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Non|Human Play (Workshop)

Live dogs and cats are included in the workshop.

Non|Human Play is a practical inquiry into the notion of play and the emergent aesthetics, ethics and politics it activates. The workshop consists of exercises, which invite the human participants to play together with their nonhuman counterparts: animals, objects, materials, machines and other entities. Together, these encounters constitute a field of potential, where various types of unprecedented bodies, relations and constellations may emerge. As artists and as former children, we are familiar with the animation of inanimate objects, as well as with the attribution of imaginary, magical and anthropomorphic qualities to nonhuman beings. In this context, we will attempt to go beyond these tendencies. Here, playing is seen as a transindividual activity, which enables us to attune to, be affected by and reinvent our way of relating to others. It dissolves the established categorizations, territories and divisions between the playing bodies, inviting them to move away from preconceived subjectivities, hierarchies and power relations and enter a state of mutual inclusion, where the human cannot be told apart from the nonhuman. As a site of subtle exchanges and radical renegotiations, the workshop poses a number of questions relevant to themes of the colloquium: What kind of gestures, bodies, behaviors and forms of agency does play generate, and what kind of ethics or politics could be derived from them? How do we choreograph other beings and things, and how do they choreograph or compose us in return? Does the nonhuman secretly play with us just as much as we play with it? Can we play with an object without dominating or appropriating the situation, or be played with without objectifying ourselves? What emerges in and as us as we play, and how does it manifest? Do we become more human, nonhuman or inhuman in result?

Saara Hannula is a Helsinki-based performing artist, researcher and educator. She works both as an independent artist and in collaboration with various working groups, collectives and art organizations, such as the Reality Research Center, HIAP, Baltic Circle, Kiasma Theatre and SenseLab. She is currently conducting her doctoral research at Aalto ARTS with a focus on the potentiality of performative events and environments. During the past ten years, she has been involved in the creation of a number of experimental performance concepts to enable new forms of collaboration, participation and co-composition between human as well as nonhuman beings.