

THE GREAT BEAR AND RESEARCH IN FARMING POETICS

Proposal by Pierre Guillet de Monthoux

We hereby propose a session for the online conference on Artistic Research arranged by 25-26 nov 2020, starting with the projection of Jenny Holts video-work *The Great Bear* (presented below). After the shared screen projection mini-keynotes on *Time and Action* by Jenny Helin, *Poetic in Farmwork* by Matilda Dahl and *Reverie in Action* by Pierre Guillet de Monthoux will lead up to the common conversation.

Background:

Action, seemingly embedded in common socio-economic culture, could be understood as acts of reason but also driven by imagination. This begs the immense query of how epistemological endeavors intertwine with poetic imagination. Out of many possible ways to tackle this we have chosen to explore French philosopher Gaston Bachelard's collective work since he seems to put scientific work on par with poetic imagination in human action

Field:

The actions we study through a Bachelardian perspective are undertakings in the area of agriculture. Given today's political mainstream culture such actions are commonly considered of societal relevance as entrepreneurial. But suppose the energy of such actions can be traced back to both their epistemic and poetic side. If then the dominance of politico-economic approaches would lose its dominance would this imply an opening for artistic research? But what kind of research are we then craving?

Conversation participants:

We propose an open conversation with the members of a research team exploring the role of poetics in agricultural action.

Docent Jenny Helin: After having done research in the area of entrepreneurship she is now focusing on sustainable management running a research/educational unit at University of Uppsala Campus Gotland. Theoretically Jenny has lead the development of process philosophy in the field of organization and management with a focus on questions of time and slowness. After drawing on Bergson she now explores what Bachelard proposes in his poetical verticality of action. Jennys familiarity with the management of small farms has made her realize the necessity to experiment with new ways of understanding what makes people engage in such projects.

Dr Matilda Dahl: Has together with Jenny Helin and Pierre Guillet de Monthoux focused her recent research on how farmers account for their engagement in their projects. She is currently exploring the implicit poetry of their accounts and attempts to render field conversations in new ways. This makes her engage in a listening and conveying her field work in ways uncommon to most social research. The narration and story-telling gives way to other accounts and especially Gaston Bachelard's work on the poetics of elements has struck her as close to her field experience.

Dr Jenny Holt: Has joined the project team in her role as a filmmaker and professor in film at Manchester School of Art. She makes video art often with the starting point in farming in the UK. Since she joined to group she has not only shown her video work but also engaged in methodological work on how to document and render atmospheres. De facto her presence in the group has influence and supported the social scientist to go shape what might possibly be a crossover or artistic and social science research.

Professor Pierre Guillet de Monthoux: after investigating the roles of aesthetics and art in organizations he now explores the poetics of action as inherent in the work investigated by the team. By connecting this research with developments of Gaston Bachelards

approach, he wants to find new ways of what the philosopher labeled Reverie.

The Great Bear

(2019, 22:29 min)

A film about the aesthetics of farmland work, created in cooperation between an artist, workers, animals and a landscape and making up a platform for new artistic research; the Bureau de la Reverie in cooperation with J. Helin, M. Dahl and P. Guillet de Monthoux

Work as a factor of production, a phenomenon to rationalize or a heroic act of creative entrepreneurship? How easy is it not to embark on abstractions, theoretical assumptions or romantic fantasies! Is there a possibility to see what there is and *express* how we experience the atmospheres of work, working and production?

The Great Bear is a film about work, documented with workers in and around the town Thrapston in Northamptonshire, UK. The place might be traditionally portrayed as a rural area with both farming and market identities. Thrapston, today a small city with around 6 000 inhabitants, got its market charter in 1205 and is located at the junction of two major routes. It also has a bridge passing the river Nene, and up until the 1960's, it had two railway stations. The area has a network of roads, and all this together has brought about a growing logistics economy, as well as – in modern times – an international workforce. But there is still poetry in work, beyond these plain templates of description?

Jenny Holt's film *The Great Bear* is based on her research, done by participant observation and through intimate conversations with singular farmers of the English Midlands. She acknowledges contemporary conditions of work but aims at accounts for a poetical reality shaping the essence of farmland work. The more nostalgic, utopian or ideological temptations are bracketed, the clearer do we

sense something inherent in all sustainable economics action. Do not forget the poetical power of work!

Jenny Holt has a background in visual arts practice as well as television documentary production for BBC, Discovery Channel and Channel 4, among others. She leads a filmmaking program at Manchester School of Art. The film is supported by Jerwood Arts and Arts Council England.