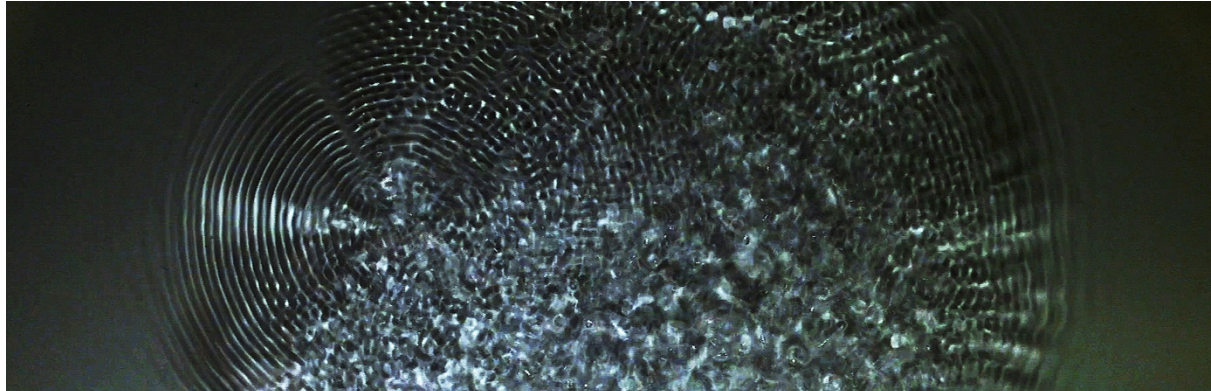


# Are You Ready for a Wet Live-In?

**Final seminar with Janna Holmstedt, Ph.D. Candidate in Fine Arts**

**Opponent: Brandon LaBelle (Berlin), Professor of New Media at Bergen Academy of Art and Design**



**Where:** Academy of Fine Arts, Umeå University, Arts Campus, Östra Strandgatan 28 B, in the Seminar room.

**When:** Tuesday April 4, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Preview material:** (an essay and film documentation of artworks), please send an e-mail to [janna.holmstedt@gmail.com](mailto:janna.holmstedt@gmail.com)

**RSVP:** If you are not student or staff at the Academy, please RSVP to [jeanette.nilsson@umu.se](mailto:jeanette.nilsson@umu.se)

*If I ask you to listen, what is it that I ask of you – that you will understand, or perhaps obey? Or is it some sort of readiness that is required, an openness, or should we call it a displacement? What does listening open? What occurs with a body in and through the act of listening in relation to material objects?*

In turning our attention to the sonic and the auditory, the world emerges in a different way. Our field of view spreads out before us. In contrast, sound envelops us; we swim, even drown in sound. When it comes to our sensory perceptions, sound travels faster than light, and sight isn't as trustworthy a guide as we might like to believe. Sight, however, has long held precedence, and it is high time to turn our attention to listening.

Holmstedt's artistic research project investigates listening through practices that are situated in the borderland between human and non-human, voice and gaze, contemporary art and performing art. At the heart of the inquiry is a collection of artworks that make use of voices, bodies, sound, narrative material, and existing or constructed environments. The final dissertation will consist of a series of performances and installations made between 2012-2017, together with an essay that documents the research process. Holmstedt describes her artworks as 'parasites' and 'set-ups'. Though she makes extensive use of voices in her work, the main focus is neither oral performances nor speech, but the presence of voice in relation to trans-sensory experiences, and how sound and voice structures audio-visual-spatial relations in concrete material situations.

One entry into this complex field is offered by the animal "voice", and attempts to teach animals to speak English. There is a specific case that Holmstedt returns to throughout her essay, where humanoid sounds were found to emanate from a most unlikely source – the blowhole of a dolphin. Between 1955-1969, a series of scientific experiments were conducted on dolphins and attempts were made to teach them speak English. Holmstedt investigates these experiments, made by Dr. John C. Lilly in USA, while trying to track down the sound recordings that were made at the 'Dolphin House' in 1965, when a woman named Margaret Howe lived with the dolphin Peter for 75 days in a flooded house – in an attempt at equal co-habitation between woman and dolphin.

Another point of entry is offered by the acousmatic voice, i.e. a voice split from its body, and a special kind of acousmatic being that composer and film theorist Michel Chion calls *acousmêtre*. Holmstedt discusses the acousmatic situation in relation to her own encounter with the disembodied voice of Steve Buscemi in a prison in Philadelphia. This listening experience triggered a fascination with the voices that walk alongside us, the accompanying voice. At first this appears to be quite a simple relationship, but it quickly gets rather complicated. There is something significant in this *alongsideness*, the way this sort of accompanying voice changes one's perceptions and even one's behavior. In both cases, that of the *acousmêtre* and the *animal voice*, the seemingly trivial act of attending to a recorded voice quickly opens a complex space of embodied entanglements with the potential to challenge much of what we take for granted.

Welcome!

Umeå Academy of Fine Arts [www.art.umu.se](http://www.art.umu.se)

Janna Holmstedt [www.jannaholmstedt.com](http://www.jannaholmstedt.com)