

Tytuł

Performing Planetaryity as a Method of Responsible Artistic Research

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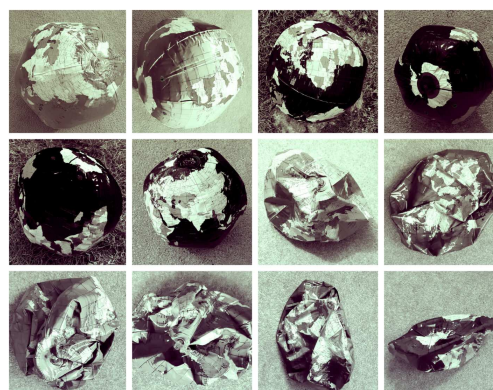
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Abstrakt

This article offers an overview of Joanna Zylińska' performative method of working within an academic context, as a theorist and artist. Departing from the problem of the constitution of the human as both a species and a historical subject, the author uses the geological probe of 'deep time' to analyse the emergence of the human in conjunction with the surrounding technologies. These include tools and other artefacts but also communication in its various modes, be it everyday language, storytelling, ethics, art and media. The planetary perspective of Zylińska's work – as highlighted in the theoretical concepts and practical projects presented in this article – finds its anchoring in the socio-political concerns of the here and now: from the ecological and economic crises through to the problem of individual and social coexistence. It is through the notion of praxis that an encounter between thinking, seeing and making in Zylińska's work yields both a methodology and a 'minimal ethics'. Bringing the two together, the article negotiates the complex set of responsibilities that need to be exercised by humans not just towards one another but also towards nonhuman beings – including planet Earth as our habitat.

Przepraszamy, ten wpis jest dostępny tylko w języku Amerykański Angielski.



Joanna Zylińska, Planetary Exhalation, 2021.

A planetary methodology with a difference

Today humans in different geopolitical locations are less and less able to see themselves as inhabitants, or, if they belong to a more privileged class, as citizens, of the world. Instead, we are increasingly being interpellated to recognise ourselves as planetary beings, de-anchored and

dislodged, a realisation which involves having to counter the fact that, as Dipesh Chakravorty puts it, the planet ‘remains profoundly indifferent ¹ to our existence. My work engages with planetary *concerns*, yet it is not itself produced from a planetary *perspective*, with the producer’s eye lodged high in the sky. Instead, it emerges *in media res*: amidst the matter of media, the piles of technorubbish, the threat of organic and nonorganic viruses. Driven by an awareness that ‘the planet’ does not indeed care, I posit that this lack of care need not – or, indeed, should not – be mutual. It is in the mobilization of our responsibility for the planet and the modes of its inhabitation that my theoretical and artistic work is enacted.

This article introduces my method for conducting artistic research which also entails an epistemic proposition, while being driven by an ethical injunction. This injunction is shaped by a complex set of responsibilities exerted not only by humans towards one another but also by nonhuman beings – including planet Earth as our habitation partner and life source. The article consists of two parts: the first one involves a ‘guided tour’ of my earlier projects through which my method of working will be outlined. Offering a remix of texts, images and concepts from my previous work, ² it reflects back on over two decades of what can retrospectively be described as a ‘planetary praxis that attempts to make a small difference’. The second part introduces a more recent work of mine called *Feminist with a Drone*, designed as a creative-critical attempt to perform planetarity on a micro-scale. My overall aim in this article is to demonstrate the way in which my work both responds to and forecasts a number of (sometimes literally) burning issues of the present moment. The hybrid method of my work, which brings together philosophy and artistic research, is intended to expand our epistemological horizon as outlined by academic convention and human cognitive practice, with a view to allowing us to *see, sense and say* (more) things via a variety of modes and media. But I am also always keen to keep a check on the hubris that sometimes features in theorists’ or artists’ pronouncements about our work and its purported scale and influence.

Given the complexity and scale of the environmental crisis manifesting itself in rising sea levels, air pollution, accelerated species extinction and a climate shift, it is understandable why ‘planetarity’ is playing an increasingly prominent role in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Positioned as a concept that can help us understand these changes, it has recently been used as a call to responsibility and action – in the 2020 special issue of the influential arts journal *e-flux*, ‘You and I Don’t Live on the Same Planet’ edited by Martin Guinand, Bruno Latour *et al.*; or as a framing device – in the books *Planetary Social Thought: The Anthropocene Challenge to the Social Sciences* by Nigel Clark and Bronislaw Szerszynski, as well as the aforementioned *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* by Chakrabarty. ³ It is within the framework of the recently postulated epoch of the Anthropocene, an epoch in which the human is said to have become a significant geological agent, that planetary thinking has most often been outlined. Chakrabarty makes a strong plea for adopting the planet as a particularly relevant concept in the current geopolitical moment due to its ability to grasp ‘a dynamic ensemble of relationships – much as G. W. F. Hegel’s state or Karl Marx’s capital were – an ensemble that constitutes the Earth system’. ⁴

Many of the theorists engaging with issues of planetaryity today do so in dialogue with postcolonial writer Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; specifically, with the final chapter titled 'Planetaryity' in her short polemical book, *Death of a Discipline*, published in 2002. In her argument Spivak opposed the abstraction of globalisation, which she saw as 'the imposition of the same system of exchange everywhere',⁵ to the differentiated political space of planetaryity. 'The globe is on our computers. No one lives there. It allows us to think that we can aim to control it. The planet is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system; and yet we inhabit it, on loan',⁶ she wrote. The planetary perspective embraced by Spivak is, paradoxically yet importantly, always partial. Introducing the sense of the uncanny in the reader, it is also presented as a demand and a call to responsibility.

Exit Human

How is this responsibility to be experienced, enacted – or, perhaps, negated? Who is its addressee, its subject, and is this subject always human? These questions, which have for a long time guided my academic and artistic practice, call for an in-depth examination of the very constitution of the human as both a species and a historical subject. Adopting the geological probe of 'deep time', I propose we need to look at the emergence of the human in conjunction with the surrounding technologies, such as tools and other artefacts, but also communication in its various modes – be they everyday language, storytelling, ethics, art and media. We also need to explore the entanglement of human and nonhuman forms of intelligence, including the promises and threats offered by AI. This exploration needs to overcome the figure-ground distinction typically adopted in the humanities as a model for analysing the world to embrace the planetary model used by Earth science. Yet I also want to suggest that, if it is to exercise a meaningful sense of responsibility and not just an aesthetic sensibility, a planetary perspective in artistic research needs to be anchored in the socio-political concerns of the here and now: primarily, the ecological and economic crises, but also the gendering and racialisation of the apocalyptic narratives brought in as responses to those crises. As well as looking into the human and nonhuman past, we need to look into the future of the human – and of the human habitat. For this human future to *have* a future, its timeline needs to be considered and experienced in contiguity with the needs and demands of nonhumans, from animals through to mycelium, insects, plants and rocks. This 'entangled' mode of seeing the planet in terms of Earth systems creates the ground for enacting this responsibility: it calls for a responsible response, even if the conditions and principles of this response still need to be worked out.



Stills from Joanna Zylińska, *Exit Man*, 2017. The film and the open-access version of

the accompanying book can be accessed
[here](#)



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As manifested in the hybrid open-access project presented above – the short book, *The End of Man: A Feminist Counterapocalypse*, and the *Exit Man* film – my work embraces the notion of praxis, which is a combination of theoretical enquiry and artistic practice that is intended to make a critical intervention in the world. As part of this enquiry, I am interested in how art can face planetary concerns and articulate them via different media. The media I use include still and moving images, photography and post-photography, sound, speculative design and AI. In

disciplinary terms, I take a Digital Humanities approach that moves ‘beyond the text’ to embrace images, data, algorithms and visualizations as not only things to *study* but also things to *make knowledge with*. As part of my enquiry into human and machine cognition, intelligence and perception, images are particularly important to me. In the era of computational imaging it is not so much the visual content as singular artefacts that commands my attention. Rather, I am primarily grappling with Lev Manovich’s question that drives his Cultural Analytics project:

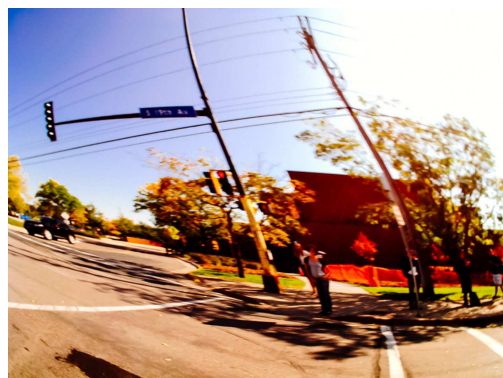
*How can you see one billion images?*⁷ But I also follow it up with another question: *Are the seer and the image-maker always only human?*

Nonhuman images

This altered volume and agency of images, especially digital images, today does indeed require new concepts and methods for studying them. The notion of ‘nonhuman photography’ I proposed several years ago in the book of the same title offered an analysis of this new ontological – and political – conjuncture.⁸ This notion encapsulates three interconnected conceptual planes: photographs that are not *of* the human (depopulated landscapes); photographs that are not *by* the human (Google Street View, but also fossils); photographs that are not *for* the human (QR codes). A project titled *Active Perceptual Systems* included in that book was an attempt on my part to deal with the question of planetary scale in image production and consumption.



Joanna Zylińska, from *Active Perceptual Systems*, 2014-2016.



Joanna Zylińska, from *Active Perceptual Systems*, 2014-2016.





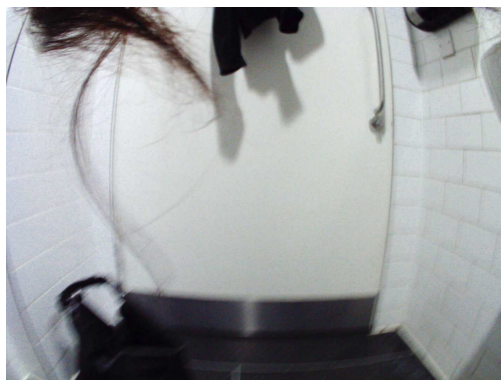
Joanna Zylińska, from *Active Perceptual Systems*, 2014-2016.



Joanna Zylińska, from *Active Perceptual Systems*, 2014-2016.



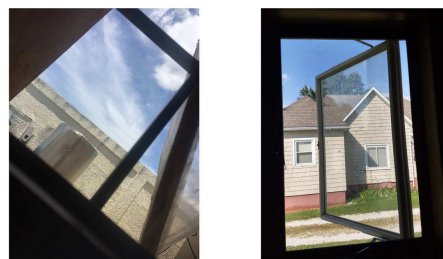
Joanna Zylińska, from *Active Perceptual Systems*, 2014-2016.



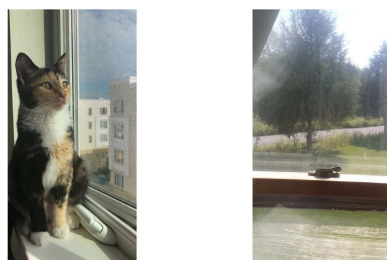
Joanna Zylińska, from *Active Perceptual Systems*, 2014-2016.

The images that make up the *Active Perceptual Systems* project were taken over a period of two years with an automated ‘intelligent’ wearable camera called the Autographer. Originally designed

as a mnemonic device for Alzheimer's patients, the Autographer was re-marketed as a media gadget tool for the 'always-on' generation. For two years I wore the camera in various everyday situations: on a city walk, in a holiday resort, in an art gallery, in a lecture theatre, at home. Inconspicuous due to its resemblance to a small necklace yet clearly visible, the camera randomly captured photographs at frequent intervals, which I then uploaded to my computer. My decision to wear the camera on a given day, switch it on, and then select and process the images was coupled with the decision of the camera algorithm regarding *what* to photograph and *when*. The machinic behaviour was influenced by the way I moved my body, enacting a form of immersive, corporeal perception that broke with the representationalist linearity of perspectival vision while also retaining human involvement in the multiple acts of image capture. The human element was also foregrounded in the subsequent editing activities: I was faced with over 18,000 images from which I chose several dozen. The selection process was akin to making careful incisions in the image flow, with a view to setting up narrative connections. In an age of constant surveillance – from omnipresent CCTV cameras, through to self-monitoring via the constant recording of our lives with mobile phones – *Active Perceptual Systems* was designed as a commentary on this constant fabrication of images: *of us*, but also *by us*. It also raised the question of whether, in the age of 'image deluge', the creative image-maker could be seen as first and foremost an editor: what philosopher Vilém Flusser has called an in-former who provides form, or structure, to the imagistic flow *after* the images have been taken. ⁹



Joanna Zylinska, excerpts from View from the Window, 2018. The complete project can be seen [here](#)



Joanna Zylinska, excerpts from View from the Window, 2018. The complete project can be seen

[here](#)

Flusser's point brings us to the problem of creativity as enacted by human and machine intelligence. Another project of mine – an online photobook presented as a video called *View from the Window* – was an attempt to investigate this problem. Included as part of the book, *AI Art: Machine Visions and Warped Dreams*,¹⁰ it discussed the relationship between AI, creativity and invention, while arguing that looking into the creativity of computers and other machines was a misguided venture, and that we should first of all explore what it actually *meant* for humans to be creative. As the problem of creativity is inherently bound with the socio-political conditions in which such creativity can be actualised,¹¹ we should also examine the problem of labour that AI poses for creative work. Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform, an online 'marketplace' connecting labour suppliers with providers worldwide, can serve as an apt case study for this examination. Amazon has informally been using the rather inelegant term, 'artificial artificial intelligence', to describe its platform. The 'labour' on Mechanical Turk consists of HITs, 'human intelligence tasks' involving simple mechanical actions performed on digital data, such as tagging photographs or filling in surveys, priced very cheaply. Basically, Mechanical Turk puts humans in the role of machines, as it would be too impractical and costly to program a computer which could perform such tasks.

Human labour, machine creativity

In an uncanny anticipation of the world-become-window situation of coronavirus capitalism, where we all constantly lived and worked on Zoom and MS Teams, in 2018 I commissioned 100 MTurkers to take one photo of a view from a window of the room they were in at the time. I had explained that this HIT was needed for a research/art project which studied human and machinic creativity. Post-processing was allowed, though not required. The HIT was priced at double the US living wage, which probably explains why all the tasks were snapped up and fulfilled almost immediately – although, given that the task was to take 1-2 minutes on average, it was hardly alleviating world poverty. Indeed, the very act of using Mechanical Turk for this project was not unproblematic, and could actually be said to be perpetuating unfair labour conditions worldwide by validating Amazon's platform. The exploration of these conditions also forms the fabric of my project. I do not know where the MTurkers that responded to my call came from – although it is possible to make some guesses from the images, using signage, architecture and vegetation as signposts. From a 2018 academic study we learn that 'Most of the [mTurk] workers are from the USA (75%), with India (16%) being second, followed by Canada (1.1%), Great Britain (0.7%), Philippines (0.35%), and Germany (0.27%)'.¹² MTurkers operate anonymously and are only identified through their assigned number, creating an illusion of a fluid mobile labour force that forms part of a digital cloud.

The idea behind my project was to re-materialise the cloudy vapour behind this narrative by creating a group portrait of MTurkers' locations. Neither conventional portraiture nor landscape photography, the collective image-base of *View from the Window* offers a non-comprehensive demographic snapshot of the global workforce, looking out. Simulating the work of machines in its quiet efficiency, Amazon's MTurk labour force ruptures the seamless narrative and visualisation of the machinic world. It does this by bringing the material traces of human bodies and their locations into the picture. The view from the window shows us that there is a window in the first place (or not). This window is not just a rectangular visualisation of the software interface patented by Microsoft and used by other operating systems, but also a metal or wooden frame holding a glass pane (but also, occasionally, curtains, shutters or a mosquito net) that brings in the outside world – while also keeping it at bay, precisely as 'the outside'.

The project offers a specific vantage point for perceiving the relationship between humans and technology at this particular moment in time – and, more importantly, a recognition *that there is a vantage point*, and that the 'view from nowhere' ¹³ promoted by most AI designers ends up putting a very specific (white, male, ahistorical) human in the picture. A broader goal of the work is also to interrogate whose interests are being represented – and who can afford to be creative, where, when and for how long. Now that, under Covid-19, we have all become MTurks in Microsoft's or Zoom's digital factories, this question couldn't indeed be timelier.

Feminist with a drone

In an attempt to identify technical and conceptual openings within the dominant structures of planetary visibility, I subsequently developed, as part of my art practice, a project titled *Feminist with a Drone*. Presented in the form of field notes, it mobilised drone technology currently used in amazing amateur drone videos from beautiful locations in the world, coupled with Go Pro Hero cameras. What I wanted to do was enact a less masterful, less heroic and less domineering viewpoint, one that does not flatten the world into a postcard or a diagram.

FEMINIST WITH A DRONE: FIELD NOTES

Date, time, and place of observation

12 December 2020 – 12 January 2021, south-west London, UK

Specific data, facts, and information on what happened on the site

On 12 December 2020, I purchased a Ryze Tello Drone. Designed by industry giant DJI, this mini drone, marketed as 'the most fun drone ever', is aimed at teaching kids and adults 'how awesome flying can be'. The exploration of this awesomeness was the key goal of my fieldwork.

My first outing with the Tello took place on 24 December 2020, in a small park in a residential area of south-west London. During flight times of up to 13 minutes, I captured a sequence of still and moving images from a height of between 2 and 10 meters. The experiment came to a halt when the drone flew away on descent. A follow-up search didn't yield any results, a situation compounded by unpropitious weather conditions and approaching dusk, with the drone then considered lost. The following day the drone was located in a different part of the park. The experiment in testing the drone's awesomeness was resumed the following week. Some images were taken during the first flight. On its second ascent the drone lost one of its propellers, with the propeller itself getting lost among the park's vegetation. A replacement propeller was installed, but this made the drone inoperative, with the device losing the capacity to fully lift off the ground. This concluded my attempt to fly the drone and take images with it.

Personal reflections on the observation

The Ryze Tello Drone had been chosen for this fieldwork on the basis of its size, design, and marketing literature, with a view to reconciling drone technology's military legacy with my critical (cyber)feminist sensibility. Unfortunately, I was unable to corroborate the producer's promise that 'Flying has never been so fun and easy!' Loss was a key characteristic of my experience with the Ryze Tello.

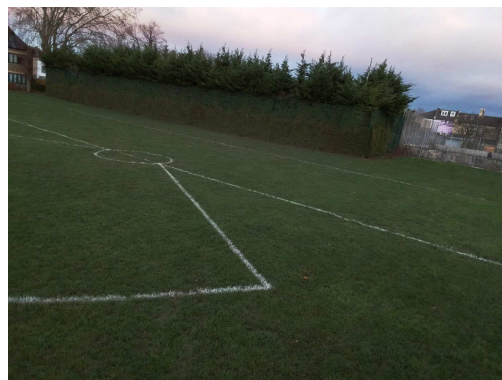
The hypothesis and questions about the observation

Could things have gone any worse? Was the fieldwork conducted as part of my project a failure? Crucially, should I have bought a better, more manly and more high-tech, drone? In the spirit of feminist bricolage, an approach which remains aware of power relations, while foregrounding 'the practices of shaping, crafting, and producing that academics usually hide (and often hide behind) in the production of beautiful and polished surfaces, unpunctured by doubts, hesitations and incompleteness', I decided to repurpose my losses. The limited sample of images obtained from the drone's camera and their relatively low quality, coupled with the loss of the drone's functionality, led to the development of a hypothesis about the possibility of constructing an alternative drone visuality, which I termed 'loser images'. This hypothesis will require further research.

As a feminist rejoinder to the 'amazing' drone views mentioned earlier, I offer 'loser images' as a figuration that channels some of the potential of the multi-perspectival, humachinic worldview without falling for its grandeur of scale. Figurations such as 'the cyborg,' 'modest witness,' or 'nomadic subject', used in the work of feminist thinkers of technology such as Donna Haraway or Rosi Braidotti, are thought devices aimed at 'shaping a different political imaginary or performing an alternative image of the future'.¹⁴ Yet rather than propose a straightforward return to a more

human or humane perspective in response to this master aerial vision, I aim to probe further the creative potential of decoupling sight from a bipedal human body and dispersing it across the environment. I am thus interested in mobilising the same image-making technology to enact a less masterful, less domineering and less heroic way of visioning and imaging. This alternative form of post-Anthropocene visibility does not flatten the world into a postcard while excising its inhabitants of different scales from the picture. Instead, it envisages a more porous *planetscape* – and a more entangled and messy ecology.

The minor intervention into the grand problem of planetarity I am presenting as my method in this article has an affinity with geographer Heather McLean's 'praise of chaotic research pathways'.¹⁵ McLean offers her chaotic methodology by way of 'a feminist response to planetary urbanisation'.¹⁶ Specifically, she is responding to the planetary approach to the study of cities offered by Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid. McLean recognises the value of her colleagues' critique of globalised yet static approaches to urbanism, approaches which uncritically praise creativity, innovation and sustainability without taking into account 'contradictory geo-economic forces that constitute cities and regions'.¹⁷ Yet she also points out that there is something both totalising and limiting about the planetary approach they offer in response, in that it 'privileges a lineage of particular white, male, and European Marxist and neo-Marxist political economists at the expense of feminist, queer, and anti-colonial contributions to this sub-field'.¹⁸ It also positions researchers as pre-constituted and monadic entities, not as living breathing beings emerging as part of their work, praxis or struggle. This attitude equally adopted by many cosmonaut-theorists of planetarity discussed earlier, who float above and around their object of study without getting their lungs and hands dirty.



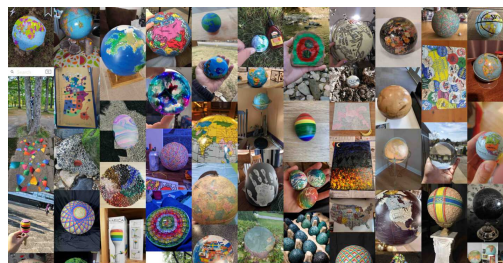
Joanna Zylińska, *Loser Images 1.0 (Feminist with a Drone)*, 2021.

Loser images

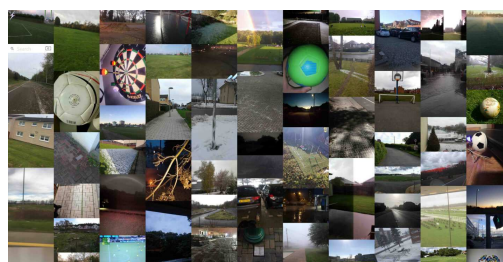
My 'loser images' go beyond the perfect planetary vision of the drone eye – but they also transcend the airy planetarity of much of contemporary theory, which seems to have left behind Spivak's commitment to partial views, inhabitation and an alterity that makes a difference. Conceptually, *Feminist with a Drone* engages humour, irony and partiality as feminist methods for conducting work in technoscience and technoculture. Those modes of affectively remodulating the

traditional framework of what count as knowledge and scholarship proper open up alternative ways of seeing and doing. McLean also works in this vein – for example, with her drag king performance at a cabaret called Fail Better, a Glasgow space featuring artists of colour, queer and working-class artists. Adopting the drag king persona of urban think-tank expert Toby Sharp, promoting ‘tools for urban change’ as part of the creative cities agenda, she engaged feminist critique not only in her scholarly research but also in her cabaret act. Creative urban communities are therefore not just treated by her as objects of study: they become research partners. McLean admits that ‘from a planetary standpoint’ promoted by theorists such as Brenner and Schmid, activities such as those taking place at the Fail Better cabaret could be positioned as, at best, ineffective. She also fears that ‘[t]hrough a lens pre-occupied with mapping flows of capital,’ local sites of activism can end up looking ‘as weak and useless in the face of steamroller-like neoliberal policies’. ¹⁹

I share McLean’s concerns. Yet, like her, I believe there is too much at stake to just give up – especially as the accusation of weakness is itself a gendered strategy aimed at re-normalising the ‘militant and heroic/victorious’²⁰ ways of acting, be it as knowledge producer, political actor or artist. Polish philosopher Ewa Majewska has gone so far as to propose what she has termed ‘the avant-garde of the weak’, a mode of working which ‘combines the feminist rejections of patriarchal visions of genius and creativity and emancipatory claims originating in the peripheries, with their demand for an expanded epistemology – one including marginalized and colonized territories in art history and practice’. ²¹ *Feminist with a Drone* was thus designed as a performance of *planetarity as a research problem*, but it also was already a form of *research designed as a performance*. My goal with this work was to perform a study of planetarity, and of the associated disciplines of art history, ethnography, geography, urban studies, architecture and design, with their colonial histories and epistemological exclusions, differently. Even though the method and the tools used (a toy drone, a beach ball) may seem naïve and childlike, their underlying ambition – to challenge our ongoing planetary foolishness as well as our partial vision – are very serious indeed.



Joanna Zylińska, *Loser Images 2.0 (Same Energy)*, 2021.



The 'loser images' figuration produced in the process follows in the footsteps of Hito Steyerl, whose kin notion of 'poor images' has become an important trope in contemporary critical studies of the image.²² Steyerl used the term to describe lossy digital images traversing the networked personal computers of our globe. Their poverty referred to their low-quality and low-resolution – as a result of their incessant replication on ever cheaper media – but it also pointed to the wider condition of cultural disjuncture, where the impoverishment of many image producers and imaged subjects went hand in hand with the enrichment of those in control of digital infrastructures. My 'loser images' are precisely such poor images of the world: serving as counterpoints to the #amazingdroneviews of planet Earth, they are a testament to the poor quality of the camera and the limited skills of its operator. There is something not quite right with them as both representations and captures. The worldview they present is out of sync: wobbly, smeary, somehow degraded. Yet these 'loser images' are not just mine: the concept is primarily meant to serve as a viewing, structuring and archiving device, allowing us to develop a countervisuality from what is already there. In her article, 'Online Weak and Poor Images: On Contemporary Visual Politics,' Tereza Stejskalová has made an appeal to 'make use of online images in a way that presents [a] challenge to the mass-image, profit-driven networked platform',²³ and to seek oppositional agency for images posted on social platforms. In this very spirit, I have mined, with the help of the deep learning similarity algorithm of the visual search engine Same Energy (which is like Google's search by image, but more look- and mood-based), millions of images from Reddit, Instagram and Pinterest with a view to developing visual affinities with my own 'failed images'.²⁴ The grids obtained transcend both the modernist elegance of Bernd and Hilla Becher's industrial typologies and the colourful seamlessness of the #amazingdroneposts Instagram flow, to inaugurate an open-ended noisy archive from which a different picture of the planet can emerge.

In the spirit of 'the avant-garde of the weak', the project offers 'a possibility to overcome [the] individualism of performance and spectatorship via a commonality of experiencing failure and weakness'²⁵ – or at least to stage this failure and weakness as a shared experience. Today's artist, as Stejskalová aptly observes, needs to understand 'that she is not anyone special nor is she doing anything special but is, in principle, like any other social network user who makes manifest the (crisis of) emotions, relations and labour which sustain life itself'.²⁶ Picking up a baton from Steyerl, I am thus speaking here *in defence of the poor image of the world*: low-resolution, widely accessible, pirated. I am speaking here for what we might term, with a nod to Gary Hall, an ethical piracy. In *Pirate Philosophy*, Hall revisits the Latin origins of the verb *pirao*, which meant to 'make an attempt, try, test ... endeavour, attack',²⁷ to refer to piratic practices in texts and images which go against the grain of traditional knowledge production, its classification and distribution. Loser images are pirate images because they 'tease [and] give trouble',²⁸ as per the word's Greek etymology. Loser images also drop out of the competitive system of accolades, prizes and totems. They drop out of individual authorship. Yet their marginal cultural status is not

by itself a guarantee of progressivism: as recent years have aptly demonstrated, the extreme right can meme very well indeed!

Loser images embrace their machinic heritage, but they also take on board the inevitable failures of human bodies *and* machinic infrastructures. As part of their weak feminist efficacy, they thus show up the dominant perception machine that we all inhabit as structurally and politically broken. Offering a fragile yet tender look, loser images differ from 'ruin porn,' that is the aestheticisation of loss, decay and poverty which is part of the dominant Anthropocene visuality. They restage planetarity as a call for help, enacting the collective 'exhaustion of humans, machines and the environment'.²⁹ Loser images are therefore unproductive, because they work against the logic of planetary extractivism (i.e., the depletion of natural and human resources, planetary management via technological improvement). Eschewing the hipster retro-visuality of purposefully failed images, they challenge the seemingly inevitable upgrade culture – of machines and humans – not just in an aesthetic gesture but also in an attempt to make a difference.

To speak in defence of the poor image of the world is to mobilise an ethical injunction to see the world better – and to make better things in it. It is an injunction to look around and askew, respond to the limitations of the image and know that the picture is always partial. My loser images also challenge the heroism of the drone eye and the GoPro Hero camera. Offering a fragile yet tender look, they differ from ruin porn, i.e., the aestheticisation of loss, decay and poverty. There is something not quite right with them, but they are not entirely wrong either. *A loser image: it is what it is.* But it tries to fail better, every time. This is a minimal form of responsibility that we as artists and art writers can perhaps aim to take. And it is here that my research method for performing planetarity on a microscale yields not just an epistemology but also an ethics – albeit a minimal one.

Coda: Minimal ethics for the whole planet

1. The universe is constantly unfolding but it also temporarily stabilises into entities.
2. None of the entities are pre-planned or necessary.
3. Humans are one class of such entities, which is as accidental and transitory as any other class.
4. The differentiation between process and entity is a heuristic, but it allows us to develop a discourse about the world and about ourselves in that world.
5. The world is an imaginary name we humans give to the multitude of unfoldings of matter.
6. Transitory stabilisations of matter do matter to us humans, but they do not all matter in the same way.
7. Ethics is a historically contingent human mode of becoming in the world – and of becoming different from the world.
8. Ethics is therefore stronger than ontology: it entails becoming-something in response to there being something else, even though this 'something else' is only a temporary stabilisation.

9. This response is not just discursive but also affective and corporeal.
10. Ethics is necessary because it is inevitable: we humans must respond to there being other processes and other entities in the world.
11. Our response is a way of taking responsibility for the multiplicity of the world, and for our relations to and with it.
12. Such responsibility can always be denied or withdrawn, but a response will have already taken place nonetheless.
13. Responsibility is not just a passive reaction to pre-existing reality: it involves actively making cuts to the ongoing unfolding of matter in order to stabilise it.
14. Material in-cisions undertaken by humans *can* be ethical de-cisions, even if the majority of such cuts into matter are nothing of the kind.
15. Even if ethics is inevitable, ethical events are rare.
16. Ethics requires an account of itself.
17. Ethics precedes politics but also makes a demand on the political as the historically specific order of sometimes collaborative and sometimes competitive relations between human and nonhuman entities.
18. As a practice of material and conceptual differentiation, ethics entails violence, but it should also work towards minimising violence.
19. There is therefore value in ethics, even if ethics itself needs no prior values.
20. Ethics is a critical mobilisation of the creative principle of life in order to facilitate a good life.
21. Ethics enables the production of better modes of becoming, whose goodness is worked out by humans in the political realm, in relation with, and with regard to, non-human entities and entanglements.

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1. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2021, 78. Chakrabarty postulates that 'the planet', which he equates with the Earth Systems, should become a key category of the humanities, replacing the human-centric 'globe', 'world' and 'earth'. ↵
2. Selected passages from the following published texts of mine have been interwoven into, and remediated in, this article: Joanna Zylinska, *The Perception Machine: Our Photographic Future Between the Eye and AI*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, forthcoming; Joanna Zylinska, *The End of Man: A Feminist Counterapocalypse*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018; Joanna Zylinska, *AI Art: Machine Visions and Warped Dreams*, London: Open Humanities Press, 2020; Joanna Zylinska, *Nonhuman Photography*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017; Joanna Zylinska, *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene*, Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2014. ↵
3. See Nigel Clark and Bronislaw Szerszynski, *Planetary Social Thought: The Anthropocene Challenge to the Social Sciences*, London: Polity, 2020; Martin Guinard, Bruno Latour, Ping Lin and e-flux journal editors, *e-flux journal*, issue #114, 'You and I Don't Live on the Same Planet', December 2020, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/114/>; *ibid.* ↵
4. Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, 78. ↵
5. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Planetary', in: *Death of a Discipline*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, 72. ↵
6. *Ibid.* ↵
7. Lev Manovich, 'Introduction: How to See One Billion Images', *Cultural Analytics*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020 ↵
8. See Zylinska, *Nonhuman Photography*. ↵
9. See Vilém Flusser, *Into the Universe of Technical Images*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, 45. ↵
10. See Zylinska, *AI Art*. ↵
11. For a poignant critique of a decontextualised notion of creativity that supposedly '(pre-)exists independently of us and our conceptual categories', see Jan Løhmann Stephensen, 'Artificial Creativity: Beyond the Human, Or Beyond Definition?', *Transformations*, issue 36 (2022), 20. Stephensen argues that 'we have lost track of: (i) the fact that we have invented creativity historically (rather than discovered it, as the argument often goes); and of (ii) how and not least why we have invented it the ways we have'. This leads him to propose that 'we need to consider how creativity as a set of practices, dispositions, available subject-positions and epistemic practices historically has been produced, and still is being (re)produced', 20. ↵
12. Djellel Difallah, Elena Filatova and Panos Ipeirotis, 'Demographics and Dynamics of Mechanical Turk Workers'. in: *Proceedings of WSDM 2018: The Eleventh ACM International Conference on Web Search and Data Mining*, Marina Del Rey, CA, USA, February 5–9

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13. See Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Autumn 1988), 575-599. ↵
 14. Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, 'Media Always and Everywhere: A Cosmic Approach', in: Ulrik Ekman et al. eds., *Ubiquitous Computing, Complexity and Culture*, New York: Routledge, 2016, 226-236, 225. ↵
 15. Heather McLean, 'In Praise of Chaotic Research Pathways: A Feminist Response to Planetary Urbanization', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 36 issue: 3 (2018), 547-555, 547. ↵
 16. Ibid., ↵
 17. Ibid., 548. ↵
 18. Ibid. ↵
 19. Ibid., 6. ↵
 20. Ewa Majewska, 'Feminist Art of Failure, Ewa Partum and the Avant-garde of the Weak', *Widok / View: Theories and Practices of Visual Culture*, 16 (2016), 1-28, 3, <http://pismowidok.org/index.php/one/article/view/370/918/>. ↵
 21. Ibid., 1. ↵
 22. Hito Steyerl, 'In Defense of the Poor Image', *e-flux*, #10, November 2009, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>. ↵
 23. Tereza Stejskalová, 'Online Weak and Poor Images: On Contemporary Feminist Visual Politics', in: Tomas Dvořák and Jussi Parikka eds., *Photography Off the Scale, Photography Off the Scale: Technologies and Theories of the Mass Image*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021, 97-110, 98. ↵
 24. Same Engine indexes 19 million images from Reddit, Instagram, and Pinterest. See <https://same.energy/> ↵
 25. Majewska, 'Feminist Art of Failure', 21. ↵
 26. Stejskalová, 'Online Weak and Poor Images', 101. ↵
 27. Gary Hall, *Pirate Philosophy: For a Digital Posthumanities*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016, 140. ↵
 28. Ibid. ↵
 29. Stejskalová, 'Online Weak and Poor Images', 107. ↵

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Przepraszamy, ten wpis jest dostępny tylko w języku Amerykański Angielski.

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