

**MATERIAL ENTANGLEMENTS WITH THE NONHUMAN WORLD: THEORIZING
ECOSEXUALITIES IN PERFORMANCE**

Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation develops multiple theories of ecosexuality with three works of performance: Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens' performance art project the Love Art Laboratory (2004-2011), Carlos Batts' pornographic film *Dangerous Curves* (2010), and Pina Bausch's dance *Rite of Spring* (1975). Following the premise that all sexuality—even human sexuality—is always already ecologically entangled with any number of nonhuman lives and materials, I consider the ways in which the performing arts produce views and understandings of these entanglements. Thinking with these three case studies, I develop multiple overlapping, intersecting, and diverging theories of ecosexuality that each figure human/nonhuman relations in ways that think beyond anthropocentric definitions of sexuality and the culture of human exceptionalism that such anthropocentrism reinforces.

Following the use of the term “ecosexuality” in Stephens and Sprinkle's performance artwork, I suggest that the significance of this concept will be as multiple and shifting as the terms from which it is assembled—ecology and sexuality—and that each of the performance works within this study demonstrates specific choreographic principles with which ecosexuality can be thought. Methodologically, I approach this material through a process of choreographic thinking, first articulating the prominent features of each performance and the choreographic principles that they instantiate, then using those principles to mobilize my theorizations of sex, sexuality, and human/nonhuman relations. These theories are supported by the work of critical theorists and philosophers across a range of disciplines, an

interdisciplinary constellation including queer theory, feminist philosophy, posthumanisms, new materialism, porn studies, and dance and performance studies.

With each of these three case studies, I arrive at a unique understanding of ecosexuality. The Love Art Laboratory presents ecosexuality as a matter of orientation, in which that toward which we become oriented is not an object from which we are separate but a relation of which we are a part: our intra-active material entanglement within the nonhuman world. *Dangerous Curves* envisions bodies as promiscuous assemblages of discontinuous parts depicted at multiple scales, in which parts do not add up to bodies organized into one of two sexes and do not stay discretely bound within categories such as “human” and “nonhuman,” for which sexualities proliferate at any number of connections. In *Rite of Spring*, both dancing bodies and dirt fluctuate between animation and stillness, presenting a range of dynamic inclinations across a shared material continuum. Thinking these tendencies in relation to the “sexual instincts” and the “death drive,” *Rite of Spring* asks: how might we pursue life for its own sake, without our lives at its center? If sexuality is the unfolding of life in excess of survival, what might it mean to pursue a sexual life, specifically when “life” already encompasses the nonhuman? Together, these readings unfold the critical potential of these performance works and contribute to the scholarly consideration of the growing ecosexual movement.