

The Annual Amfiteater International Academic Symposium

Ecology and the Performing Arts

organised by

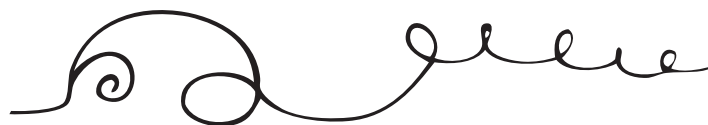
Slovenian Theatre Institute,

Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television,

Amfiteater – Journal of Performing Arts Theory and

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9–10 October 2024, on the premises of the **Slovenian Theatre Institute**, Mestni trg 17, Ljubljana, Slovenia



Climate change, sustainable development and the green transition are buzzwords that have been circulating a lot lately. There is a growing awareness that these issues are not just about the findings of the natural sciences or the search for primarily technological solutions but that the humanities and social sciences should also contribute their perspectives and approaches. New philosophical, social and political paradigms have been emerging in relation to global warming, environmental disasters and the threat of extinction of species, including the human species.

The Anthropocene, marked by deforestation, species extinction, pollution, global warming and glacial melt, is emerging as a sobering moment for humanity to reflect on its path and past choices. The impact of capitalism on environmental change has given rise to the concept of the Capitalocene, coined in 2009 by Swedish ecologist Andreas Malm, to which social, environmental and feminist theorists have contributed and continue to contribute.

New questions and problems are emerging related to the fact that humans are not the sole agents of life on Earth; we are confronted with multispecies communities, the rise of nonhuman agents (or actors), the nonhuman turn (Grusin), the idea of the “world-without-us” (Thacker), inclusive society, and artistic responses to these challenges. The consideration of nonhuman agents (animals, plants, intelligent machines) has stimulated a critique of

anthropocentrism and introduced an ethic of inclusion of these agents in communities where they meet and interact with humans.

The Anthropocene (Capitalocene), understood as an event defined by climate change and environmental disasters (and not, according to new scientific theories, as a geological epoch essentially defined by human activity), encourages art to radicalise the critique of anthropocentrism and to take into account deprived nonhuman agents, too.

In literary studies, ecocriticism is also gaining ground. Ecoliterature draws attention to ecological issues and the impact of the individual on the environment. Ecodrama, ecodramaturgy and ecotheatre explore new approaches to telling stories about the climate crisis, with theatre companies being encouraged to adopt sustainable and carbon-free production approaches.

Marx understood nature as essentially socially mediated and not at all as “pure nature” in the Rousseauian sense, setting Feuerbach’s notion of nature out to critique. “Feuerbach’s nature is that of the virgin forest, or of an atoll recently arisen in the Pacific Ocean,” writes Henri Lefebvre (quoted in Schmidt).

If access to nature in its primordial state is not really possible, and if we are constantly dealing with a socially mediated and appropriated nature, how does art respond to this?

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The *Amfiteater* Academic Symposium aims to reflect on ecology and climate change in relation to drama, theatre, performing arts and hybrid practices (e.g., performance art, (new) media art). Questions of how to respond to the impending catastrophe and how art can contribute to the green transition are increasingly present in the arts.

The symposium will seek to examine these issues through the analysis of examples of performances (and other artworks) that address them. We are interested in the ways in which they are elaborated, the impact of these performances on audiences, and how these themes are developed in different contexts. The symposium also aims to reflect on the philosophical, social and (post)political implications of these topics and how they relate to the challenges of contemporary society.

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Thacker, Eugene. *In the Dust of This Planet*. Zero Books, New York, 2011.

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PROGRAMME

Thursday, 9 October 2025

9.30 Opening of the symposium:

Alida Bevk, MA, Prof, Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television, University of Ljubljana

Gašper Troha, PhD, Slovenian Theatre Institute

9.45 Plenary lecture

Petra Ježková: Cutting Down Trees as a Dramatic and Performative Metaphor of Vulnerability

10.30 discussion

10.45 coffee break

11.00 First session

Moderator: Barbara Orel

Knut Ove Arntzen: Arctic Conditions for Dramaturgy

Kristina Pranjić: Water as Method: The Hydro-Poetic Avant-Garde in the Northern Adriatic

Gašper Troha: Non-Human Actors in Slovenian Drama

Mateja Pezdirc Bartol: The Secret Life of Trees in the Theatre Productions of Žiga Divjak

12.20 discussion

12.45 lunch break

14.30 Second session

Moderator: Gašper Troha

Panel

Bruna Bonanno, Maria Paola Zedda, Giada Cipollone, Anja Dimitrijević, Teresa Masini: Eco-Epistemologies. Transdisciplinary Horizons in Performance

16.10 discussion

16.20 Tin Grabnar, Ajda Rooss: Project *Transport*

16.40 coffee break

17.10 Third session

Moderator: Zala Dobovšek

Milena Mileva Blažič: The Ecocriticism in Svetlana Makarovič's Fairy Tales

Tery Žeželj: Complex Entanglements in *Naturecultures*: Narrating with Gardens

Saška Rakef, Pia Brezavšček: Sonic Beginnings: Dramaturgies of Care and Ecological Sensibility

18.10 discussion

Friday, 10 October 2025

10.00 Plenary lecture

Janez Strehovec, Maja Murnik: *Fire: An Essay on the Producer of Flames on the Stage and Beyond*

10.45 discussion

11.00 coffee break

11.15 Fourth session

Moderator: Maja Murnik

Lada Čale Feldman: *The Deliberative Ecology of Kyoto*

Zala Dobovšek: *Ecofeminism in Contemporary Performing Arts*

Eszter M. Polonyi, Sašo Grozdanov: *Expanding Normative Thinking: Black Holes in the Arts and Beyond*

12.15 discussion

12.30 lunch break

14.00 Fifth session

Moderator: Gašper Troha

Narvika Bovcon: *Artistic Modelling of a Sustainable Balance between Human and Non-Human Actors*

Kaja Kraner: *Environmental Imaginaries in Contemporary Performing Arts in Slovenia*

Aleš Vaupotič: *From Egology to Ecology: The Ethics of Infosphere and New Media Art*

Jatun Risba: *Vital Materiality in the Art Film Series *A Tree Doesn't Fall Far From the Mountain**

15.20 final discussion of the symposium

ABSTRACTS



Knut Ove Arntzen: **Arctic Conditions for Dramaturgy**

The Arctic is a landscape not captured by logic or symmetric understanding. In this contribution, the author expands on how ecology, gender and the mythical are aspects reflected in such landscapes and their relevance to dramaturgy. Gertrude Stein's ideas on portraits and landscapes present one perspective, while the theory of non-orientable surfaces offers another. They come to expression in theatre and drama or time-based art in general, reflecting the non-orientability of ice deserts or seascape. The paper exemplifies this with works by Carole Nadeau, of Québec, and her *Chaos K.O. Chaos*, as well as Beavivás Sámi Teáhter and their production of the Swedish play *Kayak Woman*. Additionally, it features the Norwegian Verdensteatret's installation art performance *Konsert for Grønland (Concert for Greenland)*, and Swiss director Christopher Marthaler's Greenland production *+–0*. The contribution will be a reworking of an article published in the online periodical *Trans*, "Arctic Conditions for the Arts: Landscape of Non-Orientable Surfaces – Ecology and Gender", *TRANS Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften | Internet journal for cultural studies | Revue électronique de recherches sur la culture*, No. 20, published by INST in Vienna.

Knut Ove Arntzen, born in 1950, is a professor emeritus of theatre studies at the University of Bergen, Norway, and a visiting professor at different universities in Lithuania, Belgium and Germany. He has worked as a freelance theatre critic at the paper *Arbeiderbladet* in Oslo and as a consultant to the Bergen International Theatre. He has participated in many international conferences, for example, in Glasgow, Amsterdam and Copenhagen, and attended INST's cultural studies conferences (<http://www.inst.at/trans/9Nr/inhalt9.htm>). He has published a series of articles and books analysing development in the scope of a visual kind of dramaturgy and post-mainstream. He has cooperated with, among others, the Eurokaz Festival in Zagreb. An attendee of workshops about new theatre and theatre research internationally, he has also given several guest lectures about new theatre developments, post-mainstream and site-specific/ambient theatre. Currently, he specialises in aspects of theatre and landscapes.

Milena Mileva Blažič: **The Ecocriticism in Svetlana Makarovič's Fairy Tales**

Svetlana Makarovič began publishing for an adult audience after 1960 (*Twilight*, 1964) and for younger readers after 1970 (*The Little Mouse is Sleeping*, 1972, etc.). In her children's books – as in the model of the short contemporary fairy tale – the most frequently appearing characters are personified and anthropomorphised animal figures (cf. *The Little Mouse is Sleeping*, 1972). In addition to these figures, nature itself – including forests, plants, and even fictional magic potions made from plant ingredients – assumes a special narrative function.

Makarovič took a critical stance towards the anthropocentric view of the world from the outset of her work. In the short contemporary fairy tale *Man, Don't Be Evil*, she contrasts the compassionate portrayal of a mother cat (embodied by Mother Corajjo) with the antagonist Mrs Jazbečka, who treats animals cruelly and even wants to kill a kitten. Similarly, in "How Did the Monkey Change?", she invents the curse of the "three hundred Darwins" to critique both evolution and the prevailing anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric perspectives.

Another story in the collection *The Spinner's Calendar* reflects on both the microcosm, through a dialogue between two squirrels, and the macrocosm by depicting a conversation between a frozen sun and five planets lamenting their insufficient brightness. Makarovič's ethical commitment is evident in her depiction of nature as an active subject rather than a mere backdrop. This is also clear in works such as *Moonlit Forest*, in which the fox embodies the archetypal wisdom of nature, and *Emilia the Hen*, which criticises the utilitarian view of animals as mere producers. These texts challenge readers to move from an egocentric view to one that recognises the intrinsic value of all living beings. Ultimately, they argue in favour of a philosophy of coexistence that overcomes patriarchal dualisms and unsustainable practices of exploitation.

Milena Mileva Blažič is a specialist in children's literature, fairy tale studies and comparative literature with 45 years of research experience (1980–2025) focusing on intercultural literary analysis, pedagogical innovation and Slovenian literature in international contexts.

She has contributed to 139 publications across peer-reviewed journals, book chapters and professional articles. Her efforts have established Slovenian children's literature within international comparative frameworks. She is also active in curriculum development and Holocaust education policy.

Bruna Bonanno, Maria Paola Zedda, Giada Cipollone, Anja Dimitrijević, Teresa Masini: **Eco-Epistemologies. Transdisciplinary Horizons in Performance**

Panel

The research unit PerLa – Performance Epistemologies Research Lab at Università Iuav di Venezia (Italy) prepares a panel presenting the various research trajectories through which the relationship between performance and ecology is discussed/explored/articulated within the group. Each contribution methodologically addresses a specific intersection, highlighting the epistemological potential of engaging with an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary relation.

1. *Performance and Island Studies*. By approaching performance through littoral and liminal concepts such as the shoal (Schneider, 2020), this contribution explores how the shifting nature of both islands and performance might inform alternative ways of looking at the performing arts, integrating historiographical perspectives with cultural questions tied to the specificity of insular geographies.

2. *Performance and Blue Studies*. This contribution moves beyond a hermeneutic paradigm that isolates both geopolitics and performance within terrestrial-centric epistemologies. Specifically, it proposes an expansive “wet” approach that, through the multifaceted lenses of blue studies, deconstructs dominant modes of conceptualisation and representation of our worlding and world-making (Wilson, 2025).

3. *Performance and Critical Performance Ecologies*. This proposal articulates a critical approach rooted in the epistemological and affective category of disturbance. It engages with multispecies performance as a field in which the contradictions inherent in the cohabitation of human and non-human animals become visible, negotiated or contested.

4. *Performance and Environmental Necropolitics*. This proposal analyses the methodologies through which performance and choreography interrogate the relationship between bodies, communities and the territories of necropolitics, with particular attention to forms of energy and environmental extractivism. It explores how the exercise of sovereignty over the death of people and places generates an agency of landscape and matter, which manifests in forms of more-than-human transcorporeality.

5. *Digital Space, Environment and Performance*. Direct interaction with aquatic ecosystems offers an opportunity to work in harmony with the environment. This contribution explores the premise that artistic research involves raising environmental consciousness in relation to aquatic geography. The paradigm emphasises the significance of physical contact and performing arts in territorial understanding and environmental awareness. The digital archive of an entity within its ecosystem helps

us understand ecological changes, how climate change is affecting it, and the aspects we humans may share with the environment (Baldacci, 2023; Regi, 2023).

The Performance Epistemologies Research Lab (PerLa) is a research unit based at Iuav University. Founded in 2024 by a group of scholars, it investigates performance in dialogue with various disciplinary fields, ranging from cultural studies (e.g., gender, decolonial, and critical animal studies) to the environmental humanities and radical pedagogies.

Bruna Bonanno, PhD candidate at the University of Milan, playwright and co-founder of *salmastra* (“brackish”), an interdisciplinary collective that works with the fishing community in Sicily: Blue Studies.

Maria Paola Zedda, PhD candidate at Iuav University, curator and dance dramaturg. Her research focuses on performance and dance studies, as well as environmental necropolitics, through a decolonial perspective.

Giada Cipollone, assistant professor at Iuav University: Island and Performance Studies.

Anja Dimitrijević, programming and coordination of the MA in Theatre and Performing Arts at Iuav University: Digital Space, Environment and Performance.

Teresa Masini, PhD and researcher, associate editor of *Liberazioni. Rivista di critica antispecista*, a journal of critical animal studies: Critical Performance Ecologies.

Narvika Bovcon: **Artistic Modelling of a Sustainable Balance between Human and Non-Human Actors**

The challenges of the Anthropocene – environmental catastrophes and far-reaching climate change – arise from human overexploitation of resources accompanied by a lack of empathy and responsibility. The intertwining of consumer society, global production, and financial and political systems leaves the individual feeling helpless, as they cannot adequately assess their environmental footprint or significantly reduce it by changing their everyday habits. New media artists are addressing pressing environmental issues through various approaches, which this paper explores through a review of current works at this year's Venice Architecture Biennale and the Ars Electronica festival. The solution can be sought in establishing a balance between human, collective, technological and natural agents, while emphasising their rational action and empathy.

In their artistic and research processes, artists use methods of creative thinking, constructionist searches for solutions tailored to individual requirements, speculative methods for modelling the functioning of systems, transdisciplinary research that connects diverse concepts, raising audience awareness through documentary approaches and storytelling as in investigative journalism, data capture, analysis and visualisation, generative models of artificial intelligence as creative companions and machine-powered collaborators, research and development of new materials in a circular process of reuse, smart functionalities and biodegradability, participatory projects for community learning and the invention of new lifestyles, and the fostering of empathy for interspecies connection and coexistence. The paper pays special attention to understanding the dual role of technology, which, through new scientific and technical discoveries, acts both as a problem and as a solution, generating new problems in turn at both the level of social relations and environmental change. Artworks will be considered as functional models for the coexistence of human and non-human agents.

Narvika Bovcon is a professor of video and new media art. She teaches at the Faculty of Computer and Information Science and as an external collaborator at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, both at the University of Ljubljana. Her research interests include user interfaces for exhibitions on online platforms and virtual- and augmented-reality environments, the theory and practice of new media art, information visualisation and digital humanities. Since 2016, she has been the editor-in-chief of the journal *Likovne besede / Art Words*.

Lada Čale Feldman: **The Deliberative Ecology of *Kyoto***

This contribution focuses on the play *Kyoto* by Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson, which premiered at the Swan Theatre in 2024 by the RSC and transferred to the West End in 2025. In contrast to its environmentally conscious predecessors in contemporary British drama (Angelaki, 2019; Hudson, 2020; Watson, 2022), in which the subject of climate change is predominantly treated from a bottom-up perspective, *Kyoto* dramatises the ten-year negotiation process of the so-called Kyoto Protocol of 1997, which took place at the highest global decision-making level: the United Nations Climate Change Conferences.

Although Murphy and Robertson's exposure of the conflicting interests of global players in environmental politics could be attributed to a recent "turn" in British political drama that "lays emphasis on argumentation and reflection rather than quick action" (Redling, 2014), immediate critical responses to *Kyoto* have propelled the play into a genuine thriller, imbued with its own twists and turns that make for a breathtaking reading and viewing experience. The author's interest, however, is to examine the play's strategies of representation – particularly its attitude to language – and to discuss the links it establishes between drama, debate and public opinion, which are characteristic of a perennial dramaturgical matrix that has found in *Kyoto* one of its most darkly humorous specimens, attuned to the "deliberative ecology" (Mendonça, Veloso, Magalhães and Motta, 2024) that is both the singular promise for saving the planet and the crucial obstacle to doing so.

Lada Čale Feldman is a professor and the Chair of Theatre Studies at the Department of Comparative Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia. Her areas of research include theatre and performance studies, as well as feminist criticism. Besides her two co-authored and seven authored books in Croatian – the most recent, *Hiniti i biti (To Pretend or To Be)*, was published in 2023 – she has also co-edited several special issues of journals and numerous collections, among them in English (with I. Prica and R. Senjković) *Fear, Death and Resistance: Croatia 1991–92* (1993) and (with M. Blažević) *Misperformance: Essays in Shifting Perspectives* (2014). She is the recipient of six awards (five national and one international).

Zala Dobovšek: **Ecofeminism in Contemporary Performing Arts**

Ecofeminism, one of the central feminist perspectives and movements, has encompassed numerous phenomena and theoretical developments since the term's inception in 1974, when French author Françoise d'Eaubonne introduced it in *Feminism or Death*. In the last decade, ecofeminist movements have experienced a renewed renaissance, partly due to the increasing awareness of an impending ecological catastrophe. Ecofeminist theories are highly complex and interdisciplinary; however, their foundational premise remains consistent: they are based on the idea that the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature are inextricably linked, both dominated by mechanisms of patriarchy, capitalism and environmental degradation. Ecofeminist principles are actively problematised and researched within specific scholarly fields today, and in the field of performative practice, ecofeminist theory has recently gained prominence mainly within the NGO scene. Performer and visual artist Olja Grubić has addressed these issues, among other ways, in her project *Naked Life*, and has more specifically incorporated ecofeminist poetics into two events: the exhibition *Coexistence* and the performance *Extima: Fertile Soil*. This paper examines Olja Grubić's works and her influence on contemporary stage expressions at the intersection of (eco)feminist critique and theatre analysis.

Zala Dobovšek is a dramaturg, theatre theorist and assistant professor in the Department of Dramaturgy and Performing Arts at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television of the University of Ljubljana (UL AGRFT). Her area of expertise primarily focuses on research that crosses artistic and sociological fields, with an emphasis on theatre-theoretical reflection on "non-normative" social phenomena (class relations, queer practices, feminism) and on critical analysis of their representation in performative art. In 2022, her book *Theatre and War: Performative Responses to the Wars of the 1990s in the Former Yugoslavia* was published.

Tin Grabnar, Ajda Rooss: **Project Transport**

Under the direction of Slovenian theatre director Tin Grabnar, in the 2024/2025 season, six theatres from Slovenia, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania and the Czech Republic joined forces in the international co-production *Transport*. Through six intimate performances, the project explores transport as a key pillar of globalisation and, at the same time, as one of the primary sources of environmental and social challenges. The individual performances address urgent topics – including ecological crises, wars, the depletion of natural resources, the loss of cultural identity, and social inequalities – while collectively forming a puppet omnibus that highlights the interconnectedness of today's global problems.

A distinctive feature of the project is its sustainable orientation. *Transport* is therefore not only a theatre project but also a call for change. It challenges entrenched patterns of consumerism and economic growth, opens space to reflect on our human impact on the planet, and positions theatre as a co-creator of a sustainable future. At the symposium, Tin Grabnar and Ajda Rooss will present the project's concept, its aesthetic and dramaturgical approaches, the role of sustainability in contemporary art, the importance of international collaboration, and theatre as a space for critical reflection on globalisation and the future of the world.

Tin Grabnar is one of the most innovative explorers of contemporary Slovenian puppet art. He works at the intersection of performative and theatrical practices, as well as contemporary puppetry. In his performances, he interweaves different genres and methods into multilayered stagings that probe emotional, ethical and philosophical questions. His oeuvre includes visually powerful and thematically multilayered performances, with sustainability emphasised as a central theme in both content and production. For the performances *Elsewhere* and *Still Life*, produced by the Ljubljana Puppet Theatre, he has received numerous national and international awards. In 2015, he graduated from the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television (UL AGRFT) of the University of Ljubljana under the mentorship of Sebastijan Horvat.

As the artistic director of the Ljubljana Puppet Theatre and the International Festival of Contemporary Puppetry LUTKE between 2012 and 2022, **Ajda Rooss** made significant contributions to the development and international recognition of contemporary Slovenian puppetry. In 2015, she co-founded the Museum of Puppetry at Ljubljana Castle, and in 2024, she served as the selector for the Competition Programme of the 60th Maribor Theatre Festival. Her work combines thoughtful dramaturgical strategies with innovative puppetry approaches, creating a space where the personal and the collective intertwine, and inviting the audience, through a dialogue with the unconscious, into a profound reflection and an experience of the imaginal realm.

Petra Ježková: **Cutting Down Trees as a Dramatic and Performative Metaphor of Vulnerability**

The cutting down of trees appears in classical drama across cultures as a frequent and universally understood metaphor for vulnerability, the fragility of order and the threat to balance. One cannot help but recall Anton Pavlovich Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* in this context, but trees are also symbolically felled in Czech classical drama. The metaphor remains relevant in today's non-dramatic theatre: performance art has taken it up, and trees are being cut down again, not only on Czech stages but also on Nordic ones. This contribution interprets the longevity and communicability of this theatrical metaphor as proof of humanity's essential connection with ecological themes – a connection that shows this is not merely a trend of recent decades, when ecological themes have been both radicalised and, at times, emptied or downplayed.

Petra Ježková is a theatre historian and editor specialising in Czech theatre of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Since 2007, she has worked at the Czech Theatre Studies Department at the ATI, where she serves as the main guarantor of the Czech Theatre Encyclopedia project and is the founder and editor of the book series *Nota bene*. Since 2018, she has headed the Czech Theatre Studies Department at the ATI, and since 2024, she has been editor-in-chief of the professional periodical *Divadelní revue* (*Theatre Revue*).

Kaja Kraner: **Environmental Imaginaries in Contemporary Performing Arts in Slovenia**

In the broader field of art research in the humanities, the topics of ecology, climate and environmental change have had a longer presence, especially within literary studies or, more specifically, the interdisciplinary field of ecocriticism and environmental literary criticism. Since the 1990s, a conceptual apparatus for analysing concrete literary works has been developed in these fields, with the primary focus on spatial categories established through the construction of literary worlds. In this connection, one can highlight, among others, Timothy Morton's (2007) notion of ambient poetics and, in the broader field of environmental humanities, the concept of the environmental imaginary, which emphasises the role of imagination in the experience of space, environment and climate change.

Even if such a conceptual apparatus may seem too broad for artistic fields characterised by an essential determination with space and spatial aspects (fine arts, visual arts and, to some extent, new media arts), it appears applicable to artistic fields that are – through their link with language – essentially determined by time and temporality. In dialogue with these contributions, it is possible to identify two key problematic axes that characterise current reflections on the connection between art and ecology: the question of the relationship between the (human) body and the environment, and the questioning of an anthropocentric optic on space and time that derives from embodied experience. This contribution reflects on whether such an ecocritical approach is an appropriate starting point for analysing examples of contemporary performative art practices in the Slovenian context, including selected projects by Neja Tomšič, who works at the intersection of contemporary performative and visual arts.

Kaja Kraner is an assistant professor at the Chair of Theoretical Studies, UL ALUO, and a researcher at the ALUO Research Institute (research programme Visual Literacy, ARIS PB-0452). Between 2015 and 2019, she served on the editorial board of *ŠUM: Journal for Contemporary Art Criticism and Theory*, and since 2025, she has been a member of the editorial board of the *Journal for the Critique of Science*. In 2021, she published the monograph *Chronopolitics of Art: Changes in Aesthetic Education from Modern to Contemporary Art* (Ljubljana: Krtina). Between 2021 and 2022, she served as a research associate at the Moderna galerija / Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana, working on the research project Sustainable Digital Preservation of Slovenian New-Media Art (ARRS J7-3158).

Mateja Pezdirc Bartol: **The Secret Life of Trees in the Theatre Productions of Žiga Divjak**

We live in a world of wildfires, floods, droughts, extinctions of animal and plant species, migrations, a warming atmosphere and other phenomena that highlight humanity's unsustainable treatment of the planet. Every day, we encounter articles, reports, news, and data on environmental problems. This contribution, however, considers how awareness of environmental issues can be raised through plays and theatre. The theatre, with its strongly anthropocentric heritage, has been relatively slow to respond to environmental issues compared with literary, media and film studies. In recent years, however, scholars of theatre and the performing arts, as well as theatre-makers themselves, have increasingly engaged with the subject.

This is also characteristic of Žiga Divjak's oeuvre as a director. For the past five years, he has been intensively engaged in productions that place environmental themes at the centre. His work exemplifies socially engaged documentary theatre, portraying various aspects of climate change through the simultaneous application of different theatrical strategies. These productions do not propose solutions but instead seek to inform and raise awareness of environmental and humanitarian crises, opening up the theatre as a space for public reflection where we are confronted with the contradictions of the modern world. This contribution analyses three works – *Vročina* (*Fever*, Mladinsko Theatre, 2021), *Krize* (*Crises*, Mladinsko Theatre, 2022) and *Kako je padlo drevo* (*How a Tree Fell*, SNT Drama Ljubljana, 2022) – all linked by the motif of the tree.

The tree takes on various roles: the dry branches held up by the actor allude to rising temperatures and the ensuing drought, wildfire and forest loss; the scenography with the stumps of felled trees parallels the exploitation and exhaustion of modern humanity and the objectification of all life; the tree in a green residential neighbourhood threatened by felling to make way for luxury housing becomes a symbol of resistance to gentrification, violence, capital and dehumanisation. These productions are informed by the fundamental idea that humanity will only survive if it builds on cooperation and a fairer distribution of goods, in which everyone takes only what they need – statements supported by recent scientific findings on the secret life of trees and the cooperation among beings that form every ecosystem.

Mateja Pezdirc Bartol is a full professor of Slovene literature in the Department of Slovene Studies at the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Arts, where she lectures on the history of Slovene drama and theatre, contemporary Slovene drama, theory of drama and youth literature. She has published three scholarly monographs, one of

which, *Navzkrižja svetov: študije o slovenski dramatiki* (*The Collision of Worlds: Studies on Slovenian Drama*), has also been translated into Croatian. She has edited several collected volumes and thematic issues and published numerous papers in scholarly journals in Slovenia and abroad. She has been a visiting professor at the Faculty of Arts in Zagreb, led a bilateral project with the University of Belgrade, and lectured at numerous foreign universities. She has chaired juries for various literary awards, including the Slavko Grum Award and the Cankar Award.

Eszter M. Polonyi and Sašo Grozdanov: **Expanding Normative Thinking: Black Holes in the Arts and Beyond**

Despite their remoteness, black holes – cosmological entities with such intense gravitational fields that no matter or radiation can escape them – have generated imaginaries of close encounters between these entities and the human body and environment. “What would happen if you fell in?” remains one of the most enduring questions regarding these phenomena, specifically referring to the so-called event horizon – the boundary in spacetime where the gravitational curvature becomes so extreme that nothing, not even light, can escape. This contribution examines how media artists, scientists and critical thinkers have sought to unsettle normative conceptions of the self and the environment by drawing on the physics of black holes, investigating emerging work at the intersection of observation, experiment and performativity. The paper presents research being conducted within an interdisciplinary ARIS project at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics (FMF) and the Academy of Fine Arts and Design (ALUO) at the University of Ljubljana.

Eszter M. Polonyi is an art historian trained in the Anglo-American academic system, with a particular interest in the intersections between art and science. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Kunstuniversität Linz and an ARIS-funded researcher at the University of Ljubljana (FMF, ALUO) on the project *The Photo of a Black Hole: Physics Meets Photography (ARIS)*.

Sašo Grozdanov is an associate professor of physics at the University of Ljubljana and the University of Edinburgh. He studied at Harvard, Cambridge and Oxford, and later worked as a postdoctoral researcher at Leiden and MIT. His research spans theoretical and mathematical physics, from hydrodynamics to quantum field theory, gravity, black holes and string theory.

Kristina Pranjić: **Water as Method: The Hydro-Poetic Avant-Garde in the Northern Adriatic**

This paper explores how avant-garde artistic practices from the Northern Adriatic – particularly those emerging from so-called “peripheral” regions of East Central Europe – reshape environmental sensibility and ecological thought through the lens of hydropoetics and feminist epistemologies. Drawing on the concepts of hydropoetics (Ryan, 2021) and hydrofeminism (Neimanis, *Bodies of Water*, 2017), the paper develops an expanded history of the avant-garde shaped by water – as medium, method and ontological basis.

Rather than presenting the climate crisis through representational frameworks, the selected case studies – ranging across the temporal transversal of the 20th and 21st centuries, from historical and neo-avant-garde to intermedial artistic practices – function as experimental and situated (ecoregional) forms. These works engage with the mythologies and poetics of water, as well as those of the Adriatic, exploring more-than-human relations and articulating a critique of extractivist and colonial regimes. The paper is based on current research in environmental and blue humanities as well as avant-garde studies, which are brought together in an ecocritical analysis. In the author’s recent research on the Yugoslav historical avant-garde (*Jugoslovanska avantgarda in metropolitanska dada*, 2024), a networked (rhizomatic) approach to transnational analysis is applied. In this work, the avant-garde is reconceptualised within an ecocritical framework – not as a structured network but as a fluid and fragmentary formation that responds to the need for new (watery) epistemologies and to the ecological urgencies of our time.

Kristina Pranjić is an associate professor at the School of Humanities and the Research Centre for Humanities, University of Nova Gorica. Her research focuses on European avant-garde artistic expressions, contemporary intermedial practices, and alternative epistemologies of the avant-garde, as well as their social implications. She is the author of the monograph *Jugoslovanska avantgarda in metropolitanska dada* (Založba Sophia, 2024).

Saška Rakef, Pia Brezavšček: **Sonic Beginnings: Dramaturgies of Care and Ecological Sensibility**

From sound installations and performative sound walks to relational plays designed for the shared listening of infants and their significant adults, this contribution analyses three internationally awarded and nominated sound artworks (*Iden, The Voice of Jackal, Sea*) to explore how listening functions as a practice of care and a mode of co-being with both the living and the non-living.

The paper outlines performative approaches grounded in the deconstruction of human language, caused by the sound artwork as a dramaturgical whole passing into the destruction of *logos*, of the intelligible, towards the sensory address and embodied experience of its listeners. Attention is also given to the reconfiguration of temporality and spatiality, which calls for different modes of presence, attention and listening.

Connections are highlighted between works created for adult audiences (*Iden, The Voice of Jackal*) and the piece for the youngest listeners (*Sea*), focusing on how complex sound compositions for infants and toddlers implicitly embed the same dramaturgical and conceptual premises. Through a sensory language and a physical experience shaped by sound – including the sonic texture of words – these works mark a shift toward atmosphere, relation and shared presence.

The paper asks how compositional formants based on the ways of being and perceiving of the youngest (curiosity, wonder, being in the moment, bodily perception, animism as a way of understanding the world) can open relational spaces for intangible experiences of environmental (non) linguistic, polyphonic narratives, and how sound art for the youngest can become a research field for dramaturgies of care and ecological sensibility – one in which art, ecology and care are not separate domains but contribute together to a repertoire of post-anthropocentric perspectives.

Saška Rakef, a playwright and director, is interested in the influence of emancipated musical composition on the method and aesthetics of directing. She researches sensorial language and the physical experience invoked by sound. She was the project leader of the B-AIR project consortium, exploring how people and the surrounding world conceptualise and experience sound. She works as a radio director at Radio Slovenia and teaches radio directing at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television, University of Ljubljana.

Pia Brezavšček is the editor-in-chief of *Maska*, a bilingual journal for contemporary performing arts based in Ljubljana. She works as a cultural worker in several roles – editor, publicist, critic, theatre researcher and dramaturg. She is a philosopher and art historian and was among the co-founders of the website Neodvisni.art. From 2017 to 2020, she was president of the Association for Contemporary Dance Slovenia. She also taught the course *Dance, Politics, Sociology* at the Dance Academy, Alma Mater Europaea. Her research interests also include feminism and contemporary philosophies of the body, on which she has published articles in various journals. She has collaborated on several performative projects as a dramaturg.

Jatun Risba: **Vital Materiality in the Art Film Series *A Tree Doesn't Fall Far From the Mountain***

This paper examines the four-act art film series *A Tree Doesn't Fall Far From the Mountain* (Risba and Livera, 2022–2023) and its associated transdisciplinary Live Art screening events, *Poetics of Relation*, to explore how performance-based methodologies can reshape the aesthetics, formats and materialities of film production and representation.

Positioned as author, co-director and performer, the author investigates how immersive, unpredictable and tactile encounters with more-than-human entanglements during the filmmaking process – undertaken without scripts, production crews or budgets – can foster instinctive, ad hoc configurations of human and nonhuman forces that re-enchanted both the creative work and the world it engages. This approach serves as a potent, transformative remedy to the limited foresight characteristic of the Anthropocene (Capitalocene) epoch.

Filmed across different seasons within the same natural reserve, the series captures nature's cyclical rhythms and transformations. This approach underscores the significance of embodied, place-based knowledge and highlights the interdependence between human and nonhuman agents as they navigate the ever-changing tapestry of life. By integrating Édouard Glissant's concept of Relation, the project fosters emergent, rhizomatic communities that embrace multiplicity and opacity, challenging dominant narratives and opening new modes of co-creation and coexistence.

Contributing to the discourse on new materialism, eco-aesthetics and relational art practices, this contribution proposes that performative, collaborative approaches can cultivate deeper ecological awareness and foster more inclusive, participatory forms of decentralised art-making, community involvement and audience engagement.

Jatun Risba (they) is a transmedia artist from Slovenia. Their work engages with ecofeminist and posthumanist discourses through performance art, eco-art, relational art and practices of abjection, détournement and art intervention. Their practice cultivates reciprocity between species by altering and awakening sensory awareness through Vajrayana Buddhist practices and experimental uses of technology. Their research explores the essential role and artistic potential of six "life matters" on Earth – air, water, carbon, soil, chlorophyll and (menstrual) blood – and devises experiences and tactics for overcoming the Anthropocene. Their practice evolves along two main trajectories: *Arts for Health* and *Art as Nourishment for the Bodymind*. Risba is the founder and co-facilitator of the global live art project *Be-coming Tree*. More at <https://jatunrisba.com>, <https://becomingtree.live>.

Janez Strehovec, Maja Murnik: **Fire: An Essay on the Producer of Flames on the Stage and Beyond**

Few performances use fire as their main driving force and subject matter. Rather than focusing on fire theatre, this essay considers the philosophy of fire. Not many things begin with fire. Water extinguishes it. Fire is certainly more unstable and vulnerable than water: when water is close to fire, fire's existence is threatened. Even the Olympic flame goes out. Fire can be encountered at shorter intervals in sequential fires, for example, in a field during the burning of dried plant waste. There are special experts – often financed locally or nationally – who are responsible for extinguishing fires: firefighters. The problem lies in knowing what to do with the ashes and toxic gases containing carbon, nitrogen and sulphur oxides, not to mention the even more dangerous associated acids. "Don't play with fire" is an old folk saying. Fire can cause great damage by burning down villages, ships, trains and planes. It can also kill people and animals. Yet, fire has always been useful too – for example, in clearing forests and for heating. Fire accompanied the process of humanisation, a process to which its taming also contributed.

In addition to exploring the philosophy of fire, this contribution presents rare examples of its use in theatre and performance art. These include the work of the American neo-avant-garde theatre group Survival Research Laboratories (SRL).

Janez Strehovec, PhD, is the director of the Institute of New Media Art and Electronic Literature. He was the principal investigator of the European research project Elmcip (HERA, 2011–2014), taught in the Erasmus programme at the Universidad Complutense, Madrid, and was principal investigator of the national research project Theories of Internet Culture and Internet Textuality. He is the author of eight scholarly monographs, the most recent of which were published in the United States: *Text as Ride* (2016), the first monograph to address the social specificity of electronic literature, and *Contemporary Art Impacts on Scientific, Social, and Cultural Paradigms* (Hershey, 2020). His research includes contemporary art, art activism, sustainable development, e-literature, the knowledge society and new media.

Maja Murnik holds a PhD in philosophy and the theory of visual culture, and a BA in dramaturgy and comparative literature. She is currently a researcher at the Faculty of Computer and Information Science, University of Ljubljana, and a freelance art critic. She is editor-in-chief of *Amfiteater: Journal of Performing Arts Theory* and a co-founder of the Institute of New Media Art and Electronic Literature (www.inm.si). Her primary research interests include contemporary performing arts, media art and theory.

Gašper Troha: **Non-Human Actors in Slovenian Drama**

Theatre performance is based on the co-presence of actors and spectators, i.e. on live interpersonal contact. Yet humans are not alone in this world: they are surrounded by nature, animals and machines. Nevertheless, these are usually treated merely as a backdrop against which stories with human protagonists are played out, while theatre explores their motivations, conflicts and social conditions.

In an age of ecological change – even ecological catastrophe – and in a geological epoch, the Anthropocene, increasingly marked by the collapse of human as well as animal and plant species, theatre is called upon to reflect on these issues. But the question arises: how is it possible to present on stage nature, animals and machines that are active but not endowed with human qualities, that do not become images of humans and their interpersonal relations? Nature as a dramatic person is not new in theatre and drama, but in today's world it seems it should take on a different role and form.

This contribution examines this thesis by means of a comparative analysis of three Slovenian plays – *Otroka reke* (*Children of the River*) by Dane Zajc, *Driada* by Gregor Strniša and *Jagnje* (*The Lamb*) by Neža Lučka Peterlin. The first two are classics from the 1960s and 1970s, while the last is by a young playwright who won the Young Playwright Award at the 55th Week of Slovenian Drama. Do these works present nonhuman actors differently? Are ecological themes inscribed in today's playwriting? Do they continue or break with tradition?

Gašper Troha holds a PhD from the Department of Comparative Literature and Literary Theory, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. His research interests include the sociology of literature, especially contemporary world and Slovenian drama and theatre. He is a researcher at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television, University of Ljubljana, and managing director of the Slovenian Theatre Institute. He has published in numerous national and international scholarly journals. Together with Vanesa Matajč and Gregor Pompe he edited and co-authored *History and Its Literary Genres* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), and he edited *Literarni modernizem v svinčenih letih* (*Literary Modernism in the "Leaden" Years*, Student Publishing House, 2008) and *Lojze Kovačič: življenje in delo* (*Lojze Kovačič: Life and Work*, Student Publishing House, 2009). He has written two monographs on the history of Slovenian drama: *Ujetniki svobode* (*Prisoners of Freedom*, Aristej, 2015) and *Slovenska dramatika in tuji vplivi po letu 2000* (*Slovenian Drama and Foreign Influences after 2000*, Beletrina, 2025).

Aleš Vaupotič: **From Egology to Ecology: The Ethics of Infosphere and New Media Art**

Environmental ethics is a field that attempts to expand the framework of moral action and ethical principles beyond the limits of the human. Ethical consideration extends from the Kantian focus on humans to include sentient beings, living nature and ultimately inanimate nature. The environment, as a nonhuman entity, thus gains an independent ethical value. A special issue is posed by artificial artefacts such as cultural heritage.

This contribution reviews fundamental macroethics and in particular Luciano Floridi's information ethics, which is part of his philosophy of information. Ethical issues are addressed in the infosphere as an all-encompassing environment, conceived in such a way that it also allows for reflection on artificial – that is, engineered – agents and hybrid multi-agent systems consisting of artificial, natural and human agents. Such systems open important questions of relationships between persons as well as between communities and the cultural artefacts and practices associated with them. The information metaphysics proposed by Floridi offers a minimal foundation for understanding and constructively addressing the complex phenomena of the digital age. This minimalist conception of the ethics of the information environment allows for evaluation and moral decision-making between possible modes of action with the aim of enhancing the well-being of the entire infosphere, which represents reality in the most inclusive way.

The theoretical discussion is further illustrated by different groups of new media works, including those in which devices themselves generate artistic texts, potentially in multimedia form. The use of large language models in new media art, for example, allows for an in-depth analysis and evaluation of such computer techniques and their reception – a crucial question at a time when these tools participate in human communication.

Aleš Vaupotič is a senior research associate at the University of Nova Gorica. Between 2021 and 2023, he was director of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana. He received his doctorate in realism in art and literature at the Faculty of Arts and a master's degree in video and new media at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, University of Ljubljana. Between 2021 and 2024, he led the interdisciplinary research project Sustainable Digital Preservation of the Slovenian New Media Art at the University of Nova Gorica, the University of Ljubljana, the Intellectual Property Institute, Ljubljana, and the Museum of Modern Art, funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency. He is the author of the monograph *The Question of Realism* (2019) and numerous scholarly articles.

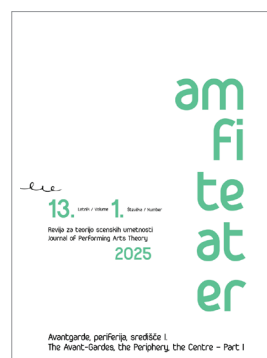
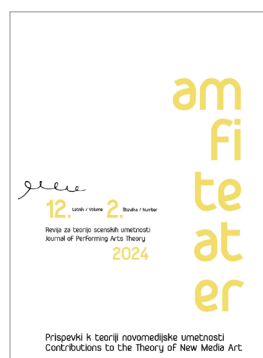
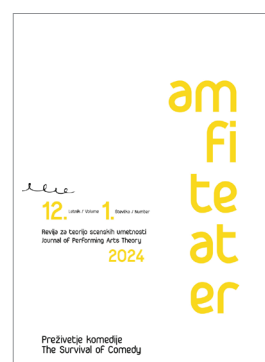
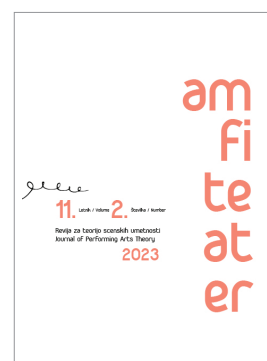
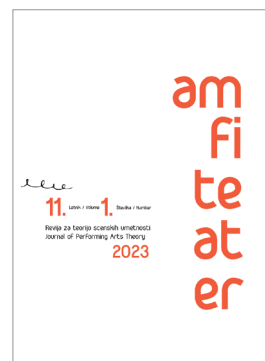
Tery Žeželj: Complex Entanglements in Naturecultures: Narrating with Gardens

Gardens, carefully cultivated sites for experiencing nature, are among the best examples through which to understand “natureculture” (Haraway). Stories function similarly: they are spaces that expose how nature and culture co-construct one another, reflecting and reshaping the interplay between the material and the imaginative. By examining two ongoing artistic projects by Slovenia-based artists Neja Tomšič and Ana Čavić, this contribution explores how gardens function as narrative frameworks that reveal the complex and often invisible relationships shaping ecological and cultural realities.

Tomšič’s *Untangling a Garden* is an artistic research project on Rafut Park on the Slovenian–Italian border. It explores its histories in dialogue with the gardens of Alexandria in Egypt, tended in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by immigrant women from the region surrounding Rafut. Through performances, audio installations and archival research, this project activates the site as both a witness and an archive. In contrast, Čavić’s *Papercut Poetry (Garden of Lost Things)* constructs an imaginary garden through visual poetry and speculative storytelling, investigating how natural phenomena are interpreted in mythical and folk narratives.

Despite their different strategies, both case studies engage in narrativising ecology through the motif of the garden. By analysing and comparing them, this contribution maps how narrating with gardens enables engagement with diverse timescales of different bodies, activates spaces as living archives and fosters a reciprocal understanding of the relationship between humans and environments.

Tery Žeželj (1995) holds a BA in dramaturgy and performing arts from AGRFT, University of Ljubljana, and an MA in contemporary theatre, dance and dramaturgy from Utrecht University. During her studies, she worked as a dramaturg on student and professional productions. During her master’s programme, she undertook an internship at Framer Framed in Amsterdam and on the project *How to Exit a Reality (Attempt 1 of 19)* by Andrea Božić and Julia Willms. After graduating, she was self-employed in the cultural sector and worked mainly as a dramaturg, researcher, editor and member of the artistic board at Glej Theatre. In 2023, she joined the University of Nova Gorica as a young researcher.





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