

Painting with Horses Towards Interspecies Response-ability: Non-human Charisma as Material Affect

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Abstract: *Leading up to the 2014 Melbourne Cup three communication modes were employed by unrelated horse welfare activists to raise awareness of cruelty in the racing industry. The intention to increase empathy with horses ties together these efforts, which are characterised as written, visual and immersive. This paper uses the lens of Jamie Lorimer's three types of non-human charisma to consider the potential for each communication mode to achieve the goal of change towards interspecies response-ability. Charisma is considered in this paper to be a form of material-affect within new materialism that offers a more complex tool for analysis than the broad brush of 'empathy'. A subjective case study describing the three communicative modes opens up dialogue on attentiveness to potential interactions towards their intended goal, or conversely towards alienation of the broader public. Of Lorimer's three categories of charisma, aesthetic and ecological are considered to rely on pre-existing anthropocentric preferences. Corporeal charisma offers potential for a more transformative experience through sharing perspectives with a non-human species. The author recounts the experience of delivering a workshop on 'painting with horses' as a case study. Evidence is given that facilitated creative interspecies activities have the potential to stimulate transformation towards interspecies empathy by enabling corporeal charisma.*

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People who care deeply about the welfare of non-human animals, and who have changed their living practices to reflect this care often wonder why other humans who have access to the same information do not also change their lifestyle so as to improve animal welfare. Where society at large has deemed practices such as puppy farming and live export to not reflect the moral standards of a region of governance, then regulations and penalties might be introduced to enforce certain levels of animal welfare. Underpinning such legislative approaches is a public will, and this depends on collective moral standards. The basis for such standards must in part be caring-for-other, which implies empathy in common parlance, or resonant material-affect in new materialist terms (as I explain later in the paper). Empathy for non-humans is not ubiquitously inherent in contemporary Western cultures, where a long history of human dominion over animals holds sway (see for example arguments in Joy (2010) and Serpell (1996) for thorough analyses of these phenomena). Duty of care then falls to those who wish to raise the standards of animal welfare and bring about change in the relationship between large sectors of the population and animal welfare. Various means of communication for change can be applied, and in this digital age the modes of communication have proliferated. This paper is set around a temporal moment at which multiple modes of ‘communication for change in empathy’ were undertaken by unrelated animal welfarists in separate efforts to address the same animal welfare issue. The temporal moment to which this paper refers is the period leading up to the Melbourne Cup horse race, 2014, and the foci of concern are the danger to horses in racing, the broader gross misconduct of animal welfare inherent in the thoroughbred horse-breeding and racing industry, and a sub-set of this targeted by some (e.g. McGreevy 2014), the whipping of racehorses. The modes of communication were a published article on horse whipping, a visually evocative protest about horse racing, and an immersive ‘Painting with Horses’ workshop.

This paper details the author’s subjective inquiry into the probable efficacy of each mode of ‘communication for change in empathy’. Theoretical lenses for inquiry are the author’s own expertise following a doctoral inquiry into horse/human entanglements (Boyd 2015), Jamie Lorimer’s theory of non-human charisma, and material-affect in new materialism. The method for analysis of the author’s observations and activities is diffraction after Haraway (2008) and Barad (1996). Weaving through the central research question of ‘how might various modes of

communication interact with human empathy towards non-human animals, and horses in particular?’ is the author’s own experience of co-learning with her research companion horse Prince the Pony, and the influence of his self-determination and charisma on her perspective and actions regarding horse welfare.

Non-human charisma has been described by Lorimer as the manner by which non-human animals can have an impact on humans in ways that are both corporeal and affective. The plaintive calling of a night bird might send shudders through a person walking home in darkness, enhancing the feeling of distance from home and hearth. Buds appearing on trees after a long Northern winter bring a leap of joy to the human heart with their promise of spring and more carefree living. Non-human charisma is relevant to animal welfare in that it impacts upon human opinion of the species in question. As shall be explained further, the leech and the Labrador puppy cause very different reactions in humans that can have broad implications for their welfare once endangered. More to the point, the way in which communication about endangerment of either type of species might best be conducted is related to the charisma of that species *vis-a-vis* the human target of the message. It is timely to revisit Lorimer’s theory of non-human charisma as affect studies within new materialism are proving to be a fruitful area for theoretical dialogue across disciplines from animal studies to fine art practice. New materialism is a theoretical perspective with a strong presence in contemporary inquiry (Barrett & Bolt; Coole & Frost). Underpinning this field of study is an interest in the agencies of non-human entities, and a fundamental ontology based in materiality, rather than say, Christianity or human perception. Karen Barad’s Agential Realism is a particularly well-described version of new materialism. This world-view facilitates analysis of the ways in which agents co-form and co-adapt through a process called ‘intra-action’. Affect is an operative force in this process of co-development, acting through all forms of communicative awareness from electrons, to cells, to rational thought. The term ‘material-affect’ more properly ascribes the materiality of these processes. With these terms of reference clarified the research question can now be posed in a more specialised form: How might non-human charisma as material-affect operate variously through communication campaigns (to increase empathy with non-human species) that take the form of written texts, visual images or immersive art-based encounters with non-human species?.

Barad, following Donna Haraway, has developed a mode of critical studies within Agential Realism called diffraction. By this method, rather than a dialectical critique or a self-reflective interrogation, multiple concepts can be analysed across and through each other. Checking for areas of similarity and difference in zones of complexity offers multiple emergences in theory and practice. A multiple slot light diffraction diagram helps to visualise this process, as do the intersections of multiple concentric ripples on a pond as rain hits the surface. The diffraction method is applied in this paper to consider the complex emergences from a cluster of the three communication activities, written, visual and immersive around the 2014 Cup.

The horse is the central species of this paper, in part because this is the author's research species. The horse holds a peculiar position in culture, having quite literally carried European cultural development around the globe. Contemporary Western urbanites are the first generations in millennia to exist without the horse as a constant member of the daily assemblage of lived existence (albeit donkeys, goats and cows were regular interlopers of the colonial cultural assemblage as well). The Melbourne Cup horse race is known in Australia as the 'day the nation stands still' and stands as testament to exultation of utilitarian attitudes towards non-human species in this country.

Non-human charisma as material affect

Lorimer has conducted research on the ways in which humans become empathetic with other species. His research is based on the experiences of British conservation organisations. Further work on his theory was conducted by Claudia Notzke (2013) in relation to political debates about the fate of wild horses in Alberta, Canada. The concept of non-human charisma falls into a similar field of consideration as the more well known idea of 'becoming animal', after Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), and the concept of 'more-than-human' after Sarah J. Whatmore (2002), as well as Vinciane Despret's (2013) concept of partial perspective with non-human animals. Each of these approaches examines the psychological, perceptual and bodily processes that take place as a member of one species becomes in some ways attuned to the life-

world of another species in such a way that the first species undergoes significant transformation perceptively and performatively.

What is specifically interesting about Lorimer's concept is the way in which he conceives that humans 'feel into' other species. He examines various types of material-affect as charisma. Importantly for interspecies response-ability,¹ charisma is conceived by Lorimer as a manner by which non-human agency exerts itself on interspecies relations, rather than being an observational process undertaken entirely by humans:

Nonhuman charisma can best be defined as the distinguishing properties of a nonhuman entity or process that determine its perception by humans and its subsequent evaluation...nonhuman charisma emerges in relation to the parameters of different technologically enabled, but still corporeally constrained, human bodies, inhabiting different cultural contexts. Nonhuman charisma...occurs in a network topology and is subject to anthropogenic manipulation.

(Lorimer 2007, 915)

Many animal studies scholars might bristle at this apparently human-centric definition. However, what Lorimer defines specifically are the affective forces of non-human charisma on human conservation campaigns. He remains committed to a relational and material approach. New materialism and its subset material-affect require deconstructed language to express ideas beyond current vocabularies. One way of expressing the concept of charisma is proposed here to be:

Charisma is a materially-affective attractive and potentially transformative force > from and to < other that occurs in a complex topology of relations.

Where the arrows indicate the direction of charisma flow as a material-affective force. Notzke (2013) joins Lorimer in her consideration of charisma as a powerful political agency *of the horses themselves* who inspire passionate human campaigns for wild horse preservation in Canada.

Lorimer describes three types of charisma: ecological, aesthetic and corporeal. This is an important development as these categories already move past most empathy studies to paint affective relations with a finer brush. The distinctions are not arbitrary and are based on field

observations of interspecies encounters regarding the actions and emotions triggered in individual human conservationists. *Ecological charisma* is measured according to detectability within the human range of awareness, including behavioural similarities. This might refer to scale, diurnal activity patterns and ecological niche similarities. The horse is highly detectable to humans in their shared mammalian behaviour, approximation to humans in scale, and entangled presence in human eco-cultural systems. Leeches for example are by comparison small, hard to detect, dwell in environs unpleasant for humans, and have a life cycle alien to that of a human. *Aesthetic charisma* refers to attractiveness, and emotionally evocative qualities. It is important to note here that in Lorimer's original paper this specifically refers to human aesthetic preferences. Aesthetic species are those that are at the forefront of conservation campaigns, such as 'cute' pandas and 'majestic' lions. Horses are aesthetically attractive, and this is reinforced within Melbourne Cup promotional material that emphasises the highly groomed horse along side the glamour of the event. It is hard to imagine the leech as central figure of a glamour promotion.

Corporeal charisma is the third and most interesting of the three categories due to the potential it offers for change in interspecies relations. Detectability and aesthetics rely on pre-existing human sensibilities, while corporeal charisma develops through material-affective processes of 'becoming animal', within a context of 'taking a genuine interest' in another species. Corporeal charisma emanates from the non-human and acts on the human through study of the species. This material-affective force develops in moments of what Lorimer calls 'epiphany' as well as through more processual steps in 'becoming together with other'. Lorimer documents conservation professionals who through their studies of particular species come to revel in life rhythms other to their own; perhaps those set by migratory patterns of birds more so than the ebb and flow of the urban work day. Initial selection of the study species for these conservationists was found to be correlated with a moment of wonderment (Lorimer's word) shared with a member of the species early on in their career or childhood. Corporeal charisma can apply equally to the horse or the leech, as it is possible to find interest, new worlds of perception and any species worthy of study.

Popular culture accepts the aesthetic beauty of the horse, yet corporeal charisma is less common. The challenge for animal rights progress is to move dialogue beyond mere attraction

to a beautiful thing towards material-affective relations that are guided by the needs of horses. Non-human charisma of both the ecological and aesthetic types indicates the agency of the species, but the impact is determined by pre-existing human sensibilities. Corporeal non-human charisma is potentially more transformative as the affective forces act upon and shift categories of 'what it is to be human' towards non-human sensibilities.

Case study in three parts

In the following section, three components of a single case study will be presented, and then considered diffractively with non-human charisma and progress towards interspecies response-ability. The definition of response-ability, following Haraway, indicates the multiple relations of being responsible and being able to respond, while proceeding in awareness of current and historical eco-social contexts and power relations. The three parts of this case study are a published article on horse-whipping, an image-based protest campaign against the Melbourne Cup, and a participatory 'painting with horses' workshop. Discussion is presented in diary form and variously in the first and third person.

One

Professor Paul McGreevy contacted me about writing an article for *The Conversation*, a well-regarded and reviewed current topic and opinion website, against the use of whips in horse racing, to appear with other similarly-themed articles in time for the 2014 Cup. McGreevy has been very active in both research and in popular media on the issue of horse whipping. We had previously crossed paths at the 2013 Australian Animal Studies Group (now Australasian Animal Studies Association) conference at the University of Sydney. He knew I was focussed on equine welfare in my art-practice-led research and so asked if I could write a piece from the perspective of an artist. I wondered how an artist would *write* about horse welfare differently to a veterinarian or an animal rights activist. It seemed to me that imagination would be an apt starting point, and the article 'Would You Whip a Unicorn?' was published on November 3,

2014, the eve of the Cup. My intention was to draw a comparison between a horse and a unicorn. Both share many similarities in physical appearance, yet the unicorn is a mere fantasy and as such holds a ‘magically’ precious place in the heart and mind of popular culture and little children. Horses and unicorns share a great deal of aesthetic charisma. Numerous films that have captured public imagination centre on a special bond between horse and a human, most notably in recent years *War Horse* (2011), *Secretariat* (2010) and *The Horse Whisperer* (1998). Similarly, fantastical forays such as the film *The Last Unicorn* (1982) evoke sadness at the loss of such a mystical and kind being. Popular paintings of horses and unicorns emphasise their beauty and strength. Unicorn parties in which white horses are dressed up as unicorns are regularly shared on social media to show how they have granted the wish of sick children by making their dream of riding a unicorn over a rainbow come true. Surely, no person of kind and noble demeanour would whip a unicorn. If ‘bad things’ happen to the unicorn, then it is at the hand of the evil character in most fantasy stories. Online film information repository imdb.com summarises *The Last Unicorn* as ‘A brave unicorn and a magician fight an evil king who is obsessed with attempting to capture the world's unicorns’.² Drawing parallels between the unicorn and the horse as sharing ‘magical’ affective qualities, it follows that those who support whipping of horses and unicorns must accept the role of ‘evil character’, prompting self-examination; so, I wrote:

behind the frivolity of race days, dark truths lurk. Every fantastical story includes a villain...our human desires for wealth, beauty and escapism are considered to outweigh the burden of pain dealt to the equines on the field.

That ‘real’ unicorns (horses) *are* whipped demonstrates that that aesthetic charisma is not sufficient to prevent harm to beautiful species. In fact, the opposite might be true, as witnessed by trophy hunting and Victorian era zoos, such that beautiful living things become objects of desire.

Two

I felt involved with the movement against cruelty to racehorses at the time of the 2014 Melbourne Cup, albeit acting as an individual in a loose network of interest rather than as a member of an activist group. One such group is the Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses. I followed their social media updates regarding their direct action protests around the Cup. This group operates significantly through the mode of publicly sharing graphic imagery documenting horse abuse and injury during races. They also conduct dramatic protest incursions into racing events. Their intention is to interrupt the continuity of unjust cultural practices. A large billboard depicting a dead, fallen racehorse was put up by the group in Melbourne at a prominent urban location (Image 1) leading up to the 2014 Cup. On the group website <http://www.horseracingkills.com> more images of horses dying on the track or being slaughtered were displayed. These images are shocking and graphic, portraying as they do acts of extreme violence towards horses. Members of the group attended the Cup dressed to match the glamorous atmosphere, but drenched in fake blood. The group's work has continued over several years. As well as direct action they are striving to have race industry legislation changed through image-based documentation of irresponsible behaviour towards horses within that industry.



Image 1: Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses billboard in Melbourne shows a fallen, dead racehorse in protest of the 2014 Melbourne Cup. Source: Google image search.

Three

Through my involvement with the research cluster New Materialism in Contemporary Art at Sydney College of the Arts I was invited to present a workshop on non-human perspectives that would be part lecture and part studio activity. The studio component was a group experience of painting with horses. Because of various delays the workshop was held on November 3, 2014, eve of the Cup. This coincidence affected the manner in which I delivered the workshop. Instead of a general introduction to the means and modes for considering non-human perspectives, I felt a political and ethical obligation to encourage deeper appreciation of the sentience of horses amongst the group of participants. In a blog entry about the workshop I wrote:

At the time of writing the Australian Melbourne Cup has just been run amongst a furore of public resistance towards the ill treatment of horses by the racing industry. For many, the veil has fallen, and the dichotomy of drunken revelry and horses being cruelly whipped no longer makes sense. In this vein numerous campaigns, media reports and heated debates on social media have emerged in the last two days. Sadly, and highlighting the risk to horses, two of the entrants were dead not long after the race had finished: Admire Rakti (heart failure) and Araldo (shattered cannon bone and euthanasia).

The workshop started with a lecture on multispecies aesthetics followed by a one hour immersive experience of painting with two miniature horses: Prince – my regular research companion – and Whinney – a young colt I had rescued from the knackery and later rehomed. Reception of the academic presentation with Powerpoint slides was mixed and cerebral in tone. This was to be expected, and it was exactly because many ideas cannot be expressed without immersive experience that the art research cluster presentations included a studio extension beyond the usual format of university talks. This was borne out when the enactment of painting with horses dismissed many of the theoretical concerns.

Caveats on the concepts of 'painting' and 'training'

To situate the practice of 'painting with horses' within the animal welfare movement it is necessary to give some background information. The workshop was held at the tail end of a five-year doctoral research project involving art-making with horses. Various experiments were conducted including film-making with horses, sculpting with horses, observation of horse grazing behaviour as the inspiration for art-making, semi-scripted narrative performances with horses, and photographic sessions with horses. A crucial purpose of these undertakings was to deconstruct pre-conceptions of how a horse and human *should* relate, the most common assumption being that horses are for riding. Although I could have chosen to observe 'creative practices' of wild horses and so remove direct human influence, I made the decision to study interactions between horse and human through making art. I observed that horses have no interest in human conceptions of art, nor are they particularly aware of what we might conceive of as 'making art'. This extract from my thesis explains the kind of engagements we did have:

Certainly Prince was aware and in a state of engagement when we did film, because our level of play stood in contrast to his usual 'day in the life of a horse' activities. William Wegman somewhat reluctantly achieved fame during the 1970s while working with his Weimaraner dogs to produce clever short film experiments... He recounted in a 2012 interview that when he tried to give up being a 'dog artist' early on in his career, his dog collaborator Man Ray moped around the studio during that year (The Morgan Library & Museum 2012). In his assessment, Man Ray missed the daily creative engagement, and was no longer satisfied with the daily dog routine. Likewise, Prince came to know that certain activities would happen when I arrived, and particularly when I brought out the big yoga ball. Prince was not definitely engaged with the idea of the camera, but was certainly engaged with the idea of interaction, or even intra-action. The placement of the POV camera upon Prince's forehead near eye-level did mean that where Prince looked, the camera also recorded. Therefore, Prince's interests were picked up in the filming, even if he was not cognizant of directorship for the films we produced. (Boyd 2015, 184)

The type of painting that I undertake with the horses is aligned with non-representational traditions of mark-making and ephemera collection in fine art, and not at all involved with the traditions of representational painting. The canvas surface serves as a focal point for performance and a symbolic connection between the activity and a popular understanding of what art making should look like. The traditions of Action Painting, after Jackson Pollock's painting method and early Mathew Barney performance drawings are considered here as resonant with the corporeal and performative methods for producing the remaining painted surface, i.e. the painting. Prior to the workshop discussed in this paper I had conducted with Prince the Pony a complex painting performance for a video work:

On the first day of two days of filming I poured black paint into the center of the black circle. Prince and I then went into the space and moved slowly in a circular motion. Prince followed the target of the golden whip, and we moved across the black paint, to leave our shared marks on the surface. Prince riffed on the movements, not following me constantly, and I began to move according to his choices, and not only my own. The paint began to control both of our performances as I sought to urge Prince to move through the paint, and he avoided it with his natural acumen for sensing possible dangers. Eventually, we had left our marks of the shared moments and struggles for shared endeavor between surface, paint, horse and human. (Boyd 2015,126; Image 2)

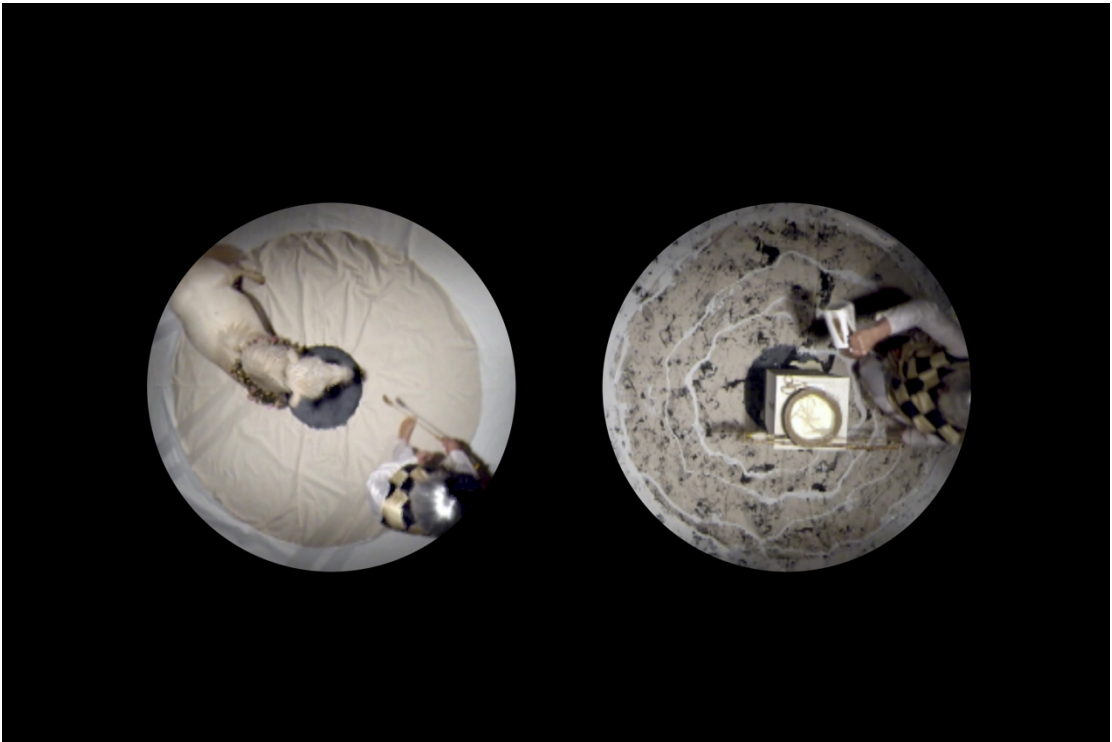


Image 2: Video still from The Golden Whip, 2014 - 2015. Chapter 2: Failure of Surveillance in Horseracing, 2014. Duration: 06:00min. Horse with human floor painting, horse hair mask, and ephemera. Image shows the process and result of painting with prince the pony.

Based on my experience of the various art-making methods with the horses I believed that the painting with horses practice served best to demonstrate differences in representational and non-representational art making, and would be an apt activity facilitating humans not familiar with horses to interact with horses in a novel and non-violent manner.

A further point to be made here is on the subject of ‘training’. As shall be described, Prince the Pony had become accustomed to touching and following a whip and pushing a large blue yoga ball, which are two forms of non-violent interaction we had settled upon. One perspective in the animal welfare movement is that humans should respect the sovereignty and self-determination of non-human animals and so refrain from all forms of training, or even domestication. This assertion is not refuted here in theory; however, in practice humans and horses are already entangled in complex power and emotive relations. This study dwells in the

context of working towards continued, but increasingly respectful relations between humans and horses. 'Training' is a simplistic term that might better be termed 'interspecies dialogue' for the sake of this current project. The human must learn the language of the horse, and the horse might be inspired to learn to communicate with the human, for safety and for pleasure. What can be claimed here is that the author subjected herself to constant self-interrogation so as to understand her motivations for conducting 'training'. I am learning how to be a better human by becoming better at communicating with horses. Prince's non-human charisma and strong sense of self-determination provided ample opportunities for co-learning. Here is a small example of the need for clever two-way communication: from the day he came to live with us at seven months old, Prince showed himself to have a dominant personality. If the food was not delivered promptly he would bite me. Biting was his way of saying 'hurry up'. He probably was not aware of how much this hurt me and turned off my friends and family from interacting with him. I therefore had to let him know that biting hurt, and he should find other ways of communicating his desire to for dinner. Research told me that hitting him hard on the face, never mind how quickly, would lead to a long-term psychological problem called 'head shyness'. I read many different reports from horse trainers and decided on a method that worked so well that he has never bitten me since, and our relationship improved. That is, when he bit me, I rose up very quickly like a large monster yelling and tapping him with my fingers all over his head and neck. This was a way to demonstrate a negative response without causing any pain. Prince is very clever and he came to realise that biting was not the way to communicate. Instead, he points with his head to wherever he wants my attention to go.

Workshop description

I started the workshop by showing the group various items that related to horse care and training. I was clothed not in my usual paddock attire, but in a dress, fancy gloves and a broad white hat as a situational nod to race-day fashion. The collection included horse brushes, as well as the horse hair I gathered during grooming then felted to incorporate into art installations. There were two whips on the table and I talked briefly about the issue of whipping, and then

demonstrated how I could use the whip not to directionally drive a horse through direct contact but to communicate without contact (Image 3). Prince would follow the whip in the direction I pointed, and move with me in various directions. I had learned this technique by following the method of 'positive reinforcement', similar to the popular 'clicker training'. Humans can develop a communicative repertoire with other species by rewarding correct responses to signals, and ignoring incorrect responses. Horses are documented to quickly learn by this method and then take the lead on offering behaviours prior to the human signal.

My research journey 2011-2013 had taken me through different training methods, and for the purposes of this discussion, I must share that I had used a whip in a direct contact manner to train Prince. The natural horsemanship method of horse training that I took a short course in at the outset of my research uses 'application then release of pressure' rather than food treating as the positive signal. For example, for a nervous horse that moves away from touch, one would lay a hand or extension on their wither and when they move away keep the hand there, only removing when they stop moving, letting them know that moving away is not the appropriate 'answer' to a touch. This is a well-respected method for communicating with horses, being based on horse-horse communication, and in my experience horses do learn very quickly in this way what the human is 'saying'. The problem I encountered is that for the learner the application of pressure before release can be heavy handed at first as they both experience frustration at not getting the timing right to encourage understanding, and have lack of coordination in using the extension devices of the long 'whip' (also called a 'carrot stick') or rope. Thus, Prince had never been subject to systematic whipping, but for a time would be very responsive and wary when shown the whip extension/carrot stick. Having seen his fear response to the whip, and realising my inability to effectively use 'pressure and release', I changed my methods to positive reinforcement based on positive signals (pointing, word signals such as 'touch') with positive rewards (treat, scratches, 'good boy' statement) rather than applying pressure of any kind. I then began to use the whip as a pointer rather than a driver. Writing two years on from the workshop, Prince and I have made leaps and bounds with positive reinforcement, and Prince happily participates in any training session involving treats, but not whips. Warren-Smith and McGreevy (2007) conducted a study comparing negative and positive

reinforcement in horse training and the results support a more complex and long lasting learning result from positive reinforcement compared with punitive approaches.



Image 3: Demonstrating using a whip as a pointer rather than a driver for directional communication with Prince. Image credit Hain Zandstra.

After the demonstration, participants in the ‘Painting with Horses’ workshop were offered the choice of drawing the two horses who were present or playing with the horses (Image 4). This playing could be enacted through a series of communicative actions which the horses already understood – such as playing ‘soccer’ with a large blue ball or mirroring a person when they put their foot up on a crate. This choice was not a real choice, but an opportunity for me to demonstrate the vastly differing experience of representation (drawing) at a distance, and creative, performative collaboration. Unexpectedly when asked to move away from their easels several of the participants expressed fear of physical engagement with the horses, particularly of being bitten. Others found the physical interaction to be quite exhilarating.



Image 4. Workshop participants were offered the choice of drawing the horses or playing 'soccer' with them. Image credit Hain Zandstra.

The next section of the workshop involved no direct physical contact and all participants took part. Four one metre square canvases were placed on the ground together. The human artists painted the canvas with molasses and carrots, and the horses then added to the mark-making by moving across the canvas and licking and pawing at the molasses and carrots. The easy movement into painting with horses was surprisingly rapid, as the interactivity of the horses seemed enthralling to the group and each person wanted to help with mark-making. The 'Painting with Horses' concept had developed during my research process as a way to create a conceptual bridge between art practices and the physical communicative modes of horses. Artist duo Olly & Suzi conduct a practice that similarly undermines and acknowledges art practice as they introduce their simple paintings of animals to wild animals. A spectacular example of their work is their photographic print 'Shark Bight' (1997) that documents a Great White Shark biting their painting of a fish.³ 'The idea is also to get the animals to interact with the work, ideally

leaving some kind of mark, and the end 'performance' is recorded on film by Olly's brother, Greg [Williams]' (Mikhail). Prince and I have painted with acrylic paints and other substances. It can get quite messy, and so paint wasn't appropriate for the college grounds. Beyond mere mark making, Prince took an interest in participating in the group activity, and stood close to observe what we were doing (Image 5). The horses were not tethered and could choose to move away and graze on the ample grass, rather than participate in our interspecies collaboration.



Image 5. Prince takes keen interest in what the human artist is doing prior to making his own marks on the canvas. Image credit Hain Zandstra.

During the workshop I realised that this opportunity to share the joy of working with horses who are able to move freely and interested to engage with humans had achieved the quality of affective agency towards interspecies response-ability. Based on the many hours I had spent working with the horses, I knew that this was a rare moment of sharing and interaction compared with other less engaged moments when horses and humans share the same space. As the workshop drew to a close at what seemed the appropriate moment, Prince and Whinney suddenly broke into a game of chase and play-fight, as young male horses are often seen to do in

the wild. People in the group remarked and marvelled at having the opportunity to witness this spontaneous equine behaviour. At risk of anthropomorphism, their actions seemed to express the sense of excitement and communication that had built up between humans and horses during the workshop.

The day after the workshop, systemic violence towards equines was celebrated by many Australians at the Cup and in workplaces around the nation. The participants in the workshop were given pause to think about the consequences of betting on the race, as they had experienced another type of relationship with equines.

Diffraction of Charisma with Communicative Modes

Beyond the temporal moment of the 2014 Melbourne Cup, the conceptual tie between communicative modes described in the case study – the written article, the immersive workshop and the image-based protest – is the intent to evoke empathy with horses as a method of change towards interspecies justice. Each of the modes is a means for turning the tide of public opinion against horse racing practices, including whipping. Approaches based in the processes of material-affect differ from strictly legislative approaches involving regulation of behaviour and punitive action. Regulations do exist for the racing industry, but further changes are required to ensure the health and wellbeing of the horses. Public outcry against cruelty can lead to industry and legislative reform. Another outcome could be that the number of people interested in the sport and entertainment of horse racing could drop, exerting economic pressure on the industry to change. In Norway whipping of racehorses has been entirely banned, although horse racing continues to exist.

Non-human charisma can be diffracted through the central ideas of this paper and the three case study examples to open up discussion on communicative modes for change. Image-based campaigns operate upon aesthetic non-human charisma. Conservation campaigns foreground tigers and not leeches. The public faces the horror of damage done to an aesthetically beautiful thing when they see photos of dead horses pictured in campaigns by the Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses. This horror no doubt evokes response, yet we can wonder at how

transformative this reaction can be, acting as it does upon pre-existing human visual aesthetics. Furthermore, images of violence operate in a dangerous space between the shut down shock response and the desensitisation to further violence (Chittaro & Sioni 2012; Iliopoulou 2012; Huesman 1986), thus limiting their effectiveness as a sole method for production of change. The literary communicative mode appeals to sentiment through reason.

Both aesthetic and ecological charisma are at work as the author's written words seek to draw attention to non-human subjects via a human aesthetic mode or writing and in the familiar eco-cultural setting of an article. The visual aesthetic mode and in particular a large billboard has the advantage of immediacy, whereas the public must find and then choose to engage with the aesthetic form of a written article. If successful, the two modes might interact so that after seeing the image, members of the public will seek out further information in the form of articles. We can build upon the images of horror and push the balance towards consideration of images beyond aesthetics towards 'taking an interest in' the species. Close study of species through academic and popular literature was considered by Lorimer to provide an important foundation for development of field-based corporeal non-human charisma for conservation professionals. If the public can be motivated through human-centric modes to take an interest in horses, then they could be more willing to take the steps towards a deeper empathy at the level of corporeal charisma.

Comment responses to the article 'Would you Whip a Unicorn' on *The Conversation* web page demonstrate polarity of views between those aggressively against the claims of cruelty in horseracing and avidly pro-whipping as opposed to those supportive of whipping bans, but with a critical opinion of a whip-centred campaign against horse racing. There exists little evidence in these responses that the article changed anyone's mind, unless fence-sitters were not motivated enough to comment or report their change of attitude. This relatively neutral space of *The Conversation* website was seen to open up opportunity for response. With ongoing pressure in the form of written critiques of horse racing, a properly engaged debate might ensue, beyond attitudinal venting. The comment section on this kind of internet publication also provides grist for further action by revealing the status of public opinion on the issues of racehorse welfare.

The 'Painting with Horses' workshop offered a far more intimate experience than the aforementioned communicative modes. Participants had a mediated opportunity to corporeally *become-with* horses. Prince and Whinney had been given preparatory experience of the co-painting and playing activities, yet neither were trained or coerced to participate. I observed the horse and human participants having unexpected moments of connection akin to Lorimer's concept of wonderment. There is no doubt that aesthetic charisma and ecological charisma were attractants in the horse workshop, for reasons explained in the introductory section of this paper. Yet, it could not be said that all of the participants had an innate attraction to horses, and some were even scared of being hurt. In my experience while at Sydney College of the Arts for five years as a doctoral candidate, there was limited interest amongst the student population in participating in horse-related activities for the sake of merely being with horses. It was the research context of new materialism that had brought together the workshop participants. What happened is that horses did their job of being charismatic in all three ways beyond all expectation during the immersive process. One might say that they captured the minds and hearts of the workshop participants through clear demonstration of their non-human sentience. In this immersive mode of communication the horses themselves had the opportunity to represent themselves. It appeared that the groundwork for corporeal charisma had been laid, and the moment of epiphany was that when the horses took our shared feelings and expressed them in their playful and energetic outburst of activity (Image 6).

As the workshop was specialised and intimate in scale, actions of this type would be difficult to conduct on a mass scale. On the other hand, the participants would have the opportunity to share their experiences through conversations, acting as vectors for corporeal charisma of horses in society. Although the method does rely on actual contact with a horse or other species, web-based video classes or an app containing mediated exercises could be developed as DIY instructions that did not require the presence of an expert facilitator. There does exist a growing movement of equine facilitated therapy, which operates via similar modes and principles to the workshop, being based in the corporeal intelligence of horses. Equine therapy operates for the purpose of healing humans and not for healing horses, although a kind approach to horses sits at the core of the movement. Whinney's forever home is an equine

therapy farm. The methods of equine therapy are able to be turned towards providing opportunities for ‘becoming-horse’, where sufficient interest in participating can be raised. Aesthetic charisma can be applied here both through exposing the need for greater empathy, as with the images of abused horses, and through the promise of aesthetically pleasing experiences with horses.

The immersive creative workshop method is not suggested to be reserved for horses, but for many species in need of greater care. Pigs and dairy cows would be ideal candidates. Less ecologically charismatic species such as the leech would require other initial attractants, such as nature adventure camps where learning about nature causes humans to ‘take an interest’. It should be noted that the workshop technique moves beyond mere physical proximity to another species. The facilitated process and creative interspecies activities provide crucial opportunities for charisma to act. Representatives of the species might be invited to act on behalf of their kind to share the wonder of being-cow or being-pig, and some who have demonstrated interest to interact with human, could go on to participate.



Image 6. Prince and Whinney broke into spontaneous and energetic playing colt (entire male horse) style at the end of the workshop. Image credit: Hain Zandstra.

Diffraction conclusion

Image 7 shows how diffraction can work as an analysis tool and how it has been applied to the research topics in this paper. The pre-existing backdrop image is the pattern of light wave diffraction where light enters through two slits. Instead of light, social forces affecting the horseracing industry enter through the conceptual slits. Multiple communicative modes addressing these forces interact across the waves, such that speculative outcomes emerge towards the farthest end of the diffraction diagram. Findings show that the communicative modes of image, literature and immersive action can interact in various ways, some paths leading to increasing affect or empathy with horses, and others leading to alienation of the human public from the issue. The task at hand is to remain responsive to the complex topology of each type of communication and to keep moving towards observed changes in charisma and material-affect, and towards interspecies response-ability.

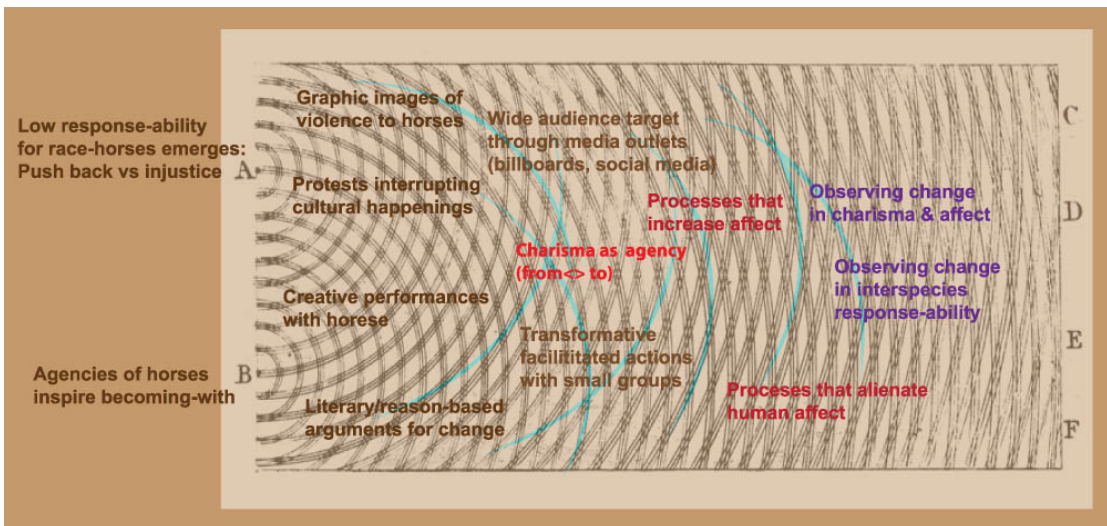


Image 7: Visualisation of a diffractive approach to analysis of change towards empathy with racehorses through attention to non-human charisma. Here initiative action through the virtual ‘light slits’ is brought about by both the perception of injustice and the inspirational agencies of horses.

Notes

¹ The use of the term ‘response-able’ in place of responsible is derived from the term’s use by Donna Haraway, Karen Barad and other multispecies theorists. This play on words indicates both the intention of responsibility as being responsible for one’s actions in regards to other, but also that other worlding towards justice requires *the ability to respond* by all of the actors and agencies engaged in the matters of interest. The term therefore indicates that responsibility proceeds in regards to context and power differences. Take the example of a farmer and a cow, where according to ‘response-ability’ the justice-intended farmer must attend to the cow’s welfare while giving regard to the cow’s ability to choose options about it’s own life (e.g. where to graze and when to wean its young), yet all activities still occur within the rubric of a pre-existing productive agricultural context of expectation for milk provisions to humans (notwithstanding a possible move towards vegan cultural practices).

² [Imdb.com *The Last Unicorn* information page](#) [accessed April 7, 2017].

³ <http://www.ollysuzi.com/> [accessed April 7, 2017].

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