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RE-IMAGINING

Editorial

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‘Re-Imagining’ across the diverse fields of artistic research

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Re-imagining addresses the various gestures of going back, returning to take another look, or starting anew. It suggests that research in the context of artistic and creative practice could have a special relation to time; simultaneously attaching itself to a prior moment in time and, from there, propelling imagination to unforeseen futures. The theme proposes reassessments where the evaluation of past events, integral to research, is in unison with the anticipation potential, integral to the arts. It wonders about new conceptions of an idea, place, space, object, and ways of doing and making that emerge from a reverse glance — the challenges, updates, and improvements.

This *RUUKKU* issue, on the theme Re-Imagining, builds on the Art of Research VIII conference, held at Aalto University’s School of Arts, Design and Architecture in Espoo, Finland, from 30 November to 1 December 2023.

At the 2023 Art of Research conference, the tone for exploring these themes was set by the presentations of the two keynote speakers. In his presentation titled “Re-imagining Urbanization: Cities and the Politics of the Common,” Associate Professor **Álvaro Sevilla-Buitrago** from Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, whose work sits at the intersection of urban studies, critical theory, and social history, offered a critical perspective on the contemporary discourse of the urban commons. He argued that while recent scholarship has celebrated the commons as a progressive model for rethinking social and spatial relations, much of it remains abstract and detached from the everyday realities of collective life. Sevilla-Buitrago traced how urbanization, architecture, and design have often served as instruments of decommonization, mediating processes that fragment social cohesion. By revisiting these histories, he proposed that we might re-imagine urbanization itself as an emancipatory project - one that restores the political and ethical dimensions of the common in shaping shared futures. Under the title “Thinking Terrestrial,” the second keynote speaker, artist and researcher **Laura Beloff** from Aalto University, discussed the crossover between art, science and technology. She described how, across the arts and other disciplines, the search for more ecological lifestyles and attitudes – along with the need to look beyond the human – has become necessary. One viable long-term technological goal, Beloff suggested, is to remain ‘terrestrial’ in harmony with our planet’s

multitude of life-forms, rather than striving solely toward extra-terrestrial futures. This would mean reinvestigating our current conditions, environments and biological ecosystems, as well as exploring the role of artistic research in creating new, sustainable imaginaries.

Following this line of thought, this issue of *RUUKKU* explores the various ideas, interpretations and possibilities of 're-imagining' as they relate to artistic research practices. Re-imagining may be conceived in relation to the artist-researcher or to an artwork: what might it mean to revisit established ideas from a new perspective, to generate new forms of thinking, knowledge, and experience, or to develop new praxes and poetics? Re-imagining can also be approached as a topical attitude within a particular research process, or as a response to broader contexts and realms of art, politics, and society. Alternatively, the expositions in this issue may seek to redefine the very notion of re-imagining: What might it mean in the current moment and near future to 're-imagine' when all life on Earth calls for urgent reconsideration?

Re-imagining as a theme sparked great interest both in the Art of Research Conference and in this journal issue. The theme has been explored from various perspectives and across different art forms. In the twelve expositions included in this issue, the prefix 're' travels between and through languages, stories, matter, cultures, bodies and practices vibrating through what has been, how we are, and what might yet become.

Together, the expositions in this issue demonstrate how 're-imagining' operates as both a conceptual lens and a lived artistic practice - an ongoing movement between past praxis and what might emerge anew. Through acts of revisiting, translating, and transforming, the contributors engage with the temporalities of artistic research: how ideas, materials, and experiences continue to resonate and take new form over time. The first exposition begins precisely with such gestures of return and transformation.

Acts of Transfer: Documentation as Creative Reimagining presents a collaborative project by **Katy Beinart** and **Lizzie Lloyd**. It is through and through about returns and repetitions. In the project, the authors revisit participatory and socially engaged artworks from the recent past and examine their 'afterlife'. The exposition explores the process and outcome of these revisitations and opens questions about the representation of such durational works to future audiences. Each 'return' creates a new artwork while retaining something of the original thereby examining also more generally the fruitful relation of documentation and re-enactment, and the role of artistic research in them.

Our Days of Gold, co-authored by **Assunta Ruocco**, **Thisbe Nissen**, **Genevieve Maynard**, **Frank Abbott**, and **Phil Nunnally**, is an artwork which stages the re-animation of an intimate and personal photographic archive through daily posts on Instagram. The posted images explore a family's life at a time when

the woman named Cécile was still alive. From this vantage point, *Our Days of Gold* becomes a polyvocal palimpsest, where shared intimacy and anonymity intertwine - a place of conversation for the followers' voices, contributions and interpretations. Through these "echoes of echoes" the story and mystery of Cécile is privately and collectively re-imagined via the multiple intertwining perspectives of the contributors' memories and associations. The exposition also demonstrates how the artworks made in a platform like Instagram – steered by the curatorial intent of Assunta Ruocco – is also sustained by the followers' attention and interpretation, which contribute to the artwork's distributed authorship. The exposition also explores the impact that the changes in the platform's logic and algorithms over time have had on the artwork, at times partaking in creating a sense of disappearance or even (perhaps thematically appropriate) a mood of "impending doom" to the artwork. In a nuanced and elaborate way *Our Days of Gold* analyses the interpretative labour and the dialogical exchanges, and the various affective states, that the feed of the mysterious images prompts.

In the exposition *Approcreations – Weight of an Absent Ancestry*, **Maarika Autio** reflects on the code of good conduct in honouring intercultural sources of inspiration and addresses the sensitive issue of cultural appropriation in relation to artistic freedom. *Approcreations* is an experimental concert in which Autio performs on a diatonic balafon—a melodic percussion instrument of the Mande peoples of West Africa—augmented with live electronics. From the perspective of her own artistic practice, she courageously engages with complex and timely questions about the making of art. With a long history as a practising balafonist, Autio has observed the phenomenon of cultural appropriation "from bud to blossom," as she writes. This experience provides a strong foundation for addressing such a delicate issue, particularly when working with an instrument from a culture other than her own. The work is both bold and multifaceted, and it offers valuable insights for culturally complex art practices, extending its relevance well beyond its artistic medium.

In their poetic exposition *dorsal practices [re-turning]*, **Emma Cocker** and **Katrina Brown** explore the gesture of returning through language-based artistic research. Their ongoing work investigates how cultivating a back-oriented awareness can shape our embodied and relational experience of being in the world. This harmonious exposition invites the reader into a realm of openness, into the delicate space between words and gestures. It lingers within moments easily overlooked, illuminating the practices of drifting, staying, and lingering — those softer, indeterminate instances of listening. The work draws the reader, or listener, into a mode of being that feels at once inviting and new, yet also strangely familiar. In this exposition, Cocker and Brown capture with precision the essence of language as an interplay between listening and being listened to.

In *11 Underground: Reenactment, Social Practice and Political Intervention*, documentary filmmaker **Arturo Delgado Pereira** (aka **Chico Pereira**) undertakes a powerful artistic excavation of memory, place, and social possibility. This exposition reflects on the research and filming process behind the 2024 feature-length reenactment documentary of the same name, which restages a pivotal mining strike that took place in Almadén, Spain, in 1984. Eleven miners, in protest against inequitable working conditions, locked themselves 650 meters underground for 11 days – a defiant act of collective resistance. Delgado Pereira’s film asks: what if a similar act took place today, in a post-industrial town struggling with depopulation, unemployment, and disillusionment? Through this speculative scenario, *11 Underground* explores the capacity of reenactment to open a space for dialogue between past and present, memory and imagination, mourning and futurity. The mine becomes not only a physical site of confinement but a symbolic space of potential transformation – a vessel for communal reflection and emergent agency. Drawing from both documentary and performative methods, Delgado Pereira’s work blurs the line between homage and intervention, using artistic research as a catalyst to reimagine Almadén beyond its mining identity. This exposition invites readers into the project’s conceptual and ethical terrain, where reenactment becomes a method of critical engagement and speculative hope.

Ilaria Biotti’s exposition *Troubling the Ideal Landscape – A Visual Narrative* works the border between imagination’s generative capabilities and the physical materiality of landscape. As a point of inspiration and reference Biotti has used Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* – in creating video tableaux with haunting multiple temporalities. Important also is the return to Biotti’s hometown Cannero Riviera, as a personal example of an ideal landscape. The project creatively deconstructs the act of looking at a landscape, which requires, in Biotti’s words “a liminal position, suspended between the intimacy of the lived experience and the analytical distance necessary to decompose its constructed image.” The form of Biotti’s exposition aptly conveys this idea of a landscape as a complex and fragmentary active force.

Peter Spence’s exposition *The Antonioni House: Sensory-Temporal Architecture* explores how building transforms sites into places, uncovering meanings embedded in the given environment. The exposition analyses how characters relate to spaces in the films of Michelangelo Antonioni; especially *L’Avventura* (1960). The unique villa La Cupola – commissioned by Antonioni from architect Dante Bini – acts as the backdrop for these investigations, suggesting that the architectural form echoes the same sensibilities towards the relation of dwelling and landscape as Antonioni’s filmic thinking. Spence’s exposition can be seen to enact “returns” in several ways, by taking a fresh look at Antonioni’s films, by revisiting his own overlooked film footage, by his personal returns to the site of La Cupola, at the Sardinian rural seaside, and by evoking his memories as a cinema

projectionist in the National Film Archives in London. Central to the exposition is the way in which the detours and chance encounters highlight bodily responses to an environment, thereby causing shifts in the researcher's orientation, and suggesting the existence of 'architectural moments' in films, where shared temporal experiences of build space and film space intertwine.

In their richly reflective exposition, titled *Betwixt and Between: Soundspaces and Digital Teaching during COVID-19*, **Max Spielmann**, **Andrea Iten**, **Catherine Walthard**, and **Daniel Hug** explore how the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic catalysed a reorientation in both pedagogical and artistic practice. Initiated through a series of hybrid soundscape workshops conducted with students from ten institutions across five continents, the project documents how listening – sharpened by the global quietude of lockdown – became a shared method of inquiry, perception, and relation. The authors trace how this transnational exchange produced what sociologist Hartmut Rosa calls a 'resonance space': an emergent field of mutual attunement and presence that transcended cultural, social, and geographical boundaries. Drawing from autoethnographic approaches and a multi-year collaboration, the research investigates how this resonance reshaped their understandings of aesthetic education, intercultural encounter, and the ethics of connectivity. Central to their argument is a call to 're-place' – to reimagine pedagogical and artistic relations as grounded in attentiveness, ontological diversity, and shared vulnerability. This exposition offers not only a documentation of a singular teaching moment during a global crisis, but a generative framework for post-digital, relational modes of art and design education that foreground care, listening, and world-making through aesthetic experience.

In the layered exposition titled *Charms: Re-Imagining the Body in Motion*, visual artist **Mariana Barrote** offers a visceral and conceptually provocative investigation of the body and skin through the lens of artistic research. *Charms*, a multichannel video installation, reimagines corporeality by drawing from anatomical, medical, and historical visual references – particularly the flayed figure and *all'antica* armour. Barrote constructs a speculative body that is simultaneously exposed and protected: a flesh-armour that destabilizes binary distinctions such as inside/outside, human/animal, and vulnerable/powerful. Her work weaves together costume design, performance, and biomechanical measurement tools to examine how the body generates – and is generated by – imaginary constructions. Through embodied experimentation and visual metaphor, *Charms* becomes a site for rethinking the symbolic function of skin, the cultural residues of anatomical illustration, and the potential of costume to act as a second skin of meaning. The exposition itself, designed by the artist, unfolds in layered sections that trace her process, from imaginative studio practices to performance and interdisciplinary collaboration. Barrote's approach foregrounds magic, chance, and poetic logic

over utilitarianism, offering a deeply personal and intellectually ambitious meditation on the body as both ‘vessel’ and image. This work addresses video performance as a method for inquiry, metamorphosis, and speculative transformation.

Clare Bottomley’s exposition *Re-enactment in Research: A Monologue* is presented in the form of a play, where Bottomley explores the potential of re-enactment as a performative replay to understand the past and as a method within artistic research practices. Bottomley re-enacts a paper presentation that was performed during the Art of Research Conference in 2023. Through the play, Bottomley opens up her feelings and the interplay between her and the audience that emerges during an academic performance, in addition to her research, which incorporates re-enactment as part of documentary photography. In its form, the exposition inspires a re-reading of it; as a sort of rehearsal in a way as one would take part in the play.

In her exposition *Re-imagining Berio’s Sequenza I for Flute Solo: Challenging Musical Interpretation through Storytelling*, **Ann Elkjær** investigates how a classical musician can assert agency and artistic freedom when performing a scored composition. Drawing on her background as a classical musician, Elkjær offers a distinctive perspective on sustaining momentum in her profession through creative artistic strategies. By employing methods such as storytelling, thinking aloud, scat-singing, and repetition, she re-imagines both her performance and her approach to studying the piece. This enables her to engage more profoundly with the score and to articulate her individual narrative as a performer. The generous exposition showcases the explorative process and different methods as well as the final performance of the Sequenza I.

In their exposition *Uncovering the Occupational Folklore of Ceramics: Small Stories Found in the Spaces Between Word, Gesture and Clay*, **Natasha Mayo, Kim Norton, and Sam Lucas** explore the collective knowledge that emerges through the practice of ceramics. They focus on three projects, examining them together as a form of folklore. While ceramics is often understood primarily through its embodied and tactile processes, this exposition highlights the social dimensions of making and the stories that arise within studio practice and can be shared among practitioners. Viewing these practices through the lens of folklore offers an inspiring perspective on how personal stories are connected and transmitted through clay as a material mediator. Ultimately, the exposition reveals a narrative field that interweaves clay, studio practice, and the shared experiences of ceramicists.

Across these expositions, ‘re-imagining’ unfolds through embodied practices, shared narratives, and material dialogues that connect individual creation with collective experience. The two invited Voices from Laura Beloff and Mika Elo continue this conversation, turning toward a more personal and philosophical

reflection on how artistic research participates in rethinking our place within the living world.

In her short exposition *Terrestrial Accountability and Art – Reimagining*, Laura Beloff develops further the thoughts presented in her keynote on the role of artistic research in the aforementioned ‘terrestrial shift’ where we are re-learning to live as grounded beings. In the exposition Beloff asks how art can “call into question what we consider natural, artificial, ‘real’, and living” providing examples from her own artistic research practice, and the underlying fieldwork – both past and ongoing.

Mika Elo’s exposition *horizon of expectat_* revisits the themes of his own earlier text ‘Three Phases of Artistic Research’ (published in the 18th issue of *RUUKKU*), where he sketched a timeline for the various phases of artistic research from the 1990s to the present day. The phases marked a shift from explorations of what artistic research is, to how it impacts research practice and at the final stage society at large. In the current exposition, Elo discusses further how artistic research aligns (or does not align) with the developmental recommendations for research at Finnish universities. Elo examines how artistic research, up to a point, can serve its ‘stakeholders’ but reminds that it can never be completely assimilated as there will always remain something in artistic research that “goes beyond relevance and knowledge.” Elo’s exposition ends with a thought-provoking suggestion to consider artistic research also “under the conditions of its possible disappearance”, and not only according to a set of fixed expectations.

The theme of *Re-imagining* proved to be both expansive and deeply resonant, inviting a remarkable range of approaches to artistic research. Already evident during the conference, the topic attracted researchers from diverse fields, each finding relevance in returning to and reflecting on their own practices, methods, and media. What emerged was not only a set of varied interpretations of re-imagining but also a shared sense of its urgency and emotional depth. Although the organizers of the event came from the fields of art, design, and architecture, the discussions and contributions extended well beyond these areas—embracing artist-researchers from music, performance, and other creative disciplines, and thus broadening the original scope. The contributions gathered in this issue also demonstrate the many ways in which the Research Catalogue platform can be used as a space for both artistic and scholarly exploration, supporting the multiplicity of voices, formats, and re-imaginings that characterize this vibrant field.

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