Non-Human Participation in Human-Initiated Art: Agency, Ethics, and Models of Compensation

Written by

Jaron Vandevelde

Academic year 2024-2025

Theoretical mentor:

Bert De Roo
bert.deroo@hogent.be

Practical Mentor:

María Boto Ordoñez
maria.botoordonez@hogent.be

Thesis presented in

fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Visual Arts
option Autonomous Design

KASK & Conservatorium
School of arts from HOGENT and Howest
Ghent, East-flanders, Belgium

Table of contents

1 Introduction[1]

In recent years, the boundaries of participatory art have been increasingly challenged by the inclusion of non-human actors. While traditionally defined as a human-centered practice based on co-creation, collaboration, participatory art is now encountering a conceptual and ethical shift: can animals, plants, and other more-than-human entities be considered participants in these human-initiated practices—and if so, how? This thesis explores the evolving terrain of non-human participation in human artistic practices, focusing on the risks, benefits, and compensation models that arise when human-initiated art includes beings that do not share human language, cognition, or cultural frameworks.

Central to this inquiry is the research question: *How can non-human entities be meaningfully included in human-initiated participatory art practices, and what ethical models of compensation can be developed to acknowledge their labor, presence, and agency within these human-framed systems?*

This question emerges from a broader tension in the arts: the recognition of non-human creative potential (e.g., bees, fungi, woodworms) collides with an anthropocentric tradition that often frames these entities either only as symbols or tools. My objective is to investigate how artistic collaborations with non-humans might move beyond toxic tokenism or extractivism and instead foster ethical, reciprocal engagements—what I term "the artistic pack". This concept draws from Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) notion of the pack as an interspecies assemblage marked by affective, material, and symbolic entanglements.[2]

To do so, this thesis draws on a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that intersects philosophy, political ecology, posthumanist aesthetics, and animal studies.

Figure 1. *Exploring the role of coots in participatory art Project: Meer Koet, Minder Afval by Jaron Vandevelde*

[1] The author used OpenAI's ChatGPT (version 4) throughout the writing process to enhance sentence structure and clarity. All content, ideas, and arguments remain the author's own. Accessed May 24, 2025. https://openai.com/chatgpt.

[2] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), 44, 285, 292–295, 305, 314–315; *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 35, 257, 264, 266, 275, 284; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2004), 305; Corry Shores, *"What Is It Like to Become a Rat? Animal Phenomenology through Uexküll and Deleuze & Guattari,"* (Middle East Technical University, 2017), 215.

Key thinkers include Eva Meijer (2019) and Val Plumwood (2012), whose ideas inform the concepts of non-human agency[3] and non-toxic instrumentalism.[4]

The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation developed by Stanislav Roudavski (2024)[5] offers an operational model for understanding varying degrees of inclusion and compensation, ranging from paternalism to commoning. Building on this model, the thesis further engages with ecological ethics and theories of multispecies justice such as Donaldson and Kymlicka's *Zoopolis* (2011)[6], integrating these perspectives into the framework of inclusion and compensation. I position this work within the discourse of participatory art[7] (as theorized by Claire Bishop) but seek to expand the field by proposing a more inclusive understanding of non-human participation—one that embraces both passive involvement and active engagement as valid forms of participation.

In terms of methodology, this research combines theoretical analysis with practice-based artistic investigation. Through selected case studies, (e.g. Natalie Jeremijenko's urban bird collaboration project: *For the Birds*, 2006, Tomáš Libertíny's bio-art installations co-created with bees), and my own artistic interventions (e.g. woodworm collaborations, 2022-ongoing), I explore how non-human labor and co-creation can be framed, facilitated, and ethically compensated.

By proposing a framework for interspecies participation and compensation, this thesis aims to serve as a practical guide for human artists committed to ethical and collaborative engagements with the more-than-human world.

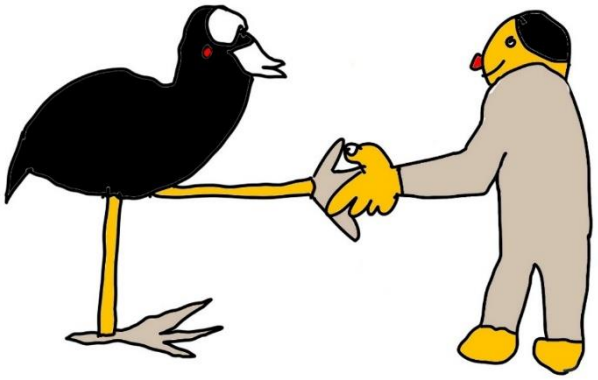

Figure 2. *Non-human co-creation in human-initiated participatory art: how are the roles divided?*
Source: Jaron Vandevelde

[3] Eva Meijer, *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy* (New York: NYU Press, 2019).
[4] Val Plumwood, *The Eye of the Crocodile: Animals and Ecology* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2012), 82; see also 80–85 ("Non-use or Respectful Use?").
[5] Stanislav Roudavski, *"The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design,"* Cultural Science Journal 14, no. 1 (2024), https://doi.org/10.2478/csj-2024-0015.
[6] Donaldson, S., and Kymlicka, W. *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011
[7] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012).

2 Human-Initiated Participatory Art as a Medium for Non-Human Advocacy

2.1 Beyond the Human: Rethinking Art Through a More-than-Human Lens

Throughout history, artistic creation has been considered an exclusively human endeavor, tied closely to consciousness, expression, and cultural context. This anthropocentric lens is not only reflected in art history but is also embedded in contemporary dictionary definitions. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, art is defined as:[8]

1. "The making or doing of something whose purpose is to bring pleasure to **people**[9] through their enjoyment of what is beautiful and interesting, or things often made for this purpose, such as paintings, drawings, or sculptures."
2. "An activity through which **people**[10] express particular ideas."
3. "The making of objects, images, music, etc., that are beautiful or that express feelings."

While the first two definitions of art emphasize the role of *people* in the creative process, the third opens a subtle yet significant door: if art is the expression of feeling through form, could this definition be extended beyond the human?

And might it even be sufficient to replace the word *people* with *individuals* to begin expanding our understanding of art into the non-human realm?

Figure 3. *The symbolic resilience of Dandelion growing through concrete cracks.*
Source: Jaron Vandevelde

Examples from the natural world begin to challenge this strict human-centric view of artistic expression. Whale songs, for instance, communicate emotions through intricate, evolving compositions that resemble human musical traditions. Chameleons change color not only for camouflage but also as a form of expressive communication—arguably aligning with performative artistic acts.

Even beyond the animal kingdom, plants pushing through cracks in urban concrete (fig. 3) evokes a symbolic strength that invites poetic interpretation. Much like the red poppy of Flanders Fields—widely recognized as a symbol of remembrance and hope—these plants communicate presence, adaptation, and life's insistence in a world shaped by human hands. Their quiet emergence challenges us to reconsider expression, beyond the bounds of intention.

But what are these non-human expressions, really? Can they be understood as art?

[8] "Art," *Cambridge Dictionary Online*, accessed April 30, 2025, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/art.

[9] emphasis added

[10] emphasis added

Some artists and thinkers argue that they belong to a broader understanding of creativity—one that is not confined to human intellect. Philosopher Eva Meijer challenges, in *When Animals Speak* (2019), the idea that animals are merely instinct-driven beings, arguing instead that they actively engage in meaning-making and should be regarded as communicative agents.[11] Similarly, the field of biosemiotics challenges the human monopoly on creativity by suggesting that sign-making and aesthetic communication exist across species boundaries.[12]

Still, one must ask: is aesthetic decision-making or communicative signaling —both indicative of creative agency— sufficient for something to be considered art? Or does art require additional conditions, such as cultural framing, symbolic intention, or contextual interpretation?

To explore this, we turn to historical discourses on aesthetics, which laid the philosophical groundwork for understanding the role of art within Western thought. In *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Immanuel Kant asserts that ''Art can only be called fine art if **we are conscious that it is art** and yet it looks to us like nature'' For Kant, it is this reflective judgment, rooted in human reason, that elevates something beyond mere nature.[13] Leo Tolstoy echoes this in *What is Art?* (1898), defining art as a **"human activity,** consisting in this, that one **man consciously**, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other **people** are infected by these feelings, and also experience them''.[14] Suzanne Langer (1953) likewise frames art as the symbolic expression of **human emotion**.[15]

All three emphasize symbolic and intentional expression, placing the uniquely human capacity to frame actions or objects symbolically at the core of what defines art. Anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake (2013, 2018) offers an evolutionary perspective on this symbolic framing. Rather than viewing art as a cultural luxury, she positions it as a biological necessity embedded in human development. She introduces the concept of "making special"[16] —a capacity to ritualize, formalize, and emotionally intensify ordinary actions or objects.[17] This behavior, she argues, evolved from the emotionally charged interactions between mothers and infants, characterized by repetition, exaggeration, and dynamic variation to attract attention and sustain emotional bonds.[18] While some non-human animals, such as for instance bowerbirds with their elaborate courtship displays (fig. 4), engage in aesthetically compelling or ritualized behaviors, Dissanayake suggests that the conscious symbolic transformation of the ordinary into the extraordinary remains distinctly human.

Figure 4.*. Satin Bowerbird (Ptilonorhynchus violaceus), Lamington National Park, Queensland. Source: Wikimedia Commons.*

[11] Eva Meijer, *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy* (New York: NYU Press, 2019).
[12] For example, see Solveig Ongstad, "Aesthetics or Communication?: Social Semiotic Traits of Structured Forms in Studies of 'Animal Beauty,'" *Biosemiotics* 17 (2024): 769–792, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12304-024-09587-6.
[13] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), 306, emphasis added
[14] Leo Tolstoy, *What Is Art?* (1898), 50, emphasis added
[15] Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1953), emphasis added
[16] Ellen Dissanayake, "*Genesis and Development of Making Special: Is the Concept Relevant to Aesthetic Philosophy*?" *Revista de Estetika* 54 (2013): 83–98.
[17] Ellen Dissanayake, "The Concept of Artification," in *Early Rock Art of the American West: The Geometric Enigma*, ed. Ekkehart Malotka and Ellen Dissanayake (New York: Routledge, 2018), 91–129.
[18] Ellen Dissanayake, "The Concept of Artification," in *Early Rock Art of the American West: The Geometric Enigma*, ed. Ekkehart Malotka and Ellen Dissanayake (New York: Routledge, 2018), 91–129.

The uniqueness lies not in the form of expression itself, but in its deliberate framing for shared emotional and symbolic engagement, a term she names "artifying".[19]

In other contemporary definitions of art, the idea of human framing remains central, but the nature of that framing shifts. Rather than locating meaning within the internal structure or symbolic content of the work itself, as in Kant, Tolstoy, Langer or Dissanayake, George Dickie's institutional theory (1974, 1984) relocates artistic value to the external context in which the work is presented. According to Dickie, art is whatever is designated as such by members of the **"artworld"—a social network of human artists, human curators, human critics, and human audiences.**[20] In this view, it is not the object's form, symbolism, or expressive intention that makes it art, but its placement within an institutional framework that grants it that status. Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) famously underscored this point: by recontextualizing a urinal as art, he demonstrated how meaning is not intrinsic to the object but arises through context and designation.

Figure 5. *Fountain (1917) by Marcel Duchamp. Source: Wikimedia Commons.*

At its core, these traditions construct art as an exclusive human activity, bounded by symbolic intent, cultural context, and institutional validation.

This presents a profound tension. If art is defined by symbolic intent and cultural embedding, how can we recognize it in non-human creations whose cultural worlds remain largely inaccessible to us? Are we maintaining an objective distinction—or reinforcing our own interpretive boundaries?

Expanding the concept of art beyond humanity would mean more than acknowledging aesthetic agency in other species; it would require rethinking how we define intention, context, and audience. Without access to the subjective experiences of non-human creators, our interpretations necessarily remain speculative.

Yet anthropocentric models of art are beginning to shift. Growing recognition of non-human cognition—such as that explored in the 2024 Netflix series *The Secret World of Sound*, narrated by David Attenborough[21]—and emerging philosophical fields like biosemiotics suggest that creative expression may be far more widespread across species than traditionally assumed. Challenging the definitions offered by Kant, Tolstoy, and Dickie is not about dismissing their contributions, but about acknowledging their limitations: each articulates an understanding of art firmly rooted within a human-centered framework, without explicitly interrogating that framework itself. Rather than critiquing them for their anthropocentrism, the task is to examine if their ideas offer conceptual flexibility for a

[19] Ellen Dissanayake, "Genesis and Development of Making Special: Is the Concept Relevant to Aesthetic Philosophy?" *Revista de Estetika* 54 (2013): 83–98; Dissanayake; Ellen Dissanayake, "The Concept of Artification," in *Early Rock Art of the American West: The Geometric Enigma*, E. Malotka and E. Dissanayake (New York: Routledge), 2018, pp. 91–129

[20] George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974); George Dickie, *The Art Circle* (New Haven: Haven Publications, 1984).

[21] *Secret World of Sound with David Attenborough*, written by Dugald Maudsley, featuring Bridget Appleby, Gemma Brandt, and Rebecca Hart, 3 episodes, Netflix, 2024, https://www.netflix.com/title/81571854.

broader, more inclusive understanding of art that might extend beyond the human.

The future of art theory may well depend on this expansion: on opening our definitions to forms of meaning-making that emerge from non-human worlds. In doing so, we move toward a more inclusive ethical and ecological aesthetic framework. Art, long regarded as the hallmark of human exceptionalism, might instead be understood as one expression within a broader, multispecies continuum of creative agency and symbolic life.

2.2 Non-Human Representation in Human Arts.

Although art is still predominantly defined within a Western framework as an exclusively human domain—a perspective which remains limited and exclusionary—non-human entities have long been entangled in its creation.

Often, animals and environmental elements have been shaped, manipulated, or used to serve human aesthetic purposes. Non-human animal-derived materials—such as ivory, bone, feathers, and pigments—have historically been harvested for artistic use, frequently at the cost of the animal's life. In human visual culture, animals have been depicted as symbols of power, innocence, exoticism, or conquest, reinforcing human narratives and hierarchies. Beyond representation, the living bodies of animals have been subjected to human control under the guise of artistic expression—such as the forced training of animals for performance, or the display of taxidermized forms in artistic installations. (fig. 6) These practices echo a broader pattern of anthropocentric dominance, where the non-human is rendered mute, used as a medium, but rarely given a voice.

Figure 6. *Death Denied (2008), by, Damien Hirst, Pinchuk Art Centre, Kiev, Ukraine. Source: Wikimedia Commons.*

However, as I will argue throughout the following text, human-initiated art can also serve as a medium to amplify non-human voices, offering a platform for their agency. This potential emerges precisely through the act of participation itself.

2.3 Human-Initiated Participatory Art as a Tool to Advocate for the Non-Human

Rooted in the Latin *participare*, meaning "to partake," participation implies a form of engagement that extends beyond the individual—whether in social, political, or creative domains. Participation, then, can therefore be understood as a form of shared agency: an evolving process encompassing varying degrees of inclusion, contribution, and co-creation.

As Eva Meijer notes (2019); Historically, participation has been framed as a uniquely human domain, closely tied to the capacity for speech, rational deliberation, and intentional action.[22] Within Western philosophical thought, thinkers such as Habermas (1981) have argued that the ability to speak is necessary for rational deliberation[23]; Rawls (1971) identified speech as a prerequisite for

[22] Eva Meijer, *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy* (New York: NYU Press, 2019), Introduction, 3.

[23] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981).

participating in a hypothetical social contract[24]; Rancière (2007) emphasized its importance for democratic action[25]; and Pepper (2016) connected it to collective intentional action.[26]

Eva Meijer challenges this anthropocentric tradition. Drawing on examples from animal communication, Meijer demonstrates that animals, too, "speak"—though often in non-verbal, embodied, or affective ways—thereby possessing agency and the capacity to actively participate meaningfully in shared environments.

This redefinition of communication, and the participation it enables, invites a broader, more inclusive framework, one that acknowledges interspecies communication and non-verbal forms of expression as legitimate and meaningful.[27]

Adopting Meijer's perspective on participation invites us to reconsider participatory art practices, extending them beyond the human to include non-human entities as participants.

Claire Bishop, a leading scholar on participation in the arts, argues, that participatory art emerged specifically to challenge the exclusionary structures of the art world, aiming to empower marginalized voices through involvement and co-creation. [28]

Human-initiated participatory art involving non-human participants can therefore serve as a powerful tool for advocating on behalf of the non-humans involved. It offers a platform for reflection and dialogue, enabling alternative ways of understanding and engaging with the environment. By amplifying marginalized voices—in this case, those of non-human entities—such practices can consequently challenge anthropocentric paradigms by highlighting the interconnectedness between human and non-human experiences.[29]

2.4 Expanding Towards a More Inclusive Definition of Participatory Arts

Traditionally, participatory art emphasizes active engagement, with participants directly shaping or influencing the creative process. [30]

However, this traditional notion of participation, as solely a form of active engagement, is insufficient when considering non-human involvement. Non-human entities often partake in artistic processes in ways that fall outside the boundaries of deliberate agency or conscious collaboration. Their participation, though, should not be dismissed.

For this reason, I propose a more expansive definition of participation within arts, one that includes both active and passive involvement:

1. **Active engagement**, where (non-) human actors directly influence or shape the artistic process (e.g., animals marking surfaces, plants growing into or around structures, insects transforming materials);
2. **Passive involvement**, where (non-) human presence operates symbolically or conceptually—whether as material, reference, environmental context, or even posthumously, as in Damien Hirst's works involving deceased animals (fig. 6).

Although the sharks in Hirst's installations is no longer alive, their presence still plays a central

[24] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).
[25] Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy* (New York: Verso Books, 2007).
[26] Angela Pepper, "*Political Agency in Humans and Other Animals*" (conference presentation, Montreal Workshop, March 5, 2016).
[27] Eva Meijer, *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy* (New York: NYU Press, 2019).
[28] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 12–13: "Instead of supplying the market with commodities, participatory art is perceived to channel art's symbolic capital towards constructive social change."
[29] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 7: *"Participatory art is not only a social activity but also a symbolic one, both embedded in the world and at one remove from it."*
[30] "Participatory Art," *Tate,* accessed May 23, 2025, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/participatory-art.

role in shaping meaning and audience response. Their participation, though passive involvement, is inseparable from the conceptual framework of the artwork. Thus, partaking (*paticipare*) can happen beyond active engagement, and even in death, a non-human actor may contribute to the meaning-making process in human-initiated art processes. It acknowledges that agency exists on a spectrum, and that participation can occur through presence, transformation, symbolic inclusion, or material entanglement.

***Figure 7**. The Green Line, Francis Alÿs (Jerusalem, Israel, 2004, 17:41 min). In collaboration with Philippe Bellaiche, Rachel Leah Jones, and Julien Devaux. Source: https://francisalys.com/the-green-line/. Courtesy of the artist.*

3 From Unavoidable to Empowering, Non-Toxic Instrumentalism in the Artistic Pack

3.1 The Inevitability of Instrumentalism: Human-initiated Participatory Art with Non-humans

The fundamental distinction between human-initiated participatory art with non-human participants and human-initiated participatory art with human participants lies in the awareness of these participants. Non-human collaborators are unaware of their participation in human framed artistic process, this applies for both to passive and active involvement in the participation process. While they may feel a sense of participation or hold their own perspective on the process (in the case of active engagement) — and let me be clear, this experience is equally important — they do not perceive the artistic intent or human artistic framework of the participation process.

In contrast, participatory art within a human framework typically involves participants who are consciously invited and aware of their role in the artistic experience. However, there are instances where human participants are unaware of their involvement, for example as in Francis Alÿs' *The Green Line* (2004)[31] (fig. 5). In this work, Alÿs walked through Jerusalem, dripping green paint along the historical armistice line, visually marking a contested border without public announcement. Bystanders who witnessed or interacted with him inadvertently became part of the performance. But the difference with human-initiated participatory art with non-humans is that despite their initial lack of awareness, human participants can later be contextualized and informed about their role in the artwork.

[31] Francis Alÿs, *The Green Line (Sometimes Doing Something Poetic Can Become Political and Sometimes Doing Something Political Can Become Poetic)*, video, 17:41 min, 2004, in collaboration with Philippe Bellaiche, Rachel Leah Jones, and Julien Devaux, accessed April 30, 2025, https://francisalys.com/the-green-line/.

Human art is grounded in cultural, symbolic, and interpretive frameworks that stem from human-specific ways of making meaning. These frameworks do not necessarily align with how non-human beings perceive, engage with, or express themselves in the world—or with how they might, in their own ways, create what might be called art.

However, this does not preclude the possibility that both, human and non-human, can be involved in the same participatory art processes. And that their participation—despite their unawareness—can still serve their own interests or well-being (as a tool). Human-initiated participatory art projects that involve non-human animals—by for instance integrating their behaviors, instinctual inclinations, or symbolic presence into artistic processes—can serve as a means of advocating for their well-being and significance. Though the non-human participant remains unaware of their artistic role, their presence within these projects can highlight issues of conservation, cohabitation, and ecological interdependence.

This dynamic highlights a paradox in human-initiated participatory art involving non-humans. The paradox here lies in the tension between advocating for non-human voices and the unavoidable human mediation, it required to do so. One could argue that this approach instrumentalizes non-humans for their presumed greater benefit within the artistic framework. However, there is also an advantage to this instrumentalism: It enables the creation of spaces where human and non-human interactions are explored, where the boundaries between species are questioned, and where new narratives of cohabitation can emerge. In this way, even without conscious participation, non-human collaborators become catalysts for challenging anthropocentric norms and expanding the horizons of participatory art.

This use of non-humans is not necessarily an act of dominance but a practical necessity: it is through human interpretation that non-human actions acquire meaning in the realm of human art. While this dynamic reinforces the anthropocentric nature of artistic production, it also creates opportunities to challenge traditional hierarchies, inviting alternative models of collaboration and deeper engagement with non-human agency.

3.2 Toxic and Non-Toxic Instrumentalism

This instrumentalism, driven by the intention to act in the best interest of both humans and non-humans entails using another being, whether through passive inclusion or active engagement, as a means to achieve a perceived beneficial outcome on their behalf.

Instrumentalism is often recognized—though frequently misunderstood—as a hallmark of oppressive conceptual frameworks. Val Plumwood, an Australian ecofeminist philosopher known for her work on environmental ethics, critiques this mischaracterization[32], particularly the definition advanced by thinkers such as Carol Adams, who equate instrumentalism with any form of "making use" of the other.[33] Plumwood argues that this oversimplified view conflates all forms of use with reductive treatment, which sees the other as nothing more than a means to an end. Such a definition fails to capture the nuanced distinction between respectful use and oppressive instrumentalism.[34]

[32] Val Plumwood, *The Eye of the Crocodile: Animals and Ecology* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2012), 82.
[33] Carol J. Adams, "The Feminist Traffic in Animals," in *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*, ed. Greta Gaard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 200.
[34] Val Plumwood, *The Eye of the Crocodile: Animals and Ecology* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2012), 82

Plumwood contends that instrumentalism, properly understood, does not refer to all instances of use. For example, a group of circus performers standing on one another's shoulders to reach a trapeze is a clear case of using others for a shared purpose, yet it does not constitute oppressive instrumentalism. Similarly, a gardener collecting animal droppings to fertilize soil involves using animals, but it does not disrespect or diminish their intrinsic value. In both cases, the individuals or animals involved are seen as more than mere tools for achieving a goal. They retain their individuality and are not reduced to purely functional entities.[35]

For Plumwood, what I've termed "toxic" instrumentalism occurs when the other is subjected to a reductionist perspective—treated as no more than an object of use, without acknowledgment of their inherent worth or agency. This reductive and totalizing view dehumanizes or devalues the other, framing them solely as a means to fulfill specific ends. To move beyond such a framework, Plumwood advocates for an approach she calls **Ecological Animalism**. This perspective recognizes that all life forms, including humans, are subject to use within broader ecological systems. However, it insists that such use must involve respect for the individuality and species-specific life of others, affirming the continuity and interconnectedness of all life forms.[36]

When applied to human-initiated participatory art involving collaborative practices with non-human actors, Plumwood's ethical framework offers valuable guidance. Her concept of **Ecological Animalism,** suggests that such practices don't need to be inherently instrumental in the negative, "toxic" sense described by critics like Adams. Art does not become an oppressive or reductive practice simply because it incorporates non-human collaborators. Instead, drawing on Plumwood's ideas, such practices can avoid toxic instrumentalism by ensuring that these collaborators are not reduced mere symbols or tools serving the artist's own interests within the artistic process. Participatory art, when framed with respect for the autonomy and intrinsic value of non-human participants, can move beyond simplistic notions of ''toxic" use and engage in meaningful, ethical interspecies collaboration.

Furthermore, I argue that even passive involvement in art—where non-humans are represented symbolically or as tools—can be non-toxic, provided that ethical considerations and good intentions (through processes of paternalism, recognition and solidarity) are prioritized.[37]

3.3 Becoming an Artistic Pack

This principle of employing non-toxic instrumentalism in artistic practices can be further examined through Deleuze and Guattari's **"affective composition"**[38] (their interpretation to Spinozistic affective composition.[39]) and the concept of **"machinic assemblages"** [40]**or "packs"**[41].

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980), identity is not defined by physical or biological traits but by affective properties—how an entity's components interact to shape its capacities for action and engagement with the world.[42] This perspective challenges traditional notions of kinship, suggesting that connections

[35] Ibid., pp. 82–83.
[36] Ibid., pp. 80–85.
[37] See chapters 4.2 and 4.3.
[38]Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), 53–54, 310, 314; *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 45, 280, 283–284.
[39] Baruch Spinoza, *B.d.S. Opera Posthuma, Quorum Series Post Praefationem Exhibetur*, ed. Jarich Jelles, Lodewijk Meijer, and Israël de Paull (Amsterdam: Israel de Paull, 1677), 185–186, 848–849.
[40] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari*, A Thousand Plateaus, (*2004). *314–315.*
[41] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, (*2004), 35, 257, 264, 266, 275, 284;
[42] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004). 314; Corry Shores, "What Is It Like To Become a Rat? Animal Phenomenology through Uexküll and Deleuze & Guattari," *Studia Phaenomenologica* 17 (2017): 214, https://doi.org/10.5840/studphaen20171710.

across species are not based on anatomical similarity but on shared abilities and potentials.[43]

As Shores (2017) summarizes, while a plow horse and a race horse may appear similar, the plough horse has a deeper kinship with an ox because both share the capacity to bear heavy loads without harm.[44] These capacities are not fixed; they evolve through interaction and collaboration. Deleuze and Guattari (1980) describe a pack as "continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities, according to its thresholds and doors," emphasizing the fluid and relational nature of identity.[45]

Building relationships with other beings—even with objects—can significantly enhance the affective power of each participant. These relationships often lead to qualitative transformations in their collective capacities. For example, the combination of an ox and a plough enables both to affect the landscape in ways neither could achieve alone. Similarly, a rider and a horse together create new possibilities for movement and influence within their environment. These pack assemblages, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, develop a collective identity.[46]

In these assemblages, the affective powers of the combined participants transcend the individual powers of their components, forming new, emergent possibilities: an ox/plough-pack, a rider/horse-pack. [47]

When humans and non-humans collaborate in participatory art, they form a similar assemblage. Their interaction generates emergent affective powers that go beyond their individual capacities. Take woodworms (woodboring larvae), for example: they instinctively consume wood, but when their behavior is framed within a human-initiated artistic concept, through a process of instrumentalization, the power dynamics shift. Their biological act of consumption acquires new meaning: their instinctual actions become an expressive force. No longer mere pests, they become co-creators, shaping the material in ways that merge natural decay with human intent.

This transformation challenges traditional notions of authorship. Rather than a singular creative force, the work emerges from a dynamic interplay of agency—where the human sets the conditions, and the woodworms' natural behaviors are elevated into acts of artistic expression within the composition. Instrumentalization, in this case, does not diminish the woodworms' role; instead, it repositions them within a framework of artistic intent.

By integrating their natural behavior into an artistic process, woodworms are perceived differently. Their woodboring tendencies, typically viewed as destructive, take on a positive connotation, altering human perception of them. This shift in perspective may even elevate their status, potentially influencing attitudes toward coexistence.

In such collaborations, neither the human nor the non-human remains unchanged. The human artist redefines their role—not as a singular creator but as part of a collective

[43] Corry Shores, "What Is It Like to Become a Rat? Animal Phenomenology through Uexküll and Deleuze & Guattari," *Studia Phaenomenologica* 17 (2017): 214, https://doi.org/10.5840/studphaen20171710.

[44] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 74–75, 60–61; *Dialogues II*, rev. ed., trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Philosophie pratique* (Paris: Minuit, 2003), 166–167; *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988), 123–124; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), 314; *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 283.

[45] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), 305; *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 275; Corry Shores, "What Is It Like to Become a Rat? Animal Phenomenology through Uexküll and Deleuze & Guattari," *Studia Phaenomenologica* 17 (2017): 215, https://doi.org/10.5840/studphaen20171710.

[46] Corry Shores, "What Is It Like to Become a Rat? Animal Phenomenology through Uexküll and Deleuze & Guattari," *Studia Phaenomenologica* 17 (2017): 218–219, https://doi.org/10.5840/studphaen20171710

[47] Interpretation by Bert de Roo, Giliam Ganzevles, Mirte Van Aalst, and Glenn Deliège, *Decentering Design* (2025), 21–22, ISBN 9789464775853, Art Paper Editions.

process—and the non-human gains a voice or presence within the human-framed context of art. Together, they form an "artistic pack," a symbiotic assemblage, that challenges anthropocentric notions of creativity and authorship. This shared identity is not merely symbolic but functional, as the emergent affective powers of the pack enable new forms of action and meaning.

This artistic pack demonstrates how humans and non-humans, through their combined affective capacities, can transform landscapes, perceptions, and relationships—envisioning a shared future shaped by the collaborative potential of affective powers within an artistic framework.

Figure 8. *Normal woodworm action as non-art, source: Jaron Vandevelde*

Figure 9*. By framing it as art, the woodworms' actions are perceived differently—imbuing them with transformative and affective powers.*
source: Jaron Vandevelde.

4 Labor , Reciprocity and Compensation in the Artistic Pack

4.1 Non-Human Labor in the Artistic Pack

As we have seen, the participation of non-humans in human-initiated artistic processes—what I refer to as the artistic pack—endows non-humans with affective powers. The act of participating in the pack alters the power dynamics between human and non-human actors. Their inclusion is framed through processes of instrumentalization[48], because it involves the use of non-human beings— their bodies, behaviors, or ecological roles—in service of human-defined artistic objectives. As a result, their participation can be seen as a form of labor within the artwork.

This labor, though often instrumentalized for well-intentioned or justifiable purposes, can manifest in different ways. It may take the form of passive involvement—such as symbolic presence through representation or metaphor—or emerge through more direct, active engagement with the environment, involving both mental and physical transformation. In these cases, non-human participants function as co-creators, contributing materially and affectively to the artistic process and its outcomes.

This non-human agency within the artistic pack raises significant ethical and ecological questions about reciprocity, responsibility, and the redistribution of benefits in human–non-human collaborations. These concerns are not limited to the artistic domain but resonate with broader debates on animal labor across different systems of production.

In this context, the work of scholars such as Jason Hribal (2003)[49] and Nicole Shukin (2009)[50] becomes particularly relevant. Both explore how animals have long been entangled in human economies. Hribal argues that animals should be recognized as participants in productive labor rather than merely treated as resources.

Building on this, Jonathan Clark (2014)[51] questions why human participants in medical trials—whose labor is often passive, affective, or bodily—are considered workers, but not to non-human animals in similar positions. If their bodies, actions, or responses are essential to the outcome, why are they not acknowledged as workers in their own right? This critique reveals a systemic inequality rooted in species hierarchies and assumptions about consent.

These perspectives provide a crucial foundation for rethinking how non-human contributions are treated within human-initiated artistic collaborations. Acknowledging non-humans as laboring contributors, necessitates a rethinking of how their work is valued and compensated. In the context of artistic collaboration, I propose that this recognition should entail ensuring that non-human participants directly benefit from their contributions. Their labor must be acknowledged, and given the involuntary and unintentional nature of their role within the artistic pack (through processes of instrumentalization); their labor should be rewarded. In the framework of non-toxic instrumentalism, such compensation should take the form of tangible improvements to their (living) conditions, ensuring that their well-being is prioritized alongside their artistic or productive involvement.

[48] See chapter 3.1, "The Inevitability of Instrumentalism: Human-Initiated Participatory Art with Non-Humans.":
[49] Jason Hribal, "'Animals Are Part of the Working Class': A Challenge to Labor History," *Labor History* 44, no. 4 (2003): 435-53.
[50] Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
[51] Jonathan L. Clark, "LABOURERS OR LAB TOOLS? Rethinking the Role of Lab Animals," in *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Centre*, ed. Nik Taylor and Richard Twine (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 139-64

4.2 Compensation in the Artistic Pack through the Framework of the Ladder of More-than-Human Participation

To better understand the different ways labor can be acknowledged and compensated within the artistic pack, Stanislav Roudavski's *The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design* (2024)[52] (fig. 10) offers a useful and ethically grounded framework.

Originally developed to map degrees of participation in design, this model can also be seen as a structure through which varying levels of compensation for non-human collaborators can be understood. When applied to the artistic pack, the model highlights the ways in which non-human participants can receive benefits—both tangible and/or symbolic—in return for their involvement.

Building on Sherry Arnstein's foundational *Ladder of Citizen Participation* (1969)[53], which focuses on human engagement in governance, Roudavski adapts and expands this structure to account for the agency of non-human actors.

This extension is particularly relevant in the context of the artistic pack, where much like in participatory design, collaboration, agency, and the negotiation of roles between participants are central. In both fields, participants—whether human or non-human— engage in processes of meaning-making and world-building. Roudavski identifies six ascending levels of engagement, from *paternalism* (where non-humans are included but without agency) to *commoning* (a state of shared authorship, benefit, and care).

Each level on the ladder represents an increasing degree of acknowledgment, empathy, power redistribution, and sustained commitment. These can be interpreted as forms of compensation—material, ethical, or ecological—that recognize and value non-human contributions. The model therefore promotes a progression toward practices that are not only more inclusive but also more equitable.

Ultimately, the framework advocates for a shift toward *commoning*—a participatory ethos where all contributors, human and non-human alike, are granted recognition, autonomous agency, and long-term care. Within the artistic pack, this implies an ethics of collaboration that values all forms of labor and seeks to redistribute both authorship and reward in a way that reflects the complex interdependencies of multispecies co-creation.

The different categories conclude:

1. **Paternalism**
   Humans make decisions for non-humans without their input. Often leading to unintended consequences or neglect of non-human needs.
2. **Recognition** (*Paternalism + Acknowledgment*)
   Acknowledging non-human contributions and rights as integral to human and ecological systems, moving beyond treating ecosystems as mere resources.

[52] Stanislav Roudavski, "The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design," *Cultural Science Journal* 14, no. 1 (2024), https://doi.org/10.2478/csj-2024-0015.

[53] Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (1969): 216–224, https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225.

Arnstein's influential framework distinguishes between three levels of participation: nonparticipation (e.g., manipulation, therapy), where engagement is superficial; tokenism (e.g., informing, consultation, placation), where citizens may have a voice but no real power; and citizen power (e.g., partnership, delegated power, citizen control), which involves meaningful decision-making authority.

3. **Solidarity** (Recognition + Empathy) Developing empathy for non-humans to better understand their needs and preferences, enabling collaborative and inclusive decision-making. It values diverse lives and strives for justice, even when full agreement among stakeholders is not possible.

4. **Autonomy** (*Solidarity + Power*) Grants non-human entities the ability to pursue their interests independently. This stage emphasizes mutual respect and the recognition of non-human agency.

5. **Conviviality** (*Autonomy + Care*) Combines autonomy with mutual care and support, fostering conditions for harmonious multispecies coexistence and collaboration.

6. **Commoning** (*Conviviality + Persistence*) Creating systems of long-term, shared care and governance that include humans and non-humans, ensuring sustainable and equitable coexistence over extended timescales.

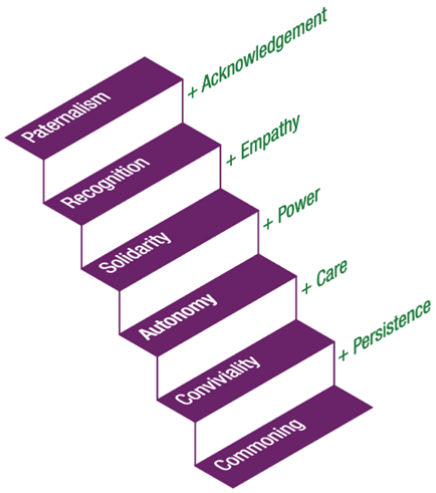

***Figure 10**. The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation Source: Stanislav Roudavski*

4.3 Practical Examples of Compensation in the Artistic Pack

We will now examine a series of practical examples that illustrate how compensation within the artistic pack can be interpreted through the framework of the Ladder of More-than-Human Participation. Each example highlights a specific step on the ladder, demonstrating how these theoretical principles take shape in practice. While some works align closely with a single form of compensation of the Ladder of More-Than-Human participation, others might incorporate multiple forms of compensation and engagement within a single project.

1. Compensation through *Paternalism*

Paternalism can be understood as *"the practice whereby powerful humans decide what is best for weaker human minorities or non-human beings and act accordingly"* [54] *(Conly, 2012)*.

Compensation through paternalistic processes in arts may emerge when motivated by good intentions. For example, a human artist might act on behalf of a non-human participant, by constructing new interspecies narratives or generating awareness within the artistic process—both of which can be meaningful forms of compensation when applied thoughtfully.

However, paternalism can also result in inadequate or even harmful outcomes. Good intentions do not always lead to positive results. As Roudavski notes, powerful humans often adopt a paternalistic attitude toward non-human collaborators, deciding what is best without fully understanding their actual needs.[55] While this approach can be justified in certain contexts, such as when adults guide children who lack the necessary skills[56], it often

[54] Sarah Conly, *Against Autonomy: Justifying Coercive Paternalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Stanislav Roudavski, "The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design," *Cultural Science Journal* 14, no. 1 (2024): 113, https://doi.org/10.2478/csj-2024-0015

[55] Stanislav Roudavski, "The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design," *Cultural Science Journal* 14, no. 1 (2024): 113, https://doi.org/10.2478/csj-2024-0015.

[56] Sarah Conly, *Against Autonomy: Justifying Coercive Paternalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

leads to negative consequences in more-than-human collaborations. [57]

The example of **Agnes Denes' "Tree Mountain – A Living Time Capsule, *11,000 Trees, 11,000 People, 400 Years"* (1992–1996)**.[58] (fig.11) illustrates how well-intentioned interventions within the artistic pack impose human logic onto ecological systems, overshadowing the agency of non-human participants. This large-scale environmental artwork involved the planting of 11,000 trees in a precise pattern on a former gravel pit in Finland. While the project was conceived as a gesture of ecological restoration and long-term environmental stewardship, it exemplifies paternalism through its insufficient consideration of the needs of its non-human participants.

In *Tree Mountain*, humans made decisions about the placement, type, and arrangement of trees without considering the natural agency of the ecosystem itself. The trees were positioned according to an aesthetic and conceptual framework determined by the human artist, rather than emerging from the spontaneous dynamics of the landscape. While the project aimed to benefit the environment, it imposed a human-designed structure onto non-human entities, demonstrating how artistic interventions, even when well-intended, can overlook the needs and autonomous behaviors of non-human participants.

This case demonstrates how paternalistic interventions can have unintended negative effects: the trees may struggle to thrive in environments that do not align with their natural tendencies, and broader ecological processes may be disrupted. Similarly, paternalism in conservation has led to practices such as species relocation, which, though well-meaning, can disrupt local ecosystems.[59]

Paternalism, while it may function when careful attention is paid to non-human participants, is often—despite good intentions—an inadequate form of compensation in the artistic pack. It tends to uphold unequal power dynamics and often fails to fully acknowledge the agency and contributions of non-human collaborators.

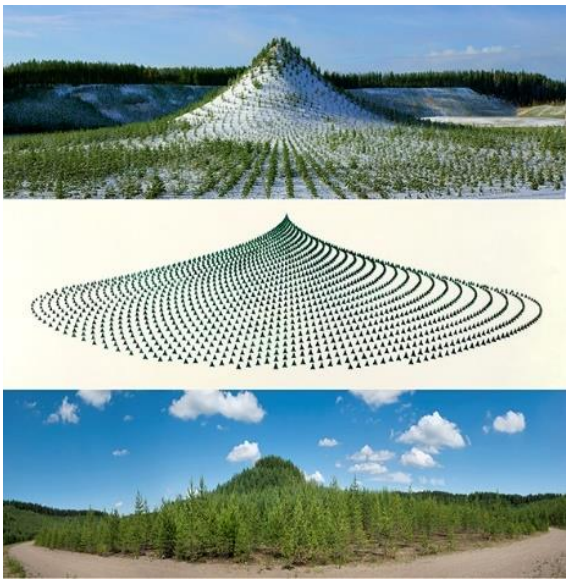

Figure 11. *Agnes Denes, Tree Mountain – A Living Time Capsule,* ***11,000 Trees, 11,000 People, 400 Years*** *(1992–1996). Courtesy of the artist.*

[57] Stanislav Roudavski, "The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design," *Cultural Science Journal* 14, no. 1 (2024): 113, https://doi.org/10.2478/csj-2024-0015.
[58] Agnes Denes, "Works," accessed April 30, 2025, http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/works4.html.
[59] A. E. Camacho, "Assisted Migration: Redefining Nature and Natural Resource Law under Climate Change," *Yale Journal on Regulation* 27, no. 2 (2010): 171–256./ Stanislav Roudavski, "The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design," *Cultural Science Journal* 14, no. 1 (2024): 113, https://doi.org/10.2478/csj-2024-0015.

2. Compensation trough *Recognition*
(paternalism + acknowledgement)

By acknowledging non-human beings as genuine co-creators and crediting their role in the creation of a work, we offer a form of compensation through recognition.

Compensation through recognition involves acknowledging non-human beings as stakeholders and agents[60]. Compensation occurs by providing respect to non-human participant in the artistic pack, thereby elevating their status within human-centric systems. In the artistic pack, this recognition can take the form of public displays, documentation, or narratives that highlight their contribution or being.

A recent example of this is the work of **Tomáš Libertíny**[61] (fig. 12). In his project, Libertíny uses the natural process of bees creating honeycomb structures as a co-creative element in his artwork. Libertíny integrates their behavior into the creation of his pieces, allowing their actions and the resulting honeycomb structures to become part of the final artwork. He acknowledges the bees as essential contributors to the artistic process, recognizing them as co-creators alongside the human artist.

Libertíny's work goes beyond merely presenting the final product; it actively highlights and celebrates the bees' role in its creation. By placing the bees at the center of the visual narrative, he publicly frames them as essential co-creators, explicitly recognizing and honoring their contribution to the artistic process. In doing so, the bees are no longer depicted as passive tools of production but are acknowledged as as participants whose agency shapes the final work.

Figure 12. *Eternity (a.k.a. Nefertiti), 2022*
Photo courtesy of Studio Libertiny

Additionally, recognition-based compensation can also take on more (un)expected anthropocentric forms. Labor contributed by non-human participants within the artistic pack may be acknowledged through financial compensation.

In this case, I will draw on the work, of Belgian artist **Koen Vanmechelen**[62] who, in the creation of some of his artworks, acquires the skins of animals, such as lions, tigers, buffaloes, and other species. (fig. 13) According to his

[60] Stanislav Roudavski, "The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design," *Cultural Science Journal* 14, no. 1 (2024): 114, https://doi.org/10.2478/csj-2024-0015.

[61] Tomas Libertiny, "Eternity Red Yellow," accessed April 30, 2025, https://www.tomaslibertiny.com/sculptures#/eternityredyellow/.

[62] Koen Vanmechelen,"Home," accessed April 28, 2025, http://www.koenvanmechelen.com.

information[63], these animals have died of natural causes in protected nature reserves or zoos. These skins are then used to create thought-provoking artworks. In this process, the animals are physically instrumentalized through the use of their skins, and symbolically, they contribute to the artwork's broader message.

If participation is understood as encompassing both active and passive involvement[64], then Vanmechelen's approach can also be seen as a form of participation. The recognition here lies in valuing not only the active agency of living organisms but also the passive and posthumous impact of non-human entities on cultural and ecological narratives.

The compensation for these animals comes in unexpected, yet meaningful financial ways. Vanmechelen pays a significant amount for these animal skins to the nature reserves who sell them, and in this way, the funds generated are subsequently channeled back into the reserves. These contributions help improve park facilities, enhance conservation efforts, and support wildlife protection initiatives. In this manner, the capitalistic art market indirectly supports the preservation of wildlife and the enhancement of natural environments.[65]

However, it is crucial that all parties involved remain guided by ethical principles and not by personal interests. If personal gain becomes the driving force, it risks undermining the integrity of these collaborations and the ecological benefits they aim to provide. Balancing the complexities of this system requires careful attention to ensure that the relationship remains sustainable, equitable, and truly beneficial to the non-human participants.

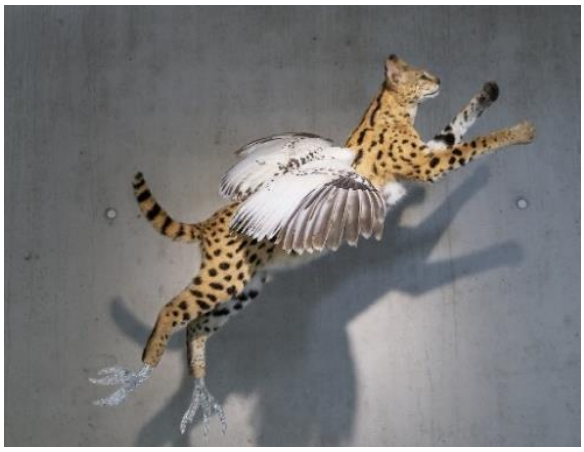

Figure 13. *Koen Vanmechelen work on display in Labiomista, Genk, Belgium*
Photo courtesy of Pauline Marie Niks / de Volkskrant

These two examples illustrate how compensation in artistic practices can take the form of recognition, by acknowledging the contributions of non-human participants within the artistic pack.

While Roudavski's emphasises on recognition as an ethical imperative in more-than-human design processes, underscoring the importance of valuing non-human participation and fostering a deeper respect for the contributions of other species to our shared world.[66]

However, as Roudavski notes, while recognition is an important beginning, it also raises the potential for tensions and disagreements, since different stakeholders — including non-human ones — may have conflicting needs. A more meaningful form of compensation would involve moving beyond mere acknowledgment toward a deeper, empathetic negotiation of these tensions—one rooted in genuine solidarity.[67].

[63] Koen Vanmechelen, personal conversation during school visit to his studio in Labiomista, Genk, Belgium, 2022.
[64] See Chapter 2.3, "Participatory Art as Tool for the Non-Human."
[65] Koen Vanmechelen, personal conversation during school visit to his studio in Labiomista, Genk, Belgium, 2022.
[66] Stanislav Roudavski, "The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design," *Cultural Science Journal* 14, no. 1 (2024): 114.
[67] Ibid., pp. 114.

3. Compensation through *Solidarity*
(Recognition + Empathy)

When non-humans participate in the artistic pack, a human artist can offer compensation by cultivating empathy and by genuinely valuing the non-humans collaborators. Solidarity, in this sense, goes beyond recognition—it acknowledges the importance of justice, even when full consensus among all participants may not be possible.[68]
It involves humans cultivating a deeper sensitivity to the needs and preferences of non-human participants, fostering more inclusive and collaborative decision-making processes.[69]

A powerful example of this is **Rosemarie Trockel's and Carsten Höller's *Ein geteiltes Haus, ein Haus für Schweine und Menschen* (A Divided House, A House for Pigs and People) (1997)**.[70] (fig .14)

In this installation, Trockel creates a divided space where pigs occupy one side of the house, and humans occupy the other. The pig side of the house reflects a certain ethical consideration for their well-being, highlighting their need for humane living conditions and drawing attention to the often-overlooked lives of non-human animals, particularly those used for industrial farming. Meanwhile, the human side of the house serves as a space for humans to reflect upon their relationship with animals, and the power structures shaping human-animal relationships.

The work exemplifies how compensation through solidarity between species can take shape. Trockel and Höller compensate the pigs' labor in the participatory art project by creating a space where human audiences are invited to reflect critically on the lives of these non-human participants, The project confronts the human-animal divide and addresses the ethical implications of industrial farming, while simultaneously advocating for a more just and empathetic interspecies solidarity.

Figure 14. *'A House for Pigs and People' at the Documenta in 1997, source: picture-alliance/dpa/Z. Uwe*

[68] Stanislav Roudavski, "The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design," *Cultural Science Journal* 14, no. 1 (2024):113, 114.

[69] Ibid., pp. 114.

[70] Carsten Höller and Rosemarie Trockel, *A House for Pigs and People / Ein Haus für Schweine und Menschen* (Cologne: Walther König, 1997).

Compensation through solidarity — by fostering empathy and offering recognition to non-human collaborators — can also take the form of granting them political agency.

An example of this potential is ***Blackfish*** **(2013), a documentary by Gabriela Cowperthwaite** that exposed the mistreatment of orcas in captivity, particularly within SeaWorld. By focusing on the story of Tilikum (fig. 16)—an orca implicated in the deaths of multiple trainers—the film reframed these animals not as spectacles of entertainment, but as sentient beings whose suffering was inseparable from the conditions of their captivity. The public response was immediate and far-reaching: SeaWorld's attendance and revenues declined, corporate sponsors withdrew support, and by 2016, the company announced the end of its orca breeding program and a phasing out of theatrical orca performances. In this way, compensation occurred by operating as a powerful tool for political and institutional change through receiving empathy and recognition due to the work.

Crucially, the orcas' participation in the film—through footage of their behaviors, vocalizations, and life histories—transformed them into political subjects. Though they did not act with what is conventionally understood as intentional agency, their mediated symbolic presence in the film nevertheless shaped discourse and policy.

Eva Meijer notes that political agency is within our anthropocentric society often narrowly defined as intentional agency, where an actor must be consciously aware of their actions and aim to influence political structures.[71] Yet she challenges this limited view by engaging with Jane Bennett's theory (2010) of *vibrant matter*, which opens up a more distributed and relational understanding of agency. According to Bennett, agency does not reside solely in individual actors, but emerges from assemblages: shifting constellations of human and non-human bodies, forces, and materials. These assemblages—comparable to the concept of the artistic pack —highlight how bodies are always embedded in dynamic networks, continuously affecting and being affected.[72] In this view, political agency is not exclusive to humans but exists on a spectrum across human and non-human actors. Even beings like earthworms, whose actions might seem instinctive or insignificant, can under the right conditions reshape their environment and impact lives.[73]

Figure 16. *Tilikum as "Shamu" at SeaWorld Orlando. Source: Wikimedia Commons*

This broader conception allows for non-human participants in artistic works to be recognized as agents—not because they operate within human frameworks of intent, but because their material and/or symbolic presence can provoke shifts in perception and contribute to social and/or ecological change. Within this framework, participation in artistic processes—whether through representation, collaboration, or material engagement—becomes a form of compensation. It elevates

[71] Eva Meijer, *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 155.
[72] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).
[73] Eva Meijer, *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 155.

non-human agency within human-dominated narratives and opens space for political resonance. Through this elevation, animals may acquire a form of influence that is capable of catalyzing systemic shifts in human understanding, ethics, and policy.

4. Compensation through *Autonomy* (*Solidarity + Power*)

Non-human participants can be compensated through *autonomy* within *the artistic pack*, a stage that builds upon solidarity by granting them the ability to pursue their interests independently.[74] In this form of compensation, non-humans are not merely included in artistic processes but are given the agency to shape outcomes on their own terms.[75] This approach acknowledges their capacity for self-determination and, in some cases, allows them to become significant autonomous contributors in artistic, design, or governance contexts.

Through given processes of autonomy, the non-human participants get compensated for their role in the artistic pack by having a stage which emphasizes mutual respect and acknowledges their agency. Autonomy challenges traditional human dominance, fostering a more equitable and reciprocal relationship between species. This model not only redefines participation but also serves as a potential precedent for broader applications of non-human agency in artistic and ecological collaborations.

An example of an artist who compensated their participators through giving autonomy in contemporary art is **Brandon Ballengée's *Malamp Reliquaries* (2001–ongoing)**[76]. (fig. 17) As both a biologist and an artist, Ballengée collaborates with amphibians affected by environmental change, particularly those with deformities caused by pollution and habitat destruction. Rather than positioning these creatures as passive subjects, his work allows them to actively shape the research and artistic process.

***Figure 17**. Brandon Ballengée's Malamp Reliquaries DFBB: Khaos (2009/10). Cleared and stained missing limb English toad from Yorkshire, England. Photo courtesy of Brandon Ballengee, Malamp*

Ballengée does not impose a human-centered narrative onto these organisms; instead, he observes their natural adaptations, struggles, and transformations, allowing their existence to dictate the project's focus. His fieldwork integrates participatory biology—what he calls "ecoactions"—where he engages with diverse communities in studying and documenting amphibians.[77] These encounters serve as both

[74] Stanislav Roudavski, "The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design," *Cultural Science Journal* 14, no. 1 (2024): 115.
[75] J. Rutten, A. Holland, and S. Roudavski, "Plants as Designers of Better Futures: Can Humans Let Them Lead?" *Plant Perspectives* 2, no. 1 (2024), https://doi.org/10/gt5ds6.

[76] Brandon Ballengee, *Malamp: Reliquaries*, https://brandonballengee.com/projects/reliquaries/.
[77] Brandon Ballengée, "Eco-Actions," *Brandon Ballengée*, accessed May 26, 2025, https://brandonballengee.com/eco-actions/.

scientific inquiry and artistic reflection, fostering a reciprocal exchange of knowledge between humans and non-humans.

As Ballengée states: *"I explore how we see the environment from the lens of the animal and what do these organisms tell us. But I try to do it in a way that is not so much hitting people over the head with a message, but actually having them experience it."*[78]

This approach embodies autonomy because the amphibians are not merely studied or aestheticized—they actively influence the trajectory of the work. Their presence, and their altered physiologies determine the project's ecological and artistic significance. Ballengée does not dictate their roles; instead, he acknowledges their agency by allowing them to shape the narrative. In doing so, his art dissolves the boundary between human and non-human decision-making, granting more-than-human life forms the power to influence environmental awareness. This empowerment—produced through the act of granting autonomy—functions as a form of compensation for the non-human labor involved.

5. Compensation through *Conviviality*
(*Autonomy + Care*)

Non-human participants can be compensated through processes of conviviality, a mode of coexistence that provides autonomy with mutual care and support.

Within the artistic pack, compensation through conviviality fosters compensation for the non-human labor in the artistic pack by proving conditions for harmonious multispecies relationships: it acknowledges their agency and encourages reciprocal engagements in which both humans and non-humans contribute to a shared, sustainable environment.

An example of this is ***OOZ* by Natalie Jeremijenko, particularly the project *For the Birds* in collaboration with Phil Taylor (September 7 – October 7, 2006, Postmasters Gallery).** This installation consisted of "urban animal infrastructures"(fig. 18)—including perches, feeding stations, and aquatic zones—designed to invite the voluntary presence of urban wildlife such as squirrels, insects, and especially birds. These structures were not only functional habitats offering clean water, shelter, and enrichment, but were also equipped with sensors and cameras that activated when animals interacted with them. Visitors to the gallery could observe these real-time interactions on large screens in the exhibition space below, (fig. 19) transforming each encounter into an aesthetic, educational, and affective experience.

Rather than exploiting animal labor for spectacle, Jeremijenko's approach emphasizes reciprocal benefit: animals gain supportive micro-environments in the urban landscape, while humans are invited into a more attentive and ethical relationship with them. The birds' contributions—through their simple acts of

[78] "Deformed Frogs and Fish: A Scientist-Artist Explores Ecological Disaster—and Hope," *Smithsonian Magazine*, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/deformed-frogs-and-fish-scientist-artist-explores-ecological-disaster-and-hope-180960711/.

dwelling, flying, or feeding—become ecological performances that reshape human perception and provoke reflection on interspecies entanglement.

Compensation through conviviality in *OOZ* is thus situated in both material and perceptual domains: materially, by offering resources to its animal collaborators; perceptually, by recognizing their agency and making space for their spontaneous actions to matter within human systems of meaning. The work depends on the animals' participation—not as spectacle, but as co-creators in a shared ecological artwork. Through this, Jeremijenko proposes a model of multispecies cohabitation where care flows in multiple directions and where artistic production becomes a practice of interdependent living.

Figure 18. *Natalie Jeremijenko and Phil Taylor, 1,000 square-foot rooftop garden equipped with sensors that interacts with New York City's bird population.*
Source: Postmasters Art Gallery.

Figure 19. *Events on the roof are captured and transmitted to the gallery space below through live video feed.*
Source: Postmasters Art Gallery.

6. Compensation through *Commoning* (*Conviviality + Persistence*)

In contrast to the previous example of compensation through conviviality, the model of commoning represents a more sustained and reciprocal approach to compensation within the artistic pack. It combines conviviality with persistence, emerging through durable systems of shared care and governance that include both human and non-human participants. These structures support long-term collaboration, fostering a more-than-human coexistence rooted in mutual responsibility, interdependence, and care.

Commoning, in this context, thus becomes a way of compensating through the dynamic practice of cohabitation, where all actors contribute to and benefit from collective stewardship over time. [79]

A compelling example of this compensation through act of commoning is the work of **Purnima Devi Barman** and the help of her fellow **'Stork Sisters' (2014 – ongoing)** in northeastern India.[80] (fig. 20) The focus of their efforts is the greater adjutant stork, once widely reviled as a pest and considered an ill omen due to its scavenging behavior and imposing appearance. By the 1990s, the global population had plummeted to just 115 individuals. "The villagers would rather cut down the trees in their backyards than have such birds in their midst," Barman noted.[81]

Figure 20. *Dr. Purnima Devi Barman, aka 'Stork Sister' on a Hargila Baby Shower*
Featured image: Roundglas
Photos by: Abdul Ghani, Purnima Devi Barman, Dhritiman Mukherjee

[79] Stanislav Roudavski, "The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design," *Cultural Science Journal* 14, no. 1 (2024): 115.
[80] Work beautifully explained in *Nature on PBS*, "Meet the Army of Women Saving India's Rarest Stork | WILD HOPE," YouTube video, July 12, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3A7OXGf8nRM.
[81] Moushumi Basu, "The 'Stork Sisters' Are Saving One of India's Largest and Least-Loved Birds," *National Geographic*, August 6, 2020, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/hargila-storks.

In response, Barman launched a grassroots conservation movement centered on building acceptance and fostering emotional connections between local communities and the stork.[82] Through this effort, she not only helped protect the species but also empowered local women, creating a model of conservation rooted in care, creativity, and community. A key aspect of this initiative was the transformation of the stork's symbolic and economic value. By integrating the bird into local crafts, textiles, tourism, and cultural festivals—such as *Hargila Baby Showers* (fig. 20)—Barman reframed the stork from a reviled scavenger to a cherished emblem of regional identity. In 2017, the *Hargila Weaving Centre* opened, where women began weaving stork motifs into stoles, towels, dresses, bags, and cushion covers. [83] This new economic model—led by women and fueled by local storytelling and artistic representation—revitalized traditional industries and created opportunities for female leadership and financial independence.

This case powerfully exemplifies commoning as a reciprocal, multi-species form of compensation—where both humans and non-humans benefit from sustained care, shared agency, and long-term commitment. Within an artistic framework, the project reimagines value and fosters collective stewardship that transcends species boundaries.

Ultimately, compensation through commoning synthesizes the entire spectrum of models within the artistic pack. Using Stanislav Roudavski's *Ladder of More-than-Human Participation* as a lens, we gain insight into how all contributors—human and non-human—can be recognized and integrated into participatory processes. His framework allows us to reflect on how non-human labor can be ethically acknowledged and compensated, aiming not just for inclusion, but for co-created futures grounded in justice, equity, and care.

4.4 Alternative Forms of Compensation within the Artistic Pack

In the broader context of non-human labor—particularly that of animals—and the question of compensation, it becomes increasingly relevant to extend the notion of working rights to non-human beings. Stanislav Roudavski's *Ladder of More-than-Human Participation* offers a valuable framework for thinking about how such compensation might be ethically structured. The rungs of this ladder—ranging from paternalism to commoning—can be understood not only as degrees of participation, but as stages within a broader vision of working rights.

Despite their goal-directed contributions to various forms of labor, animals have long been rendered invisible within dominant systems of capital and productivity.[84] Bringing their work into view, especially within the context of artistic collaboration, is not merely symbolic—it becomes a political gesture that challenges prevailing narratives of human exceptionalism. Fighting for working rights for non-human animals within the *artistic pack* has the potential to radically shift how animals are positioned in society.

As Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka propose in *Zoopolis* (2011), viewing animals as co-workers or co-citizens invites a restructured relationship based on social membership rather than ownership or utilitarian value. [85] Rights such as the ability to refuse participation *(autonomy)* or to live free from exploitation *(conviviality/ commoning)* could serve as early steps toward broader legal recognition.

[82] Ibid
[83] Ibid
[84] Hribal, Shukin, Clark, Meijer; see earlier discussion in chapter 4.1 Non-human labor in "the artistic pack."
[85] Donaldson, S., and Kymlicka, W. *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011

Indeed, such rights may act as a stepping stone toward the recognition of animals as legal persons—granting them the protections, status, and consideration currently reserved for humans. Will Kymlicka (2022) emphasizes that working rights are not endpoints, but indicators of shifting societal attitudes and growing moral inclusion.[86] Legal scholar Steven Wise (2000) and others argue for this ontological reclassification, contending that animals should no longer be treated as property but as persons, with profound implications for justice, welfare, and interspecies coexistence.[87]

Integrating these ideas into artistic practice can serve as a catalyst—creating a reflective, imaginative space where alternative forms of compensation and care are tested and exemplified. Through the lens of Roudavski's model, the *artistic pack* becomes a site of potential transformation: a space where working rights and more-than-human participation converge to imagine more just and inclusive futures between humans and non-humans.

5 Conclusion & Final Reflection

This thesis has explored the evolving terrain of participatory art as a site for interspecies collaboration, proposing that non-human beings—often considered passive, mute, or symbolically exploited in the arts—can instead be understood as co-creators within what I have termed the "artistic pack." Through a synthesis of philosophical frameworks, artistic case studies, and ethical considerations, I have argued for a broader definition of participation—one that includes both active and passive forms of engagement and that critically reconsiders the implications of instrumentalism, and compensation within human–non-human creative relationships.

Drawing from thinkers such as Eva Meijer, and Val Plumwood, and through tools like Roudavski's *Ladder of More-than-Human Participation*, I have attempted to reframe non-human involvement not as a mere extension of human authorship, but as a potentially reciprocal act—ethically complex, affectively potent, and ontologically transformative. The *artistic pack* allows us to view artistic processes as relational assemblages in which agency is distributed and where affective capacities are shared across species lines.

Nonetheless, this reconceptualization does not erase the asymmetry at the heart of human-initiated participatory art involving non-human participants. The human remains the one who frames, contextualizes, and ultimately mediates meaning—precisely because the non-human participant cannot consciously engage with their role as an artistic collaborator. This creates an inherent tension—between inclusion and projection, between recognition and instrumentalization. The risk of unintentional anthropocentrism persists, even in projects that aim to resist it. This tension must not be ignored, but rather embraced as the generative friction through which new ethical imaginaries can form. It is in the conscious, reflective negotiation of this imbalance—acknowledging it while striving toward more inclusive and just frameworks—that the true power of the artistic pack lies.

[86] Kymlicka, W. "Membership Rights for Animals." *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 91 (2022): 213–244, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246122000078.

[87] Wise, S. M. *Rattling the Cage: Toward Legal Rights for Animals* (Cambridge: Perseus Books, 2000).

Here, Val Plumwood's notion of *non-toxic instrumentalism* becomes particularly relevant. It provides a lens through which to evaluate and improve these practices. It allows for use without exploitation, influence without domination.

In this context, compensation becomes more than an ethical afterthought—it becomes a structural necessity. If participation entails labor, presence, or risk from the non-human collaborator, then some form of reciprocation is required. Building on Roudavski's *Ladder of More-than-Human Participation*, I propose a spectrum of compensatory models—ranging from paternalistic care to long-term systems of *commoning*—that allow for recognition, reciprocity, and the redistribution of benefits. Whether through paternalistic care, public recognition, legal reform, or infrastructural cohabitation, compensation mechanisms must seek to restore some of the balance lost through the anthropocentric structuring of art. In doing so, they help carve a space for commoning—a vision of long-term, shared stewardship between human and non-human within the artistic pack.

The activist urgency of this work lies in recognizing that art, when used thoughtfully, can act as a powerful catalyst for positive societal transformation. When we include non-human lives in participatory frameworks, we are not merely adding new voices to an old conversation—we are radically altering the conversation itself. We begin to design, imagine, and create with the premise that all beings—human and non-human—deserve space, recognition, and justice within our shared environments.

As an artist and researcher, I am increasingly aware of the need to approach creation not as an act of mastery but as an ongoing negotiation with other forms of life and intelligence. Artistic collaboration with non-humans is a real, embodied entanglement that comes with ethical stakes. This shift has practical, emotional, and political consequences. It demands of us slowness, humility, and a commitment to mutual care. It urges us to abandon the myth of the sovereign artist and instead embrace the role of facilitator, listener, and co-thinker—one node in a larger, multispecies network.

Still, working with non-humans must not be romanticized. There are risks of projection, co-optation, and superficiality. Without critical reflection, these collaborations can reinforce the very hierarchies they seek to undo. That is why the framework of non-toxic instrumentalism and the emphasis on meaningful compensation are so essential. They provide criteria to distinguish ethical participation from exploitative use. They remind us that intention is not enough; we must also be accountable to outcomes.

In the end, this thesis is not a conclusion but an opening. It opens toward new practices of interspecies solidarity, toward rethinking art not as something humans do to the world, but as something we do with them. It invites artists and thinkers to ask ethical questions, to sit longer with discomfort, and to begin building frameworks that recognize the other—not as metaphor, resource, or curiosity—but as collaborator, citizen, and kin.

Bibliography

Adams, Carol J. "The Feminist Traffic in Animals." In *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature,* edited by Greta Gaard, 195–214. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.

Alÿs, Francis. *The Green Line (Sometimes Doing Something Poetic Can Become Political and Sometimes Doing Something Political Can Become Poetic).* Video, 17:41 min. 2004. In collaboration with Philippe Bellaiche, Rachel Leah Jones, and Julien Devaux. Accessed April 30, 2025. https://francisalys.com/the-green-line/.

Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation." *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (1969): 216–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225.

Ballengée, Brandon. *Malamp: Reliquaries*. https://brandonballengee.com/projects/reliquaries/.

———. "Eco-Actions." *Brandon Ballengée*. Accessed May 26, 2025. https://brandonballengee.com/eco-actions/.

Basu, Moushumi. "The 'Stork Sisters' Are Saving One of India's Largest and Least-Loved Birds." *National Geographic*, August 6, 2020. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/hargila-storks.

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship.* London: Verso, 2012.

Camacho, A. E. "Assisted Migration: Redefining Nature and Natural Resource Law under Climate Change." *Yale Journal on Regulation* 27, no. 2 (2010): 171–256.

Cambridge Dictionary Online. "Art." Accessed April 30, 2025. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/art.

Clark, Jonathan L. "LABOURERS OR LAB TOOLS? Rethinking the Role of Lab Animals." In *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Centre,* edited by Nik Taylor and Richard Twine, 139-64. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Conly, Sarah. *Against Autonomy: Justifying Coercive Paternalism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation.* Translated by Daniel W. Smith. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2*. Paris: Minuit, 1980.

———. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. London and New York: Continuum, 2004.Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. *Dialogues.* Paris: Flammarion, 1996. [2007. *Dialogues II,* revised edition, English trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York: Columbia University Press].

Deleuze, Gilles. *Spinoza: Philosophie pratique.* Paris: Minuit, 2003. [1988. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy,* English trans. by Robert Hurley. San Francisco: City Lights].

Denes, Agnes. "Works." Accessed April 30, 2025. http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/works4.html.

De Roo, Bert, Giliam Ganzevles, Mirte Van Aalst, and Glenn Deliège. *Decentering Design*. Art Paper Editions, 2025. ISBN 9789464775853.

Dickie, George. *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974.

Dickie, George. *The Art Circle.* New Haven: Haven Publications, 1984.

Dissanayake, Ellen. "Genesis and Development of Making Special: Is the Concept Relevant to Aesthetic Philosophy?" *Revista de Estetika* 54 (2013): 83–98.

Dissanayake, Ellen. "The Concept of Artification." In *Early Rock Art of the American West: The Geometric Enigma,* edited by Ekkehart Malotka and Ellen Dissanayake, 91–129. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Donaldson, Sue, and Will Kymlicka. *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1981.

Höller, Carsten, and Rosemarie Trockel. *A House for Pigs and People / Ein Haus für Schweine und Menschen*. Cologne: Walther König, 1997.

Hribal, Jason. "'Animals Are Part of the Working Class': A Challenge to Labor History." *Labor History* 44, no. 4 (2003): 435-53.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment.* 1790.

Kymlicka, Will. "Membership Rights for Animals." *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 91 (2022): 213–244. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246122000078.

Libertiny, Tomas. " Eternity Red Yellow." Accessed April 30, 2025. https://www.tomaslibertiny.com/sculptures#/eternityredyellow/.

Meijer, Eva. *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy.* New York: NYU Press, 2019.

National Geographic. See Basu, Moushumi.

Ongstad, Solveig. "Aesthetics or Communication?: Social Semiotic Traits of Structured Forms in Studies of 'Animal Beauty.'" *Biosemiotics* 17 (2024): 769–792. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12304-024-09587-6.

PBS Nature. *Meet the Army of Women Saving India's Rarest Stork | WILD HOPE.* YouTube video, July 12, 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3A7OXGf8nRM.

"Participatory Art." *Tate*. Accessed May 23, 2025. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/participatory-art.

Pepper, Angela. "Political Agency in Humans and Other Animals." Conference presentation, Montreal Workshop, March 5, 2016.

Plumwood, Val. *The Eye of the Crocodile.* Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2012.

Rancière, Jacques. *Hatred of Democracy.* New York: Verso Books, 2007.

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Roudavski, Stanislav. "The Ladder of More-than-Human Participation: A Framework for Inclusive Design." *Cultural Science Journal* 14, no. 1 (2024): 103–118. https://doi.org/10.2478/csj-2024-0015.

Rutten, J., A. Holland, and S. Roudavski. "Plants as Designers of Better Futures: Can Humans Let Them Lead?" *Plant Perspectives* 2, no. 1 (2024). https://doi.org/10/gt5ds6.

***Secret World of Sound with David Attenborough*. Written by Dugald Maudsley. Featuring Bridget Appleby, Gemma Brandt, and Rebecca Hart. 3 episodes. Netflix, 2024. https://www.netflix.com/title/81571854.**

Shukin, Nicole. *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Shore, Corry. "What Is It Like to Become a Rat? Animal Phenomenology through Uexküll and Deleuze & Guattari." *Studia Phaenomenologica* 17 (2017): 205–222. https://doi.org/10.5840/studphaen20171710.

Smithsonian Magazine. "Deformed Frogs and Fish: A Scientist-Artist Explores Ecological Disaster—and Hope." https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/deformed-frogs-and-fish-scientist-artist-explores-ecological-disaster-and-hope-180960711/.

Spinoza, Baruch. B.d.S. *Opera Posthuma, Quorum Series Post Praefationem Exhibetur.* Edited by Jarich Jelles, Lodewijk Meijer, and Israël de Paull. Amsterdam: Israel de Paull, 1677.

Tolstoy, Leo. *What Is Art?* 1898.

Vanmechelen Koen. Accessed April 30, 2025. http://www.koenvanmechelen.com.

Vanmechelen, Koen. Personal conversation in his studio in Labiomista, Genk, Belgium, 2022.

Wise, Steven M. *Rattling the Cage: Toward Legal Rights for Animals*. Cambridge: Perseus Books, 2000.