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*(Un)Common Worlds III Conference*, organized by the Finnish Society for Human-Animal Studies, the University of Derby, and the University of Oulu (Faculty of Education and the Biodiverse Anthropocenes research program), took place in Oulu, Finland, in October 2023, with the theme ‘Navigating and Inhabiting Biodiverse Anthropocenes’. Held during the crisp and sunny frost-filled days of October in Oulu, the conference brought together 180 researchers, students, and interested individuals. The majority of the participants were from Europe, but abstracts were received from all inhabited continents. I remember the days as busy yet filled with meaningful encounters with researchers who, like myself, are interested in examining worldly creatures and phenomena from perspectives beyond the seemingly central human standpoint, questioning humanity’s unique position.

I have been involved in organizing both the first *(Un)Common Worlds* conference, held in August 2018 at the University of Turku, and the third con-

ference in 2023. A paradigm shift has occurred in Finnish academia since the first conference, with concepts such as post-humanism, the Anthropocene, non-human agency, and other terms central to human-animal studies no longer requiring extensive definition or explanation. Instead, the focus has shifted to directly engaging with these ideas, thinking in new and more ethical ways about the relationship between humans, the environment, and the non-human world, while deconstructing harmful dualisms historically drawn between nature and culture.

At both conferences, art was an essential part of the program, alongside the scholarly presentations. This time, the conference featured art exhibitions both at the University of Oulu and online curated by Angela Bartram and Riina Hannula. The exhibitions included works by Liina Aalto-Setälä, Sara Blossville, Jaana Erkkilä-Hill, Lee Deigaard, Outimajja Hakala, Riina Hannula, and Oona Leinovirtanen. The seven invited artists described their work as a form of environmental activism, viewing their collaboration with science

as a means of exploring new ways of working and imagining diverse life forms and relations.

The current 11th issue of *Trace* engages in a similar dialogue between science and art that characterized the *(Un) Common Worlds III* conference. Unifying themes in this issue include multispecies communication and the dialogue between humans and other animals through art. For instance, Sanna Karimäki-Nuutinen's article explores the role of art in expanding animal agency in the works of the artist duo Gustafsson&Haapoja, arguing for the significance of multispecies communication efforts. Angela Bartram and Jaana Erkkilä-Hill discuss the role of artistic research in multispecies dialogue and consider what humans could learn from non-human animals. In their art, they aim to create collaborative relationships in which the autonomy and creativity of all parties are respected and acknowledged. Meanwhile, Johanna Hällsten seeks to understand the languages of environments and non-human animals through music and attentive listening. Also, Becky Nunes writes about empathetic listening in relation to more-than-human agents in her essay, which explores contemporary photographic strategies that challenge the colonial traditions of visual representation and aim to foster interspecies alliances and ecological responsibility.

The articles and essays also highlight the drawing of boundaries between

species: for instance, in the garden, boundaries and hierarchies between humans, non-human animals, and different animal species are concretized as various species are categorized in an anthropocentric manner as "beneficial" or "harmful." In their article, Anna Sofia Salonen and Ryan T. Cragun analyze the complex relationship gardeners have with Spanish slugs, and how they, for instance, describe birds as lovely and Spanish slugs as horrible. Through these boundaries and exclusions, valuations and hierarchies are established between species, and, for example, killing is justified and legitimized. Ville Kokko also explores boundaries and hierarchies between different animal species and humans in his article –analyzing the moral reflection the issue would require– in relation to the Finnish Animal Rights Law Society's proposal to amend the Constitution of Finland to grant rights to all non-human animals. Ombre Tarragnat, on the other hand, reflects on the bestialisation of neurodivergence in their article, advocating for a more-than-human and more-than-neurological approach in neurodiversity studies, and critiquing the anthropocentric and neurocentric biases in existing frameworks. Furthermore, Lee Deigaard writes about her art project inspired by a cow named Aida, who escapes human control and attains independence, while challenging traditional notions of animal roles and identities, thus dismantling boundaries.

This story of resistance and hope is necessary in the time in which we live. I have a vivid memory of hearing Aida's story for the first time at the *(Un)Common Worlds III* conference, how I held my breath, rooted for her, and hoped for the best. This, I believe, is an essential characteristic of art: it touches, moves, and fosters identification. As Becky Nunes writes, it can also show us what we are at risk of losing. In fact, the impacts of the climate crisis have escalated rapidly, with, for example, the global average temperature in January 2025 being 1.75 degrees higher than pre-industrial levels. January thus marked the 18th month in the last 19 months during which the global average temperature exceeded the critically regarded 1.5-degree threshold. The massive scale of animal exploitation is an essential cause of the climate crisis and a defining feature of the Anthropocene. The need for our field, which calls for an ethical renegotiation between the human and the non-human, is increasingly urgent. In this endeavor, art and research complement each other in their

reflections, dialogues, listening, efforts to understand, and speculations with the more-than-human world: what if the future were more equitable?

Finally, congratulations on the 10th anniversary of *Trace*, whose first issue was published on June 2, 2015! In the inaugural editorial, editor-in-chief Nina Nygren writes about how although human-animal studies was still considered "academically odd" in 2015, it was approached with great passion. Since the first issue, there has been an exponential surge in scholarly interest in human-animal relations within the human and social sciences. I believe I can speak on behalf of the entire board of Finnish Society for Human-Animal Studies when I say that we are truly proud to witness the growth and evolution of *Trace* as it continues to thrive as a vibrant platform for scholarly research and discussion. We remain hopeful as we look forward to the next ten years and the future developments of both *Trace* and the field of human-animal studies.

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