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Title: *Watching and Being Watched: How human-animal performance is able to rethink the theatrical assumptions of vision and spectatorship*

How is performance art and the unedited question it brings on spectatorship able to produce a glimpse into the animal question? Although performance historically rethinks a series of power dynamics and ontological statutes on co-authorship, it has rarely done so in view of the interspecies relationships on the scene from an antispeciesist perspective, typical of the transdisciplinary field of Critical Animal Studies. Theatre, with its ability to unmask cultural structures of domination, can instead be a generative place where rethinking the animal question in relation to various classical assumptions, in this particular case, that of vision. Beginning from the shift of the question from whether or not animals are able to perform (like humans) to how animals perform for themselves and for others (Cull 2023), the proposal intends to investigate this dynamic with a mapping of the work of some performative artists. These, eager to stay in touch with the problem, situate their practices not in the use of animal bodies – as materials or as symbols – but in the more open field of possibilities of creating affects and unprecedented alliances inside and outside the scene, in the creation of other thinking that takes into account the significance of all lives. In this work a rupture is made with the idea of "landscape" as a nineteenth-century view (in which can often be found also animal portraits), from which the observer is totally excluded, and the aim is to produce a vision which is inside and outside the spectator, who is immersed in it (Ranci re 2011; Neimanis 2017). Applying this thought and "way of seeing" (Berger 1980) on the scene from a multispecies perspective produces the overturning of the viewer-observed relationship. For instance, this happens in spectacles specifically dedicated to an "animal" audience such as the ones by Tuija Kokkonen and David Harradine, or in the voyeuristic and indiscreet looking that takes place in Kira O'Reilly's *Falling Asleep With a Pig* (2009), able to deconstruct the fear of proximity and affection between subjects of different species. Here, it is no longer a matter of what one is looking at, but of what dynamics that gaze is able to highlight and subvert, like the listening disposition of a possible answer. As a result, the proposal research opens up the possibility of a post-anthropocentrist aesthetic capable of shifting the very idea of interspecies co-creation, as well as undermining the sense of aesthetic creation tout court.

Keywords: Performance; Animality; Spectatorship; Vision; Alliances