

Preface

By exploring and further developing new materialist thought in the philosophy of art and aesthetics and the study of different forms of art, this special issue enters an expanding and already richly layered field that consists of new materialist research on art. Indeed, alongside feminist theory, science and technology studies, and media theory, studies of art can be pointed out as one key area where reignited interest in the mattering of matter to human practices and the interrelations of humans and the wider world began around two decades ago, thus having a formative impact on the multi- and transdisciplinary assemblage that is nowadays called the new materialisms. Much recent study of art elaborates, above all, on such particularly well-known and influential theorists of new materialism as the feminist philosopher of science, Karen Barad, and political theorist, Jane Bennett. Yet, it is important to remember that the renewed theoretical and practical interest in the roles of matter began within studies of art already at the turn of the 1990s and 2000s (see e.g. Kontturi & Tiainen, forthcoming). It arose in various disciplines, from art history to musicology, as an attempt to rethink the practices and effects of art after some decades of heavy emphasis on textuality and discursive ideological contents, which had come to characterize critical studies of art similarly to many other disciplines of the humanities.

Notably, these reorientations of inquiry were intent on examining the materialities that matter in the makings, reception, and sociocultural significance of art beyond modernist art philosophy's notion of materiality as a vehicle for supposedly autonomous artistic expression, encapsulated by such slogans as "truth to materials" (see Bolt 2013, 4) or the "tendency" of the (musical) material (e.g. Adorno 1999, 54). From the early 2000s onward, scholars such as art theorist and visual artist Barbara Bolt began developing ways to analyze processes of art's materialization that occur "between the matters of bodies, cultural knowledges, *and* the materials of production" (Bolt 2000, 320, emphasis in original; see also e.g. Bolt 2004; Kontturi 2009; Meskimmon 2003). Moreover, the term new materialism started to be employed in the study of art in the latter half of the 2000s. In the wake of the

term's early proponents Rosi Braidotti and Manuel DeLanda, it was invoked to emphasize the need to reconsider "the significance and ontological status of materiality in our analyses of culture, power, and subjectivity" in a theoretical framework that conceives of phenomena as composed of several, yet constitutively related and mutually influencing registers of being, from the material to the social and the symbolic (Tiainen 2008, 150).

Certainly, the revived attention to matter—in the sense of dynamic materializations of artistic materials, human bodies-subjects, and art's socio-physical environments, in the projects of the 2000s—was not a self-contained affair. Like nowadays, these research orientations were already then inspired by currents of thought in philosophy and the humanities and social sciences more generally. These inspirations included the newly emerged transdisciplinary engagements with the process philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Nonetheless, as a context for this special issue of *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics*, it is interesting to note that the "new" materialist approaches to art and its study were also motivated from the outset by the distinctive state and traditions of art-related disciplines. These approaches emerged *in parallel* to reorientations to matter in other fields (for example, in science studies and media theories), instead of just following developments elsewhere.

By today, engagements with the mattering matters of art have proliferated into a multifaceted range of studies, disciplinary and theoretical angles, and joint research endeavors. The scholarly locations of these projects vary from sound, music, and voice studies to performance research (e.g. Eidsheim 2015; Neumark 2017; Fast 2018; Tiainen 2013; 2017), and from the study of historical and contemporary visual arts and media arts to artistic practice-led research and explorations of different arts in education studies (e.g. Kontturi 2013; 2018; Golanska 2017; Parikka 2011; nicolić & Skinner 2019; Donaldson & Kontturi 2019; Radomska 2020; Hickey-Moody 2018; Huuki 2019). Frequently, these explorations combine new materialist theoretical work with posthumanist thinking, affect theories, indigenous bodies of knowledge, queer studies, and postcolonial perspectives, among others. In addition, several edited collections and journal special issues dedicated to new materialist study of art have been published in recent years (see e.g. the contributions in Barrett & Bolt 2013; Tiainen, Kontturi & Hongisto 2015; Barrett, Bolt & Kontturi 2017; and Kontturi, Nauha, Tiainen & Angerer 2018).

The special issue at hand, "New Materialism: The Mattering of the Arts, Crafts, and Aesthetics," joins this vibrant complex of new materialist theorizations and research practices across fields of art, but also makes a distinc-

tive contribution to this complex in at least two senses. First, the peer-reviewed articles and book reviews included in this issue provide a particularly effective overview of the diversity of topics, areas of research, and methodological directions that are involved in the development of new materialist ways of studying art. Together, the three peer-reviewed essays, by Joanna Łapińska, Polina Golovátina-Mora, and Adrian Mróz, respectively, respond quite literally to the latter part of the issue's title. Each contributes first and foremost to one of the areas listed in the title: the arts, specifically vocal and musical performance, in the case of Łapińska; the crafts in the case of Golovátina-Mora; and philosophy of art and aesthetics in the case of Mróz's essay. To be sure, the compartmentalization between arts, crafts, and art philosophy is not taken for granted nor regarded as unproblematic in the articles. Instead, they move across and renegotiate these categories, for example, by seeing crafts and arts as a continuum and by devising various connections between art philosophical considerations, new materialist concepts, and specific artistic practices. At any rate, the mutually different topics and locations of the articles demonstrate the multidimensionality of new materialist studies of art also in a methodological sense: while Łapińska carries out a new materialisms-informed close analysis of the performance and materiality of sound in the presently vastly popular ASMR videos, Golovátina-Mora's essay represents practice-led research by growing from, or with, her own and another jewelry-maker's crafts/artistic practice. Meanwhile, Mróz's article focuses methodologically on conceptual analysis and the creation of some new conceptualizations which are inspired by new materialist theories and other scientific and philosophical approaches relevant to his concern with the notion of habit.

The methodological range of these articles is complemented by the studies discussed in the three book reviews. These studies represent Deleuze- and Guattari-inspired cultural study of music and sound, feminist new materialist and collaborative study of contemporary art, and new philosophical and art-historical theorization of the image. Conjointly, these six contributions comprising the issue offer a concise but kaleidoscopic view of what new materialist research on art can entail and some of the paths on which it is currently moving. At the same time, they will, hopefully, inspire the readers to imagine and discover further future co-becomings of new materialisms and ways of researching art.

The second distinctive feature of the present issue is linked to the purview of *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics*. In their different ways, all the peer-reviewed articles inquire into the enriched or expanded understandings of aesthetics, and the adjective "aesthetic," which may open up through new

materialist thinking. While they do not always explicitly refer to the notions of aesthetics and aesthetic, all the essays examine issues that are of high relevance to the field of aesthetics—both as a modern academic discipline and in a more historical perspective. These issues include the questions about what “art” and “artistic practice” can involve, how they should be understood, and what counts as art and artful or is included within these concepts. Recalling the historically older layers of the concept of aesthetic/s, the articles also explore how the ways of acting, making and experiencing investigated in each essay engage and are perceived through the senses. In relation to this, they investigate how a new materialist focus on the liveliness of all kinds of matter and on co-constitutive relations—or intra-actions (e.g. Barad 2007)—of human practices with the wider-than-human world, including technologies, other species, physical locales and things, and ecosystems, may reconfigure our understandings of the sensorial nature and impact of art. A more detailed introduction of the articles helps to shed light on their approaches to these questions and new materialist thinking in general.

In her contribution, “Vibrations of Worldly Matter. ASMR as Contemporary *Musique Concrète*,” Joanna Łapińska crafts a fresh approach to the globally thriving phenomenon of ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response). This phenomenon spreads on YouTube and other digital platforms in the shape of videos in which performers, who are nowadays often called ASMRtists, produce sonic and other sensory stimuli that invoke pleasant tingling sensations in the bodies of many recipients. While there is already some academic research on ASMR, for example in media studies, Łapińska’s article makes a novel intervention by analyzing the phenomenon in relation to the practices of electronic music called *musique concrète*, or as a new manifestation of these practices. According to Łapińska, *musique concrète* aims to offer new sensibilities of musical expression while promoting an attentive mode of listening to matter. By elaborating on new materialist notions concerning the physicality and materiality of sound and its vibrational force, Łapińska demonstrates how the ASMR practices generate specific sensorial attunement to the material elements involved in these performance and reception events, and thus to matter more generally. Her approach contributes to the still rather small group of projects that advance new materialist theorizing in music and sound studies.

Polina Golovátina-Mora’s essay, “Sprinkles of an Agate Sea-Wave—Multi-species Storying as Creating with Matter,” explores the constant interplay, or intra-action, of sensorial experiences and memories, theoretical concepts,

nostalgias, and active materialities across the traditional (European) human–non-human divide in creative, artistic practice. Golovátina-Mora is preoccupied with the ways that creative practice always stems from more than just the actions and seemingly self-sufficient designs of the humans called artists. In her take, such practice unfolds as the outcome or process of multiple, co-constitutive, intra-actions of human agency, physical milieus, lively and responsive matters engaged in and generative of art-making, other species, and layered sensations and recollections. To investigate and invoke a feeling of creative practice as “multispecies entanglements,” Golovátina-Mora advances experimentally a twofold methodological approach. First, she explores how intra-actions constitutive of creative practices are storied within two Instagram channels that concern such activities as jewelry-making and felting. Instead of a comparative analysis, Golovátina-Mora approaches the posts and elements of these channels as parts of a dynamic, distributed knowledge about the more-than-human material and relational nature of art and crafts. Second, her article extends this approach to creative activities to the level of text by pursuing a mode of writing *with* these activities, which involves an interplay between academic conventions of written expression and the practice of “speculative fabulation.”

In his two-part article, “Behaving, Mattering, and Habits Called Aesthetics,” Adrian Mróz advances Bernard Stiegler (1952–2020), a political French philosopher renowned for his scholarship on technics, as a critical new materialist thinker. Mróz and his article, which is “noetically active”, are concerned with the “technical doings” of artworks while foregrounding the value of the performative materiality of behaviors and sensory shaping. He analyzes select definitions of behavior and habit to develop a new materialist understanding of these phenomena, re-conceptualizes manipulation as “caripulation,” and considers the application of “pharmacology” to habit. Part One of the article, titled *Theoretical Navigation*, provides a theoretical background for Mróz’s analyses, while Part Two, *Theoretical Cays of Phenomenologically Making-Sense*, is laid out in four readings focused on specific questions. The first weighs new materialism with the psychological discipline of behaviorism. The second consists of an existential analysis of “behaving” that argues for the non-banality of habit. In the third section, the phenomenology of retention is applied to behavior. Finally, the last reading raises the problem of the *pharmakon* with the action of cutting as applicable to social conduct with special regard to artistic practices.

The first book review incorporated in this edition is by Juliana España Keller who discusses the volume *Musical Encounters with Deleuze and Guattari* (2017), edited by Pirkko Moisala, Taru Leppänen, Milla Tiainen, and

Hanna Väättäinen. This polyphonic title concentrates on Deleuzian-Guattarian research as well as elaborations on Spinozian metaphysics. The book's multisensory expanse of subjects in feminist new materialisms encompasses, among others, music and sound studies, expanded listening, dance, dis/ability, semiotics, and ethnography. The work provides vital attention to concepts such as *affect*, *becoming*, and *assemblages*, including *different* ways of moving and conceiving across contemporary creative practices. The next review, by Rahma Khazam, concerns Katve-Kaisa Kontturi's book titled *Ways of Following: Art, Materiality, Collaboration* (2018), where she introduces a new materialist methodology for observing art in movement, by following and collaborating *with* three female artists. In Kontturi's research, various ongoing becomings or *ways*—like stratification and destratification, co-workings, as well as the autonomy of process—interlace in and co-compose instances of art-making. Her account allows us to learn about the creative process through Deleuzian theory and how philosophy and art can complement and challenge each other. In Katherine Robert's review of *Theory of the Image* by Thomas Nail, we learn of the defaults and paradoxes of established Western aesthetic theory from the 20th century, such as *stasis* and *ahistoricism*, for which Nail provides an alternative through a new materialist framework that is useful for both theorists and artists. As Robert states, Nail offers an understanding of images that does not focus solely on the visual, but also explores what these images *do* within the presented novel and holistic "kinaesthetic" theory—which has steadily gained relevance within the current synchronous and disruptive digital turn.

This special issue, however, does not rely only on the power of the written word to address and express "matterings of matter in arts, crafts, and aesthetics." It also introduces an artistic and activist practice that attends to and revolves around vibrant moving matters of color, body, and image: *Feminist Colour-IN* (2015–). This practice was developed by artist Kim Donaldson and theorist Katve-Kaisa Kontturi who took an interest in the widespread coloring book boom that predominantly promotes self-care, concentration, and focus (hence economic and societal productivity), as in Emma Farrons's *The Mindfulness Colouring Book: Anti-stress Art Therapy for Busy People* (2015). By taking over and transposing the productivity-driven nature of mindfulness for feminist purposes and combining it with earlier forms of feminist activism, such as quiet sit-ins or consciousness-raising, Donaldson and Kontturi created a coloring practice and designs that would raise new knowledge about and enhance feminist connectivity and collectivity through the color-in (Donaldson & Kontturi 2019). They call participants

to join the project by asking them to: “Attune to the emerging environment / Colour in what you hear, see, smell, feel / Synthesise sensations, conceptions, thinking / Focus on the vibrating present to open a future / while learning the lines and desires of local art / Share it, if you will / Tag it: #feminist-colourin.” In other words, their practice is not about emptying one’s head, but about creating a stronger connection to others and the world; not about self-absorption but about reaching out through the embodied and relational movement of coloring-in—by following the lines and rhythms of the designs, or drawing over them. As such, *Feminist Colour-IN* can be described as “an aesthetic activism of connection and collectivity” deeply invested in the vibrant material potentialities of color (Donaldson & Kontturi 2019; Kontturi & Tiainen forthcoming).

The first *Feminist Colour-IN* workshop was integrated into the program of the *7th International Conference on New Materialisms—Performing Situated Knowledges: Space, Time, Vulnerability*, which was held at the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, in September 2016.¹ All the conference delegates received a booklet and set of coloring pencils, and were invited to color-in instead of or in parallel to making written notes on the talks they were listening to. The designs of the booklet were drawn after the works of Polish feminist artists of different generations, offering the participants access to a knowledge otherwise not present at the conference, also connecting them to the feminist histories of the local area in question. The cover illustration of this issue was colored in Warsaw by artist-researcher mirco nikolić on a design based on Basia Banda’s painting, *Black Gap* (2015). It emerged while nikolic was listening to Professor Ewa Domańska’s keynote “Slow Science and Emergent Methods in the Humanities and Social Sciences.” When tagged and posted online, it connected further audiences both to the conference and the art of Banda, making them matter more—through the mattering practice of coloring-in.

This journal issue is illustrated with altogether six designs to be printed and colored in—if the readers so wish. All the designs were originally published in different editions of *Feminist Colour-IN* booklets: in the Polish (2016), Australian (2016), and Finnish (2017) ones. As a new compilation assembled for this issue, they offer a rich geographical, generational, cultural, and ethnic companion to the new materialist arguments of the issue’s

¹ Between the years 2014–2018, the conference series was organised by New Materialism: Networking European Scholarship on ‘How Matter Comes to Matter’ action, IS1307, funded by COST: European Cooperation for Science and Technology.

articles. The chosen designs are situated in-between and in dialogue with the essays and reviews. The first of them is drawn after Polish artist Julita Wojcek's *Tęcza* (Rainbow in English), which is an award-winning, flower-covered, outdoor installation that caused much political controversy and was vandalized by right-wing, anti-GLBT conservatives several times during its different occurrences. The next illustration, which is located between Łapińska's article on ASMR and Golovátina-Mora's suggestion of art/craft-making as a multi-species practice, acquaints us with Australian artist Textaqueen's piece from the series *We don't need another hero* that portrays immigrant artists who are also people of color living in settler-colonial realities. The design in question presents a Pacific queer performer Fez Faanana starring in a made-up show titled "Attack of the Underwater Woman" (2011). Then, placed before Adrian Mróz's two-part article, we encounter an uncolored version of Basia Banda's *Black Gap* which is thus available for new matterings of colored matter. The book reviews are likewise accompanied by color-in designs. Next to the review of the edited collection *Musical Encounters with Deleuze and Guattari* (2017) stands Indigenous Sámi artist Merja Aletta Ranttila's wood engraving *How far I can fly* that offers a wild, joyous scene of human-animal coexistence. The review of the book *Ways of Following: Art, Materiality, Collaboration* appears in dialogue with Finnish artist Kaisu Koivisto's *Cornucopia* (1996)—a complex large-scale installation carefully constructed out of cow horns that the artist retrieved from a slaughterhouse. Finally, our illustration plan and the whole issue close with the review of *Theory of the Image* that is accompanied by Australian artist Nusra Latif Qureshi's multilayered take on the colonial histories of Pakistan through the 'mattering' revival of miniature painting.

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