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“In the archival multiverse, the blubber decays but the fever increases.”

A contribution to VIOLENCE: the fourth biennial PARSE Research Conference at the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.
by Marc Johnson with the contribution of Hitomi Ohki 大木瞳.

A fragment of a documented artistic research funded by the Stockholm University of the Arts.

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"Scholarship in society is inescapably political."

Howard Zinn

Abstract

The presented work is composed by Marc Johnson — a memory worker — who is currently a PhD candidate in performative and media-based practices at the Stockholm University of the Arts. The shared perspectives are engaging issues of violence from the center of an artistic practice-based research focused on archival practices and concerned with how a documentary heritage circulates, is formed, debated, shared, and re-interpreted.

The lecture performance starts by considering the “Rights of Nature” — from recent environmental litigations in Aotearoa (New Zealand), Bolivia and Ecuador — which focus on the idea of legal standing. What does it take to enforce the legal personhood of a river or other natural entities?

Marc Johnson investigates and reflects on some ways to deal with representations of murdered bodies — human and more-than-human (cellular life forms) — without replicating historical patterns of abuse? Under what conditions shall these documents, artifacts or, images be seen? Marc Johnson collaborates with Hitomi Ohki 大木瞳 — Soprano singer — to expose how polyphony and counterpoint applied to cinema can be used practically to navigate the uncertain archive(s) of violence studies.

Marc Johnson addresses the dynamics of archival silences and archival amnesty as an important reminder of the ways in which violence — despite its presence in the everyday life of most people mainly through paper-based, and online news media (including social networks) — can also be deeply buried and invisible through institutional and corporate powers and other means; nonetheless impacting the lives of ordinary people (as opposed to powerful people, military, political and business leaders).

The proposal does not intend to resolve, but rather to expose and to put oneself in the presence of using the means of montage.

Skêspsis is the deployed strategy throughout the duration of the time-based work as defined by Jacques Derrida as a “vigilance, and attention of the gaze during an examination. [...] One is on the lookout, one reflects upon what one sees, reflects what one sees by delaying the moment of conclusion.”

2 A process of combining two or more voices so that they harmonize with each other but maintain their individuality.
3 A process of adding one or more melodies as an accompaniment to a given melody according to certain fixed rules; a composition in which melodies are thus combined.
Acknowledgments:

I would like to send my gratitude to:

1. The PARSE working group: Jyoti Mistry, Sanne Kofod-Olsen, Mick Wilson, Jessica Hemmings, Anders Hultqvist, Erling Björgvinsson, Cecilia Lagerstöm, Ole Lützw-Holm, Rose Brander, Gerrie van Noord, and the previous affiliates.

2. I also would like to thank Cecilia Roos, Vice-rector of research and professor of artistic practices at the Stockholm University of the Arts.

3. And Maria Hedman Hviffeldt, Head of the Film and Media department, at the Stockholm University of the Arts.

4. Lise-Lotte Axelsson, head of the opera department, and Ulrika Tenstam assistant professor of musical interpretation at the university of the arts.

4. Also, I would like to thank my supervisors, Ellen Roed & Mick Wilson.

5. Jenny-My Andersson for her amazing support as a live technician.


7. And last but not least my ancestors; both my true blood line, and the imaginary relationships that I have built upon the past 35 years.
LA ASAMBLEA LEGISLATIVA PLURINACIONAL,\(^7\)

DECRETA:

LEY DE DERECHOS DE LA MADRE TIERRA

**CAPITULO 1**

**OBJETO Y PRINCIPIOS**

**3. Garantía de regeneración de la Madre Tierra.** El Estado en sus diferentes niveles y la sociedad, en armonía con el interés común, deben garantizar las condiciones necesarias para que los diversos sistemas de vida de la Madre Tierra puedan absorber daños, adaptarse a las perturbaciones, y regenerarse sin alterar significativamente sus características de estructura y funcionalidad, reconociendo que los sistemas de vida tienen límites en su capacidad de regenerarse, y que la humanidad tienen límites en su capacidad de revertir sus acciones.

**3. Guarantee of the regeneration of Mother Earth.** The state, at its various levels, and society, in harmony with the common interest, must ensure the necessary conditions in order that the diverse living systems of Mother Earth may absorb damage, adapt to shocks, and regenerate without significantly altering their structural and functional characteristics, recognizing that living systems are limited in their ability to regenerate, and that humans are limited in their ability to undo their actions.

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\(^7\) Bolivia
Capítulo séptimo

Derechos de la naturaleza

Art. 71.- La naturaleza o Pachamama, donde se reproduce y realiza la vida, tiene derecho a que se respete integralmente su existencia y el mantenimiento y regeneración de sus ciclos vitales, estructura, funciones y procesos evolutivos.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Rights of nature

Article 71 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador.

Nature, or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes.

HITOMI_1

Mussorgsky 1, vocal only + video Hitomi_1
Rivers might one day argue for their course to be changed because that change is necessary for their long-term survival (say, as an adaptation to human induce climate change).

The Whanganui River in Aotearoa (New Zealand) has been recognized as a legal person by the New Zealand government, following longstanding negotiations.

According to the scholars Erin O'Donnell and Julia Talbot-Jones,

“Granting legal rights to New Zealand’s Whanganui River catchment (Te Awa Tupua) has taken eight years of careful negotiation. The new legislation, introduced at the national level, transfers ownership of the riverbed from the Crown to Te Awa Tupua, and assigns a guardian the responsibility of representing Te Awa Tupua’s interests.

The guardian will consist of two people: one appointed by the Whanganui Iwi (local Māori people), and the other by the New Zealand government. Substantial funds have been set aside to maintain the health of the Whanganui River, and to establish the legal framework that will be administered by the guardian, with support from independent advisory groups.

I HAVE A QUESTION FOR YOU: What does it take to enforce the legal personhood of a river or other natural entity?

First, there needs to be a person appointed to act on its behalf.

Second, for a right to be enforceable, both the “guardians” and users of the “resource” must recognize their joint rights, duties, and responsibilities. To possess a right implies that someone else has a duty to observe this right.

Third, if a case requires adjudication by the courts, then it takes time, money, and expertise to run a successful legal case. Enforcing legal rights for nature therefore requires not only legal standing, but also adequate funding and access to legal expertise.
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How will they decide which rights to enforce, and when? Who can hold them to account for those decisions and who has oversight? Even in the case of the Whanganui River, there remain biting questions about water rights and enforcement.

This example shows that conferring legal rights to nature is just the beginning of a longer legal process, rather than the end. Although legal rights can be created overnight, it takes time and money to set up the legal and organisational frameworks that will ensure these rights are worth more than the paper they’re printed on.”

Highlight the limitations of the law and argue for a shift in vision about how we perceive the world and its natural elements as “resources” and “commodities” far from a horizontal relation where all living organisms are egal.

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March 6, 1912.

Mr. Frank. E. Kleinschmidt,
4122 3rd Ave., N.W., Seattle, Washington.

My Dear Sir;

You will receive from the Treasurer of the Carnegie Institute a check for $1132.50, which is in payment for the following and at the following rates:

1 large Polar Bear, $200.00
2 half-grown Polar Bears ($100/p) $200
Freight from Nome to Seattle, $60
1 male Dall's Sheep, $100
2 female Dall's Sheep ($80/p) $160
110 Birdskins ($3.75/p) $412.50

$1132.50

In your letter of November, the 17th you told me that the freight from Siberia to Tacoma on the bears was $60. You will observe that I refund this to you. The freight from the coast to Pittsburg, in cold storage, on the three bears amounted to $90, which we paid at this end of the line. I submitted to Mr. Todd, our Curator of Birds, the specimens, and asked him for an opinion upon them. They add nothing new to our collections and the specimens were not first-class — that is to say, they were poorly made skins. After a careful examination he reported to me that they were worth about $3.00, but I did better than that, as you will see, and marked them down at $3.75. On inquiry I find that Dall's sheep have been acquired by several firms of taxidermists recently, never at more than $75 apiece. You will observe that I have done better in this case than would have been done by dealers. The polar bears
are not satisfactory as they would have been, had the two smaller specimens been cubs. As it is, they are full half-grown and are not nearly as interesting as it would have been to have had younger animals. They came through all right, were skinned, and there has been a good deal published about them in the newspaper and journals to whom I gave an account of their shipment. In this case I have done the very best I can. Polar bear skins can be found, as I informed Dr. Young, in Norway and Sweden at prices ranging from $35 up to $75.

When I was in Christiania last summer a year ago, I saw a stack of about a thousand from which I could have made my pick, and was tempted to do so. They were flat skins intended for rug purposes, but the biggest and finest of them was only quoted at about $75 of our money. In allowing you $400 and paying the freight the bears stand us something over $500 which does not include the cost of skinning, preserving and tanning. I think it is a very liberal price.

I do not want any more polar bears. We have two very large specimens in our Zoo here, much bigger than the one you sent us, which will naturally die one of these days and the skins of which will come to us. The bears that I do want are Kodiak bears. I want to get the biggest going.

I have endeavored, my dear Mr. Kleinschmidt to be as liberal as I can afford to be, knowing that you have taken the trip at considerable expense. I was not at all enthusiastic about it at the outset, and am not now particularly gratified by the results. It would have been much better if the birds had been put up in a different way. The skins are distorted and they were packed very carelessly, so that they were tossed about hither and thither in the boxes in which they came. They are not strictly first-class specimens.

With kind regards, begging to be remembered to Dr. Young when you see him or write to him, I am Yours very truly, Director Carnegie Museum.⁹

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HITOMI_3

Mussorgsky 2, vocal only + video Hitomi_3
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In 1913, the filmmaker Capt. F. E. Kleinschmidt travelled to Alaska to film a series of pictures depicting wild animals in their natural haunts. This was done to secure a comprehensive and illustrative series of photographs that could be used for educational and scientific purposes. The expedition was unique in that it involved the use of a special camera mounted on a sled, allowing photographers to approach wildlife at close range without disturbing them. The resulting pictures were described as a valuable addition to the study of wildlife and were highly appreciated for their educational and scientific value.

In *The Cinema*, a news and property gazette from Wednesday March the fifth 1913, Captain Frank E. Kleinschmidt got a review for his expedition commissioned by the Carnegie Museum.

"Cinematographing Wild Animals in Their Natural Haunts.
An interesting series of pictures secured 18 degrees from the North pole.

Quite a unique series of animal pictures by Capt. F. E. Kleinschmidt, photographer, big game hunter and naturalist, secured 18 degrees from the North Pole, were shown at the New Gallery Kinema before a crowded audience, which included the Premier and Mrs. Asquith, on Monday afternoon, and elicited loud applause.

A few particulars as to how these pictures were obtained may not be out of place.

The Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh under the directorship of W. H. Holland, LL. D. wishing to obtain scientific specimens of the Arctic Region, Alaska and Siberia, commissioned Capt. F.E. Kleinschmidt to outfit an expedition and secure specimens of the fauna of these regions. Especially was it desirable to collect series of the birds and a group of the big game animals of these unexplored regions. The expedition was a gigantic success, and new and hitherto unknown features are added to the result of the enterprise. One of these new departures in science was to collect data of the animal life with the cinematograph or moving picture machine.

Hunting with a rifle is comparatively child’s play to hunting with a camera or moving picture machine. One may shoot successfully at a distance of three hundred yards from cover that conceals the hunter. A photographer of wild game must operate from within fifty to one hundred feet. The motion, while operating the crank, will scare away any wild animal, and often days were spent in fruitless hunts with the cinematograph.

The Polar bear and the brown or cinnamon bear also are no gentle playmates, and after their photographs had been taken at close range the captain had to hastily transfer his activities from camera shooting to rifle practice. As a result of this, Bruin has a place of honour in the Carnegie Museum, stuffed but not with the photographer a la natural.

The expedition left Seattle on June 14th, going to Alaska via the “Inside Passage,” and was fortunate to penetrate as far into the Arctic as Wrangel Island, situated in 72 degrees north only 18 degrees from the North Pole, and very seldom ever reached by any explorer.

Twenty thousand feet of film were taken on this trip and of these, six thousand feet were made up into six reels for the study of wild animal life, adventure and amusement for the public. These will, we have no doubt, prove a very great attraction wherever shown, and should fill the New Gallery Kinema for a long time to come. They are as beautiful as they are remarkable [...]."

10 Capt. F. E. Kleinschmidt, “Cinematographing Wild Animals in Their Natural Haunts.,” *The Cinema: News and Property Gazette* 2, no. 21 (March 5, 1913): 49.
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[...] Texts, in the broadest sense of the term, including written, visual, audio-visual, and electronic, are the currency of archives. Archival texts, however, are not fully representative of society.”
[...] it is impossible for archives to reflect all aspects and elements of society.”

“The notion that archives are neutral places with no vested interests has been undermined by current philosophical and theoretical handlings of the concept of the “Archive”; it is now undeniable that archives are spaces of power. Archival power is, in part, the power to allow voices to be heard. It consists of highlighting certain narratives and of including certain types of records created by certain groups. The power of the archive is witnessed in the act of inclusion, but this is only one of its components. The power to exclude is a fundamental aspect of the archive. Inevitably, there are distortions, omissions, erasures, and silences in the archive. Not every story is told.”

HITOMI_4

Mussorgsky 1, vocal only + video Hitomi_4

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