7

European Journal of

Philosophy

in

Arts Education

Editor:

Ketil Thorgersen

Issue 01

2024

vol 08

CONTENT

EJPAE

Editorial

Tenth issue of the European Journal of Philosophy in Arts Education

Ketil Thor Thorgersen

Editor in Chief

EJPAE is finally coming out with the tenth issue after more than a year of rest. Why this absence? EJPAE is more or less a one-man show with me, the editor in chief, doing most of the work. Since EJPAE is unpaid voluntary work (as much work in academia is), the editorial work suffers when I have too many other things in my life. I have hade the blessing of becoming a father to a baby boy which has taken up most of my extra time, but as he is now 2,5 years old, time is slowly getting available again. I am so happy to be able to present this fantastic issue comprising of three articles from different art forms and practices.

The first article is based on an experiment and a curiosity: What would happen if the teacher students were allowed to own their own learning processes in a museum context? *Nikonanou, Panagiotis, Moraitopoulou* and *Viseri* from Greece reports from an exiting, developing and challenging time where the ideas of *the commons* are being tested against what is common – what is usual and expected. In the article *Commoning the teaching of art in a museum context: SMOOTH reflections*, the teachers experience that their roles are challenged as they attempt to hand over responsibility to the students. The teacher training academia questions the usability of

a process with no predefined outcome. Towards the end of the article the authors develops a suggestion for a framework for an education of the commons in a museum-higher education context.

Our second article, *'Dido's Lament', a Lament for our Dying Planet?* by *Inga Marie Nesmann-Aass*, offers a compelling re-interpretation of Purcell's famous aria. Set against the backdrop of Annie Lennox's modern performance during the pandemic, Nesmann-Aass connects this 17th-century piece to the global climate crisis, reflecting on the ways historical music can speak to contemporary crises. The article weaves together embodied performance, environmental activism, and pedagogical applications, asking us to rethink how we relate to music from the past in the context of today's urgent challenges.

Finally, in *Abstraction through the Kaleidoscope: Playful Concept Creation with Irma Salo Jæger*, *Heidi Marjaana Kukkonen* invites us into the creative world of abstract art through a philosophical and playful exploration with Finnish-Norwegian artist Irma Salo Jæger. Kukkonen reflects on the potential of abstraction as a tool for education, where the act of playing with abstract ideas opens up new perspectives and disrupts conventional thinking. Her approach, informed by new materialist theory, reveals how abstraction is not only a philosophical concept but also a way to engage deeply and actively with art.

This issue exemplifies the richness of art in education, with each article offering unique perspectives on how we learn through artistic practices. I am proud to share this with you and hope it sparks as much curiosity and reflection for you as it has for me.

Ketil Thor Thorgersen

Editor in Chief   Stockholm October 4th 2024

EJPAE

Commoning the teaching of art in a museum context:

SMOOTH reflections

Niki Nikonanou, University of Thessaly

Panagiotis A. Kanellopoulos, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Elina Moraitopoulou, University of Hamburg

Elena Viseri, University of Thessaly

Abstract

Drawing on the experience of a series of multi-art education workshops run in a museum of modern art with the participation of a group of upper secondary school students, this paper reflects on how the philosophy of educational commons might help us rethink the role of the educator in museum-based art-education initiatives. By focusing on the transformations, the challenges, the failures and the openings experienced by the educators of this program in their attempt to work on the basis of the philosophy of educational commons, we arrive at an articulation of what might be referred to as patterns of *commoning teacher agency*. More specifically, based of an ecological model of teacher agency that Priestley et al. (2015) proposed on the basis on the work of Emirbayer & Mische (1998) we identify patterns of *commoning museum educators' agency* that operated on an iterational, a practical-evaluative and a projective dimension. On the iterational dimension, a commoning approach to teaching led museum educators to re-evaluate past experiences, received ideas, and cherished practices, inducing a process of unlearning. On the practical-evaluative dimension, it enabled museum educators to implement new ways of working and relating to students and their worlds, and to come up with ideas and tools that expand "The social, structural and material 'here and now' of possible agency" (Philpott & Spruce 2021, 290) and its distribution. On the projective dimension it enabled museum educators to imagine alternative ways of exercising agency, envisioning a way of commoning the museum. The resultant reorientation of the role of the teacher in museum-based, commons-derived creative art-education practices might be seen as providing a much needed alternative to the pervading neoliberal colonisation of education initiatives in cultural institutions.

Keywords: museum education, music education, educational commons, creative arts education, teacher agency, unlearning

Commoning the teaching of art in a museum context
SMOOTH reflections

Niki Nikonanou, University of Thessaly

Panagiotis A. Kanellopoulos, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki[1]

Elina Moraitopoulou, University of Hamburg

Elena Viseri, University of Thessaly

I.Introduction

In this paper we ask the question: How might the philosophy of educational commons enable us to reframe museum-based art-education practices? We ask this question by drawing on the experience of a series of art-education workshops run in an art museum with the participation of a group of upper secondary school students. More specifically, our theoretical reflection on the collected data aims at inquiring on the possible core constituents of a framework for a commons-based creative museum education, highlighting some of the challenges presented and the shifts needed with regard to the role of museum educators. We

1   Corresponding author; Panagiotis A. Kanellopoulos, Associate Professor, Music Education, Department of Music Studies, School of Fine Arts, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, E-mail: pankanel@gmail.com

thus look at the transformations, the challenges, the failures and the openings experienced by the educators in their attempt to work on the basis of the philosophy of commons. On this basis we then attempt to articulate what might be referred to as patterns of commoning teacher agency. The resultant reorientation of the role of the teacher in museum-based, commons-derived creative art-education practices might be seen as providing alternatives to the pervading neoliberal colonisation of education initiatives in cultural institutions (Kanellopoulos & Barahanou 2020)

Setting the scene

Museums and other cultural spaces wish to play an increasing role in taming young people's free time by assuming as one of their prime responsibilities the design and implementation of non-formal educational programs (Beane & Pope 2002; Burton & Scott 2007; Pegno 2019; Roberson 2010; Yellis 2012; Gigerl et.al. 2022; Holdgaard & Boritz 2022). Museums, libraries, music and/or art centers are increasingly seen as "important agencies in new learning societies" with an "educative and educational" role to play, so that they are able to meet the present generation's "need for continuous learning in order to acquire new skills constantly" (Thinesse-Demel 2005, 1; also Bélanger 2004). Time is not to be 'lost'; it should be turned into profitable time (Pinto & Blue 2021). "The organizing forces of neoliberal capitalism" (Räber 2023, 4) lead to a self-imposed urgency to 'exploit time', to participate in activities that combine enjoyment with 'self-development'. Responding to such calls, teaching artists and cultural education workers began "cramming the galleries with art trolleys and other educational paraphernalia" (Kaitavuori 2013, xiii).

Cultural institutions' emphasis on education has been a core aspect of a perceived need for their transformation into 'participatory' institutions. Cultural institutions' participatory turn reflects the need for democratisation (Sternfeld 2018), encouraging content contribution and co-curation (Pointek 2017; Nikonanou & Misirloglou

2023), and upholding the merits of participatory design (Pierroux et.al. 2020). Such efforts to encourage "people to actively engage as cultural participants, not passive consumers" (Simon 2010, ii), occur at the same time as calls for museum de-colonisation gain momentum (Oswald & Tinius 2020; Ariese & Wróblewska 2022). Emphasis on participation has been met with sentiments of optimism and hope (Simon 2010; see also Walmsley 2019; Shettel 2008). Voices of critique have, however, attended to the numerous and subtle ways in which institutional power impedes participation, capitalizing on its rhetorical effects rather than on its empowering potential (Lynch, 2011; Kreps 2013; Klindt 2017). Emphasis on the superficial merits of participation seems to be the rule rather than the exception. For example, reporting on Have a Seat: Mexican chair design today exhibition held at the Denver Art Museum, U.S, journalist Mark Rinaldi celebrates its innovative design as one that "lets visitors experience museum fare as more than just pretty objects". The article's heading reads as follows: "You can sit there. Really" (the New York Times, April 28, 2024)[2].

Attention should be also paid to the imposed obligations on cultural institutions to prove that their work has a clearly measurable impact (Janes & Sandell 2007; Mörsch 2013). Museum education initiatives are asked to play a pivotal role in this race for impact increase in the face of accountability pressures. This goes hand in hand with the vast increase of museum's "reliance on corporate funding" (Wray 2019, 320), while, at same time, the fact "that accepting corporate funding is not a neutral act" (Wray 2019, 320) is artfully masked. As Kaitavuori (2013) has poignantly argued "[a] lot of educational work is [...] funded on social terms to follow local or national governmental agendas" (p. xvii). These developments lead museum education to assume a central role in the advancement of the entrepreneurial museum (Kalin 2018;

---

2   https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/23/arts/design/denver-art-museum-mexican-chairs.html

Sternfeld 2018; Kalyva, 2024). Kundu & Kalin (2015) provide a well-grounded critique of "art museum education's reliance on learning and management theories" (2015, 49) that "places art museum education as a space to reflect, deal with open-ended activity, think critically, transgress, and ask unanswered questions—under threat" (ibid., 44). Similarly Kaitavuori has argued that museum education easily falls into the trap of "pleasing audience expectations at any price, because within the institution, education is often accountable in quantitative terms for attendance and media success" (Kaitavuori 2013, xvii). In the context of these concerns, this paper examines the possibility of shaping more open, inclusive and egalitarian approaches to participatory art education initiatives in cultural institutions, based on the *philosophy of educational commons.*

II. Commons in (museum) education

Commons - a wider view

In its earliest use, the notion of commons denotes land that is undivided; land, that together with other natural resources belong to a local community as a whole (Sumner 2017). The philosophy of commons has inspired and at the same time has been shaped by a number of initiatives in areas as diverse as economy (Ostrom 1990), digital technologies (Bollier 2008), political philosophy (Federici 2012; Kioupkiolis 2020), the arts (Sollfrank, Stalder & Niederberger 2020; Kioupkiolis 2019; Tan 2018), culture and cultural heritage (Bertacchini et.al. 2012; Lekakis 2020; Graham 2017) and education (Means, Ford & Slater 2017; Pechtelidis 2018; Pechtelidis & Kioupkiolis 2020). As Stalder & Sollfrank (2020) have put it, "the commons re-emerged, in the English-speaking world, as a major theoretical, political and cultural horizon during the 1990s, and have been articulated within a number of larger perspectives that often refer to one another" (p. 13). Pivotal in this respect is the need for advancing visions

and practices of sustainability, countering the inherent unsustainability of contemporary capitalism, and "building and maintaining cooperative human constructs that protect and/or enable universal access to *economic life goods*" (Sumner 2017, 202).

From a political philosophy perspective, Hardt and Negri (2009) have emphasised that the notion of the commons needs to be expanded to include all "those results of social production that are necessary for social interaction and further production, such as knowledge, languages, codes, information, affects" (p. viii). A core imperative of the philosophy of the commons has been the active engagement with practices of sharing that are based on autonomy, freedom, diversity and equal participation "eschewing top-down, centralizing logics of the state and a profit-driven individualism of neoliberal markets" (Kioupkiolis 2019, 113).

Commons – education

In a certain (Arendtian) sense, education can be seen as a practice of sustainment and renewal of a common world (Arendt 2006/1968; Gordon 2001). Yet, education often produces and reproduces power relationships, perpetuates privileges and hierarchies, performs exclusions (Apple 2007; Giroux 2019) and creates epistemic and aesthetic injustices (Zembylas 2022; Medina 2013; Means 2013). In the face of this, educators that seek to promote educational practices on the basis of the commons need to enter a process of rethinking the role of education and also, to unlearn persistent and sometimes much cherished modes of teaching practice. As Stalder & Sollfrank (2020) have argued, "Unlearning, first of all, requires an understanding of the historicity of all subject positions—which implies that they have been 'made' and thus could also be 'unmade'" (p. 29). Educators that regard their role as masters of knowledge and practices that need to be transmitted assume a position of privilege that may need to be re-considered: "unlearning one's privileges is not just a gesture, and it is only possible

through critical thinking and acting that involves the risk of challenging one's own position" (Stalder & Sollfrank, 2020, 30).

One should certainly acknowledge that often non-formal educational contexts have encouraged the adoption of teaching practices that move away from traditional notions the teacher-as-transmitter, encouraging 'facilitation' or 'mediation' of learning, as well as attention to 'learners' needs'. But one might also point out that the realm of non-formal education has often promoted approaches to learning as an individualistic struggle for accumulating cultural and knowledge capital as one more asset in the race for "the construction of flexible and self-responsible subjectivities with specific predetermined skills and competencies" (Tiainen, Leiviskä & Brunila 2019, 647) that have market-oriented use-value and are taught without any concern for, let alone critique of, the ends served. Thus, to talk, today, about placing students 'needs' at the centre of education may be an invocation of an old and much cherished progressive educational ideal, but it can at the same time be leading us (unintentionally, perhaps) to lend support to discourses that turn "student into a customer whose 'wants' (rather than needs) deserve to be satisfied, without asking 'difficult' questions" (Biesta 2022, 341; Charteris, Smardon & Kemmis 2022).

To look at education from the perspective of the commons may be seen as a different way forward, beyond the modernist-progressivist discourse, and at the same time beyond the neoliberal mis-appropriation of this discourse in the service of market-based logics of learner's 'needs'. To look at education from the perspective of the commons signifies a shift away from "both private appropriation and public central control" (Snir 2016, 121, based on Hardt and Negri 2009). It signifies an important shift from the individual to the collective, a new relationship with knowledge, and also the initiation of egalitarian processes of decision-making. As Means, Ford & Slater (2017) have put it, "[r]ather than the pseudo-reality and mono- chromatic

world of unending commodification constructed by neoliberal common sense, the commons are in fact rich in variation and possibility" (p. 3).

On a general level, the 'commons' induce a constellation of practices that simultaneously operate on three distinct but interrelated levels: that of a) *resources*, (b) *practices*, and (c) *communities*. Thus, common resources/goods are being used, produced and transformed on the basis of commoning processes of collective governance on the basis of freedom, equality and care as manifested through the active and creative participation of the commoners (Kioupkiolis 2019, 116; see also Dellenbaugh et al. 2015, 13; Bollier & Helfrich 2015, 3). Educational commons go well beyond "a mere technical management of resources" (Velicu & Gustavo 2018, 55). The implementation of educational initiatives based on the philosophy of commons induce the initiation of activities that enable everyone involved to contest relationships of domination and to blur distinctions between professionals and amateurs, leaders and led, experts and non-experts. Thus, the philosophy of educational commons may help us actively counter appropriations of education as a de-politicised race for acquiring skills appropriate for the markets of tomorrow, going against learning "as pure process" (Straume 2011, 256-257) devoid of socio-political significations related to wider educational objectives (emancipation, judgement, intellectual dignity, longing for plurality and openness). The commons offer the possibility of a re-politicisation of education through the cultivation of what Snir calls 'a new kind of politics': "Education in common is education without sharp distinction between teachers and learners, one in which all take active part. Such education is therefore far from de-politicization, for it allows learning to be part of a new kind of politics of broad participation in community life" (Snir 2016, 121).

Commons – museum education

The philosophy of educational commons emerge as a particularly fertile perspective through which we could rethink educational work in museums and arts-based cultural institutions. Not least because museums' traditional emphasis on the 'preservation' of the so-called 'common heritage'. There is an ironic twist in this invocation, given the colonialist roots of the civilising and elitist discourse that historically have permeated traditional museum practices (see Ariese 2022) – as Nkiru Nzegwu has aptly shown, the "racial system of knowledge" that underpins western art museums has functioned as "a structural foundation that racially organizes epistemological, social, political, and economic data and interactions along vertical lines that entrench white superiority and dominance" (2019, 369-370; based on Bonilla-Silva 1997). The philosophy of commons moves way beyond this line of thought, suspending vertical lines from a 'primitive' past to a [white] 'civilised' present.

But it also problematises traditional conceptions of museums as public institutions: "if we understand art institutions as public spaces that are not only open to everyone but also strive to be sites that belong to everyone, then we are dealing with the question of the possibility of change" (Sternfeld 2013, 4). The role of museum education initiatives on the basis of the philosophy of commons might be seen as pivotal in this respect, as notions of outcome, benefits, skills, value, participation and creativity, become explicitly re-politicised in a context of participation in decision-making on the basis of equity.

III. Into 'in-and-out-of-sync'

'In-and-out-of-sync': creative dialogues between Russian Avant-garde art and teenagers is an inter-artistic museum education project developed and implemented at the

Museum of Modern Art-Costakis Collection (part of MOMus[3] - Metropolitan Organisation of Museums of Visual Arts of Thessaloniki, Greece).[4]

Twenty five students, 15 to 18 years old, from a vocational high school participated in the program. Accompanied by two of their school-teachers, the students participated in nine three-hour-long weekly meetings, held at the the Museum of Modern Art-Costakis Collection over a period of three months. The program brought together three museum educators, a musician-music educator (hereafter referred to the educators) and a research team (two academics specialising in museum and music education and a researcher responsible for data collection).

Throughout the program participants experimented with approaches to museum space and contents, with modes of teaching, with practices of artistic creation, and with the development of participatory frameworks that are rooted in philosophy of the commons. The program's design was co-created as each meeting constituted the basis of each next step; collective decision-making processes involving both the students and the educators, using tools/processes such as pedagogical documentation, self-reflection, and youth councils.

In-and-out-of-sync invited young people as co-creators inside the museum, encouraging creative visual art experimentations (jagodzinski 2017; Atkinson 2011) together with creative music making that centered on free improvisation and noise music practices (Woods 2019, 2020; Kanellopoulos & Stefanou 2015). Moreover, it sought to find ways of linking this work with the museum collection, and more spe-

---

EJPAE: 01 2024 8
*Nikonanou, Kanellopoulos, Moraitopoulou,Viseri; Commoning the teaching
of art in a museum context*

cifically with the exhibition "Ivan Kliun. Transcendental landscapes. Flying sculptures. Light spheres" that showcased works by Russian avant-garde artist Ivan Kliun.[5]

The nine meetings built up to the creation of a multimodal installation that used a variety of means to explore different perceptions of 'war and non-peace' – a theme that emerged as a result of collective decision-making processes and created a context for vivid sharing of thoughts and experiences among the participants. The collectively made artwork bore the imprint of these discussions and was exhibited in the so-called 'dark room' in the context of International Museum Day, 2022. The 'dark room' was situated in ground floor of the museum and was granted exclusively to the young participants throughout the program. That room, which the participants later on started calling it their 'headquarters', was intentionally left empty at the beginning of the program, and the educators invited the students to 'make it theirs' by bringing their own personal objects to decorate it over the meetings. It is notable that 'the dark room' continued to host for several months the exhibition of the multimodal artwork created by the students.

Our focus in this paper lies with the role of the teacher. Our main questions, as already stated at the start of the paper, are: which are the challenges presented and the shifts needed with regard to the role of museum educators in the context of a museum education program that operates on the basis of the philosophy of educational commons? How might this re-consideration of the educators' role, allow for a re-articulation of teacher agency? Our analysis will be grounded in a series of short stories based on our field notes, as well as on interview/focus group excerpts. In crafting these stories our intention was to vividly capture the nuances and the complexities of the experience of teaching in this project.[6] The stories attempt to provide a synthesis

---

5   https://arthive.com/exhibitions/5790
6   The stories have been shared and discussed via e-mail with the museum educators that
     implemented the program. This serves as a means for member check for accuracy, also

of our discoveries that can then be theoretically probed, allowing us to address the question of the educators' agency in educational commons.

Therefore, the following snapshots from museum educators' engagement in a common-based inter-artistic education program in a museum setting provide a glimpse to the challenges, the failures, the ambiguities and the transformations experienced in the process of this work. In their dedicated effort to implement this program, the educators faced unexpected obstacles, encountered resistances, pushed and negotiated boundaries, explored new ways of sharing and ultimately posed the question of how to think anew the notion of teacher agency; an ever-present sense of vividness, passion and joy has been integral in all this - this has by no means been an academic exercise.

Casting:
Anna, Ilektra, Vaso: museum educators
Mak: music educator
Fani, Alexandra: school-teachers
Joe, Kari, Bachman: Students

"offering participants opportunities to check how their data are used in the context of reporting" (Simons 2014, 460; also Trent and Cho 2014). Headline text in inverted commas comes for our interview data.

1. "Let's not make it look like a classroom this time": initial negotiations around the teachers' role

This is our first meeting. Ilektra, one of the museum educators, tries to be clear right from the start that "we'd like this to be something different [...] we do not want it to be just a school visit to a museum. [...] But we do not really know how all this is going to look like. We are expecting, or rather, we need you [the students] to tell us how. And we have this 'hot' concept: educational commons".

One may say that here, Ilektra directly confronts her identity as a museum educator, renouncing the authority that comes with it. In retrospect, however, we feel that this 'programmatic declaration' may have been a sign of the insecurity that the museum educator is feeling. Calling educational commons a 'hot concept' somehow seems to betray her puzzlement. After many years of experience in museum education programs that are clearly designed, delivered and evaluated, here she is, bewildered, in front of something uneasy and unknown: 'we do not know … we need you to tell us how".

The two school-teachers that accompany the students to the museum perceive this as going against their very definition of what it is to be a teacher: "It would help us a lot if you could give us some details about the program", Alexandra says. Ilektra provocatively answers: "But that is exactly the point. We have not programmed a set of activities; we are here to decide on this together". Negotiating resistances has been an ongoing process, as the school-teachers' fear of the possibility of failure of the project was to be evident in subsequent meetings as well. Fani, the other school-teacher: "It's the framework that we are mostly in need of. Otherwise students feel lost". Their worries amplify the concerns that museum educators had anyway: "I felt their [the school-teachers'] gaze on my back like X-rays; it was as if they were telling me: 'come on, take up your role!'" (Anna).

Collective decision making about how the group might begin creative work and at the same finding their way into the museum spaces has not been easy. In the third session the students decided that they would like to see the museum exhibition - everyone gathered in one of the large exhibition rooms; an intense discussion begins as to the adoption of a guided-tour format, or, conversely, of a free-floating individual take. There are voices that insist that the absence of a guide will induce disorientation, while others say that "walking through the exhibition on our own does not equal 'chaos'". One of the school-teachers turns to the museum educators and says, once again: "could you please explain to us the logic of the exhibition?" The museum educators prefer to avoid answering: "maybe it is better if you take your time, walk through the exhibition and discuss its logic when you come back?", says Vaso. The logic of 'explanation' and the logic of 'exploration' seem irreconcilable.

Figure 1: Copying artworks

EJPAE: 01 2024 8
Nikonanou, Kanellopoulos, Moraitopoulou,Viseri; Commoning the teaching
of art in a museum context

2.   Is time lost a lost time?: creating space

"Whenever they [the students] are left on their own, they basically do nothing. Propensity to do nothing seems deeply ingrained in their DNA", says one of the school-teachers. The museum educators are often reminded that their duty is that time does not get lost, and that they should provide concrete guidance. "Shall we set your poems into music?" the same school-teacher adds - she refers to poems written by the students on their first visit to the museum, prompted by exhibition print-outs handed by the museum educators. This, of course, reveals that the museum educators frequently *did* indeed give concrete suggestions to the group. It seems that un-doing much-cherished practices was easier said than done.

Collective decision making takes time. At times there is a feeling that endless discussions lead nowhere. Ilektra complains: "I am sorry but I can't hear anything in this mess" Fani says. Anna: "Shall we all say what it is we'd like to do?". She adds: "I do not feel that in our last session we managed to hear everyone's voices". At this point one, Alexandra decides to intervene: "We are losing our time, talking over and over again about the same things".

Fani adds: "I suggest that the students work in groups, making up different pieces of music that are based on the idea of 'the cycle', or on that of 'the line', and then proceed to put them together". Alexandra adds: "Let's decide on creating a project. I do not think we have enough time". Her point is quite clear: let's not lose time in endless discussions.

Fani, brings up another issue: "I cannot see the connection between the work of the different groups. I felt quite uncomfortable in our last meeting, as we really did not know who was doing what".

EJPAE: 01 2024 8
Nikonanou, Kanellopoulos, Moraitopoulou,Viseri; Commoning the teaching
of art in a museum context

In the midst of all this Vaso comments: "I feel that the time we are spending today may actually prove very useful, for it allows us to shape ideas for next time, and to mould the dynamic of our group as a whole. However, I feel that If we had designated one of us as coordinator, maybe this would have saved us from coming back to the same things again and again". Later on, during reflection time, Ilektra would add: "It is actually great that this sense of discomfort came up so clearly, for this puts some pressure on all of us to find ways to coordinate".

Figure 2: 'Dark room' discussions

3.   The burden of outcome-oriented logics

We are already in the midst of our seventh meeting. Nothing has been easy; and although all sorts of doubts and ambivalences are still with us, a certain climate of trust and commitment has been established.

The museum educators have prepared the space so that creative work may proceed - the students are in the midst of preparing their 'war and peace' materials that will find their place in the collective spiral construction on which we have agreed upon. The three student groups ('war'-group, 'peace'-group, and 'music'-group) get down to work on their ideas - a sense of creative joy prevails. The educators are walking in the various rooms of the museum, observing, and/or engaging in brief interactions with the student groups.

Finally the museum feels less like an impersonal place of highbrow art exhibits - it is impossible not to sense that something good is happening there. Yet, at some point one of the school-teachers says: "we somehow need to show to the school that we have been doing something [worthwhile] here". The teacher needs to deliver something – to show that the time spent at the museum did lead to a creation of some kind.

Figure 3: Preparing 'war and peace' materials

4.   Providing headways

The group meets in the dark room. There is quite a vivid talking among the students, but the museum educators feel somewhat reluctant to begin talking. Discussion commences, finally, with the museum educators trying to pose open questions that would lead students to suggest possible ways forward. At some point, one of the students says: "What do you mean by 'let's decide what we want to do? 'Are you expecting us to tell you what we should do? Give us some choices so that we can choose from." Which leads us to ask, once again: What would it mean for a teacher to refrain from taking on the role of the leader?

A few weeks later: we are in our 8th meeting; spread around in the dark room are the artworks made by the students in the context of the workshop. The group moves around the room, vividly exchanging comments about their work. At some point one of the educators utters the question whether they would like to proceed by making some music to add to their final installation. One of the students says: "But only if we want to, right?", at which point another says: "Only if we want to, haven't you got this yet? This is what we keep saying since the beginning of this all: 'only if we want to'". Letting the students feel that they indeed could express desire in the process of a museum education program, has not been easy.

Figure 4: Sharing proposals

EJPAE: 01 2024 8
Nikonanou, Kanellopoulos, Moraitopoulou,Viseri; Commoning the teaching
of art in a museum context

5.   "Can I do nothing?"

A group meeting commences in the dark room. Noisy conversations; some of the students begin to share candies with each other - candies are thrown in the air, all over the room, a noiseless response to the request for silence that was just been made? Ilektra outlines the museum educators' suggestions about what to do next: "1. Conducted improvisation 2. Copying works shown in the exhibition ('Yeah', some students yell), 3. Copying in pairs 4. Your suggestions". Most prefer to work on copying, individually or in pairs, so they begin to spread around the exhibition rooms. Kari stays behind and asks Mak: "can I do nothing?" Mak responds "indeed you can". This exchange is overheard by one of the school-teachers who some weeks later, and on a different occasion, would say: "When this program is over, I will certainly need to remind them that sloppiness may be ok in this context, but is not something that can be tolerated at school. Oh, God, these kids have been born idle."

Figure 5: A glimpse through the curtains: hanging out/playing around

6. A non-judgmental approach

Two of the students, together with Mak, our music-educator, are just about to initiate their first free music improvisation. Bachman says: "I'm a bit shy to play in front of other people. I'll make mistakes, and this makes me nervous". Mak responds: "How could we create a context for playing where the notion of 'mistake' does not exist? Are there mistakes in improvisation?"

In one of the focus groups after the end of the program, one of the students, Kari, would direct our attention to the following: "In school, our teacher is also the one who's grading our artwork, and maybe this also gives her the impression that she 'owns' our artwork too, to put it that way. I mean, the fact that we're preparing work that she is then asked to put a grade on, entitles her to ask us to do it in her way. [...] Here [in the museum], she had no such power, because it's none of her business, because the notebook on which we do our artwork is o-u-r-s and she will give no grade to it, and also because you [the museum educators] were here too and she felt ashamed to do that".

Despite the difficulties, it can be said that the openness with which creative experimentation was approached led to a unique feeling: "No one judges you [here] [...]We accepted one another, and this is something that you only rarely come across nowadays", Kari added.

Figure 6: Dropping ideas

7.   Awakenings

The school-teachers, slowly but reluctantly began to acknowledge that their students' visits to the museum may not have been a waste of time. It was now impossible not to be taken by the intensity and the care with which their students worked in different areas of the museum, preparing their collective installation. Yet, some of their concerns keep returning. One of them comments regretfully: "at the school they still believe that we are just messing around here. And back at school there are many who are ready to pick on anything, however unimportant, just to prove that all this has been a failure."

Contrary to what many might think back at school, Alexandra confirmed that through their work at program "they [the students] have finally become a team", adding that "students who were usually left backstage, who had ideas but were too shy to share them, [here] they found space! They participated! [...] After the compliments-game, Joe was transformed!", she says with enthusiasm: "he began leaning on others, lying horizontally in the middle of the room!". She then comes back to her worry that back at school the value of this project may not be recognized: "we need to show to the school that we've achieved something here". When our conversation ends, she goes back to another exhibition room on the ground floor where a group of students perform a free musical improvisation. She picks a glassy object and a metallic beater, for, as she said: "oh, this might fit with the sound of this piece" – that she allows herself to be carried away by the immersive atmosphere her students have created, might be seen as an indication that as the program moved near completion, her scepticism receded.

8.   The hard path to unlearning (a)

In trying to refrain from their traditional role as workshop leaders in museum education programs, in trying to be as open as possible, and at the same time to be as creative as possible, the group of educators often experienced:

- Doubts:

    "I feel that today I had some peak moments and at the same time some really dull ones. So, I am not sure..." (Vaso)

- A sense that they are of no use:

    Anna: "I felt quite awkward; I did enjoy some moments but generally I had the feeling that my presence was superfluous. I did not feel that I was needed there, nor that I had a role to play, an interest, so I really do not know. I then thought that this is neither good nor bad, rather, it is something new, a new role may be: the role of the 'no-role'.

- A need to get back to tried and tested solutions:

    Ilektra: "Today I came to the meeting having decided that if I face once again that sense of insecurity [that results from struggling to 'implement the commons'], I will just do what I know. This may sound a bit selfish, and it may make me go back to my traditional role as a leader [...] I must say that this issue of the educator's role is something that troubles me a lot, from the very start of our meetings, and even before this, from the day I began diving into the theory of the commons... I [however] still believe that I need to offer starting points [that open pathways].... So, to have to abolish that role, this was something very very difficult for me".

- A feeling that although they set out to work on the basis of a non-interventionist approach, that has been merely rhetorical:

Vaso: "In our emphasis on making sure that the creative participatory process would yield interesting and tangible results, and in our care to offer as many starting points as possible, we fell into the trap of channelling and controlling the process, rather too much I would say. [...] The difficult question is whether we are equal to the students or not, and how one may keep invoking the commons and the idea of collective decision making in the context of a relationship that is not equal".

Anna: "This relationship can never be equal"

9.   The hard path to unlearning (b)

The struggle with doing away with a traditional role of museum educator seems to have been em-bodied, occupying their thoughts, inviting them to imagine possible ways forward:

Anna: "I do remember very vividly that all four of us were just so very tired after the sessions".

Ilektra: "Oh God, I was just knackered. To have to unlearn your role (as a museum educator). That was so difficult. I now think three times before each time I have to speak. And this whole thing consumes my thinking throughout the week, not only on the day of the workshops".

Mak: "And this is what makes us feel so exhausted".

Anna: "This is so very new to us, so challenging, and it interests us so very much. It is not just that we carry out the workshop and then just leave it behind us. It whirls in our minds during the rest of the week".

Figure 7: Students' final installation

IV. Teaching and the commons: commoning agency

Our hope is that that the above vignettes from the life of '*in-and-out-of-sync*' museum education program, provide a window through which one can glimpse at the challenges, the failures and the openings experienced by the educators. It seems to us that the themes that emerge from those vignettes testify to an ongoing struggle that swipes between two poles on two different axes that might be referred to as (a) the teacher role axis, and (b) the school-museum axis.

On the teacher role axis (a), at one end we have the teacher who explains, transmits, dictates and controls; at the other end we have a less-directive approach to teaching that attempts to shape a mode of teaching practice that aligns with the philosophy of commons: sharing the decision making process, allowing students to take the time to suggest ways forward, and providing the time for them to pursue those ways forward.

On the school-museum axis (b) we may say that at one end we have the museum as a cultural institution that has the potential to function as an other space away from school, a space that suspends and sometimes threatens the dominant school logic (constant evaluation, clear evaluative criteria, knowledge based work, timed activities, clear end-products), and at the other, a perceived need to function as a traditional, outcome-based, educational venue. In the struggle along both axes that was evidenced through the continual friction between museum educators' and school teachers' perceptions, what was at stake seemed to be the question: what exactly is a teacher?

Thus, we would like to suggest that the 'programmatic' declaration, "let's not make it look like a classroom this time" goes beyond the oft-heard calls for joyful experiential learning employed by museums in their effort to widen audience participation; rather, it points towards a possible re-definition of the role of teacher agency. Agency, understood as the power to affect matters that relate to one's own work, maintains firm links with the notion of 'being in control'. But in the stories presented above, one encounters a constant tension between, on the one hand, a perceived need to take control over the educational process, and repeated attempts to find ways to distribute control on the other. The museum educators explored ways of sharing authority, ways of enabling the group of students to experiment with sharing control over the processes of decision making and the direction of creative work. The schoolteachers emerged as 'guardians' of the traditional order. Both the museum educators and the school teachers had moments of opening up to experimentation with letting control go, and moments of ambivalence, insecurity and/or dismissiveness.

In this paper we have found it useful to theorise on how the educators experienced agency in the context of *in-and-out-of-sync* through the lens of the 'ecological' model of teacher agency that Priestley et al. (2015) elaborated based on the pioneering work of Emirbayer & Mische (1998) (see also Philpott & Spruce 2021). This frame-

work introduces three distinct but closely interrelated "dimensions that impact upon a teacher's capacity for the exercise of agency, particularly at the micro-level" (Philpott & Spruce 2021, 290). The first dimension is the *Iterational*: the nexus of past experiences, received ideas, and cherished habits that impact upon the 'now' of teaching practice: "wrapped up in the iterational dimension is a set of identity-forming, explicit, and implicit personal beliefs and values" (Philpott & Spruce 2021, 290). The second is *the Projective dimension*: the willingness and the ability to imagine alternative approaches to how teaching is to be thought and practised: "Projectivity encompasses the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future" (Emirbayer & Mische 1998, 971). The iterational and the projective dimensions relate to the 'past' and the 'future' respectively. Both the 'past' and the 'future' feed into the moment of the now. Therefore, the third dimension concerns how both the iterational and the projective are feeding into the 'now' of teaching, into the dynamic exercise of situated judgement, negotiation, failure, insecurity, and ambivalence that are ever-present in the shaping of teacher's agentic role in day to day practice: this is referred to as *the Practical Evaluative Dimension*. As Emirbayer & Mische (1998) put it, the practical evaluative dimension "entails the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations" (p. 971).

In the context of *in-and-out-of-synch*, this has not been an easy and straightforward process: patterns of action that have been developed over time, defining these museum educators' teaching identity may function as a source of resistance to change. Anna, Ilektra, and Vaso are experienced museum educators. And a crucial aspect of their experience relates to the demand to intervene creatively, and also to the development of an apparatus that allows them to find creative ways to present mu-

seum exhibits to their audience. Their teaching habitus is largely framed by what Mörsch (2009) refers to as affirmative and reproductive discourses of gallery education. In this program, their wish was to work in a different way, but, as our stories show, resistances and ambivalences were constantly present, and were eloquently expressed through the invention of an ambiguous term: "the no-role" role.

Is the 'no-role' role an empty role? Sometimes our data show that the educators felt this way. One can certainly say that this new role rendered them vulnerable – remember their comment on having felt the school-teachers' gaze "like X-rays". Refraining from exercising their traditional teaching authority that knows how to show the way rendered them vulnerable to criticisms. These criticisms posed a direct threat to their identity as educators: "come on, take up your role and teach". Which means: act by adhering to the logic that underpins affirmative and reproductive discourses. In the face of this pressure, it is not surprising that the museum educators felt so strongly that there were times when they would prefer to get back to tried and tested solutions, "to what they know".

To refuse to bow to these expectations, preferring to insistently remain faithful to the unspectacural effort to consistently open up a space for students to find out what is this that they want to pursue and to forge a voice and be clearly heard, is a tedious process that challenges educators – at times it even overwhelms them. As Kaija Kaitavuori (2013) has put it "the professional positioning of educators with the audience—the "other", the non-professional— puts them in a disadvantaged position in a field that defines its value as a specialised field of expertise" (p. xiv). The educators chose to distance themselves from their role as mediators between the lay students and the high status that has been conferred upon the exhibits of the museum. The privilege that stems from assuming the role to lead the way, the privilege that stems from being considered an expert: this is what here is being un-learned. What the educators involved in this program began to glimpse to, is a future-oriented re-shaping of

their role by - and here it is highly appropriate to use Spivak's formulation - "[u]nlearning one's privilege [the privilege to be in control] as one's loss" (Landry & MacLean, 1996, 4). It is this that the school-teachers were mostly afraid of: the loss of control, was to their eyes, a loss of the role of the teacher.

In this paper we suggest that the practices of commoning implemented by the educators of this program may be seen as experimenting with the idea that "there is a dimension of agency in its very uncontrollability. Because when there is only space for the necessary, change is impossible" (Sternfeld 2010, 5). When there is only space for the *predictable,* control thrives but ironically, *agency fades away.*

Pursuing the possibility of distributing control among students and educators may not be seen as entailing the abolition of educational responsibility. Rather, it may mean finding the courage to support the participants in the process of learning to make decisions. Instead of pigeonholing them as 'born-idle', this sharing of responsibility might be seen an honest effort on the part of the educators to look for what it is that they students might want to say, what it is that they might want to express. Common-based educational and creative artistic practices may be seen as a dedicated attempt to materialise a conception of teaching that creates a space for sharing, but also for defining what is to be shared, a conception of teaching that allows for expression of ideas and desires, but also creates a space for interrogating into and critically engaging with these ideas.

The museum educators in this program clearly tried to refrain from just offering their students an array of possibilities from which they could choose. For the most part, they seemed also to have refused to choose in advance in the name of their students. Rather, they attempted to create a context in which the students could engage in a number of artistic practices - sketching and copying, collage, installation, free improvisation using found objects – and through them, to search for what they want

and for what it might be that they want to express. This practice refuses to consent to the misleading "assumption that learners come to education with a clear understanding of what their needs are" (Biesta 2005, 59). At the same time, it explicitly rejects authoritarianism, which assumes that "the task of the educator or teacher to decide for the one being educated what right, good and correct ways of thinking and being were" (Biesta 2018, 149).

Our stories testify to the ambivalences that relate to the notion of creative 'product'. The program programmatically refused to operate on a product-oriented logic. If there was a 'product' sought after, that has been the experience of the openings, the failures and the difficulties of art-based educational commons. In such a context no-one 'owns our artwork', no-one creates in accordance to somebody else's agenda, 'no-one judges you', and yet, making, sharing and discussing art and art-making is intensely present. This brings us to the ideal of transforming the museum into a 'safe space', a space "where people can be themselves, spaces that are free from judgement and prejudice and where people can talk freely" (Morse 2021, 136). Yet, the final installation was exhibited in the museum space, and was treated as a 'tool' for legitimation in the eyes of the school.

Central to the process of abolishing control and redefining responsibility seems to have been the issue of controlling time. In *in-and-out-of-synch*, issues of time were hotly debated through various lenses: for the school-teachers that accompanied the students to the museum, time away from school was to be used for the creation of a final product that can be shown to the school, so as the whole program attains legitimacy in the eyes of the other teachers there. That the museum educators employed commoning practices that distributed control over the management of time was perceived by the school-teachers as unproductive, as a scandalous waste of time, to be tolerated only as an exception: "I will certainly need to remind them that sloppiness may be ok in this context, but is not something that can be tolerated at school".

EJPAE: 01 2024 8
*Nikonanou, Kanellopoulos, Moraitopoulou,Viseri; Commoning the teaching
of art in a museum context*

The right to choose not to do something, to choose to do something at one's own pace, and the right to decide when it is the most appropriate time to do something, are all distinctive aspects of a process of commoning time. The notion of commoning time may be seen as referring both to processes where discussion, negotiation and debate take centre-stage and also to a conception of time that goes beyond productivism (Räber 2023). It is to this latter conception of time that Räber (2023) refers to "as the practice of refusal via taking time: the self-determined arrangement of the nexus of time, action and utility that begins with the a-synchronous insertion of unproductive time into the synchronous horizontal time of productivism" (Räber 2023, 1).

Both aspects of this process of commoning time are crucial manifestations of the common's commitment to equality. Räber invokes Rancière's (2013) thesis that time is a means for dividing and excluding "and, equally, for establishing identity and commonality" (Räber 2023, 6). The ways in which one uses one's time also defines what is permissible and what it is not, what is of value and what is useless, what is possible and what is not. The time we create so as to form and share ideas on equal terms (a), and the act of taking time not to do something, to move away from something (b), are both aspects of the political dimension of time. Räber (2023) holds that this second use of time is central to democracy via "its indifference to authority's powers to deactivate and suppress the capacity of citizens to determine the utility of actions and events in time" (p. 3). In this sense *in-and-out-of-sync* may be seen as glimpsing at a future possibility for museum education work that moves away from productivism, away from marketing time and the emphasis on exploiting free time in order to gain access to certain privileges. It also moves away from product-oriented logics of school-time.

As such, common-based museum education may be seen as forging a pathway informed by what Mörsch (2009) refers to as transformative discourse, delineating a

perspective that apprehends gallery education as taking up "the task of expanding the exhibiting institution and to politically constitute it as an agent of societal change" (p. 10).

In the light of this analysis, *in-and-out-of-sync* may be seen as a local, small scale attempt to materialise a transformative museum education practice via an intense and radical reworking of the notion of teacher agency that brought teaching close to core aspects of the philosophy of commons:

- On the iterational dimension, it enabled museum educators to rethink, re-work and critique aspects of their agentic practice, via a process of unlearn-ing.

- On the practical-evaluative dimension, it enabled museum educators to im-plement new ways of working and relating to students and their worlds, and to come up with ideas and tools that expand "The social, structural and ma-terial 'here and now' of possible agency" (Philpott & Spruce 2021, 290) and its distribution.

- On the projective dimension it enabled museum educators to imagine altern-ative ways of exercising agency, envisioning a way of commoning the mu-seum.

This process can be summarised in the following figure that, based on the model of Emirbayer & Mische (1998), aims to concisely capture the transformational dimen-sions of agency that may result from commoning education acts.

Figure 1 The transformative potential of commoning teacher agency:		
Iterational dimension	→	Reflecting on past practices: Unlearning
Practical-evaluative dimension	→	Negotiating resistances, and creating openings via the distribution of agency
Projective dimension	→	Envisioning the commoning of the museum

It can be argued that the philosophy of commons enabled the museum educators of *in-and-out-of-sync* to engage into a process of commoning agency, prioritising collective creative acts of their students as the prime means of initiating a dialogue between students and 'the past' - art museums, after all, purport to be agents of treasured aspects of art's 'past'. Extending a formulation that has been put forward by music education philosopher Randall Allsup (2013), this commoning of agency can be seen as effecting a radical change as it leads the world of the museum to be seen and felt not as a master but as a guest, and the students-participants not as a admirers of the museum's heritage but as active hosts of aspects of this heritage, a heritage that is creatively re-appropriated through commoning the museum education process. Which brings us close to an important question asked by Nora Sternfeld (2013): "What if educators were no longer the ones with knowledge and visitors no longer those in need of knowledge? What if mediation processes were conceived as spaces of collective agency, in which to engage with different forms of knowledge?" (p. 4).

The resultant reorientation of the role of the teacher in museum-based, commons-derived creative art-education practices might be seen as allowing us to envision and shape alternatives to the pervading neoliberal colonisation of education initiatives in cultural institutions (Kanellopoulos & Barahanou 2020), and the emphasis on increased measurable impact, and their market-derived approaches to participation (Kundu and Kalin 2015; Katsaridou 2024). The commoning of teacher agency that has been addressed through *in-and-out-of-sync* attempted to bring students *in* synchrony with each other and with their teachers through collective decision making, and permitted them to be *out of* synchrony when this was felt necessary. On a different level, in-and-out-of-sync attempted to create a local museum education approach that is *out of* synchrony with museums' entrepreneurial turn (Kalyva, 2024), but in synchrony with a transformative vision of museum education.

References

Allsup, Randall E. (2013). The compositional turn in music education: From closed forms to open texts. In M. Kaschub and J. Smith (eds.), *Composing our future: Preparing music educators to teach composition* (pp. 57-74). New York: Oxford University Press.

Apple, Michael W. (2007). Whose markets, whose knowledge? In A. Sadovnik (ed.), *Sociology of education: A critical reader* (pp. 177–193). New York: Routledge.

Arendt, Hannah (2006/1968). The crisis in education. In J. Kohn (ed.), *Hannah Arendt–Between Past and Future: Eight exercises in political thought* (pp. 170-193). New York: Penguin.

Ariese, Csilla E. (2022). Increasing inclusivity. In C. E. Ariese & M. Wróblewska (eds.), *Practicing decoloniality in museums: A guide with global examples* (pp. 37-50). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Ariese, Csilla E. & Wróblewska, Magdalena (2022). *Practicing decoloniality in museums: A guide with global examples.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Atkinson, Dennis (2011). *Art, equality and learning: Pedagogies against the state.* Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Beane, Deane B. (2002). Leveling the playing field through object-based service learning. In S. G. Paris, *Perspective on object-centered learning in museums* (pp. 325-349). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bélanger, Paul (2004). New visions of lifelong learning. In J. Thinesse-Demel (ed.), *Engage extra: Museums and galleries as learning places* (pp. 16-21). London: engage.

Bertacchini, Enrico., Bravo, Giangiacomo., Marrelli, Massimo., Santagata, Walter., eds. (2012). *Cultural commons: A new perspective on the production and evolution of cultures.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Biesta, Gert (2005). Against learning. *Nordisk Pedagogik*, 25, 54–66.

Biesta, Gert (2010). *Good Education in an age of measurement: Ethics, politics, democracy*. London: Routledge.

Biesta, Gert (2018). Walking the museum: Art, artists and pedagogy reconsidered. In C. Naughton, G. Biesta & D. R. Cole (eds.), *Art, artists & pedagogy: Philosophy and the arts in education* (pp. 147-156). London: Routledge.

Biesta, Gert. (2022). The school is not a learning environment: How language matters for the practical study of educational practices. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 44(2), 336-346.

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/citedby/10.1080/0158037X.2022.2046556?scroll=top&needAccess=true&role=tab&aria-labelledby=cit

Bollier, David (2008). Viral spiral: How the commoners built a digital republic of their own. New York: New Press.

Bollier, David., Helfrich, Silke., eds. (2015). *Patterns of commoning*. Amherst: Levellers.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo (1997). Rethinking racism: Toward a structural interpretation. *American Sociological Review*, 62(3), 465–480. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2657316

Burton, Christine & Scott, Carol (2007). Museums: challenges for the 21st century. In R. R. Janes & R. Sandell (eds.), *Museum management and marketing* (pp. 49–66). London: Routledge.

Charteris, Jennifer., Smardon, Dianne., Kemmis, Stephen (2022). Leadership in the built spaces of innovative learning environments: Leading change in people and practices in the perfectly self-managing society. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 44(2), 212-231. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0158037X.2021.1928051

Dellenbaugh, Mary., Kip, Markus., Bienok, Majken., Müller, Agnes K., Schwegmann, Martin., eds. (2015). *Urban commons: Moving beyond state and market.* Basel: Birkhäuser.

Emirbayer, Mustafa & Mische, Ann (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology,* 103(4), 962–1023. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/231294

Federici, Silvia (2012). Feminism and the politics of the commons. In D. Bollier & S. Helfrich (eds.), *The wealth of the commons: A world beyond the market & state* (pp. 45–54). Amherst, MA: Levellers Press.

Gigerl, Monica., Sanahuja-Gavaldà, Josep M., Petrinska-Labudovikj, Rozita., Moron-Velasco, Mar., Rojas-Pernia, Susana., Tragatschnig, Ulrich (2022). Collaboration between schools and museums for inclusive cultural education: Findings from the INARTdis-project. *Front. Educ.* 7:979260, 1-17. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2022.979260/full

Giroux, Henry A. (2019). Authoritarianism and the challenge of higher education in the age of Trump. *Action Criticism, and Theory for Music Education,* 18(1), 6–25. http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Giroux18_1.pdf

Gordon, Mordechai, ed., (2001). *Hannah Arendt and education: Renewing our common world.* Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

EJPAE: 01 2024 8
Nikonanou, Kanellopoulos, Moraitopoulou,Viseri; Commoning the teaching
of art in a museum context

Graham, Helen (2017). Publics and commons: The problem of inclusion for
participation. In C. Gether, S. Høholt & C. Jalving (eds.). *The art of
taking part: Participation at the museum* [ARKEN Bulletin no. 7] (pp.
150-167). Ishøj: ARKEN Museum of Modern Art.
https://www.arken.dk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/publics-and-
commons...-by-helen-graham_bulletin-2017.pdf

Hardt, Michael & Negri, Antonio (2009). *Commonwealth.* Cambridge, MA:
Harvard University Press.

Holdgaard, Nanna & Boritz, Mette (2022). Power to the children?
Understanding children's participation in the year of the children via the
National Museum in Copenhagen. *Nordisk kulturpolitisk tidsskrift*,
25(3), 218–233. https://www.idunn.no/doi/10.18261/nkt.25.3.5

jagodzinski, jan, ed., (2017). *What Is art education? After Deleuze and Guattari.*
New York: Palgrave.

Janes, Robert R. & Sandell, Richard, eds. (2007). *Museum management and
marketing.* London: Routledge.

Kaitavuori, Kaija (2013). Introduction. In K. Kaitavuori, L. Kokkonen & N.
Sternfeld (eds.), *It's all mediating: Outlining and incorporating the roles*

of curating and education in the exhibition context (pp. x-xxi). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.

Kalin, Nadine M. (2018). *The neoliberalization of creativity education: Democratizing, destructing and decreating.* Cham: Palgrave.

Kalyva, Eve (2024). Introducing the entrepreneurial turn. In E. Kalyva, I. Katsaridou & P. Bianchi (eds.), *Museums and entrepreneurship: The effects of capitalising on culture in the 21st century* (pp. 1-11). London: Routledge.

Kanellopoulos, Panagiotis A. & Barahanou, Niki (2020). The neoliberal colonisation of creative music education in cultural institutions: A hatred of democracy? In A. Kallio (ed.), *Difference and division in music education* (144-162). London: Routledge.

Kanellopoulos, Panagiotis A. & Stefanou, Danae (2015). Music beyond monuments: Re-imagining creative music engagement in the light of museum-based projects. *MuseumEdu: Education and research in cultural environments*, 1, 37-64.
http://museumedulab.ece.uth.gr/main/en/node/343

Katsaridou, Iro (2024). Postscript: Where do we go from here? In E. Kalyva, I. Katsaridou & P. Bianchi (eds.), *Museums and entrepreneurship: The*

effects of capitalising on culture in the 21st century (pp. 175-180). London: Routledge.

Kindlt, Maj (2017). When and how do we participate? On participation from a musicological and cultural-political perspective. *Arken Bulletin*, 7. https://issuu.com/arken_museum/docs/bulletin_2017_fe4c9dee90af81

Kioupkiolis, Alexandros (2019). The Commons and music education for social change. *European Journal of Philosophy in Arts Education*, 4(2), 111-146. http://www.ejpae.com/index.php/EJPAE/article/view/37/30

Kioupkiolis, Alexandros (2020). *Heteropolitics – Refiguring the common and the political.* Report. European Research Council, https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/724692

Kreps, Christina. (2013). Participation, museums, and civic engagement. In A. Nicholls, M. Pereira & M. Sani (eds.), *New trends in museums of the 21st century. The Learning Museum network project* (pp. 85–101), Gruntvig Fund, EU LEM Project.

Kundu, Rina, Kalin, Nadine M. (2015). Participating in the neoliberal art museum. Studies in Art Education: *A Journal of Issues and Research*, 57(1), 39–52.

EJPAE: 01 2024 8
Nikonanou, Kanellopoulos, Moraitopoulou,Viseri; Commoning the teaching
of art in a museum context

Landry, Donna & MacLean, Gerald, eds. (1996). *The Spivak reader: Selected works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. London: Routledge.

Lekakis, Stelios, ed. (2020). *Cultural heritage in the realm of the commons: Conversations on the case of Greece.* London: Ubiquity Press.

Lynch, Bernadette (2011). *Whose cake is it anyway? A collaborative investigation into engagement and participation in 12 museums and galleries in the UK – summary report.* London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation. https://www.phf.org.uk/publications/whose-cake-anyway

Means, Alexander J. , Ford, Derek R. & Slater, Graham B. eds. (2017). *Educational commons in theory and practice: Global pedagogy and politics.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Means, Alexander J. (2013). *Schooling in the age of austerity: Urban education and the struggle for democratic life.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Medina, José (2013). *The epistemology of resistance: Gender and racial oppression, epistemic injustice, and resistant imaginations.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Morse, Nuala (2021). *The museum as a space of social care.* London: Routledge.

Mörsch, Carmen (2009). At a crossroads of four discourses: documenta 12 gallery education in between affirmation, reproduction, deconstruction, and

transformation. In C. Mörsch, U. N. McBride, K. M. Castañón, L. Schleussner & E. Smith (eds.), *documenta 12 education II. Between cultural praxis and public service. Results of a research project* (pp. 9–33). Berlin: Diaphanes. https://www.diaphanes.com/titel/at-a-crossroads-of-four-discourses-1032

Mörsch, Carmen (2013). Contradicting oneself: Gallery education as critical practice within the educational turn in curating. In K. Kaitavuori, L. Kokkonen & N. Sternfeld (eds.), *It's all mediating: Outlining and incorporating the roles of curating and education in the exhibition context* (pp. 8-19). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.

Nikonanou, Niki & Misirloglou, Thouli (2023). 'Together we curate': Cultural participation and collective curation. *Museum & Society*, 21(1), 31-44. https://journals.le.ac.uk/ojs1/index.php/mas/article/view/4048/3740

Nzegwu, Nkiru (2019). African Art in deep time: De-race-ing aesthetics and de-racializing visual art. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 77(4), 367-378. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jaac.12674

Ostrom, Elinor (1990). *Governing the commons.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

EJPAE: 01 2024 8
Nikonanou, Kanellopoulos, Moraitopoulou,Viseri; Commoning the teaching
of art in a museum context

Oswald, Margareta von & Tinius, Jonas, eds. (2020). *Across anthropology: Troubling colonial legacies, museums, and the curatorial.* Leuven: Leuven University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv125jqxp.

Pechtelidis, Yannis (2018). Heteropolitical pedagogies, citizenship and childhood: Commoning education in contemporary Greece. In C. Baraldi & T. Cockburn, (eds.), *Theorising childhood: Citizenship, rights, and participation* (pp. 201-238), Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pechtelidis, Yannis & Kioupkiolis, Alexandros (2020). Education as commons, children as commoners: The case study of the Little Tree community. *Democracy & Education*, 28(1), Article 5, https://democracyeducationjournal.org/home/vol28/iss1/5

Pegno, Marianna (2019). Becoming a service provider through partnerships and sustained engagement: Developing programs with immigrant and refugee audiences in art museums. *Journal of Museum Education*, 44(1), 13-25. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2018.1560785

Philpott, Chris & Spruce, Gary (2021). Structure and agency in music education. In R. Wright, G. Johansen, P. A. Kanellopoulos & P. Schmidt (eds.), *The Routledge handbook to sociology of music education* (pp. 288-299). New York: Routledge.

Pinto, Laura & Blue, Levon (2021). The heist: Neoliberal education and the theft of time. *Encounters in Theory and History of Education*, 22, 117-136. https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/encounters/article/view/14802

Pierroux, Palmyre., Bäckström, Mattias., Brenna, Brita., Gowlland, Geoffre., Ween, Gro (2020). Museums as sites of participatory democracy and design. In P. Hetland, P. Pierroux & L. Esborg (eds.), *A history of participation in museums and archives: Traversing citizen science and citizen humanities* (pp. 27-45). London: Routledge.

Piontek, Anja (2017). *Museum und Partizipation. Theorie und Praxis kooperativer Ausstellungsprojekte und Beteiligungsangebote.* Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

Priestley, Mark., Biesta, Gert., Robinson, Sarah (2015). *Teacher agency: An ecological approach.* London: Bloomsbury.

Räber, Michael (2023). Whose time is it? Rancière on taking time, unproductive doing and democratic emancipation. *Philosophy and Social Criticism,* 0(0), 1–21, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/01914537221150457

Rancière, Jacques (2013). In what time do we live?. *Política Común*, 4, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/pc/12322227.0004.001?view=text;rgn=main

Roberson, Donald N. Jr. (2010). Free time in an art museum: Pausing, gazing and interacting. *Leisure Sciences*, 33(1), 70–80. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01490400.2011.533112?journalCode=ulsc20

Shettel, Harris (2008). No visitor left behind. *Curator*, 51(4), 367-375. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.2151-6952.2008.tb00323.x

Simon, Nina (2010). *The Participatory Museum.* Santa Cruz, CA: Museum 2.0. https://participatorymuseum.org/read

Snir, Itay (2016). Re-politicizing the scholastic: School and schoolchildren between politicization and de-politicization. *Ethics and Education*, 11(2), 117-130. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2016.1160522

Sollfrank, Cornelia, Stalder, Felix & Niederberger Shusha, eds. (2020). *Aesthetics of the commons*. Zurich: Zurich University of the Arts/Diaphanes.

Stalder, Felix & Sollfrank, Cornelia (2020). Introduction. In C. Sollfrank, F. Stalder & S. Niederberger (eds.), *Aesthetics of the commons* (pp. 11-38). Zurich: Zurich University of the Arts/Diaphanes.

Sternfeld, Nora (2010) .Unglamorous tasks: what can education learn from its political tradition. *e-flux Journal,* 14, 1-12.

https://www.e-flux.com/journal/14/61302/unglamorous-tasks-what-can-education-learn-from-its-political-traditions

Sternfeld, Nora (2013). That certain savoir/pouvoir: Gallery education as a field of possibility. In K. Kaitavuori, L. Kokkonen & N. Sternfeld (eds.), *It's all mediating: Outlining and incorporating the roles of curating and education in the exhibition context* (pp. 1-7). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.

Sternfeld, Nora (2018). *Das radikaldemokratische Museum.* Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

Straume, Ingerid S. (2011). 'Learning' and signification in neoliberal governance. In I. S. Straume & J. F. Humphrey (eds.), *Depoliticization: The political imaginary of global capitalism* (pp. 229-259). Malmö: NSU Press.

Sumner Jennifer (2017). Education and the civil commons. In A. J. Means, D. R. Ford, G. B. Slater (eds.), *Educational commons in theory and practice: Global pedagogy and politics* (pp. 189-207). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tan, Pelin (2018). Practices of commoning in recent contemporary art. *ASAP/Journal*, 3(2), 278-285. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/700559/pdf

Thinesse-Demel, Jutta (2005). Introduction. In J. Thinesse-Demel (ed.), *Libraries and cultural heritage democratising culture, creating knowledge and building bridges. Report on the workshop held at the C O N FINTEA V mid-term review conference, Bangkok, Thailand, September 2003* (pp. 1-3). Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000140184

Tiainen, Katariina., Leiviskä, Anniina., Brunila, Kristiina (2019). Democratic education for hope: Contesting the neoliberal common sense. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 38, 641–655. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11217-019-09647-2

Trent, Allen & Cho, Jeasik (2014). Interpretation strategies: Appropriate concepts. In P. Leavy (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 639-657). New York: Oxford University Press.

Velicu, Irina & García-López, Gustavo (2018). Thinking the commons through Ostrom and Butler: Boundedness and vulnerability. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 35(6), 55–73. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0263276418757315?journalCode=tcsa

Walmsley, Ben (2019). *Audience engagement in the performing arts: A critical analysis.* Cham: Palgrave McMillan.

Woods, Peter J. (2020). Reimagining collaboration through the lens of the posthuman: Uncovering embodied learning in noise music, *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 18(1), 45–65. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15505170.2020.1786747?journalCode=ujcp20

Woods, Peter. J. (2019). Conceptions of teaching in and through noise: A study of experimental musicians' beliefs. *Music Education Research*, 21(4), 459–468. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14613808.2019.1611753

Wray, Lynn (2019). Taking a position: Challenging the anti-authorial turn in art curating. In R. R. Janes and R. Sandell (eds.), *Museum activism* (pp. 315-325). London: Routledge.

Yellis, Ken (2012). From insurgency to re-branding. *Journal of Museum Education*, 37(2), 57-65. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41705824

Zembylas,, Michalinos (2022). Theorizing aesthetic injustice in democratic education: insights from Boal and Rancière. *Ethics and Education*, 17(4), 388-402. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17449642.2022.2148387?journalCode=ceae20

About the Authors

Niki Nikonanou is Professor of Museum Education at the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Thessaly, Greece. She has participated in several European research projects and has published books and articles on theory and practice of museum-education, critical cultural mediation, participation and inclusion in cultural institutions.

Panagiotis A. Kanellopoulos serves as Associate Professor of Music Education at the Department of Music Studies, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Active as a researcher and a music maker, he is particularly interested in politico-philosophical, socio-historical and field-based explorations of creative music making in educational and cultural institutions.

Elina Moraitopoulou is an interdisciplinary researcher/practitioner. She holds a PhD in Anthropology (POEM H2020/MSCA Fellowship, University of Hamburg) which explores young people's emotional orientations to desired education futures in the UK context through participatory memory work. She has done participatory research in informal education contexts drawing on theories and practices of the Educational Commons (SMOOTH H2020 project) and on histories of Black Supplementary Education and Participatory Evaluation (Impact Accelerator Account, University of Manchester). She holds an MSc in Interdisciplinary Approaches to Research and Education (Learning Planet Institute/Paris Descartes University) and a BSc in Biology (University of Ioannina) and has previously worked as a coordinator of educational and citizen science projects. Today, she works as a coordinator, researcher, and educator at Mamagea Environmental Organization (Thessaloniki, Greece).

Elena Viseri is a PhD candidate at the University of Thessaly in the Department of Early Childhood Education. She has studied Theatre (School of Fine Arts, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) and holds a master degree in 'Aesthetic Education' (Department of Early Childhood Education, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki). She

has worked as a drama teacher in primary education (2018-2022) and adult education (2016-2023) as a researcher in the European Research Programme SMOOTH- H2020 (2022-2023) and as a museum educator in MOMus- Museum of Contemporary Art (2023- today).

EJPAE

'Dido's Lament', a Lament for our Dying Planet?

An inquiry into a modern reconfiguration of 'Dido's Lament', exemplified through Annie Lennox' performance.

Inga Marie Nesmann-Aas

University of Agder

Abstract

'Dido's Lament' from the opera Dido and Aeneas (Henry Purcell, 1680s) has found its manifold ways through history. Still holding a massive popularity on the world's opera stages, it is also realized through several performers in various musical styles. Do such performances pose a 'threat' to the historical perspectives, or do they offer new ways of experiencing this music?

I look specifically into Annie Lennox' performance of 'Dido's Lament' with London City Voices. Recorded during the pandemic, it exemplifies an aspect of the crisis in music during the pandemic. Further, Annie Lennox herself relates the lament to our dying planet and thus to the global climate crisis. The objective is twofold, in that I seek to show the value of understanding the culture where the text and music originates, and to open up for re-configuration and appropriation where we seek a meaningful performance and experience in our current context. This is done in light of central issues concerning performance of historic music. This approach is both applicable for performers and in and educational setting for students and teachers in music education.

Founded in an embodied experiential approach, I will, through historic references, textual analysis, and analysis of this realisation by Annie Lennox , address the various 'crises' mentioned. From centring around Dido's tragic fate towards a beyond human tragedy concerning the planet's survival, we shift from an anthropocentric view towards a wider and embodied approach to this piece of music, opening new for possibilities and experiences for performers and audiences, which is also highly relevant in an educational setting.

Keywords: *Dido's Lament performance, embodiment, historically informed performance, interpretation, topomorphology*

'Dido's Lament', a Lament for our Dying Planet?

An inquiry into a modern reconfiguration of 'Dido's Lament', exemplified through Annie Lennox' performance.

Inga Marie Nesmann-Aas [1]

Introduction

Dido's Lament' from the opera *Dido and Aeneas* (Henry Purcell, 1680s) has found its manifold ways through history. Still holding a massive popularity on the world's opera stages, it is also realized through several performers in various musical styles. Do such performances pose a 'threat' to the historical perspectives, or do they offer new ways of experiencing this music?

As the title suggests, this article is an inquiry into a modern, contemporary reconfiguration of 'Dido's Lament', through the performance by Annie Lennox and London City Voices[2] . I investigate and ask: 'To what extent can it be meaningful to transform original musical compositions and performances into a framework which aims for a discussion of contemporary and critical issues to learn of the past?'. Through my inquiry I illustrate challenges, opportunities and dilemmas of such an approach.

---

1 Inga Marie Nesmann-Aas, PhD, University of Agder, Department of Classical Music and Music Education, E-mail: inga.m.nesmann-aas@uia.no

I begin by presenting the contemporary performance, pointing out some interesting aspects as a basis for analysis and interpretation. Further, I give a short introduction to the historical perspective of the opera and libretto, specifically in the aria. Then, I again focus on the contemporary performance by Annie Lennox and inquire into possibilities of interpretation and experience through approaches towards performance of historical music, leaning on embodiment perspectives (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Scott, 2018; Spatz, 2017) and historical empathy (Lévesque, 2008) rooted in performative musicology as introduced by Rolfhamre (2022).

I extend my inquiry by suggesting a possible pedagogical approach where I build on Frida Forsgren's 'Aesthetic and Pedagogical Approach to Re-Living History' (Forsgren, 2022) and Rolfhamre's pedagogical approach to HIP through performative musicology (Rolfhamre, 2022) to explore a more immersed and experiential take on working with history through the contemporary.

'Dido's Lament' –presentation and analysis of Annie Lennox' performance

The music video begins with 9 seconds of silence, a still picture with black background and the white text:

> When it comes to climate catastrophe, we are on the edge of abyss. I really believe we don't have much time left to make an effective change. We are looking at a civilization on the downwards side. This is the truth of this matter. It's staring us in the face and we are not paying any significant attention –continu-

---

2   This is the video that the analysis is based on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3DFaIovZxc : Choral Performance with London City Voices, released 16. Des. 2020. In addition, there is an official music video focusing on nature images and environmental threats: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yWda4RJoOI. Official music video, released 13. Nov. 2020

ing on as if it doesn't exist. I see Dido's Lament as a lament for our dying planet."

<div align="right">– Annie Lennox, December 2020</div>

Then the screen fills up with squares with one person in each, headshot, dressed in black with white-hued backgrounds. Annie Lennox is in the centre square, she also wears black, but with white dots. She looks towards the side, not looking into the camera before she starts singing. The focus zooms in on her. Musically, we hear a piano, a b2, and the bass line from Purcell's composition is played on a piano with single notes, very simplistically. Visually we see various people in squares, focus shifting between different people and a varying number of people on the screen at once. First time she sings the verse, it is her voice alone with the base line played on piano. The film is swiping across the faces, all pale and with little colour when they do not sing, though not completely black and white. Then the piano plays chords with the bass line. The verse is repeated, this time with the sopranos in the chorus in octave unison with Lennox' voice.

The first time the 'chorus' 'Remember me' comes, she sings alone. There is an echo repeating the phrase, other faces are in focus when the echo comes. Next, the whole chorus is harmonized, 'Remember me' with all voices. This harmonization is an arrangement and cannot be found in Purcell's composition.

In the instrumental interlude, a harpsichord is introduced, playing an obligato, also not in Purcell's composition. The chorus then begins with harmonized 'oh, oh, oh'-vocals. Short, and precise with rhythmical patterns both on quarter notes, and female voices also on eighth-notes. The film is swiping all the various faces, many different faces are represented. All are in colour when they all sing. No one ever smiles throughout the video.

Then the verse is sung harmonized by the choir, with simple chords accompanying, and no polyphony. All voices are heard. Annie Lennox then sings alone again: 'Remember me', twice, with echo and the third time they all sing in harmony. Towards the end, the rhythmic 'oh, oh, oh' returns with intensity, then a weaker 'remember me' as the last vocal line. It ends in a b-minor chord. With the final chord, the screen is again black and white letters appear with 'In solidarity with GREENPEACE. Donate now at: www.greenpeace.org.uk/dido'.

The video and music are both insistent on simplicity throughout the performance. The focus is on the seriousness of the message, in this context: The climate crisis, and as Lennox states: 'we are on the edge of abyss [...] it is staring us in the face'. The singers all stare at us, insisting on the grave situation at hand. The voices all contribute with their unique sound. In this context, the human voices are central, the bodies producing the voices are in focus and the natural sound with very little instrumental accompaniment makes them stand out further. To me, it seems as though the voices do not represent the unique human aspect, but more nature itself. They speak for, with, and through nature. '[...] an understanding that nature is not inanimate and less than human, but animated and more than human' (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, p.566).

The echo in the phrase 'remember me' can be heard as an echo from the planet, as echo is a natural phenomenon; nature speaking back at us, representing communication and dialogue with our planet. The chorus is very important in representing plurality and shifting the focus from the subject, the performer, or artist, towards the message, the music, and nature itself. In my view, this performance does not have an anthropocentric focus, but instead lifts the perspective beyond the subjective artistry towards being a part of nature and the whole. Having an embodied understanding of this relationship, it results in an activist moral attitude towards society, the planet

and nature as a whole. Nature is a part of our being and in my view, this performance underlines this embodied relationship.

Historical perspective

In its original context, 'Dido's Lament' is the protagonist aria at the end of the opera *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell and Nahum Tate written in London in the 1680s. Its context is Queen Dido heartbroken and in despair. In the classic myth, Dido commits suicide, whereas in the opera libretto by Nahum Tate, she dies of grief (Harris, 2018). A common belief at the time, and an embodied realisation of emotion. It is even recognized in medical science today as 'broken heart syndrome'.

Delving into the lyrics of the aria, we see the recitative relating to the relation between Belinda, servant and close friend, and Dido. Looking into the structure of the text topomorphically (how words are structured and distributed architecturally throughout the text to emphasise e.g. meaning and message), we see that rhetoric is consciously embedded to underline and enforce the meaning in the text itself (Eriksen 2001).

Thy hand, Belinda, darkness shades me,

On thy Bosom let me rest,

More I wou'd but Death invades me.

Death is now a Welcom[sic] Guest,

When I am laid in Earth [may] my wrongs Create

No trouble in thy Breast

Remember me, but ah! Forget my Fate.

The rhetorical structure emphasizes references to Dido herself throughout the short text, she is the focal point throughout. There are synonyms as 'breast' and 'bosom' that are in a circular mirrored pattern. Repetitions of 'death' occur, beginning with death as an invasion, moving towards acceptance at the end. This is ordered in a chiastic centripetal structure, a symmetric, circular pattern. Synonyms for errors are related to problems and their consequences. Dido being at peace with her fate are the centripetal words, at the very middle structurally. 'Remember' and 'Forget' are clear antitheses, opposites. All these rhetorical devices are well-known structures emphasising the message and strengthening the emotional nerve of the aria. The last word, 'fate', is central throughout the plot of the opera and distributed evenly and at central points in the libretto. It is very fitting that this is Dido's very last word[3] (Nesmann-Aas, 2022a).

As these structures were common in texts at the time of the creation of the opera, it could more easily be recognised by the audience. However, the historic belief concerning rhetorical, topomorphic structuring of texts was that this also functions on a subliminal level, thus if we adhere to this possibility, it can support an intuitive translation of essential content being available also to an audience of today. Another point in 'translating' history is the meaning of the words themselves. Historically, 'my wrongs' do not only mean what Dido herself has done wrong, but it can also mean wrongs done against her (Schmalfeldt, 2001). Stepping aside from a more subjective focus, it is also relevant to note that the focus on wrongs could also be more related to not acting according to one's fate or will of the God(s). Knowing this adds layers to the interpretation of the text itself.

---

3   This short analysis is part of a larger analysis previously published in chapter 3 in the anthology by Rolfhamre, R., & Angelo, E. (2022). *Views on Early Music as Representation: Invitations, Congruity, Performance. I*n: Cappelen Damm Akademisk/NOASP (Nordic Open Access Scholarly Publishing).

Without providing a separate musical analysis of the aria, I simply note that these textual focal points are in line with the musical phrasing and accompaniment. 'Dido's Lament' in g minor is structured around a ground bass pattern and in addition it is one of very few vocal pieces with independent string accompaniment from this opera. The ground bass pattern is made up of a descending tetrachord but has distinctive features. the combination of a regular structure opposed by irregular features results in a more intricate musical structure. It builds a tension which supports the content of the words. The aria also has a lack of full tonic resolution in the sung melody and accompanied harmony, which is withheld until the end.

In terms of embodiment and metaphoric expressions in the text, I find it important to note the density of bodily, physical references linked to emotions in the short text. This is also referred to as immersive techniques, as found in second generation cognitive literary theory (Allan, 2020; Grethlein et al., 2020; Nesmann-Aas, 2022b)[4]. Without providing a full analysis of basic and complex metaphorical structures, as outlined by Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 2003), I will still point out some striking examples. 'Darkness shades me' is a metaphoric reference to the lack of light as something negative, depressive and invasive, darkness and shade takes away the ability to see clearly, and this is related to a similar emotional experience. Being invaded by death is similarly a metaphor for outside negative forces taking over the body. 'When I am laid in earth' reminds us of the physicality of burial and puts focus on the body itself. Creating 'trouble in thy breast' is again a very much embodied and physical experience of emotion, a visceral embodiment where the negative emotions are strongly felt in the chest region. These poetic and metaphorical descriptions of physical bodily

---

4   For those interested in more detail and an exemplification, I have previously published an article (in Norwegian) where I apply the framework of embodiment and immersive techniques on music and poetry by Grieg and Bjoernson. Nesmann-Aas, I. M. (2022b). «De tonende sekunder». Studia Musicologica Norvegica, 48(1), 3-17. https://doi.org/10.18261/smn.48.1.2 .

orientation in the world and visceral embodiment of emotion are a strong case for a common embodied understanding bridging the historical gap from the creation of the text in the 1680s and our present time. Emphasising the embodied experience in approaching and interpreting this aria can be an effective tool for both performers, teachers, students, and audiences in connecting with the material beyond academic, historical and musicological perspectives. I return to how this article relates to embodiment in more detail in a later section.

Analysing the music and lyrics and the interaction between these, is central to interpretation and performers generally do this as a part of studying, learning and performing a piece of music, from a more unconscious experiential level to a detailed analysis, spanning from Haseman to Hegel, as an example. Much can be said of interpreting the aria as part of an operatic performance, but I wish to look into more of what happens when the piece of music is reinterpreted by contemporary artists in other musical genres. Here we look specifically into Annie Lennox' performance of 'Dido's Lament' with London City Voices.

The Past in the Present, for a Better Future?

Beginning with the text in Lennox' performance, we see that the recitative is left out, leaving us only with the following lines:

When I am laid in earth may my wrongs create

No trouble in thy breast

Remember me, but ah! Forget my fate.

The original rhetorical structure is altered, as part of the text is removed. However, we are left with central phrases that can be interpreted in their new context. The subjects 'I' and 'thy' referred to in Lennox' performance are clearly no longer Dido and

Belinda. As she states herself, it is a 'lament for our dying planet'. The subject phrase can perhaps be seen as all of us who lament the dying planet, we regret what humanity has done wrong towards our planet. But saying that these wrongs should cause 'no trouble in thy breast' is not exactly in line with the message. The performance is a call for action, as it encourages us to donate to Greenpeace. The central phrase 'remember me' is more in line with this activist attitude. In the phrase 'but, ah! Forget my fate', 'fate' can be seen as the tragic destruction of the planet and what has already been ruined. But we do not wish to forget it, and we still have time to make a change.

I see that the key to interpretation is to not take each phrase literally since they were written in a very different context. The sentiment of the piece of music and the sentiment of the lamenting words are very similar in many ways. The tragedy is stated as final just before it happens. Dido sings of her death, and then dies right after. The lament for our dying planet states the same seriousness of the situation. 'the abyss' is right here, if nothing is done, the planet will soon die. And this grave situation and grief is presented clearly. However, Lennox's interpretation also has a more activist attitude. We can make a change, it does not have to end in certain death shortly after the aria is sung, to phrase it metaphorically. Lennox' lament is both lamenting the grave situation and encouraging us to improve it. 'Our dying planet' in present continuous tense, is not dead yet. The text must be seen as a description of what might be if we do nothing. The planet will die, be 'laid in earth' and should be remembered for all the wonder and beauty, not its tragic fate. But since this is not how it must be, the poetry, in Lennox' interpretation, is encouraging a moral activist attitude. We remember, and we wish to preserve and save, not just lament its dying state. An important part of this reinterpretation of the text, is to focus on the echo, 'remember me', that Lennox has introduced. The planet speaking back towards us, we must remember. Such an imperative has a strong appeal to its receivers, and this is used by Annie Lennox as a call for action.

Moving on to the other aspects of the performance by Annie Lennox and London City Voices, it is clear that the overall expression is altered in many ways from its historic context. As Nina Eidsheim states:

> Musical genres are generally recognized within a few seconds, based on timbre: If the formal parameters of a genre are fulfilled but the timbral aspects are not, the status and intactness of the work in a particular instantiation –that is, the extent to which the work remains itself –are called into question (Eidsheim, 2015, loc.2883-2885).

Here, the issue of whether the work remains itself is called into question. Relating to the work concept is in itself a detailed musicological and philosophical debate. In order to be clear that the implications of the work concept (Goehr, 2007) are not the central issue, I will refer to the aria as a piece of music. However, the question remains. What is the essence of this particular piece of music, if any? If the melody and text remain, the formal parametres of the genre are somewhat the same and the timbral aspects change, is it still Dido's Lament'? This philosophical issue can be answered in many ways, but the basics of the case in question are that we recognize the melody and text immediately and many would agree: it moves us. Annie Lennox herself explicitly refers to Henry Purcell as the composer, so from her perspective, it is an interpretation and performance of his composition. When positioned in historical musicology, the historical itself has value. But when applying Rolfhhamre's concept of performative musicology, giving, among other central points, a rhetorical perspective of the past in the present (Rolfhamre, 2022), the historical aspects are to a larger degree seen through the complex lens of our present experience and the possibilities for the past in the present and future. Lennox' performance represents something new in the sense that the extent to which the work remains itself is called into question. This means that it is, to some degree, something new based on historical material, rather than just being 'historical music'. And the difference is relevant when

working within the field of Early Modern music and HIP, as the historical is the premise even though we recontextualise it and make it meaningful as an artistic expression and communication in our own time. However, staying with this question and its possible answers are not the most central aspect when exploring possibilities for reconfiguring historical material.

I would argue that the appreciation of historically informed performance, identifying something as historical, is a creation, and can never fully be a truthful recreation. As is generally agreed upon, as the shift in terminology from the earlier 'authentic performance' to 'historically informed performance' illustrates. To emphasize: 'The past acquires a second hybrid life which contaminates its first life' (Liakos and Bilalis, 2017, p.209). And as Locatelli (2015) states, there is an epistemological premise that myths themselves are texts that are always and already mediated. And furthermore, that these texts are relevant. She explains that re-visitations of historical material (myths) are meaningful in two ways: Obviously for the culture that creates them, but, once re-configured, also revealing of the appropriating culture's own values. This twofold perspective reveals the understanding of the culture where the text and music originates, and the re-configuration and appropriation where we seek a meaningful performance and experience in our current context.

Stepping on from the field of Early Modern or historically informed performance, HIP, towards a post-HIP (Friman, 2008) and music as experience, I state that we can enrich our understanding and experience through the historical, but it always involves a re-configuration when realising it in our own present context. And judging the limits of, and thus setting limitations on, this process is perhaps not the most interesting issue at hand. 'There are surely many ways in which pieces of music might interact with our ever-changing cultural context to bring forth new meanings, understandings and sensations, but only if we give up the idea of works as fixed and inviol-

able objects' (Butt, 2015, p.20). Here, I see that performative musicology again offers a particular space for expansion of our perspectives, as Rolfhamre explains:

> [...] performative musicology, as a distinct, dedicated focus, has something to offer, because it goes beyond the idea of understanding musical practice from an artefact-performance-reception view, to pronouncing its agential advocacy for change (or sometimes for resisting change). It is both a performative perspective for historical musicology, and a musicology that seeks to be performative, and as such, it is also inevitably ethically charged precisely because of its aspiring efficacy (Rolfhamre, 2022, p. 82).

This agential musicology seeks to move beyond set frames and advocates change, precisely in line with Lennox' activist interpretation, thus opening up for a change for the better in the future. Expanding from the approach in performative musicology towards the embodied approach, I explain here the basis of embodiment as I implement it in my writing.

Embodiment as Awareness and Empathy

My inquiry is partly based on an embodied approach, leaning on the embodied mind as it is explained and stated in Lakoff and Johnson's *Philosophy in the Flesh. The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (1999). Based on cognitive science, they state an empirical responsible philosophy based on the fact that everything we think and say and do depends on the workings of our embodied minds.

> The embodied mind is part of the living body and is dependent on the body for its existence. The properties of mind are not purely mental: they are shaped in crucial ways by the body and brain and how the body can function in everyday life. The embodied mind is thus very much of this world. Our flesh insep-

arable from what Merleau-Ponty called "the flesh of the world" and what David Abram (E, Abram 1996) refers to as "the more-than-human world." Our body is intimately tied to what we walk on, sit on, touch, taste, smell, see, breathe, and move within. Our corporeality is part of the corporeality of the world (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 565).

In the article *An Embodied Approach to Academic Writing?* published in EJPAE, Domogalla (2019) also refers to, among many others, Lakoff and Johnson, in outlining embodiment as a method in approaching both art and academic material. I find that her writing is in line with the understanding of an embodied approach where our senses form an embodied understanding, and it is inspiring to see it applied also in her research. In her book *Embodied Performance as Applied Research, Art and Pedagogy* (2018), Scott outlines a strong case for embodiment as making us more open, empathic and inclusive in our relations to others.

I believed (and still do) that once we embrace our dependence on mortal bodies, our understanding's dependence on our embodied interactions with others, and the susceptibility of even deeply embedded meanings to be dismantled through our body-to-body interactions, we can become more aware, open, and empathetic to each other's experiences. Openness and empathy can compel us to resist fear and marginalization and fight for inclusivity and the valuing of one another (Scott, 2018, p. 3).

The importance of embodied awareness in both an artistic and pedagogical setting is emphasized throughout her book, written partly in a compelling auto-ethnographic style exemplifying the embodied awareness she presents. This empathic relation to one another, and in extension, our world, goes hand in hand with the contemporary message of 'Dido's Lament as a Lament for our Dying Planet'.

Lakoff and Johnson include extensive explanations on primary and complex metaphors, and how they are based on bodily mechanisms, previously presented in their former book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980, 2003). We think with and through metaphors that are constitutive for us. 'It has given us a way to know ourselves better, to see how our physical being –flesh, blood, and sinew, hormone, cell and synapse – and all things we encounter daily in the world make us who we are' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p.568).

Our context and surroundings are then taken in through our bodily senses and we thus have an embodied understanding. 'The mind is not merely corporeal but also passionate, desiring, and social. It has a culture and cannot exist culture-free. It has a history, it has developed and grown, and it can grow further' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 565).[5] This embodiment is foundational to how I approach experiencing music, both as performer and receiver, and as a pedagogical approach. The culture context is relevant in finding metaphors in the historic text and how they still make sense to us today. Embodiment is a common reference both then and now. Since these metaphors form our understanding, meaningful communication across time is possible, even though our embodied experience today is in many ways radically different from an embodied experience in the 1680s.

The Agency of 'Dido's Lament as a Lament for our Dying Planet'

Building on the premise of embodiment and the past seen through the present, then: In what other possible ways can we view and apply this new interpretation of 'Dido's Lament' performed by Annie Lennox?

---

5   More recent publications further supporting their research can for example be found with Johnson, M. (2015).

Recorded during the pandemic, this performance exemplifies an aspect of the crisis in music during this time. The video performance with London city voices recorded individually, presents the singers as alone, together. The visual production emphasises this, expressed through each singer in a separate square, similar to zoom or other digital video conferencing tools. Recognizable to us all, we can relate intuitively to the situation. The visual is embedded in this performance and expresses and supports the vocalization throughout the performance.

Further, Annie Lennox herself relates the lament to our dying planet and thus to the global climate crisis. This can be seen both as an interpretation of the lyrics and as a dedication of the performance of 'Dido's Lament'.

> [...] It is the most profoundly haunting and melancholic aria from the opera written by English composer Henry Purcell approximately 300 years ago, where heartbroken Dido prepares to commit suicide. It occurred to me there was a comparison to the destruction human beings have brought upon the Planet. When it comes to climate catastrophe, we are on the edge of abyss. I really believe we don't have much time left to make an effective change. We are looking at a civilization on the downwards side. This is the truth of this matter. It's staring us in the face and we are not paying any significant attention –continuing on as if it doesn't exist. I see Dido's Lament as a lament for our dying planet." – Annie Lennox (YouTube).[6]

Interpreting the lament in relation to the critical situation of our planet, engages a whole new perspective of association and interpretation. To me, a small fact such as the historic meaning of the word 'wrongs' can enrichen the understanding here. If the focus of the lament is no longer Dido herself, but our dying planet, I would say it is important to see the wrongs done towards the planet, as opposed to 'wrongs' our planet does (which would not make much sense). A small historic fact can thus add

---

6   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yWda4RJoO I released 13. nov. 2020

to the understanding of a new interpretation and recontextualization of this piece of music. This strengthens my case that historical information and understanding is of great value, although it does not have to restrict our sense of interpretive possibilities.

Placing the focus on our planet is also a shift from an anthropocentric perspective towards a wider understanding of what we all are in relation to and what we can lament, so to speak. A reappropriation of such a famous aria into a lament for our dying planet, brings great force into the issue. I would argue that the intricate historical layering of 'Dido's Lament' adds both depth and layers to our understanding. The music itself is not just any music, it is a piece of music which has moved people for centuries, and thus carrying a certain 'weight' in itself. There is perhaps something forceful in the music itself, as Even Ruud states it: 'But we must also consider that music carries its own force—a sort of musical and emotional agency [...]' (Ruud, 2020, p.98). As we have all experienced, some pieces of music have more 'force' to engage and move. It seems that 'Dido's Lament' in this sense, is a forceful piece of music to many people. What this means for each individual is not the same, and even though I will argue that for me, the historical context, references and knowledge deepens my experience and understanding, I cannot say that another person without this background competence is not capable of a strong experience of this performance by Annie Lennox. At the subliminal, intuitive level, the musical and emotional agency in the piece of music has the force to move people. Music thus operates on several levels, as Eidsheim argues: [...] while we can meaningfully understand much music within the symbolic order, music continues to influence us within the presymbolic domain (Eidsheim, 2015, p. Loc.3405). Uniting these perspectives, this embodied experience is how our senses and minds receive and experience the music, and we can then add to and deepen this experience with our understanding. I believe that the experience can become richer with a deeper and broader reference.

Through the philosophy of the Embodied Mind (1999), we also see this perspective clearly:

> Lakoff and Johnson convincingly argued for a continuity between physical experiences and the system of thoughts, actions and values that we come to acquire/elaborate. From this premise, knowledge is not only separated from values and context, but it is fundamentally embodied. Knowledge exists by virtue of the fact that we are ourselves bodies, and through the body we experience both place and time. (Darling-Mcquistan et.al., 2019, p.2)

An embodied understanding of our reality is not necessarily an anthropocentric view of the world. Our bodies react before our awareness, being in a more direct communication with our surroundings[7]. This embodied interaction between music and ourselves is an important part of our experience with music. Emphasizing this experience can also relate us closer to the message that Lennox wishes us to take from her realisation of the lament. Being in contact with our planet as bodies, can tune us in to the fact that we are experiencing that relation through our senses, and give us a closer understanding of that relation. Being aware of the message that Annie Lennox states so clearly at the beginning of the performance, and then having an embodied experience of this performance, connects the two and can form an embodied knowledge in us. Davidson and Correia also connect the bodily experience to a meaningful musical performance, applying Deleuze and Guattari's term '*becoming*' to this experience:

---

7   'The full arguments for an embodied view of cognition are far too complex to rehearse here, and readers are encouraged to refer to eminent proponents such as Varela et al. (1991), Damasio (1994), Lakoff and Johnson (1999), to cite a few. However, it is worth mentioning a couple of further points in favour of the case. Evidence from psychology suggests that phenomenal consciousness (the bit we know about) may be but a small fraction of the total volume of cognitive activity in the subject. The work of Libet et al. (1983) suggests our awareness of our own will may lag someway (1/5 second or so) behind the decision made by our bodies to take an action (Pepperell 2005., p.38).'

> Thus, a *meaningful* musical performance is one grounded in its bodily origins. Historically informed 'constraints' are a means to stimulate the performer's imagination. For us, what is really decisive in musical authenticity is the gratifying and convincing 'becoming' experience that can take place[...]. Through bodily means the whole process of music can be enjoyed, communicated and developed. (Davidson and Correia, 2001, p.81)

Building on this research, I find that the historically informed can stimulate imagination and deepen both our experience and understanding, as Davidson and Correia argues, whereas the more subliminal level of bodily experience with music as a force with agency is the basic process of both performing and experiencing music. This position removes restrictions stemming from the need to define and categorise and opens up for new possibilities and experiences. Lakoff and Johnson also explain how spiritual experience, in a wide sense, is embodied. I find that their explanation is in line with the empathic care for our planet that Lennox states.

> The environment is not an "other" to us. It is not a collection of things that we encounter. Rather, it is part of our being. It is the locus of our existence and identity. We cannot and do not exist apart from it. [...] It is through empathic projection that we come to know our environment, understand how we are a part of it and how it is part of us. This is the bodily mechanism by which we can participate in nature, not just as hikers or climbers or swimmers, but as part of nature itself, part of a larger all-encompassing whole. A mindful embodied spirituality is thus an ecological spirituality (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 566).

I also see this as a metaphor for how music and art, too, is a part of our being, rather than an 'other' to us. It is not merely something we encounter. We come to know it through empathic projection. And we should participate in it, not as performers, audience, analysers, or critics, but as part of music and art itself. The embodied approach argues both for an empathic relation to our environment and our planet, and

in extension, an empathic relation to music. It calls for action, as we experience being a part of the whole. I find that this connection between our engagement in music and the power music can have to initiate and awaken such engagement is artfully integrated in Annie Lennox' interpretation and performance of 'Dido's Lament'. Relating it to a 'Lament for Our Dying Planet' is a metaphor that we embody and accept through this experience.

> An embodied spirituality requires an aesthetic attitude to the world that is central to self-nurturance, to the nurturance of others, and to the nurturance of the world itself. Embodied spirituality requires an understanding that nature is not inanimate and less than human, but animated and more than human. It requires pleasure, joy in the bodily connection with earth and air, sea and sky, plants and animals –and the recognition that they are all more than human, more than any human beings could ever achieve. Embodied spirituality is more than spiritual experience. It is an ethical relationship to the physical world (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999. P. 566).

A Pedagogical Approach

In extension, this ethical relationship to others and to the physical world, can be a gentle guide in an educational setting. For both educators and students, an embodied approach with an empathic projection ensures a more ethical, safe and open setting for teaching and learning through encounters with history, music and art. It is highly practical, in the sense that it relates directly to the manner in which we all relate to our surroundings, both human and non-human. What it takes, first of all, is a commitment to an awareness of this and a responsibility towards the implications of this awareness. A practical approach can be to use this analysis of Annie Lennox' version of 'Dido's Lament' as a means to open up for an embodied experience and conversa-

tion about this experience and what possibilities that might be found in an embodied approach to historical material in relation to our present-day context.

Further, in performative musicology, HIP can be a pedagogical approach. This performativities focused perspective is contributing to a [...]'cumulative relationship between the individual contributions emphasising dynamic readings from more than one perspective, rather than determining and safekeeping one preferred ontology'(Rolfhamre, 2022, p. 82). Such a pedagogical approach to HIP, can in this context be to use Lennox' performance as a point of departure for understanding the past in the present in new and richer ways. As Rolfhamre explains, by looking beyond the separate spaces and agencies found in 'the score, sound, reception, meaning making, aestheticism, historicity, embodiment, etc.,' [we can gain] 'a richer understanding of cause and effect in broader temporal, situational, practical and social contexts, focusing directly on agency'(Rolfhamre, 2022, p. 82). As a pedagogical tool, I see that the foundation of an immersive, embodied approach to the material through the lens of performative musicology opens up for a focus on agency which, as stated, can liberate from remaining within a preferred ontology, thus providing an opening for a richer understanding.

In her chapter 'Re-Enacting Beat Art: An Aesthetic and Pedagogical Approach to Re-Living History', Frida Forsgren explains, as the title entails, how re-living history can be an aesthetic and pedagogical approach. 'The text proposes that this method may be applicable to early modern studies as a pedagogical method for presenting, enacting, re-enacting, living, re-living and fantasising a historical past'(Forsgren, 2022, p. 177). The method encourages a deeper embedded learning through arts-based pedagogy. The method '[...] uses an artistic way of thinking and working to enrich and expand the academic and historical. It does history through art'(Forsgren, 2022, p. 188). Further, she explains that by teaching the students to develop historical thinking, historical empathy, and historical consciousness the method can strengthen crit-

ical thinking and as stated, a deeper embedded learning. The outcome of this approach can ensure:

> [...] that we can not only refer to and talk about art intellectually, but also acquire a better sense of our being part of history and of history being part of us. In this sense, this method would also highlight the implications of protecting our European cultural heritage as an ongoing community activity, rather than simply not forgetting the great works of the past (Forsgren, 2022, p. 193).

As I see it, re-living history through arts-based pedagogy as outlined by Forsgren, goes well in line with my argument based in performative musicology and an embodied approach. Together, it provides both a practical method, and an ontological, philosophical and ethical approach to working with historic material towards a richer understanding of how possibilities in 'presenting, enacting, re-enacting, living, re-living and fantasising the historical past (Forsgren, 2022)' in the present.

Concluding Remarks

Rejecting Lennox' realisation of this historical piece of music on the grounds of it not being a historically informed performance, robs us of a meaningful musical experience. I believe that it can awaken an interest of historical music in people experiencing it and be applied as a possible point of departure for meeting the past in the present also as a pedagogical approach. The historic cannot survive without someone 'keeping it alive', performing it and believing in it as still meaningful. Working with historical texts, it is an important premise that the texts are understandable and possible to interpret. As Roy Eriksen and Peter Young emphasise in *Approaches to the text* (2014), historical texts communicate across time. 'That there should be a division between these [historical texts from different times in history] causing communication break-down and preventing knowledge transfer is ahistorical and a fabrication of

the biased mind' (Eriksen & Young, 2014, p.10). Through performative musicology and embodiment perspectives, this article offers a possible approach to communicating across time through a contemporary performance of historic material as case material.

The central issue is perhaps not to decide whether or not Annie Lennox' performance of 'Dido's Lament' is 'the same work' as the aria from Purcell's opera. It is still recognised as this piece of music, it echoes the past, but is a modern performance, a reinterpretation and reconfiguration of the piece written in the 1680s. It still has 'force' to move people today and to many, it does. As previously stated, once re-configured, the reconfiguration is also revealing of the appropriating culture's own values (Locatelli 2015). What this performance reveals, is our own culture and context's values and reality. The pandemic is embedded because of the recording situation and how the visual presentation is edited. The current situation of our planet comes to the fore through the focus it is given by the performer. This performance is truly a 'lament for our dying planet' and is interpreted accordingly. This piece of music, then, becomes an authentic and meaningful performance for many. Through an embodied experience we can connect with this historical piece of music, the other bodies in this musical situation and in extension, our whole planet, thus meeting the past in the present, hopefully for a better future.

References

Allan, R. J. (2020). Narrative Immersion. Some Linguistic and Narratological Aspects. In J. H. Grethlein, Luuk; Tagliabue, Aldo (Ed.), *Experience, Narrative and Criticism in Ancient Greece. Under the Spell og Stories.* Oxford University Press.

Butt, J. (2015). What is a 'Musical Work'? Reflections on the Origins of the 'Work Concept' in Western Art Music. In A. Rahmatian (Ed.). *Concepts of Music and Copyright: How Music Perceives Itself and How Copyright Perceives Music* (pp. 1–22). Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd. https://www.elgaronline.com/view/edcoll/9781783478187/9781783478187.00006.xml

Darling-Mcquistan, K., Gray, D. and Colucci-Gray, L., (2019). Education in a Posthuman Age. *Education in the North* 26(1) pp. 1-5.

Davidson & Correia. (2001) Perspectives in Music Education Research. Meaningful musical performance: A bodily experience. *Research Studies in Music Education.* Number 17.

Domogalla, S. A. (2019) An Embodied Approach to Academic Writing? *European Journal of Philosophy in Arts Education.* Number 01, vol. 4

Eidsheim, N. S. (2015). *Sensing sound: singing and listening as vibrational practice.* Duke University Press.

Eriksen, R. T. (2001). *The building in the text: Alberti to Shakespeare and Milton.* Pennsylvania State University Press.

Eriksen, R. T., & Young, P. (2014). *Approaches to the text: from pre-gospel to Post-Baroque* (Vol. 9). Fabrizio Serra.

Forsgren, F. (2022). Re-enacting Beat art: An aesthetic and pedagogical approach to. *Views on Early Music as Representation,* 177. https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.157

Friman, A. M. (2008). *Modern Performance of sacred Medieval Music with Particular Reference to Women's Voices.* [PhD in performance Doctoral thesis, University of York]. EThOS. https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.520043

Goehr, L. (2007). *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works. An Essay in the Philosophy of Music.* Revised Edition. Oxford University Press.

Grethlein, J., Huitink, L., & Tagliabue, A. (2020). *Experience, Narrative, and Criticism in Ancient Greece: Under the Spell of Stories* (J. Grethlein, L. Huitink, & A. Tagliabue, Eds.). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198848295.001.0001

Harris, E. T. (2018). *Henry Purcell's Dido and Aeneas* (Second Edition ed.).
Oxford University Press.

Johnson, M. (2015). Embodied Understanding, in *Frontiers in Psychology,* 6
(Article 875), pp. 1-7. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00875

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: the embodied mind
and its challenge to Western thought.* Basic Books.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980, 2003 ed.). *Metaphors We Live By.* The
University of Chicago Press .

Lévesque, S. (2008). *Thinking historically : educating students for the twenty-
first century.* University of Toronto Press.

Liakos, A. & Bilalis, M. (2017). The Jurassic Park of Historical Culture. In M.
Carretero, S. Berger & M. Grever (Eds.). P*algrave Handbook of Research
in Historical Culture and Education* (pp. 207–224). Macmillan.
https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52908-4_11

Locatelli, A. (2015). Re-Configuring Classical Myth in Early-Modern England. In
E. W. Nivre, *Allusions and Reflections. Greek and Roman Mythology in
Renaissance Europe.* UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Nesmann-Aas, I. M. (2022a). Contextual In-depth Knowledge as a Liberating Force in *Artistic Communication of Early Modern Material Views on Early Music as Representation*, 97. https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.157

Nesmann-Aas, I. M. (2022b). «De tonende sekunder». *Studia Musicologica Norvegica*, 48(1), 3-17. https://doi.org/10.18261/smn.48.1.2

Pepperell, R. (2005) Posthumans and Extended Experience. *Journal of Evolution and Technology*.Vol.14 http://jetpress.org/volume14/pepperell.html

Rolfhamre, R. (2022). Performative Musicology and HIP as Rhetoric and Pedagogy for the Past, Present and Future. *Views on Early Music as Representation*, 21. https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.157

Rolfhamre, R., & Angelo, E. (2022). Views on Early Music as Representation: Invitations, Congruity, Performance. In: Cappelen Damm Akademisk/NOASP (Nordic Open Access Scholarly Publishing). https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.157

Ruud, E. (2020). *Toward a Sociology of Music Therapy: Musicing as Cultural Immogen.* Barcelona Publishers.

Scott, J-A. (2018). *Embodied Performance as Applied Research, Art and Pedagogy*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-63661- 0

Schmalfeldt, J. (2001). In Search of Dido. *The Journal of Musicology.* Vol. 18, No.

  4. Pp584-616. University of California Press.

  https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jm.2001.18.4.584

Spatz, B. (2017). Embodied Research: A Methodology. *Liminalities: A Journal of*

  Performance Studies, 13(2). http://liminalities.net/13-2/embodied.pdf

About the Author

Inga Marie Nesmann-Aas, MA, MMus, is a PhD research fellow at the University of
Agder, Faculty of Fine Arts, department of Classical Music and Music Education, as a
candidate with the PhD programme Arts in Context. Her research interests include
historical musicology and literary analysis, investigating new approaches to textual and
musical analysis «post-historically informed performance practice» (post-HIP), inter-
pretation, «embodied musical performance» and how text and music can be realized
in artistic meaningful performances and as a pedagogical practice. Both academic and
performance centred perspectives are integrated in her research.

EJPAE

Abstraction through the Kaleidoscope

Playful Concept Creation with Irma Salo Jæger

Heidi Marjaana Kukkonen, University of Agder

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore the philosophical concept of abstraction and its educational potential based on a day spent with the Finnish-Norwegian artist Irma Salo Jæger at her studio. The creation of the concept is informed by Deleuze and Guattari's (1994/2009) philosophy of the concept and new materialist theory-practice (Coole and Frost 2010; Hickey-Moody and Page 2015; Kontturi 2018; Page 2018). Throughout the day, the concept of abstraction grows through stories related to Salo Jæger's art and artistry and references to art and art history, and the abstract paintings and other artistic materials at her studio guide the creation of the concept. I further analyse the situations and conversations in light of abstraction's educational potential and the aforementioned theories. I argue that abstraction contains both representational and more-than-representational qualities, which are remoulded and combined anew in the making of and encounters with abstract art. Representation functions as a threshold rather than an impasse. The breaking of representational logic brought about by agential materials and the multiplicity of understandings has educational potential, rejecting tunnel vision and binary thinking. The entanglements between humans and painting matter are pedagogical, eliciting new perspectives and embodied understandings. Playing (Harker 2005) enables the educational potential to unfold. It makes experimenting with and building a complex, kaleidoscopic understanding of the concept of abstraction possible. The article contributes to the discourse about Salo Jæger's art and artistry and the concept of abstraction. The creation of the concept challenges conventional philosophical understandings of abstraction, where the concept is regarded as a universal dimension of ideal forms and ideas.

Keywords: Abstraction, abstract art, Irma Salo Jæger, new materialisms, representation, concept, playing

Abstraction through the Kaleidoscope

Playful Concept Creation with Irma Salo Jæger

Heidi Marjaana Kukkonen, University of Agder [1]

Introduction

> Throughout the conversation today, the concept of abstraction has been gleaming in my mind. This concept has rich content. But is it passive or active? Does abstraction have agency? Can it act? Or does it stay abstract?
>
> (Irma Salo Jæger)

I meet the Finnish-Norwegian artist Irma Salo Jæger on a July afternoon in 2020 at Atelier Lilleborg, the renovated linseed oil factory in the Sagene neighbourhood of Oslo. She has painted under the grand roof windows for over 14 years. I am in the process of curating a pedagogically motivated exhibition about abstract art for the Children's Art Museum, a section dedicated to children inside Sørlandets Art Museum in Kristiansand, Norway. The exhibition will include two paintings from Salo Jæger.[2] As part of the process, I am investigating the philosophical concept of

---

1 Heidi Marjaana Kukkonen, PhD, University of Agder, Department of Visual Arts and Drama, E-mail: heidi.kukkonen91@gmail.com

2 Abstraction! at Sørlandets Art Museum, September 4, 2020–January 24, 2021. The exhibition was funded by AKO Foundation. The exhibition at Sørlandets Art Museum's website: https://www.skmu.no/utstillinger/abstraksjon/

abstraction and its educational potential (see also Kukkonen 2022a), and I wish to hear how an artist who has worked with abstract art over the past six decades understands the concept. Throughout the day, I explore the concept with Salo Jæger at her studio, which provokes memories and stories related to her art and artistry.[3]

Salo Jæger was born in Soini, in the Southern Ostrobothnia region in Finland, in 1928. She studied art history and aesthetics at the University of Helsinki and spent semesters abroad in Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. Salo Jæger took up residence in Norway with her late husband, Tycho Jæger, in 1954. The painter held her first solo exhibition with abstract and figurative paintings at the Artist's Association in Oslo in 1962. Salo Jæger was recognised by Norwegian institutions from the beginning, but she has continued to be less represented in Norwegian art history when compared with Jakob Weidemann, Gunnar S. Gundersen, and Inger Sitter, all of whom contributed to establishing abstract painting in Norway (Hansen and Ugelstad 2016; Sjåstad 2016).[4] When abstract art was finally accepted in the Norwegian art world in the 1960s, most painters went either for the expressionist and intuitive approach, like Weidemann, or for the more analytical and rational, like Gundersen. Salo Jæger, however, combined the intuitive and analytical, the abstract and the concrete, in her art (Sjåstad 2016).

The word *abstract* has traditionally been used to describe a painting that is abstracted, taking its starting point in something representational (Varnedoe 2006; Ar-

---

3   The 'core texts' about Salo Jæger and her art: Dæhlin (2002); Rajka (2006); Rød (1998); Røed (2014); Sjåstad (2016); Valjakka (2016); Ugelstad (2016).

4   Hansen and Ugelstad (2016) note that Salo Jæger is not mentioned in Brun's article (1983) 'Maleriet 1940–1980' [Painting 1940–1980] in Norges Kunsthistorie or Brun's article (1989) 'Etterkrigstid' [The Post-War Period] in *Norges Malerkunst. Vårt eget århundre* [*Norwegian Painting. Our Century*]. In the literature (Sjåstad 2016; Valjakka 2016), Salo Jæger's art is discussed more in relation to internationally recognised modernist artists such as Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Josef Albers, and Serge Poliakoff.

vidsson 2018). The painting is inspired by something the artist has seen: movement is reduced to a line or a forest to geometrical patterns.[5] Nonfigurative and concrete, among other terms, are used to describe art that does not refer to anything but itself, that is, to its concrete and material reality, rejecting representation altogether (Arvidsson 2018). These definitions become difficult to follow when the focus moves from the artist's intentions to the experiential realm of the artwork. As I have observed in museum educational situations (Kukkonen 2024), a concrete painting can provoke associations in the spectator as much as an abstract work. In recent literature (Arvidsson 2018; Dickermann 2013; Fer 2000; Karmel 2020; Lind 2013; Linsley 2017; Varnedoe 2006), the concept is not regarded only as a word for abstract art but rather as a wider phenomenon in artistic, social, political, and economic contexts. The authors mentioned above study abstraction from different perspectives, offering historical accounts of how the concept has been understood by different authors, artists, and movements. Instead of looking for universalist or absolutist explanations of abstraction, artists and theorists today focus on abstraction emerging in immediate situations rather than in ideal dimensions (Arvidsson 2018). The experiential and situational realm is also acknowledged in my explorations of abstraction with Salo Jæger.

In the present paper, abstraction is regarded as a philosophical concept according to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's (1994/2009) philosophy: concepts are not static discoveries found in reality, but are always created. During the day spent with Salo Jæger at her studio, we are creating the concept of abstraction by experimenting with different understandings. The creation of the concept is nonlinear and kaleidoscopic, provoking new questions, perspectives, and observations throughout the day. My approach is informed by new materialist theory-practice (Coole and Frost 2010; Hickey-

---

5   '"Abstraction" after all, comes from the Latin abstractus, a word meaning to pull or draw away from. It tends to suggest that abstraction is somehow a derivative or second-order kind of art, drawing away from something the artist has actually seen' (Varnedoe 2006, p. 47).

Moody and Page 2015; Kontturi 2018; Page 2018), which acknowledges the agency of nonhuman matter. In addition to Salo Jæger and me, other agents such as paintings and artistic materials interrupt and guide the concept creation. Throughout the text, I consider the educational potential that concept creation with abstraction might have, and I argue that playing (Harker 2005) becomes a key element for the potential to unfold.

In the first sections, I present the philosophy of the concept according to Deleuze and Guattari (1994/2009) and new materialist theory-practice (Coole and Frost 2010; Hickey-Moody and Page 2015; Kontturi 2018; Page 2018) that inform this study. The first part of the discussion focuses on the emergence of abstraction, both in Salo Jæger's artistry and in a wider context of art history. In the following sections, I contemplate qualities in the concept that might both break and create representational logic. In addition, concept creation leads to reflections as to whether concepts are merely discursive or also connected to senses and action. In the last part of the discussion, I explore how playing (Harker 2005) might enable kaleidoscopic understandings when creating concepts. When I contemplate the educational potential of abstraction, I support my analysis with my previous studies (Kukkonen 2022a; 2024), which focus on the educational potential of abstraction. Throughout the text, I analyse the situations and quotes from the day spent with Salo Jæger with new materialist theory-practice and Deleuze (1968/2021) and Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2020; 1994/2009) philosophy.

Creating Concepts in a Flat One-World Ontology

A theoretical starting point for this study comes from Deleuze and Guattari's ontology, which can be described as a 'flat one-world ontology' (Østern et al. 2021, 8). It escapes from fixed positions; contrary to being, the world happens in a constant becoming. The state of the world is like a 'rhizome' (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/2020,

11), whose roots are constantly creating new connections and breakages in all directions. Given that there is no linearity in the rhizome, the world is always in a process: 'A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, inter-being, intermezzo' (26). The world is immanent; there is no dualist outside dimension of *a priori* pure forms that transcend into the material and embodied world (hence, a *one-world ontology*). Everything in the world is connected and relational without a hierarchy between the abstract and concrete (hence, a *flat* one-world ontology). The logic in the flat one-world ontology functions instead as an endlessly generating multiplicity of 'and ... and ... and' (p. 26) rather than a dualist either/or.

Concepts are always created in the flat one-world ontology, given that there is no dualist abstract dimension in which they can exist separate from the concrete world. In *What Is Philosophy?* (1994/2009), Deleuze and Guattari write, 'Concepts are not waiting for us ready-made, like heavenly bodies. There is no heaven for concepts. They must be invented, fabricated or rather created and would be nothing without their creator's signature' (5). In this study, the concept of abstraction is used as a proposition that works like a springboard to test and generate different understandings. At the start of my meeting with Salo Jæger, I bring up the concept of abstraction. We wonder about the concept throughout the day, which takes us towards different ideas, stories, associations, and materials in her studio (and the other way around: the materials lead us to new ideas about the concept).

New Materialisms: A Theory and Methodology

New materialist theory-practice (Kontturi 2018; Page 2018), which underpins this study, recognises human and nonhuman matter (and, therefore, artworks as well) as agentive, constantly forming, changing, and becoming (Coole and Frost 2010; Page 2018). Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2020) process philosophy has had an important influence on new materialisms (Kontturi 2018). Given that the world is in constant

movement, new materialisms focus on the processual and material emergence of art-works. The approach acknowledges agential matter, moving away from the hegemony of language and human-centredness. The research approach asks not only how humans make and understand art but also how art makes us (Hackett et al. 2018). Throughout the day spent with Salo Jæger at her studio, the agential material, such as abstract paintings around us, interrupt and guide the creation of the concept.

New materialisms encourage experimentation, given that they might offer '[...] something new instead of what is already known' (Kontturi 2018, 10). Instead of following a predetermined plan, the approach acknowledges cuts and disruptions in the process, escaping from fixed viewpoints (Kontturi 2018). In this study, following Deleuze (1968/2021) and Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2020; 1994/2009) philosophy and the new materialist theory-practice has led to abductive research logic (Alvesson and Kärreman 2005), in which theory and practice are in a continuous interplay with each other, and the process constantly generates new research questions. Abductive research logic makes it possible to create knowledge where both patterns and interruptions, as well as order and disorder, are acknowledged (Alvesson and Kärreman 2005). Prior to my meeting with Salo Jæger, I made some plans and prepared questions, but early on, I decided to let go of the controlled plan, to follow the various strands of ideas on the way and let the situations unfold by themselves.

I spoke mostly Finnish with Salo Jæger during the day, but sometimes, we switched to Norwegian and English when we were looking for the 'right' words. I recorded the conversations with a Dictaphone. When we were sitting at the restaurant, I took notes by hand on paper to avoid recording nonconsenting persons' voices. In addition, I took photos of the artist, her studio, and the artworks. We have since continued our conversations with phone calls and emails. The artist received and signed a letter of consent, and the project plan was approved by the Norwegian Council of Research Data before implementation.

Abstraction Emerging beyond Representational Logic

> Come in the afternoon, when the light is the most optimistic.
> (Email from Irma Salo Jæger)

Irma Salo Jæger's studio is filled with the optimistic light of a July afternoon, which she mentions in her email prior to our meeting. We are sitting at a large table covered with piles of books, notes, and papers. Her paintings are hanging and leaning on the white partitions installed here and there around us. I tell her about my studies in the concept of abstraction, and I ask her: Why did she start to paint abstract art? She is quiet for a long time, taking her time to think about the question.[6] Then, she fills the silence by asking where our artistic ideas come from in the first place:

> That is a very difficult question. Are we just copying each other? [...] All the traditional exercises with drawing and painting, such as figure drawing from live models, are still important today. These exercises create a foundation for all artistic forms of expression. We learn to look at pictures and compose them; we learn to know what is significant. Then, these pictures compose *us*, and in the experience, we might judge the pictures. Are they good, are they bad, or what?

Salo Jæger's answer points towards many different agents in the emergence of abstraction. First, her traditional and classical artistic education has influenced her artistic decisions. Second, by combining anew the patterns and traditions, the artist creates something new. The third agent in the process is the material abstraction itself, 'composing us', as Salo Jæger says. Abstraction is not born in a bubble but emerges from

---

6   Salo Jæger tells me later that she was thinking about her experience of seeing an abstract painting by Wassily Kandinsky in the Klar Form exhibition at Kunsthalle Helsinki in 1952. She describes this as a 'soul-stirring' encounter (she uses the Norwegian word *sjælsettende*).

many different agents, such as patterns learned through education, the artist's interests, and the concrete process with the material artwork.

Although Salo Jæger refers to her own practice in her answer – as in how she turned towards abstract art in her artistry – I argue that the same logic can also be encountered in the emergence of abstraction in a wider context. In the history of abstract art, many artists, such as Wassily Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich, and Hilma av Klint, have been credited for being the first to create abstract art (Fer 2000; Arvidsson 2018; Lind 2013). These genesis stories and 'firstness', however, have been questioned by many (Arvidsson 2018; Fer 2000; Lind 2013). As Swedish art historian Arvidsson (2018) writes, 'Abstract images had been created previously in other contexts, such as folk art and handicraft, but were not then described as art' (53). The new materialist writers Tiainen, Kontturi, and Hongisto (2015) write that something 'new' '[...] points to the sustained processuality – the never fully foreseeable emergence and unfolding – of any materialisations under scrutiny' (5). Something *new* is not absolute but processual; it comes into being when traditions, ideas, and patterns move and merge in new ways.

Salo Jæger wonders further, 'Why have we turned towards abstraction? [...] Kandinsky is naturally with us in the conversation today. Abstraction is spiritual, and all about senses and synesthesia'.

Salo Jæger mentions the Russian artist and art theorist Wassily Kandinsky many times during the day. As other authors (Valjakka 2016; Sjåstad 2016) also write, Kandinsky has been an important inspiration for Salo Jæger. In his widely influential On the Spiritual of Art (1946), first published in 1911, Kandinsky writes that art is born from the 'inner necessity' (55) of the artist. The inner necessity is derived from three elements: the artist's own personality, the spirit of the age, and from 'art as such' (55). When the artist creates a work of art born from this inner necessity, the abstractions of colours and forms create a vibration in the soul of the spectator. The abstraction

starts to act by itself, or, as Kandinsky puts it, '[the work of art] possesses creative active forces. It lives, has power, and actively forms the above-mentioned spiritual atmosphere' (91).

I can hear Kandinsky's influence when Salo Jæger begins to show me the abstract paintings around us. She talks about her art in synesthetic terms, where the senses mix into each other, and the paintings are their own active beings. She has taken many unfinished paintings up from her storage to daylight as a result of another project. She tells me that some of them have been there for more than a decade, but the works do not 'speak' to her. I point at pieces of geometrically cut paper on the floor, and Salo Jæger leads me to an unfinished painting to show me how they work. She carefully attaches a piece of paper to the canvas to see if the form can work in the composition. I ask if it is her or the canvas that leads the painting process. She answers:

> Sometimes I want to paint, and the painting is calling me too. However, to finish a painting, the artwork needs to speak and come towards me. […] The artworks have their own agency and will. Materials play a significant part in the process. When I use different kinds of primers on the canvas, the painting starts to act by itself without my knowing. When the painting dries, it might look different from what I expected. I take this agency as a positive gift.

Salo Jæger's artmaking seems like a highly intuitive and sensitive process. Sometimes, the collaboration between her and the materials happens in perfect synergy, while at other times, it involves a number of surprises. As her answer above indicates, she acknowledges the agency of the materials and welcomes the surprises they create as a 'positive gift'. Salo Jæger also describes other nonhuman agents when we discuss the process of making abstract art. As we walk around her studio, she tells me that she is in a hurry to finish the paintings around us because of the disappearing light:

> It is already July, and soon, the sunlight will change. [...] We need to live at the mercy of the light that makes our life possible on the only planet that we have. The light begins to disintegrate in July. Very soon, the sunlight will lose its character, and it will lose its face, becoming expressionless and blank. The autumn months are filled with hurry and urgency, with the disappearing light. In the last three months of the year, it is not wise to make final decisions or do finishing touches on a painting. In the middle of January, daylight starts to return, especially if there is snow. The light is at its best around Pentecost.

As the quote above shows, light is an important agent in Salo Jæger's artmaking. She might call the light 'optimistic' and talk about its 'character' and 'expressions', almost as if it were another colleague at her studio. Light is something out of her control, provoking hurry and urgency, but through the knowledge she has gathered throughout her career, she knows how to work *with* it.

In these moments described in Salo Jæger's quotes, the painting matter and light might become a teacher for the artist. The new materialist authors Anna Hickey-Moody and Tara Page (2015) write about matter that '[...] can often teach us through showing us otherwise. [...] Matter resists manipulation, it inspires and demands attention, and through engagement with matter, new modes of practice transpire' (16, original italics). Something new, as also discussed earlier, can come into being when the agential matter acts differently in relation to the artist's expectations. This process might break representational patterns and logic, as in challenging what is already known.

The pattern-breaking qualities of abstraction can be seen not only in the making of abstract art but also in experiences with abstract art. As a museum educator and researcher of museum educational situations with abstract art (Kukkonen 2022a; 2022b; 2024), I have observed this representation-breaking quality in action many times when museum visitors experience abstract modernist art. When a group of 10–

12-year-old children look at an abstract painting, each student sees it differently, and the image transforms from nonfigurative to figurative (and back again) multiple times in the situation (Kukkonen 2024).[7] This paradox – that an image seems to represent nothing but, at the same time, many things – is a common question in the contemporary literature about abstract art (e.g., Fer 2000; Linsley 2017; Varnedoe 2006). The art historian and former chief curator of painting and sculpture of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Kirk Varnedoe, argues that 'Abstract art, while seeming insistently to reject and destroy representation, in fact steadily expands its possibilities' (40). One abstraction provokes countless imaginative associations and responses. This could be understood as 'a multiplicity', according to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2020, 7). According to the philosophers, everything is a multiplicity in which lines between subjects and objects become blurred, emerging from numerous sources like a kaleidoscopic collage. In the previously mentioned study with schoolchildren (Kukkonen 2024), I argue that encounters with abstract art can have educational potential given that the multiplicity of understandings might help to reject tunnel vision and binary thinking. The abstraction is seen from multiple perspectives, as if through a kaleidoscope, becoming a multiplicity of abstractions.

Concrete Abstraction: Numbers, Patterns, and the Unambiguous

Salo Jæger gets an idea about the concept of abstraction, and she begins to scroll through a thick book that lies on the table. She says, 'Here it is, the number of Fibonacci. Arabic mathematics must be taken into consideration'.

---

7   In the study (Kukkonen 2024), I observed eight groups of sixth and seventh graders (10–12-year-olds) visiting Sørlandets Art Museum. The groups participated in a guided tour at the Gunnar S. Gundersen – The Groundbreaking Modernist exhibition (4.9.2020–24.1.2021).

I get up from my chair and take a look at the book. I read from the pages that Leonardo da Pisa, called Fibonacci (1170–1250), was an Italian mathematician who learned Indian and Arabian mathematics when travelling with his merchant father in North Africa. In the Fibonacci sequence, each number is the sum of its two preceding numbers. The sequence that bears his name has been used to compose aesthetically pleasing images, and it is connected to the rule of the golden ratio.[8] Salo Jæger shows me a table chart from the French manufacturing company Sennelier, which produces art materials and pigments. For the past 60 years, Salo Jæger has used canvases that follow the table chart, with its three categories of canvases: figure, landscape, and marine. The length of the painting always has the same ratio as the width of the canvas.

It seems like Salo Jæger's mind is constantly occupied by numbers, which she frequently brings up in our conversations.[9] She wonders whether beauty can be calculated by mathematics, and she tells me how her mother, educated as a tailor, taught her to think about proportions. Then she pushes the movable partitions around and shows me a large greyish-white collage where she has sewn painted particles together.

Mathematics becomes an important component in abstraction when the concept is understood through Salo Jæger's artistry and the situations described above. She relates the concept to the Fibonacci sequence and the golden ratio, and the formats by Sennelier play an important role in the abstractions she creates. When thought through rhizomatic logic, abstraction is not only 'lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/2020, 10–11), ruptures and disconnections that escape the representational

---

8   The book that she is scrolling through is a compendium that she assembled with her research assistant when working as a professor at the Norwegian National Academy of Fine Arts from 1986 to 1992. Salo Jæger writes more about the Fibonacci sequence later in an email: 'Numerical relationships that occur this way in geometry appear as symmetrical and harmonious, aesthetical proportions'.

9   For more about Salo Jæger's interest in mathematics and its importance in her work, see Røed (2014).

order, but also 'lines of articulation or segmentary, strata and territories' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/2020, 2), which might create structure and form. Although the ontological state of the world is in constant movement in the process philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2020), we can still detect organism-like formations, even if they eventually transform into something else when interacting with other things in the world. These 'already known' things, such as mathematical patterns in abstraction, can then also be considered representational logic.

The artist suddenly remembers a moment from her teaching days at the Norwegian National Academy of Fine Arts. When a student asked her how she would define the abstract picture, she answered, 'Abstract painting is colours and forms within the law of frame. The frame is the first step, given that it defines the proportions that will appear on the picture plane'.

This definition reminds me of the concrete art movement, where the painting is stripped of all reference to everyday reality and is constructed from its essentials, colour and form. It is characterised by geometrical, clear, and closed forms and colour planes. Concrete art came to Norway after World War II from Sweden and France, and the international movement was influenced by Bauhaus, suprematism, and neo-plasticism in Europe (Gjessing 1998).

I ask Salo Jæger what she thinks about the word 'concrete'. She gets an idea and starts to push the partitions around, looking for a certain painting. She says, 'Some of my paintings are concrete, and I would describe them as ... unambiguous, while some others have a certain element of wonderment'.

We are standing in front of a large painting with a cold red background. Warm yellow and light blue vertical forms are leaning against each other, and my eyes turn towards a hook-like black shape in the middle of the painting. Salo Jæger continues, 'The concrete paintings *happen fast*. Some others you can watch for decades, and they always give you something new to think about'.

Then, she reminds us that, sometimes, the seemingly unambiguous can also become very complicated; perhaps the painting we are looking at is not concrete after all. We begin to wonder where the centre of the painting might be and how all the colours affect each other. Salo Jæger wonders further, 'There are actually all kinds of events in the painting.'

The word 'concrete' has multiple meanings. In addition to movement in abstract art (Gjessing 1998), concrete can mean physical and material things and events in the world.[10] It can also refer to something that can be easily understood and grasped, something 'unambiguous', as Salo Jæger says. Inspired by the latter, the concrete can be understood as the representational level of abstraction: patterns, structure, and order in abstract art. Salo Jæger's interest in numbers, geometry, and mathematics can then be considered concrete: coherent, measurable, and definable.[11]

British artist Gillick (2013) suggests that abstraction is fundamentally impossible because abstract art is always concretised in the making of art. I do not agree with Gillick that abstraction would be impossible, given that I do not think the concept is absolute. I make the case that abstraction contains both the concrete (emergence of representational patterns) and the abstract (moving outside or beyond representational patterns). With the concrete painting at Salo Jæger's studio, a work that first appeared as 'unambiguous' continued to move and happen, giving us more to wonder about when we stood before it. In a situation in which an abstract painting and a spectator meet, something seemingly unambiguous might open up into a multiplicity of events. Similar moments occurred in the study I previously mentioned in this paper (Kukkonen 2024). When I observed 10–12-year-old children on a guided tour with

---

10   Merriam-Webster, s.v. "Concrete," accessed June 18, 2023, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/concrete

11   Elsewhere, Salo Jæger has explained that the canvas is concrete and that colours need to find forms that collaborate with the canvas (Røed 2014). When she paints, the mathematical relations of the Sennelier format she has chosen influence the work.

abstract art, some of the students discovered new 'events' in the abstract paintings when intuitively moving their bodies in front of them.

The artist-teacher-researcher Tara Page (2018) argues in her pedagogical theory, underpinned by new materialisms, that learning can happen when we engage with matter with our bodies in a sociomaterial world. 'Bodies and things are not as separate as we were once taught, and their intra-relationship is vital to how we come to know ourselves as humans and interact with our environments' (Page 2018, 2). The entanglements – or 'intra-actions', according to Karen Barad (2007, 141) – between bodies and matter are pedagogical. As in the encounter with a 'concrete' painting at Salo Jæger's studio, or when the schoolchildren experienced abstract art in the museum space, the painting matter interrupted and guided the experience. In these moments, learning happens in intuitive and embodied ways.

Abstraction as an Incomprehensible Concept

Without noticing it ourselves, we have been standing on our feet for hours in her studio, and we need to rest our legs. We sit down in the neighbouring restaurant. The place is crowded and echoing, but Salo Jæger does not seem to mind the hustle and bustle. We are moved to another table and the waiter brings us desserts as an apology. When Salo Jæger's purse drops to the floor, she picks it up before I have time to react. She seems curious about the changing and rather crowded and noisy atmosphere of the restaurant. She tells me that they sometimes have great colloquiums with the staff at Atelier Lilleborg. When they hold courses about mural techniques, conversations during lunch breaks are important. She says:

> When you are with others, your thoughts are becoming and transforming. The purpose of us humans is to work with the whole of our bodies, and you need to think in many ways. [...] Abstraction seems to be a difficult concept. It is a concept that asks and demands. Demands are very important in life. I have al-

ways been eager to make, to create and to act. But I need to watch out. My life is like a sewing machine ticking forward. Not because time is moving so fast but because I am working so much. But it is important to have things that urge you in action; those things keep you alive.

As the Finnish art historian Timo Valjakka (2016) also points out, Salo Jæger has a curious, unhierarchical, and open attitude towards life and art. As the quote above shows, she values thinking with others and challenging her thoughts. For Deleuze (1968/2021), thinking happens through difference: 'Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter' (183, original italics). Whereas recognising means identifying two or more things as identical, repeating what is already known, encounters happen through differentiation, which breaks representational logic. I argue that the concept of abstraction during the day spent with Salo Jæger forced us to think, or as Salo Jæger puts it, '[Abstraction] is a concept that asks and demands.' The quote above also indicates that Salo Jæger regards 'thinking' as something that happens through action with other bodies and materialities in the world. Deleuze (1968/2021) writes that thoughts are not only cognitive but occur through the senses, generating understandings that cannot always be articulated or rationalised.

Salo Jæger wonders further, 'Abstract art depends on our skills to be alive. Abstraction is how everything feels and how it is to sense things, to use senses'. She tries to explain what sensing means, but gets nowhere and says, 'You cannot explain senses with words because you only feel them.'

We start to wonder in what language the concept of abstraction might be easiest to understand. In our conversation, we have mostly spoken in Finnish, but we are constantly struggling to find the right words. Sometimes, we end up at dead ends, and here and there, we change the language. Salo Jæger switches into Norwegian and

says that, perhaps, the concept is impossible to grasp or understand: 'An incomprehensible concept! [*Ubegripelig begrep!*]'

This idea reminds me of Jacques Derrida's *aporias* (1993) in his linguistic model, a concept I studied for my master's thesis (Kukkonen 2017) and in relation to abstraction (Kukkonen 2022a). Some concepts have a paradoxical structure that cannot be resolved. These concepts are undefinable and undecidable. Does the concept of abstraction exist at all if you cannot explain it with words?

Salo Jæger seems very enthusiastic about the idea of the impossible abstraction, but she does not accept it as an answer:

> Reality is not only made of words. Senses are also reality. My responsibility as a human is to paint, and paintings' task is to nurture the senses. Without senses, we do not feel well, and nothing matters or means anything.

I argue that in these thoughts, a 'concept' is not only a theoretical tool in an abstract or textual dimension, but something that emerges from and further generates 'concrete' things, senses, and action (in the sense that 'concrete' signifies material and embodied aspects in the world). In light of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy (1994/2009), concepts are also 'sensibilia' (5), similarly, as thinking is not solely cognitive. These understandings challenge human-centredness and the hegemony of language. Education researchers Karin Hultman and Hillevi Lenz Taguchi (2010) write that the understanding that reality is constructed by words '[...] reduces our world to a social world, consisting only of humans and neglecting all other nonhuman forces that are at play' (526).

Connecting the philosophical concept of abstraction to senses and action also differs from the conventional idea of abstraction as the universal and weightless dimension of ideal and perfect forms, as in Plato's (1997) dualist ontology, where the material, sensory, and concrete are only secondary representations of the perfect forms. In

the concept creation with Salo Jæger, as discussed previously, the painting matter guides and challenges our dialogue and the concept creation. The concrete and abstract are constantly becoming without a clear hierarchy between the two. This is also the case in Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2020) flat one-world ontology: the world is understood as immanent without a dualist dimension transcending the material world.

Playing with Uncertainty

In one of the quotes above, Salo Jæger calls the concept of abstraction 'difficult'. However, she does not shy away from this difficulty but openly explores the different understandings that emerge during the day. Concept creation takes us to many different ideas, encounters, stories, and references. Similar logic can be detected in encounters with abstract art: one image becomes a multiplicity of abstractions without a single definite answer. This ambiguity and pattern-breaking quality can be found in many kinds of art, if not all, in varying degrees and not only in modernist painting. As mentioned earlier, Arvidsson (2018) writes that abstract, non-figurative art has been created in many contexts and cultures. For example, a recent archaeological study (Bello et al. 2020) showcased ten fragments of engraved stone plaquettes with abstract designs from the Magdalenian site of Les Varines, Jersey, Channel Islands. These geometrical abstractions are believed to have been made in Magdalenian cultures in Western Europe approximately 15,000 years ago.

I propose that abstraction is the uncertain quality in many, if not all, kinds of art. Abstraction is born when representational logic – traditions, patterns, and what is already known – is composed in new ways. The patterns are broken and remoulded, and the breaking of patterns paradoxically becomes a pattern. Abstraction is that which diverges from the road, opens rather than closes, touches senses, and might es-

cape words and conventional logic. The constant emergence and breaking of patterns makes it slip from our fingers when we are about to catch it.

In my previous studies, I have observed how abstract art and its rejection of fixed answers can provoke frustrated and even angry responses (Kukkonen 2022a; 2024). When the image cannot be controlled by its viewer or given a rational explanation, the human subject loses control of the situation, which creates uncertainty. The painting matter also provokes sensory experiences, which cannot always be explained with conventional logic, and which might challenge the spectator's expectations. This might happen when visitors encounter abstract art in a museum space, but also with an artist who has worked with abstract art for over six decades and has immense knowledge of materials, traditions, and techniques.

As I have argued elsewhere (Kukkonen 2022a; 2024), the uncertainty in abstraction can have educational potential, both when encountered in paintings and when the concept is used as an educational approach by purposely creating situations in which representational logic is challenged. Abstract art is a safe opportunity to encounter uncertainty, which can build our tolerance towards uncertainty in everyday life (Kukkonen 2022a). Encounters with abstract art can help reject tunnel vision and binary thinking (Kukkonen 2024). As argued in this paper, abstraction can help build kaleidoscopic understandings that do not shy away from difficulty. Regarding the concept of abstraction as 'sensibilia' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994/2009, 5) can turn one's focus towards senses and the agency of nonhuman matter.

I further argue, inspired by the day spent with Salo Jæger at her studio, that a key aspect for the educational potential of abstraction to unfold is the element of play. Salo Jæger has an experimental, curious, playful, and unhierarchical attitude towards art and life, skills that can be very beneficial when one encounters uncertainty in art and life. Salo Jæger's playfulness and openness have also been noted by other authors

(Dæhlin 2002; Ugelstad 2016; Valjakka 2016).[12] To create kaleidoscopic understandings, one needs to let go of a linear knowledge-building process that seeks to find one final 'truth'. The concept creation with Salo Jæger and the analysis in this study is inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic logic, which emphasises non-linear and relational epistemology, where disruptions and breakages are welcomed. The philosophers write, 'Always follow the rhizome by rupture; lengthen, prolong, and relay the line of flight; make it vary, until you have produced the most abstract and tortuous of lines of n dimensions and broken directions' (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/2020, 10–11).

Harker (2005) writes about playing as something that happens between being and becoming, as inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2020; 1994/2009) philosophy. Harker argues that playing is not only something that children do, but also an activity that concerns all ages. According to Harker, playing contains embodiment and affects (Connolly 2002; Massumi 2002), intensities between matter and bodies that cannot always be articulated in words. Although playing can be emancipatory, it can also contain controlling patterns that create familiarity and stasis. Playing can also be serious: '[...] playing isn't always fun and games' (Harker 2005, 48). I argue that the concept creation with Salo Jæger at her studio was playful in Harker's sense of the word: the concept was in a state of becoming throughout the day, creating an open-ended exploration where we experimented with multiple definitions and ideas. The concept became entangled with artworks, notes, and other materials, and we could not always explain the understandings with words. Playing made it possible to create a kaleidoscopic understanding of the concept.

---

12 Salo Jæger has been inspired by the Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan (2013) and his ideas about the 'homo ludens', 'the playful human' (Ugelstad 2016, 33).

Conclusion

I have studied the philosophical concept of abstraction in this text, based on the day spent with Irma Salo Jæger, and by further analysing the situations in light of new materialist theory-practice (Coole and Frost 2010, Kontturi 2018, Page 2018) and Deleuze (1968/2021) and Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2020; 1994/2009) philosophy. The present paper contributes to the discourse on Salo Jæger's art and artistry (Dæhlin 2002; Rajka 2006; Rød 1998; Røed 2014; Sjåstad 2016; Ugelstad 2016; Valjakka 2016), knowledge that has been called out previously (Hansen and Ugelstad 2016; Sjåstad 2016). This concept creation also contributes to the literature on the concept of abstraction in the context of abstract art (e.g., Arvidsson 2018; Dickermann 2013; Karmel 2020; Lind 2013; Linsley 2017; Varnedoe 2006). To the best of my knowledge, the philosophical concept of abstraction has not been studied before with a new materialist theory-practice in the context of Salo Jæger's work. In addition, I have discussed abstraction's educational potential and the importance of play (Harker 2005) as part of its unfolding.

Concept creation challenged conventional understandings of abstraction, where the abstract and concrete are considered separate dimensions or where abstraction is regarded as a universal realm of ideal forms. The concept was continuously explored in relation to the concrete and material world. I have used multiple meanings in the text for the word concrete. In our concept creation, it has referred to material and physical matter in the world, a movement in nonfigurative art in art history, and to 'unambiguous' things in the world, such as artwork that 'happens fast', as Salo Jæger described it. I have further analysed concrete as representational logic in abstraction. Based on the concept creation with Salo Jæger, her classical artistic education and her interest in mathematics can be understood as representational patterns in abstraction. In the process of making abstract art, and in encounters with abstraction, the patterns are remoulded and combined anew. The breaking of representational logic hap-

pens not only by human subjects but also by agential materials. The 'teaching matter' of abstraction might provoke sensory experiences and surprising associations, which cannot always be explained by words or conventional logic.

The breaking of representational logic might create uncertainty and frustrated responses, as I have also observed in museum educational situations, where 10–12-year-olds encounter abstract art on a guided tour (Kukkonen 2024). However, these encounters might have educational potential. Abstract art is a safe opportunity to encounter uncertainty, which can build our tolerance towards uncertainty in everyday life (Kukkonen 2022a). Such encounters can help reject tunnel vision and binary thinking (Kukkonen 2024). In the present paper, based on the concept creation with Salo Jæger, I have argued that playing (Harker 2005) enables the educational potential to unfold, making it possible to create kaleidoscopic understandings of the concept. With a playful approach, a lack of fixed answers can become 'a multiplicity' (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/2020, 7) of understandings.

The artist has a playful and unhierarchical attitude towards art and life, an approach I am inspired by as a researcher, art educator and art historian. Salo Jæger's playfulness does not mean that she does not take art or life seriously. It means curiously looking at things from multiple perspectives, even if it is difficult, time-consuming, and challenging. Her optimism is not naivety or ignorance, but the patience and wisdom of seeing potential in the multiplicity of things, building a kaleidoscopic view. The playful, open, and unhierarchical attitude makes it possible to listen not only to one's own wishes, but also to the materials. Lines between the artist and artistic matter might sometimes blend into each other. As Salo Jæger said at her studio:

> When you work with traditional methods, it takes a lot of time. It won't become anything if you try to do things too fast. The working process is very complicated. All the different pieces need to be put together. [...] Then, I ask

myself if I am satisfied with the result. Me and the painting, we are the same. I need to accept that I am like that'.

References

Arvidsson, K. 2018. "The Universal Language: Post-War Abstract Art." *Skiascope* 9. Göteborgs Konstmuseum.

Alvesson, M., and D. Kärreman. 2005. "At arbeide med mysterier og sammenbrudd: Empirisk materiale som kritisk samtalepartner i teoriutvikling." [Working with mysteries and ruptures: Empirical material as a critical interlocutor in theory development.] In *Kvalitative metoder i et interaktionistisk perspektiv: interview, observationer og dokumenter* [Qualitative methods from interactionist perspective: Interview, observation, and documents], edited by M. Järvinen and N. Mik-Meyer. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzel Forlag.

Barad, K. Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning.* Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Bello, S. M., E. Blinkhorn, A. Needham, M. Bates, S. Duffy, A. Little, M. Pope, et al. 2020. "Artists on the Edge of the World: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Magdalenian Engraved Stone Plaquettes from Jersey (Channel Islands)." *PLoS ONE* 15 (8): 1–40. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0236875

Brun, H. J. 1983. "Maleriet 1940–1980" ["Painting 1940–1980"]. In *Norges Kunsthistorie, Bind 7*. Edited by K. Berg, 93–242. Oslo: Gyldendal Forlag.

Brun, H. J. 1989. "Etterkrigstid" ["The Post-War Period."]. In *Norges Malerkunst Vol. 2. Vårt eget århundre.* [Norwegian Painting. Vol 2. Our Century], edited by K. Berg, 201–346. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.

Connolly, W. E. 2002. Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Coole, D., and S. Frost. 2010. *New Materialisms. Ontology, Agency and Politics*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Deleuze, G. 2021. *Difference and Repetition.* Translated by P. Patton. London: Continuum. (Originally published 1968).

Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari. 2020. *A Thousand Plateaus—Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Translated by B. Massumi. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Deleuze, G., and F. Guattari. 2009. *What is Philosophy?* Translated by H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell. London and New York: Verso. (Originally published in 1994).

Derrida, J. 1993. *Aporias.* Translated by T. Dutoit. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Dickermann, L., ed. 2013. *Inventing Abstraction 1910–1925. How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art.

Dæhlin, E. 2002. *Irma Salo Jæger*. Oslo: Forlaget Press.

Elmies-Vestergren, A., and H. Kukkonen. 2024. "Playful Assemblage – Walking into Failures in the Digital Space." In *Walking Matters: Material and Digital A/r/tographic Explorations*, edited by N. Lee, J. Ursino, M. Mosavarzadeh, and R. Irwin. Springer.

Fer, B. 2000. *On Abstract Art*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Gjessing, S. 1998. "Figur og rom I norsk etterkrigskunst" ["Figure and Space in Norwegian Post-War Art"]. In *Fokus 1950*, 10–29. Oslo: Spartacus Forlag.

Gillick, L. 2013. "Abstract." In *Abstraction*, edited by M. Lind, 211–214. London: Whitechapel Gallery.

Hackett, A., R. Holmes, C. MacRae, and L. Procter. 2018. "Young Children's Museum Geographies: Spatial, Material and Bodily Ways of Knowing." *Children's Geographies* 16 (5): 481–488. https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2018.1497141

Hansen, T., and C. Ugelstad. 2016. "Foreword." In *Irma Salo Jæger*, edited by C. Ugelstad, 7. Oslo: Teknisk industri.

Harker, C. 2005. "Playing and Affective Times-Spaces." *Children's Geographies* 3

(1): 47–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/14733280500037182

Karmel, P. 2020. *Abstract Art: A Global History*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Kandinsky, W. 1946. *On the Spiritual in Art*. Edited and translated by H. Rebay.

New York: Gallery Press.

https://www.csus.edu/indiv/o/obriene/art206/onspiritualinartookand.pdf

Kontturi, K. 2018. *Ways of Following. Art, Materiality, Collaboration.* London:

Open Humanities Press.

Kukkonen, H. 2017. "*Uncannyt oksymoronit subliimin lähteinä. Stéphane

Thidet'n tuotannon tarkastelua.*" [Uncanny Oxymorons as the Sources

of Sublime. Viewing Stéphane Thidet's Art.] Master's thesis, University

of Turku, Department of Art History, School of History, Culture and

Art Studies.

Kukkonen, H. 2022a. "Abstraction in Action: Post-Qualitative Inquiry as an

Approach to Curating." In *Kunstens betydning. Utvidede perspektiver

på kunst for, av og med barn og unge* [Meanings of Art. Perspectives to

Art For, by and with Children and Young People], edited by L. Skregelid

and K. Knudsen, 319–432. Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk.

https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.163.ch14

Kukkonen, H. 2022b. "'Can I Go into the Artwork?' Material–Relational Situations with Abstract Art." *Journal for Research in Arts and Sports Education* 6 (3): 76–95. https://doi.org/10.23865/jased.v6.3554

Kukkonen, H. 2024. "The Virtual of Abstract Art. Museum Educational Encounters with Concrete Abstraction." In *Propositions for Museum Education: International Art Educators in Conversation*, edited by edited by A. Sinner, P. Osler, and B. White. Intellect.

Lind, M. 2013. "Introduction." In *Abstraction*, edited by M. Lind, 10–25. London: White Chapel Gallery.

Linsley, R. 2017. *Beyond Resemblance. Abstract Art in the Age of Global Conceptualism.* London: Reaktion Books.

Massumi, B. 2002. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

McLuhan, M. 2013. *Understanding Media. The Extension of Man.* Berkeley: Gingko Press.

Østern, T. P. S. Jusslin, K. Nødtvedt Knudsen, P. Maapalo, and I. Bjørkrøy. 2021. "A Performative Paradigm for Post-qualitative Inquiry." *Qualitative Research*, 23 (2): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941211027444

Page, T. 2018. "Teaching and Learning with Matter." *Arts* 7 (4): 1–12. https://doi.org/10.3390/arts7040082

Plato. 1997. *Complete Works.* Cambridge: Hackett Publishing.

Rajka, S. 2006. "*Experimental Tendencies in Norwegian Art in the 1960s.*" Master's thesis, Oslo University College.

Rød, J. 1998. *Kunstneren i atelieret.* [Artist in the Studio]. Oslo: Gyldendal Fakta.

Røed, K. 2014. *Konstruksjon: 10. mai-9. juni 2014: Irma Salo Jæger, Jarle Teigen Olsen, Peder K. Bugge* [Construction: 10 May 2014–9 June 2014: Irma Salo Jæger, Jarle Teigen Olsen, Peder K. Bugge]. Tønsberg, Norway: Cicero Grafisk AS.

Sjåstad, Ø. 2016. "Irma Salo Jæger: An Explorer in Form and Colour." In *Irma Salo Jæger*, edited by C. Ugelstad and H. O. Kunstsenter, 73–96. Oslo: Teknisk Industri.

Ugelstad, C. 2016. "Life and Work. Interview with Irma Salo Jæger." *Irma Salo Jæger*, edited by C. Ugelstad, 25–48. Oslo: Teknisk Industri.

Valjakka, T. 2016. "Wind and Water. Six Chapters on the Painting of Irma Salo Jæger." *Irma Salo Jæger*, edited by C. Ugelstad, 121–132. Oslo: Teknisk Industri.

Varnedoe, K. 2006. *Pictures of Nothing—Abstract Art Since Pollock.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

About the Author

Heidi Kukkonen is a researcher and art educator, currently working as the Head of Communications and Education at Kunsthall 3,14 in Bergen, Norway. In her PhD project (2019–2023) Kukkonen researched how museum educational situations with abstract art can be created and understood with new materialist theory-practice. Her research interests include museum and gallery education, post humanist philosophies, and practice-based research.