



Ecologies of Embodiment: Listening With Earth

Doerte Weig, Movement Research, Spain, doerte.weig@gmail.com

Raffaele Rufo, International Forum for Eco-Embodied Arts, Italy, raffaele.rufo@gmail.com

This Companion Issue continues the collaborative work of problematizing the notion of the 'more-than-human', which began with the summer solstice of 2021, by bringing together different artistic, educational and cultural ways of belonging to earth. The editorial explores *listening-with* as a speculative and generative (eco)somatic practice for attuning to the situatedness of each article and sensing the impact of audiovisual work in our bones and nervous fascial tissues. Our process deepened into the relation between listening and voicing – listening until a voice emerges. Alongside video excerpts from the authors' works, we offer poetic resonances which make tangible the connective tissues between them. We conclude by discussing how embodiment as an ecological experience can transform established academic modes of knowing and doing by allowing a different aliveness into the inquiry.

Keywords: breathing; cellular knowing; rest; resisting; sound; planetary continuum; bodily earthly voices; situated knowledge; vegetal empathy; ecosomatic resonances; research as entanglement; contingent futures

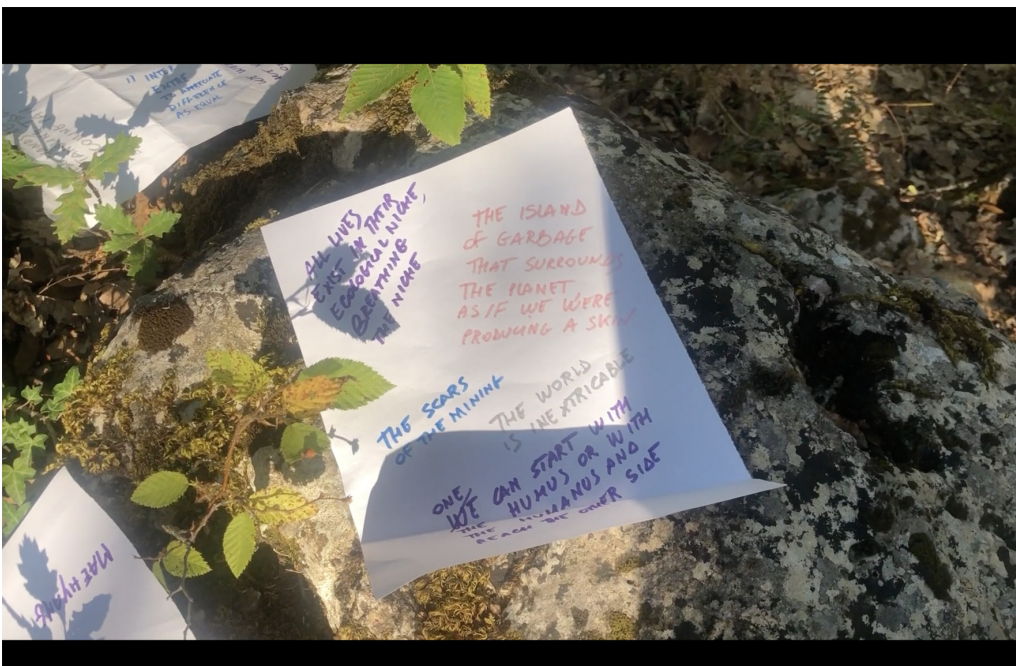


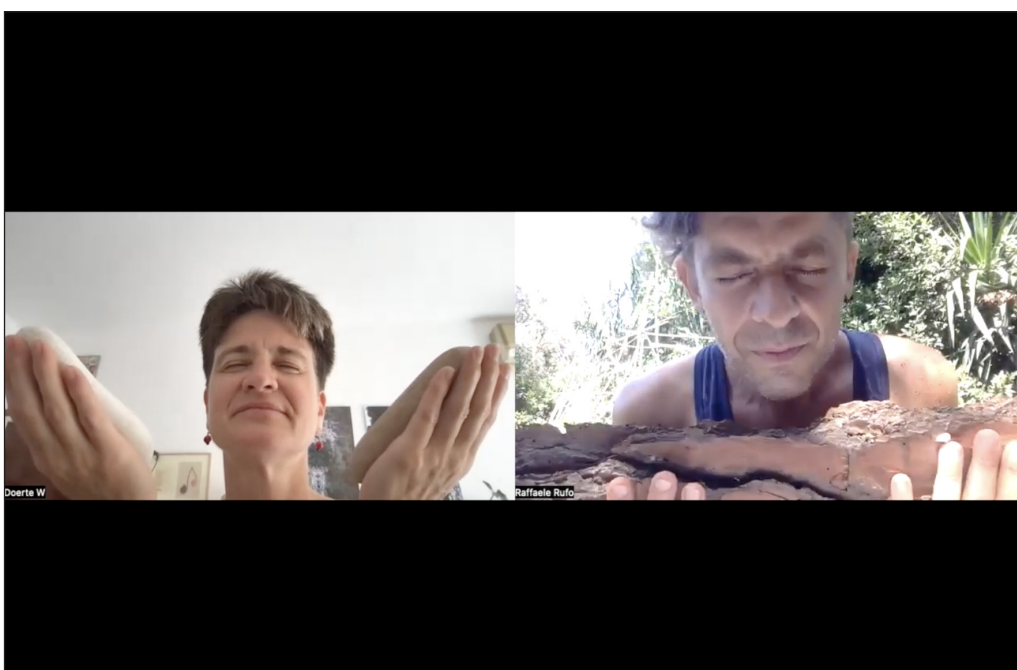
VIDEO ARTICLE

Available to view here: <https://doi.org/10.16995/jer.18072>.

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STILLS FROM THE VIDEO ARTICLE





VIDEO ARTICLE TRANSCRIPT

[Note: This is a transcript of a video article. Onscreen text appears left justified, while spoken words are indented. Individual elements from the transcript, such as metadata and reference lists, may appear more than once in the document, in order to be properly read and accessed by automated systems. The transcript can be used as a placeholder or reference when it is not possible to embed the actual video, which can be found by following the DOI.]

[0:10]

Ecologies of Embodiment

[birds singing]

[water rippling with hands gently placing light pink flowers and small leaves into a bowl of water]

[0:30]

Doerte Weig

Barcelona (Spain)

Raffaele Rufo

Rome (Italy)

[Doerte Weig:]

I'm just in awe of this collaborative creative process, and how we've tried to hold space, and also give and offer feedback, offer our responses to the pieces.

[cicadas rubbing their wings]

[water lifting to touch a face, with drops dropping back into the bowl]

[Doerte Weig:]

To see how this dance that we do together, across online technologies, allows the process of and supports the process of shifting out of a complete linear academic way of doing things.

Body to earth

[cicadas rubbing their wings]

[twigs and dry leaves cracking and crackling under human feet]

Our collaborative project ‘Ecologies of Embodiment’ started with the summer solstice of 2021. Given the richness and abundance of proposals we received, we were able to curate first the Special Issue ‘Co-Editing with the More-than-Human’ (2022), and now the Companion Issue ‘Listening with Earth’ (2024).

The Companion Issue continues the work of problematizing the notion of the ‘more-than-human’. The articles included in this issue have brought us to listen deeply to the unique places and cultural contexts within which the authors were immersed, and to the play of layers and situated knowing emerging from their embodied research.

[Raffaele Rufo:]

So, in itself this is a collaborative co-creation or enterprise. To make it work within the material constraints of time and resources, we have to face several challenges. Most of the time academic discourse tries to kind of abstract itself from these limits, as if they were not there.

[2:40]

Listening with Earth

[wind moving yellow flowers to dance with it]

Our editorial aim was to support the diversity, co-presence and coherence of voices by bringing bodily felt experience, academic knowing, and human vulnerability into the inquiry. Listening as a speculative and generative (eco)somatic practice emerged as central to our work.

Listening-with, as embodied co-presence of human with more-than, generates practice and materiality, where human words come to have ecosomatic qualities that engender a different bodily-earthly aliveness.

In listening with earth, *earth* is both the *soil* under our feet and the *planet* we live on; all the complexity and all the layers.

Trying to limit the reproduction of existing patterns of power-over, we engaged with the articles as both editors *and* listeners. This involved, as a process of power-with, attuning to the information received through active stillness and following what emerged through interstitial spaces.

The editorial process was shaped by 4 questions:

How do words touch us if we *listen-with* Earth?

What kinds of listening emerge from (eco)somatically-informed academic processes?

How do activity and rest play out in processes of listening?

How does traditional ecological knowledge relate with emerging ecosomatic practices?

[Raffaele Rufo:]

So, on the one side, there is this great opportunity to dive into a mosaic of places, situations, perspectives, positions, more-than-human elements, ways of cooperating with the more-than; and on the other, there is the responsibility to allow a coherence to unfold.

[paper-scissors-hands cutting, ready to drop paper pieces into the bowl of water]

Humus and human

Body to earth

Scent of the soil

Sound of the soil

Remember the voices, the bodily voices

Sing and give praise!

[Doerte Weig:]

To make as much space as possible, for this, for the complexity with the more-than-human.

[water-feet-leaves-mud splash dancing]

[Doerte Weig:]

And for giving voice to all these beings and qualities, which make up any moment, any situation, any political situation, and environmental – whichever lens you then take for the videos. I find as an editor, also like sensing into that and capturing this moment of, yea, that's it. That is something which activates all my senses ...

[water immersing paper pieces, wooden staff crunching paper, dissolving different coloured inks]

... and I'm just, the piece brings me into a state of aliveness, which I wouldn't otherwise have in an academic context, because there's already so much that's been cut out, and cut-off.

[Raffaele Rufo:]

Hands, hands holding

[Doerte Weig:]

Resonance with world, in one specific place

[7:00]

In what follows, we offer poetic fragments of our editorial conversations on the works included in this Companion Issue.

The fragments emerged from our embodied resonances to the voices of the authors, and are placed alongside, below, above or between the video excerpts.

The pieces speak to the political and environmental more-than, as audiovisual entanglements with artistic, educational and cultural practices, and ways of belonging with earth.

[07:36]

video essays III

These Hands; an Ecosomatic Approach to a Woman's Labour – of the Body, and of the Land

by Polly Hudson

[Polly Hudson:]

'These hands reach out, feeling the earth shift and move beneath them. Untangling tissues, uncoiling pain. These hands carry weight – weights of grief and of loss, heavy weights. And barrows full of decomposing matter.' (in Hudson et al., 2024)

[Editorial commentary]

Soil

Hands holding stories and weight

Unearthing pain

Cellular knowing across female lineages

Wisdoms of ageing

Practice of Resting, Reading and Translating the Text: 'Hapticality, or Love'

by Ana Dupas

[Ana Dupas:]

'What is the rhythm that these words give
as well as the materials you came in contact with

and you can stay in touch with it
 touching the skin.
 How the text touches our eyes
 our ears
 our mouths
 our heart frequency
 the rhythm of breathing
 this feeling that the text perhaps evokes
 of feeling together.' (in Hudson et al., 2024)

[Participant 1:]

'Rest with those who insist on not to be one.' (in Hudson et al., 2024)

[Editorial commentary]

Reading and somatic rest

Text and senses

Bodily rhythms and rhythms of text

Recreating the text together

Feeling the body of the other

'Within the Memories of a Mountain': Posthuman Embodying as Techno-Material Becoming

by Lea Spahn and Hana Magdonova

[Lea Spahn:]

'One may hear the breathing of the body, even see the heartbeat's pulsation in the shaking hand holding the camera or the minute continuous balancing movements of the hands; the body is never still. So the human body, merging with and amplified through the camera's eye, and the bodies of rocks, plants, and other beings become a relational techno-material assemblage.' (in Hudson et al., 2024)

Field notes: 39 days at the plain

'What have you done, Hana? How will you react now? Should you continue with "purification" (or cleaning up the waste) or should you return the piece of plastic back? It is obviously already used as a benefit for another multispecies collaboration. Think, Posthuman, think!' (Magdoňová, 2021) (in Hudson et al., 2024)

[Editorial commentary]

Quarry as memoryscape in becoming

Camera panning to mineral levels

Limestone sounding

[10:36]

Letters to the Landscape (or an Alphabet in Ruins)

by Marina Guzzo and Mateus Guzzo

[Editorial commentary]

Letters carrying ways of doing and thinking body

[Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Juliana Fausto:]

‘... a way to try to live and die well on this earth, live with joy and terror. Because when you say that we were never individuals, you can imply that everything is connected to everything else.

But not everything is connected to everything.’ (Guzzo and Guzzo, 2024)

[Editorial commentary]

Everything is connected to something

[fire crackling and humans singing; deep and rapid human breathing]

[Editorial commentary]

Opening futures

Weighing the cost of limits

[Alana Moraes:]

‘... it is not known for sure what Medusa was guarding,
so there’s also an interesting secret there that Medusa protects
and that, in a way, was not revealed yet.

And I think this is also very important for people to think about this figure,
which is a figure from the earth.’ (Guzzo and Guzzo, 2024)

[singing]

[Editorial commentary]

Making space for underground stories

[11:46]

Breathing the Earth: Bodily Exploration of Relationality in Eco-Rituals and Dance
by Cho Kyoung Mann and Choi Haeree

‘Tidal flats, reeds and other vegetations of the estuarine ecosystem ensured the food availability of biologically diverse ‘marine and river’ lives and migratory birds throughout the year. [...] But in the late 20th century huge anthropocentric intervention and development destroyed the active ecology of human and more-than-human beings.’ (Cho and Cho, 2024)

[Narrator:]

‘“Breathing” is a metaphor for eco-phenomena of interactions between human beings and more-than-human beings in/with earth.’ (Cho and Cho, 2024)

[Editorial commentary]

Breathing as communal phenomenon

‘Following the Buddhist tradition the priests called this practice ‘mookeon’ (묵언, 默言) which means ‘silence’, ‘blocking up utterance’.’ (Cho and Cho, 2024)

[Editorial commentary]

Remembering bodily voices

[Korea Dance Resource Center 2018, video documentation (KDRC archive)

Cho, Kyoung Mann & Choi, Haeree, concept of video documentation]

‘At the forest of village shrine, Seo, Jung Sook, who leads ceremonial dance, distributes bowls filled with rice to the movers.’ (Cho and Cho, 2024)

[Editorial commentary]

Choreographed ecorituals

‘They deliver the bowls to the beach. Artists created the movement path from the forest to the beach for Gaetje. New interpretation and transformation of villagers’ way. Performers improvise movements on the way to the beach. Sensing the air, swinging in the air, touching the leaves.’ (Cho and Cho, 2024)

[Editorial commentary]

Forest-ocean continuum, with knowledge continuously flowing

[Korea Dance Resource Center 2018, photo documentation (KDRC archive)
Cho, Kyoung Mann & Choi, Haeree, concept of photo documentation]

‘But on the day in October 18th, artists and village elders planned different, quite created one. For the revitalization of the villagers’ environmentalism, they focused on the interaction between people and Guggyedeung forest-ocean continuum. On the day dancers set up the rice bowls on the beach.’ (Cho and Cho, 2024)

[Hwang, Kyoung Hwan 2018, video footage & editing (KDRC archive)
Cho, Kyoung Mann & Choi, Haeree, concept of video documentation]

‘Traditionally the offered food and offering processes are called ‘heonsik’ (헌식, 獻食). Artists and village elders talked together to make heonsik as the one valuing the villagers’ precious communal ocean, beach, and forest grove. Thus more-than-human beings became main interactive agencies.’ (Cho and Cho, 2024)

[Editorial commentary]

Gesturing body to earth

[13:48]

Embodied and Sensorial Methodologies for Researching Performance: Kinesthetic Empathy

by Celia Vara

[sound of waves breaking the shore]

[Editorial commentary]

Meeting Catalanian artist Fina Mirales

Feminist activism, with more-than-human spaces

[Celia Vara:]

‘A natural spring in the mountains.’ (Vara, 2024)

[sound of river water flowing]

[Editorial commentary]

Body feeling relation with water

[Celia Vara:]

‘In this same place where Fina Miralles performed, I recreated the piece.’
(Vara, 2024)

[Editorial commentary]

Artist's performance re-embodied

[14:51]

Dancing With World: Experimenting With Experiments

by Paula Kramer

[Paula Kramer:]

'I suppose I am saying it here because I find that the emphasis is more often on the entanglement, or maybe the desire of being connected, or immersed, or almost, maybe, becoming the same or invisible.' (Kramer, 2024)

[sound of marker writing on paper]

'Being, becoming with world, or in world, or worlding ... maybe.' (Kramer, 2024)

[Editorial commentary]

One take

Temperatures and atmospheres of artistic process

Worlding as tensions between difference and resonance

[15:57]

Sonic Kinesthetic Forest: Fostering Ecological Empathy

by Rennie Tang, Lisa Sandlos and Eleni-Ira Panourgia

[soundscape]

[Editorial commentary]

Storying with trees

Dancing human-vegetal witness

'Rennie Tang, Los Angeles, USA

Eleni-Ira Panourgia, Berlin, Germany

Lisa Sandlos, Erin, Canada' (Tang, Sandlos & Panourgia 2024)

[Meagan Pitts, Dancer, GYD Company:]

'...that kind of connecting to the nature and the wind blowing and then when we were by the river we could hear that. And it all just kind of simultaneously worked together. We were also involved in making the sound. I remember when we brought

in the sticks and other leaves and other nature stuff and we were also just using body sounds and clapping to start developing the soundscape that was a really cool experience to kind of develop that alongside the dancing' (in Tang, Sandlos & Panourgia 2024)

[Editorial commentary]

Circle drawing and earbodying

Learning empathy and cooperation from forests

[17:18]

Ecologies of embodiment: Learning how *listening-with* gifts us with bodily earthly voices

By attuning to the situatedness of each article and sensing the impact of audiovisual work in our bones and nervous fascial tissues, we have grappled with the (assumed) dichotomy of embodied-bodying and the objectified body of academia.

Starting from the 'urgency' of our times, our editorial learning has involved working in alliance with the more-than for over 3 years. This long process deeply challenged our human tendencies to use time as a control mechanism. A different time-sensing opened up new creative-collaborative spaces.

We came to appreciate and understand listening as an active process, which involves pausing, resting, and waiting. From sensing and naming (the focus of the 2022 Special Issue), our process deepened into the relation between listening and voicing – listening until a voice emerges.

This kind of listening-voicing is not a finite process which comes with a fixed and anticipated response. It engenders a different aliveness, which carries potential for novel responses. Stillness and silence are full of new sounds.

Actively *listening-with* the pieces of the Companion Issue shows how bodily movement affords access to the specificity of an environment and to the complexity, situatedness and (de)colonial layers of cultural knowledge. Playing with activity and rest, with sound, silence, and stillness, un-folds and in-earths the messy relations of collective intelligence and cultural (re)generation.

[18:46]

[Raffaele Rufo:]

And there is a passage there, of what happens when I relate differently with what's not been defined as part of the human sphere. What happens when that connectedness, that embodied connectedness, or what makes that embodied connectedness available for cultural regeneration? How do we make the change in a process such as an academic process such as editing, or running an editorial process, when the very context is based on the disembodiment of most of those processes? We are running against the tide and how do we slowly introduce moments and forms of connectedness that can then open up space for others to feel it's possible, it is possible to see and to experience this regenerative encounter with the more-than-human, also in human context that have been constructed through disembodiment and through disconnection with the more-than-human. So, the question of cultural regeneration comes in.

[Doerte Weig:]

I feel there is an interesting tension. On the one hand, yes, life has cyclical or elliptical qualities, rather than linear ones, and yet by using terms such as regeneration, for me it feels like we are actually emphasising the linear context, because it's like we can actually go back to something that was before, but that's a linear concept. We need new language, or different language. We need adapted language, human language to honour the embeddedness, the ecosomatic connectivity, the tensional responsiveness. So, if we bring together that kind of quality with ideas of giving voice to certain cultures, or giving more voice to certain cultures, because we now have what we call a decolonial practice and awareness. For me, the important question is how do we do power? One way of saying it is, how do we do power-with rather than power-over? That is something which is now entering many discussions at many levels of larger debates.

[Raffaele Rufo:]

The contribution to me of these pieces is that they show how certain practices that we are used to see or experience within a disembodied context, that have been framed for so long within a disembodied colonialist model or culture – how do you do them, or make them breathe out of that? I think there are some little interesting examples in each of these pieces in the Companion Issue on how this can be done.

[Doerte Weig:]

I like the idea that there are sparks, but this is for me what I feel has been for me one of the core emergent themes of this editorial process: the importance of place and context. That can mean that gardening in an urban allotment in 2020, when

most countries were experiencing some kind of lockdown, was a different practice then it would be now, where you are free to come and go from your house as you wish. Urban gardening in a city in the UK is not the same as in a city in Spain or Italy, or Australia, or Central Africa. What I feel is important is to acknowledge more clearly the spacetime context of the practice, and that each land and place demand a different honouring, but also offer a unique kind of joy and aliveness.

[24:40]

Acknowledgments

Doerte Weig and Raffaele Rufo thank the specific more-than-human presences and technologies that have continued to support us and co-shaped our editorial process. We are especially grateful to the Mediterranean and Central African vegetal worlds and to vegetal beings in Winkworth Arboretum (UK), Marimurtra botanical garden (Costa Brava), the Natural Reserve of the Roman Coast and the rolling hills of Siena (Italy). We also thank stone circles and formations in Portugal, Spain, France, Germany and Italy which helped ground our work in non-human stillness and temporalities.

[Singing]

Abstract

This Companion Issue continues the collaborative work of problematizing the notion of the ‘more-than-human’, which began with the summer solstice of 2021, by bringing together different artistic, educational and cultural ways of belonging to earth. The editorial explores *listening-with* as a speculative and generative (eco)somatic practice for attuning to the situatedness of each article and sensing the impact of audiovisual work in our bones and nervous fascial tissues. Our process deepened into the relation between listening and voicing – listening until a voice emerges. Alongside video excerpts from the authors’ works, we offer poetic resonances which make tangible the connective tissues between them. We conclude by discussing how embodiment as an ecological experience can transform established academic modes of knowing and doing by allowing a different aliveness into the inquiry.

Keywords

breathing

cellular knowing

rest

resisting

sound
 more-than-human
 bodily earthly voices
 planetary continuum
 hands and feet
 contingent futures
 movement as access to cultural knowledge
 situated knowledge
 forest/plant/vegetal empathy
 ecosomatic resonances
 weaving academic and ecosomatic modes
 research as entanglement

Raffaele Rufo (PhD) is a somatic dance practitioner, a mediator and facilitator of artistic and cultural processes, and an independent scholar working with eco-somatic arts as a vehicle for individual and social transformation. His movement-, video- and text-based research was presented in international artistic festivals, programmes and residencies such as '(Re)Gaining Ecological Futures' at Floating University Berlin and 'Roots' at the Italian Culture Institute of Bucharest. He is the co-founder of the International Forum for Eco-Embodied Arts (IFEEA) and the artistic director of 'La Selva' International Ecosomatic and Regenerative Arts Residency (Rome). www.raffaelerufo.com

Doerte Weig's fascination is to in-earth how human physicality relates to socio-political transformation and ecological awareness. In her work, she combines anthropology, artistic research-creation, dance and somatics. Doerte moves with the notion of socio-somatics, referring to our ancestors' egalitarian practices of keeping power circulating as part of ecosystemic thinking-doing. For Doerte, nurturing this kind of ecosomatic aliveness speaks to issues around human and planetary healing, (re)generative cultures, relational intelligence and decolonial approaches to power. www.movementresearch.net

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