

The Animal Sound Society is an artist pseudonym, an identity for a fictive community with a logo, a website, and a uniform. It is a 10-year-long research that comes to life through performances and workshops; a practice focused on listening to animals.

‘ARISTOTLE ONCE SAID THAT LANGUAGE SEPARATES HUMANS FROM OTHER ANIMALS’



Embroidered logo, 10 cm

Looking through my portfolio, you will find that images, scripts and props are recycled, giving the impression that works overlap. Each performance is a separate event, yet, they are sometimes part of the same fictional universe.

‘SUPPOSE HE WAS RIGHT. THEN WHAT KIND OF SOUNDS MAKE US NON-HUMAN?’

- The Animal Sound Society

THE ANIMAL SOUND SOCIETY 2013-2023

The members of The Animal Sound Society change over time and include collaborations with dancers, singers, and circus artists (among others).



Textile banner, 200 x 150 cm.



The Animal Sound Society on a residency at Astrid Noack's Atelier, 2019

THE ANIMALS WERE NEVER ALONE I • 2019

my first work about The Animal Sound Archive

video documentation: <https://youtu.be/En-EDDYyvlq>

Performance, 45 min. Recordings from the archive are played on speakers, mixing with the sound of the public space. An amplified voice shouts out instructions and the audience participate in choreography and reading scripts.



'WALKING A LITTLE BIT FASTER...'

A public space performance that functions as a rupture in the everyday life, a synchronized action where the past and the present overlap.

'DISTANCE 5 METERS...'

We have created a fictional story about an existing scientific archive. Can we make it come to life through movement?

'ALMOST HOLDING HANDS!!'



a scientist walking in a circle holding a scientist

in a circle holding a scientist

in a circle holding a scientist

in a circle holding a scientist

Performance, Blågård's Plads, Copenhagen 2019.

THE ANIMALS WERE NEVER ALONE I • 2019

my first work about The Animal Sound Archive

Props ca 50 pieces, various dimensions. Wooden sticks and cardboard with scripts on one side and printed photos of scientists on the other.

It is the fourteenth of June,
two thousand and nineteen,
sixteen fifty-four,
sunny, no clouds, no moon,
a very light wind from the west.

We are standing in the courtyard
of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts

There used to be birds here.
Do you remember the birds?

We!
We wear the masks of the scientists
who recorded the animals!
We have a high-quality sound system!
We play the recordings
of the Animal Sound Archive!
All animals are gone,
but some of them were recorded.
We downloaded their voices.

The animals were never alone.
There was always somebody there,
somebody silent,
carrying a recorder.

Do you remember the goats?
They screamed like humans sometimes.

Do you remember the Syrian woodpeckers?
Do you remember the domesticated guinea pigs?

The wolves came back to Denmark

year two thousand and twelve

They had started to colonise Europe.
Moving along belts of vegetation,
they chose to travel in silence,
undocumented.

The Danish government built a fence.

Now there is only a fence,
separating us, humans
along the border of Germany.

Do you remember the dogs?
Do you remember those small annoying dogs
that never stopped barking?
They stopped barking.

Do you remember the dogs
that howled like wolves?
Now there are only humans
howling to each other

There used to be rabbits.
Do you remember the rabbits?
Yes, the rabbits were silent,
but not all the time.
Do you remember what they sounded like?

The animals were never alone.
There was always somebody there,
somebody silent,
carrying a recorder.

We wear the masks of the scientists
who recorded the animals

Nobody has asked us to come,
but here we are:

Carl Heinz Frommolt
Günter Rainer
Tembrock Günter

etcetera etcetera

Do you remember the pigs?
In two thousand and nineteen,
There were thirteen million pigs in Denmark.
Do you remember them?

Do you remember the old-striped tit-babbler?
Do you remember the black-cheeked lovebird?
Do you remember the horses?

Do you remember the arctic foxes?
Do you remember the African penguins?
Do you remember the bald eagles?
Do you remember the cows?

Do you remember the cats?
It was your favorite animal.



Prop. 40 x 30 cm

THE ANIMALS WERE NEVER ALONE II • 2022

my second work about The Animal Sound Archive

essay-website: www.tierstimmenarchiv.dk

Performance, 45 min. This work is based on an essay written as a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure and designed as an interactive website (154 pages). It revolves around a meeting with the scientist Karl Heinz Frommolt; the curator of the existing Animal Sound Archive, and its online database; www.tierstimmenarchiv.de. During the performance I project it on the wall, asking the audience on how to proceed.

The Animals Were Never Alone II > a Choose Your Own Adventure Essay > by Maria Lepistö and the [Animal Sound Society](#)

6:43:41 PM

19 years ago, 1999

June 26

on a Russian island called Insel Mednyi.

It is 18:40 in the evening,

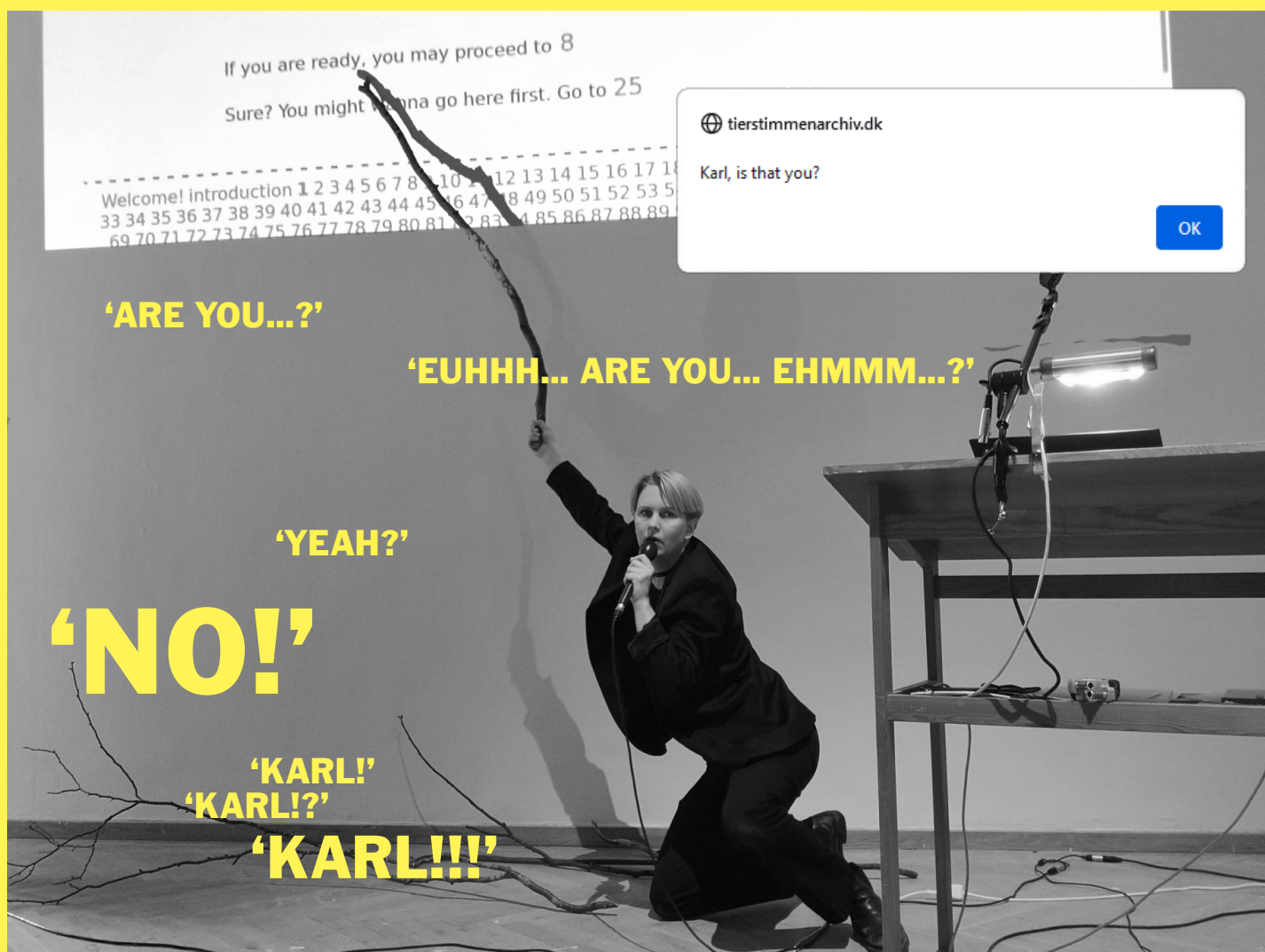
cloudy, weak winds.

A Northern Fur Seal and a man called Karl...

If you want to try to get in touch with Karl, go to [15](#)

19 years ago? That doesn't seem right. Go to [30](#)

Welcome! introduction 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109



Performance, Charlottenborg Kunsthal, Copenhagen 2022. Quotes from amplified voice.

Screenshot from my website, p 96 (projected on a wall)

THE ANIMALS WERE NEVER ALONE II • 2022

my second work about The Animal Sound Archive

My lecture is interrupted by pop-up alerts and recordings of animals. I use a loop pedal to record the voices of the audience; gradually building up a cacophonous chaos.

'DID YOU HEAR THAT?'

'THAT WAS SNOW CRYSTAL!'

We archive because we want to remember. Having a shared history gives us an identity; a sense of belonging together in this world. The Animal Sound Archive is made by humans, yet our own voices are strikingly absent in the recordings. It is producing a history of human silence. It speaks of a past where we did not exist.

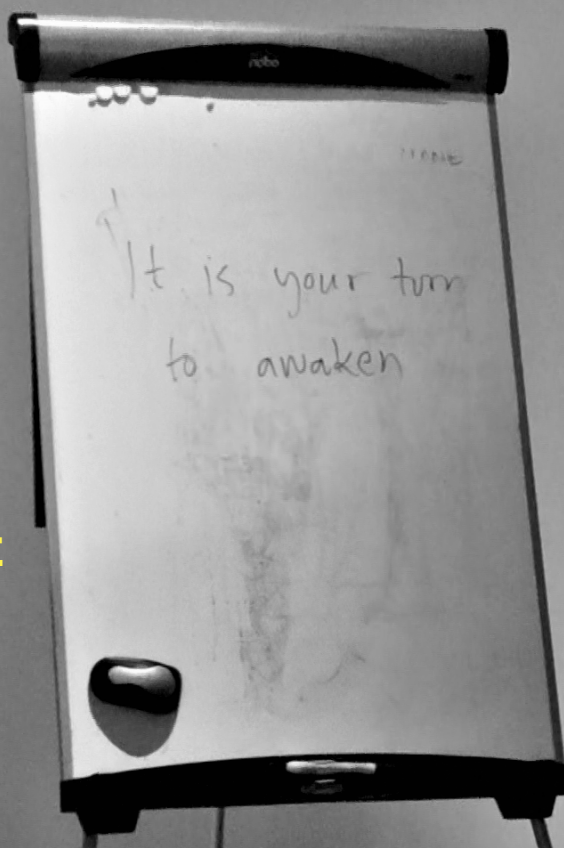


'AND THAT WAS WOLF OF SHADOWS 1986!'

I have found an online community of Therians; girls who identify as wolves and howl in YouTube videos. Taking singing lessons, I have learned how to howl myself and at one point, I transform into a wolf.

'YOU WANT TO BE ONE OF THEM!'

'YOU WANT TO BE ONE OF US!'



THEY ALWAYS WANT SOMETHING • 2019

audio track used in performance: <https://on.soundcloud.com/Bs7pd>

Performance, 30 min, with aRzu Saglam. A playback of recorded speech by a dominatrix waiter and a needy guest, set in a room decorated as a restaurant. The waiter (played by Maria) is silent and reproduces scripted gestures of care; smiling, moving objects and putting herself on display in poses of attentive waiting. A chef (aRzu) is in charge of an 'open-kitchen-sound-studio', creating live sounds with ASMR-like qualities that imitates the texture of food.

'THIS IS A RESTAURANT

**A VERY POPULAR
RESTAURANT**

**EVERYBODY WANTS TO
GET IN AT THE SAME
TIME - BUT THATS NOT
POSSIBLE!**

**YOU HAVE TO STAND IN
A QUEUE AND WAIT!!'**



I believe that as a performer, I'm embodying a silent agreement between the artwork and its audience. We want something from each other.

I want to give what is not asked for and withhold what is desired. I draw from my own experience of working in service, a paid labour of being present, at hands, yet always in the background, speaking yet avoiding actual conversation and interaction.



**'I HAVE A STAIN OF
BÉARNAISE SAUSE ON
MY SHIRT AND YOU
LOOK AT ME LIKE I'M
A STEAK**

BUT IM NOT A STEAK'

'IM A WAITRESS'

**'AND YOU ARE IN MY
STATION...'**

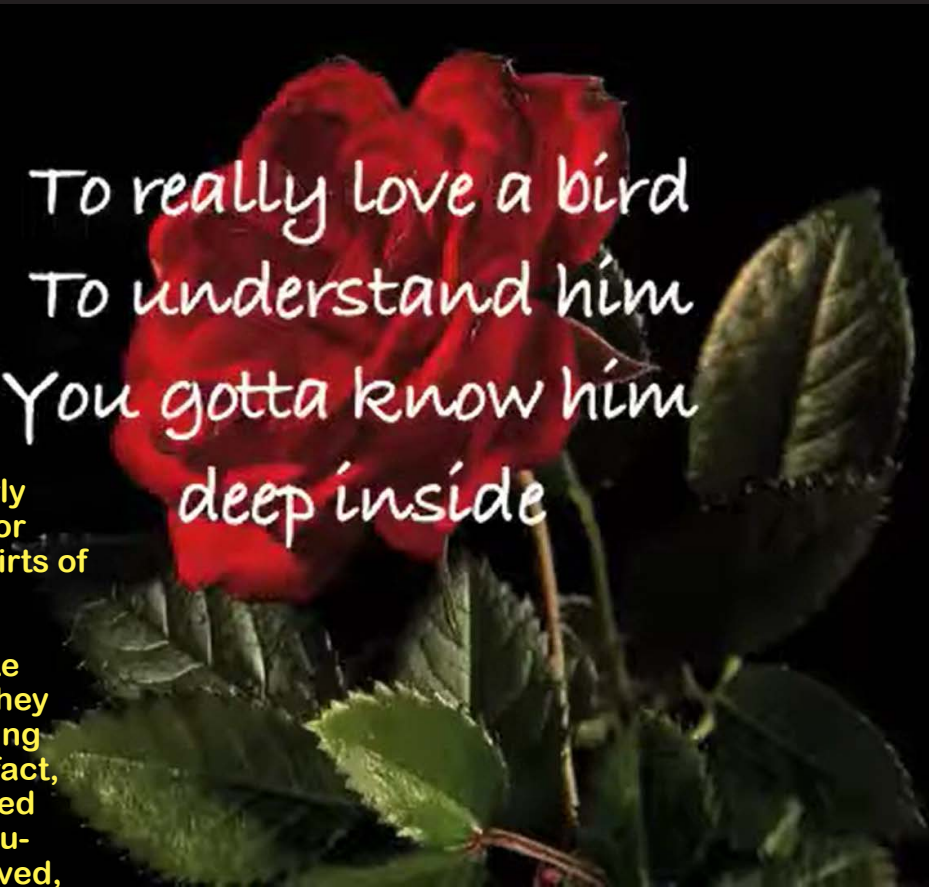


BOB MARLEY IS THE NAME OF A BIRD • 2017

my first work about The Surinamese Singing Bird Community Ringmasters

video documentation: <https://youtu.be/bkc-dDJqq7M>

Performance, 15 min. A montage of pop songs, field recordings, vocal interpretations of bird songs, Karaoke and a monologue based on conversations with bird owners of The Surinamese Singing Bird Community Ringmasters, Amsterdam.



Ringmasters hold yearly singing competitions for their birds in the outskirts of Amsterdam.

The birds don't sing like they do in Suriname. They have been trained to sing an ideal bird song - in fact, their songs are recorded and edited; badly articulated sounds are removed, refining the syntax and improving the clarity of the message.

Can bird songs be intellectual property? And if so, who do they belong to?

**'THAT WAS A GOOD SONG
I WANNA BE CLOSE TO YOU
I WANNA MAKE BABIES WITH YOU
AND I NEVER GET TIRED OF LISTENING TO YOU'**



Screenshot of Karaoke video: our remake of 'Have You Ever Loved a Woman'

Performance at Centrum voor Beeldende Kunst, Amsterdam 2017.

FRANK SINATRA IS ALSO THE NAME OF A BIRD • 2018

my second work about The Surinamese Singing Bird Community Ringmasters

video documentation: <https://youtu.be/Avl4EcSXJjw>

Performance, 25 min. A monologue with a video projection of men watching singing bird competitions in an intimate and dark staging with a fake grass carpet. A pocket torch and printed photos are used as props.



**'..AND HE WILL RAISE
HIS VOICE AND WE
WILL LISTEN
BECAUSE IT IS A
VERY STRONG VOICE'**



**A VOICE THAT IN-
VENTS, FORMULATES
AND ARTICULATES
WELL CRAFTED
STATEMENTS**

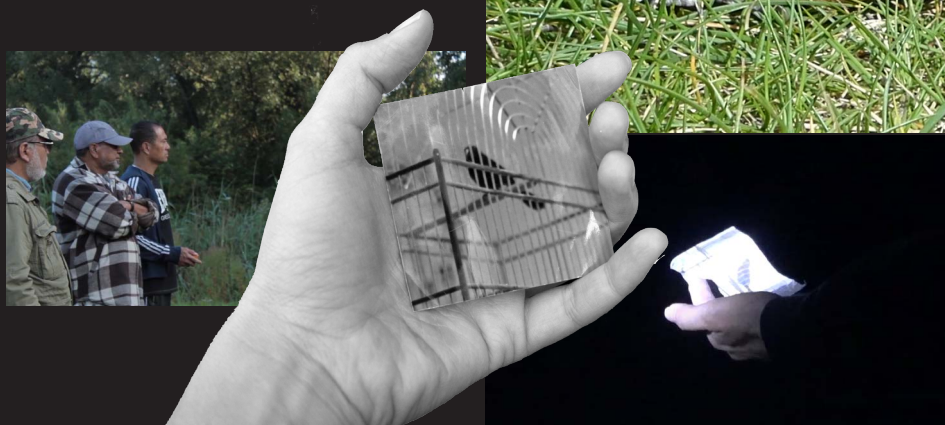
**ON THE
SPOT!'**

**'TIT
TIT, TIT
PIJE PIJE FJUTI FU
FU FU
FIJE FIJE FJUTI
FU TU FU
FIJE FIJE FJUTI
FU TU TU
FJUTI FJUTI, TIJE TIJE
FUWE TU TIJE TIJE
FUTI
FU, TU.
TU TU TUE!**

**TU TIWU WHIU
KUTI U TUE TUE TU
PIJE PIJE
FU TI FU TU TU FU TI
FU
TU TU
PIJE PIJE, FIJE FIJE
FJUTI FJUTI FJUTI
FJUTI FU
TIT
TIT, TIT'.**

The birds refuse to be translated, and so do the men. It was a tactic used by people of Suriname against colonizers. Now we are strangers. Can we resist the urge to translate?

The birds sing their songs to mark their territory and we are told the competitions are about dominance, but it's also about patience and listening.



(my second work about The Surinamese Singing Bird Community Ringmasters, Amsterdam)

video documentation: <https://youtu.be/ao2khFQZIK8>

Performance, 20 min. The Animal Choir is a choir of people who, at some point in their life, learned to imitate an animal. The choir arrives as a pop-up event, carrying speakers and microphones.

'IMITATING IS A WAY OF UNDERSTANDING ANOTHER BEING'

-Miyuki Inoue

We imitate because we are curious about otherness. It is a form of understanding that comes from within our own bodies. The Animal Choir is a public display of empathy.

We make a bold pop-up statement - yet we hide behind a curtain, that prevents the performers from directly facing the audience. We want to give them an experience of voyeurism; we want to be heard - but not exposed.



Performance, Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam 2016



'THE ANIMALS ARE THE ORIGINAL COMPOSERS. WE ARE A COVER BAND'

- The Animal Choir



ABOUT THREE POEPLLE AND THE SOUNDS THEY MAKE • 2014

video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QVvvgEq-l4>

Video, 10 min. A video portrait of three of the members of the Animal Choir; Ina, Julia, and Masaki.



**'NOT REALLY WALK-
ING AROUND - MORE
LIKE SITTING, KEEP-
ING ONE POSITION
AND CONCENTRATE...'**

- Masaki Komoto

Almost everybody knows somebody who has learned to imitate an animal. I search for a place, a social context where it makes sense.



small neat sounds



so maybe he saw...
maybe because he was cooking chicken...?

Screenshots from video work