



Dementia as a material for co-creative art making: Towards feminist posthumanist caring

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ABSTRACT

This article generates new understandings of dementia through feminist posthumanist and performative engagements with co-creative artmaking practices during a six-month study in a residential care home in Norway. Dementia emerges within multisensorial entanglements of more-than-human materials in three different artmaking sessions, which first materialized in the form of collective photographs and vignettes and culminated in a final exhibition, *Gleaming Moments*, in the care home. Drawing on these photographs, vignettes, and the author's engagement as a research artist in the sessions, this analysis examined how dementia was enacted as a spark of inspiration, felt warm seat pads, and a friendly more-than-human touch, that is, a touch of human and nonhuman art materials. These findings suggest new ontologies of dementia within multisensorial artmaking practices, in which dementia functions as a material for co-creative artmaking rather than a disease. These findings disrupt dominant biomedical ontologies of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, as well as humanist person-centered practices in dementia care, which have concretized an individual, rather than relational, focus on dementia. In contrast, this study explores dementia as a phenomenon within the entanglements of human and nonhuman intra-active agencies. By highlighting the significance of these agencies (i.e., sponge holder-painting, wool-felting, choir-singing, chick-making) for different worlds-making with dementia, this study provides an entry point for imagining feminist posthumanist caring. Thus, dementia becomes a matter in life that is not to be managed and defeated to achieve successful aging, but to be interrogated and embraced.

Introduction

In Euro-American biomedicalized aging societies, dementia appears as a global threat to be managed and prevented (Latimer, 2018a; WHO, 2023). Following an ideology of “successful aging”, there is an increasing trend for dementia, which is associated with the most dreaded aspects of age-related conditions, to be viewed as something to be avoided, if not defeated, through individual “choice” (Bülow and Holm, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2020). According to its biomedical definition, dementia is “the generic term for several brain disorders that lead to cognitive decline and other functional impairments” (Strand, 2019), and Alzheimer's disease (AD) is its most common form. Although age is the strongest known risk factor for developing dementia, dementia is not an inevitable consequence of aging (AA, 2023; AS, 2021; WHO, 2023). The emphasis on cognition as a central sign of dementia originates in the establishment of AD as a separate disease category from senile dementia, which had been deemed an organic consequence of aging (Beard, 2017;

Cohen, 2006; Leibing, 2006). Dementia linked with aging (in the past, “senility”) thus emerged as a “problem,” in part because of a created separation between aging and disease (Beard, 2004; Holstein, 1997). Defining dementia as an irreversible somatic brain disease, such as AD, reinforced a binary hierarchical dualism between mind and body that differentiated between “normal” and “abnormal” aging and rendered “natural” aging processes problematic (Beard, 2004, p. 419).

This definition frames dementia as a biomedical disease accompanied by progressive neurodegeneration of brain cells, leading to memory loss (Innes, 2009). Although this biomedical ontology of AD and other dementias has been disputed, and a definitive diagnosis can only be made postmortem through brain autopsy (Beard, 2017; Lock, 2013), the biomedical definitions continue to dominate Western discourses surrounding dementia and dementia care (Diaz-Ponce and Cahill, 2013; Dupuis et al., 2016; Innes, 2009; Kitwood, 1997; Mitchell et al., 2020). Even legal systems support the biomedical understanding of people with dementia as terminally ill “non-persons” (Behuniak, 2010a, p. 233).

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Hence, these definitions of dementia appear to be objective, universal, and central to the current knowledge regarding dementia (Lukić, 2019; Leibing, 2006; Moser, 2008). By locating dementia solely within the brain cells, biomedical practices reinforce false distinctions between mind and matter, health and pathology, and humans and nonhumans (Lukić, 2019; Lukić and Lotherington, 2019). Therefore, a dementia diagnosis acts as a dehumanizing label for people (Beard, 2017; Mitchell et al., 2020), the majority being women. This diagnosis produces stigma (Bond, 1992; Latimer, 2018a), which, for people with dementia, renders suicide a matter of rational choice (Lukić and Lotherington, 2019; Mitchell et al., 2020).

Unlike biomedical understandings of dementia, the “personhood movement” within dementia care (Leibing, 2006, p. 242) paves the way for creative arts and therapeutic practices to strongly challenge definitions focused on deficits (Innes, 2009; Leibing and Cohen, 2006; Swinnen, 2014). Social psychologist Tom Kitwood, along with the *Bradford Dementia Group* that he founded in 1992 (Jenkins, 2013; Leibing, 2006, p. 246), advanced a person-centered care “paradigm” and demonstrated how, by involving caring for a person rather than a disease, dementia care had the potential to fundamentally challenge Western, logo-centric culture (Kitwood, 1997). This paradigm also enabled the voices of people living with dementia to be heard, which contributed to a positive transformation of dementia care and the growth of dementia-friendly communities (Bartlett and O'Connor, 2006; Swinnen, 2014). Additionally, personhood-inspired therapeutic and participatory art research practices explored how emotions and feelings towards other human and nonhuman matters (such as objects, poetry, dance, music, singing, drawing, performance, identity, structures, spaces, cultures, and environments) could expand our understanding of personhood within dementia as an inherently embodied, relational, and collective human experience (Basting, 2009; de Medeiros and Swinnen, 2018; Dupuis et al., 2016; Innes and Hatfield, 2001; Kontos, 2004; Kontos and Naglie, 2007; Lee and Adams, 2011; Swinnen, 2014; Zeiler, 2013). Although the concepts of person-centered care and personhood in dementia are continuing to develop (see, for instance, Vrerink et al., 2022), Bellass et al. (2019) pointed out that the focus of arts-based, person-centered qualitative and quantitative research remains primarily individualized. Jonas-Simpson et al. (2022) agree with Bellass et al. (2019, p. 2802) that a “person-centered paradigm, while enacting a welcome shift in emphasis from the biomedical features of dementia to the person living with the condition, has arguably concretized an individual, rather than relational focus”. Placing the person in the center of dementia care, rather than a disease located in the brain makes it possible to see how these care approaches are intertwined (Leibing, 2006); they both operate “from within” the humanist vitalist knowledge tradition (Higgs and Gilleard, 2016; Jenkins, 2017, p. 1486, emphasis in the original). Therefore, some critical posthumanist approaches to dementia have suggested moving beyond humanist person-centered paradigms in dementia research and care (Jenkins, 2013; Jenkins, 2017; Quinn and Blandon, 2020). However, feminist posthumanist approaches to dementia care remain scarce, even though more recently critical feminist trans* and crip studies have contested the social normalization processes of person-centeredness (Foth and Leibing, 2022; Haeusermann, 2019; King, 2021; Sandberg, 2018; Silverman and Baril, 2021). Moving towards relational care has been suggested (Gallagher and Beard, 2020; Hatton, 2021; Morhardt and Spira, 2013; Nolan et al., 2004), especially “arts-based relational caring” (Jonas-Simpson et al., 2022, p. 61) through engagement with “co-creative” art practices (Jonas-Simpson et al., 2022; Zeilig et al., 2018, p. 135; Zeilig et al., 2019).

Drawing on the latter trend, this article advances feminist posthumanist caring through co-creative engagement with multisensorial art

practices to suggest different definitions of dementia. More specifically, the article employs posthumanist performative feminist frameworks. Barad's (2007) “agential realism” interacts with Mol's (2002, p. 32) “praxiography” to explore how dementia might become “enacted” beyond individual loss through the entangled intra-actions of human and nonhuman agencies in the art sessions. I co-created a series of art sessions in a residential care home in Norway where residents living with dementia, health care staff, research assistants, and my close colleagues were invited to co-creatively experiment with more-than-human art materials. More-than-human art materials signify entangled intra-actions of human and nonhuman agencies, which I will come back to in more detail in the next section. The sessions culminated with a final exhibition, *Gleaming moments: Co-creative arts sessions* (Norwegian: *Gylne øyeblik: Samskapende kreative samlinger*), which highlighted illuminating entangled human and nonhuman intra-actions in the sessions. In this article, I specifically recount the most fruitful sessions, which were the drawing, felting, and chick-making sessions, because they suggest different understandings of dementia, people living with dementia, and dementia care. In the drawing session, more-than-human materials enlightened black paperboards with white colors in the dark wintertime. In the felting session, colorful wool bundles became felted seat pads at Christmas time. In the chick-making session, all intra-actions co-created small figures for Easter decorations.

Photographs from and vignettes about these sessions and my co-creative engagement as a research artist in this study helped analyze and discern different dementia enactments from each session. The discussion section briefly compares the enactments and their effects, prompting different implications for dominant humanist biomedical and person-centered care approaches in dementia studies. Subsequently, I suggest a posthumanist notion of feminist caring, building on Puig de la Bellacasa's (2017, p. 83) thinking about and with “more than human” modes of care (I write “more-than-human” with hyphens for clarity's sake). Her thinking is promising for imagining creative aging with dementia beyond an ideology of successful aging. Finally, the article indicates the strengths and limitations of the study and opens a path for further feminist posthumanist dementia inquiries.

Theoretical and methodological frameworks

This study is situated in a transdisciplinary lab conducting feminist research on innovative understandings of aging and dementia (Artful Dementia Research Lab, 2023). Researchers and artists from the Artful Dementia Research Lab (ADLab) explore dementia beyond human loss through feminist materialist engagements with art practices (Lotherington, 2019; Lotherington, 2023; Lotherington and Obstfelder, 2023; Lukić, 2019; Lukić and Lotherington, 2019; Lukić and Mittner, 2023; Mittner, Bockwoldt, and Lotherington, 2021; Mittner, 2022). We are particularly inspired by the work of feminist theorist Karen Barad. For Barad (2007, p. 32), “...posthumanism marks a refusal to take the distinction between ‘human’ and ‘nonhuman’ for granted and to found analysis on this presumably fixed and inherent set of categories” (as quoted also in Åsberg et al., 2011, p. 225). “Post,” as it is used here, does not signal an end; instead, it challenges human-centered humanistic traditions in knowledge generation practices (Åsberg et al., 2011).

This article likewise stresses that we have never fulfilled the modernist “human” ideal of a self-sufficient individual “person” that possesses a sense of “self as a continuing subject of its own experiences” (Shildrick, 1996, p. 1). Rather, we have always been entangled with other humans (differentiated by disability, age, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) and nonhumans (such as animals, machines, and the environment). This understanding inherently transforms the meaning of “human.”

According to [Braidotti \(2013, p. 13\)](#), the human ideal was "...predicated on eighteenth and nineteenth-century renditions of classical Antiquity and Italian Renaissance ideals" and has been sustained through modernism and neoliberalism (as also quoted in [Goodley et al., 2018](#)). This human ideal is implicitly inscribed as a masculine, cognitive, able-bodied, white, heterosexual individual "endowed with language" ([Braidotti, 2013, p. 143](#); [Goodley et al., 2018](#)). The formation of written language as an abstract anthropocentric system of self-reflexive human-centered thought has reinforced human exceptionalism and colonialism over earthly others from Descartes onwards ([Abram, 1996](#)) and has intensified the self-sufficient human individual subject as the only ideal capable of thinking and reasoning ([Latimer, 2013](#)).

Besides differentiating, this ideal puts people with disabilities in a position where they desire to become "proper" human individuals (for instance, in human rights discourses) and, at the same time, in a position of rejecting adherence to this normative ideal (in real-life posthuman crippling conditions; [Goodley et al., 2018](#)). Within dementia discourse, humanist person-centered approaches act as a "double-edged sword" for dementia care as they reproduce hierarchical inequities between "people with dementia" and those deemed healthy ([Jenkins, 2017, p. 1846](#); [Mittner et al., 2021](#)). Experimental frameworks (apparatuses) that critically "work" on dementia as a phenomenon entangled with its frameworks (such as [Åsberg and Lum, 2010](#); [Cleeve, 2020](#); [DeFalco, 2020](#); [Jenkins et al., 2021a](#); [Mehrabi, 2016](#); [Quinn and Blandon, 2020](#)) might help conceptualize different understandings of dementia and relationships with people living with dementia (with or without a dementia diagnosis). Specifically, a move towards posthumanist, new materialist, and ecofeminist writings that underscore perceptual relations with more-than-human worlds in the center of thinking ([Abram, 2014](#); [Mortimer-Sandilands, 2008](#); [Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017](#)) might engender different understandings of care for all.

Agential realism interfering with praxiography

This study builds on [Barad's \(2007, p. 88\)](#) establishment of a diffractive methodology, agential realism, which uses the physics phenomenon of diffraction as a "productive model" for making differences in the world and carefully attending to the entangled effects that are made by those differences rather than the dominant phenomenon of reflection. Agential realism radically reconceptualizes humanist understandings of agency and acknowledges the "becoming" of nonhuman agencies without human influences. For [Barad \(2007\)](#), agency cannot be aligned with subjectivity or intentionality because it is not a property that humans or nonhumans have, but an enactment that unfolds through their intra-actions. [Barad \(2007\)](#) propounds that individuals do not pre-exist:

Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not pre-exist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating (p. ix)... [H]uman bodies, like all other bodies, are not entities with inherent boundaries and properties but phenomena that acquire specific boundaries and properties through the open-ended dynamics of intra-activity (p. 172).

Being entangled is to lack a self-contained individual existence. Therefore, Barad uses the term "intra-relating" or "intra-action," rather than "interaction." Through intra-actions, "humans" and other bodies acquire individual boundaries and properties through different means. [Barad \(2007\)](#) identifies gender, race, class, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and sexuality as some of these properties. Inspired by [Mol's \(2002, p. 32\)](#) praxiographically induced story about how a disease is "being done" differently in medical practices, I add dementia to Barad's

list of properties. [Mol \(2002, p. 31\)](#) explains that a praxiographer details the "practicalities of *doing* disease". Referring to Barad, [Mol \(2013, p. 380\)](#) asserts that new disease ontologies are brought into life as "objects" of study through intra-actions: "'Action' is always interaction. And it is only in interactions, or intra-actions if you prefer ([Barad, 2007](#)), that objects relationally afford each other their (always local, often fluid) 'essence.'" According to this, different practices delineate different situated ontological realities of dementia. There is no singular reality or "ontology" of dementia waiting to be depicted through representational knowledge-making practices; there are "multiple" realities or "multiple ontologies" ([Mol, 2002, p. 6](#); [Mol, 2013](#)). To signify how a disease is being done in ontologically different ways through practices, [Mol \(2002, p. 32\)](#) suggests the term "enact." Unlike "performance," a term which connotes a preset actor, a stage, and a script, enact:

...suggests that activities take place—but leave the actors vague. It also suggests that in the act, and only then and there, something is — being enacted ([Mol, 2002, p. 33](#))... [The] phenomenon wasn't available for study before the apparatus. The object wasn't lying there and waiting patiently. The apparatus delineated it ([Mol, 2002, p. 156](#)).

In both agential realism and praxiography, a researcher/praxiographer is a decentered, affective, and active part of the framework used to study phenomena (such as dementia). (S)he is politically engaged ([Mol, 1999, 2002](#)) in making an "agential cut"— a situated mattering of phenomena entangled with time-space and the framework ([Barad, 2007, p. 340](#)). While a Cartesian cut entails pre-existing hierarchical dualisms between mind and matter, human and nonhuman, and health and pathology, an agential cut involves a researcher's accountability in making the actual cuts as a part of the phenomena of study. A researcher/praxiographer crafts academic knowledge entangled with research phenomena, or "worlds" different phenomena/realities, and their emerging effects ([Lukić and Mittner, 2023](#); [Barad, 2007](#); [Haraway, 1988](#); [Haraway, 2008, p. 19](#); [Hellstrand, 2015](#)). Diffraction, as known in physics, illustrates how new patterns form when water, sound, or light waves encounter an obstruction ([Barad, 2007](#)). An obstruction, as an artistic material entangled with many other more-than-human materials, creates new patterns and effects of diffraction, such as new worlds of living and relating to dementia ([Lukić and Mittner, 2023](#)). Thus, a researcher/praxiographer acts as an obstruction that can perceive the phenomena of inquiry differently without having full control over the research process. Both agential realism and praxiography challenge the metaphysics of individualism and representationalism, demonstrating the performativity of practices. Hence, I situated these frameworks within a "performative paradigm for post-qualitative inquiry" that recognizes the performativity of an experimental, imaginative, and wild qualitative research process ([Østern et al., 2021, p. 1](#); [Ulmer, 2017](#)).

Situating the study

The article draws on a doctoral study I conducted in a residential care home in Norway. The study began with a preliminary period of about three weeks in April and May 2017. A more in-depth period of study took place from November 2018 to September 2019. During the preliminary period, I worked almost full-time in the care home and spent most of my time in two closed wards with younger residents with early onset dementia. I followed daily routines, sensed places, tested materials, and tried to initiate co-creative experiments. I also joined ongoing group sessions in a main activity room (reading, bingo, physical exercise, devotion) and dancing concert events in a main hall, as well as short walks outdoors. This article builds primarily on the in-depth study

period during which I co-created 21 weekly art sessions with residents, care home staff, research assistants, and the ADLab members. The sessions took place once a week in the main activity room. About twice a week, complementary sessions were held in a more fluid and experimental form in the two closed wards. Three complementary sessions took place in two local museums.¹ These only indirectly affected the analysis of the three sessions in the activity room, which I describe in this article. The study culminated with the *Gleaming Moments* exhibition that was open for one month, from the end of August to the end of September 2019. The study aimed to generate different understandings of dementia. The research questions were as follows:

1. How is dementia enacted within the intra-actions of human and nonhuman agencies?
2. What entangled effects have dementia enactments for different understandings of dementia and people living with dementia?
3. How could these effects generate different understandings of dementia care?

To answer these questions, I developed a feminist postqualitative adaptation of “participant observation” as a multisensorial ethnographic method for studying the sessions (Gunnarsson and Bodén, 2021; Pink, 2009, p. 63). Rather than balancing the two different roles of artist and researcher and preserving a distance between researcher and research participants to produce reliable knowledge as in participant observation (Fangen, 2022 [2015]), the method utilized within this study could be described as “participatory engagement” (Gunnarsson and Bodén, 2021, p. 54) or, more precisely, co-creative engagement. Inspired by Haraway’s (2008) *When Species Meet*, Gunnarsson and Bodén (2021) suggest that participatory engagement presupposes a change in both researcher and research apparatuses to allow for the creation of new situated knowledge. For this to happen, affective material and even risky engagements and reactions (or intra-actions) must be acknowledged as part of the research phenomena. I prefer co-creative engagement to participatory engagement because the broader term “participatory” assumes hierarchical distinctions between participants and leaders of the sessions and connotes that there is some pre-existing activity to join (Zeilig et al., 2018, p. 141). Co-creative, meanwhile, signals that all criteria/materials are believed to change in a more inclusive and democratic creative process. As such, even evident passivity and uncomfortable emotions might alter the process and co-creatively contribute to artmaking (Lukić and Mittner, 2023; Zeilig et al., 2018).

In addition, reframing “observation” to “multisensorial attunement” to “emplacement,” that is, ways of knowing by using all senses rather than privileging the dominant sense of sight, was critical (Gunnarsson and Bodén, 2021; Pink, 2009, p. 63; Pink, 2012 [2011]). According to Pink (2009), researchers must achieve multisensorial attunement to a place while recognizing their emplacement. Researchers should acknowledge what senses are most present, most repressed, and why, and consider what senses are most valued in the current symbolic system (Howes and Classen, 1991; Pink, 2009). Emplacement presupposes that researchers have become a multisensorial constituent of a place and its ongoing practices and are actively producing new practices in the place, which temporarily renews the place’s substance and meaning. Co-creative engagement, thus, means that researchers have multisensorial engagement with the reworking of a place and the co-creation of a new one.

¹ The purpose of the sessions in the closed wards was to become familiar with the care home and the residents, and to test initial activities and materials that I could further explore in the main activity room. The museum sessions (a photocollage, a gallery visit, and wool-history session) were more limited in terms of co-creativity and data collection. Therefore, these sessions were complementary to the main sessions in the activity room, this doctoral study, and the writing of this article.

As Silverman (2010) suggests, I chose to conduct the study in the biomedicalized site of a residential care home since it is unlikely to contain other understandings of dementia. The study took place in a large Norwegian municipal care home consisting of five wards. Approximately 80% of the residents were assumed to live with some form of dementia and needed round-the-clock care (Strand, 2019). Thus, the people who live in care homes in Norway are deemed to be unable to independently sustain their daily activities (NHI.NO, 2021). Before starting the study, I had a preconceived notion of life in a residential care home. This notion was based on research into popular imaginations of dementia and popular films that showed people in a zombie-like state in wheelchairs with no spark of life, gathered in groups for easy observation and control (Behuniak, 2010b). From my first day at this home, however, I perceived an abundance of light, life, and even prosperous, privileged conditions. Architecturally complex, audacious spaces surrounded by trees and houses were accessibly located, and their spatial configurations made it easy to participate in social interactions. Warmhearted leaders were engaged in developing diverse models of humanist, person-centered care that were differently enacted in each of the wards and situations.

In a conversation with Gloria,² the principal leader of the care home, she informed me that a VIPS framework of person-centered care had been continuously improved over time. This framework, which Brooker (2004, p. 216) summarized after Kitwood’s death in 1998, consists of the four most important elements of person-centered care: “1) Valuing people with dementia and those who care for them (V); 2) Treating people as individuals (I); 3) Looking at the world from the perspective of the person with dementia (P); 4) A positive social environment in which the person living with dementia can experience relative wellbeing (S).” Besides this framework, the Marte Meo Method, an additional internationally recognized person-centered method, which Gloria is licensed for, had become a person-centered care practice. The Marte Meo Method consists of film footage of daily supportive approaches with dementia patients in challenging situations developed for care staff and caregivers, created to strengthen the resources and identities of persons with dementia (Lunde and Munch, 2015). In addition, other person-centered methods emerged from shorter yet significant projects, such as Kjerstin Haukland’s project *Stimuli* (2011–2014).³ The care home focused on person-centered care to safeguard the residents’ integrity, dignity, and opportunities for mastery (Leaders, 2022). The person-centered care implied the reduction of medication and medicalized interventions, as well as attentiveness to residents’ personal histories, identities, and freedom of choice (for instance, when arranging biomedicalized rooms into home-like places).

I suggested fine arts activities to the leaders of the home, and they welcomed my study; they were particularly open to the experiments and potential improvement of care, which helped me to build trust. The Norwegian Ethics Committee for Research approved the participation of the residents with the ability to give verbal and written informed consent. Residents’ legally responsible representatives (relatives or health care staff) gave proxy consent. The leaders of the care home provided consent forms that invited persons with dementia and their relatives to join the sessions (Information letter, 2017). However, residents’ relatives

² All names in the article are pseudonyms.

³ Kjerstin Haukland (2011–2014) led six diverse subprojects: *Bevegelse fra hjertet*, (Eng. *Movement from the heart*) exploring music, movement, and touch for improving person-centered care staff individual and group competencies; *Aska laska latus*, activating memory reminiscence, song games, and rules; *Music therapy*, employing video- and literary-documented methods of Audun Myskja for using music as medicine; *KlokkeKlovnene* (Eng. *The bell clock clowns*), forming a national team of clowns activating the health of progressed dementia; *Aktivitetstovna* (Eng. *The activity wagon*), creating toolkit materials for residents and relatives to be used in dementia wards, *Ungdomsprosjekt* (Eng. *The youth project*) involving youth in their leisure time (Greiner, 2013).

rarely attended the sessions. During the first days of my study, I felt that I had to adjust my academic frameworks to the emplaced knowledge and language of the care home: The word “dementia” was rarely spoken, and the phrase “persons with dementia” (as my study had identified them through the [information letter](#), 2017, p. 1) did not exist, as residents who may have been described by this phrase reacted strongly against it.⁴

The sessions started with a group of about 30 residents from different wards (including the two closed wards), but after some time, the group was reduced to 10 regular residents. Based on Gloria's insights, I concluded that the reduction occurred due to the entanglement of four different agencies: interests (residents' wish to join the sessions affectively enacted upon each invitation), routines (current care practices at the ward), adaptation (establishment of continuity and safe environment for experiments), and ease (creation of an easy flow among all present to reduce possible conflicts). The sessions lasted about one and a half hours. Although Gloria, who had qualifications in person-centered care and a strong affinity towards arts practices (painting in particular), could not physically be present in the sessions, she helped to advance this study with ongoing support, occasional follow-ups of co-creative processes, and appreciation of our efforts. Gloria's open leadership style, which was trusting and affectionate, helped to make this study flourish. A young activity coordinator with a social science and music background, Solveig (who greatly contributed to the sessions with her melodious voice and guitar playing), and I co-created weekly and monthly plans for the sessions, mainly focused on materials and provisional intra-actions. We did not know about the attendees in advance, and one session took place without me. We invited residents before the start of the session, and health care staff usually walked them to the activity room and, whenever possible, stayed during the sessions. Residents and/or health care staff could leave the room at any time. After the sessions, all could stay and discuss the co-creative processes.

Three members of the ADLab (a social scientist, Pernille, a music researcher, Karol, and a fine arts/gender researcher, myself) and four research assistants with diverse social science qualifications and interests in art-related practices co-created the sessions whenever possible. We used a digital camera and audio recording devices to document the sessions. We took photos when we felt affected by the entanglements. If I could not take a photo, I would usually ask another member of the ADLab to do so. Solveig, the health care staff, and the residents could also take photos. To register movements, sounds, and other multisensorial impulses beyond the visual, we video-recorded various co-creative processes, such as the felting session.

At the end of the sessions, we audio-recorded the open discussions, which primarily involved Solveig, the research assistants, and the ADLab members. The purpose of the discussions was to determine which materials could be used for experiments in the next sessions and to summarize what we had learned and what we could improve. Although the discussions were open to all the co-creators, residents and health care staff rarely stayed because lunch was scheduled in the wards after our sessions. Residents and health care staff frequently expressed their

⁴ For instance, on one of my first days in the care home, I met a younger woman named Sabina, who lived in the closed ward. She disinterestedly turned her head and went away from me when I welcomed her to my study that was inviting “persons with dementia” and their relatives to participate. I knew from previous research that perspectives of persons with dementia and their relatives were underprivileged ([Bartlett et al.](#), 2018; [Van Gorp and Vercausse](#), 2012), which was the main reason for inviting persons with dementia to the study. However, this turned out to be a research bias because people living in the care home had various health conditions, and dementia was often one of them. In addition, many disagreed with receiving the dementia label, and some of them even complained. Therefore, from the beginning, the previous activity coordinator Vanny taught me that “resident” was an ethical way to address people living in the care home and that the word “dementia” was rarely spoken. However, I felt obliged to speak this word in the place in a more generative sense without tying it to persons.

opinions during or right after the sessions. Occasionally, I audio-recorded my impressions from the sessions when traveling from the care home to my office; these notes were handwritten and were an entanglement of writings in English, Norwegian, and Serbian, and when I could not express what was happening linguistically, I drew (see some notes in the form of drawings displayed on the ADLabBlog, [Lukić, 2019b](#)). Solveig, Pernille, Karol, and the research assistants also wrote notes after the sessions and for the co-creation of the vignettes for the exhibition.

Experimenting with multisensoriality of more-than-human materials

[Pink \(2009, 2020, p. 4\)](#) regards multisensoriality as “a methodological process” that departs from the dominant Western five-sense sensorium (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell) to suggest that our senses “do not travel along separate channels,” but are intertwined in perception ([Cytowic, 2010](#), p. 46; as quoted also in [Pink, 2012](#)). Multisensoriality bypasses the dominance of sight, which has been privileged in Western philosophy, through representational and reflexive practices to promise situated inquiry ([Haraway, 1988](#); [Lukić, 2019](#)). Sight and hearing have been considered superior “intellectual” senses that primarily contribute to cognition because they enable more sensory information to be gathered at a distance from the object perceived; meanwhile, the senses of touch, taste, and smell require immediate physical contact with the perceived object to function ([Korsmeyer, 2004](#), p. 87). Therefore, the latter three senses are considered to function on an instinctual level ([Korsmeyer, 2004](#)), and bodily needs and felt expressions are linked to nonhuman animal species rather than to human language ([Abram, 1996](#)). While touch, as our first and most reliable sense, could be activated to verify vision, taste and smell are associated with mortality and pleasure ([Korsmeyer, 2004](#)). Their aesthetic aspect, therefore, made them suspect within Western fine art and philosophical humanist traditions ([Korsmeyer, 2004](#)). Hence, multisensoriality validates all senses and is open to new compounds that are engendered through situated material-discursive doings of research in different places.

In the feminist materialist engagement within dementia studies, multisensoriality emphasizes the sensorial materiality of the mind and the perceptual nature of cognition, which acknowledges the significance of short-term, kinesthetic memories as well as important bodily expressions, which are built-in places for the formation of thinking ([Mortimer-Sandilands, 2008](#)). In addition, multisensoriality also means creating a new focus on the transformative process amid agential cuts within entanglements that cause differences or diffractions. In his book *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996, p. 133), [Abram](#) describes this transformative process: The spell of the world around us speaks through us when we “cast a spell” (in [Barad's](#) terms, “make a cut”) upon our senses to catch its sensual magic by writing on a piece of paper. Thus, written language is already a part of our perceptual experience and not separated from it ([Abram, 1996](#); [Mortimer-Sandilands, 2008](#)). Nevertheless, following [Abram's \(1996\)](#) arguments, human-centered European philosophy and science generated Cartesian cuts and reinforced the privilege of reflexive thought enacted through written language over perception. These Cartesian cuts furthered human Euro-American individuation and intensified asymmetries between humans and those who were rendered as non- or less-than-humans, such as people designated as having dementia during the neoliberal age ([Latimer, 2016, 2018a](#)). To avoid the categorization of language as a source of merely human property and human power over animate nature/animals/earth as objects of inquiry, [Abram \(1996, p. 22–28\)](#), coined the phrase “more-than-human” world. Although this term, which [Abram \(2014, p. 301\)](#) later calls “the commonwealth of breath,” has been circulating in different variants within feminist new materialist and activist eco movement for 27 years, I am inclined to use [Puig de la Bellacasa's \(2017, p. 1\)](#) phrasing of “more than human worlds” because it speaks to the multiplicities of more-than-human care constituencies: “things, objects, other animals,

living beings, organisms, physical forces, spiritual entities, and humans.” This article speaks, thus, about more-than-human worlds generated through multisensorial intra-actions of human and nonhuman material agencies (i.e., sponge holder-painting, color-cleaning, wool-felting, water-dripping, choir-singing, chick-making, coffee-sensing, chocolate-testing, glue-smelling, nose-touching, etc.).

Arts interfering with sciences: Art materials, artmaking, and artworks

Art has always been multisensorial (Bacci and Melcher, 2011), yet research has also highlighted the multisensoriality of the sciences (Eisner and Powell, 2002; Pink, 2020). Agential realism enables the intertwinement of artistic and scientific practices in the worlding of reality by “reading them through” one another diffractively rather than against each other (Barad, 2007, p. 93). This is significant because the arts have not been regarded as a form of knowledge in the Western history of education and philosophy (Eisner, 2008; Lukić, 2019). Nevertheless, art practices hold the potential to disrupt the hegemonic humanist ideal of an able-bodied individual, which serves as a basis for healthcare systems and practices (Viscardis et al., 2019). Critical arts-based inquiries in particular, as Dupuis et al. (2016, p. 363) argue in support of Finley (2005), are “...more effective in addressing social justice...” because they open different ways to relate and experience life, challenging oppressive regimes and advancing transformational processes. In Latimer’s (2018b, p. 388) words, these transformative processes could be explained as making “shifts” in a relational extension with materials. As she exemplifies, these processes shift the previously divided worlds and hierarchical ways of ordering care among staff and residents. The shifts, therefore, create new possibilities for more reciprocal modes of care and building relationships through different worlds-making (Latimer, 2013, 2018b). Making these shifts presupposes uplifting the neglected and mundane materialities of care into the clinical and political healthcare domains, which are often disinterested in recognizing the existence and the significance of these materialities (Latimer, 2018b; Puig de la Bel-lacasa, 2017).

Through my education in the painting and media arts, the agential aesthetics of more-than-human materials became significant for imagining worlds beyond logo-centrism. I understand art materials as entanglements of the human and nonhuman matter in a constant process of becoming (Ingold, 2014). Bodies and diseases are also more-than-human materials for artmaking and inquiring about the world. Artmaking is critically important because “oneself” becomes unpredictably dissolved (Reynolds, 2009, p. 139) into an artwork, making it possible to comprehend the world beyond the person. This is particularly significant for stigmatized people who, in neoliberal models of “successful aging”, are becoming increasingly responsible for individually managing dementia (Mitchell et al., 2020). Artmaking practices, instead, may be able to explore dementia as a “strange traveling companion” (Van Gorp and Vercruyse, 2012, p. 1276). Additionally, artmaking is considered “relational aesthetics” (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 84) and creates different aesthetic relations and worlds with dementia beyond individual artistic intentions (Dupuis et al., 2016). Artworks, therefore, entail co-created more-than-human relations and hold significant implications for meaning and policymaking. I understand artworks as co-creative processes that engage materials that are in flux, which could be temporarily enacted as stable artworks in an exhibition (Ingold, 2014). While some of the artworks co-created during the sessions continued living on the care home walls as framed and seemingly stable pieces of art, others were moved to residents’ rooms, to our offices for documentation purposes, to our website, and finally, to this article, which further diffracts/differences the knowledge about dementia in a transnational forum.

I began the study with the fine artmaking practices and materials that were mostly familiar to me: brush-painting, pencil-drawing, paper-collaging, kinetic sand-sculpturing, and mixed-assemblage. Although I found that it was difficult for residents and healthcare staff to engage in

such practices, the care home’s leaders saw an opportunity for the practices to unveil something new and different. I realized later that some residents and their relatives experienced these practices, especially painting, as childish and found them to be uncomfortable or even frightening to work with. This might be because painting as a creative practice mostly occurs in kindergartens and primary schools in Norway.⁵ We usually began sessions with a short introduction of the study and a demonstration of what “...materials can do” (Ingold, 2014; Lamb, 2014, p. 67; Lukić and Mittner, 2023). We employed varieties of “human-made” (canvases, music, pottery, paper glue, packaging, mackerel cans, etc.) and raw “nonhuman-made” materials (wood circles, protein wool fibers, feathers, cotton, silk, water, beans, etc.). The care home often supplemented the sessions with additional materials. The smell and taste of coffee, chocolate, and fruits were part of the care home culture and thus also co-created the sessions by nurturing relationships (Mitchell et al., 2020). At times, a co-creator would request new materials during the sessions, which were provided. The sessions were flexible and open; if painting was difficult for some people, singing, dancing, or simply sitting and sensing were welcomed. However, the multisensorial aesthetics of more-than-human materials were vital for how the sessions would turn out. In some sessions, materials enriched the co-creative artmaking, but in others, they were not meaningful enough to forge engagement, and the sessions often ended sooner than expected. These less engaging sessions were, nonetheless, significant for learning the craft of caring as constant “tinkering” with how to connect through multisensoriality (Mol, 2006, p. 410).

Co-creating while being alongside dementia

Multisensoriality fits well with the concept of “co-creativity.” This concept was developed concerning artistic practices with people living with dementia and their partners (Zeilig et al., 2018, 2019). Unlike creativity, which connotes an artistic genius — an ancient figure of the individual man (Korsmeyer, 2004) — co-creativity “...focus[es] on the shared process, shared ownership, inclusivity, reciprocity, and relationality” (Zeilig et al., 2019, p. 17). Co-creativity indicates that, instead of having a static plan, researchers must learn to become receptive to multisensorial impulses to direct a mutual co-creation and sudden flows of multiple genres, from painting and writing into singing, collaging into playing music and dancing, and felting into choir performances. Even though this study did not inquire into the personal background of the residents and the context of their lives to personally tailor the activities (which is arguably an important aspect of assuring the quality of care, see, for example, Beard, 2012), the activities evolved through shared intra-actions with residents and more-than-human materials, conversing along the way and forming each other. This experimental attitude made us vulnerable to the process. Leadership might thus be described as being alongside (Zeilig et al., 2018).

Latimer (2013, p. 80) suggests that a state of being alongside: “...can involve cooperating with one another, even working together, but not with the same materials and not necessarily to the same ends.” This state, in contrast to the process of “becoming with” (Haraway, 2008, p. 17), opens up different ways of being in alonsideness; rather than coming together into a totalizing hybrid or becoming one another, the parties are intermittently and partially connected and divided. The

⁵ One dear friend living with Alzheimer’s once proclaimed, “I do not know anything about painting!” when confronted with painting materials. I sometimes felt concerns regarding the ethics of putting residents in a position where they were a stranger to materials while they were also pressured to fulfill an expectation and perform a skill that is artistically “good enough” in front of the group. In a collage session, for instance, a former schoolteacher refused to do a collage with his hands, because he said, “that is just for children!”; however, he co-creatively contributed to the collage intra-activity with his review of the journal images we used and lively school stories (ADLab research notes, 2018).



Fig. 1. The entanglements from the drawing (a), chick-making (b), felting sessions (c and d), and research notes-drawings (e), presented in the exhibition *Gleaming Moments*. © ADLab CC BY 4.0

preservation of division matters as much as the connection, and it is this attentiveness to divisions and detachments that makes relations different and possible. The state of being alongside recognizes the temporality and tensions of relations, whereas each relation enacts something specific that may (or may not) be mutually recognizable to different parties. This way of relating offers a way out of Euro-American neoliberalism and individualistic notions of personhood while also recognizing the complexity and plurality of partial connections and mutuality of relations (human to human, nonhuman to nonhuman, and human to nonhuman) without irreducibility of the parties (Latimer, 2013).

While being alongside, humans and nonhumans remain both partially connected and divided in difference rather than becoming a coherent human whole (or one person, as Zeiler (2013) suggests in defense of intracorporeal personhood in dementia care). While being alongside a resident who is designated as having dementia, even apparent passiveness, calmness, and disconnectedness may be a way of resting, retreating, and repelling the social world (Latimer, 2018a). Then, one should become capable of carefully sensing tensions, divergences, and irreducibilities of differences and allow “oneself” to become affected and changed (Latimer, 2013, 2016). This might build worlds of care (Latimer, 2013, 2018b). Consequently, care becomes a more reciprocal activity (or intra-activity) (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017), while the sessions became “possibility spaces” (Mittner and Gjørum, 2022, p. 7) for experimenting with materials and learning about dementia as a material.

Partial extension of the final exhibition *Gleaming Moments*

As a part of my study proposal, I suggested a final exhibition. Gloria decided on a stark pink color profile for the exhibition and ensured funding from the care home. Gloria, Solveig, the assistants, the ADLab members, and I opened the exhibition, titled *Gleaming Moments: Co-creative art sessions*. *Gleaming Moments* welcomed more than 80 guests, including the residents and their relatives, representatives from the municipality, political bodies in the care and healthcare sector, friends, and all those who were engaged in this study.

The exhibition presented a selected overview of the entanglements from the sessions in the form of 13 anonymized and enlarged photo prints accompanied by vignettes. The vignettes were presented as white texts printed in large fonts in Norwegian on thick pink paperboards, which articulated the entanglements. Gloria, Solveig, Pernille, and I selected the prints, and I organized the co-creation of the vignettes with Solveig, the assistants, and the ADLab members. Thus, the vignettes comprised “our” anonymized spoken and written words about the sessions, and the words of some of the residents were included amid the entanglements. To write these mostly descriptive vignettes, we drew on audio-visual documentation and the artworks, intra-acting with our

selective memories from the sessions. Rather than having an individual author and source, the vignettes unfolded through a lively performative process with documentation materials. At the exhibition, vignettes followed the artworks, which included tempera paintings, cotton bags, painted porcelain crockery, magazine collages, assemblages, seat pads, lanterns, and other works in progress. The Lukić, 2019c displays more photographs from the exhibition. Fig. 1. shows the photos from and the vignettes about drawing, chick-making, and felting sessions, which are further analyzed in this article.

In addition to the prints, *Gleaming Moments* presented an impression book for visitors and designed cards inviting people to continue the sessions with support from Red Cross volunteers (see a table in Fig. 1a). It was important to me that the materials enabled the continuation of the sessions, as one of the ethical concerns of artistic projects is the sudden disappearance of the co-created relations and worlds after the research ends.⁶ We wanted the exhibition to be performative and intra-active as the methodological frameworks of the ADLab. Therefore, the exhibition also included a white paperboard with stickers asking visitors to state what activities they imagined the care home could organize in the future (see the white paperboard in Fig. 1a). Additionally, on the opening evening, we co-created a porcelain painting session in the activity room (Fig. 2a). This session connected visitors with the life of the care home and the entangled materials, which included sounds, color smells, chitchatting, a warm pink ambience, balloons, the taste of refreshing drinks and cakes, and an atmosphere of renewal and transformation. This exciting atmosphere was energizing and refreshing, resonating with Gloria's statement at the opening of the exhibition, that we (as more-than-human communal creatures) are made to co-create. A transformed atmosphere is an invisible agent of performative relational care (Hatton, 2021). Fig. 2 partly expresses this atmosphere and shows how porcelain coffee cups and other artworks we co-created in the sessions affected caring places of the home.

As an intra-active performative installation, *Gleaming Moments* advanced the multisensorial knowledge about co-creative engagements with dementia beyond the institutional walls (Basting, 2020). The care home transformed into a contemporary exhibition place, with some of the artworks continuing their life even after the end of the exhibition (see Fig. 2c, showing part of a resident's room). The exhibition acted as an agential cut that engendered the entanglements from three sessions, which I further explore in this article to answer the three research

⁶ To ensure this continuation, I shared useful Internet resources with Solveig on inspirational and multisensorial practices I could find from all around the world. Due to ethical constraints, the residents could not be acknowledged individually as I did with the research assistants and volunteers at the opening of the exhibition. Therefore, after the exhibition was closed, I brought them the artworks we co-created accompanied by some photographs, all tracing the memory of our relations.



Fig. 2. Pink-colored table for porcelain intra-active workshop in the exhibition (a), a coffee cup co-created in the workshop during the opening (b), a cup, a bag, and a box co-created in the sessions (c). © ADLab CC BY 4.0 (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

questions. The article, therefore, forms a partial, extended, and diffractive format of the exhibition as it further analyzes the minute differences (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1997), which were unfolding through drawing, felting, and chick-making entanglements. To advance the analysis of these entanglements, in this article, I built on the vignettes from the exhibition and included them in performative conversation with other documentation materials, methodological frameworks, received feedback, and my memories from the sessions. Two of the vignettes (from Karol and Laura in the felting session) emerged through the writing of this article and were not present in the exhibition. While the vignettes in the exhibition had a more descriptive purpose of elucidating the co-creative processes (some of the visitors appreciated the vignettes because “it gives great meaning [linguistically] to what we achieved” (Anonymous visitors, 2019, p. 2), the vignettes in this article advanced the analytical and performative purpose of the exhibition and aimed to use methodological frameworks and concepts to forge different dementia enactments. The emphasis is thus on what the vignettes with photographs can “do” in the exhibition, in the care home, and in this partial extension (Jenkins et al., 2021b, p. 985).

In addition, this subsection shows how co-creative artmaking in the sessions and the performative craft-making of the text converge. This article was, thus, woven intra-actively (Lukić and Mittner, 2023). The performative process of writing limited my options to maneuver changes as I wrote intra-actively through my frameworks and concepts in the text (Østern et al., 2021). Therefore, as the performative use of analytical vignettes in the posthumanist and multi-species research that Jenkins et al. (2021b, p. 1) conducted, the vignettes in this article should not be evaluated from the “fixed criteria (e.g., validity, authenticity, and trustworthiness)” common to qualitative reflexive and representationalist practices. This would, as Jenkins et al. (2021b, p. 979) assert when referring to diffractive methodology (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1997), keep the vignettes (and other materials that we are a part of) to be reflected upon as fixed “pre-existing facts” distanced from us, while we are intimately formed through lively intra-actions with the vignettes. Each intra-action created more nuanced patterns of our relations while also engendering different dementia enactments in agential cuts. The purpose of the vignettes (and this article itself) is, therefore, to be accountable for the worlds with dementia that we are materializing, and the vignettes should be evaluated by these criteria (Jenkins et al., 2021b). Although the vignettes were written in the first person, they did not aim to represent the “inner” worlds of researchers; instead, their goal was to enliven performative stories with a disruptive and diffractive potential to provoke further discussions and revisions (Jenkins et al., 2021b, p. 1). When I was revising this article, the vignettes I wrote were also changing in view of conversations with the reviewers of this article. However, my intra-action with documentation materials (photos, video recordings, and notes-drawings) based on different feedback was the

primary reason that I could have a different perception and understanding of the purpose of this article, that is, the art of co-creating different materials together from near and far distances.

The following section will describe the drawing, felting, and chick-making sessions, which offer different answers to the research questions. Included are the different materials employed, time-space agential cuts enacting dementia differently, and learning effects made by dementia enactments. The analysis of these sessions suggests: 1) dementia as a material for co-creative artmaking; 2) persons with dementia as more-than-human entangled becoming; and 3) from humanist care to feminist posthumanist caring.

From dementia as a human personal loss to material for co-creativity: Enacting dementia as a spark of inspiration

The following section describes the second session that took place during a dark winter period in Norway. I was still new to the care home environment and felt stressed and unconfident. Pernille's presence, combined with the familiar drawing and painting materials I had prepared for this session, helped to calm the environment. We attached a few black drawing paperboards to the tables and spread out various white crayons, pencils, markers, brushes, sponge holders, blob tubes, rollers, stamps, erasers, natural and synthetic swamps, and tempera colors.

A staffer drew a house, and I sketched a road and wind blowing from the house. The house was almost destroyed, so a person had to run down the road. Seated opposite me, Torhild, who I had gotten to know during our first painting session, was painting with a sponge holder alongside Pernille. They started laughing. Suddenly, I saw Torhild's hand scrubbing a white spot on Pernille's nose. Her hand continued gently touching and patting Pernille's cheeks. Torhild enjoyed painting in companionship. She felt free to paint everywhere. This created a cheerful atmosphere in the room. Even the two chocolate cubes got some white dots (see two painted chocolate cubes with a brush on a saucer, on the left of Fig. 3). Unexpectedly, these cubes became part of the artwork (ADLab research notes, 16.08.2019).⁷

Pernille described this moment:

A woman sat next to me. She seemed tense and anxious and talked about something unpleasant. I did not understand her but sensed that

⁷ I translated all ADLab research notes from Norwegian to English.



Fig. 3. Enlightening darkness in cold winter times. © ADLab CC BY 4.0.

it was about a bad man and something about her father, so I asked her if her father was bad. However, she said he was not at all bad. He was a kind man. I tried different ways to get this conversation going but eventually realized that it was not possible. Instead, I suggested that we start painting. She did not want to, but I thought she might follow if I started. I drew a flower and suddenly a brush came in from the left and painted over the flower. I drew another flower, and the brush came again. We laughed. Afterward, I placed a sponge holder on my finger and made some white dots on the sheet. I asked her if she wanted to try. She refused at first, but, eventually, as I went back to my drawing, she placed the sponge holder on her finger. Suddenly, a finger with the painted sponge nearly touched my nose. I laughed and she laughed and, with teasing in her eye, she did it again. There we were, the two of us, laughing at each other and having a good time. The sadness and anxiety present from the moment she came in was gone. I realized that she enjoyed being naughty at times—and so we were at it (ADLab research notes, 19.08.2019).

The two vignettes accompanying the photo (Fig. 3) from the exhibition reveal how painting—a generally unfamiliar activity for Torhild⁸—formed an “intimate entanglement” between two women (Latimer and López Gómez, 2019, p. 247). In Barad’s (2007) terms, the entanglement of human and nonhuman agencies (Torhild’s hand moving with a painted sponge holder towards Pernille’s nose) immediately diffracts a delicate emotion through us. Since the conversation between Pernille and Torhild could not evolve in traditional logo-centric ways, it evolved through intra-activity with art materials. This intra-activity assigned agencies constitutively to a co-creative process (Zeilig et al., 2019) with brushes and sponge holders rather than coherent human individuals. We were all changed through this process that lit up the dark sheet of paperboard and two chocolate cubes. This intimate intergenerational entanglement strongly affected Pernille as she could precisely recall it nine months after it occurred as part of the vignette co-

creation for the exhibition. I perceived Torhild intimately, as a different woman, courageous and energizing, yet mischievous. Torhild felt free to improvise beyond the often-controlled spaces of the care home (Swinnen and de Medeiros, 2018; Zeilig et al., 2018). This co-created atmosphere affected me as I was sitting alongside Palma (whose thin-lipped smile resembled the smile of my dear aunt who was far away), and a robust resident, Jonas, across the table. Although we were sitting alongside each other, I felt it was difficult to accomplish the engagement as I had imagined, and so I frequently stood up and walked around. I felt responsible for ensuring that intra-actions were taking place.

We were all alongside each other and other more-than-human materials, experiencing unease and tension. We were preserving partial divisions, perhaps because of differing aims, and connecting in experiential trials. Other seemingly nonhuman materials, which were not necessarily made for artistic purposes (i.e., the red chairs, the ocher table, gingerbread cookies, white paper plates for color palettes, coffee mugs, and chocolate cubes) were co-creating the colorful life of the session. Long after the session, I noticed a photo that Pernille had taken (Fig. 3) with two chocolate cubes that had been painted white on our (left) side of the table. In a vignette for the exhibition, I acknowledged these cubes as a part of our artwork. Within the care home setting, painted chocolate cubes would be associated with a biomedical sign of dementia, while this agential cut, registered by the camera, enacts dementia as a spark of inspiration for co-creative artmaking.

Dementia could empower co-creativity in unpredictable ways as if all borders and hierarchies that “humans” inherit during their lifetime simply disappear. This could create an “emancipatory space” that allows things to be done differently than expected within person-centered models of care (Foth and Leibing, 2022; Sandberg, 2018, p. 29). As Quinn and Blandon (2020) beautifully suggest, dementia might also become a site for lifelong learning through the multisensoriality of art practices, sometimes with alarming effects. For example, some of the residents began tasting potentially harmful colors, or I was worriedly scrubbing correction fluid from Jonas’ wrinkles and fingernail ridges. This drive to test what materials can do and what we can do with them

⁸ I learned from Torhild’s relative that she had not painted previously.

(Lamb, 2014; Lukić and Mittner, 2023) maintained the flow of the session, and dementia enabled some of these efforts. Pernille similarly noted that, at first, Torhild refused to paint, and in the next moment, she was already holding a brush. Intra-active play with brushes, sponge holders, and dementia thus enabled multisensorial conversations beyond normative expectations. The cheery atmosphere gave me confidence that the materials were inspiring, and that the session was meaningful, even though the start was slow and heavy. Overall, I felt the session was challenging, uncomfortable, and even risky because the materials were unusual, and the process unfolded without a pre-defined purpose.

Figure 3 and the vignettes were exhibited and thus acknowledged the value of our co-creative process beyond the aesthetic significance of the resulting drawings. This session also illuminated a more-than-human sense of touch and movement that was overtly present (yet rendered invisible) within the care home. In addition, this performative entanglement of the photograph and the vignettes displayed a “failure-free” possibility place (Mittner and Gjørsum, 2022; Swinnen, 2014, p. 1389; Swinnen and de Medeiros, 2018; Zeilig et al., 2018) for experimentation. Likewise, in a witty manner, Fig. 3 overrides gendered notions of human-centrism as it plays with the taste (of the chocolate) as something to be reclaimed and reappropriated. Chocolate is an edible material that had an important function in our communality as we were getting very tired and hungry. However, the chocolate cubes had become inedible and acquired an unexpected meaning in these relations; they were a co-creative artistic achievement that joyfully crossed human normalization practices within and beyond the care home.

From human persons to more-than-human entangled becoming: Enacting dementia as felted warm seat pads

Felting was the fourth session in the series and took place before the Christmas holidays. I invited Karol to organize this activity. We brought expensive carded wool bundles and silk fibers, bowls for water, olive oil green soaps, a bulb felting spray, sheets of bubble wrap, and cotton gauzes for wool flattening and rolling. I felt excited about learning to felt with completely new materials. I often interrupted my felting intra-actions with a camera when perceiving very sensitive moments, such as the one shown below.

Felting was one of the most fruitful sessions. Wool is a comforting, warm, and essential material for the cold winters in Norway. Moreover, it smells good. I had no experience in felting, so I had to learn from others. Some residents immediately demonstrated embodied and emplaced mastery. We moved our hands in different directions rhythmically and repetitively over soapy plastic sheets covering wool fibers. Water dripped. What a mess! People who were afraid of water sat at another table and began to sing in chorus (The vignette following Fig. 4, as presented in the exhibition, ADLab research notes, 16.08.2019.).

Although there was a common sense of enjoyment in touching the wool, Karol did not have a clear plan about what we were going to make:

I had a vague idea of doing a tablecloth/tea-cloth, but this was far from a plan. Instead, I was curious about what the group would come up with and do with the wool. I have seen so many ways of handling it. But then it was Laura [a research assistant] who started to treat the wool in a way that is usual when people in the high North do seat pads. However, then you need much more wool and thicker wool. The sort of wool I'd brought was more for smaller fancy stuff, instead of the typical Lyngen Alp lamb wool seat pads. I have also found that people think of seat pads when I talk about felting. But I did not have them in mind at all (ADLab research notes, 07.05.2021.)

Karol's research note demonstrates that rather than a skillful individual person, artistic leadership was integral to the co-creative art-making process (Zeilig et al., 2018), which we could not fully control. To glue big bundles of soapy wool fibers, we needed more water, space on the table, work capacity, and time. Not everybody could stand up and protect themselves from dripping water. Therefore, Laura immediately helped a group of women to move to the coffee table on the right side. She initiated singing Norwegian folk songs while I helped serving coffee and dark chocolate. The singing intra-acted with felting in the group and sprayed water and smashing bulb sounds blended into fragile chorus voices following Laura's piercing singing:

Who can sail without the wind, who can row without an oar – who can leave his friend behind, without the tears falling... Your mind can fly so wide, it's like you forget the near things – it's like you never



Fig. 4. Sensing a fresh start with wonderful wool and silk fibers. © ADLab CC BY 4.0.

have peace for an hour – you always long for somewhere else... (ADLab research notes, 15.03.2019.).

Karol describes this moment:

We started moving our hands, bodies, and breath over the wool and water like sailing boats as we were longing for another place by engaging with the wool. The site was changing, we were changing, and hence we were moving to another place (in our imagination), which affected our relationship (ADLab research notes, 07.05.2021.)

In Barad's words, the performative intra-actions with wool created another space-time in which dementia as the disease of a person was not central. Rather, in the felting entanglements, dementia mattered as an agential more-than-human material, among many others, for the formation of the woolen artworks and "new possibilities of life" (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 19). More specifically, repetitive movements—a behavior often associated with dementia—participated in the making of the seat pads in an intertwinement with the past. This furthers an agential cut that occurred while being alongside Ada, a resident from the closed ward, whose shrunken hands were slowly sensing bubble wrap over a sky-blue interwoven wads of wool, interrupted on one side with sunny yellow light (see Fig. 5a).

Amid awkwardness, I felt that we shared this fascination with wool as a material while sensing it and longing for warmth. We were alongside each other during felting, partially and intermittently connected and divided in difference (Latimer, 2013). I was fascinated by how stark wool fibers triggered tactility in Ada; I had not noticed this in the closed ward, but here it made me stop my felting. Having a camera in my hands above the felting table as I filmed the movements of her (and others') hands created a partial and asymmetrical distance among us, as in that cut, we were not working with the same materials or towards the same ends (Fig. 5a). I was searching for dementia enactments, and the film clip made a cut uncovering how dementia became one of the materials for the co-creation of warm pads.

During another felting session in the local museum, I discovered that wool holds significance in Norwegian history and culture, and many Norwegians, women in particular, felted wool to produce warm gloves, seat pads, and garments for fishermen. Life in the cold winters in the North was much harder than it is today. I felt connected to this communal spirit, which I had not lived but was being brought into. The amalgamation of the past, present, and future made me feel secure and fortunate to live at this time in history.

Although we all began working with one wad of wool, we ended up helping each other and felting together because big wads required longer compression time to hook and weave fibers together into a single piece of fabric. I mostly learned to felt alongside Karol and Malin, who, as I recorded with fascination (see Fig. 5b), were mutually agitating soapy bubble wrap in rhythmic hand movements. As the video recording reminds me, it is difficult not to perceive their rhythmical compression of wool as an intra-active process of becoming in alonsideness with the wool under the bubble wrap into a seat pad. They were standing alongside wool; in an outward movement, they were open to differences

as anyone could leave the process at any moment, and there were no criteria for persistence. Nevertheless, wool felting was uniting their hand movements, remembering and strengthening the historicity of their embodied and emplaced relation with wool, which I lacked.

In particular, Malin demonstrated embodied mastery in felting. Her body moved dynamically back and forth as she pressed bubble wrap over an already almost flattened wool pad in circular hand movements. "I used to felt often at home" she explained. The "noise" from the singing table intra-acting with the soapy bubble wrap disturbed her felting, she complained, and she repeatedly washed and wiped her hands before coming back to felting (see Fig. 5c). In Kontos's (2004), terms, Malin's mastery in felting sustained her embodied pre-reflective selfhood. Nevertheless, I perceived her felting as an embodied and emplaced performativity in which soapy wool, alongside multisensorial collective felting, singing, and glimpses through my camera, played an equally important part in the co-creation of the seat pads, rather than or in addition to her selfhood. Some Indigenous knowledge (see, for instance, Henriksen et al., 2021) and personhood approaches within dementia studies (de Medeiros and Swinnen, 2018; Kitwood, 1997; Kontos and Naglie, 2007; Vrerink et al., 2022) suggest how intra-activity with nonhuman materials might enact unique personhoods. However, I perceived how intra-active agencies of wool, hands, bodies, and breaths during felting formed the felted seat pads. Scattered around the room, along with noisy bubble wrap, dripping water, and sighing while agitating wool fibers together and singing, we partially shared materials and a common aim to co-create woolen artworks, rather than focusing on becoming better humans (persons) in an inward movement (Latimer, 2013). Woolen seat pads contained traces of many bodies' speech and hand movements into the fibers to become compacted pieces of art. Entangled with wool, we became less of our "transactive" rationalist human selves, as Jenkins (2013, p. 125) suggests, and more of the materials used for the different kinds of worlds-making.

Tore, a resident that we later found out did not have a dementia diagnosis (see his hand felting on the right of Fig. 5b), became the most persistent felter. He did not demonstrate the same mastery as Malin, as he was sitting and moving only one hand over a stark red wool seat pad. Felting had a therapeutic effect, he explained, which made him the only co-creator who continued to felt until the end of the session. My notes discuss the way I felt inferior during this session, even though I was intermittently holding the camera to document the process, as it was astonishing to perceive how felting and singing (while sensing the smell of wool, soap, and humidity blended with coffee and dark chocolate) created a livable atmosphere for all (ADLab research notes, 03.12.2018). We all changed through our intra-actions with the wool, and the session created new relations between residents from different wards, as well as between healthcare staff and us, and the staff appreciated our artmaking. In the end, we proudly looked at the wool artwork lying on the table. Relational aesthetics enabled intra-actions with high-quality wool fibers. The effect of wool colors and texture invited our hand movements. Songs from the other table intra-acted with crackling felting sounds, making this session unique.



Fig. 5. Camera intra-acting with wool-felting. Ada sensing bubble wrap over the sunny-sky felted wool wads (a), Malin and Karol felting alongside Tore (b), Malin's distracted felting (c). © ADLab CC BY 4.0

From human-centered care to feminist posthumanist caring: Enacting dementia as friendly more-than-human touch

The chick-making session was the twelfth in the series, and unlike the other sessions, was integrated into the Easter spirit of the care home at that time. The power relationship changed at this point. The care home was absorbing and shaping the study; it provided a variety of materials, such as flaring goose feathers, papier-mâché balls, wooden circular pedestals, plastic eggs, small eyes and beaks for chickens, colorful iron plush sculpturing sticks, glue guns, and much more. I only brought tempera colors and brushes right before the beginning of the session. My notes reveal how I felt as a powerless “immigrant” as I was a stranger to Norwegian celebrations of Easter (ADLab research notes, 16.04.2019, p. 16). The full presence of the Norwegian-speaking health care staff familiar with each other and the residents formed a strong group and clear structure of the session with results that intensified this feeling. I came to the session tired and with low energy.

I sat next to Palma. I missed her—it had been a long time since I had last seen her at the sessions. She was smiling and excited. First, I noticed her squeezing a white papier-mâché ball with a brush without color on it. Then I handed a yellow-colored brush to her. When she was done with the painting, a strange rough sound followed by shaking her hands up and down stunned me. Malin, sitting alongside me, disrupted Palma's reaction. I instantly handed another ball to Palma, interpreting her excitement as a need to continue with handwork. Then we started working together. She held the other ball while I painted it yellow. Afterward, she continued to paint the ball by holding it with one hand and painting with the other. An energizing nurse alongside Jonas happily sensed the atmosphere and suggested using toothpicks to connect the balls. As I struggled to make a hole with a toothpick, a stinking glue gun appeared as a faster solution. I could hardly glue the balls together with a glue gun. Then I made the beaks for the chick with an orange plush stick (see the first chick from the left in Fig. 7). Palma formed a halo with the same stick

color and suggested placing it over the chick's head, which I gladly did. I cut two pieces of yellow paperboard to glue over the iron plush beaks, but the paperboard resisted fitting the beaks. Feeling irritated and alone in this process, I gave up trying. A group on the other side of the table presented clever and admirable chicks with eggs. My thinking and testing of materials were very slowly emerging alongside Palma. Palma preferred using dark red feathers for the chick's wings instead of paperboard or wool. I was surprised at how effectively we communicated without speaking. We communicated through a mutual process, which was appealing, refreshing, and thought-provoking. When we had completed the activity and a staffer came towards us to walk Palma to lunch, Palma was reluctant to leave the chair. We gave her our newborn chick-angel, which convinced her to leave (ADLab research notes, 16.08.2019).

Figure 6, which was presented alongside the vignette in the exhibition, shows an example of touch, which, in this multisensorial entanglement, became personal and lost the biomedical hierarchical instrumentality. The sensorial touch that triggered the stark brightness of yellow papier-mâché balls within this agential cut enacts dementia as a friendly, more-than-human touch. This is not to romanticize touch; our skin contains receptors for both pleasure and pain, and one can “... touch without being touched,” which means that touch does not presuppose reciprocity or “embodied *unmediated* objectivity” (emphasis in the original, Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 119–120, 98). Nevertheless, touch destroys representational practices that attend to an “objective vision” from nowhere (Haraway, 1988, p. 585; see also Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Touch is intra-corporal because it enlightens the shared materiality of human and nonhuman forms of existence (Barad, 2014).

Significantly, this touch is a multisensorial entanglement of human and nonhuman agencies that unfolds beyond linguistic articulations. A “fine-tuning” of sensorial receptiveness and the act of “...adapting to the rhythm of breathing and slower tempo...” enables physical contact and creativeness (Hendriks, 2017, p. 213). Our co-creative decisions materialized “postverbally” through mimicry, gesticulations, eye gestures, and smiles (Quinn and Blandon, 2020, p. 16). We worked alongside each



Fig. 6. Co-creating a chick figure with Palma. © ADLab CC BY 4.0.



Fig. 7. Charming more-than-human Easter community. © ADLab CC BY 4.0.

other, partially connected in enacted intermittent decisions while preserving the sense of difference in age, fragility, energy, mobility, and verbal expressiveness.

Each decision transformed us and gave the chick different shapes, colors, and meanings. When we were done with the chick, Malin stood up and leaned towards Palma's face, touching her cheeks with both hands while looking her straight in the eyes, saying: "I know you." Malin recognized her friend⁹ at that moment, forgetting all the annoying disruption from the beginning of the session (ADLab research notes, 16.04.2019, p. 10). This exemplifies how the multisensorial aesthetics of human and nonhuman entanglements generate "interpersonal" (Swinen, 2014, p. 1380), "social" (de Medeiros and Swinnen, 2018, p. 65) and "socio-material connectivity" (Mittner, 2022, p. 4) through artmaking practices, which may help people overcome deficiencies, deviations from "typical" interactions, and form friendships.

The plentifulness of materials in this session allowed for multiple intra-actions. My notes recall that materials maintained the session flow (ADLab research notes, 16.04.2019.). There was no time for coffee and chocolate. Materials also created pressure to master the activity and present recognizable results. This pressure, I felt, was shared with Pernille and Hedda, an older woman resident, as they sat alongside each other. Hedda observed Pernille's struggle to create a ball-formed tassel (see the last item in the row, Fig. 7) made of yarn to use as the chick's body or head. Pernille wanted to create a chick the way she used to do it at school and was surprised that she did not recall how to do it. Hedda curiously followed the process. Rather than sticking her hands into materials (Lamb, 2014; Lukić and Mittner, 2023) with Pernille, Hedda sat alongside almost passively; she reminded Pernille quietly: "You must not leave me!" (ADLab research notes, 16.04.2019, p. 6). This reiterative feeling of temporal uneasiness while "becoming at home" (Lovatt, 2018, p. 366) with Pernille and other materials was creating confusing, tense feelings in our artmaking.

As a trained artist, I also felt extremely small in terms of realizing my creative potential. "Nonhuman" materials that were unfamiliar to me,

such as the entanglements of papier-mâché balls, toothpicks, glue guns, and plush sticks, required more patience and time and perhaps confirmation from Palma to master. Although we worked with similar materials and aimed for the final chick figure, we remained partly different. Nevertheless, the more-than-human materials familiar to the Norwegian Eastern culture and the festive care home atmosphere closed the session with expressions of satisfaction. "That was fun!" Malin said (ADLab research notes, 16.04.2019, p. 1). Per Ole, a resident who regularly co-created the sessions, searched for his wallet in his back pocket. "It is Easter, everything is free," Solveig said, calming him by gently placing her hand on his arm (ADLab research notes, 16.04.2019, p. 7). When everyone left, I was tired, empty, and sad because I knew that the different worlds we co-created during the sessions would soon end. Coming to the session with a low mood and then getting inspired by the spiritual atmosphere, the Easter colors on eggs with flowers, chicks, and smells of spring approaching made me grateful. I felt that the residents, as well as the rest of us, would need artmaking activities more often in our lives.

In the Norwegian Protestant culture, yellow chicks are the symbols of Easter, signifying the return of the sun, the fertility of hens, the arrival of spring, and the vulnerable/helpless life of humans and nonhumans. Hence, co-creating chicks was something I learned during this session, and I realized that everyone else was familiar with this ritual. Easter mattered more than dementia. If dementia mattered, it was in these quiet, conversational, friendly efforts to co-create chick decorations. Like the felting session, we became part of something larger, beyond the person—part of a Norwegian Easter ritual.

Discussion

My analysis of three sessions reveals enactments of dementia beyond human loss and decline. In the drawing session, dementia became like a spark of inspiration for co-creative artmaking, in the felting session, dementia participated as communal felting of warm seat pads, and in the chick-making session, dementia enabled the intergenerational friendly

⁹ I found out later that Malin and Palma worked in the same organization.

more-than-human touch.

In the drawing session, dementia¹⁰ intra-acting with brushes and sponge holders intimately connected Pernille and Torhild and then diffracted to all. Materials that were new and explorative in the care home combined with pressure from my professional background to deal with the resistance I felt in the beginning, made us test and do things differently. Thus, painting beyond paperboard frames (on the chocolate cubes and the nose) in the dark winter period (which would enact dementia as a deviance from a “human” norm in an interpersonal caring environment¹¹) obtained a different quality within artmaking, a quality of testing, exploring, and crossing the conventional borders of “human” normalcy for moving forward in life. I suggest that this argument, illuminated through photographs and co-created vignettes, enacts dementia as an agential material for co-creative artmaking rather than an individual human brain disease or personal individual human loss. The question that arises is this: What are we becoming in intra-actions with more-than-human materials, such as air, chocolate, plush sticks, and perceived color?

In the felting session, the relational aesthetics of colorful wool fibers aroused collective felting and created a different time-space in which communal survival during cold winters mattered more (for this study) than personal embodied relations with wool. In this session, repetition, which is a pathologized activity in dementia, co-created warm seat pads in an intertwining with the weighty past. Water dripping acted as an obstruction and initiated chorus singing, moving us as if we were in fishing boats towards different worlds with dementia. Dementia, as an agential material, intra-acted with the wool and singing and taught me about people's difficult lives in the past in Norway. This affected our relations, as we changed in the intra-actions with wool, and I learned from Laura, Karol, Ada, Malin, and Tore about the significance of felting and the seat pads.

Different worlds-making aligned our relations and connected staff and residents communally, making us feel strangely at home during the felting session. I therefore suggest that socio-material entanglements with wool challenged an understanding of felting as an embodied achievement of pre-reflective human selfhood. Arguably, the transformed space-time that enacted dementia as one of the emplaced felting materials went beyond embodied subjective intentions (for instance, comparing the examples of Tore's endurance and Malin's obstructed mastery in place by choir singing and washing of her hands). Hence, a useful direction here would be to move from people with dementia previously considered as distinct human individuals to more-than-human entangled becoming (a form of aesthetic more-than-human creative community). The question is, “What is happening to dementia care?” A discussion regarding the next session might provide some answers.

In the chick-making session, my co-creative process with Palma, awkward materials, and dementia enacted a feeling of vulnerable friendliness within an Easter spiritual celebration. Materials that were familiar to the environment and a clear structure with predetermined results created pressure to promptly master materials. The greater presence of the health care staff (who were actively engaged in this session until the end, in contrast to the previous two sessions where they had left) intensified my feelings of subordination and loneliness. Perhaps these feelings made me more attentive, and I listened carefully while learning the art of postverbal communication alongside Palma and dementia (Quinn and Blandon, 2020). Our shared feelings of vulnerability materialized in our making of the chick figure and kept us intimately engaged. The more-than-human materials maintained the flow of the

session by co-creating obstructions, pressures, and tensions. I found feelings of communal friendliness embracing the materials. This perhaps clearly indicates a different way of imagining care that recognizes asymmetrical relations, not just among humans and others considered nonhuman, but also along the axes of power asymmetries, such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, or class (Foth and Leibing, 2022; Sandberg, 2018). Though deeper analysis is beyond the data for this article, the examples of entanglements show how the “I” writing this article changes through each intra-action in the sessions and while writing, enabled different ways of relating. For example, the shifts co-created while becoming at home with partially shared vulnerabilities, uneasiness, and forgetfulness (in my intra-actions with the chick figure and Palma and Malin and in Pernille's intra-actions with the tassel and Hedda).

To propose that, within co-creative art practices, dementia may acquire generative meanings in life risks romanticization. The position I take here is not to deny that aging with dementia entails decline and loss with devastating and frightening effects for all involved, but to acknowledge interferences within this conventional deficit and decline ideology to create a space for differences. If we do not create situations in which dementia may become different, it would be impossible to imagine the potential of “flourishing” lives with dementia (de Medeiros & Swinnen, 2018, p. 68). Without wishing to disregard the pain that life with dementia might entail for people diagnosed and their closest loved ones, I think that the concept “multiple ontologies” of dementia, that is, interdependent enactments of dementia, is still useful to challenge the hierarchical dualisms in dementia knowledge-making practices (Lukić, 2019; Mol, 2002). The sessions I summarized point to the significance of such co-creative art practices, which are commonly subordinated forms of knowledge creations, to “dwell and breathe” (Østern et al., 2021, p. 1) with different dementia realities, complementary to other dominating ones in laboratory sciences, general practice, antidementia medication, the Alzheimer's movement, daily care practices, and political responses (Moser, 2008).

Different enactments of dementia forge different understandings of people who have a dementia diagnosis as a part of human and nonhuman entanglements. The photographs and vignettes in this article highlight the examples of such entanglements. Due to ethical restrictions, we could display only hands as an extension of other art materials. Harvey and Brookes (2019, p. 994) argue that representing body parts of “persons with dementia,” such as hands, diminishes “the whole person” in popular stock images about dementia, which “eradicates the wholeness and essence of the individual.” However, the photographs in this article present intra-actions of several people's hands and other materials in artmaking while clarifying that the boundary of a person does not end with the body (Barad, 2007; Leibing, 2006; Mol, 2002). As Barad (2007) contends, entanglements are related to differentiation and connectivity rather than separation. Within the entanglements with (art) materials, we became different humans. This is not to say that we became lesser humans, but less rationalist, self-contained, and self-controlled individuals, which is the normative form of being human (Åsberg et al., 2011). This study then intertwines with personhood approaches to dementia that similarly criticized the Cartesian emphasis on the mind paving the way for posthumanist approaches (Jonas-Simpson et al., 2022; Kontos, 2004; Kontos and Naglie, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2020; Swinnen, 2014). Nevertheless, the posthumanist frameworks abandon notions of the relational “self,” (similarly to Quinn and Blandon, 2020, p. 5) and (in this study) subjective notions in order to emphasize the current decentered being alongside more-than-human becoming with dementia.

I changed through these sessions. I learned to “let go” of my professional competencies and aesthetic inhibitions in the drawing session and suspend my normative expectations to the group. I experimented more with materials unfamiliar to me and explored new materials, such as wool in the felting session. Materials were equally acting and intra-acting on me in this performative learning process (e.g., in the chick-making session) to become competent and learn how to connect. The

¹⁰ Within the caring context, postverbal conversations are usually ascribed to aphasia in dementia, or a person's inability to speak.

¹¹ See, for instance, Fletcher's (2019) research on dementia as “deviance” to highlight the role of the interactionalist environment in shaping dementia experiences.

chick-making session, although less co-creative than the two other sessions because the care home took control as it is often done in person-centered care environments (Sandberg, 2018), created fixed frames that enabled the endurance of my co-creative conversations with Palma. All three sessions generated interpersonal, social, and significant socio-material connectivity as a part of more-than-human aesthetical intractions. These findings point to my performative and passionate engagement in the study.

Overall, my different relations with dementia as a material and residents designated to live with dementia were in constant flux and affected the places in the care home and beyond. The sessions provided an opportunity to reimagine the care home, and the traveling artworks rejuvenated the ordinary, personal, homelike ambiance in the residents' rooms, hallways, and the main hall. The exhibition left a stark pink color in two memorable framed paintings on the care home walls, and I felt that their refreshing and lively colors became an undeniable and much-needed story of the environment. For some, the exhibition created an inspirational meeting with the care home and all who were living and working there because: “[Art] opens doors in many different ways” (Anonymous visitors, 2019, p. 4). In the last talk with Gloria, four years after the exhibition opening, she commented that every small change does something to the whole institution. These small changes or shifts (Latimer, 2018b) diffracted outside as we (as more-than-humans) continued to live across the care home places, making them all colorful and livable, as well as refreshing their substances and re-envisioning aging. Nevertheless, relations co-created in the sessions affected all co-creators and disrupted biomedicalized and hierarchical ordering of care within the group activity room, creating an unusual space for messy experiments and failures.

Thus, a more reciprocal and asymmetrical posthumanist understanding of care would be to acknowledge the nonhuman agencies that shape caring entanglements as well as researchers' influence in making differences because caring entanglements also emerge because of “dirty” and even malicious interests (Haraway, 1997, p. 36; Latimer, 2018b; Østern et al., 2021; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). As Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, p. 161) puts it when revising Tronto's conceptualization of care into feminist posthumanist terms:

We need to disrupt the subjective collective behind the “we”: care is everything that is done (rather than everything that “we” do) to maintain, continue, and repair “the world” so that all (rather than “we”) can live in it as well as possible. That world includes... all that we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web (modified from Tronto, 1993, p. 103).

This form of more-than-human care might provide space for cherishing creative and inspiring worlds with dementia, whereby dementia is seen as a creative potential for building relations through shared intractivities while flattening traditional hierarchies and becoming part of something bigger that fosters change (Basting, 2020; Dupuis et al., 2016; Latimer, 2018b; Mitchell et al., 2020). Merging these notions of care with “relational caring” as developed through co-creative engagements with the arts foregrounds my understanding of feminist posthumanist caring (Jonas-Simpson et al., 2022, p. 6). Instead of a static noun, “care,” the verb “caring” signifies “... a mutual process of caring rather than the dominant unilinear one where persons living with dementia are treated as passive recipients of care” (Jonas-Simpson et al., 2022, p. 6). This emphasis on the mutual emotional caring process helps imagine intimate socio-material entanglements as a part of caring medical professionalism (Latimer and López Gómez, 2019) and the ageist expectations that often dominate long-term care (Fitzroy et al., 2022) to imagine a notion of feminist posthumanist caring.

This caring may provide a path for the creation of worlds that embrace dementia's leaky and unstable embodiment (Bülow and Holm, 2016) without being afraid of fragility, loneliness, shrinkage, immobility, instability, discomfort, dependency, slowness, and mortality

(Bülow and Holm, 2016; Latimer, 2016). While being alongside these different conditions within co-creative encounters, dementia might contribute to worlds-making beyond anti-ageist neoliberal agendas of productivity, innovation, and self-realization (Gallisti, 2018; Jones, 2021; Swinnen, 2021).

Strengths and limitations

This is a pioneering critical posthumanist, non-individualistic study that queries how dementia is enacted within multisensorial co-creative arts sessions with residents living within an institutional setting, care home staff, ADLab members, and research assistants. Considering the lack of posthumanist and critical feminist interventions in dementia research (Bartlett et al., 2018; Sandberg, 2018), and the uncertainty of how to conduct practice-based health research inspired by new materialist methodologies (Lupton, 2019), this study provides one possible path forward. The situated analysis of dementia within the co-creative practices provides nuanced, dynamic, and authentic knowledge because it pertains to details in the analysis to maintain complexities rather than erase them (Østern et al., 2021). Belonging to a performative paradigm in knowledge-making, this study is rigorous, sound, and trustworthy because it temporarily presents the truth about dementia through the creation of new dementia realities, aiming to engage and provoke (Østern et al., 2021). As a research artist who is effectively present in the process but in a way that differs from phenomenological person-centered approaches, “my” body is decentered in the process of being and becoming alongside other more-than-human materials. As Østern et al. (2021) further help me to elucidate, one strength is showing how the uplifted cognitive and linguistic humanist capacities might be put to the ground in an entanglement with nonhuman others. In this sense, this study seeks justice as a more-than-human endeavor (Ulmer, 2017). Particularly, through engagement with more-than-human (art) materials, it elucidates that agency transcends the individual person and its psycho-social interactions with the dementia environment. The study also shows how multisensorial ways of knowing dementia might become scientifically valid; this is rare in dementia research, where the arts are commonly “used” for scientific knowledge and/or focus more on outcomes than process or “in the moment” benefits (Beard, 2012). This adds to the study's transversal and transdisciplinary potential as it cuts across artificial divides (Ulmer, 2017). In Barad's (2007) terms, the study is also ethically accountable and objective because I have engaged my situatedness and multisensorial being alongside the specific agential cuts created as part of the study frameworks. Additionally, showing how dementia might be enacted as a collectivist disease within the entanglements remains ethically loyal and caring towards the people involved who are designated as having dementia.

The major limitations of this study are the difficult terminology that it features, which may not be readily accepted in political and legal discourses on dementia. Although, as Weinberg (2013) argues, in the context of addiction science, posthumanist methodology features might add a subtle analysis to the closer understanding of disease phenomena within local practicalities, beyond humanist scientific antinomies and feedback into political challenges. The partial, affective, unstable, processual, and problematic (Haraway, 1988; Ulmer, 2017) matter of the study cannot be generalized, transferred, and confirmed elsewhere because performative post-qualitative research cannot be evaluated with the standard criteria of qualitative research (i.e., criteria of credibility), and its positivistic leftovers in academia (Østern et al., 2021). Although the study is non-representational (which means that it generates new dementia realities rather than representing existing abstract realities as definitions of dementia), as Ulmer (2017) suggests, it may not remain possible to avoid representationalism completely, as researchers remain, to some degree, trapped in representationalist material-discursive practices. For instance, residents living with dementia were prioritized for participation, which placed them in an uneven power relation towards the study. The diversity of the group was

limited because the leadership managed the recruitment of residents according to perceived suitability. The priority to explore dementia within multisensorial entanglements left little time and possibility for residents to stay for the discussions. The timing of the sessions during working hours precluded the involvement of relatives. Due to structural constraints, people living with dementia who were receding in their own homes were not included. The study did not begin with a network of communal volunteer efforts that could facilitate the prolongation of the sessions after the study ended. Learning about the embodied and emplaced (and very invisible and undervalued) knowledge of the care home staff at the beginning of the study could have strengthened its co-creation between the care home and academia, as the care staff could have felt more included and responsive to what happened without feeling that their involvement was yet another task to be added to their already busy day. Additionally, this article has not been co-written or discussed with someone diagnosed with dementia.

Conclusion

In this article, I suggested different enactments of dementia generated through agential cuts within human and nonhuman entanglements in three multisensorial arts sessions that were previously presented at the *Gleaming Moments* exhibition in a residential care home in Norway. Dementia did not manifest as a disease within a given person, as is in the dominant understandings, but as one of the agential materials for co-creative artmaking. Hence, dementia contributed to the transformation of all parties involved. This challenges the understanding of dementia as a condition of inevitable linear loss and decline (as propagated in the biomedical definitions) that must be defeated through a nuanced understanding of what the condition can offer in the process of artmaking. Instead, this study situated “definitions” of dementia within co-creative intra-actions of human and nonhuman agencies in which dementia could be seen as a potential for socio-material connectivity and the creation of different worlds with dementia.

Thus, the study shares with biomedical care practices a focus on dementia as a phenomenon, yet not to be treated and defeated as a bodily condition, but to be embraced as an emancipatory space for learning. Much like person-centered care practices that emphasize how people living with dementia are much more than “their” disease, this study explored the potentials that are not lost within art practices or may even come about as a result of dementia. While sharing the effort of these caring practices to create more just worlds with dementia (and partially departing from them), I have attempted to show how dementia is not an individual, static condition of a person and, therefore, shifts with every situation. Feminist posthumanist frameworks intertwined with practical experiments with co-creativity and multisensoriality alongside residents living with dementia, health care staff, ADLab members, research assistants, and other more-than-human materials, helped me elucidate the becoming of dementia differently and, thus, formed different situated definitions. Unlike other care approaches, I have focused on human and nonhuman multisensorial entanglements and their generative potential to form intimate socio-material relations.

Thus, this article moves towards feminist posthumanist caring for more-than-human relations within co-creative engagements with the arts as scientific endeavors. The article inquires whether this move could help us imagine caring for more-than-human worlds and acknowledge that caring for the nonhuman is always caring for the human. Therefore, dementia might become less a matter of concern to be defeated and more a phenomenon to be explored together. Dementia can then begin to be considered as something unpredictably different, sometimes awkward, sometimes astonishing, very often fragile, immobile, and unsettled, or, as described in art-science entanglements: something diffracting. As many critical gerontologists have argued, we must imagine aging with dementia amid and beyond loss and decline, creating an openness for

differences and different embodiments of aging to emerge while being alongside in co-creativity and more-than-human matters.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

Data availability

I have shared a link to some of my data on ADLab website.

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