

POST-FUTURE ESSAYISM

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This text is based on Eva la Cour's presentation at the Center for Applied Ecological Thinking (CApE) on June 3, 2025. CApE provides the framework for Eva la Cour's postdoctoral project *Scenes of Fieldwork* (2025–2027), which is also affiliated with the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at the University of Copenhagen. The project is funded by the Novo Nordisk Foundation's grant for practice-based artistic research.

POST-FUTURE ESSAYISM

I arrived at the idea of post-future essayism out of a fundamental desire for a future unlike the one presented to us today as inevitable. It opposes, that is, a deterministic belief that the system currently imposed on us is the only system possible and names the effort to show the future to be undetermined; it certifies our predicament to be unresolved. This is not to be understood as a kind of disregard for the future consequences of our actions: it is, rather, a shift in focus from linear explanatory models (where “linear” indicates a way of conceiving time and of rationalising value) toward historical effect and struggle.

The post- in post-future essayism doesn’t declare the future to be cancelled. It’s a question of challenging the structures that permit me to imagine and describe only a specific kind of future through my work. The essayism, meanwhile, signals a methodological approach to that problem. It’s a modest and committed, if passionate, way of making an attempt – from essayer, the French verb for “to try”.

It’s perhaps already obvious that this presentation isn’t the traditional artist’s talk. I won’t be showing images of works to discuss how they came about, or what the intentions behind them were, or anything like that. I seek, rather, to contribute to (or maybe intervene in) assumptions of what applied ecological thinking is; what it can be.

So I speculate: what are the consequences for applied ecological thinking in a time when Danish colonial history and relations have (finally) come to public consciousness? And how are we to tackle the wave of technological globalisation, driven by the cryptomania of the extreme right, in which the imposition of a neo-imperial, totalising, technological future is ordained as inevitable? Can post-future essayism bring about a less instrumental, authoritative, and formative rationality in favour of a more incongruent, situated and affective rhetoric – in relation to the climate crisis, for example? And what forms and expressions can artistic practice as research provide in response to these questions?

It's relevant that my approach is artistic research. In short, I understand this to be research in which artistic practice serves a central role in the investigation's execution. Or research that requires an artistic process; that can't be conducted out without it.

In other words: cultural studies is not my field.

But nor is it art history – my approach isn't empirical.

I'm oriented towards artistic production.

With that said, I've divided this presentation into three parts. First, I'll situate my artistic practice and touch on how post-future essayism articulates a distinct position in relation to the essay film. In the longer second part that follows, I'll introduce my postdoctoral project here at CapE which, in the context of interdisciplinary collaboration with scientific research, seeks to (re)negotiate

the (historical) role of the artist figure in Arctic terrains with colonial histories and its entanglement with present-day ecological and social crises. In the final part, I connect that aim to my concept of post-future essayism and try to say something about its relevance as a methodological reorientation and epistemological strategy.

1. THE ESSAY FILM

A little biography to begin. I was trained as a visual artist in the first decade of the millennium. At this time, following the first wave of the 1950s–1970s, the essay film had begun to re-emerge as a promising strategy and a reflective approach to an increasingly complex media environment.

The essay film offered a way of relating to a reality constituted by networks, in which new technologies were increasingly understood as being entangled with the human brain; subjectivity was an effect of this entanglement (by way of the role played by technologies in shaping human perception, experience, and interpretation of the world).

But then what always happens happened: instead of becoming a strategy permitting some kind of liberation, the essay film became a popular style. Or, as the artist Hito Steyerl so appositely asked at the time: “Has the essay as form been replaced by the essay as conformism? ... Has the essay become a dominant form of narrative in times of post-Fordist globalization?”¹



Steyerl's point was that "the essay as form" no longer served, necessarily, to challenge the standardised and homogeneous identities it once did.² Instead, she suggested, the popularity of the essay film had come to reflect post-Fordist demands for diversity, mobility, extreme flexibility and forms of attention described by distraction, in which the ideal subjectivity is hybrid and agile.

But what if, others speculated, we consider the essay film less as a genre and more as an (im)possibility? In this instance, an (im)possibility within the conditions of cinema itself. How, and to what extent, can the essayistic be understood as the very desire to liberate these conditions?³

In line with these kind of speculations, post-future essayism positions itself as distinct in relation to the essay film. It seeks to sustain the essay film's historical, critical and experimental approach to audiovisual production while acknowledging it as a tradition originating in the early avant-garde filmmakers of the 1920s and 1930s.

In other words: I don't entirely agree with Hito Steyerl and the understanding of the essay film as an obsolete genre. For me, the issue isn't altogether post-essayistic forms, works and ideas – it is the post-future within the essay, a methodology that looks beyond the post-millennium celebration of the essay film as a personal and subjective mode of expression, beyond the essay film's glorification of individual auteur visions.



Post-future essayism is grounded in a process-oriented and collaborative ethos. What drives it is less a vision owing something to film – an idea of the future-as-film, complete and releasable – and more a kind of negotiation that belongs in the editing room. Or in the street. Post-future essayism is a way of working (against) images that totalise what they depict: it's a question of treating filmmaking as an environment highly sensitive to influence. A malleable process. It's an exercise in remaining open to what happens during the editing process, without losing focus.

From the anthropological theory of ethnographic fieldwork, I've drawn inspiration from Marilyn Strathern's idea that the decisive axis of isolation or separation it is not space but time.⁴ According to Strathern, "the ethnographic moment" occurs when an observation or lived experience (connected to fieldwork) is recreated in the reflective and analytical space of writing. Strathern's notion of the ethnographic moment, then, is a matter of recognising fieldwork as something that takes place in two locations. Encounters and impressions "out there" are active and consequent "back home," so to speak.

I've spent quite some time considering this in the context of filmmaking together with the artist Mia Edelgart. In our 80-minute video essay *Problems never got solved before there was no time left* (2024), for example, we use vox pops and street interviews to constructively interfere in our ongoing investigation of, and continuing conversation about, the ecological crises subsuming us today. We call our method precari-

ous film practice – a kind of filmmaking practiced with the aim of exploring something both collectively and durationally.

There's a lot to unfold about my collaboration with Mia Edelgart. It began as an exploration of the role art and cultural production can play in a time of continuing climate collapse, revealing both its accelerating scale and slow violence.⁵ But there's also much to say about how the momentous cycle of crises defining our time – the invasion of Ukraine; the genocide in Gaza; record-breaking temperatures and wildfires; inflation; the proliferation of weapons; the uncovering of historical abuses in Kalaallit Nunaat; the accumulation of capital; the monopolisation of power by ever-more invulnerable rich men – has affected our working process and our production.

A fundamental concern is this: if it is possible to adopt an unorthodox position on the climate crisis – one that seeks systematic critique rather than superficial, hyggeligt activism – how are we to ensure that it avoids becoming abstracted and too far removed from lived lives and sensing bodies?⁶ How, that is, are we to practically engage in social struggles toward “knowing otherwise?”⁷ What is the epistemic and ethical status of audiovisual production at a historical moment when the overarching risk of collapse, environmental, social and mental, can only be prevented through extraordinary collective effort?⁸ How are we to move beyond the production of instances of knowledge, of data, toward the production of practices permitting and generating communal knowledge? And more generally, but quite

crucially: how are we to address the (looming) risk of imposing and aestheticizing colonial frameworks for imagination, for dreaming the future?⁹

2. THE ARTISTIC FIGURE AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Here I'm going to leave the intellectual history of the essay film and turn to my postdoctoral project at CApE, which, among other things, involves fieldwork in western Kalaallit Nunaat with the Danish marine biologist Torkel Gissel Nielsen.

Torkel studies copepods. These are crustaceans entirely crucial to the ecosystem in every kind of marine environment. Those thriving in Arctic waters are big and fat. They have beautiful names such as *Calanus hyperboreus* and *Calanus glacialis*. With his colleagues from all over the world, Torkel has spent thirty years both describing the seasonality and behaviour of these creatures, how they're affected by increasing quantities of human-caused contaminants in the seawater, including oil from cruise ships, mercury and microplastics – and how rising temperatures have seen the emergence of new copepod species altogether.

I was introduced to Torkel's work by Janne Breinholt Bak, also a visual artist. Together we've joined Torkel in his fieldwork in Qeqertarsuaq for three years in a row, most recently in April of 2025. The reiterative and durational quality of Torkel's work interested me right from the start. Since the 1990s, he has collaborated with

local hunters, navigated changing political agendas and funding structures, and experienced the ways in which specific biophysical conditions have altered. But he has also grown older himself. I was interested in how the amassing of scientific knowledge within a field such as marine biology is both founded on inscrutable scientific data while being essentially shaped by emotional, situated and aesthetic engagements, relationships and preferences.

I'm not merely talking about the differences between Torkel's scientific data and his lived experience. It isn't a question of the fact of there being people behind the data, so to speak. I'm speaking about the way that, as much his experiences have generated insights that can only be imperfectly articulated in scientific spreadsheet, they have nevertheless influenced scientific understanding in decisive ways (as evidenced by shifting paradigms). I'm talking about the ideas of science and data in a Eurocentric scientific tradition, and about the dominance of those ideas over scientific cultures that afford greater recognition to lived experience (without using the term "local knowledge").¹⁰

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Before I continue, I must say a few words about the Arctic Station.

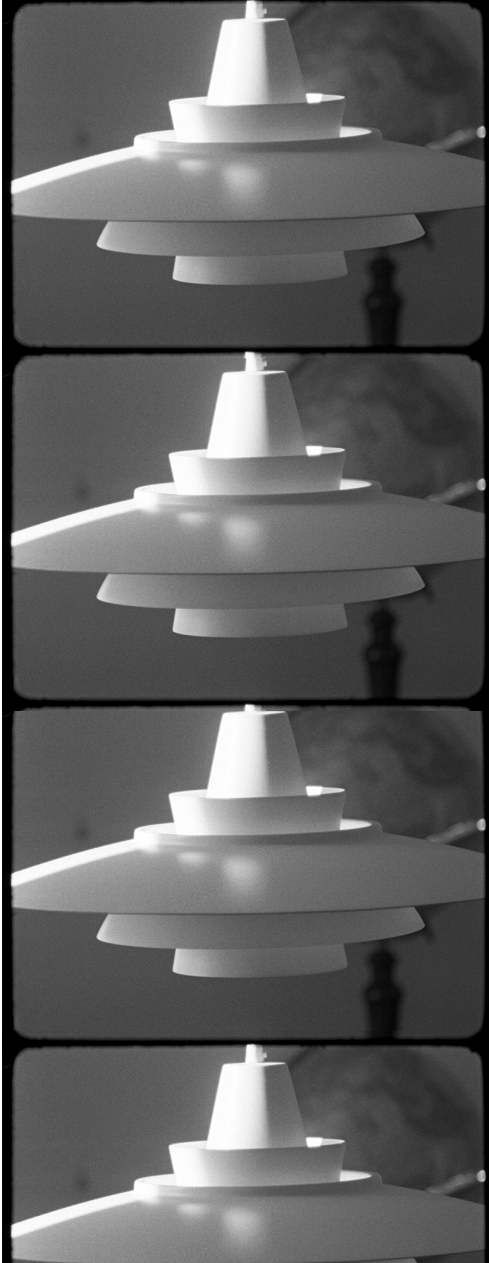
Established by the Danish government in 1906, the Arctic Station is an international research facility today owned and operated by the University of Copenhagen. A handful of red wooden houses with white windows

furnished with Danish design classics, the station is found just outside Qeqertarsuaq, a town of some 800 inhabitants on the island of the same name in what is known as Disko Bay.

I visited the station for the first time in 2017 with a colleague, the artist Tinne Zenner. At the time, I was interested in DTU's geomagnetic observatory – an old, green building in the shape of a compass, oriented towards the four corners of the world. It was founded in 1926 by my great-grandfather, Dan la Cour, then the director of the Danish Meteorological Institute. At that time, Kalaallit Nunaat (“the land of the Kalaallit”) was a territory under Danish rule, considered by the Danes to be the property of Denmark¹¹ – or, rather, a country under Denmark's protection, as the Danes told themselves, a projection of the Danish self-image.¹²

I only know my great-grandfather from my mother's stories. But even so, a clear picture of a dedicated geophysicist emerges, a member of the enlightened elite, a man with a passionate belief in science. Dan la Cour's passion was also shaped by a view of history typical of his time – a linear and eternal progression with an implicit understanding of the Inuit as a backward people in need of a helping hand.

I tell this to show my personal links to the story I am trying to tell. It is a kind of meta-story about the relationship between Danish colonial and scientific history. From 2025, the Arctic Station appears as a kind of haunting presence from the past. Or as a kind of threshold for speculation. What do the red and



white buildings tell us about the social relations formed through research? What do they tell us about the fundamentally relational nature of aesthetic qualities?

Arriving at the Arctic Station, one of the first things you're told is that it was built on a site previously used by angakkut – shamans with the ability to communicate with the spirit world. Thus, the place is also called Angakussarfik – “where there is haunting”. In itself, this is an invitation to speculate and dwell on the place's stories; how they convey its meaning.

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Before lingering on this any further, more context to the postdoctoral project is necessary. This context relates to the ways in which interdisciplinarity and collaboration have today become mandatory in (critical) Arctic studies, and the ways in which artists and researchers from the humanities and social sciences are increasingly involved in projects and research consortia led by natural science faculties. But if the aim is to guarantee the social legitimacy and societal relevance of scientific research contributions from the artists and the humanities, the contributions of artistic researchers are often reduced and instrumentalised for the purposes of illustration and communication – work conducted after the scientific “finding”, so to speak.

This isn't unequivocally a bad thing. If scientific data is to inform public debates and reach political decision-makers, science communication is crucial. And, clearly, art has a role to play here; the problem lies

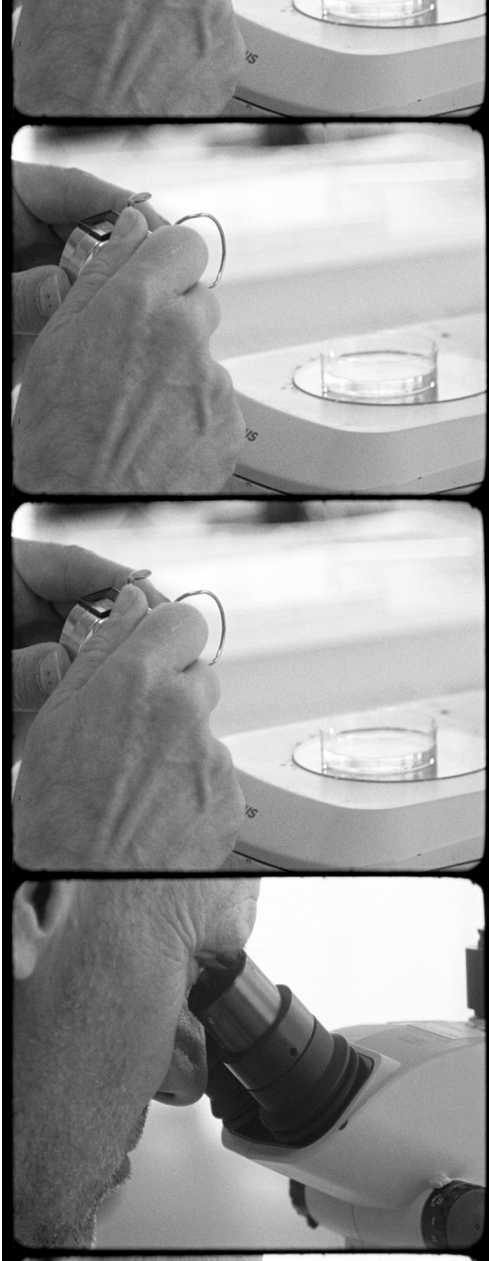


(rather) in art's more subtle function as a legitimising force and its capacity to aestheticize and exceptionalize scientific activity.

What I seek, therefore, is a more integrated approach to interdisciplinarity. I'm pursuing a renegotiation of the Eurocentric scholarly tradition's idealisation of representation; through that, I seek a renegotiation of my own role in the production of the Arctic.

Here, and with the enduring myth of the archetypal artist's seductive power in mind, I assume a general historical overlap between colonial history, geopolitics and colonial image-making practices. The Arctic has long been used and imagined by outsiders as "a place where the past, present and future of the planet's environmental and geopolitical systems unfold".¹³ In the current context of climate crisis, artists are expected to create narratives and images that can prompt (future) action. This applies, not least, to critical studies and post-humanist efforts to challenge the various contributions linear anthropocentric narratives made to the colonisation of the Arctic in the first place.¹⁴ But the assumption that one can create images capable of effecting change often carries with it notions of the artist figure that can be difficult to navigate. In other words, my interest in a more radical production of interdisciplinary practice is an expression of my own experience of the discomfort arising from the inadequate language that the traditional artist figure has at its disposal, as my friend and colleague Anne Mette Schultz has put it.

....



With that said, I'd like to dwell on a specific event that occurred during my stay at the Arctic Station this April. Several of the natural science researchers had given presentations on previous evenings; one evening I did the same. I wanted to talk about some of the things I also discuss here and to take the opportunity to possibly develop some collaboration.

A cross-disciplinary and cross-generational discussion about collaborations between art and science and the importance of context unfolded afterwards. While it proved both interesting and insightful, a relatively stereotypical distinction was also quickly established between the production of scientific knowledge and art as something "other". One person, for example, expressed the view that, fundamentally, the role of art was to speak on its own behalf, to be "magical", and not necessarily to explain things – to do the opposite of what science does, speaking so concretely that no one could misunderstand it. Another, older, researcher went on to express the necessity for a clear distinction between art and science in order to avoid the risk of researchers becoming "howling wolves" – which I understood as the risk of researchers expressing beliefs freighted with emotion, lacking in credibility and thus risking themselves not being taken seriously. This prompted one of the younger researchers, on the other hand, to convey a different, emotional sense of powerlessness and frustration. She felt that her work seemed to be inconsequential in a time of acute climate crisis.¹⁵

After all this, I was left with a feeling of doubt. Not because I necessarily disagreed with anything that was said. But any sense of “lived interdisciplinarity” seemed, however, a long way away;¹⁶ it seemed far from any cooperative labour capable of tackling the very real risk that, through our work and the ways we talk about it, we perpetuate colonial frameworks of representation and description.

Here, I’d like to say a few words about the term “collaboration” and the unequal relationship between the arts and the natural sciences. I recently spoke to a philosopher who aptly remarked: “Researchers never knock on the door of the philosophy department and ask: ‘Why don’t we do some interdisciplinary research, led by what you’re into at the moment?’ Somehow, you always end up being a kind of maid.”¹⁷ With regard to the word “collaboration”, then, a key question is how we are to address this asymmetrical relationship – the form of inequality embedded in ideas about interdisciplinarity.

What is at stake in interdisciplinarity?

How is interdisciplinarity to be understood?

And what is at stake in image production related to it?

In neoliberal discourse, interdisciplinarity is often presented as something historically new and useful, capable of generating innovation and new knowledge. It’s a means to break down barriers between disciplines, to generate greater interaction between science

and society. In this sense, interdisciplinarity serves as an image of how disciplines are dissolving and cultural autonomy in research set aside in favour of an economic rationale. But, as many have pointed out, interdisciplinarity is neither the opposite of single-discipline work, necessarily, nor the dissolving of such work. Indeed, perhaps it serves to reinforce it.¹⁸ Without the recognition of a discipline, there's nothing to "interact" with, if you like. The professional art world and its institutions function as my ticket to the interdisciplinary space – but this also means that my contribution is often valued according to traditional criteria in the art world rather than any methodological or epistemological potential. In this sense, there's a risk that the integration of fields offers the appearance of success precisely because one avoids discussion of the political and politicised differences and (in)equalities that characterise knowledge formation – both at the micro and macro levels.¹⁹

A risk of interdisciplinarity for its own sake?

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Back at the Arctic Station, I woke up the morning after my presentation doubting myself, doubting my project. What kind of interdisciplinarity, what kind of collaboration, was I even thinking of?

Before too long, paradoxically enough, I also noticed a kind of energy in that feeling. A species of energy that my friend Jundan Jasmine Zhang later helped me identify as a tension between my own curiosity about

the world and the question of whether anything relevant to others would result from this curiosity. But a tension, too, that has related to how the Arctic has historically been portrayed by artists in the service of science. Responding to the question of relevance (of critical and more radical interdisciplinarity) thus requires not only a critical approach to notions of interdisciplinarity, but considerations of how they are embedded in understandings of the Arctic. And understandings of fieldwork: as has been pointed out by others, these understandings are prone to be characterised by specific ideas about the relationship between the centre and the periphery, serving to “link scientific discovery with the territorial expansion of the empire” by way of the field station.²⁰

In the context of the Arctic as a hotspot for climate change and (neo)imperial expansion, I speculate, in other words: What is my role in the reproduction of the art system and its relationship to knowledge production? How are we to collaborate in ways that do not entrench what already exists? That do not serve to confirm the desire of science to communicate results while simultaneously remaining “unaffected” – no “howling wolves”? That do not serve to confirm the essentialisation of local perspectives (colonial anthropology)?

Or, more simply: through which forms and expressions, can research results be presented, rather than represented, in an interesting way?

What makes something interesting?²¹

...

There are many valuable examples of the effects of interdisciplinary processes, and of artistic practices in which the context of knowledge-culture, material properties and social exchange play a central role.

But a critical question remains in how interdisciplinarity can be understood less as a thing and more as a field of difference, of ambiguity.²² Could the relevance of interdisciplinary collaboration lie, rather than in any good example it might set, in its offer of ongoing openness? An openness that does not necessarily accord with a paradigm of growth-oriented innovation or a neoliberal concept of accountability, but leads, rather, to something more subtle and less sharply delineated?

Can interdisciplinarity be understood as a kind of politics of convergence, in which disciplinary traditions and ideologies around publicity and communication are themselves (re)negotiated?

Can interdisciplinarity be understood as the production of practices for an indeterminate future?

Can interdisciplinarity be understood as a kind of post-future essayism?

3. POST-FUTURE-ESSAYISM AS EPISTEMOLOGICAL STRATEGY

Here, in the third and final part of this presentation, I'll simply try to summarise a few points.

In “The Essay as Form” (1958), Adorno writes that “the essay is what it was from the beginning, the critical form [...] it is critique of ideology”.²³ It is, however, precisely with reference to Adorno that Hito Steyerl, as I've already mentioned, pointed to the essay's turn to a conformist style in the early years of this century. More specifically, in relation to documentary film, Kodwo Eshun of the Otolith Group collective has characterised the essayistic in filmmaking as a way of practicing dissatisfaction, as “discontent with the duties of an image and the obligations of a sound”.²⁴ The essay film is a form and expression of dissatisfaction with the presumed authority of the documentary genre and its morally self-righteous pursuit of truth.

It is thus in continuation of the intellectual history of the essay film, but in a contemporary media reality defined by the ubiquity of AI and network-based systems and a fundamental alteration in image production, that post-future essayism seeks to resist contributing to forming the future according to any predefined category – including generic/predetermined representations of categories such as icebergs, “the Arctic”, or even “nature”.

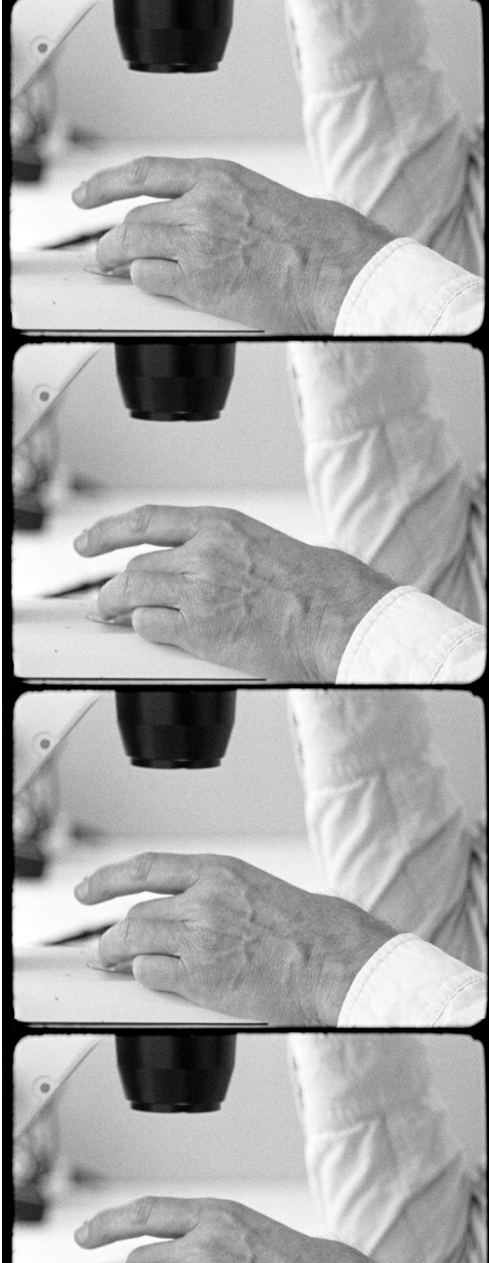
How can data (image representation) be remediated in a way permitting technical, emotional and institutional

aspects to more deeply influence image production – even with a delay? How can sensory experience, acquired expertise and specific mediation technologies be weighted in order to challenge standardised notions of knowledge production (representation, data) as the accumulation of homogeneous identities?

Torkel Gissel Nielsen's recurring work in Qeqertarsuaq confronts me with such questions. More specifically, it confronts me with the value of long-term continuity in scientific monitoring as opposed to the "more-than-linear" as artistic practice.

I think about what happens to Torkel's 30-year record of copepod data when it is mapped onto a lived life, and what happens to the span of a lifetime when measured against irreversible climate collapse. I think about the political tension between the possibility of the more-than-linear as an artistic method and the slow violence of climate collapse. Or is there another way to talk about life as simultaneously defined by continuity and the proliferation of discontinuity rather than as opposing ways of thinking about temporality? A way to speak of a kind of integrative temporality (and not as contradictory ways of thinking about temporality)?

At stake is an understanding of value as an index of continuity, independent of the telos of research as a naturally progressive process; of continuity as something other than linearity. And perhaps such an understanding is simply made possible by distinguishing between scientific monitoring as an idea and as a practice. Does scientific monitoring also manifest



an internationalist and collaborative spirit capable of exerting a form of resistance in an era of funding structures driven by capital and neo-imperial geopolitical tendencies?

And, similarly, with regard to the so-called “research turn” in contemporary art of recent decades, while knowledge production has become a central competency in both the making and understanding of art, does the recognition of “idiosyncratic thinkers who feel their way through the world” (as the theorist Claire Bishop has put it) also constitute a recognition of art’s active epistemic function?²⁵

Indeed, in an artistic and methodologically reflective research project conducted between 2012 and 2022, the visual artist and curator Marie de Brugerolle has theorised the anecdote as a way of situating, narrating and explaining something both conscious and unconsciously – an intimate mode of argumentation.²⁶ Doing so, she offers a kind of not unambiguously academic theorisation challenging the argument-based world and rationales of research.

Similarly, I propose that post-future essayism should take intuition, association, and the anecdotal seriously as ways of generating or recoding concepts and discourses – and the challenge inherent in formalising these concepts and discourses. But also the challenge inherent in formalizing these concepts and discourses. I specifically speculate on the film still as a threshold for (re)negotiating the timeline as image. Can the still image be understood as a data point without closing itself off

as an image – can the volatile nature of the anecdote enact a form of resistance? Can film practice as a monitoring practice challenge the production of future scenarios based on advanced computational models integrating data? Future scenarios, that is, designed to maximize GDP growth under climate pressures in a time when green transition and data integration are corrupted by the status quo.²⁷

Post-future essayism is a mode of working with a material and its material connections. A prioritisation of aesthetic experience in the production of structural critique. I invented the term because I needed it. I needed something I could use to rethink and break with the way I have learned to understand the future as a matter of transformation – the way I was trained to understand how images change “us”. As we know all too well, “enlightenment” isn’t enough. The system of logical argumentation, transparency and (democratic) communication of scientific results does not serve to galvanise any will to change, let alone change itself.²⁸

Post-future essayism is an interdisciplinary research methodology – insofar as the collection, circulation, presentation and production of knowledge are compounded. And specifically, as I have already made clear, I am particularly interested in filmmaking in this context. In my practice and collaborations, I explore how filmmaking can function both as an inclusive and practice-generating tool and a framework for reflecting on knowledge and being and relating in the world with others (and other).

Through, for example, live-edited audiovisual montages – video works that are created as they are composed live. Live-edited documents of dialogue.

I am thinking of various forms of conversation-based processes in which academic, anecdotal and personal memories can coexist. And more specifically, again, on my collaboration with Mia Edelgart and on how our video works – yes, we could call them “conversation-programmes” – as well as being recorded and edited live, “take place” across physical locations and/or archives, and between people with different vocations. But live editing as a method is also a self-reflective tool, allowing us to explore the language we use to communicate with one another, and to consider the significance of a specific location as a place from which knowledge may be derived.

My postdoctoral project, founded precisely on the assumption that a “place” always extends beyond itself (biophysically, socially and structurally), is in that regard driven by a post-future essayistic hope of finding in art the capacity to formulate how the presentation of an image (of the Arctic, say) also produces what the image represents (the Arctic).

In relation to the question of what applied ecological thinking is and can be, the project seeks to constructively alienate us from the way in which the reality of the climate crisis is communicated and understood as natural, both scientifically and aesthetically. The effect may be a more disjointed rhetoric. But a critical perspective on the rhetorical and aesthetic frameworks through

which the climate crisis is framed needs to protect the messy, contradictory relationships involved – especially when they clash. Ultimately, the desire is to reorient the idealisation of representation – especially in relation to embedded political notions of “nature”, “culture”, “self” and “other” – towards an understanding of mediation as a process or environment never foreclosed. Post-future essayism seeks to break with the “harmony” of mediation in the conventional sense by mobilising a shift in focus from the visions of individual auteurs to the effect of collaborative processes. But without claiming any idealized distribution.²⁹ This is central. And thus, post-future essayism is not a tool for escaping authorship. In live editing, both the essayist and the artist embody the productive subject, ideologically and practically.

Can post-future essayism as epistemological strategy be a kind of editorial authorship?

Without knowing exactly where the marine biologists might sit at the editorial table, or the roles they might play, I like the idea of editorial authorship. And so, at this point, three months into my postdoctoral project, I’ve gone as far as to change the title.

What was *Scenes of Fieldwork: Negotiated Imagination and Interdisciplinary Collaboration* is now *Scenes of Fieldwork: Towards Forms and Expression of Editorial Authorship*.

How can the axis of time be mobilised as a space permitting collective reflection and structural critique?

Or, more practically, how are we to construct timelines on the basis of the degree of ungovernable disorder arising from multivocal and less (solo-)author-oriented editing processes and modes of (re)negotiation?

ENDNOTES

¹ Hito Steyerl, “The Essay as Conformism? Some Notes on Global Image Economies (2011),” in Nora M. Alter & Timothy Corrigan (Eds.), *Essays on the Essay Film* (Columbia University Press, 2017).

² Here, Steyerl references the philosopher Theodor Adorno’s celebrated *The Essay as Form* (1958).

³ Luka Arsenjuk, “‘To Speak, to Hold, to Live by The Image’: Notes in The Margins of the New Videographic Tendency,” in Elizabeth Papazian & Caroline Eades (Eds.), (Columbia University Press, 2016).

⁴ Marilyn Strathern, *Property, Substance, and Effect: Anthropological Essays on Persons and Things* (Athlone Press, 1999).

⁵ Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁶ More generally, the positions outlined here refer, albeit in simplified form, both to the recent dispute between the so-called old and new materialisms and to the limitations of both. The strong structural critique of capitalism found in Marxism tends to abstract away the significance of embodied and situated experience. But the new materialism’s emphasis on material entanglements and nonhuman agency can, conversely, easily slip into esoteric and depoliticised rhetoric without systemic critique. I understand this as a fundamentally feminist insight: the world is experienced in relation to the different, or absent, privileges in time and space that condition what different bodies can do. See, for example, Mads Ejsing, *Verden er ikke længere den samme: økologiske krisefortællinger i det antropocæne* (Hans Reitzel, 2024).

⁷ See, for example, the historian Sverker Sörlin’s “Wisdom of Affect? Emotion, Environment, and the Future of Resource Extraction,” *Polar Record* 57 (2021): e27.

⁸ See, for example, the media researcher Siegfried Zielinski, *Varianter Af Fælles Handling i Kunsten* (Kunsten Som Forum På Tryk & Billedkunstskolernes Forlag, 2023).

⁹ See, for example, the anthropologist Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston’s “An Elephant in the Room: Tracking an Awkward

Anthropology,” Lecture, Emergent Futures CoLab, July 15, 2020, <https://www.urgentemergent.org/talking-uncertainty/kazubowski-houston>.

¹⁰ My concern about using the term “local knowledge” is solely about avoiding reducing lived experience to a static cultural artefact – precisely in order to resist abstract, top-down models of epistemic authority. At the same time, it emphasises the importance of locality as a starting point for knowledge, and how all forms of knowledge are dynamic, critical and politically potent while pointing to the ways in which all knowledge is, in a sense, local – produced from specific positions and material conditions – even when it claims universality. Or, as the anthropologist and filmmaker Elizabeth Povinelli writes more precisely: “The global nature of climate change, capital, toxicity, and discursivity immediately demands we look elsewhere than where we are standing. ... As we stretch the local across these seeping transits we need not scale up to the Human or the global, but we cannot remain in the local. We can only remain hereish.” Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (Duke University Press, 2016), 13.

¹¹ The use of the indigenous endonym Kalaallit Nunaat signals a contemporary awareness and positioning with regard to the country’s independence, language and colonial history with Denmark.

¹² Then, as now, the world’s superpowers had interests in the Arctic region. In the 1920s, explorers, scientists and artists explored and regarded the Arctic as a so-called “undiscovered area”, an objectified region, a screen on which ideological notions of an empty wilderness were projected. Thus, both geographical studies (among other forms of scientific research) and the establishment of mission and trading posts, were part of the Danish state’s strategy for full occupation. Today, in contrast, Inuit self-representation is more firmly entrenched. Nevertheless, the idea of the empty wilderness remains widespread and embedded in contemporary notions of the Arctic, as currently expressed by members of the American far right currently investing money in ideological visions of ‘free network states’ in the region.

¹³ Lill-Ann Körber et al. (Eds.), *Arctic Environmental Modernities*

(Springer International Publishing, 2017).

¹⁴ Here I'm thinking explicitly both of the celebrated Indian author Amitav Ghosh's observation that the lack of convincing action-oriented imagination among visual artists and filmmakers contributes to public passivity, and of how activist and commercial forces overlap within environmental aesthetic discourses when "the appearances of the world need our care more than our suspicion" (as the film critic Erika Balsom writes in her essay "The Reality Based Community"). See Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, The Randy L. and Melvin R. Berlin Family Lectures (The University of Chicago press, 2017); Erika Balsom, "The Reality-Based Community," *E-Flux Journal*, Issue 83 (2017).

¹⁵ A significant part of her frustration stemmed from here being in a position where she and her younger colleagues, despite their professional and ethical convictions, were compelled to accept funding from oil companies, for example, that directly contribute to the very collapse their research seeks to address and prevent.¹⁶ Marilyn Strathern, "Interdisciplinarity: Some Models from the Human Sciences," *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 32, no. 2 (2007): 123–34.

¹⁷ Samtalen var med Isabella Stanford, som jeg mødte i forbindelse med workshoppen *Concepts and Problems in Art, Culture and Aesthetics* på Kingston University, Maj 2025.

¹⁸ Jeg er klar over, at jeg veksler mellem ordene tværfaglighed og interdisciplinartitet. Det er inkonsistent og afspejler den mundtlige præsentation, som teksten stammer fra. For mere om forholdet mellem interdisciplinartitet og betydningen af fagdiscipliner, se: Thomas Osborne, "Inter That Discipline!," i *Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the Social and Natural Sciences*, red. Andrew Barry og Georgina Born (Routledge, 2014).

¹⁹ My summarisation and reflection here are founded also on Jundan Jasmine Zhang's noteworthy article "Imaginarities of Svalbard, Interdisciplinary Research and Fieldwork: Where Emergent Knowledge Surges," in Mathias Albert et al. (Eds.), *Svalbard Imaginarities, Arctic Encounters* (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2023).

²⁰ Sarah J. Whatmore, “Where Natural and Social Science Meet?”, in Andrew Barry & Georgina Born (Eds.), *Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the Social and Natural Sciences*, (Routledge, 2014).

²¹ Peter Osborne, “Interesting Art,” *New Left Review*, no. 150 (2024): 156–68.

²² Andrew Barry and Georgina Born, “Introduction,” in Andrew Barry and Georgina Born (Eds.), *Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the Social and Natural Sciences* (Routledge, 2014).

²³ Theodor W. Adorno, “The Essay as Form,” in Nora M. Alter & Timothy Corrigan (Eds.), *Essays on the Essay Film*, (Columbia University Press, 2017).

²⁴ Kevin B. Lee, “Video essay: The essay film – some thoughts of discontent,” *Otherzine*, no. 31 (2017).

²⁵ Irit Rogoff, “Becoming Research,” *The Contemporary Journal*, no. 2 (2019). Claire Bishop, “Information Overload,” *Artforum*, 2023. For further discussion on art’s epistemic function, I recommend Tom Holert, *Knowledge beside Itself: Contemporary Art’s Epistemic Politics* (Sternberg Press, 2020).

²⁶ Marie de Brugerolle et al., *Post-performance future method/e* (T&P Publishing, 2023).

²⁷ Advanced computational models that combine knowledge from multiple scientific disciplines (typically economics, energy systems, and climate science) to analyze the interactions between human systems and the Earth system. These models play a central role in the future scenarios and analyses featured in the reports published by the IPCC (the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). See also: Wim Carton and Andreas Malm *Overshoot: How the World Surrendered to Climate Breakdown* (Verson, 2024). This is a detailed historiographic account of the origins and development of the overshoot ideology – the situation where established temperature targets (e.g., 1.5 °C) are exceeded, while relying on the assumption that temperatures can later be reduced through technologies such as CO₂ removal or geoengineering.

²⁸ Chus Martínez, *The Complex Answer: On Art as a Non-Binary Intelligence* (Sternberg Press, 2023).

²⁹ And without subscribing to the idea that any unmediated, immediate and pure access to reality is possible.

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