Credits
The History of Others

The History of Others is an art and research project by visual artist Terike Haapoja and writer Laura Gustafsson. The project aims at bringing to light alternative cultural histories of those whose stories are yet to be told.

The focus of the project is the exploration of the lives and experiences of non-human animals and the investigation of their cultural history. The focus of the research in The History of Others is to understand how the lifeworlds of individuals have changed over time and how historical events may have been interpreted or perceived by non-human beings.

The aim of the project is to create immersive experiences that enable the human mind to approach non-human realities. The research is conducted through interviews and collaborations with professionals from different fields of science, research and art. Thus, it is more closely linked to the fields of anthropology or ethnographic studies than it is to biology, with complications arising around how to exhibit or make accessible the knowledge and meanings of other cultures. The goal is to create new forms through which to experience knowledge – forms, that are more open to the subjective, non-linguistic experience of the non-human world.

The History of Others project materializes in exhibitions, publications, performances, interventions and seminars on the topic. The project is structured as a continuous process, leading towards a large-scale, encyclopaedic installation exhibition The Museum of the History of Others.

The Museum of the History of Cattle, first exhibited in Helsinki in 2013, is the first part of the ongoing project. The second part, a lecture performance The Trial which investigates the legal personhood of non-human animals, premiered at the international theatre festival Baltic Circle in Helsinki 2014. The upcoming third part of the project will be The Museum of the History of Non-Humanity, which focuses on dehumanisation and its effects on both humans and animals.

Laura Gustafsson is a Finnish author and playwright. In her work Gustafsson often focuses on themes of equality, transgression, animals and gender. Her writings are strongly political yet equally invested in form and language. Gustafsson’s drama pieces could be described as somewhat Brechtian.

Gustafsson graduated with an MA from the Theatre Academy in Finland. She has written a number of plays and a six-episode radio play for Finnish Broadcasting Company.

Gustafsson’s first novel Huorasatu (2011, “Whorestory”) is her genre-bending version of the Bible and the Quran. This debut was a nominee in many well-thought-of literary competitions in Finland. The more minimalist Anomalia (“Anomaly”, 2013) deals with the questions of violence and empathy, as well as language and its limitations. Gustafsson is currently writing her third novel about cloning another human species, and working with the History of Others project.

Terike Haapoja is a Finnish visual artist. With a specific focus on encounters with nature, death and other species, Haapoja’s work investigates the existential and political boundaries of our world. The notion of a world that is deeply rooted in the physicality and co-existence of beings and their multiple lifeworlds is at the core of Haapoja’s politically and ethically driven practice. Her recent projects include: Closed Circuit – Open Duration (2008/2013), last seen at the Venice Biennale, which focused on questions of mortality, co-existence and the relationship between humans and nature while adopting scientific technologies; The Party of Others project (2011–ongoing), which looks at the status of other species and other groups excluded from the law by appropriating the form of a political party; and The History of Others (2012–ongoing) with author Laura Gustafsson. Haapoja’s work has been exhibited widely in solo and group shows internationally, Haapoja contributes regularly to Finnish and international art publications.

Haapoja represented Finland at the Venice Biennale in 2013 with a solo show in the Nordic Pavilion. Her work has been awarded the Dukaatti prize (2008), Säde prize (2009) and Finland’s Festival’s artist of the year -honorary mention in 2007. Haapoja was a candidate for the Ars Fennica prize in 2011.

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