



History of the Bargehouse. Recipe pages taken from an old Liebig recipe book. Letterpress with red ink. A2.

Probing the history of Oxo tower and the Bargehouse brings up some murky facts. Originally a power station stood on the site.

It provided electricity for the Post Office. In 1928 Liebig Extract of Meat Company (LICO), along with its subsidiary company Oxo, bought the power station, knocked it down and built on storage and warehouse facilities.

Liebig was established by a German chemist in the mid-1800's.

He 'discovered' the supposed nutritional qualities of extracts from the glands of cattle (Oxo). Liebig called these 'Oxid glandular preparations' (OGP), and claimed they cured many diseases.

To support manufacture, the company opened a factory in the town of Fray Bentos, Argentina. Canned/corned 'beef' soon became another popular product; thousands of cattle were slaughtered each year from Argentina, South Africa and Indonesia (Zimbabwe).

On 3rd May 1930 the Oxo tower was opened. At the time it was the second tallest building in London. The architect, Moore, got round the ban on skyline advertising by incorporating the letters Oxo into the window design.

It is most likely that the bodies of murdered animals used in stock cubes were kept in the cold storage facility of Bargehouse: a newspaper reports theft of 10 crates of 'meat' at Bargehouse.

COLD MEAT on 4th December 1915.

In April 2023 I had the opportunity to take part in an interim show at the Bargehouse, part of the Oxo tower complex on the South bank of the river Thames. A little research in the National Newspaper Archives revealed that the Bargehouse had been built as a warehouse facility by Liebig and its subsidiary company, Oxo, who made extract of meat stock in the late 1900s and first half of the 20th century. It seems the Bargehouse was used to store crates of dead animals. I used this as an opportunity to make a site specific installation focused on farmed animals and to slightly narrow my research question:

What can I Learn about how site specific installation can interrupt the iconography of oppression, objectification, invisibility (as subjects) and discourses of violence in our society; specifically toward the 'farmed' animal?

The Tate defines a site specific installation as follows:

As a site-specific work of art is designed for a specific location, if removed from that location it loses all or a substantial part of its meaning. The term site-specific is often used in relation to installation art.

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/site-specific>

I also had the chance to choose the specific site for the installation and chose a small room, with one side open to the larger gallery, that was on the 4th floor - a fairly dark, and generally distressed environment that I thought would fit my work.

Because I am concerned not to distance myself from my culture in which farmed animals are treated as objects of consumption, I titled the installation, '**I Learned Not to Look**' and placed it in my own experience of growing up on a Dairy/Sheep farm in North Yorkshire, where the discourse of objectification of other animals is entrenched in the farming community, and where eating them is a daily occurrence.



Front view of the installation showing the main components:

- paper mache child (me) wearing her school uniform with a cotton apron:
- holding a knitted cow (acrylic fibre)
- table with oilcloth
- the liebig recipe book on table (found on ebay),
- oxo cubes (vegan green variety painted red), and an
- old meat grinder found in a second hand shop.

-A video of Stirks at the auction mart I went to as a child in North Yorkshire - I focused mainly on their eyes.

- background kitchen objects
- Liebig back page from the recipe book enlarged to an A1 poster.
- a drawing of cows with the words 'non so marginalised and invisible' from the writing of John Berger, printer in Letterpress and becoming more faint on each repetition.
- On the right wall - the history of the building printed on pages of the recipe book (all the recipes include Liebig meat extract).

I see methodology as the understanding of how research itself is viewed. **What kind of research do I think I am doing? In what sense might I claim to be doing 'research'?** I see Method as the practices I adopt for conducting my research/making my work. The next pages briefly outline my methodological assumptions and the methods I am honing in on - installation and ficingiong.

Methodology

I view my work generally as Visual Activism - that is I do not take a neutral stance on the cruelty to animals and I want to see it stop. Visual Activism is focused on raising awareness of social justice issues (see Hartle and White, 2022). I read the following in the foreword to the Whitechapel gallery series 'Documents of Contemporary Art':

(art is)...no longer grounded in traditional aesthetics but centered on significant ideas, topics and themes ranging from the everyday to the uncanny, the psychoanalytical to the political (Vishmidt, ed. 2021).

However Visual Activism is not itself a research methodology (it does not set out to create new knowledge) - it is an aim for outcomes of the work, related to the hope that the work will raise questions, generate debate and bring about change. My understanding of art as research was furthered by attending a research week at Konstfack university in Sweden in January 2023. Artist research was defined as follows:

Sometimes defined through its capacity to incorporate the intuitive, the pre-conceptual, and the non-linguistic, artistic research contributes to the production and dissemination of new knowledge in and through the practice of art, crafts and design...

Art is a fundamentally critical, exploratory practice, able to make visible the hidden threads driving everyday practices and events. Research projects in Art adopt a critical vision on our societies, their history, on prevailing norms and possible future forms of co-existence. Through these projects, new knowledge is made available on the artistic practice itself, as well as on its intimate relation to our daily experiences...

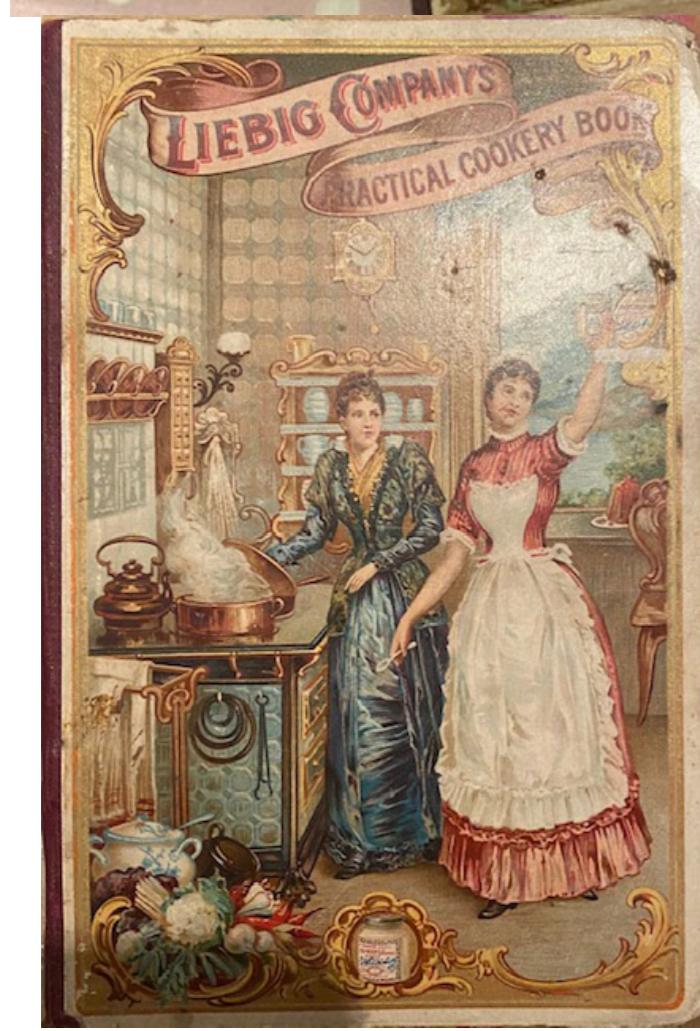
In Art, the methodological starting point is our own artistic practice. Research explores the untried; new working methods are tested, and new forms of dialogue and cooperation between fields of knowledge are established. In an open and interdisciplinary dialogue, Art interacts with the Crafts' material tradition, but also with the humanities, social sciences and technological disciplines. (<https://www.konstfack.se/en/Research/Fine-Art/>)



The window and broken tiles in this space added the sense of being in an old farm kitchen.

Speakers mentioned the following:

- Artistic Research involves unlearning, re-learning. Re-searching. Re-looking. Re-invention.
- We are not using theory to describe, or as a hypothesis to be 'proved', but to position self.
- Artistic research develops our artistic capacity.
- We descend into the hole and come back to share our knowledge.
- Rethink the obvious.
- Artistic Research involves exploration of social norms and practices
- As well as 'What Kind of Knowledge'? Think about 'Who are we doing our research for?'
- Artistic research relates to our ability to respond 'Re-sponsibility'.
- Reflect on artistic position.
- Rather than ask 'what is research' ask 'what can research do?'
- Challenge sedentary forms of knowledge production.
- Alternative ways of thinking for social transformation, emancipation and solidarity entail alternative methods of investigation.
- Art as Research is a creative, imaginative way of finding alternatives.
- Art as Research is a critique of traditional scientific and qualitative approach to ontology and epistemology (ie knowledge viewed differently, as well as the researchers relationship to the researched).
- Art as Research begins as a hunger for transformation.
- It is not what you know that matters, but how that knowledge transforms your life.
- The research object constantly changes.
- If knowledge requires empathy, but also difference – revisit places of not knowing, listen to other animals, glaciers, Forrests that find it hard to empathise with us.
- Difference must be welcome. Confront viewer with different forms of life, but the other must be recognised as an alternative self to engage empathy.
- What is at stake? What kind of world view might we create? Are we trying to reinforce or introduce ?
- What is an image? What do images do? What can we do with images? How do images create different experiences and moments in time? How can an image be critical?
- Research is an inherent attempt to patch or mend the world.



The Liebig cookery book, found on ebay, produced by the company who bought the site on which the bargehouse was built in 1927 to build warehouse facilities and the Oxo tower. Liebig also owned a factory in Frey Bentos, Argentina where they manufactured Frey Bentos 'meat'. These products were of course made from slaughtered cattle.

- The work lies between documentary, experiential and fictional narratives.
- Give space and form to other stories.
- Drawing as political practice. Drawing as a tool to communicate.
- Drawing as an expression of identity. Drawing as a performance.
- The impossibility of seeing.
- Research as a possibility for action/participation. Research to make visible and challenge norms.
- The work is about trauma. Nature as a silent witness.
- How do we interrupt the human gaze and produce a counter gaze?
- How do we produce images without perpetuating the gaze of the perpetrator?
- Animal imaginaries – what are the possibilities for alternative relationships between human and non human? How can they be imagined (art is poor in visions of the future).
- Violence of discourse e.g. in food industry.
- Use Critical discourse analysis

Every single one of these points is important for me to think about. The last six points are crucial: from the start I viewed my methodology as being rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) does not lie in the traditional scientific, quantitative, objectivist view of knowledge that uses methods of experiment or observation. Nor does it lie in the other major tradition of research - the interpretivist or qualitative. The interpretivist or qualitative view of research is based on understanding of how 'subjects' make sense of their experiences. Qualitative methods usually involve collecting data through interview.

Instead CDA involves identifying dominant narratives and what they contain. It asks what kind of ideas underpin the narrative/discourse, and also in whose interest it operates. In art it involves making an intervention that comments on these narratives (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, 2008). (see Bell Hooks. Talking Back).



Top view showing a different clip from the video. Right - the bottom of the Liebig cookery book - back cover - A1 with sash - Nothing is so marginalised or invisible. Same text (from John Berger) used in letter-press on the A1 drawing below, becoming more invisible.



Method. 1. Installation

'Installation art champions a shift in focus from what art visually represents to what it communicates. Installation artists are less focused on presenting an aesthetically pleasing object to viewers as they are enfolding that viewer into an environment or set of systems of their own creation. Tweaking the subjective perception of the viewer is the artist's desired outcome. Pieces belonging to this movement resonate with our own human experiences – like us they exist within, and are always in conversation with, their lived environments.'

'Pieces belonging to this category (visitor engagement) of Installation art shift the focus from art as a mere object to art as an instigator of dialogue. By occupying spaces so intentionally the artwork forces viewers into close interactions, so that viewing Installation art is more akin to an act of engagement than to one of contemplation.'

'Installation art also overlaps with the Conceptual art movement, since they both prioritize the importance of ideas over the work's technical merit. However, Conceptual art tends to be more understated and minimalist, whereas Installation art is often bold and more object-based.'

'Initially, art critics focused solely on the site-specific and ephemeral nature of Installation art-work to define it, but this focus shifted as proponents of the genre began to make work referencing cultural contexts and social concerns.'

(All quotes from <https://www.theartstory.org/movement/installation-art>)

Groys (2009) raises the political implications of installation art, including the autonomy of the artist. He writes that 'A conventional exhibition is conceived as an accumulation of art objects placed next to one another in an exhibition space to be viewed in succession....the exhibition space works as an extension of neutral, public urban space.'

The curator's role is to safeguard the public character of the space, making art works accessible to the public..to publicize them ...'It is obvious that an individual artwork cannot assert its presence by itself, forcing the viewer to look at it. It lacks the vital energy and health to do so.' The word curator is etymologically related to 'cure'. However Groys argues that curation both cures, but at the same time further contributes to the art-works illness. Groys argues that installation art radically changes the role and function of the exhibition space. It symbolically privatises the public space of an exhibition, and is 'designed according to the sovereign will of an individual artist'. While traditional art is defined by its material support - canvas, stone etc, the material of installation art is space itself.



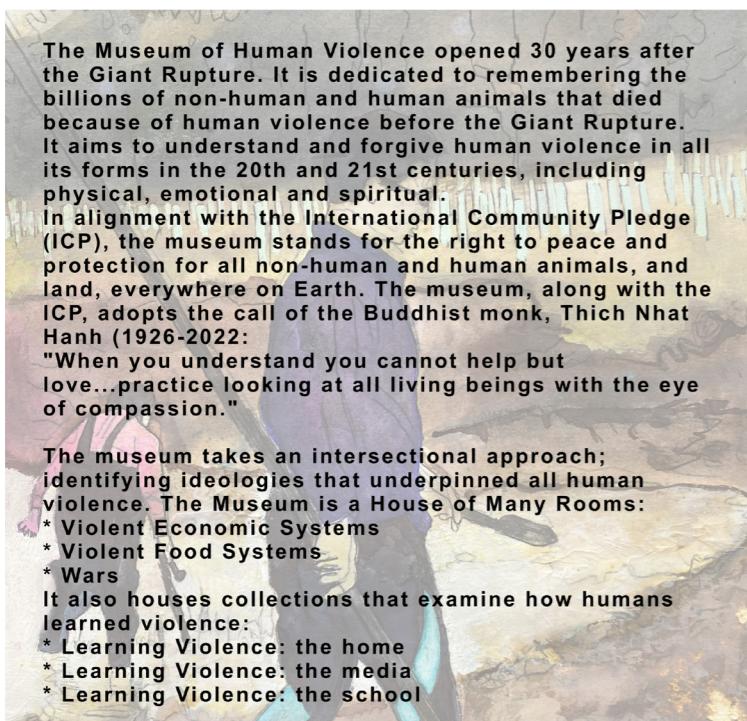
MUSEUM OF HUMAN VIOLENCE

NEW GALLERY
OPENING:

LEARNING VIOLENCE: SCHOOLING

JULY
3-8
2063

Above: image showing part of the installation. Left: A1 poster outside this room with information about the Museum of Human Violence. Most importantly it is set in **2063**.



ADDRESS: Peckham Road, SE5. OPENING: 11.00 - 17.00 Mon-Sat

'the installation is material par excellence, since it is spatial- and being in the space is the most general definition of being material. The installation transforms the empty, neutral, public space into an individual artwork- and it invites the visitor to experience this space as the holistic, totalising space of an artwork. Anything included in such a space becomes a part of the artwork simply because it is placed inside this space'. The point here is that the selection of what to include, where and how to place it, becomes the sovereign perogative of the artist alone: the focus on autonomy chimes with artwork that focus on questioning 'power-over' the 'other'. Importantly, the visitor too becomes part of the artwork.

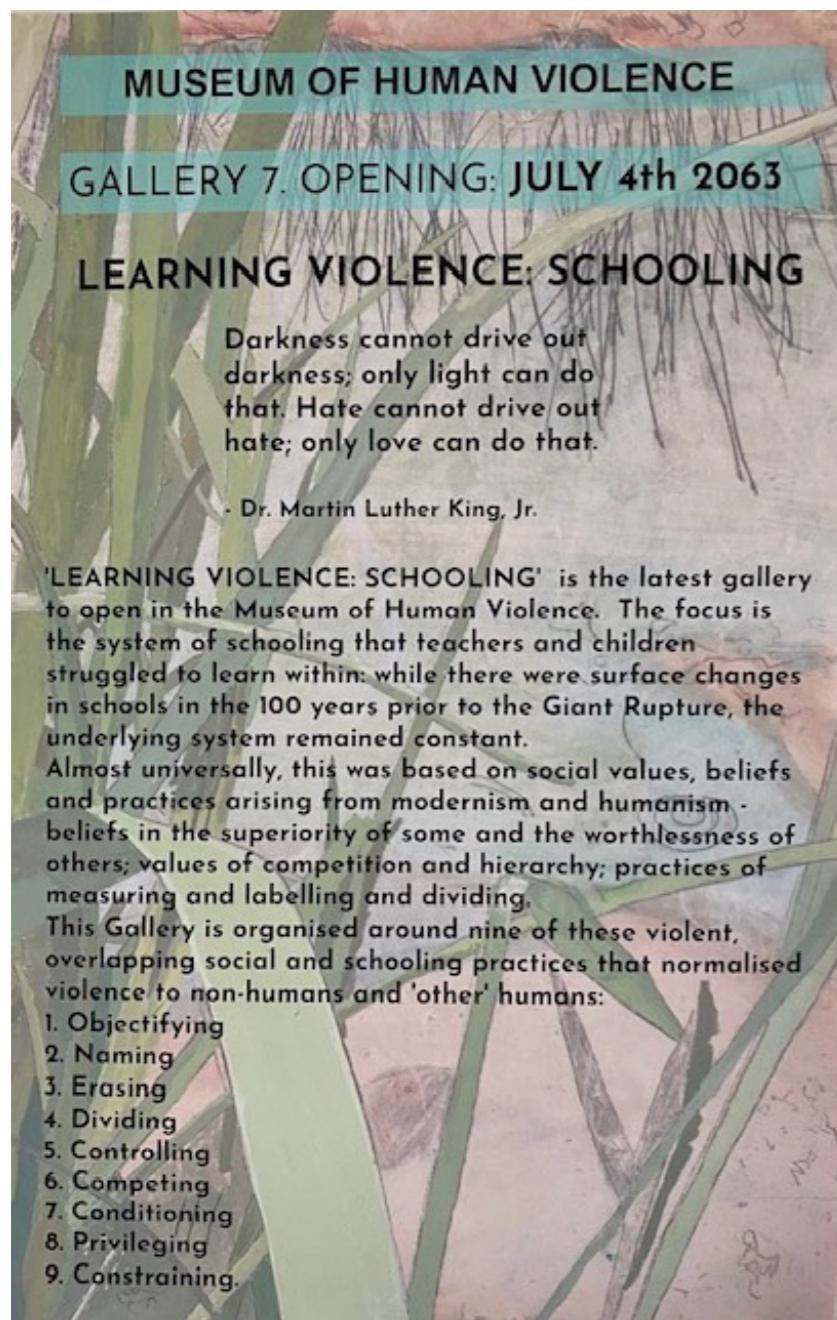
Method. 2. Fictioning/Speculative fiction/ Experiments in imagining otherwise (Olufemi, 2021).

The Museum of Human Violence, (MHV), combined the methods of installation (non site specific) with fictioning (building on Collages). The research question slightly developed: 'What can I learn about how installation combined with fictioning, can interrupt objectification, invisibility (as, subjects) and discourses of violence in our culture; specifically toward the 'other' animal?

By placing the museum in the future, where human violence has ended, we can more easily identify and critique violent discourses of our own time, and distance from them so we are less likely to feel criticised, and can empathise. I chose to focus on schooling because it is an experience we share, but also because it is not an experience we generally associate with violence. In MHV I look at normalising discourses of violence explicitly, and am interested to trace them to our treatment of other animals. The concept of the MHV, set in the future, gives many possibilities for ongoing work.

... it is possible to imagine ourselves differently. It is incumbent upon us as readers, citizens and authors to do so more often, in more ways, and including more kinds of people. Only through different imaginings will the world's oppressive structures shift (Earle, 2019:3).

Braidotti (2022: pp 224-229) writes about Afrofuturist fiction, for example the work of Octavia Butler and N.K. Jemisin: 'The authority and transformative energy that are missing from a traumatic past and the harsh conditions of the present can be borrowed from the future, defined as a site of empowerment to come' (p. 226).



Two images from the installation. On the left, the poster advertising the opening of the latest gallery in the Museum on July 4th 2063. The use of tense in all text is important.

Anything referring to 'what used to happen pre-rupture' is written in past tense. Reference to the Museum in 2063 is written in the present tense.

Below: booklets to take away with 'map' of the whole of the new Gallery: Learning Violence: Schooling, and short information about each 'Stop' in it. The main installation focuses on only stop 3 of the 9 stops in the Schooling Gallery.



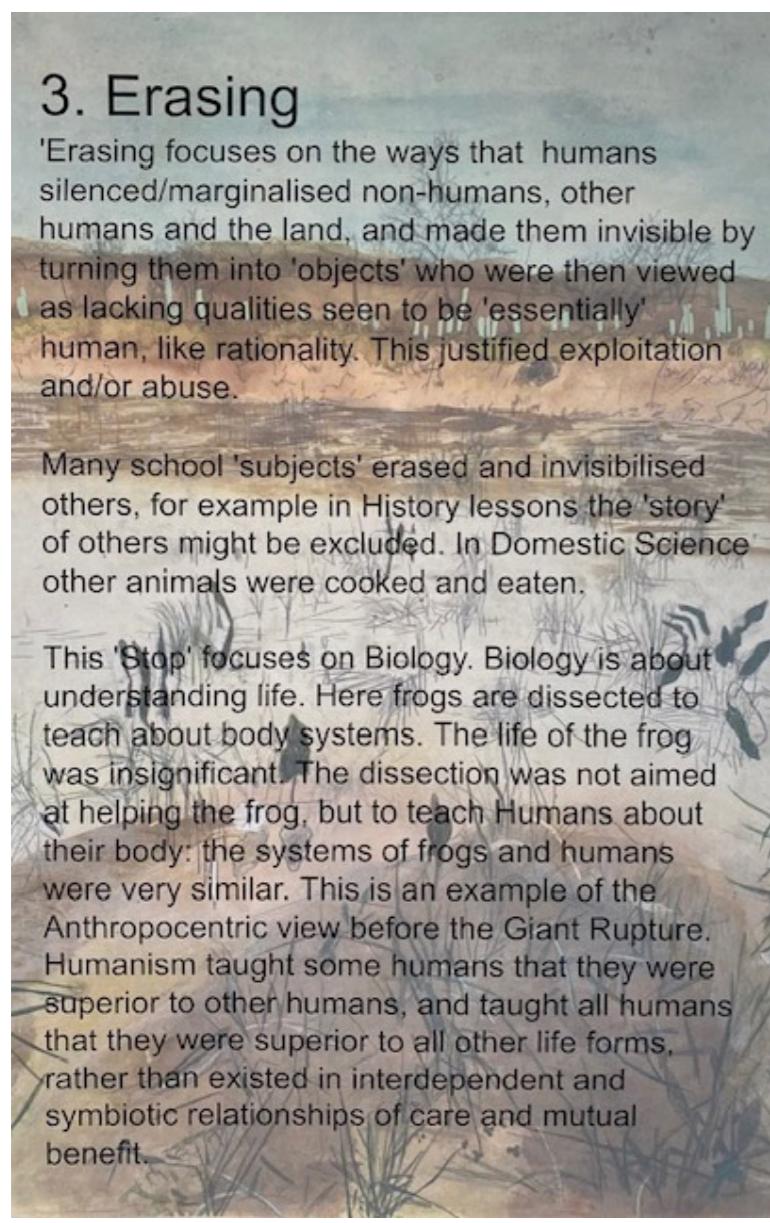
The philosopher, Donna Haraway, goes beyond suggesting fictioning, to using it as a 'method' herself. For example, 'Staying with the Trouble' (2016) ends with the fictional story of five generations of Camilles who inhabit the devastated earth during the next 400 years. They are given monarch butterfly genetic patterning to enable them to make closer relationships with butterflies and work with them to make their continued existence a possibility.

Burrows and Sullivan (2019: 2) write that they use fictioning:

... as a verb to signal the marking out of trajectories different to those engendered by the current organisation of life, as well as fiction as intervention on, in, and augmentation of, existing reality. In this sense, they argue, fiction can take on a 'critical' power when it is set against, or foregrounded within, a given reality.

Burrows and Sullivan agree with Statkiewicz (2009) that fictioning involves a collapse of any hierarchies between art and philosophy - and point out that philosophy has long been concerned with modes of narration and play that produce truth or unconcealment. They point out that this is increasingly a concern in the practices of contemporary art (often related to art as activism). The authors suggest that fictioning is most powerful in art when there is a play of fiction AS life and reality: in other words a blurring between 'fact' and fiction.

I understand this in relation to my work: I present 'The Museum of Human Violence' (MHV), set in 2063, as FACT. The visitors are asked to imagine they are in a future space and world that is very different from the world we inhabit now. They are part of that world, and this might raise questions for them about whether they are still human or Cyborgs, or AI. I have been reflecting on how different this is from reading a science fiction novel or watching a science fiction film - here we know we are reading about the future, not in the future ourselves. The installation MHV is more similar to a game in which we enter a future world - but here again, we would make the choice to play the game, understanding its parameters. In MHV visitors do not know before they step inside that they are entering a future world.



The final poster in this installation focuses specifically on Stop 3: 'Erasing', with a focus on how humans invisibilised non humans, other humans and the land. This poster forms the entry point to the installation.

Importantly in 2063 AI has collaborated with Cyborgs to set up the Museum of Human violence.

Ethics

My thinking about ethics is influenced by both ecofeminist ethics of care and posthumanist vital materialism. Leonard (2020) argues, from a new materialist perspective, Art is an act of environmental and cultural stewardship, 'creating new possibilities and differences in the virtual that are merciful, graceful, and hopeful'.

To support this argument he uses the ideas of Agential Realism (Barad, 2007) and Affirmative Ethics (Braidotti, 2019). Like other post humanist philosophers, he draws on a philosophy of immanence to counter the 'circular perpetuation of violence.' So far as I can understand, the theory of immancence, in the writing of Sinoza, holds that God is not outside of or separate from the material world, but part of it.

New materialism, in the work of Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2019) de-centers human aims and goals. Both of their writings are ethically focused since they examine the dynamic relationships of matter to focus on what new relationships form. According to Barad matter does not possess inherent fixed properties but is a collection of atoms that exist in a relationship with other atoms, temporarily developing qualities until a new relation is formed. Leonard uses the example of a hammer which is not a hammer until it strikes something.

From this perspective subjects are always in the process of becoming something else: every action is an ethical action affecting and being affected by other matter. This way of thinking, Leonard proposes, means breaking away from dualist thought to immanent understanding of how entities are emerging and how they influence future becomings. It means that the world is constantly dynamic. Consequently Braidotti writes:

Post human thinking ... is the creation of concepts to assist with the complexities of the present with a focus on actualizing the virtual. Since our thinking and actions influence matter's becoming in the virtual, all our thoughts and actions need ethical considerations since "we-are-all-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-and-the-same" (Braidotti, 2019: 157)

Ethics, contd.

In other words, in the writing of Donna Haraway, ‘it matters what thoughts think thoughts.’ (Haraway, 2016). It is important to stress here that becoming does not produce a new ‘thing’ but a new relationship. The implications for art are that rather than reflecting binaries in artworks, new materialism stresses how engaging with the artwork can produce new relational differences.

‘Art is not a binary statement but a provocation to change the becoming of the world... The ethics of new materialism go beyond describing the world as is, to describing how things ought to be in the world’ (Leonard, 2020). I hope in my work to go beyond describing the binary exploitative relationship between human and non-human and instead, through setting it in the future in which these exploitative relationships no longer exist, provoke and challenge the visitor to think about what has to change in order for this to be the case.

Barad (2007) sees new materialism as inherently ethical since a person’s actions always influence others: Agential realism is a recognition that all our actions are entangled. For Braidotti Affirmative Ethics is about constructing horizons of hope in the face of injustices. This calls for a critical engagement with the present.

Leonard (2020) goes on to discuss mercy, grace and hope. In his reading, mercy relates to compassion - to withholding punishment that is rightly deserved to increase the chance of positive transformation. Grace is providing kindness when it is not deserved. Hope is to ‘desire, anticipate or expect fulfillment of a particular actualisation of the virtual which has yet to be actualised (Leonard, p.16). Leonard gives an example of hope in works of Speculative fiction.

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