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Andrea Petitt and Véronique Servais



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Artful Multispecies Ethnography

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We wish to extend our sincere gratitude to the MEAM community and to our co-founders of the network for their support, inspiration and continued creative discussions. Our thanks go out to the two anonymous reviewers of this paper for their critical reading and encouraging comments. We also want to thank Ulrika Dahl and Ann Gollifer who read and discussed an earlier draft version of this paper with us. Lastly, we want to acknowledge the support of the Swedish Research Council through an international post-doc grant that allowed Andrea to spend time at Université de Liège as a visiting researcher, and the funding from ARC (Actions de Recherche Concertée, University of Liège) for our newly started project that will keep giving us an academic space to further develop these thoughts and to which these methodological developments will continue to contribute.

Introduction

- 1 A steady stream of literature in the field of what is now known as Equestrian Social Science focuses in different ways on how to understand and communicate between humans what it is that happens when humans riding horses experience what is commonly called ‘feel’ (see for example Davis 2011, Ford 2021, Kennedy 1992, Scopa et al. 2019, Servais 2022, Brandt 2004). The ‘feel’ can generally be said to be the human’s experience of being one with the horse, when tactile communication is instant and effortless, and when an embodied feeling of merging is accompanied by an emotional and mental state of near euphoria. Although it is something sought for among riders of different disciplines and backgrounds, as it is also thought to be beneficial for the horse, the difficulties in describing, and not the least teaching, ‘feel’ become apparent when ordinary language fails to convey the experience to those who have not lived it themselves (Zetterqvist Blockhuis 2019). Riders and teachers alike, also in our own research, resort to analogies and portraying images with words in order to get their message across, while researchers grapple with accurately reporting these interactions.

- 2 This is but one example of when ‘ordinary sentences’ and perhaps even more so ‘ordinary academic language practices’ potentially limit what we might understand of multispecies relations through ethnographic research. In this reflexive article, the two authors – Andrea Pettit who focuses on human-horse-cattle relations in Colorado (USA), Canada, Sweden, and Botswana, and Véronique Servais who has studied, amongst other things, human-horse encounters in Belgium – share our thoughts on how methods other than ‘ordinary language’ have been useful, productive and sometimes right out necessary in our different ethnographic research of multispecies relations. Here, we discuss being inspired by, and drawing on, methods from artistic fields of inquiry in addition to the more commonplace academic use of words and sentences.
- 3 While text-based and verbal approaches have been the norm in much ethnographic research (Goopy and Kassan 2019), drawing and photography have in different ways been part of taking ethnographic field notes since the early days of ethnographic methodology (see for example Bateson and Mead 1942, Leroi-Gourhan in Soulier 2019, or Griaule in Jolly 2011) and there are plenty of examples of more recent work that both uses and explains the methods of drawing (see Causey 2017, Taussig 2011). Ethnographic filmmaking has a long history as a research practice and has recently gained momentum in multispecies ethnography (Fijn and Kavesh 2021). Ethnographic poetry has been established as a field (Maynard and Cahnmann-Taylor 2010), and recent work includes problematisation of researching multispecies relations (Haris 2022). An increased attention to, and interest in, a variety of methods inspired by the visual, lyrical, and performative arts over the past decade has created a recent surge of initiatives linking the arts with the social sciences and humanities - not least of all ethnographic research. Importantly, the different possibilities of art-inspired methods within the realms of more-than-human and multispecies ethnography are continuously being explored as ways of being sensitive and receptive to non-human and human-animal encounters (Hamilton and Taylor 2011).
- 4 Interestingly, this ‘artistic turn’, as we may call it, of ethnography (and perhaps particularly multispecies ethnography) coincides with an ‘ethnographic turn’ in the arts (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2015) as well as with an increased artistic attention to the environment, non-human and multispecies relations (see for example the works of Olafur Eliasson and Cecilia Vasquez Yui). This has opened up a myriad of interdisciplinary collaborations and researchers are themselves using artistic expressions as research methods. Nowadays, an increasing number of academic journals with a focus on ethnography call for alternative pieces such as creative non-fiction, ethnographic poetry, photo essays, and film. The collective term for ethnographic methods inspired by artistic practices differs as they carry different connotations in different fields and communities. Words such as creative, artistic, or arts-based methods denote a range of research practices where sometimes the research participants are asked to engage with for example photography or drawing, and sometimes the researcher themselves draws, paints or dances, or collaborates with artists.
- 5 Some ethnographers with training in both anthropology and art, work at an intersection that blurs the line between art and ethnography (Nakashima Degarrod 2020). In our case, while neither of us has formal training in art, we both engage in methods inspired by the arts as well as collaborate with established artists. The term

we try out for our methodological practices is ‘artful’. Connected to the term ‘artful thinking’, using art as a force with which to develop thinking dispositions (Project Zero 2004), here we use the phrase ‘artful multispecies ethnography’ in an attempt to capture and acknowledge an inspiration from and engagement with artistic methods without necessarily aiming for *outcomes* to become Art in its own right.

- 6 While we do not assume an absolute distinction between ‘art’ and ‘science’, neither do we assume a complete overlap. Scientific methods can be artistic methods, and artistic methods can be scientific methods – while they can also at times be one without being the other. We hold it as possible that not all methods inspired by artistic methods produce Art, if we take Art to also require an artistic skillset and relation to an artistic tradition. Science and art often have different vocations and objectives, all the while overlapping in being modes of investigation and knowing. While artistic methods comprise artistic methods and art created through a scientifically rigorous practice, the notion of ‘artful’ methods, we propose, can be inclusive enough to also include practices of drawing, painting, writing, and so on, that might not be considered outright Art in its own right by the practitioner themselves or the artistic community.
- 7 With ‘artful multispecies ethnographies’, we strive to capture the creative, critical, and more-than-verbal force of artistic methods. In this article, we do not attempt a complete review or mapping of the use of ‘artful’ methods in multispecies ethnography. Rather, we will in the following pages reflect on how we ourselves have engaged with various ‘artful’ methods in our own multispecies ethnography throughout the iterative phases of data collection, analysis, and dissemination of research results. We end by telling the story of how we found ourselves amidst a whole group of multispecies ethnographers, engaging in artful methods by initiating the MEAM network for Multispecies Ethnography and Artistic Methods.

Collecting and Producing Data with Artful Methods in Our Multispecies Ethnographies

- 8 Ethnographers’ notebooks have been dappled with jottings, shorthand, and scattered thoughts since they were first carried into the field, but have recently received more focused attention as methods to be taken seriously (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011 [1995]). While detailed descriptions of what the ethnographer experiences are key to the methodology, exact and exhaustive formulations are not always possible to capture in the moment. Sometimes there is not enough time to write more than a few scribbles and sometimes the exact nature of what is happening, beyond sight and hearing, is at first elusive. Quick drawings and sketches can come in handy in such instances, as Michael Taussig shows in his book, *I swear I saw this* (2011). Even when having more time on one’s hand, drawing can be a good tool to better observe, to better see, in the field. Andrew Causey’s book *Drawn to see* (2017) discusses different ways of doing so, and both these books can be an inspiration for those who do not usually draw to take the first steps with wordless field notes.
- 9 Andrea’s first inspiration to draw field notes in multispecies ethnography was through John Hartigan’s chapter on ‘how to interview a plant’ in his book *Care of the Species* (2017), where he sets out to draw different plants in order to better pay attention to them. Andrea, sitting in a field observing cows in the south of Sweden, found herself

easily distracted and failing to see much going on. She started to draw the cows. It did not take long before a cow's ear moved, a tail swished and a head turned, and she had to start the drawing over again.

Sitting in the field with cows



This drawing was made during a five-hour session of sitting in the field with a herd of cows in Sweden. It helped Andrea to keep focus, to see more and to notice subtle movements.

Drawing by Andrea Petitt

- 10 Through this practice, Andrea almost instantly started to see more of what was going on in the herd. *An ear moved - why? The cows started to walk left - who had started the move? That is a difficult angle of a spine to draw - why is she lying like that? She stops chewing every now and then - how often does she regurgitate?* Details that Andrea had not noticed before started to emerge from the sociality of the cow herd as a result of her drawing. She was suddenly drawing to see, as it were, rather than looking to draw.
- 11 In a different herd, on a different day and on a different continent, Andrea went to feed a new-born calf who had trouble standing up and thus had not yet nursed. In the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, where this herd lived, calves do not survive long in the cold spring temperatures without nursing. Together with her *ranch sister* with whom she lived throughout that year of ethnographic fieldwork, she went out onto the frozen hay meadow where the cows and calves roamed together. Equipped with a lukewarm bottle of colostrum they approached the cow-calf 'pair'. The cow, named 52, started to throw her head around and then lowered her head, snorted, and bellowed, presumably threatening to protect her baby at all costs. On her ranch sister's instructions, Andrea fetched a pitchfork from the car nearby as a last resort, should 52 really decide to attack the humans interfering with her calf. What transpired was a somewhat scary and at the same time comical scene that Andrea found difficult to put into words. Ordinary sentences can be limiting and often only normative, norming, or distancing words are

available for cows doing particular head movements or approaching humans at speed. In the short break between calving tasks, Andrea thus instead drew a picture. While not necessarily informative for anyone else but Andrea, the picture works as a rich field note that instantly brings back the memory and the feeling of that human-bovine interaction and can thus be included in her analysis of ethnographic material, something we shall come back to in the next section.

- 12 Another way that Andrea uses artful methods for ethnographic data collection is through rhyming. As she explains elsewhere (Petitt 2019; 2022), rhyming has come naturally to her since an early age but has only recently become an important part of her field notes. Such *field rhymes* can be said to be part of the tradition of *ethnographic poetry*, and akin to what anthropologist and poet Leah Zani (2019) calls *field poems*. Poems have the advantage of resembling everyday speech and experiences through their ‘playfulness, rhythm, sonics and allusion’, as Zani shows in an essay printed in the online version of *Anthropology News* (Zani 2019). Zani emphasizes that the difference between a poem and what has come to be known as an *ethnographic poem* is fieldwork. Indeed, ethnographic poetry is, in Maynard and Cahnmann-Taylor’s words, ‘verse written by researchers based on “field” study’ (2010: 5). It has been gaining recognition as a scholarly practice during the past two decades, Maynard and Cahnmann-Taylor note, describing one of its potentialities as ‘poetic craft [that] allows the anthropologist to name and claim subjectivities and contradictions experienced in “the field”’ (2010: 7).
- 13 When written in the field, Zani (2019) refers to her poetry as *fieldpoems*, denoting the process of poetic creation in dialogue with the field. For Andrea, the simultaneous structure and freedom of a rhyme made it easier to depict specific events, the atmosphere during a particular day, or the field relations that developed. Once home after a full day on horseback moving cows around the mountains together with her ranch sister and ranch mom, or together with cowboying crew on the neighbouring ranch, rhymes sometimes came easier than ordinary sentences. With little possibility to write even short notes throughout the day, due to the very participant and embodied horseback ethnography Andrea engages in, it could sometimes be overwhelming to sit down at night, exhausted, to write. The rhyming format then helped her think and feel through the day to capture the most significant experiences and impressions. In combination with photo and video (that could be administered with one hand at a walk, trot, or gallop), field rhymes often captured satisfying amounts of material from a day on horseback.
- 14 Rhymes, poems, drawings, and other artful methods might come in especially handy in multispecies ethnography as a significant amount of interaction in these fields is wordless and even beyond words. Every time we, as ethnographers, write a field note – apart from direct verbal quotes from humans (and even then, we cannot capture the speed, tone, or timbre used) – we translate our experiences into words on paper. Sometimes images make up better translations and sometimes drawings, rather than photos, might capture what it is that we focus on and how we interpreted it in the moment. Moreover, engaging other modes of operandum than ordinary language sometimes helps us think and feel in different ways, as well as perceive and thus collect and produce data we might otherwise have missed or would have had difficulty capturing.
- 15 In addition, we both sometimes find ourselves in multispecies situations where we are not really sure what is going on. As mentioned above, words can be normative or

otherwise loaded in ways that might not fit the situation. Words can sometimes be too precise when describing a situation and can sometimes be not precise enough when depicting a scene.

- 16 For her part, Véronique has begun to develop research protocols in which an artful practice (dance) is the means by which data is produced in the context of research into bodily communication between humans and animals (particularly horses). The project *Rencontres dansées avec des chevaux en prairie* was conceived in collaboration with Thérèse Coriou, a dancer and manager of production and broadcasting of live performances. It aims to explore the way in which horses are encountered from the body, by proposing that a mixed group of dancers and biologists specialising in ethology go together to meet horses in the meadow. The aim is to cross the ethological knowledge of the scientists and the bodily knowledge of the dancers and to invite them to share their experiences in the writing of a common booklet. The ethologists will be guided in their bodily practice by the dancers, while the latter will be able to deepen their bodily experience thanks to the gaze, sensitivity, and expertise of the ethologists.
- 17 This project is an opportunity to freely explore the heuristic value of bodily empathy in the knowledge of animal behaviour, thus continuing the invitation of researchers such as Vinciane Despret (2013), who suggested that observers of animal behaviour ‘let themselves be affected by the animal's body’ or ‘animalise the relationship’ (Abram 2010). It is also intended to experiment with methodologies in which embodied knowledge can be made explicit, in particular through interview techniques such as elicitation or microphenomenology interviews (Vermersch 1994; Petitmengin 2017) and Focusing (Gendlin 1978). These interview techniques make room for what is not named and allow the experience to be formalised little by little in non-logical statements that gradually find meaning. In a previous study, Véronique showed the relevance of these interview methods for exploring the experience of the encounter with horses, including its bodily and sensory dimensions (Servais 2022). For example, she discovered that some encounters are accompanied by a sense of strength and energy, but also by the sensory materialisation of the feeling of being in a relationship, in the form of bubbles, threads and a sense of space as being filled with ‘something’. During these interviews, the subjective experience of the encounter with an animal is uncovered in its multiple non-intentional and non-rational dimensions.
- 18 Drawings, paintings, and field poems (including field rhymes) where much is said between the lines, as well as dance as knowledge and data production, can in those instances be precise and unclear at the same time. Convinced of the importance of capturing that which is hard to formulate in ordinary words, still unclear, inchoate, and open to interpretation, we have found artful methods useful tools with which to collect such data for future interpretation. Moreover, artful expressions of data collection often capture affective aspects of the experiences in the field that could be imperative to take into consideration in order to explain that which we are trying to understand.
- 19 If we are willing to accept the hypothesis that a whole part of interspecies communication takes place in the relationship of bodies, rhythms, and kinesis (Servais 2018, 2022; Fijn 2021; Ford 2019; Brandt 2006), in what the philosopher Erwin Strauss called ‘the sensing’ (Barbaras 2004), we have to accept that most of this communication takes place outside of intentional consciousness. It is therefore a challenge for the researcher to access and report on it. It seems to us that under these conditions, and as

many authors have already stated, artful methods are not a mere supplement, they are a necessity, both to produce data and to give a non-discursive account of what is perceived in the ethnographic moment.

Analysing Our Material Using Artful Methods

- 20 Whether doing preliminary analysis in the field or grappling with the full body of material once ethnographic fieldwork is completed, artful methods have been useful to us. Actually, it was by way of analysing material that Andrea first discovered the usefulness of rhyming in her research, before trying it as a data collection method. The structured poetic form and the constraints of the rhyme are helpful to her when distilling the core premises and line of argument of any attempted claim. It helps cutting away anything that is not necessary to advance the storyline and pushes the ethnographer to consider synonyms and different ways of expressing the same thought, thus sharpening and specifying the analysis. At the same time, unpronounced premises or gaps in logic reasoning become easier to spot, and when one stratum does not follow smoothly from the previous one, there is often something taken for granted that needs to be made explicit. Andrea thus often rhymes an argument, a paper, a conference presentation, or a lecture to check that the analysis is sound. If she cannot rhyme it, this means there is more work to do.

Energy Bubble Rhyme

The mountain pastures of Colorado arouse
Some culturally valued projects of cows
They differed from that of calf or of bull
All driven by a different pull

-

Intersectional relations of heifers and steers
Shape their desires, their projects and fears
The zoocialization of a culture and place
Shapes the interactions and troubles we face

-

The social topology of space is felt
Understood from a particular umwelt
I learnt about this from the horse's back
Feel agency through the saddle and tack

-

Together we move cow-calf pairs
Our place in the triad differs from theirs
In this multispecies triad of the American West
We put species power relations to-the-test

-

This energy between us, this bubble of space
This multispecies power and grace
Can embody care, respect and social maps
Can turn to violence quickly when bubbles collapse

-

When ordinary language fails to portray
Into rhymes and drawings and music I stray
Badgering space with a sensory profile
Can require an artful research style

-
 Energy bubbles I learnt from cow and from horse
 Can our concepts be emic from a non-human source?
 Theorizing power, staying with the trouble
 We might want to highlight this energy bubble
 -

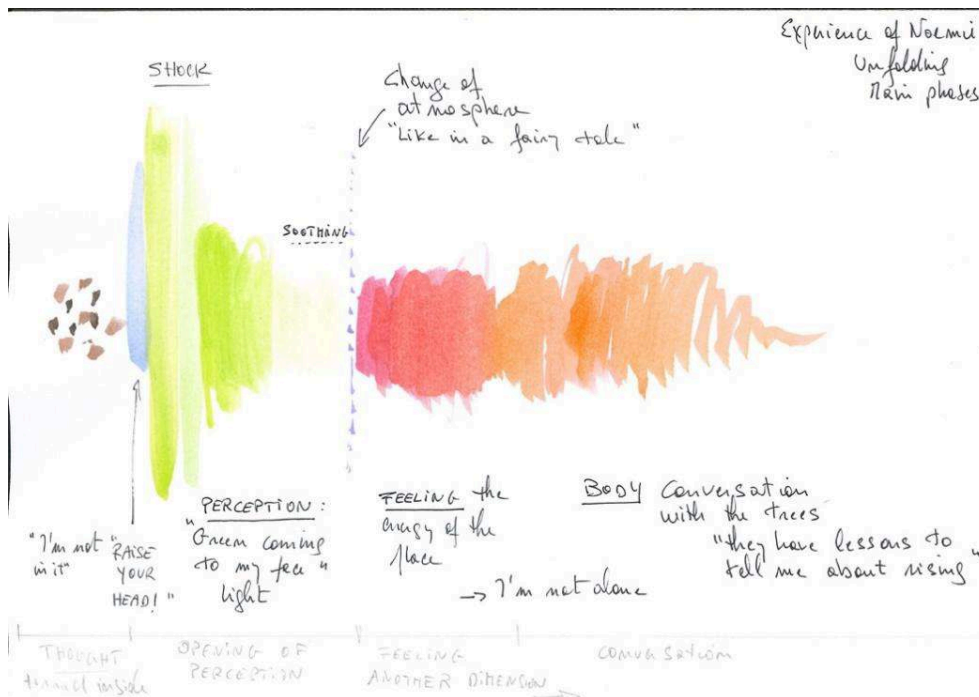
Rhyme by Andrea Petitt

- 21 This ‘rapstract’ was part of Andrea’s analytic process when writing a book manuscript for a forthcoming book in the Routledge MANE series, based on a one-year ethnographic fieldwork on a working cattle ranch in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. It was performed at the American Anthropological Associations conference 2023 as part of a presentation. The rhyme makes reference to Jacob von Uexküll’s notion of ‘umwelt’, and draws on Andrea’s previous paper on the multispecies triad and multispecies intersectionality (Petitt 2023) and the paper where Andrea and Keri Brandt-Off outline the concept of zoocialization (Petitt and Brandt-Off 2022). Using this method first for rhyming abstracts, she called them ‘rapstracts’, reading them to a beat in her head or out loud, although they in no other way claim kinship to rapping (Petitt 2019; 2023; 2024).
- 22 Other artful methods, such as drawing, painting, printmaking, photo transfer, dance, and so on, also provide opportunities to think and feel with our collected ethnographic material. Scholars do this in different ways but our own engagement with such methods largely stems from our own explorations and collaboration with artists. Andrea first discovered the power of visual art methods of analysis when working together with Ann Gollifer, a Botswana-based visual artist and printmaker. They applied for, and received a grant to together portray the findings of Andrea’s PhD thesis on women’s ownership in Botswana. After two weeks of traveling around together to the villages, ranches, and cattle post where Andrea had conducted ethnographic fieldwork, as well as to Universities and the Ministries of Agriculture and of Gendered Affairs, they spent a week in Ann’s art studio in Gaborone.
- 23 When confronted with the artistic process of conceptualizing the portrayal of the research findings, new angles of understanding and new questions emerged. Something in deciding what art material to use, what colour and size to work with, and what aspects to bring to the forth, made Andrea see her research in new ways. This was so inspiring to her that the next time she started her own research project, she invited Ann to Sweden during the planning phase to learn artistic practices from which to draw inspiration when exploring the conceptualization of the project. With a newfound understanding of drawing and photo transfer techniques (see also Causey 2017) she could bring these artful practices into the early analysis of the data collected.
- 24 Drawing from photos taken in the field, or making photo transfers, allowed Andrea to see the photos in a different light. Already the iterative process of choosing a photo that highlights what you want to portray and through that process specifying what it is that you want to portray and why, can be fruitful to the analytic process. By looking through photos featuring close-ups of facial expressions of cows, horses, and humans respectively, Andrea became aware of patterns in her own data collection throughout a year of ethnographic research on a working cattle ranch, which led her to reflections on species relations as well as species-specific research methods, that before had been implicit. Further, to stay with a photo long enough to draw it, and to draw out of the photo what she wanted to portray, allowed Andrea to engage with the visual

ethnographic material in detailed ways. It became clear what she was trying to capture and even if the finished drawing looked nothing like the photo, it could still be more adept at depicting a particular setting, event, or relation than the photo itself.

- 25 Véronique's use of artful methods during the analytical parts of her research has so far been explorative and tentative. She was convinced of the potential of such analytical tools for her own research when she was presented with watercolour drawings which were designed to freely depict the pattern of aesthetic experiences during a methodological seminar organized by cognitive scientist Magali Ollagnier-Beldame at the École Normale Supérieure in Lyon in 2019. The drawings were made by an artist who worked in close association with the researcher and who had drawn abstract colourful lines from the content of microphenomenological interviews of visitors about their (aesthetic) experiences in a museum. The drawings were not only beautiful in themselves, but they were also telling something significant about the experiences that was not explicitly said in the interviews. According to the researcher, the watercolours expressed the unfolding of the aesthetic experience. Different colours were used for different moods and the density/transparency of the colour was related to the intensity of the experience. However, it is important to note that the watercolour paintings were not a kind of coding of different modalities of the experience. For example, there was no attempt to use the same colours for the same kind of mood in all the interviews. Each interview was an experience in itself and each one had its own artistic expression in the painting.
- 26 Later, Magali and Véronique began to work together in the *ExCoNat* project, a study that is aimed at describing the experience of encountering nature (Servais and Ollagnier-Beldame, forthcoming). They worked with an acting teacher, Pietro Varasso, eight of his students, and four anthropology PhD students. For the research project, Pietro led a three-hour silent 'walk' in the woods with the instruction of 'taking care not to disturb anything'. Then Magali and Véronique conducted microphenomenological interviews with each participant. They were asked to retrieve a moment of the walk that was significant to them, according to the instruction of 'taking care not to disturb anything' and were invited to describe it. Twelve interviews were recorded and are currently still in the process of being analysed. At one point during the data analysis, Magali and Véronique found it useful to resort to some nonverbal description of the experiences. Inspired by the paintings they had seen in the 2019 seminar, they started to make watercolour paintings. Each experience was likely to have its own painting. The paintings expressed something of the *dynamic* of the experience that was not explicitly stated in the interviews and yet was significant: its rhythm, unfolding, and variations in density.

Watercolour of Noemie's experience



A drawing of the unfolding of Noemie's experience of encountering trees during the workshop. The drawing was made by Véronique to help in the identification of the main moments of the experience and the transitions between them. The drawing can also be used as a resource for writing the story of the experience.

Drawing by Véronique Servais

- 27 Again, it is important to note that the paintings are not a *representation* of the participant's experience of the encounter with the woods. The paintings are an expression of Magali or Veronique's own *embodied understanding* of the unfolding of the experiences of encountering nature, as described by the participants in the interviews. The paintings helped them to see one of the recurrent patterning of the experiences, namely an alternating activity/passivity in the attention mode, and to see how this alternation was followed by the opening of a moment of imagination, where a new space/time dimension seems to take place. The paintings were also expressing several co-occurring dimensions of the experience in a way that would be impossible with words. Finally, the paintings showed the continuous variations in the intensity of the experience, making its materiality easier to perceive. Compared to purely textual analysis and descriptions, the watercolour helped to keep in mind that the experiences under analysis were dynamic and alive, and to consider them as whole and avoid having them destroyed by analysis.
- 28 For both of us, artful methods of analysis have enabled us to see things and make connections that we would otherwise have missed. Further, using paintings, drawings, rhymes and poems, photo transfers, printmaking or any other kind of artful method as a process of analysis can be enabling also for neuro-divergent thinkers who struggle to stay within the narrow lanes of conventional academic analytical practices. Finally, artful expressions of data collection can be analysed alongside more traditional ethnographic field notes in for example more conventional thematic analysis. When analysing one's own drawings, paintings, rhymes, and other artful expressions of data collected, they are considered primary data just as one's own field notes or photos,

which is different from methods where interlocutors are asked to make drawings or paintings that are later analysed by the researcher. In varied and divergent forms, artful practices have been crucial to both of us for our analytic advancements in our respective multispecies ethnographies.

Disseminating Research Results by Means of Artful Methods

- 29 A third, and nowadays quite common, arena to make use of artful methods is when disseminating research results. Drawings, paintings, poems, films, photos, installations and performances of different kinds can give a sense of an ethnographic field, a process, relation or event, and so on, that can be difficult to portray through ordinary academic language. Moreover, such methods might more readily convey interactions that are beyond words, making them particularly interesting for multispecies ethnographers who work with interlocutors who do not speak or write human language. As with data collection methods, artful methods of dissemination can be more precise in some ways, yet more open-ended in others, leaving different kinds of questions in the air, than ordinary academic texts do, for the audience to engage with. Artful expressions of research results might also evoke affective and emotional aspects of the findings that cannot be put into words, as in Susan Haris's poetic reflection on the power relations involved in multispecies ethnography (Haris 2022).
- 30 Another benefit of artful methods is that they make research results accessible to an audience well beyond academia and to those who would never read a journal article or an ethnographic book. Importantly, artful expressions can be chosen with the research interlocutors themselves in mind, as did Andrew Gilbert, Larisa Kurtović and Boris Stapić (2021) when they worked together with a graphic artist in their fieldwork depicting labour politics in a detergent factory in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As graphic novels were commonly appreciated on their field site and an integral part of local popular culture, the research output was designed to be accessible to their interlocutors at the factory. In a similar way, although more by immersion than by design, Andrea's field rhymes and 'rapstracts' crafted during her ethnography amongst the multispecies triad of humans, horses, and cattle in the American West took on the form of 'cowboy poetry', commonly read by working cowboys, ranchers and cowboying women at rodeos and other Western-style gatherings in Colorado and around the USA. Some of those field poems could thus also work as methods of dissemination, and ways of expressing to local interlocutors what her research was about. Rhyming has also come in handy for Andrea at seminars or conference presentations as well as in teaching, in order to draw out a particular sentiment or paint a particular picture of certain multispecies ethnographic moments or analytical claims.
- 31 Exploring artful methods of dissemination further allows researchers to break free from the norming formats of mainstream academia. As we noted before, artful methods of dissemination also have the potential to make visible what is invisible. They provide affordances for the perception of the unseen, non-rational, and untold dimensions of fieldwork: feelings, embodied senses, notions of energy and ambiance, and so on. Artful methods of dissemination help position the customary language, format, and procedure of traditional academic publishing as having an actual position rather than just making up the view from nowhere, to speak with Donna Haraway (1988). Arguably, working

with, and sharing research findings through ethnographic poetry, drawings, paintings, and other artful expressions makes it more likely that the audience keeps the researcher in mind as the (co-) producer of knowledge, and keeps the researcher present and accountable as a positioned and embodied researcher. Artful methods thus lessen the risk of performing accidental god-tricks, to keep conversing with Haraway, as they draw on practices that acknowledge the engagement of the self – mind, body, and emotions – in ways that traditional scientific methods and language might not. A poem or a drawing, for example, can thus help both the researcher and the audience to appreciate the researcher's particular perspective in ways that a matter-of-fact style text description might not. However, no method is in itself a guarantee for reflexive practices and even artful methods need to be engaged with self-reflexive curiosity in order for their use to remain humble, situated, and open-minded. Finally, challenging normative forms of research dissemination has the potential to reveal blind spots in the mainstream academic system. It also furthers alternative perspectives and acknowledges divergent traditions of knowledge production and embodied positionalities, and thus joins forces with feminist methodological advances (Petitt 2022).

Finding a Flock of Multispecies Ethnographers Inspired by Artistic Methods

- 32 Today, multispecies ethnographers from different disciplines and continents engage in artful methods of data collection, analysis, and dissemination in various and divergent ways. Some put artful (and artistic) practices to use in primarily one of these overlapping and iterative phases and some find them useful throughout the full research process. We, Andrea and Véronique, first found each other through our shared practice of multispecies ethnography and organised for Andrea, then a postdoc based at the Centre for Gender Research at Uppsala University, to come as a Visiting Researcher to the Social and Cultural Anthropology Laboratory (LASC) at the University of Liège, where Véronique is a professor of anthropology of communication. Once we realised our shared interest in artful methods, we organised, together with two multispecies ethnographers from Radboud University, an online workshop. With Anke Tonnaer and Catrien Notermans, whom Andrea was already in contact with, we decided to dedicate the online workshop to Multispecies Ethnography and Artistic Methods (MEAM). It focused on how artistic - or artful - methods lend themselves in particular ways to multispecies ethnography and on the specific possibilities and challenges that ethnographic research and multispecies as well as more-than-human questions more broadly offer.
- 33 The response to this workshop, held in May 2022 and which attracted around fifty participants and thirty-five presentations in various artful and artistic formats, was overwhelming and we realised that many researchers and researcher-artists were grappling with similar questions around artful methods that were particular to multispecies ethnography. Moreover, repeated comments on how individuals felt they were the odd one at their workplace and how thrilled they were to have found a research community with overlapping interests led the four of us to start thinking about a future beyond the workshop.

34 In the early fall of 2022, we launched a MEAM network with a homepage¹ and a mailing list, in the hope of keeping the connections alive and further future collaborations. We organised a MEAM conference that took place in July 2023 with the aim to invigorate discussions on the intersections of gender, multispecies relations, and artful methods, as well as advancing the debates on academic publishing formats of artful research output. Our hope is that our MEAM initiative will inspire and support researchers and artists engaged in multispecies ethnography worldwide and that the MEAM network will link up with other initiatives with adjacent and overlapping interests. We also hope to critically examine how academia and the arts could engage in mutually beneficial and fruitful connections in the form of interdisciplinary collaborations as well as through the use of artful methods by researchers and the use of multispecies ethnography by artists. As for us, we have been inspired by finding this flock of fellow multispecies ethnographers drawing on artistic practices and engaging in artful methods and we are eager to explore where this artistic turn of ethnography might lead next. As a next step, these ponderings have allowed us to take artful methods in multispecies ethnography seriously in the development of our methodological framework and as a starting point in our newly begun joint research project. We look forward to being part of future developments in the field.

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NOTES

1. www.meam.uliege.be
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ABSTRACTS

We propose to discuss the importance of artistic methods during the three stages of scientific research: data collection, analysis, and dissemination of results. Using examples from our own practice, we show how these methods help us to see, hear and feel better in our fieldwork, how they can amplify and enrich our analyses, and how they allow us to reach a wider audience, including those who have been our informants in the field. Artistic methods sensitize us to non-human subjectivities, take seriously the bodily knowledge of non-humans, and at the same time

force us, as researchers, to remain present and to assume a situated and embodied point of view. The text also discusses the circumstances and motivations behind the creation of an international network of researchers concerned with artistic methods in multi-species ethnographies, the MEAM network.

Nous proposons de discuter de l'importance des méthodes artistiques au cours des trois temps de la recherche scientifique : lors de la récolte des données, de l'analyse et de la dissémination des résultats. En partant notamment d'exemples issus de nos pratiques personnelles, nous montrons comment ces méthodes nous aident à mieux voir, entendre et sentir sur nos terrains, comment elles peuvent amplifier et enrichir nos analyses et comment elles nous permettent d'atteindre un public élargi, et notamment d'intéresser ceux qui ont été nos interlocuteurs sur le terrain à nos travaux. Les méthodes artistiques nous sensibilisent aux subjectivités autres qu'humaines, prennent aux sérieux les savoirs corporels des non-humains tout en nous forçant, en tant que chercheuses, à rester présentes et à assumer un point de vue situé et incarné. Le texte revient également sur les circonstances et les motivations à l'origine de la création d'un réseau international de chercheurs concernés par les méthodes artistiques dans les ethnographies multi-espèces, le réseau MEAM.

Resumen=

INDEX

Mots-clés: ethnographie multi-espèces, méthodes artistiques, plus-qu'humain, subjectivités, microphénoménologie, zoocialisation, dessin, poèmes, peinture

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AUTHORS

ANDREA PETITT

Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS), Kathmandu, Nepal
andrea@sias-southasia.org

VÉRONIQUE SERVAIS

Université de Liège, Faculté des Sciences Sociales, Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale et Culturelle
v.servais@uliege.be