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### **Embodied Polygraphies and Sensory Experimentations**

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Introduction

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# Embodied Polygraphies and Sensory Experimentations

## Introduction

Véronique Beneï, Flo Boux and Juliette Salme

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- 1 Over the past fifteen years, the social sciences have witnessed an increasing integration of artistic approaches into our academic practices. Following on from the ‘postmodern critical turn’ that began more than three decades ago (Clifford and Marcus 1986), we are now in the midst of a movement focused on experimentation in our encounters with art, not just as an object of study, but as an important part of our methodologies. Such experimentation carries a reflexive dimension on these methodologies, whether the latter are developed in the field or at the time of sharing fieldwork materials. The creative effervescence underpinning the overall process testifies to a renewed concern to ‘talk about the field’ in a way that is not narrowly academic or reserved for an audience of enlightened intellectuals. It may be that, for the pioneers of anthropological cinema, the approach is nothing new. Nevertheless, for many of us, there seems to be at play a ‘revolution’ in the literal sense, that is, an ‘action of starting again’ to explore other potentially innovative modalities through encounters and exchanges with arts practitioners of all kinds – literature, film, photography, painting, choreography, etc.
- 2 Importantly, this ‘revolution’ has occurred blurring the lines heretofore existing between the social sciences and artistic practice. Some social scientists today are confirmed artists in their field (e.g. photography or film), whereas artists have been borrowing from the social and human sciences (particularly anthropology and sociology) in their investigations. As importantly, an increasing number of us have developed a proclivity for ‘trying our hand’ at a variety of artistic forms. Alongside these hands-on experiments, scholars and artists have been collaborating as never before: anthropologists and working with illustrators and cartoonists, visual artists and taking up residencies or setting up exhibition projects with sociologists, etc. This criss-crossing of boundaries has enriched the relationship between the social sciences and the arts. Thus the wealth of resulting productions testifies to the heuristic value of such

experimentation in our collective attempts to make sense of our contemporary worlds. While for some this may reopen the vast question of what art is and of its legitimacy, or whether to define oneself as researcher, artist, or both, we want to make clear that this special issue is not concerned with determining the artistic character or value of these productions. Rather, it is dedicated to carving new spaces in which to weave conversations about our shared worlds, experienced in a myriad of subjective, embodied and situated ways. The contributions we have gathered here are an invitation towards experimentation from this particular perspective, that is, one that is attentive to bodies and senses.

- 3 Reflecting on the growing developments in our disciplines, this issue, then, explores experiments combining social sciences and artistic practices through a consciously situated anchoring in the body. We interrogate its place in alternative ways of investigating and writing. How do all these creative methods engage our bodies and how do they allow us to apprehend our fields of investigation and the scholarship thereupon differently? How does the researcher's 'sensuous body' (Stoller 1997) engage with artistic practices, and how do these embodied modes of feeling and doing enhance reflexivity (Kieft 2020)? As importantly, we ask how artists and anthropologists may reach out to a multitude of audiences and actors. Clearly, the question for scholars is no longer one of focusing on the academic sphere, but of acknowledging the long-term interactions (Hoskins 1998) that are fundamental both to the creation of relationships between researchers and 'researched', and to the production of ethnographic material. These interactions give rise to co-creation processes, on the very sites of our investigations as well as beforehand and thereafter. To be sure, in acknowledging these new modalities we need to contend with the ways in which the social sciences are being increasingly monitored the world over: procedures of institutional evaluation towards recruitment, promotion and careers have tended to stifle creativity rather than foster its free circulation. As a consequence, this has heightened an already existing tendency toward self-censorship among anthropologists, again questioning the very scientificity and legitimacy of our methodologies, especially at the time of writing. The interaction, interconnection and empathy that we were able to cultivate whilst in the field are then felt as necessary to distance from, in a claim to so-called objectivity as the source of all legitimacy. Yet, arguably, it is through acknowledging the act of co-creation that we can best rupture the spurious yet enduring distinctions between 'objective' and 'subjective', and 'scholarly' and 'popular', and produce an anthropology that makes sense, both for the people it relies on for its existence, and for scholarly communities today.
- 4 In these co-creative actions and activities, mobilising the sensitive (Rancière 2004), sensory (Stoller 1997), and embodied (Benei 2008) capacities of all the social actors involved opens up new avenues for us to consciously engage with our multiple worlds, starting from our very own bodies. First, by taking the full measure of what we are – that is, body, muscles, joints, guts, livers, pulses, cells, emotions and feelings, as Michelle Rosaldo emphasised long ago (1980). Then, by placing this wholesome intelligence back at the service of the rational intelligence we have nurtured and developed in the academic field, allowing ourselves to experiment freely. In this respect, the '*Pratiques Sensibles. De l'enquête à la diffusion*' three-day workshop held at the University of Liège in 2022 was an invaluable invitation to experiment and break down the barriers between niches, genres and categories. This special issue is a direct result of this workshop and the exchanges that took place at the time and even beyond,

through the invitation of a few more researchers to take part in the discussion. Highlighting the plurality of modes of writing and combinations of modes of expression in the social sciences, these ‘polygraphies’<sup>1</sup> demonstrate the possibility of conveying crucial layers of understanding pertaining to the sensory and affective dimensions occurring in the field, and which academic prose is often too rigid to account for.

- 5 This dossier is also aimed at testifying to the wealth of creativity happening on the French-speaking academic scene of the social and human sciences, primarily anthropology. To be sure, other work in French has appeared in dedicated fora, exploring collaborative approaches between anthropologists and artists or focusing on the creative experiments of social science researchers themselves (Baracchini et al. 2022, Balteau et al. 2023, Gélard et al. 2016, Saillant et al. 2018). This is, of course, notwithstanding publications originally produced in English, such as Elliott and Culhane (2017) as regards creative methodologies in ethnography, and Theodossopoulos (2022) about contemporary graphic ethnography. Yet, here, as already indicated, we focus on the multiplicity of narratives and experiments with creative methods in ethnographic practice *as they are intimately related to their sensory and embodied character*. To do so, we acknowledge the parallel and at times overlapping developments of, on the one hand, a sensory and phenomenological anthropology that is attentive to the sensing and pulsing bodies of researchers and research participants alike, and on the other, the increasing mobilisation of artistic methods in ethnographies and the dissemination thereof, *within and beyond* visual anthropology. We propose to think about those developments jointly as they underline the fundamentally embodied and sensory character of social science research today.
- 6 Although long devoid of visibility as a specific object of research or as analytical tools, the bodily, sensory, and emotional dimensions of fieldwork have played an active part in the production of anthropological knowledge since the very beginnings of the discipline. Only much later, however, did they achieve greater prominence. The question of ‘the sensualisation of anthropological theory and practice’ (Howes 2019) emerged in the 90s, most notably with the seminal works of Stoller (1989, 1997), Howes (1991), and Claessen (1997). Although its beginnings can be traced back to Alain Corbin's history of sensibilities (1986, 1990), the issue of senses and sensibilities hit the French-speaking academic scene much later and was more piecemeal (Gélard 2016, Colon 2013). It has now become extremely topical, as testified by several recent collective volumes featuring the ethnographies of young researchers and more established scholars of sensory anthropology (Battesti and Candau 2023, Calapi et al. 2022). Yet these approaches have nevertheless remained confined to the margins of our disciplines. Here, we argue in favour of making the sensory and embodied dimension of our own research experiences more central, through exploring possible ways of grasping and reporting on them.
- 7 In this regard, the arts are particularly well suited to produce novel situations that exacerbate the relationship with the senses (Dassié, Gélard and Howes 2021), attracting a different audience, fuelling anthropological reflection on the social contemporary worlds we inhabit (Müller, Pasqualino and Schneider 2017). Though the relationships between anthropology and artistic practices have been long-standing and continually renewed (Schneider and Wright 2010), we believe that researchers’ attention to senses and embodiment provides a promising avenue for social science research, not *on* these practices but *with* them (Ingold 2017). The term ‘Embodied polygraphies’ here

subsumes all the activities of researching and sharing research through consciously deploying an arsenal of practices originating ‘from the body’ in all its dimensions, i.e. phenomenological, physiological, kinaesthetic, sensory, emotional, and affective.

## Multisensory Bodily Experiences

- 8 French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty was among the first to develop the idea of the body as the permanent condition of our perceptual experience of the world. Although his work goes back to the 1940s, its influence still lives on in contemporary anthropology. Central to Merleau-Ponty's non-dualist philosophy is the idea of the lived body, in which he posits the sensual body as the fundamental element in our relationship to the world. Thus the immediate and intimate connection between an individual and the world is effected through their flesh (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Live human beings are primarily living bodies, and it is through this shared embodied condition that we meet, communicate, learn, live and create together. The body, then, is at the centre of our daily perceptual experiences. And so are our senses. This sensory character is multiple thanks to the wealth of each of our senses, whose inseparability must be emphasised (Wathelet and Candau 2013). However, its tacit and embodied nature makes it difficult to express in written or oral form (Pink 2015). Creative methods are particularly invaluable to circumvent these difficulties and access those aspects of experience that are often elusive and challenging to capture and communicate in our ethnographic research. Thus, through the use of a variety of artistic and performative media, the contributions in this issue report on variously embodied experiences of the world: from an erotic gaze (Morgane Tocco), to an agoraphobic emotion (Roseline Lambert), an embodied pencil stroke in the practice of taxidermy (Isabelle Borsus), the learning of martial art (Martin Givors), interaction with animals (Andrea Pettitt and Véronique Servais), a keen observation of plastic recycling (Mikaëla Le Meur), and a dance experimentation (Marie Mazzella di Bosco).
- 9 We open this issue with Pettitt and Servais' text as a useful introduction to numerous methodologies ranging from drawing to rhyming and dancing, while specifically engaging with various senses (sight, touch, hearing, etc.) in their fieldwork. Based on their respective ethnographies of equids and other species, Pettitt and Servais stress the importance of the use of ‘art-ful’ or art-based practices *at various iterative stages of research*, namely: data production, analysis, and dissemination. This three-part division is shared by most of the authors here, whose articles present polygraphies in various forms (drawing, photography, video, movement, rhyme and prose) and combinations thereof, intertwining and complementing each other.
- 10 Tocco's text, analysing the male body as the focal point of the heterosexual female gaze, highlights how an artist may underline the importance of other senses, such as haptic perception in interpreting her own gaze. The sense of touch may thus be integral to a visual artist's ‘sensory landscape’ (‘paysage sensoriel’, Wathelet and Candau 2013), a notion that Borsus mobilises, for her part, to highlight the value of sketching. Engaging in this activity, she explains, draws the eye to specific aspects that would otherwise be lost in a multitude of information in an investigative environment particularly rich in sensory stimuli (smells, textures, sounds, colours, etc.). Thus, artistic practices helping to bring out or emphasise elements that are not easily accessible while in the field become a fully-fledged part of an in-depth ethnographic

description. Le Meur works in this fashion as well, through close observation of gestures, using video to combine the macroscopic and visible with the microscopic and invisible. This method allows her to deepen her understanding and representation of plastic pollution in Vietnam. Givors, for his part, while using his interviewees' photographs and videos, exposes the limitations of an ethnographic description of physical postures only, and highlights the benefits of a process of learning bodily techniques. The attention paid to the body here is linked to a particular affective experience, which Givors assimilates to the notion of rhythm as evoked by François Laplantine (2015). For Laplantine, successive moves transform the body by moving it in space, but they also operate as affective devices that alter the consciousness of the practitioner.

- 11 Rhythm is also reflected in Lambert's poetic performance. Therein, she engages her whole body to convey the intense emotion of agoraphobia she perceives. In a section of this issue entitled 'Experiments', Lambert offers us an insight into her research-creation work as an anthropologist and a poet. Her bodily engagement while declaiming her text demonstrates how she mobilises her whole being to share and convey a lived experience. This was made particularly evident during the aforementioned workshop at the University of Liège, where Lambert first performed part of the text presented here in writing, capturing with both text and orality what the 'ethnographic field did to her' as a researcher during her thesis. We include this text here in audio-visual form as a 'video poem'. Finally, Lambert's performative bodily involvement is also echoed in Mazzella di Bosco's fieldwork on conscious and free dance practices, wherein she emphasises a 'visceral and existential commitment to the field' while also underlining the need to take a step back, as required by an anthropological stance. This, she does through her drawing practice, as do other contributors here.

## Revisiting Drawing as a Multisensory Tool

- 12 Véronique Servais and Andrea Pettit remind us in their contribution that 'drawing and photography have in different ways been part of taking ethnographic field notes since the early days of ethnographic methodology'. Thus, for instance, archeologist and anthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan made notorious use of both resources to closely document and monitor his findings as well as the investigative processes surrounding these (Soulie, 2019). Throughout this dossier, however, the emphasis is placed on drawing in relation to the cognitive process it enables, together with the epistemological and methodological shifts it entails as an embodied process engaging the drawer's corporeality. Drawing is explored whether as an analytical tool, as a sensory translator opening up to embodied knowledge that is otherwise difficult to convey through oral language (see Borsus *infra*), or as a means of collaboration. In what may at first sight appear rather counter-intuitive, the act of drawing finally seems particularly well suited to capture and account for the embodied dimension of ethnographic research. The recent resurgence and renewal of anthropological interest in the graphic form has already been noted. In recent years, this renewed interest has been the subject of numerous published pieces analysing its history and contemporary metamorphoses, both in French (Tondeur 2018, Rougeon 2023, Roussel and Guitard 2021) and in English. Take, for instance, the recent Society for Cultural Anthropology's

dossier on 'Graphic Ethnography on the Rise'. As Dimitris Theodossopoulos (2022a) reminds us there, although the use of drawing has a long history in anthropology, it is only in the last decade or so that graphic ethnography seems to have taken on a distinctive development. As part of a more global creative movement towards multimodality, this raises the question of a so-called 'graphic turn' in the 21st century (Theodossopoulos 2022b).

- 13 In this issue, both Borsus and Mazella take note of this recent revival of interest in drawing in anthropology, stressing its heuristic potential. They argue that regardless of the variable 'talent' of the researcher, it is less the result, its faithfulness to some reality, or even its accuracy or its aesthetics, than the process itself that is important here. Thus, when she is out in the field documenting taxidermists' work, Borsus always carries her notebook, pen, pencil, or any other makeshift drawing materials, so she is ready to sketch down what is around her. She explains how, then and there and later at home, the process of drawing progressively reveals key elements that are difficult to see at first glance, such as ways of categorising. As she illustrates, drawing reflects the play with blurred boundaries that is constantly at work in taxidermy. By the same token, through numerous examples of drawings and comic strips she made for her doctoral thesis, Mazella shows how the process of drawing enabled her to bring out what was crucial in her fieldwork – including, in some cases, elements that did not directly appear in her sketches. Because she always found them unsatisfactory, they might or might not force her to rework and modify them, but in any case, they made her fully aware of the gap between the drawings and reality, and therefore of what needed to be underlined. Furthermore, in a kind of double movement, drawing paradoxically allowed her to distance herself from a deeply embodied fieldwork (where she danced and moved), while at the same time bringing her back to it, by mobilising her whole body. Thus a faithful rendering of the postures she observed required her to get up from her chair at home, to move again, and to look at herself in movement, in order to grasp the complexity of the body in motion.
- 14 In an altogether different register, drawing for Le Meur provides an effective way of circumventing the censorship of an authoritarian context while protecting her interlocutors when communicating about her research. In addition, playing with graphic, drawn, minimalist black lines furnishes another creative way for her to make big ideas more immediately visible and graspable. To be sure, none of the authors in this issue reduce these visual techniques to their purely representational or illustrative dimensions. Yet this point is particularly evident in Servais's contribution: referring to the use of watercolour paintings to convey the intensity of an encounter with the natural elements, she emphasises how this tool makes it possible to express, visually but not figuratively, something about the dynamics of the experience that could not otherwise be said explicitly and yet is *felt* as significant.
- 15 How, then, can we think about the contributions of this 'graphic ethnography' specifically in terms of the fundamentally embodied dimension of research? For, if the potential of drawing to explore this crucial aspect comes to the fore for both research participants and researchers, it should be stressed that the work undertaken at a visual level is based on a deeply embodied approach. As one of Tocco's informants, a professional artist herself puts it, the aim is to *visually translate what is felt in the body*. For Borsus, drawing and then returning to her sketches afterwards is an effective way of immersing herself directly in the scene again, mobilising a kind of embodied



reminiscence. Similarly, Mazella stresses how drawing brings back memory and feeling, suggesting kinaesthetic and embodied memory through (the act of) drawing, as in Petitt and Servais's contribution. In demonstrating the ability of drawing to evoke things that happened and were experienced in the field, all four authors in this issue exemplify how 'all ethnography is a work of memory' (Machado 2019: 350). Thus, taken together, these papers suggest that regardless of their familiarity with these mediums, researchers may feel free to experiment with drawing, doodling and even colouring as a precious way of accessing what has been experienced in the body and through the senses.

## Embodied Experiences, Polygraphies, and Collaboration in the Field

- 16 The notion of the centrality of the body in human experience in general and in the arts in particular, has been notably engaged with in the work of Jerzy Grotowski. The contribution made to theatre studies by the Polish theatre director and researcher is for some comparable to that of Merleau-Ponty to philosophy and phenomenology (Fischer-Lichte 2008). In his theory of 'poor theatre', Grotowski (2002) makes the body the central element of theatrical performance, where language becomes secondary. In his view, the essence of theatre lies in the transmission that takes place between bodies, that is, the 'conducting' body of the actor and the 'receiving' body of the spectator (Chestier 2007). Here, putting aside this distinction between 'conducting' and 'receiving', we propose to extend the argument of body-based centrality of artistic practice and communication to other artistic forms and languages: through the bodily and sensory mobilisation they *de facto* engender, these may serve as a basis for shared and sensitive modes of exchange and communication between researchers and participants.
- 17 Furthermore, these may also contribute to our reflexive approaches: drawing, for example, facilitates 'a (self)reflexive process' that makes position and positioning visible and evaluable, thereby rendering the constituent elements of the whole process less abstract (Bonanno 2022). As importantly, the reflexivity at play highlights the collaborative process involved in knowledge production within the field. This process, which is not always made visible at the time of writing and sharing scientific productions, bears witness to the creativity of both researchers and participants in the co-production of materials (Petitt and Servais, *infra*). The various contributions in this issue also emphasise how the use of artistic medium during data collection and scientific production can provide a clearer picture of the dynamics of knowledge production, reflexive inquiry, and sensitive sharing — the 'distribution of the sensible' as described by Rancière (2004) — that bring together researchers and participants and give rise to embodied polygraphies, highlighting their intrinsically collaborative dimension.
- 18 Thus, Morgane Tocco collaborates with female drawing artists, with the aim of indirectly observing how women look at men's bodies in an erotic way. Using this medium, she captures the 'self-narratives' ('*récits de soi*', Foucault 1994) of her interviewees, which emerge in the course of artistic production and discursive explication. These exchanges enable both a 'sensory sharing' (Tocco, *infra*) that first passes through the body, and creative production which is then translated into



discourse. For Tocco, the co-construction of knowledge is facilitated by the sharing of reflexivity with her informants. In a different way altogether, Le Meur demonstrates the embodied and collaborative nature of her own fieldwork with interpreters in central Vietnam, when she shared and reflected with them on their interactions with residents and passers-by during their walks together across town. Here, the photographic walks through the streets provided her with a way of overcoming the institutional obstacles in this authoritarian context.

- 19 As for Givors and Borsus, they analyse embodied knowledge in detail, in very different field situations and using a variety of media. As part of his own training in the Qi Gong sessions he studied, Givors highlights the importance of paying attention to the body and gestures when reproducing and learning the postures of this martial art. Participants take photos and videos to keep track of the gestures they have learned and to be able to repeat and integrate them. The circulation of the materials thus produced reflects the fundamentally collaborative dimension of his research. Importantly, Givors emphasises the common language understood by all through the observation of bodies and postures in re-using the materials produced by the interviewees. What cannot be transmitted by text, such as body movements and atmosphere, relies on prior embodied experience of bodies and postures at the time of training. As for Borsus, she uses drawing in a taxidermy workshop as a 'sensory memory aid' to share gestures more clearly and highlight specific details. These drawings allow her to *feel* the scene while immersing herself in it with her whole body and sensory dispositions so as to better understand it. Furthermore, like note-taking, drawing during fieldwork is no trivial matter. As Bonanno (2022) points out, it helps to position the ethnographer in a complex network of relationships that involve the people present. The fact that Borsus draws when she is in the field affects her position within it: for her informants, she is 'the one who draws'. Sketching therefore encourages dialogue with her interviewees, who can then reflect and comment on their practice based on what has been represented, thus bringing the viewer's sensibility into play through the discursive exchanges generated. In this way, Borsus emphasises how what she calls 'embodied knowledge' can be mobilised and discussed through drawing. Drawing to her is thus a way of co-constructing knowledge, a point that is echoed in the way Mazzella di Bosco engages with the dancers she worked with.
- 20 In her article, Mazzella di Bosco offers comparable insights into the researcher's reflexivity and subjectivity. In her approach to, and practice of dance, drawing, she explains, allows her to think differently about her research object, in a (re)embodied, meditative and heuristic way: it is a kind of a 'pencil-in-hand meditation'. Le Meur's article also evokes a reflexive evaluation, particularly through her processual and increasingly rich use of images, including photographs, drawings, and illustrations — her own or those produced in collaboration with a graphic designer.
- 21 Theodossopoulos (2022b) notes that drawing - and we can extend this hypothesis to other media - has a propensity to popularise and decolonise academic writing. This means that it can facilitate the return of knowledge to a heterogeneous multitude of individuals and groups involved in the production of these materials and, moreover, make them accessible to ordinary people. Thus, the productions are no longer exclusively reserved for a community of intellectuals, artists, and academics. Instead, they are made available to everyone, through a more sensory and embodied language. It must be pointed out, however, that non-textual academic writing is not

automatically comprehensible to others, and that it may also raise specific questions. Some authors in this issue return reflexively to these questions of how and in what contexts to communicate about their research. Sensitive language, although at first sight more directly accessible, is nevertheless also 'situated' in the sense understood by feminist biologist and philosopher Donna Haraway (1988).

## Situating Our Own Embodied Positions Towards Knowledge

- 22 Conceptualised against the illusion of an objective, universal and neutral science, the notion of 'situated knowledge' invites us to question the position of the person producing knowledge and the power relations in which this production is embedded. For, drawings, films and performances are just as much produced and understood from our own bodies as well as gender, social class, sexual orientation, story, subjectivities, and so on, as is more conventional academic writing. Building on feminist methodological traditions, creative ways of disseminating research can heuristically and importantly take into account how knowledge is produced and how positionalities are embodied (Petitt 2022, Petitt and Servais, *infra*). Here, it must be stressed that although it has essentially been understood as an intellectual activity, knowledge is actually situated at the intersection of cognitive, perceptual, affective and social dimensions, as anthropologist Nicolas Adell reminds us, highlighting its 'polymorphous nature' (Adell 2011: 288). Limiting knowledge to the mind can only be reductive, given that, from the perspective of embodiment approaches, 'engagement with the world is not just cognitive or theoretical, but involves the emotional, practical, aesthetic' (Stolz 2015: 479). Seeking to encompass the full range of these dimensions can only be beneficial because, as Sarah Pink points out, for us ethnographers, understanding other people means 'participating' in their world through 'embodied, emplaced, sensorial and empathic' ways of learning (2009: 65). As a consequence, far from being superfluous or irrelevant, the attention we pay to the senses, emotions and bodies in our research and the way we report on it is central to our understanding of how people make sense of the world. The articles presented here clearly show how the variety of creative methodologies mobilised has implications for understanding both their research objects and the reflexive stances of the researchers' attempts at grasping them. Thus, what is at stake behind the multiplicity of fieldwork experiences, research objects and artistic practices featured in this dossier is the fundamental question of situated and embodied knowledge production in our disciplines and beyond.
- 23 Yet, as noted above, scientific culture has been built around an ideal of objectivity that has erased researchers' subjectivities. French historian Françoise Waquet (2019) speaks of a 'culture without emotion', although there is an irreducible element of subjectivity in science and of emotion in knowledge. Indeed, despite the appearance of positivism and Cartesian rationalism to which research generally tends, especially in France, Waquet argues that different dimensions of the researcher's working environment can generate many diverse emotions. She particularly highlights the presence of the objects that surround researchers. To varying extents, the contributors to this dossier also document what cameras, pens and brushes or film, among other material tools used in creative practices, do to those who handle them. Eventually, what makes for the strong coherence of the texts presented together in this dossier, in addition to the

materiality of the artistic practices used by their authors, is their heuristic potential for co-producing and sharing sensitive and embodied knowledge. This, each contributor does through exploring and mobilising a resource or a technique in relation to the perception and sensing of their subject. Depending on each author, the focus shifts more or less towards analysis at a phenomenal, emotional or sensory level. Thus, for instance, in her article analysing the mechanisms involved in the conservation of an animal, Borsus points out that for her, drawing is an embodied experience of the world rather than an emotional expression thereof. Mazzella di Bosco, for her part, uses her emotions as genuine levers of understanding, whereas Lambert's performance clearly expresses a personal and embodied emotional state. The latter is meant to offer a lively account of the material, sensory, emotional and cultural experience that is agoraphobia, nourished by Lambert's exchanges with her interlocutors and her own lived experience. Eventually, just as we find a plurality of epistemological positions and conceptual approaches in the work of sensory anthropology scholars, ranging from a phenomenological understanding to one more focused on the senses or even 'the sensory' (see the debate between Pink and Howes 2010, Ingold and Howes 2011, Howes 2011), so we find a diversity of viewpoints and approaches in the contributions presented here. These, to various extents, explore and reflect on multisensory issues as well as on co-construction of knowledge. They use methods that even when primarily visual, strongly conjure up the other senses and the embodied nature of their work. And while all contributors gathered here share a commitment to using artistic methods in order to express a sensitive dimension that is otherwise difficult to capture and render, they do not necessarily embrace it in the same way.

- 24 To conclude, today, an increasing number of researchers are showing an openness to try out new modes in their work as anthropologists that most of their (French-speaking) colleagues in earlier generations have long lacked. This renewed interest in reconnecting bodies with emotions, movement, senses, mind and intellect while producing artful, scholarly work ultimately gives one hope that one day we shall see the spread of this integrated and multifaceted intelligence within academia at large... and beyond. To be sure, these new endeavours to think and produce research differently also raise issues of legitimacy and credibility among practitioners of the discipline, especially among our younger colleagues. The institutional constraints and procedures for evaluating academic work are real, all the more so that 'articles in anthropology tend to derive their authority by reiterating a standard form' (Jain 2022). However, as demonstrated throughout this special issue there is room for creative experimentation. This, then, is an invitation to partake of a long-term, ongoing development of new methodologies and pedagogies in our research practices. Thus, may our embodied intelligences be harnessed to produce a work full of empathy and deep understanding (Abram 2013), reconnecting our scholarly selves to our everyday reality and surroundings. Finally, allowing oneself to experiment, with all the trials and errors as well as the serendipitous findings that emerge along the way is a fundamental act of intellectual, pragmatic and political engagement with these highly charged times. Artists, activists, intellectuals, and academics from all walks of life, we are all being called upon to reflect on our commitments, biases, and methodological, ethical, theoretical and pragmatic choices. Arguably, it is through the exercise of all our forms of creativity that we can work towards understanding, and acting on, our contemporary world, in institutions of knowledge and education, as well as in museums

and on the streets... so that we may eventually dream and invent a liveable world together.

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## NOTES

1. Here, we acknowledge the richly layered meaning and usage of the term by Béatrice Fraenkel (see for instance 2007) in her linguists-inspired work on polygraphy as an analytical frame *and* an object of study examining situations and processes of collective writing. In this issue, however, we more mundanely take our cue from François Laplantine's suggestion (2018) of polygraphy as an ethnographic method.

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## INDEX

**Palabras claves:** palabras claves=

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