

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents seven artists, namely, Jaime Kennedy, Tom Bamberger, Kelli Connell, Tom Chambers, Matt Siber, Nathan Baker, and Harri Kallio in the order of their interview dates. For each artist, data is presented in two different interpretational contexts: (1) the artist's self-understanding, and (2) the artist's theoretical understanding (Kvale, 1996). In (1) self-understanding, I rephrased the artist's points of view in my own words. The description of what they said about their views on layers of reality and their photographs is arranged according to themes:

1. About the artists: their biological, educational, and artistic backgrounds.
2. About the artists' digital-synthesized photographs: the making, size, and the content of the photographs, production process, image sources, pattern, major ideas, initial feelings, meanings, and artistic influences.
3. History: experiences with the darkroom and digital photography, past or later work, the significance of the digital tool.
4. View on reality: the artists' definitions, notions of reality in their work, reflections of their views of reality on photographs, strategies to visualize realities.
5. Artists' expectations of viewers: personal, cultural, and social responses.

In (2) theoretical understanding, I situated data analysis in the context of major Western aesthetical theories on knowledge, namely realism, expressionist cognitivism, formalism, and postmodernism. I first of all identify the artist's different layers of reality, consider the deepest layer of reality as his knowledge, and according to his knowledge I cite most suitable

theories to explicate his work. It was common for each artist to have mixed epistemologies, and thereby their photographs could be explained by different aesthetic theories. In this respect, instead of trying to find a single epistemological school for each artist, I identify various characteristics that belong to different epistemologies, even though they might contradict each other, such as a combination of realism and expressionism. Then I concretize his knowledge by discussing his idea of the work and his fabrication of the images. Finally I move to the significance of the digital tool and conclude with the artist's contribution of knowledge to and expectation of viewers.

### **Artist 7: Harri Kallio**

#### **Part 1: Kallio's self understanding**

Harri Kallio, a Finnish photographer living and working in New York City, reconstructs extinct dodo birds in sculpture and photography to explore the mysterious history of dodos that live today only in people's memory, and to arouse concern for the hierarchical relationship between humans and other species. Kallio's project, *The Dodo and Mauritius Island: Imaginary Encounters* (see Appendix G), visualizes innocent and naïve dodos frolicking and running about before their extinction and the moment they encountered human beings for the first time in Mauritius Island.

Kallio's deep interest in the dodo motivated him to begin this project. It was in *Alice in Wonderland* that Kallio first became acquainted with the dodo, a wild bird with a kind heart. Amazed at the fact that the dodo did exist on the earth once upon a time, and curious about why the memory of the dodo is so ingrained in people's collective consciousness today that it occasionally appears in popular culture, Kallio began researching the dodo. The dodo, pigeon- and duck-like, slightly bigger than a swan, lived only on Mauritius Island, situated in the middle of Indian Ocean, and was exterminated due to human invasion of the island between 1662 and 1693. The extinct dodos live again as they once did in Kallio's project,

where he reconstructed two life-size models of the dodo, one male and one female, brought them to Mauritius Island, and photographed them in various natural settings.

To rebuild the dodo, which was extinct before the camera was invented, Kallio relied on two different categories of historical data—scientific and artistic. Actual dodo remains are scarce, incomplete, and exist in collections in different European countries: an actual dodo head in Oxford University Natural History Museum, a skull at Copenhagen University's Zoological Museum, a dodo's foot at Natural History Museum, London, some bones at Narodny Museum, Prague, and reconstructed dodo fossil skeletons at Cambridge University and Natural History Museum, London. Kallio visited these sites and photographed bones and fossils as part of this photographic project. In addition, he acquired scientific information about the proportion of mechanical bones, the difference between a male and a female dodo, and the bone structure linking the head and the body from Bradley Livezey's Ph.D. research in morphology at the University of Kansas.

This accurate, scientific data makes Kallio's constructed dodos "extremely close to actual dodos" (Personal communication, June 13, 2007); however, as he states, accurateness is not his primary concern. Rather, what is more important to him is that his dodos are recognizable as the one in *Alice in Wonderland*. Therefore, despite his extensive research on bones and fossils to obtain a probable sketch of the dodo's looks, Kallio puts an emphasis on artistically historical resources. The most important pictorial reference among them is Rolandt Savery's *Edward Dodo* (1626), which inspired John Tenniel's drawing of the dodo in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), and which gives a direct hint about the feathers, plumage, wings, tail, and coloration of real dodos. Kallio explains the relative weight he gave to the scientific vs. the artistic sources: "My idea was not so much to carry out a scientific reconstruction, but rather to place back into the landscape of Mauritius the dodo of *Alice in Wonderland*—a character faithful to its appearance in art history, a character that is part myth

and part real” (Kallio, 2004, p. 12). Nevertheless, although modeling his dodos from Savery’s artistic *Edward Dodo*, Kallio is very concerned with the evidence that Savery used a live dodo as a model instead of basing his image on either other artistic reproductions or his imagination. Kallio explicitly states: “I am not a scientist, but I do not mind my work is based on actual scientific information” (Personal communication, June 13, 2007). The negotiation between the scientific and artistic influences has a direct effect on what kind of dodo is to be formed—whether it is fat and dumb, as is the dodo that exists in most people’s memory guided by Savery’s painting, or it is an agile and athletic bird, as described by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century witness accounts. Kallio finally decided to depict the dodo in most people’s memory.

Kallio’s process of building two dodos involved different media, materials, and working sites. First of all, the mechanical skeleton of the dodo was made of aluminium and steel with adjustable joints in the legs, wings, necks, and jaws so as to make possible various facial expressions and bodily postures. The second stage was a long process to sculpt the heads and feet with clay: “I did not stop sculpting the heads until I had a feeling that they are staring at me” (Kallio, 2004, p. 57). Also involved were taxidermy, which denaturalized skins and feathers from a swan and goose, and a dying procedure to match the colors in Savery’s *Edward Dodo*.

The third stage was to carry the two dodo sculptures to the dodo’s original habitat—Mauritius Island. Kallio tried to construct the scene as it was in the seventeenth century when dodos were abundant and free before their encounter with human beings, either in a forest, near a river, or by the sea. These moments of encounter were based on his imagination but not on facts. His concern was not illustrating certain behaviors or activities, as a scientist does, but demonstrating the connection between characters and the land. However, Kallio identifies a mismatch between his imagination and reality. Kallio expresses

his disappointment with the modern scene on Mauritius: “I expected it to be lush, mysterious, charming, but what I found was something like urban Florida” (Personal communication, June 13, 2007). Because of urban development and numerous imported vegetation, “the original Mauritius Island is just as extinct as the dodo” (Personal communication, June 13, 2007).

Finally, the computer enables Kallio to composite many single shots of one or two dodos into one image so as to yield a big group of dodos in a landscape. Kallio explains that he needs the digital tool in one way to compensate for the inaffordability of producing a hundred dodos to be scattered in the land, and in another, to fit the idea that the dodo is actually not alive anymore and hence “does not exist one single time in front of the lens-light traditional photography” (Personal communication, June 13, 2007).

Kallio continues to explain his twofold purpose in reinventing the past of the dodo. One is to work with the popular dodo character from *Alice in Wonderland* as mentioned above; while the other is to explore human hegemony over other species. In Kallio’s view, there is an imbalance between people and the rest of the world. Human beings are arrogant enough to place themselves on a higher position over other species by not only occupying and destroying the living environment, but also interrupting and even exterminating other species. In Kallio’s opinion, like dinosaurs that used to dominate on the earth and became extinct as a result, human beings will have the same fate, leaving the rest of the world back to normal as if they had never existed. Having a long history of interest in other species—collecting butterflies since he was twelve years old and doing editorial photography on animals as a part-time job when he was a student—Kallio has had a desire to understand more about the weirdness and mystery of animals. For example, due to the climate change, millions of bees suddenly disappeared from their beehives, leaving no clue about the exact cause of their evacuation and where they might go. Kallio is especially intrigued by those even scientists

cannot explain.

As a general theme in all his work, Kallio examines the “strange relationship between people and nature” (Personal communication, June 13, 2007), which is a reciprocal perspective-exchange between people and other species to see the world, either projecting the human view onto animal behaviors, or imagining the world from other species’ perspectives.

In *Lepidoptera Portrait*, Kllio photographs moths and butterflies in the way we make human portraits. By anthropomorphizing moths and butterflies, Kallio seeks to “interpret the expressions in these portraits using the scale and approach of human emotions” (Kallio, Artist Statement). Kallio provides a definition of the portrait: “A portrait is an artistic representation of a person or object, and occasionally some artistic insight into his or her personality” (Kallio, Artist Statement). In another project, *Innerscape*, Kallio presents microscopic and macroscopic landscapes seen through bacteria’s eyes. Kallio investigates an odd yet familiar domain parallel to our everyday environment from the viewpoints of other species.

Kallio’s work, present or past, demonstrates a combination of probing serious issues and comical approaches. While revealing human beings’ wicked conduct in the dodo project, Kallio mentions that he was constantly laughing at his project when carrying the two models and searching for good places to photograph in Mauritius Island. This mixture of seriousness and humor is an influence from artist Joan Fontocberta, who has a similar tendency in his artwork.

Kallio further articulates the differences among his reconstruction of dodos in the actual landscape, other people’s dodo sculptures, dinosaurs of diorama in science museum, sculptures of dragons, and unicorns in fairy tales. According to Kallio, while there is a whole history of dodo sculptures spreading in museums around the world, his dodos are unique because he uses *Alice in Wonderland* as a reference, and because his dodos are adjustable and can be moved into various postures.. It is also the individual interpretation of the incomplete

information on dodos that set each dodo sculpture apart: “this is my interpretation, and my own concern is that the character is recognizable as a dodo, and recognizable for someone who knows it is from *Alice in Wonderland*” (Personal communication, June 13, 2007).

Compared with dinosaurs of diorama, Kallio once again insists that his biggest concern is not exact and scientific duplication, even though he contend that his landscape is real, and is the exact location where the dodo existed. Kallio remarks that giving his dodo reconstruction a real surrounding is more upright and honest for him than situating them in studio and rendering a virtual space. Also, the face of his dodo is much more detailed than dinosaurs in museums so as to have vivid looks in different shots. He says that dragons and unicorns are absolutely different from his dodo because “there is no fossil” of them; they are imaginary creatures, while the dodo actually existed.

Kallio gives a definition of reality, but soon indicates that such a view is not of his concern and interest: “Think of yourself as an organism. It is responding to all kinds of stimulus around you. Basically your reality can be seen as electrical impulses in your brain” (Personal communication, June 13, 2007). Rather than mechanism, what is more important to Kallio is human perspective: “How you look at people around you is your reality, your human perspective” (Personal communication, June 13, 2007).

Kallio unequivocally states that his dodo project presents his reality: “I am creating my own reality and express it in my work” (Personal communication, June 13, 2007). Although scientific information is important to him, he considers *Alice in Wonderland* as his most important reference. However, rather than totally duplicating the dodo in *Alice in Wonderland*, Kallio resorts to actual remains and witness accounts, and forms his own interpretation of what the dodo should look like. Therefore, according to Kallio, it is his own interpretation that makes the dodo project a reality for him: “The final project is my interpretation; that is just important” (Personal communication, June 13, 2007). Besides, in

showing his project in exhibits, along with his final prints where the dodos were photographed in Mauritius Island, Kallio gives tools for viewers to understand how his reality is constructed by showing two dodo reconstructions and photographs of actual dodo bones and fossils, as well as visually explaining the several stages of production. Kallio's reality resides in his human perspective toward the accurate data and the shared memory in children's books, which results in the blend of fabricated dodos and the real landscape.

In the same vein, Kallio thinks that every person has his own reality because each one sees things differently and has different interpretations of the same event. For him, retouched magazine covers presenting perfect models are not real, such as those that shrunk Paris Hilton to look thinner, because "they are not real people; they do not look like that" (Personal communication, June 13, 2007). In this case, the only thing Kallio can be certain of is the fact that Hilton was actually in front of the camera. Furthermore, idealized landscapes constructed in a computer is not real either because "it loses the link to anything that is out there; it is just like a drawing with pixels" (Personal communication, June 13, 2007). As for dragons and unicorns, they are too romantic to be real, as he asserts: "I like to keep things real. I am interested in things that are real. I would not be interested in creating super romantic, fake, fantasized world, such as unicorn or monster. I am interested in reality and real thing" (Personal communication, June 13, 2007).

Kallio also states that the knowledge his photographs provide includes perception, memory, consciousness, and reason. According to Kallio, perception indicates his own interpretation of all the information about the dodo; memory is the collected memory of the dodo; consciousness connotes his view of the world that he wants to share; and reason constitutes the educational function of the work. Within the photographic spectrum with the realistic window on the world in one end, and the romantic projection of self on the other, Kallio situates himself in the middle: half faithful representation of the world and half

subjective expression of self.

Kallio keeps his final photographs realistic in order to have them read in the traditional sense of documentary photography, as one critic says: “it is a kind of documentary about a memory” (McCormick, 2005, p. 70). In Kallio’s view, if the seam or fault is detected, it becomes part of viewers’ reading of images, which is not interesting and not part of his intention. For Kallio, the digital tool does not cause as much as the change of his perspective in reality, but brings forth a requisite look of digital artwork. Kallio sets a higher expectation on the sophistication of visual presentation of digital photographs, and in turn, for Kallio, the digital medium is best used by and suitable for only those images requiring delicate and subtle synthesis. For example, montage, unique in seeing its actual cut and paste, does not need any advantage of a computer, and hence is not fitting to be made with the digital tool. In addition, the decisive-moment mode of seeing is interesting in traditional documentary photography, but it makes no sense for him to imitate a decisive-moment type of photograph in computer. The digital medium deserves a new method of image production and a new style, which is seamless and sophisticated fabrication of images. Like a movie condensed in one frame, working with the digital tool is not only more convenient than working with the traditional tool, but it also offers more options to convey and to achieve one’s wishful ideas. In Kallio’s view, digital construction is closer to what one does in painting because images can be modified and changed at the beginning, middle, and end of the process.

Kallio’s expectation of viewers is to understand the concept and to enjoy the interesting pictures. If viewers comment on them as fake photographs, Kallio would defend them by explaining that the landscape is real, the dodo did exist hundreds of years ago, and the digital duplication of dodos in the photographs is only to overcome practical limitations. However, since Kallio cannot control viewers and they have their own interpretations, all he wants to express is that he never intends to fool viewers; to the contrary, he honestly gives details on

how and where his 'fake' photographs were fabricated and originated.

## **Part 2: Kallio's theoretical understanding**

Kallio provides two definitions of reality. The first one is the basic reaction to stimulations from the world: "Think of yourself as an organism. It is responding to all kinds of stimulus around you. Basically your reality can be seen as electrical impulses in your brain" (Personal communication, June 13, 2007). Kallio then rejects this view and turns to the second one: "How you look at people around you is your reality, your human perspective" (Personal communication, June 13, 2007). The difference between these two views is the extent to which the human mind is involved in processing the data from the world. Although Kallio refuses the first mechanical view which necessitates the least cognition, he does not deny that he needs sensory experiences as raw material for later mental processing. His reliance on the actual information from the world can be observed from his assertion that dodos and dinosaurs are real, while dragons and unicorns are not. The former actually existed and left bones and fossils behind, whereas the latter are imaginative creatures from human minds. In addition, the idealized landscape retouched in a computer and Paris Hilton on a magazine cover are not real because "they lose the link to anything that is out there; they are not real people; they do not look like that" (Personal communication, June 13, 2007). Here, the only reality comes from the assurance that Hilton did exist in front of the camera. This assertion accords to Sontag (1977), Berger (1980), and Barthes's (1982) realism that there is a close relationship between a photograph and what the photograph represents. Therefore, for Kallio, the prerequisite for something to be real is its actual existence that can be sensed, which also forms his first layer of reality.

Certainly, this basic level of reality does not satisfy Kallio. He continues to set a second criterion to filter what he gains from sensory experiences—the human perspective, which indicates his point of view to see the world. This emphasis on personal interpretation is

shown in his opinion that his own dodo reconstruction is more real than the dodo sculptures of others: “it is my interpretation; that is just important” (Personal communication, June 13, 2007). Consequently, Kallio’s second layer of reality can be summed up as his personal version of the world.

Having two distinct sources of knowledge, one from the world and the other from his mind, Kallio seems to have mixed epistemologies; as he states, his window on the world and mirror of himself are “half and half” in his work. Such a unique combination of realist and romanticist characteristics seems to parallel with the epistemology of Nobel Prize winner Erwin Schrodinger (1887-1961), a physicist, biologist and philosopher. As a scientist well-known for his contributions to quantum mechanics, Schrodinger opposed the commonly-held view that for scientists knowledge must only come from nature and reason. Rather, his world view has been theorized as “rational mysticism” (Gotschl, 1992, p. 12), which stresses the two stages of knowledge production—sensory experiences from the external world and inner mental construction, as he states:

First, we are physically connected with the external world through our sensations . . . Second, since only single data, individual information, enter via our sense organs, our consciousness, the full inner picture has to be constructed and synthesized by my cognitive, mental functions. These perceptions, sensations, and memories can only be connected and ordered through our imagination and our memory: this is our inner world view. It makes no difference whether we do this with the help of scientific knowledge, mystical insights or even prescientific beliefs, as long as we verify and confirm our inner picture through empirical reality (Gotschl, 1992, p. 13).

Kallio’s two sources of knowledge manifest in the deliberation between readymade images of dodos from scientific data and artistic pictures, as well as his own imagination of it based on collected memory. The information about the dodo that he obtains includes actual remains of the dodo head, skull, and bones, drawings and paintings of dodos, general memory from *Alice in Wonderland*, and witness accounts. Even though Kallio took into consideration of all of these sources, he did not solely rely on any of them. He created a dodo out of his

estimation which looks “extremely close to actual dodos” (Personal communication, June 13, 2007), while equally fulfills the image of mysterious dodos living in collective consciousness. For him, his interpretation is the benchmark of how a dodo should look, although what constitutes or affects his multiple sources of knowledge is hard to pin down, vacillating between science and mystery, as if echoing Schrodinger’s view from “scientific knowledge, mystical insights or even prescientific beliefs” (Gotschl, 1992, p. 13). In this dodo project, Kallio resorts to the dodo in *Alice in Wonderland*, but when tracing the origin of the dodo in *Alice*, it is still important for Kallio that the painter based his subject on a real dodo. In other words, Kallio highlights his self-interpretation which is composed of nostalgic memory and accurate origin. These complicated sources in his mind suggests Kallio’s cognition at work, which is supported by his imagination and memory of dodos through scientific and artistic data. In addition, the dodo project is in fact a dodo’s portrait—the portrait not only shows the basic appearance of the dodo, but also reveals Kallio’s artistic insight into his personality. Therefore, the knowledge provided by the dodo project is a combination of the realism of the faithful appearance of dodos, the expressionism of exploring the mystery and memory of dodos, and the cognitivism of Kallio’s insight about what dodos should look like, and the meaning brought by the reconstruction of the extinct dodo. This wide range of knowledge is proved by Kallio’s own claim that his work provides perception, memory, consciousness, and reason.

Realism can be used to explain Kallio’s approach to reconstruct dodos. His interpretation is based on bones, fossils, and accurate statistical information, which lead to the resemblance to the real dodo. With a hint of his imagination and the haunting impression, Kallio depicts the dodo from his point of view. Echoing Aristotle, Kallio depends on the use of his senses as evidence and contemplation of the physical realm. Kallio’s mimetic dodo reconstruction does not just represent two particulars, but visualizes what a dodo ought to be.

His dodos are not ideal, but are acquired from the world; they are imagined items which carry significance encompassing the pattern underlying human understanding and memory. The subject matter of dodo reinvention is the dominant theme of this project. No matter how scientific, artistic, or imaginary the ingredients of the final products are, showing the extinct dodo to people is one of Kallio's most important objectives.

Expressionism, though not intense, can be detected from Kallio's motivation to make dodos alive in his pictures. As he utters: "as a human being, I would like to see dodos alive today" (Personal communication, June 13, 2007), his humanity and pity toward the fate of extinct dodo saturates the innocent faces of dodos and their carefree wandering on Mauritius Island. The other expressionism manifests in Kallio's passion for mystery. Akin to romanticists in the eighteenth century, who emphasized intuition and imagination to explore everything irrational, Kallio cannot resist the temptation to explore the enigma of other species: what is the charm of dodos that they still live in people's hearts even though they have been extinct for so long? Why do bees suddenly disappear without leaving any hint? And what are the facial expressions of moths and butterflies? Kallio also implies a longing for a mysterious Eastern island from the perspective of a Western man: "I expected it (Mauritius) to be lush, mysterious, and charming" (Personal communication, June 13, 2007). Such exoticism shows that Kallio desires not only a distant past, but also a distant place, which comprises of simple stereotypes of the East in his craving. Kallio's theme of volition motivated by mystery while also acknowledging the objective appearance of dodo seems to correspond to philosopher Ayn Rand's romantic realism, which was defined as: "a portrayal of things and people as they might and ought to be. 'Might be' implied realism, as contrasted with mere fantasy. 'Ought to be' implies a moral vision and a standard of beauty and virtue" (Wikipedia, 2006).

Cognitivism can also articulate the impact of Kallio's project on viewers. From Kallio's

own insight and ideas about dodos in his photographs, viewers gain the opportunity to imagine the real dodos running up and down on Mauritius. According to philosopher Berys Gaut (1998), we imagine cognitively. The cognitive activity in our mind resulting from the dodo project deepens our understanding about dodo's appearance and habitat, and refines our belief concerning the overall image of dodos in our consciousness. We develop our own ideas in response to the dodo reconstruction, and thus "mov[e] cognitively from point A to point B" (John, 2001, p. 332). Furthermore, the meaning of the dodo project is delivered through the dodo character itself, which has become a symbol for all extinct species. According to Goodman (1976), as long as we acquire a correct interpretation of the symbol, we understand a work of art. From looking at dodos alive, we realize how cruel, intrusive, and dominant human beings were to kill dodos, to rob them of their living spaces, and to carry them to Europe for entertainment which resulted in the permanent change of their body figure. Introspecting further, according to Kallio, human beings have unworthily awarded themselves license to wantonly control other organisms and the environment. We think we have the authority because we think, we reason, and thus are smarter; while other species are dumb because they cannot even speak. However, the only result from our unscrupulous behavior is the total destruction of all.

For Kallio, the seamless combination of different shots of dodos in final prints is a unique and necessary characteristic of digital photography. His return to the appearance of documentary photography is not as much as a modernist intent to stay true to the medium of photography. Rather, he regards the digital as a new medium presenting a matchless style where the decisive moment is not the way of producing and seeing photographs, where different shots are sophisticatedly modified and synthesized so as to render no faults, where multiple pictures are condensed like a one-frame movie, and where artists work more like painters able to adjust the image in any stage of production. To this end, viewers are not

expected to look at Kallio's photographs from a decisive-moment standpoint. More appropriately, viewers are invited to understand the whole production process, enjoy the humorous dodo portraiture, and ponder the meaning behind it.

In conclusion, Kallio has mixed sources of knowledge—one from the world and the other from the mind—and hence exemplifies Schrodinger's rational mysticism, or Rand's romantic realism. His dodo project involves a romantic incentive to concretize the memory and mystery of dodos, a realist approach based on scientific and artist information, and a contribution to viewers' cognitive contemplation on the issue of extinct species. Kallio considers the digital tool as a brand new medium exhibiting an unparalleled style of skillful manipulation. From looking at this new style of images, viewers are encouraged to adjust their old definition of a truthful photograph and experience the mixture of seriousness and light-heartedness in Kallio's artwork.