

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge all my majority-animal, plant and landscape kin for their generosity in sharing knowledge in a time of climate emergency. You are more trustful than we deserve. Current strict guidelines prevent nonhumans from qualifying as authors. Therefore, I state here that morally, the genuine co-authors of this paper include Apricot Fruit Borer Grub; Apricot Leafminer Grub; Apricot Tree Borer Grub; Whale; Slug; and Armadillo. I hope soon that anthropocentric barriers to attribution of knowledge will dissolve and rightful acknowledgements will become standard.

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Intuitive Interspecies Communication With A Grub Reveals The Applied Arts Can No Longer Ignore Nonhuman-Animal Artisans

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Abstract

PURPOSE

Currently, the organizational culture of Applied Arts' spaces is bound by interlinked, oppressive/privileged systems using terms such as the ableist 'handmade'. This article details using Intuitive Interspecies Communication, (IIC), to uncloak the proficient and multitudinous making skills of nonhuman-animals, from their own viewpoint. This simultaneously acknowledges individual nonhuman-animal artanship and dismantles oppressive arts language.

DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

IIC is one of my innate skills. Using unstructured IIC interviews, nonhuman-animal artisans explain their making materials and modalities. Acting as transcriber and reflective/reflexive practitioner, I then create art jewellery to disseminate concepts from the interview data.

FINDINGS

Making as directed from the perspective of nonhuman-animal artisans reveals multiple oppressive/privileged biases ingrained in the Applied Arts, impacting how we attribute objects nonhuman-animals make and those created by humans with hands-free technology. The resulting non-bodycentric language provides an environment where all making is valid.

ORIGINALITY/VALUE

Centralising nonhuman-animal voices and reframing their ‘instinctually’-made objects as decisionmade recognises “universal multispecies creativity” (Gigliotti, 2022). This engenders compassion for fellow makers of all species oppressed by the Applied Arts’ kyriarchal systems.

KEYWORDS

Ableism, Animal, Applied Art, Arts-Based Research, Autistic, Decolonisation, Handmade, IIC, Intuitive Interspecies Communication, Jewellery, Kyriarchy, Making.

Introduction

The applied arts (lowercase) are the cultural practices of skilled artisans/applied artists making objects across varied disciplines such as ceramics or jewellery. Creating an object (including tools) is collectively referred to as ‘making’. The objects made are mostly functional, often decorative, and overlap fine arts. They are ethnographic markers and cultural descriptors.

The Applied Arts (uppercase) is the organisational settings where this making occurs or is supported - such as studios, guilds, universities, galleries and museums. Within the Applied Arts, our teachers’ heritage and connections place us in a lineage, as does working in spaces where significant makers work(ed). These interrelated lineages keep skills alive and striving for excellence (World Crafts Council, 2024) whilst moving artists up the hierarchy of the Applied Arts. Our ‘history of artistic practice’ maps the Applied Arts’ spaces we inhabit, impacting how we are regarded within this organisation.

Due to kyriarchy (intersectional, oppressive/privileged structures of racism, ableism, and speciesism amongst others) (Reed-Bouley, 2012), a great disparity exists between the importance attributed to objects created by human artists in Applied Arts’ spaces and similar objects nonhuman-animals make in alternative locales.

We are surrounded by multiple creative, agential nonhuman individuals deserving of credit for their skills and consideration not just in the Applied Arts, but all our shared landscapes. Significantly, I believe my introduction of an Intuitive Interspecies Communication, (IIC), methodology to Applied Arts’ spaces invalidates these oppressive structures, unshackling our catastrophically-declining nonhuman kin from toxic, contemporary, Westernized ‘relationships’. Importantly, reorganising the anthropocentric Applied Arts’ via IIC will instigate a system of “universal multispecies creativity” (Gigliotti, 2022) - equitable making by all species.

IIC is an academic neologism for communicating with an ancient, interspecies organisational system integral to those who live multispecies-connected lives, such as myself. I have ‘spontaneously communicated’ this way since childhood (Barrett *et al.*, 2021). IIC is defined as,

“A non-verbal and non-physical form of communication between humans and other animals...includ[ing] the mutual exchange of visceral feelings, emotions, mental impressions and thoughts, embodied sensations of touch, smell, taste,

sound, as well as visuals in the mind's eye...a common intersubjective communication experience for many people the world over." (Barrett et al., 2021)

The purpose of this article is to share findings from IIC sessions with three Apricot Tree Grubs, a Whale, a Slug and an Armadillo that uncloak the making skills of nonhuman-animals from their viewpoint. It aims to impact both the inner and outer landscapes of those in the Applied Arts, including researchers, curators, museums and galleries, and provide provocation for teaching institutions, scientists, and conservationists, amongst others.

Firstly, I discuss the modification of problematic language necessary to enable a transition to equitable multispecies co-creation in all Applied Arts spaces. I then give a background of the building arguments for nonhuman-animals' inclusion in the Applied Arts. These include the colonialist hierarchy of makers and objects, and legacy of speciesist extractivism. I discuss the impact of artist/activists using interspecies communication, before presenting my emergent IIC methodology, foregrounding nonhuman voices in an act of equitable co-creation. The findings, with clear accounts of IIC sessions, mark a point of no return for the Applied Arts. Lastly, I conclude with a discussion detailing the impact of this IIC research and offer thoughts for future researchers.

As a non-Indigenous person I acknowledge my research sits within the context of Eurocentric academia, a space of white, able-bodied privilege historically benefiting from enslavement and exclusion of other ways of knowing than the Christian scientific (Gopal, 2021). My research employs my expertise in multiple craft fields, making techniques and materials. Having represented the Applied Arts internationally, I am well versed in its organisation at most levels. As an Autistic, with the common identifier of a wider sense of self (Davidson and Smith, 2009), I regard myself as part of a greater web of multispecies belonging, which I call "The Expansive" (Author, 2023, 2024). This amplifies my connectivity to nonhuman-animals' complex creative decisions, starkly contrasting Applied Arts' human exceptionalism.

An artificial speciesist divide, built through colonialism and extractivism, plagues our planet. "The Western way of knowing has denied validity to every mind save its own" (Griffiths, 2019), commodifying 'invalid' beings and plundering 'resources' into extinction. This overconsumption has led to the ecological and climate collapse that all species face alongside the dismissal of nonhuman skills.

Academic literature regarding nonhuman-animals' artisanship stems largely from observational and experimental accounts within the biological sciences, anthropology and psychology, with nonhuman-animals the voiceless subject. My applied-arts-based research engages IIC sessions to puncture this norm, taking us beyond the lens of human-researching-nonhuman and enables us to speak *with* nonhuman-animals (Wijngaarden, 2023). This dialogue moves beyond wondering what nonhuman-animals would say (Despret, 2016) to truly listening without interrupting (Blenkinsop and Piersol, 2013). It is a call to the Applied Arts to up take our responsibility to reveal the wonder of nonhuman-animals and widen society's field of vision (Wessel, 2018).

Using IIC in a rigorous arts-based academic framework enables nonhuman-animals to co-author this equitable, multispecies making research and knowledge-creation method (Wijngaarden, 2020). Intuitively communicated, unstructured interviews with nonhuman-animal participants provide an immersive mode of enquiry, shifting traditional power dynamics and placing me as an ethnographic bridge for nonhuman-animal artisans (nonhuman-animals who make objects) to decolonise the Applied Arts. Resulting transcripts disrupt current bodies of knowledge about nonhuman-animal material culture and methods of making.

Additionally, IIC enables nonhuman-animals who do not have hands, such as a Whale and a Grub, to share concepts that transform ableist Applied Arts' language (language that discriminates against persons whose bodies differ from a perceived 'norm'). Their knowledge significantly impacts both the Applied Arts' elitism of 'handmade' objects and challenges the dominant negative perception of nonhuman-animals' 'instinctual' making.

It is possible/probable that my findings are already known to marginalised people globally. Findings and citations are presented here as a demonstration of my continuance to foreground Indigenous voices (Todd, 2016) over Eurocentric scholars as an act of decolonisation in academia and society. It is not as an example of "firsting" (Liboiron, 2021). My work is in allyship to all who have been persecuted for existing within a space of multispecies belonging.

I wish to recognise the violation of the bodies, minds and cultures of nonhuman-animals, who have the right to freedom, autonomy and to live agentially, without fear from humans. In respectful recognition of this, just as some

capitalize species' names (Abbott, 2021), so I capitalize the titles majority-animals request to be referred to by. This may appear generic, such as 'Whale', but I do not question their choice to anonymise themselves.

My greatest thanks goes to all those nonhuman-animals who, whilst oppressed by humans, generously participate, sharing their cultural perspective of equitable, ethical making and living, without whom, this research would be impossible. Unfortunately, within current publishing guidelines, nonhumans do not qualify as co-authors. However, I state here that the genuine and moral co-authors of this paper include Apricot Fruit Borer Grub; Apricot Leafminer Grub; Apricot Tree Borer Grub; Whale; Slug; and Armadillo. I hope soon that anthropocentric barriers to attribution of knowledge will dissolve and rightful acknowledgements will become standard.

PROBLEMATIC APPLIED ARTS' LANGUAGE

Restructuring the systemic language of any established organisation requires more appropriate terminology, suited to a new paradigm. My work introduces several neologisms to aid this transition, the most cross-disciplinary being 'majority-animals', coming from the words and images communicated by a Whale, where they showed me a Venn Diagram of primates with hands as a tiny subset of all the "majority- of animals" (see Findings). Currently, the problematic term 'nonhuman-animals' centralises humans whenever a nonhuman-animal is referenced (Trzak, 2015). However, the majority of individual animals alive are not human and have a right to be recognised without human reference. The term 'majority-animals' centralises the greater number of voices (which will grow louder with every IIC) and moves nonhuman-animals from the deficit term of nonhuman to the power of majority. Henceforth, I shall use this term which I co-attribute to the Whale.

To address a second established problematic art phrase, 'Homo Faber', we look to the pinnacles of this culture - The Michelangelo Foundation's illustrious *Homo Faber* exhibitions and awards featuring the world's top artisans (*Homo Faber*, 2024). There is a strong concept of Homo Faber (Man the Maker) within the Applied Arts, when referring to artisanship of anything from paper sculpture to clockmaking. However, Homo Faber (appropriated incorrectly from the Latin *Faber homo*) denotes making in the sense of heavy work, such as pounding at an anvil - by a male. Whilst male blacksmiths are applied artists, given the dexterity involved in most applied artists' practice and their being of all genders, Artifex Humanus (Artful, skilful Human) is more appropriate. (Species capitalization is retained as per Applied Arts convention and the aforementioned agential recognition.)

I argue IIC demonstrates that the Applied Arts must also embrace 'Artifex Animalis' (Artful, skilful majority-animals) and move towards a multispecies belonging pedagogy (Blenkinsop and Piersol, 2013). (The continuation of Latin in this context avoids us using 'animal making' or 'animal makers' which conjure images of enforced breeding and taxidermy.) Future multispecies co-creation and collapsing of speciesist boundaries will trigger more apposite neologisms, but these will suffice in the interim.

The pernicious assertion that Artifex Animalis make 'instinctually', unlike the human processes of reason, observation, repetition, and learning, was rejected in 1870 (Wallace, 1870, pp. 211–230) and again in 2000 by social anthropologist, Tim Ingold. Ingold observed that both Weaverbirds and Humans, when traditionally knotting, looping and stitching plant fibres were teaching intergenerationally (Ingold, 2000, pp. 349–391). As revealed later, via IIC, an Apricot Leafminer Grub readjusts similar anthropocentrically-skewed assumptions.

Most applied arts objects are described as 'handmade' - our next problematic term. An anthropocentrically and body-normatively bound term, 'handmade' excludes the creativity of any human making objects with other parts of their body, such as feet. 'Handmade' is an ableist term. Traditionally, the term and concept of 'handmade' is fundamental to Applied Arts' elite artisanship, denoting making by an artisan rather than machine. However, the Applied Arts' adoption of hands-free making technology such as water-jet cutters and 3D printers often makes 'handmade' redundant.

Some opt for the slang term 'headmade' denoting the object is made by machine through human intelligence. However, if we are to embrace Gigliotti's 'universal multispecies creativity', just as it is not the hand which is necessary to make an object, neither is it a head. De-centralised 'brains' in an Octopus' arms make decisions independently of the brain in their head (Chang and Hale, 2023). When making coconut shell 'armour', an Octopus is

not using hands and may neither be using their head, simultaneously disqualifying both 'handmade' and 'headmade'. I propose 'decisionmade'.

Majority-animal architecture specialist, Professor Mike Hansell, asserts that majority-animals make unconscious decisions when they are creating objects (Hansell, 2009, p. 4). However, I argue that majority-animals creating an object require conscious decisions of engineering, situation, and future performance, requiring forward planning and complex material knowledge. These decisions are the result of feedback from multiple maker senses, be it fingers, tentacles, or bill.

For example, the elastic nest of a Long-Tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*), is made of up to 6,000 individual pieces of Moss, Lichen, and Spiders' webs enabling it to stretch and accommodate expanding offspring. The nest's feather lining is selected not due to how long the Tit forages, or which feathers they find, but "specifically for the thermal environment" (McGowan, Sharp and Hatchwell, 2004), suggesting conscious decisions and material choices akin to those I make when sculpting. I argue *Artifex Animalis*' objects are consciously decisionmade using senses we do not yet understand (Yong, 2022). An assertion supported by the IIC with an Armadillo, later in this paper.

As Autistic advocacy in research tackles ableism through systemic language change (Bottema-Beutel *et al.*, 2021), Applied Arts departments have the opportunity to begin erasing ableism and, by embracing IIC, speciesist bodycentrism, too.

HIERARCHY OF OBJECTS

The proficient and multitudinous making skills of majority-animals are generally under regarded, with study mostly in biological sciences, anthropology and psychology. Yet the Applied Arts has the potential to understand *Artifex Animalis* most easily. This requires dismantling further unjust organisational structures.

The Applied Arts exists within frameworks developed by Eurocentric institutions - spaces that secure elite careers for the privileged whilst escaping the reach of marginalised groups (Heffernan, 2023, pp. 233-239). Art institutions as with others, must decolonise their collections containing harms to humans and use IIC to address the majority-animal bodies captive in collections and artworks (Hörner and Antlfinger, 2024).

An enforced colonialist hierarchy of making unjustly downgrades Indigenous makers of culturally significant objects, consigning their highly-crafted works to museums' ethnographical curiosity sections (Turshen, 2017). So too, the Applied Arts dismisses cultural objects made by majority-animals.

The mission of global Applied Arts organisation, The World Crafts Council is to empower artisans, celebrate cultural diversity, support the rich tapestry of global craftsmanship, and preserve languishing crafts from extinction (World Crafts Council, 2024). Amid the current catastrophic loss of majority-animals, *Artifex Animalis* and their skills are most at risk of extinction. The woodworking skills of a Eurasian Beaver (*Castor fiber*), nest building basketry of a Southern Masked Weaverbird (*Ploceus velatus*), and mud-daub ceramics of a Potter Wasp (*Eumenes* sp.) are equally part of 'the rich tapestry of global crafts[being]ship'. Bodies such as the World Crafts Council, domain of well-crafted, functional wooden objects, baskets, and pots must elevate majority-animals and their functional objects – and as a matter of urgency.

Those that do recognise majority-animals' making skills impose a second hierarchy of objects. Current material-culture discourse elevates *Artifex Animalis* making functional tools over those making other functional objects, such as nests, due to perceived higher levels of intelligence. Primates' stick tools (Boesch, Head and Robbins, 2009) and the hook tools of New Caledonian Crows (*Corvus moneduloides*) (Hunt *et al.*, 2008) steal the limelight over other majority-animals (Street, Author and Healy, 2025) such as a burrowing Armadillo (see Findings). However, the Applied Arts does not elevate the applied artist who makes (Brothwell, 2024) or uses tools (Hole & Corner, 2019) above one who works without tools: both objects and artisans are equally significant. This example of equality, in conjunction with IIC based interviews, provides a more balanced perception the Applied Arts can offer other disciplines.

TACKLING EXTRACTIVISM

Alongside large Applied Arts organisational spaces, individual artists' studios must decolonise, addressing the materials they use. Extractivism provided and provides plundered natural resources, be it mined precious metals and stones (Hall, 2012), or felled ancient hardwood (Sextro, 2015). These materials carry the stain of European extractivism, its violences, displacements and dominations (Murrey and Mollett, 2023).

Extractivism extends to the bodies of majority-animals where studios might be stocked with Squirrel-hair paintbrushes, Cochineal Beetle dyes or bone-china clay amongst other items. Objects made by Artifex Animalis and the bodies of those forced into 'collaborations' (Duprat and Besson, 1998) pass through studios before they exhibit in museums and galleries. Complicit in using majority-animal-derived materials during my career, I am trying to redress this harm. IIC makes it incumbent upon the Applied Arts to implement and bolster existing anti-speciest curatorial guidelines which provide ethical parameters, legal and moral protections (Gibson, 2025) and eliminate suffering for all majority-animals (Andreyev, 2016; Minding Animals, 2019). Intertwining interspecies communication and art also hands a controlling lens to majority-animal individuals, altering creative dynamics forever.

INTERSPECIES ACTIVISM

This majority-animal-controlled lens is apparent in the work of three notable artists. Dr Zoe Todd, Indigenous artist and activist, uses embodied listening that displaces human centrality (Chayne, 2024) as a mode of interspecies communication. Their work recognises "Fish-as-political-citizens" (Todd, 2024) and decries imposed geographical and 'lawful' boundaries, challenging the organisational gaze and its current parameters (Todd, 2017). Through this Fish lens, colonially-constructed borders become obsolete, foregrounding a traditional way of living with landscapes, and placing Fish as co-activists.

Eels manipulate human emotions in the audio-visual installation *Nipawiwini Akikodjiwan: Pimizi ohci*, about Eels and hydroelectric power. Via interspecies communicator Gail Simmons, Indigenous artist/researcher Cheryl L'Hirondelle asked Eels how they wish to be represented. The Eels requested images of Eel babies be used (L'Hirondelle, 2022) to encourage human-Eel relatability.

Interspecies communication shifts hitherto speciesist physical, relational and permission boundaries. Intuitively communicating with the Nation of Pigs, artist Franziska Lauber sought permission to create *On The Back of the Pig*, an installation visibilizing the 'hidden' Pig in the food industry. Turning "jelly gum" sweets, with their hidden ingredient of Pig gelatine, into a Pig silhouette on a gallery floor, Lauber creates a non-confrontational space for difficult dialogue. Lauber feels only Pigs can ethically approve her using Pig bodies to discuss industrial farming (Lauber, 2022).

In 2023, a group of over 50 artistic scholars from institutions worldwide attended the *International Multispecies Methods Research Symposium: Intuitive Interspecies Communication*, held by the University of Saskatchewan, Canada – the second of its kind (University of Saskatchewan, 2022, 2023). The profound possibilities emerging from important shifts in interspecies understanding prompted the formation of ARTISTic (ARTIST Interspecies Communicators), to discuss the outcomes and future of using interspecies communication, including IIC, in our practices.

Design Methodology and Approach

If my research were an ethnographical study of the making modalities and material culture of human artisans, interviewing them directly would be considered a necessity. Therefore, it is equally imperative that I interview Artifex Animalis directly about their own making modalities.

The recent framing of IIC as an amplifier of majority-animal voices in academia (Wijngaarden, 2023) cements my research aims. However, whilst the design of this research methodology is novel, my use of IIC in this way is not. IIC with the Expansive is an innate thread of my life and artistic practice, as it is for others (Stuckey, 2010; Flowers, Lipsett and Barrett, 2014). Making IIC an integral part of my contemporary research methodology is natural.

Crucially, IIC's inclusion bridges any differences (assumed or genuine) between myself and a majority-animal participant, enabling genuine co-learning and co-construction of knowledge. Wanting to foreground authentic majority-animal voices and conscious anthropocentric concepts might create leading questions, I use unstructured interviews with conversational flexibility led by majority-animal participants' thoughts and ideas (Qu and Dumay, 2011). Aware that IIC-based research might encounter resistance, I devised ethical consent forms as stringent as for a human healthcare interview. These go beyond current UK practice for safeguarding majority-animals and ensure robust equity. I use them before each IIC session to enable an anti-colonialist "dynamic relationship" where "trust will not only be reciprocated but constantly negotiated" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021).

Further unconscious species bias could impact which majority-animal I choose to interview, so all majority-animals are invited to take part, creating a process of self-selection. So far, in addition to those included here, a Crow, Termites, a Freshwater Crab, several Orang-utans, and a Fjordland Penguin have keenly shared their making modalities via IIC during these formatted sessions. Constantly challenging personal anthropocentric biases ensures my 'ethnographic orientation' of humility in these sessions. This ceding of knowledge control to majority-animal participants, includes taking their communicated information seriously (whether I understand its significance or not). By using the exact language of majority-animal participants and documenting my human presence frankly (Trundle, Gardner and Phillips, 2024), I dismantle speciesist kyriarchal oppression (Trzak, 2015) to my best ability.

Methodology

"Artful practice" as an (auto)ethnographic, qualitative method "break[s] the 'silences' [so we] come to know our individual and societal collective truths" (McKenna and Woods, 2012). But with majority-animals in such crisis, it is no longer enough to break silences. This methodology must centre and amplify majority-animals' voices. As David Rousell writes, "our work as scholars, artists and activists constitute an aesthetics and ethics of co-existence, rather than just another discursive regime of identitarian representation" (Rousell, 2022, p. 247) .

My methodology needs to be "a lever for change" (Woodhouse and Gigliotti, 2023) in every Applied Arts space, with majority-animals driving the conversation and directing the human gaze (Abbott, 2020). IIC sits in a space of alternative knowing, one that many Indigenous voices have stayed connected to for millennia, despite colonialist oppression. Heeding Linda Tuhiwai Smith's advice, my methodology must decolonise, centralising Indigenous persons 'geographically, politically, intellectually, theoretically and imaginatively' (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). I must move majority-animals similarly, towards "interspecies justice" (Barrett *et al.*, 2021) whilst honouring current important land-management work setting an equitable space for more-than-humans at the table (Jack, 2022; Kuppenbender, 2024).

In addition to Yukon First Nations Elder, Copper Joe Jack, calling decisionmakers to provide a seat at every table (Jack, 2022), I call artists to use this methodology built like a table. Each of the four solid 'legs' represents a vital perspective of human/majority-animal relationships drawn from texts by Indigenous and multispecies scholars.

1. The first leg states the methodology must "emerge, be negotiated in ongoing ways, and/or be recognised, in different places, at different levels, for different people as and with more-than-human beings" (Smith *et al.*, 2022, p. 720).
2. The second leg is that the methodology is replicable for all artists expressing Val Plumwood's ethical, agential interspecies co-creation (Rose, 2013).
3. The third leg is one of 'respectful anti-colonial engagement' (Koleszar-Green, 2018; Rosiek, Snyder and Pratt, 2019).
4. The fourth leg recognises Indigenous artistic scholars expressing interspecies communication amid "kincentric ecology" (Salmón, 2000; Kimmerer, 2013).

Now a circular tabletop is needed. For this, I initially blended "Dialogic Method(ology)" where "researching through porosity" (Barrett, 2014) encapsulates IIC; and art-practice-based "Experimental Methodology" (Grant, 2017) where the reflective maker-practitioner (Schön, 2016) produces an emergent methodology. Very quickly, these blended methodologies become a multispecies-co-authored, artistic IIC methodology. This, alongside the transcriptions of IIC sessions, expose the speciesist invisibility of *Artifex Animalis* in the Applied Arts.

Using IIC as an ethnographic mode of inquiry within an ethnographic artful practice, I fulfil multiple roles. The cycle moves me from collaborator with key participants, to data gatherer/transcriber, before becoming generating

instrument, disseminator and reflecting/reflexive practitioner – only to start again. These are the usual roles of an artist understanding and defining their research whilst co-designing an emergent methodology (Gray and Malins, 1993; Grant, 2017). What is unusual, is that my co-designers are majority-animals and, through use, we co-design the methodology and art jewellery using IIC. The result is the emergent ‘Collaborative Animal Docens Methodology’ (Animal Teacher). The borrowed Latin for teacher, docens, places majority-animal participants as generous teachers with humans becoming students (Wijngaarden, 2020). It does not denote a majority-animal’s duty to teach but implies it is us whom must learn.

Collaborative Animal Docens Methodology

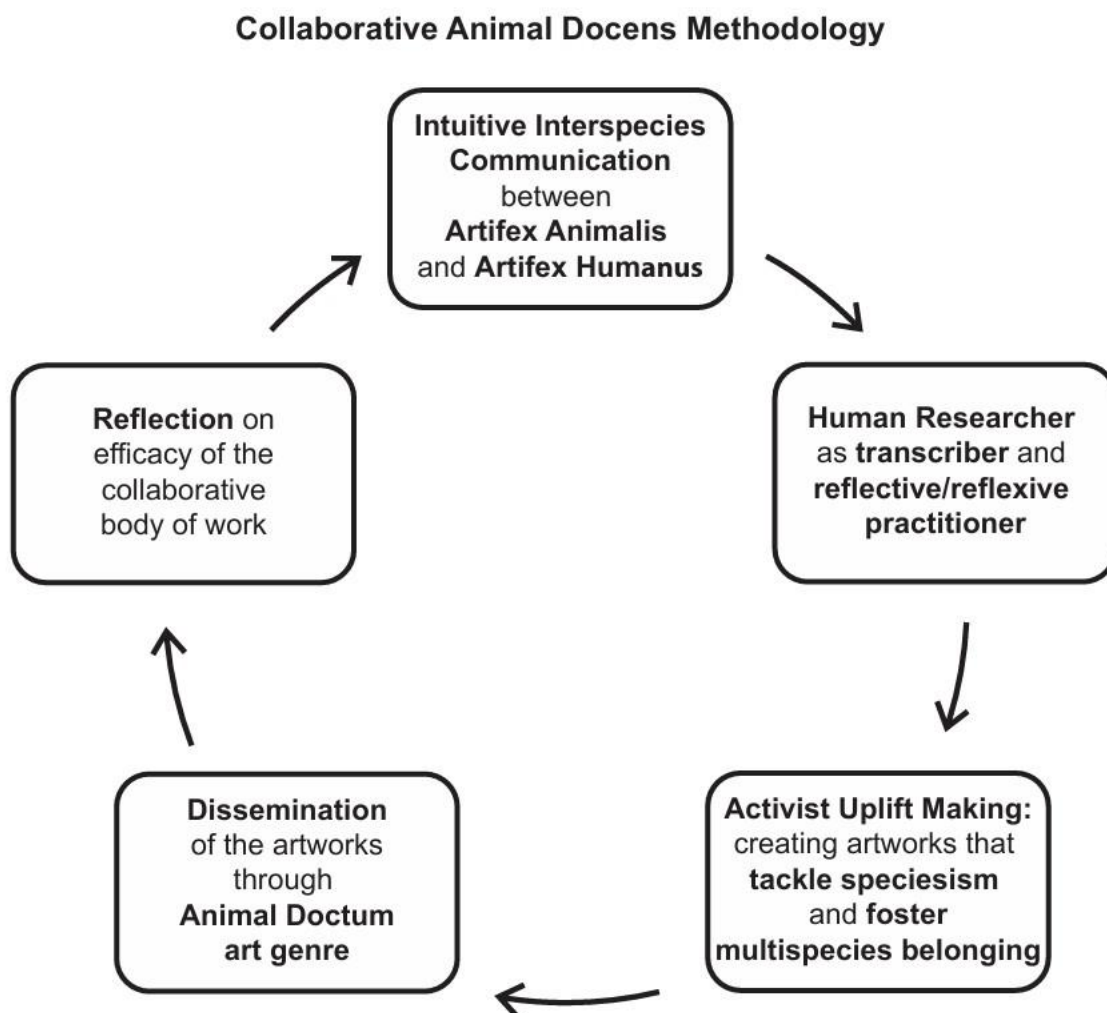


Figure 1. ©Author (2023) Collaborative Animal Docens Methodology.

The IIC interview sessions are carried out with a clear head, usually in the mornings, sitting comfortably in my studio. They consist of up to three 10 - 15 minute sessions. Being inside, no majority-animal participants are in my locale (Barrett *et al.*, 2021) - countering the theory that proximate majority-animals are more relatable (Liguore, 2018).

Majority-animal participants’ inner landscapes are safeguarded during IIC sessions which begin with the consent form read aloud. I then invite, “any majority-animal that consents and wishes to communicate about the things they make to come forward.” This ensures communicating participants are self-selecting, consenting, and regarded as co-authors.

Whilst conducting the IIC interview, I use Otter.ai to record and transcribe my audible descriptions and communications on an iPhone. I write notes and sketch images as they are intuitively communicated. Validating information is not sought post-session out of respect for the majority-animals. Having used IIC for 55 years, I have had enough validating experiences to trust communications.

This collected data informs my art jewellery making as does any client's brief. I absorb myself in conveying the story through sketched designs. I then construct iterative maquettes using ecologically-sound materials appropriate to a participant's environment. The final piece of jewellery honours the participant's narrative. It is a novel vehicle by which I disseminate intuitively communicated concepts and spark discussion in the Applied Arts and beyond. At all times I respectfully honour the information shared through IIC. No participant's name, gender or location is collected to ensure anonymity and prevent possible persecution.

Findings

What follows are five IIC session excerpts. They epitomise the thought challenges ahead of us when tackling the Applied Arts' kyriarchy. Are this Grub and Whale calling out ableism more effectively than a human? Is this Slug challenging speciesism by directing my role in research? And is this Armadillo invalidating the elite hierarchy of objects across disciplines? To answer, we must read the transcripts.

Italicised text denotes what I, the researcher, am experiencing during the communication. I experience audible information as if projected from inside my ears; visual images projected towards the back of my head as if on a movie screen; embodied sensations can be felt anywhere on my body; and a knowing centred in my solar plexus. I project my own responses as audible, visual or embodied sensations.

Excerpt 1 from IIC Session

23/11/2022.

Recorded in Otter.ai on an iPhone. The consent form has been read.

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] "I invite any animal that consents and wishes to communicate about the things they make to come forward."

[Researcher is experiencing audible information.]

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] "I'm recording this on the 23rd at 11:09. I just asked if there were any animals that would like to speak to me about their making and I got an immediate response."

[Researcher is experiencing audible information.]

[It was established that the majority-animals were aware that this communication was part of doctoral research and consented to the use of any information they shared.]

INTERLOCUTOR: "We'd like to talk. We burrow into apricots. Nobody takes our burrowing as making, but we create channels in which to move as Grubs. *[pause]* We can sense what direction we're going in. We can feel the material we're chewing through."

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] "I'm going to ask, is it the apricot fruit, or is it the apricot tree, or is it the apricot leaf? *[pause for response]*"

[Researcher is experiencing audible information.]

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] "And the response is - all of those. *[pause]* Response is - that they mine. *[pause]* Oh, I see that we have a collection.

[Researcher is experiencing images showing the communications coming from three Grubs on an Apricot Tree - mining into its leaves, fruit and under the bark.]

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] "We have Leafminers. We have Grubs that are burrowing into the fruit and then there are others that actually mine into the Tree itself under the bark. *[pause]* So three different types of burrowing. And you are not Insects are you, because you don't have six legs? *[pause]*"

[Researcher is experiencing audible information and embodied sensations].

[The Leafminer Grub elects to communicate for the trio.]

INTERLOCUTOR: "Grubs."

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] “Are you, you are insects? You will become an insect? Right? [pause]

[Researcher is experiencing audible information accompanied by images of the Grubs mining spaces in which to pupate and hide from Birds trying to eat them. The researcher is shown the protective burrow the Leafminer Grub creates between the two outer layers of an Apricot Tree’s leaf and the Grub hiding from predators whilst feeding on the inner part of the leaf.]

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] “So, Insect Larvae. Right? Okay. Okay. Yeah, got you. And what you're doing, people think you're eating it, but you're not necessarily? You can be mining to create channels in which to pupate? [pause] To hide from Birds. To hide from predators. And that I need to take my research down to the tiniest level.” [pause]

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] *[Responding by projecting images of an Apricot Tree leaf that has been mined and is full of frass.]* “Isn’t your mining just subsistence and not creating?”

[Researcher is experiencing audible information.]

INTERLOCUTOR: [Answering without judgement.] “Your view is skewed by human thinking. Just because something is foodstuff, does not mean it cannot be a making material, too.”

[Researcher is experiencing vivid images showing the researcher cocooned inside a cake, using her hand to scoop out cake to create a safe space, then eating the scooped cake. The researcher experiences dual embodied sensations and emotional representations of being scared of a predator and of being in a safe space within the cake. The researcher is also experiencing audible information.]

INTERLOCUTOR: “If you are born inside a cake and you need to live inside that cake to stay safe from predation, and you only eat cake, then you make a room by eating cake. You don’t just carve away the space you need to live and leave the cake on the floor. Your making creates your subsistence.”

Excerpt 2 from IIC interview with a Whale

23/11/2022

[Researcher is experiencing huge pressure across her body and a sense of the enormous body of a Whale dwarfing her. She senses deep diving into the very cold water and a side-to-side movement, then rolling and an exquisite feeling of water flowing across her body.]

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] And [the Whale is] saying, “We [humans] regard making as something we do with our hands. But obviously, many animals don't have hands, majority of animals don't have hands. And we also talk about making as being a physical object. Well, they make. They make with sound and they move bodies of water. That this is a type of making and humans need to look further than their own senses... to understand that there is much more to making than just creating an object.”

Excerpts 3 and 4 from a second and third IIC interview with a Slug

04/12/2023

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] *[Recapping first IIC interview.]* “The Slug explained that the slime trails are not just highways but sparkle in the moonlight and you can tell things from the Slug trail left.

[Researcher is experiencing audible information.]

INTERLOCUTOR: “Help humans to see beauty in the least expected places. That's your job.”

05/12/2023

[Researcher is experiencing images of the pearlescent shimmer on a Slug trail in daylight.]

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] “Constantly seeing the light on it, the, like the pearlescent, opalescent pinks and lilacs and yellows that are glinting in the sun. It’s very beautiful.”

[Researcher is experiencing audible information.]

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] “And this is the thing here. Okay, you create beauty, but people don’t see it.”

[Researcher is experiencing images of beautiful, shimmering Slug trails. A response of beauty and awe is experienced as a knowing in the researcher’s solar plexus.]

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] “Ah, trails of beauty but people see you as a pest. It’s not all of you, is it. It’s only a few that eat our veg. The rest of you are incredibly important in the ecosystem.”

[Researcher is experiencing audible information.]

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] “Defender of... you see yourself as defender of the earth. [pause] ‘Cus you enrich it. You enrich it with the broken... you break down the, you literally enrich shit into it. You break down the leaves, pull them down.”

Excerpt 5 from IIC interview with an Armadillo

05/12/2023

[Researcher is experiencing images of the Armadillo’s enormous claw clawing at a termite mound - digging.]

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] “to talk about the engineering of burrowing. People think that they just dig a patch - and they need to understand the soil weight, the depth that they’re digging up because they don’t want it to collapse above their heads and bury them.”

.....

[Researcher is experiencing images of the dexterity of this enormous claw. It’s so big and its used so gently. The resistance of the claw as it pushes on the earth.]

.....

RESEARCHER: [Aloud.] “[The Armadillo is] showing, it’s creating a cathedral, a palace underground. That we go into things like the Sagrada Familia and look up and think “Wow!”. Well, they can do the same inside. They can create these caverns for them that are sanctuaries. They are havens. They are safe. They are warm.”

My IIC interviews reveal that every majority-animal participant has an individual understanding of making and material culture with a richer inner landscape than we have thus far attributed. This suggests that we are surrounded by an immeasurable encyclopaedic knowledge of de-anthropocentred making from multitudinous viewpoints: micro to macro.

The Slug’s and Apricot Leafminer Grub’s descriptions of making from the viewpoint of species not regarded as makers exposes even my own unconscious bias of species hierarchy. I had no prior awareness of the existence of Apricot Tree Grubs. Neither did I expect to have tasks allocated to me by a Slug. Despite this, their communications challenge human exceptionalism.

Alongside the Whale’s rebuffing of human-bodycentric positioning (and inspiring the ‘majority-animal’ neologism) these collective interviews affirm that IIC evaporates Applied Arts’ ableist hierarchies.

The Grub’s assertion that eating is a valid multispecies making modality, with food a material, redefines the ‘made’ object and animal consciously (cr)eating it (human or majority). This forces us to reassess objects such as an excavated leaf, an object most likely disregarded as waste, as a decisionmade object. Similarly, the Armadillo’s description of engineering calculations necessary to burrow evaporate the idea of purely ‘instinctual’ making.

The results of these communications are five sculptural pieces of art jewellery, three of which I share here. It being important that materials akin to an interlocutor's realm are used, for the first ring, Tree resin was selected to cast representations of the Grubs and wood chosen for the shank. The ring is an artistic representation of the Grub's concept of eating cake as a making process including vivid communicated images of a hand plunging into a cake.



Plates 1-3. ©Author and Apricot Tree Grubs (2023). *Cake As Protection: IIC With an Apricot Leafminer Grub.* Tree resin, wood, sealant, vegan cake & glass plate. No food was wasted when making this artwork.

The second ring and accompanying cuff, explore the beauty of a Slug trail in moonlight and daylight, as per the Slug's direction. This jewellery is an applied-arts vehicle to share Artifex Animalis' knowledge - a starting point for conversations - and along with other pieces I created using the Collaborative Animal Docens Methodology, exhibited at the National Glass Centre, Sunderland, UK, in winter 2024 - 2025.



Plates 4&5. ©Author and Slug (2024). *Beauty In The Least Expected Places & Nighttime Slug Shimmer.* Burnt wood, sealant, Moss & angelina

Animal Doctum – An IIC Artistic Genre

Collectively, the generated jewellery pieces form a new genre, the 'Animal Doctum' (Learned Animal) Art Genre. Whilst the field of IIC credits majority-animals as learned, this is rare in Global North societies. These IIC sessions and numerous since, upend the traditional dynamic of 'artist as maker and majority-animal as subject'. Instead, a multispecies relationship emerges where majority-animal is knowledge holder and artist is student. Knowledge holders are not exploited as resources for extraction, or fetishised subjects of curiosity. This is a feature of the respectful inclusion IIC brings to the Applied Arts, providing multiple points of inquiry into the lives of majority-animal kin which can nurture society toward normalised multispecies belonging.

Conclusion/Discussion

In my introduction, I suggest that the inclusion of IIC in the Applied Arts marks a point of no return. I believe my research shows this to be true, confirming that we are surrounded by multiple Artifex Animalis - creative, agential individuals making objects in ways beyond our current consideration.

Had my research methodology been haphazard, it would be impossible to tease meaning from the IIC sessions or question methods. But by formatting sessions, writing consent forms, transcribing unstructured interviews, and approaching with an ethical framework equal to that for human participants, my data is collected logically and appropriately.

Self-selecting majority-animal participants lead to unpredictable and remarkable outcomes. That the knowledge of a Slug and an Apricot Tree Grub, both considered 'pests' by humans could possibly catalyse the re-organisation of Applied Arts spaces and structures, including global bodies such as the World Crafts Council, should humble us.

IIC offers an equitable manner of co-creating at all levels, dissolving artificial speciesist lines, adjusting problematic language, revealing unconscious biases and illuminating the unjust attribution of being 'lesser'.

I hope future art-based researchers will adopt the replicable Collaborative Animal Docens Methodology, and proliferate the Animal Doctum Art Genre, becoming students of majority-animal knowledge - ethnographers guided by majority-animal material culture, expanding current bodies of knowledge. Directional indicators for curators, teachers, and galleries to follow, they will become studio decolonisers, removers of majority-animal-derived materials and responsible for future non-speciesist work. Future curatorial research should include IIC as a mode of enquiry with existing collections and artworks in and beyond the Applied Arts.

This research to date only includes a dozen individual majority-animals, making findings extremely limited. More research is needed. The Applied Arts has the potential to explode with exciting, equitable interspecies collaborations and discourse. It can anchor us in respectful multispecies belonging where majority-animals' specific material and cultural needs, including critically-linked landscapes, are safeguarded. Together we can decentre our extractivist actions in favour of eco-system wellbeing and multispecies justice. Therefore, I call for enforced guidelines to stringently protect the inner landscapes and wellbeing of majority-animals from future harmful experimentation by those wishing to exploit. As, which other organisational structures might use IIC as an ethnographic tool to further safeguard majority-animals?

In conclusion, the potential of IIC to deftly disrupt the Applied Arts and dismantle the kyriarchy is immense. We have a lot of work ahead of us; pedagogical restructuring; rewriting programmes; emptying institution cabinets; forming ethical frameworks; addressing copyright law; establish royalty payments; organising a Multispecies World Crafts Council; and most importantly of all, humbly embracing Artifex Animalis for all their wonder. It is going to be amazing.

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