ARTICLE

Take a Hike: Fostering Environmental Values by Walking with Ecological Art

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ABSTRACT

Ecological art responds to environmental degradation and often aims to restore ecosystems through arts practice. Some ecological artists devote their practice to motivating people to protect small species, particularly by increasing awareness about the role these creatures play in local ecosystems. In this article, I discuss two South African ecological performance works that encouraged close attention, respect, and care for small species by fostering environmental values. I argue that it is through walking, dialogue, and embodied participation that sensorially engaged participants developed deeper understandings of the fragile relationship between humans and non-human animals. By combining aesthetic and educational components, both animal-endorsing performances encouraged an openness and attentiveness towards the environment in the people who participated in the events.

Keywords: ecological art; environmental values; walking; site-specific; participation; phenomenology; landscape; multisensoriality

> Walking is a profoundly social activity: … in their timings, rhythms and inflections, the feet respond as much as does the voice to the presence and activity of others.
> (Ingold and Lee Vergunst 2008, 1)

Introduction

In June 2017, a hodgepodge group waited, slightly anxiously, to find out whether or not Hannelie Coetzee's *Locust and Grasshopper* performance would go ahead. The performance entailed burning a precisely demarcated section of dry veld on the outskirts of Johannesburg, in an area where several properties adjacent to the NIROX sculpture

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park, in the heart of the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site, had taken down their fences. The performance had already been postponed by more than a month owing to damp grass and unsuitable weather conditions. As we stood waiting at the NIROX pavilion, the memory of the uncontrolled fires that had raged through the town of Knysna in the Western Cape only a few weeks earlier added to our suspense. That inferno had led to the deaths of seven people and countless animals (both wild and domestic). It had also destroyed large areas of indigenous vegetation and had left many homeless or destitute. While we welcomed the gentle breeze which offered a respite from the hot Highveld winter sun, it may have prevented Coetzee's event from taking place altogether. The owners of the private nature reserve were understandably worried that the fires might get out of control and destroy their property and its inhabitants. After a long delay, however, we were informed that we could begin hiking to the area where the burn would take place. And so, a group of over 200 people of different ages, genders, and races set off on the 2.8 km (mostly uphill) hike to witness the performance.

A year earlier, in June 2016, I participated in an event organised by Nicola Grobler that took place at the Tswaing Meteorite Crater Nature Reserve in Soshanguve, on the outskirts of Pretoria. This group consisted mostly of students and staff of the University of Pretoria, their friends and family, and other artists. We met at the educational hall, where Grobler briefly introduced her project, *The Visitor Centre I.* With very few details of what was to come, Grobler informed us that we should follow a dusty trail and that the "backpack" (a large blue contraption that she carried) would be revealed (somewhere) along the trail. Curious, confused, but mostly intrigued, we set off on our 1 km journey towards the crater.

There are a number of similarities between these two events. Firstly, both events required spectators (who should more aptly be regarded as participants) to slog a fair distance to a designated spot in the veld where the performance of the artwork would take place. Walking was thus fundamental to the way in which both artworks were presented, performed, and experienced. Secondly, the works were performed in natural settings and can, therefore, be described as site-specific, participatory works. And thirdly, both performances dealt with ecological themes, specifically the interrelation between humans, environments, and small species.

In this article I show how walking with ecological art may foster environmental values. My main intention is to understand how walking with ecological art encourages spectator-participants to develop empathetic understandings of the interrelation between people, environments, and non-human animals, small species in particular. The focus here is on ecological art that is created and/or displayed "on the move", in that walking was integral to the way in which the artworks were performed and perceived.

In order to develop this argument, I begin with the third similarity listed above. I define ecological art and briefly contextualise its manifestation in artistic practice. I highlight the concerns of ecological artists with environmental degradation and discuss how

Coetzee and Grobler aim to foster environmental values through their art. In the next section, I contextualise walking as an artistic practice and discuss the close relationship between walking and thinking. The participatory and site-specific aspects of *Locust and Grasshopper* (2017) and *The Visitor Centre I* (2016) are also discussed in this section. I then discuss relevant research in the humanities and social sciences that focuses on the dynamic and complex nature of walking. This leads me to discuss the turn that has taken place in landscape studies towards a phenomenological understanding of the landscape experience, with a particular focus on sensory experience. I then conclude that walking with both artworks fostered environmental values during the unfolding of the two performances, as people's multisensorial and embodied engagement with the works encouraged a deeper understanding of their own personal relationships to small species.

Walking with both performances allowed me to personally experience and observe the unfolding performances—or "situations", in Claire Bishop's (2012, 2) terms—in a way similar to that of an ethnographer. For this reason, phenomenological anthropology and sensory ethnography both offer useful ways in which to understand the affective possibilities of both site-specific and participatory works. The raw data referred to throughout the article was collected from personal observations at both events, informal conversations with participants, as well as photographs and videos of the works posted on the artists' websites.

Ecological Art, Small Species, and Environmental Values

Ruth Wallen (2012, 235) defines ecological art as follows: "Ecological art inspires caring and respect for the world in which we live, stimulates dialogue, sparks imagination and contributes to the socio-cultural transformations whereby the diversity of life forms found on earth may flourish." Although the genesis of ecological art is closely linked to the earthworks and land artworks that emerged in the late 1960s in the UK, USA, and Europe, the aims of artists involved in these different movements are not always consistent. Earthworks and land artworks were generally conceptual in nature, incorporating natural materials to create artworks in remote landscapes in order to challenge prevailing conceptions of art rather than to advance ecological principles (Wallen 2012, 235).[1] Therefore, the main difference between ecological or environmental art and earthworks or land art is that ecological art "aims to raise awareness of ecological degradation or is directly involved in supporting or restoring ecosystems and other natural processes" (Brady 2010, 48).[2]

1 See Allen Carlson's (2000) criticism of earthworks produced by a long list of artists including Michael Heizer, Christo and Jeanne Claude, and Robert Smithson. Carlson (2000, 155) argues that turning nature into art constitutes an "affront to nature".

2 It is worth noting that the terms ecological art, environmental art, land art, and earthworks are often

Ecological art therefore responds to the problems created by anthropocentric structures that have exploited and degraded biological environments and ecosystems. Although a number of terms, including Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene, and White-supremacy-cene (Van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster 2016, 3), have been used to describe our current geological era, the term Anthropocene—coined in 2002 by Nobel Prize-winning chemist Paul Crutzen—is still widely used. All these terms refer to the diverse ways in which *anthropoi* (human beings) have acquired superiority over natural environments and brought into effect significant changes owing to (mainly the abuse of) that power. The Anthropocene and its consequences have recently become a topic of much debate, with increasing focus on the relationship between humans and the environment and humans and non-human animals; the implications of technology on this relationship; humankind's exploitative practices; and the future of humans, non-human animals, and the environment (see Krajewska 2017). Habitat destruction, invasive species, pollution, population growth, and overhunting—collectively labelled HIPPO—have been identified by Edward Wilson (2016) as the particular mix of human-led factors that have contributed to immeasurable numbers of species either already dying off or rapidly becoming endangered. It is precisely these crises that ecological artists address in their works.

Some artists devote their practice to motivating people to protect small species—such as insects, birds, bats, bees, fish, and frogs—by increasing awareness of the role these creatures play in local ecosystems. For instance, American artist, biologist, and environmental activist Brandon Ballengée created *Love Motel for Insects* (2001, ongoing), which aims to bring humans and nocturnal arthropods into closer contact with each other (Taft 2011). His work aims to restore biodiversity by reclaiming species that are either already extinct or are facing imminent extinction. Similarly, the group *Animal Estates* creates interventions (mainly in the USA and Europe) that encourage small creatures to return to the urban spaces from which they were previously evicted through human development (Haeg 2007). Following Steve Baker's (2000, 9–10) distinction between "animal-endorsing" and "animal-sceptical" environmental art, Brady (2010, 51) classifies the above-mentioned works as animal-endorsing.[3] This means that the works focus on human–animal relationships and are aligned with the work of conservationists and the welfare of non-human creatures.

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used interchangeably. For instance, while I have contrasted ecological art and environmental art to land art and earthworks here, Emily Brady (2010, 48) considers environmental art to refer to any artwork generated outdoors, including earthworks and land art.

3 Early land art and earthworks are "animal-sceptical" in that they work with natural environments, using sticks, stones, sand, and so forth, to create art that is conceptual in nature rather than inspiring environmental activism (Brady 2010, 51). In my opinion, many site-specific art projects currently underway in South Africa that focus primarily on the aesthetic fall into this category, as they do not aim to raise awareness about or improve the plight of non-human animals.

It is not hard to find international examples of animal-endorsing ecological art and literature on these works. In the South African context, however, the situation is unfortunately quite different and the literature on ecological art is still rather sparse.[4] This article therefore aims to contribute towards filling this lacuna by showing how, as "animal-endorsing" artworks, Coetzee's and Grobler's performances may foster environmental respect and care.

In *Locust and Grasshopper*, Coetzee explores the interrelation between humans, the environment, and non-human animals. As part of her practice, she collaborates with scientists such as Sally Archibald, who is Associate Professor in the School of Animal, Plant, and Environmental Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Archibald's research focuses on understanding the dynamics of savanna ecosystems, particularly in the context of global change. One of the topics she is especially interested in is the relationship between small fires and the grazing practices of small antelope, as well as how these fires impact on the biodiversity of the veld. The long-term collaborative project between Coetzee and Archibald seeks to make scientific research about environmental management accessible to the wider public. The result thus far has been two "performance burns": *Eland and Benko* (2015) and *Locust and Grasshopper* (2017). For both performances, huge images were plotted on a hillside in the nature reserve by surveyors using GPS points. When the veld inside these markers was burnt (with the assistance of the government-funded programme Working on Fire [WoF]), the images became visible.

Locust and Grasshopper (Figure 1) tests the impact of a controlled burn on small species, such as grasshoppers and locusts, which are so often regarded as pests. Archibald suspects that certain grasshopper species prefer the short-grazed patches that emerge as a result of fires such as this one. Coetzee chose the image of two insects looking each other in the eye to draw attention to the impact that the Anthropocene Era has had on small species (NIROX Foundation 2017). To clarify the aims of their collaborative project, Archibald states, "We hope to use the science–art partnership to synthesise different views on the same ecological phenomenon, and engage the public to discuss how societal values influence conservation ideals" (NIROX Foundation 2017).

4 There may be all sorts of reasons for this. It is telling that in Ania Krajewska's (2017) recent article in this journal about ecological art, only two South African artists—Jenna Burchell and Frikkie Eksteen—are mentioned, among a wide variety of international examples.

Figure 1: Hannelie Coetzee, *Locust and Grasshopper* (2017). NIROX Sculpture Park, Khatlhampi Nature Reserve, Gauteng, South Africa. Accessed April 27, 2019. http://www.hanneliecoetzee.com/2017-locust-and-grasshopper/ (photograph by the University of the Witwatersrand).

Similarly, Grobler's *The Visitor Centre I* is undoubtedly an "animal-endorsing" work. Grobler describes *The Visitor Centre* project as "an art intervention aimed at promoting human empathy towards smaller species, multispecies co-existences, and urban biodiversity" (Grobler n.d.). The backpack under discussion here is part of this larger project, which consists of a video work entitled *The Visitor Centre* (2015) and three backpacks, namely *The Visitor Centre I* (2016), *The Visitor Centre II* (2018), and *The Visitor Centre III* (2018).

The Visitor Centre I was introduced to audiences at Tswaing, which is located about 40 km northwest of Pretoria. Tswaing (which means "place of salt" in Setswana) is a conservation area that includes the meteorite impact crater, a wetland, and what remains of an old salt factory. Grobler carried *The Visitor Centre I* all the way and brought the group to a stop under a mopane tree, where she hung the bag on a branch (Figure 2). As she unravelled the backpack, its neatly packed contents were revealed. These included a variety of small objects that relate in some way or other to insects and other small species: a bronze frog in a folded triangular fabric pouch, a lock with the inscription "6 bedrooms" engraved on both sides (Figure 3), a cardboard box with two funnels, two homeopathic remedies that keep "pests" away, a small spider-leg measuring tape labelled "Comfortable Distance TM" (Figure 4), a number of digital photographic prints on canvas, and a pack of *Impossible Neighbours* postcards depicting squashed mosquitoes.

Figure 2: Nicola Grobler, *The Visitor Centre I* (2016). (photograph by Josly van Wyk).

Figure 3: Nicola Grobler, *Six Bedrooms* (2016). (photograph by Carla Crafford).

Figure 4: Nicola Grobler, *Comfortable Distance Tape Measure* (2016). (photograph by Carla Crafford).

Explaining her aim, Grobler states, "The artwork acknowledges the value of informal conversations and personal anecdotes in raising awareness and shifting perceptions towards nonhuman animal lives" (Grobler n.d.). Similarly, Archibald and Coetzee explain that they aim to "educate a growing audience … inspiring them to become active citizens" (NIROX Foundation 2017). In other words, both artists aim to educate, inspire, raise awareness, and change perceptions about the environment and its non-human inhabitants. Both works seek to foster environmental values by changing environmental attitudes and behaviour.

Daniel Dutcher et al. (2007, 474) maintain that environmental values are intertwined with a person's sense of "connectivity" with nature. Values can be described as "fundamental orientations, life goals, or guiding principles, which serve as the basis for organizing an individual's beliefs and attitudes and guiding their behavior" (Dutcher et al. 2007, 475). Environmental values are specifically related to nature and concern a person's beliefs and attitudes toward, or concerns about, the environment, as well as his or her behaviour in relation to the environment (Dutcher et al. 2007, 475). Artworks that foster new ways of thinking and feeling about human–nature interactions can therefore encourage positive attitudes towards natural environments and their non-human inhabitants. As Brady (2010, 49) argues, such works "can foster harmonious rather than conflicting relationships with environments" and may potentially generate "a more caring approach in and with environment".

Following Brady's argument, ecological art has great potential for encouraging close attention, respect, and care by fostering environmental values. This, in turn, may lead to "environmental citizenship", which involves people making a commitment to the "common good" (Dobson 2007, 280) in terms of environmental care. In particular, it is my contention that walking in natural environments with "animal-endorsing" ecological artworks—or, "taking a hike" with ecological art—can raise awareness of environmental degradation as a result of human interference and may even lead participants to better understand that the environment, humans, and non-human animals are not separate entities.[5]

Walking in Art

Neither walking *with* art nor walking *as* art are new artistic practices. In fact, the list of contemporary artists whose work is informed by walking is extensive (see Walking Artists Network n.d. for examples) and the nature and purpose of walking as it is engaged in by various artists is diverse. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between "walking art" as a conceptual strategy and Coetzee's and Grobler's particular walking performances.

"Walking art" was developed as an artistic practice in the 1960s by land artists such as Richard Long and Hamish Fulton in the UK, as well as by other artists, mainly in the USA and Europe (Pope 2014, 16). Both Long and Fulton are regarded as *the* archetypal "walking artists" (Pope 2014, 16). In *A Line Made from Walking* (1967), Long made his mark on the art world by walking backwards and forwards in a Wiltshire field until he had etched a trail into the grass. Long has since dedicated his art practice to walking in straight and circular paths, moving back and forth to etch his tracks into the earth. The only traces of these performances are the photographs, marked maps, or text-works that capture them.

Long's solitary "path-making performances" can be traced back to a well-established "philosophic tradition of outdoor contemplation" (Dapena-Tretter 2014, 105). The history of walking "as a conscious cultural act rather than a means to an end" began in the late 18th century when Jean-Jacques Rousseau remarked that "I can only meditate when I am walking. When I stop, I cease to think; my mind only works with my legs" (in Solnit 2000, 8). Likewise, for Hegel, Kant, Thoreau, and Heidegger, walking was a form of meditation (Dapena-Tretter 2014, 105).

Many contemporary walking artists have since been influenced by Long's and Fulton's contemplative walking method. Deidre Heddon and Cathy Turner (2010) interviewed

5 Understanding humanity as nature goes back to the shamanistic practices of hunter-gatherer societies, in which no distinction between humans and nature was recognised. See Krajewska (2017, 35) for a discussion of this line of thinking.

10 female walking artists as a means to uncover the various characteristics of their aesthetic walking practices. Although all these women acknowledge the influence of Long and Fulton, as well as Janet Cardiff, on their practice, in their walking interviews with each artist, the authors discovered that walking takes on very different forms in each artist's work. From knitting while walking through familiar city streets, to observational walks and walking groups that walk through overlooked or marginal city spaces, to travelling vast distances to deliver personal messages, these contemporary examples reflect a participatory or collaborative ethos not evident in the work of Long and Fulton. Influenced largely by the radical pedagogy of St. Martin's College of Art in London, Long and Fulton were primarily concerned with the spatial and sculptural aspects of walking (Pope 2014, 17). Perhaps a better term for the contemporary examples mentioned above, as well as Coetzee's and Grobler's performances, would be "walking works", a term I borrow from Simon Pope (2014, 17). A "walking work" is different from "walking art" in that the focus in the former lies more on "participation, conversation and dialogue" (Pope 2014, 17).

Coetzee's and Grobler's performances are both participatory (by calling for interaction and conversation) and site-specific. Bishop (2012, 2) defines participatory art as those kinds of art practices "in which people constitute the central artistic medium and material", with an orientation towards the social. Artists produce "situations" rather than discrete objects and the artwork is regarded as a process or an ongoing project with no clear beginning or end (Bishop 2012, 2). In this sense, the viewer or spectator of participatory art projects is "repositioned as a co-producer or *participant*" (Bishop 2012, 2).

In a similar way, the viewer is repositioned as a participant in site-specific art. According to Miwon Kwon (2002, 1), site-specific art, in its broadest sense, incorporates "the physical conditions of a particular location as integral to the production, presentation, and reception of art." The bodily presence of the viewing subject is required for the site-specific work or event to be experienced "in a sensory immediacy of spatial extension and temporal duration" (Kwon 2002, 11). Thus, just as in participatory art, the presence of a viewer-participant is required to complete the artwork. Site-specific art is therefore different from public art, in that artworks are not simply placed in specific public sites; rather, these works "are meant to interact with both site and public" (Wallen 2012, 236). Some may even aim to transform society, as the two works discussed in this article do. What matters in many site-specific and participatory art projects, as Bishop (2012, 9) argues, are "the ideas, experiences and possibilities that result from these interactions."

It should be pointed out that Bishop (2012, 21) has included "walks" as a "predictable formula" that now characterises many community-based art projects that aim to educate their audiences. Her critique is directed at projects where the artist's role as facilitator is hardly different to that of an art or museum educator. Bishop's main concern with this type of participatory practice, however, is not its educational component, but its neglect

of aesthetic considerations. Participant interaction, through walking and dialogue, was indeed fundamental in both Coetzee's and Grobler's performances. This participation, in turn, generated rich discussions and creative ideas. Neither artists, however, could be criticised for neglecting the aesthetic dimension of their work. Coetzee's carefully mapped-out image of a locust and grasshopper required artistic creativity and mathematical precision. Similarly, the objects in *The Visitor Centre I* backpack were designed with consideration given to their aesthetic appeal. Grobler distributed the carefully packaged objects in the backpack to people in the group while asking what they thought the purpose of the item might be. As people offered suggestions, she encouraged further conversation by asking more questions, without specifying if our answers were correct or not (Figure 5). In this way, conversation about how these objects might mediate the relationship between humans and non-human animals was elicited.

Figure 5: Nicola Grobler, *The Visitor Centre I* (2016). (photograph by Josly van Wyk).

Grobler's reluctance to share the actual meaning of the objects led to spontaneous conversations about fumigation and how people tend to unthinkingly use poison to keep their homes free from unwanted insects. One participant said: "We fumigate our homes indiscriminately. … You kill everything." Another participant added: "[W]e have choices, but we remove theirs [the insects']." One of the participants mentioned

that the works draw attention to "smaller things and understanding the world from that perspective." Someone also suggested that spiders and other critters might make a home in the lock and another suggested that one should pause to consider how "we relocate these animals which we may think are impossible to live with." In this way, the dialogue that was generated by the objects in *The Visitor Centre I* unlocked many possible meanings. Although it is not possible to analyse each object separately here, overall they focused on the heroic spiders, ants, bees, mosquitoes, and other small species we encounter in our daily lives. In this way, the works encouraged participants to become more mindful of their actions towards these creatures. A lock that becomes a home for insects, a non-toxic remedy that encourages critters away from our living spaces without killing them—these things offered a hopeful vision of a future where human animals might live in an empathetic relation with non-human animals. Even the (rather absurd) tape that can be used to measure spiders' legs highlighted the injustices we unthinkingly commit against the small creatures with whom we coexist.

The educational component of *Locust and Grasshopper* unfolded in a slightly different way. When we reached the top of the hill at NIROX, we sat down on the rocky ground, between prickly grass and small aloes. Archibald and Coetzee then explained that the purpose of the burn was to understand how the short grass that emerged after the small managed fire promoted bird, insect, and wildflower species which, in turn, increase the biodiversity of the area. Their aim is to test conventional environmental practices in South Africa, specifically regarding when and how often veld should be burnt. The methods most often used in South Africa do not take into account different ways in which managed fires affect the biodiversity of ecosystems. Interest in the ways in which burns can be used to restore ecosystems is also gaining attention in other parts of the world. Although not mentioned by Archibald, much is now being learnt from indigenous strategies—or, cultural burns—which aim to reinvigorate the landscape.[6]

Although the group who attended *Locust and Grasshopper* did not engage in much dialogue at the site, it was on the walks to and from the performance that informal conversations emerged. In this way, a scientific project was made meaningful through active and engaged participation. Whilst Cartesian science privileges the distanced observer, these examples of ecological art encouraged viewer-participants to "get dirty" by "combining scientific understanding with sensual awareness to reawaken embodied relationship and innovative response" (Wallen 2012, 239). Both works could therefore be described not only as walking works, but also as aesthetic ecological interventions.

As I have already pointed out, both works were performed in natural landscapes. But before discussing the experience of landscape in more detail, I first lay the groundwork for that discussion by exploring some of the research in the humanities and social sciences that has investigated the dynamic and complex nature of walking.

6 See https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-18/indigenous-burning-before-and-after-tathra-bushfire/10258140

Attending to Walking

As a universal human activity, walking might easily be taken for granted as nothing more than either a form of contemplation, something one does simply "to clear one's head" (Rybråten, Skår, and Nordh 2019, 65), or the "locomotive means between two sites" (Solnit 2000, 1). In the 20th century, however, many social theorists have drawn attention to the different purposes of walking and its dynamic and complex character. For instance, Charles Baudelaire ([1863] 1964) and Walter Benjamin (see McRobbie 1994) were fascinated with walking in the city and both wrote extensively on the figure of the flâneur. Later, Guy DeBord (1981) and the Situationist International developed the idea of "psychogeographies", which brought attention to the effects of particular urban atmospheres on people's emotions and behaviour. Similarly fascinated with urban environments, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel De Certeau (1984) compares the city to a language and urban walking to speaking the language of the city. More recently, the topic of walking has meandered into a wider variety of academic fields such as cultural history (Solnit 2000), cultural geography (Degen and Rose 2012; Wylie 2005), sociology (Borer 2013), health and well-being studies (Doughty 2013; Rybråten, Skår, and Nordh 2019), contemporary arts practice (Heddon and Turner 2010), anthropology (Ingold and Lee Vergunst 2008), and ethnography (Pink 2007; Pink 2015). From philosopher to pilgrim, explorer to migrant, protest marcher to traveller, flâneur to hiker, artist to shopper, walking is an activity that affords a very particular engagement with the world that is different to driving, cycling, biking, or being transported by any other means.

More precisely, walking is a unique way in which we perceive places. The phenomenological anthropologist Tim Ingold (2004, 330) argues that "it is surely through our feet, in contact with the ground (albeit mediated by footwear), that we are more fundamentally and continually 'in touch' with our surroundings." From a phenomenological perspective, being in touch with the environment through bodily movement shapes our understanding of place. Similarly, for Edward Casey (1996, 44), place is both produced by an experiencing body and it draws bodies and things together owing to its "gathering power". This means that places are produced in the meeting of people and environments. Drawing on Casey's and Ingold's perspectives on the embodied relationship between people, place, and walking, Sarah Pink (2007, 245) further argues that walking is a place-making practice. As a physical, multisensorial activity, walking "determines place" as people interact with environments through sight, sound, smell, and touch (Pink 2007, 245). The material and atmospheric qualities of a place are therefore produced through an intimate interaction between environmental sounds, smells, and so forth, combined with the particular characteristics that people themselves bring to environments. The particular atmosphere or texture of place is produced as people leave their own "mark" on the environment—their footprints, their breath, and the sounds they make. Thus, as we walked through the landscapes in which

Locust and Grasshopper and *The Visitor Centre I* were performed, all the participants generated place both individually and collectively.

Furthermore, Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst (2008, 1) maintain that "walking is a profoundly social activity: … in their timings, rhythms and inflections, the feet respond as much as does the voice to the presence and activity of others." In ethnographical fieldwork, walking with others is understood to engender both sociability and ways of knowing with them that are produced through bodily movement and practice. Although Markus Miessen (2011, 45) has criticised the notion that participation leads to empathy, it is precisely because walking with others involves "a physical co-presence, emphasised by common movements" that we may (potentially, at least) share, and consequently understand each other (Lee and Ingold 2006, 69) through the practice of walking.

Walking, Landscape, and Experience

As socially engaged viewer-participants, we literally "got dirty" (as Wallen [2012, 239] suggests participants in ecological art should do), sweaty, and tired as we experienced both performances in the natural landscapes with which they interacted. In landscape studies, a shift away from focusing solely on the analysis of representation to considering people's lived interactions with material landscapes has taken place over the last decade or so (Thompson, Howard, and Waterton 2014, 5; Wylie 2005; Wylie 2014). As opposed to the culturalist approach, which gained currency in the 1980s and 1990s and that focuses on the discursive analysis of landscape, the recent emphasis on lived experience is influenced by a turn towards phenomenological methods in landscape research (Wylie 2007, 139). Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's ([1945] 2002) phenomenology of perception, the phenomenological approach to landscape criticises the ocularcentrism of earlier methods, which only considered landscape in visual and ideological terms (Wylie 2014, 57).[7] For example, in *The Iconography of Landscape*, Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (1988, 1) argue that landscape is "a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing or symbolising surroundings." As a result, research in new cultural geographies focuses on exposing the hegemonic cultural, political, and economic structures that shape landscape images and texts (Wylie 2007, 153). While these studies aim to expose the elitist, gendered, and Eurocentric bias of representations of landscape and to understand landscape as a projection of cultural meaning, they also render landscape, nature, and place as nothing more than inert matter and an intellectual construction. Proponents of this approach evidently consider human beings to be distanced spectators of landscapes (Ward Thompson 2014, 30).

By paying attention to other ways of knowing the world, a phenomenological approach considers landscape to be "a lived, embodied and affective experience" (Wylie 2014,

7 See John Wylie's thorough analysis of landscape phenomenology in *Landscape* (2007, 139–86).

58). From this perspective, landscape is "more-than-visual and more-than-symbolic" (Wylie 2014, 59). The culturalist approach to landscape is especially troubling to Ingold. In "The Temporality of Landscape", Ingold (1993, 154) writes the following in response to Cosgrove and Daniels' (1988) definition of landscape: "I do not share this view. To the contrary, I reject the division between inner and outer worlds—respectively of mind and matter, meaning and substance—upon which such distinction rests. The landscape, I hold, is not a picture in the imagination, surveyed by the mind's eye; nor however is it an alien and formless substrate awaiting the imposition of human order." In other words, Ingold (and other landscape phenomenologists) regards viewers to be engaged and active perceivers (Ward Thompson 2014, 30). A phenomenological approach does not see landscape as separate from human thought and practice; rather, it emphasises our continuing immersion in the world and our relational engagement with landscape by paying attention to direct, bodily contact with, and experience of, landscape (Wylie 2007, 139).

A phenomenological approach to human being-in-the-world understands the relationship between human beings and environments to be embodied, experience-based, and dynamic (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2002). We do not perceive our surroundings from a distance; rather, we are entangled with our surroundings and, importantly, the body is the centre from which understanding emerges. This means that we do not perceive places in a visual sense only, but as whole beings whose participation in environments is the way in which we come to understand them (Ingold 2000). Moreover, it is the body in motion that is fundamental to how we experience and come to understand places. Embodied movement—walking—is thus fundamental to how we perceive the world around us (Ingold 2011), and when we walk, we are in an intimate relationship with the environment we are moving through.

Thinking of landscape in the terms sketched above means that landscape is not a static or stable concept. Rather, as David Crouch (2014, 126) argues, landscape is "emergent" and the way it is evoked in any one location "may bear traces of other, earlier experiences there and elsewhere, merging the way in which landscape happens, relationally." In other words, experiencing a landscape is different for everyone and each experience offers different possibilities. In Crouch's (2014, 123) words, "landscape is not perspective and horizon, or lines, but felt smudges, smears, kaleidoscope, a multi-sensual expressive poetics of potentiality … ." Therefore, making generalising statements about people's perceptions of landscapes is unhelpful. Rather, from a phenomenological perspective, individual experiences are emphasised.

Although a phenomenological approach to landscape is not without its critics,[8] environmental aestheticians generally take a phenomenological approach to landscape, rejecting the assumption that people are distanced *viewers* of landscapes whose visual

8 For a critical and thorough discussion, see Wylie (2014).

appreciation of a landscape is what is to be measured. Instead, their approach recognises the human subject's whole-bodied involvement in the world.

The Highveld, the particular landscape in which both works were performed, is a summer rainfall area; in the winter month of June the earth is dusty, the grass is brown and dry, and the baking sun can be uncomfortably hot. Walking to see both works unfold was tiring and thirsty work and, depending on each person's level of fitness, the journey was either purely enjoyable or arduous. In his account of hiking the South West Coast Path in the UK, Wylie (2005, 240) reminds us that hiking is labour. Wylie (2005, 240) explains that "limbs and lungs" must work hard "in a haptic, step-by-step engagement with nature-matter", with feelings of boredom, fatigue, and pain being very much part of the hiking experience. For some, this was surely the case on the hike to *Locust and Grasshopper*, which was primarily an uphill climb. The fittest bodies were quickly reduced to small specs in the distance; this meant that the large group had soon split up into smaller groups. It was noticeable that the journey—whether fast-paced or slow—appeared to be an enjoyable and mostly sociable activity on both occasions, as people chatted in the groups produced by each participant's pace, confirming Ingold and Lee Vergunst's (2008) account of the sociability of walking. These conversations contributed to the inter-subjective contexts which formed part of the unfolding performances as people shared stories and experiences. Walking to and from the performances offered time for reflection on the environments we were in, as well as their particular rhythms and pulses.

As an embodied and emplaced activity, walking is fundamentally a corporeal experience in which the visual and visceral are interlinked. In other words, walking is a more-than-visual experience. As Pink et al. (2010, 4) argue in their article "Walking across Disciplines: From Ethnography to Arts Practice", paying attention to walking means that the emphasis in visual studies must shift from focusing attention solely on the visual towards acknowledging the "kinaesthetic, mobile and sensory/felt dimension of lived experience".

There is a growing amount of literature concerned with the embodied nature of the experience of places, with specific attention to walking and its affective dimensions. Steven Feld's (1996, 91) summation of the important link between place and sensory experience is an apt description: "[A]s place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place." In trying to understand how "senses make place", Pink developed a methodology of sensory ethnography which she describes as an approach to ethnography that foregrounds the multisensorial ways in which people understand themselves and their environments. The premise of sensory ethnography is that *multi*sensorial experience is "fundamental to how we learn about, understand and represent other people's lives" (Pink 2015, 18).

Different disciplines understand and attend to the senses in different ways. For instance, one of the founding theorists in multimodality, Gunter Kress (2000, 184), maintains

that the senses of sight, hearing, taste, sound, and touch operate separately and provide "highly differentiated information" because they are "attuned in a quite specific way to the natural environment". On the other hand, anthropologists of the senses do not understand the senses as operating independently of one another. Ingold (2000, 268) has been especially influential in this regard, arguing that "the eyes and ears should not be understood as separate keyboards for the registration of sensation but as organs of the body as a whole in whose movement, within an environment, the activity of perception consists".[9] This means that "[l]ooking, listening and touching, therefore, are not separate activities, they are just different facets of the same activity—that of the whole organism in its environment" (Ingold 2000, 261).

Recent neuroscientific research has shown the cross-sensory activity taking place in the perceptual system. As Charles Spence (2011, 85) explains, "our senses receive correlated information about the same external objects and events." This means that what we see is influenced by what we feel through the skin, what we hear, and what we smell. Sensory experience does not travel along separate channels; all the senses are inextricably linked. Information obtained from various sensory stimuli blurs into our singular, but multi-layered, even "fuzz[y]" (Prior 2005, 26) experience.

Influenced by phenomenological anthropologists as well as recent neuroscientific research, Pink's (2011; 2015) approach to the senses emphasises their interconnectedness rather than the ways in which they might be differentiated. Although the sensory categories we use to describe our sensory experiences are culturally constructed, human perception itself is not actually divided up in this way. As Pink (2011, 268) argues, the sensory categories of vision, sound, touch, smell, and taste are merely a useful way to "communicate about human sensory perception" and merely offer a starting point from which to draw conclusions about human experience, knowledge, and practice. People often describe their sensory experience in terms of "*extra*sensory" categories (Pink 2015, 25; my emphasis). For instance, in her research about people's sensory experiences of the home, Pink (2015, 115) found that "freshness" is often used to explain people's experiences of their domestic environments. The human sensorium is an inter-related system and all aspects of being alive and being in particular environments commingle in the multisensory production of knowledge.

If we acknowledge that a complex synthesis between all the senses takes place in the body, then understanding how environmental values may be fostered while walking with ecological art must take multisensorial experience seriously. Apart from seeing these events, the experience was also auditory, haptic, and olfactory, amongst other modes of experience both conscious and unconscious, which all contributed towards how their meaning took shape. Whilst walking with *Locust and Grasshopper* and *The Visitor Centre I*, knowledge emerged through sensory registers other than sight as we

9 See Pink's (2011) critical discussion of these differing perspectives.

became sensorially engaged participants. This whole-bodied experience is discussed briefly below. In the discussion that follows, I draw attention to the tactile or haptic and olfactory dimensions of this experience, merely because it is convenient to refer to these categories. In truth, the whole sensorium is fundamentally involved in each description.

Touching the objects deigned for critters in *The Visitor Centre I* brought us to new insights about small species. Rosalyn Driscoll (2011, 111) argues that "[c]ontact, movement, and gesture generate a cascade of cues for one's memory that may be different than those generated by sight, enriching the associations and meanings of an artwork." The objects in *The Visitor Centre I* were passed around, examined, and discussed. As they sparked our curiosity, we imagined and shared ideas about each one's purpose. Facilitated by the tactile experience of the objects, these discussions generated creative ideas and enriched the meaning of the event. Similarly, the atmosphere of the place we were in—the smell of the dry grass, the touch of the light breeze, and the baking sun—combined with the conversations that emerged around the objects, enriching our experience of the work and the meanings that unfolded in that space.

The cool wind blowing on our hot bodies, the irritating feeling of dust in our throats, the rustling sound of dry grass blown by the wind, as well as its particular smell, conjured up memories—both pleasant and unpleasant—of hiking in similar landscapes. It is quite common for a particular smell to vividly evoke a memory of a past event. According to Tim Jacob (2011, 200), the extent to which smells can evoke emotion and memories is far greater than the other senses. Generally known as "autobiographical memory" or "the Proust effect", smell is a powerful stimulus for recalling events and forging associations (Jacob 2011, 200).[10] For Laura Marks (2011, 241–42), since smell evokes such complex personal affects, "it seems to be the least translatable and most personal of all the senses", extending deep within the subconscious to the extent that one could speak of the existence of an "olfactory imaginary". From neuroscience we learn that, owing to the direct link, or wiring, in the brain between olfaction and the neural centres for emotion and memory, smell has the capacity to elicit memory and cement associations, particularly when intense emotions are experienced (Marks 2011, 242).

The path leading back from the performance of *Locust and Grasshopper* cut through the recently burnt veld. The pungent smell of freshly burnt grass brought us back to the critters who would make their home in the veld when new grass sprouted. Owing to our particular embodied experience on the hill, watching the veld go up in flames, as well as our tactile, olfactory, and auditory experience of *The Visitor Centre I*, combined with the "labour" of hiking to both performances, for some participants deep meanings and associations about our relationship to small species were cemented. On the walk back from the performances, many of us became more aware of the particularities of

10 Jacob (2011, 200) explains that the term "Proust's effect" stems from Marcel Proust's description in *Swan's Way* (1913) of the memories of his Aunt Leonie's house in Combray that were evoked by the taste ("he didn't actually refer to smell!") of a petit madeleine dipped in his tea.

the landscape and the bugs and small creatures that inhabited them. On both occasions the conversations that emerged on the walks back centred on our responses to what we had just experienced. Walking through the landscape thus provoked a wide variety of responses, feelings, and ideas.

Conclusion

Just as different walkers engage in different kinds of walks, different kinds of meanings are generated by each walk(er). Motivational factors will influence what people learn when they walk with art in natural surroundings, even when they all attend the same event. These attitudes affect the meaning the work assumes for each individual, and it is not my intention to suggest that everyone was affected in the same way by the performances I have discussed.

Even so, by combining aesthetic and educational components, these performances encouraged an openness and attentiveness towards the environment. Through walking, dialogue, and embodied participation, sensorially engaged participants developed deeper understandings of the fragile relationship between humans and non-human animals. One of the participants at the performance of *The Visitor Centre I* described the backpack as a "vehicle of education" which encouraged him to think about insects in ways that he had not done before. These performances were thus potentially transformational events. By providing a platform for debate about our ethical responsibility to the non-human animals with which we share this planet, they inspired environmental care and respect. This is an urgent issue at a time when, according to Anthony Turton (in Ledger 2019, 3), "humans have become an invasive species", their insatiable desire for progress impacting on "every ecosystem on the planet". Artistic practice, as these examples have shown, can play a key role in raising awareness about the need to make sustainable, rather than environmentally detrimental, choices.

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