

*'weather' is not only meteorological, but the total atmospheres that bodies are made to bear.*

HAMILTON, ZETTEL AND NEIMANIS 2021, 237

*To breathe means to be immersed in a medium that penetrates us with the same intensity as we penetrate it.*

COCCIA 2018, 18

First night in the Amazon Forest. I am becoming the weather; the weather is inside me. My body becomes water. There is water all around me, atmospheric water. I breathe water, I exude water, I am immersed. ¶ Curator and LabVerde director Lilian Fraiji tells us a story about the inhabitants of the Amazon rainforest developing respiratory organs of fish, by which oxygen is extracted from water. Am I becoming a fish? Is this the unexpected process of transformation of my embodied experience in the Amazon? Is this living by my situated conditions?

*The being in the world of each living being should thus be understood starting from the fish's experience of the world. This being in the world, which in consequence is ours, too, is always a being in the sea of the world; it is a form of immersion.*

COCCIA 2018, 32

My senses are overwhelmed while I immerse myself into a world that I don't recognize and that at the same I belong to. I learn to look otherwise, to hear otherwise and to experience otherwise. I learn to be part of an environment which is in constant flux, where changes and transformation are activated by living forms that are inside me and outside me. I feel powerlessness until the realisation of being part of a powerful set of relations. ¶ The night is sound. Insects, birds, animals, wind, plants, for me an indistinct sound that arises from the forest and becomes closer and closer. The night is silence. The noise of two airplanes is an unescapable reminder of my intercontinental flight to Manaus and



increases my discomfort (the discomfort of a white middle class woman whose comfort has been built on the exploitation of others, human and non-human alike).

FOOTPRINT: noun

- a mark left by the shod or unshod foot, as in earth or sand.
- the area affected by an increase in the level of sound or noise, as that generated by an airplane.
- the impact that humans have on the environment, especially in the utilization of natural resources.
- any impact or effect, or its scope

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WHAT TRACE WILL I LEAVE ON THE GROUND?

Early morning. I am woken up by an intermittent, cold, metallic sound. Is this an animal, an insect, or the noise of a wire, of electricity? Is this sound natural or artificial? What is natural and what is artificial in the Amazon Forest? I wonder if I am the artificial element in a natural environment. But what if we look at nature as an artifact and thus as an artificial construct? How would our understanding of nature shift if we abandoned this illusion of a natural and artificial world? These questions resonate in my head like the metallic sound. It turned out to be a *cigarra*, an Amazonian cicada whose artifact triggered philosophical disorientation and insomnia. ¶ I wonder and question my being in the Amazon rainforest. What is the forest thinking of my visit? Does my presence bother her? Does she care? Do I care? What kind of relationship will I be able to establish? What is my agency - the artistic agency in this uninterrupted ecosystem? ¶ I feel the Forest has repositioned me. Again, a sense of powerlessness overwhelms me until I am able to adjust my perspective. Being immersed requires a new relational perspective, where humans, animals, insects, plants, water, weather become a multiplicity of possibilities, agents for change and transformation of the environment we share, and we shape. ¶ The Scientists from The National Institute of Amazonian Research teach us the Amazon rainforest is a perfectly balanced ecosystem (although dangerously reaching the tipping point), an incredibly diverse, multispecies, complex, and yet affective system of cohabitation, co-operation, and intra-action, always in movement, always in process. ¶ American feminist theorist Karen Barad coined the term 'intra- actions' in 1996. The term offers an escape from the dualism of subject and object embedded in the word 'interactions' and subverts the anthropocentric perspective on all other forms of life. According to Barad 'Abstract objects or observation-independent beings' do not exist, and therefore 'there is no sense of two things to interact' (BARAD 1996, 179-180).

*Intra-actions involve transformative encounters, seductive moments that generate new modes of coexistence.*  
KIRKSEY 2015, 5

¶ I begin to understand intra-actions as a powerful methodology, instigating new ways of thinking and novel methods for engaged or 'entangled' art practices. ¶ The Art Immersion Programme in the Amazon LabVerde is a form of entanglement that offers that unique experience of intra-actions. The art projects developed during the residency are generated in a process of multispecies collaboration, negotiation, and appreciation. Leaves are the transformative agents of human faces; clay naturally found in the soil becomes frog, fish, turtle — *muiraquitã* left to honour the Forest to then dissolve into the soil again; ants offer speculative modes of building structures and co-inhabit, plants' movement generates 'artificial' beings; water provides an unexplored sonic experience. ¶ Collaborations are never enforced, and whether the soil refuses to generate power as planned, or an ant furtively takes away a piece of an artwork, all beings act as agents of change in an artistic process. As Karen Barad argues, 'agency is for me not a matter of something somebody has but it's a doing, it's the very possibilities for reworking and opening up new possibilities,' (JUELSKJÆR AND SCHWENNESEN 2012, 17). ¶ Agency no longer sits uniquely with the artists but within an 'intra-active entanglement' with any forms of life, human and non-human. As a curator and researcher whose work has been concerned for the past fifteen years or so with socially engaged practices as affective and political tools, this is one of the most powerful learnings the Amazon Forest has offered me. 'Entangled art practice' seems to me to offer a wider relational perspective which goes beyond the Western dichotomy of subject/object, culture/nature, creator/creature. ¶ A perspective well embedded and embodied in the Amazon Indigenous knowledge for which there is no separation between nature and culture: nature is culture, all beings are social, and all beings change the world we live in (produce culture). An ontological universe violated by the Western colonizers. ¶ In his talk, Thiago Mota Cardoso, a biologist and anthropologist from the Federal University of Amazonas, one of the inspiring scientists enriching the programme at LabVerde, introduced the concept of minor ecology (from Deleuze and Guattari). The idea of minor ecology helps (scientists and non-scientists alike) to reframe the attention to intraspecies relationship from a large scale to a minor scale, thus opening possibilities for speculative thinking. ¶ What effect – or affect in the arts would have such a shift from the centre stage, where our practices engage in minor (and multiple) relationships, on minor (and multiple) stages? ¶ How would this shift affect the response-ability of artists when addressing environmental, social, and political conditions we live in? The notion of responsibility has been at the core of my

curatorial practice for some time and although unresolved, the experience of the Amazon Forest inevitably brought new perspective and expectations. ¶ Responsibility and care seem to me to play a central role if we are to practice art that is about transforming ourselves and a set of relations and conditions. There is no practice independent from its environment and this is even more evident to us who had the privilege to participate in LabVerde and immersed ourselves in the weather, in the total atmosphere.

*"Responsibility is not a matter of who is being 'truly' responsible, it is a matter of concern, and, as such, open to technical advice. When you are about to act, do not rely on any general principle that would give you the right to act. But do take the time to open your imagination and consider this particular occasion. You are not responsible for what will follow, as you are not responsible for the limitations of your imagination. Your responsibility is to be played in the minor key, as a matter of pragmatic ethos, a demanding one nevertheless—what you are responsible for is paying attention as best you can, to be as discerning, as discriminating as you can about the particular situation."* STENGERS 2013, 188

I treasure these words as an ontological and methodological direction, and I wish they can be a companion to all of us who shared the embodied experience of LabVerde and to all the speculative ecologies to come.

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