

Abstract: Thinking through / practicing materiality – a dialogue on practice

A performance Essay & Dr. Johanna Hällsten

A collaborative performative essay by Dr. Heather Connelly and Artist Researcher Dr. Johanna Hällsten, Senior Lecturer /Course Leader BA Fine Art, School of Art, Architecture and Design, London Metropolitan University for 'Weaving, language, writing: thinking and practicing research-creation' conference organised by University of Angers, University Paris, Vincennes Saint-Denis), University of Lorraine, and University of Grenoble Alpes, which took place in place in Angers (11th-13th June 2025).



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Using Heidegger's *A dialogue on language - between a Japanese and an inquirer* (1982) essay as a starting point, Connelly and Hällsten performative essay will conduct a dialogue that moves across and between languages, materials and practices – exploring the verbal, visual, sensual aspects of their artistic research. Taking the Swedish word *nysta* as a starting point, they will work reflexively, unpicking, unravelling and translating their praxis through words and materials (thread, cloth and sound) in an attempt to understand and translate that which is difficult to translate, and how materials plays a particular role (sensations and affects) in attempting to give form to something that is 'undefinable' (Heidegger 1982:13), or alludes definition.

Both artists draw on listening practices, such as Jean-Luc Nancy's seminal text *Listening* (2007), where he states: "to listen is to be straining towards a possible meaning, and consequently one that is not immediately accessible" (2007). It is through the embodied work with textiles, weaving and sound (oral and material) that we explore this possibility of meaning making. Importantly using rhythm of the utterance and weave moving across, and creating, a score or surface, unearthing that recurring return of the unfamiliar in our multilingual practices.

Connelly and Hällsten have worked with translation over the past few decades - working closely together as supervisor and supervisee and coming together to collaborate on multilingual performances and installations. This call provides the opportunity for them to scrutinise how materials and processes become part of the dialogue, an agent, that is not passive. This will be explored through a poetic performative essay, that will provide insights into their practices, as they continue to build on their shared knowledge and cultural differences.

Authors:

Dr. Heather Connelly, Senior Lecturer / International Lead Lincoln School of Design & Architecture (LSDA), University of Lincoln

Dr. Johanna Hällsten, Senior Lecturer /Course Leader BA Fine Art, School of Art, Architecture and Design, London Metropolitan University

Biogs:

Dr Heather Connelly is an artist/researcher, Senior Lecturer and International Lead at University of Lincoln, UK. Her artistic research concerns art-and-translation and linguistic hospitality, establishing Translation Zone(s), in 2016 to explore how art practice can be used to engage people in the complex issues of translation and more broadly transcultural communication. She is cofounder and co-curator of InDialogue a series of artistic research events that aimed to provide platform and hospitable environment for artistic research, experimentation, interrogation and discussion about and through dialogue. Heather often works across disciplines – creating the conditions for individuals to work together to examine, explore ideas, identify issue and problems through arts practice and is currently developing a new work with colleagues at North West University in South Africa.

Dr. Johanna Hällsten is a Swedish artist and Course Leader for BA Fine Art at London Metropolitan University, UK. She works primarily with text, sound and performance, where the work focuses on translation between different cultures, species, and forms, to address the interrelation between sounds and environments. Her work was performed at Nottingham Contemporary as part of InDialogue by Juxtavoices, and exhibited in e.g: Personal Structures, Venice Biennale, ANTI festival, EV+A. She has published in e.g. The Front Edge of Environmental Aesthetics, Contemporary Aesthetics, Somatechnics, EUP journal, and in n.Paradoxa