

Marietta Radomska, *Biophilosophical Investigations: Ecologies of the Non/Living in Contemporary Art* (Dociekania biofilozoficzne: Ekologie tego, co nie/żyjące we współczesnej sztuce)

Drawing on process, queer and feminist philosophical perspectives as well as select examples of contemporary bio-, eco- and media artworks, this paper offers the framework of (queerfeminist) biophilosophy as an approach that may allow us to better understand the complexity, vibrancy and materiality of the non/living. The concept of 'the non/living' (Radomska 2016) stems from a transdisciplinary theoretical and practical engagement with bioart, bioscience, and philosophical approaches to life. The non/living reframes what is conventionally referred to as 'life' in order to problematise the materiality, processuality and ambiguity of the relationship between the living and non-living, growth and decay, and ultimately, life and death. This ambivalent entwinement comes to the fore even more so when considered against the backdrop of the planetary environmental disruption and other intersecting more-than-human crises of our times. It should be always-already understood as 'ecologies of non/living matters' that call for not only an ontological reflection, but also for an ethical one.

Joanna Hoffman-Dietrich, *In the Networks of Rhizosphere* (*W sieciach ryzosfery*)

These days we are increasingly more aware that the structure of our reality is based on various dynamic networks of data, such as neural networks and galaxies, river deltas and social, economic and cultural phenomena. Countless interactions between all levels of our network-based world take place every second.

The title of my presentation alludes to the research on communication and network strategies in plants within so-called Wood Wide Web. This research inspired the interdisciplinary project *Ryzosfera: wielka sieć małych światów* (*Rhizosphere: the Great Network of Small Worlds*) developed by Pracownia Projektów i Badań Transdyscyplinarnych at the University of the Arts in Poznań in cooperation with the Biology Department at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. This interdisciplinary cooperation is crucial to the project, as it promotes the development of comprehensive educational, artistic and research activities. The project encompasses workshops, outdoor artistic sessions (also in Białowieża Geobotanical Station, University of Warsaw), lectures, debates, exhibitions, and conferences. Works of art produced in the project, whether collective or individual, act as interpersonal and interdisciplinary communications hubs. The project has been systematically broadened and will be developed on the international level with accordance to ASSET, Art Science Society Education Technology. The presentation discusses the premises and realisation of the project, its rhizome-like structure, and selected works of art.

Nora Sørensen Vaage, *Violent Care? Relational Ethics at the Convergence of Bio and Eco Art* (*Brutalna troska? Etyka relacji na zbiegu bio- i ekosztuki*)

"Violent care" may appear at first sight as an oxymoron, two terms that mutually cancel each other out. Although "care" has many possible meanings and connotations, they are positively charged. In this paper, however, I will discuss the inevitable violence that is present when humans seek to care for as well as care about nonhuman others. Presenting an ethics, politics and aesthetics of care grounded in phenomenology, pragmatist philosophy and STS, I will consider the difficulty of escaping human exceptionalism and the species hierarchies embedded in most existing moral systems. The relational quality of care is present and often emphasized in many bio artworks, particularly those that are in the vicinity of eco art. I will discuss a selection of these artworks, focusing on how their modes of violent care might toggle human perspectives on other species.

Artur Tajber, *The Performer's Body: Distribution of Accents* (*Ciało performerera – rozłożenie akcentów*)

Having practiced the art of performance since the mid-1970's I have always opposed defining this form of art through the body (body art) and stressed its central issue of presence, that is, its psychological rather than physical aspect. I have seen more and more clearly that in this type of artistic practice the notion of "work of art" and its value are more related to the continuum of life than to the form of subsequent artistic realizations and performances. What counts is not the form and timing of the performance, but the shape of life. Obviously, I do not try to say that art and life are the same thing; what I mean is the fact that the work (or act) of art is meaningful when it shows the actual processes of life, not mere artistic fantasy. In other words, the act of performance is valid only when it functions as a kind of "window" opening on the author's way of living and thinking. The proper method of constructing the act of performance is therefore not to concentrate on and direct the artist's actions, but to shape the artist's own form of existence in its entirety. As a result we return to the concept of body as a biological foundation of psychological processes and an entity in which there occur processes exceeding our capability of introspection and individuation.

Ewa Domańska, *Microbiology of Presence* (*Mikrobiologia obecności*)

The starting point of my presentation is the reflection on the relations between the well-known work *Droga* (*Road*) by Oskar Hansen and restoration works carried out in former death camps sites, focusing on identification of bacteria and fungi, those "enemies of memory", which destroy the objects exposed there. Hansen planned to distribute strong chemicals on the site of Birkenau former death camp, which would create barren land, a "ground zero" of sorts. That would mean that in order to preserve the space of a former death camp, people might decide to destroy nature, plants, small mammals, insects –

therefore the extermination of humans entails premeditated extermination of various non-human entities and the genocide is supposed to be cured by bioslaughter and ecocide. Looking for alternative ways of death camp sites conservation, I discuss the works *Alternaria alternata* by Anna Zagrodzka and present the opinion that restoration may be viewed from the perspective which I characterise as “environmental microbiology of mass murder sites” and from the point of view which takes microbiology of various life forms into account. Such life forms demand access to oxygen and possess “the universal right to breathe”, as Achille Mbembe put it. Photographs by Anna Zagrodzka pose questions about live microorganism colonies and whatever they may tell us about the present reality of mass murder sites. Can those bacteria and fungi be used to preserve the sites – instead of being treated as agents of destruction? Zagrodzka’s project makes us rethink the idea of “microbiological purity” leading to the annihilation of life forms considered by people to be destructive, impure, unwanted, and/or hostile.

Marianna Michałowska, *New Stones. Cultural Geology in Artistic Practice (Nowe kamienie. Geologia kulturowa w praktyce artystycznej)*

In contemporary art galleries and museums we may see many works by artists who wish to make a statement about the current environmental issues. Their artistic material often comprises various finds: minerals, stones, debris, mixtures of plastic and other substances. The equivocal status of such objects encourages the debate on the “new materialism” in contemporary art. In my presentation I will focus on three projects which are both artistic and academic: the exhibition of plastiglomerates, that is, stones containing natural debris and fragments of lava held together by molten plastic, found by Kelly Jazvac and her team in Hawaii; plastic waste collected by the archaeologist Thora Petursdottir on Norwegian shores; and the project *Plasma Rock* by Inge Sluijs, presenting material created in the process of plasma gasification of landfill waste from the coastal landfill site near Tilbury in UK. Such projects challenge the status of so-called natural objects. The new “stones”, whether created or found, do not belong solely to the natural order, but are a product of social change and constitute an argument used in politics.

Justyna Ryczek, *Non-human Subjects in Artistic Activities – Material or Individual Entities – Bioethical Considerations in Art (Nie-ludzkie podmioty w działaniach artystycznych – tworzywo czy jednostki – bioetyczne rozważania w sztuce)*

My presentation will be dedicated to bioethical considerations in art, particularly to the subjects of artistic practice. The question I wish to ask is whether, and to what extent, non-human subjects are bound by the rules of bioethics. In this context I will discuss selected artistic activities involving non-human agents, such as works by Tatiana Czekalska and Łukasz Golec. Are the forms of life, presented by the artists, independent and fully legitimate individual entities or do they just constitute a material which makes the art more attractive? What questions are posed by the artists who broaden our perspective concerning non-human subjects? It is also a question about the transgressive potential of artistic practice.

Natalia Balsa, *Umwelt Inspirations: Examination of the Incorporation of Biosemiotics Theories in the Field of Art-Science (Inspiracje Umwelt: funkcjonowanie teorii z zakresu biosemantyki w dziedzinie art-science)*

The field of biosemiotics grew out of the Umwelt theory presented by Jakob von Uexküll in the book *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With A Theory of Meaning*. It is also regarded as one of foundation texts of cybernetics of life and AI studies. The theory of Umwelt - an organism dependent perception of the environment reliant on feedback and action loops closely resembles Artificial Neural Network learning algorithms, but its influence can be found in many fields including art-science practices.

The talk will examine the cross pollination of ideas between biosemiotics, technology and art and how the interdisciplinary approach can allow artists to engage in discourse about possibilities of life in non-biological beings.

Monika Rogowska-Stangret, *On the Coexistence of Life and Death with Reference to the Selected Examples of the Anthropocene Art (O współobecności życia i śmierci na wybranych przykładach sztuki antropocenu)*

These days we talk a lot about life and death. Discussions about the biotechnological world – or, more broadly, Anthropocene – show how strongly the questions of death, loss, and extinction on the one hand, and survival chances on the other hand, engage our imagination. Apocalyptic visions of catastrophes, end and fall are followed by the questions about the possibility of revival, hope, alternative ways of organising the world. In my presentation I would like to examine this coexistence of life and death and the contemporary art’s reactions to it. I think there are two trends: the first focuses on the coexistence of life and death and the resurrection of life from the Capitalocene era filled with the waste of capitalist overproduction. In this context I will discuss the project *Instytut dla żywych rzeczy (Centre for Living Things)* by Diana Lelonek and the installation *An Ecosystem of Excess* by Pinar Yoldas. The second trend concentrates on the efforts to reorganise and redesign “our” world, to go beyond death into a new life. In the works by Oliver Ressler, belonging to the cycle *Reclaiming Abundance*, the artist presents new ways of life, even though the human element remains in the central position. The project by Natalie Jeremijenko *Environmental Health Clinic* is a celebration of utopia which leads to the revaluation of “our” world and the creation of human and non-human societies working in close co-operation. These trends in contemporary art encourage reflection on the coexistence of life and death and how it changes the way we think about them.