

ZETESIS

Research Generated by Curiosity



THE CRUELTY OF THE CLASSICAL CANON



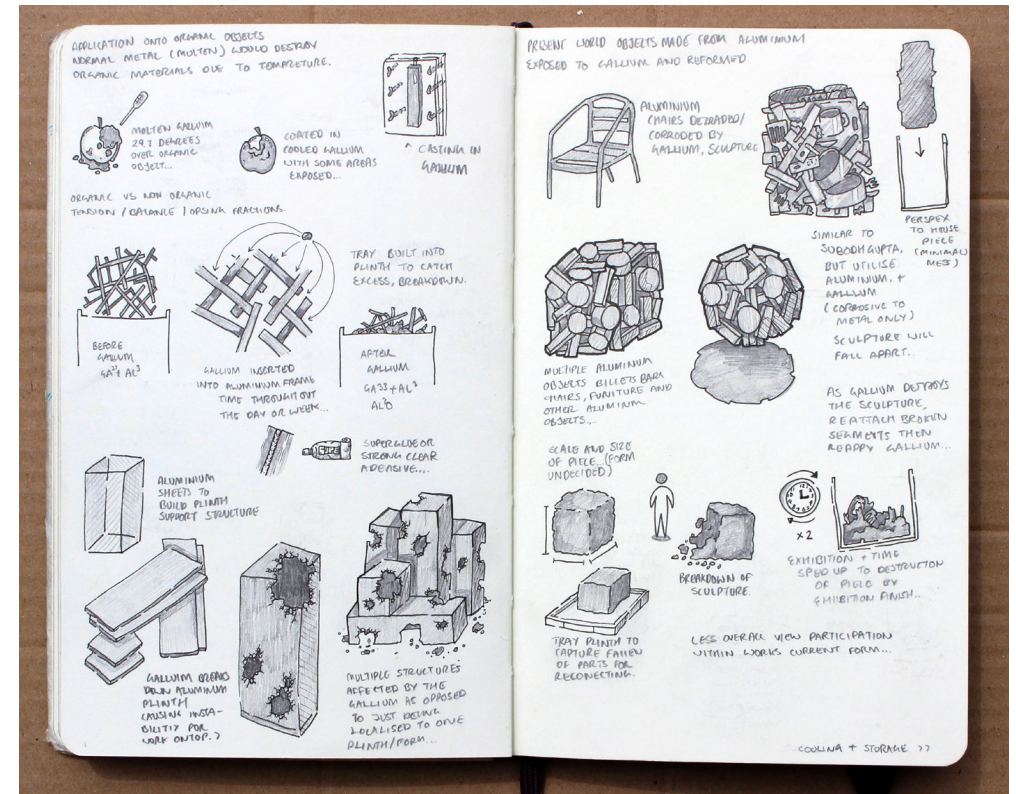
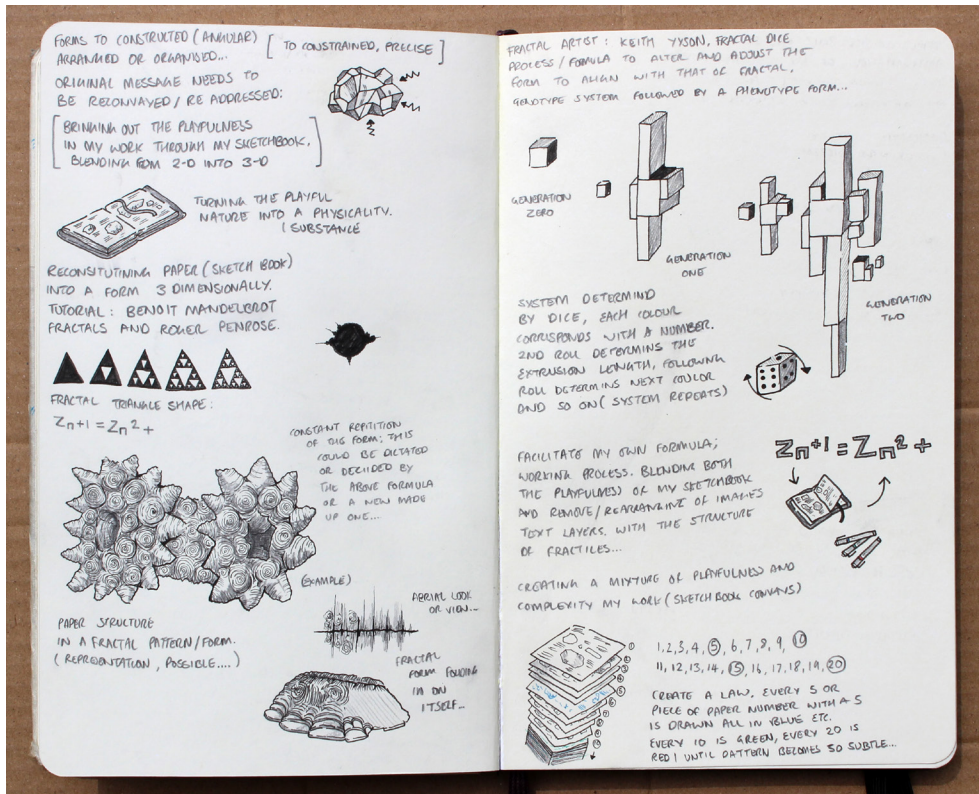
Kręć się, kręc wrzeciono,
prysła wąta nić,
wstydem dziewczę płonie,
wstyż się, dziewczę, wstyż!

(S. Moniuszko, Przasniczka)



Turn up, turn up the spindle,
burst the frail thread,
girl burns with shame,
shame on you, girl, shame!

(S. Moniuszko, Przasniczka)



The final form(s) emerging out of these few pages shown here will be built from a composite wood material made from the sketchbook pages themselves, organized and layered according to the imaginary and irrational with mathematical formulation. This form will then be subjected to large currents of electricity causing natural fractal patterns to appear over its surface. It just might work.

My Body is Your Body

For over a decade, AMAE has been investigating, through their art practice, the representation of the psychological tension that is created in the body that results from the influences of society. Their work also explores the theory of the Self, the perception of sexuality and the therapeutic influence of art in the construction of identity. In 2012, AMAE presented as a live stream broadcast, *I Will Jump First, a Male to Female Sexual Reassignment Operation* by Italian duo Amae.

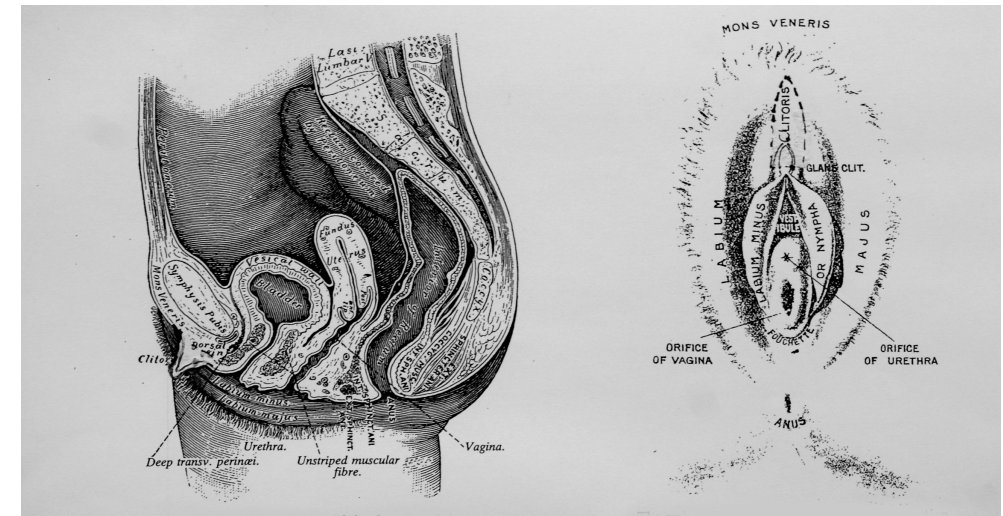
For many artists their muses were the source of their inspiration and even the object of their desire and dreams. For AMAE the muse is a woman in a man's body. Gaia grew up in a male body never thinking about herself as a man. As soon as she took her first steps she was rejected by the company who had up to that point, employed her. Gaia is now 37 and she is still contemplating a sex change. Gaia is one person of many in this situation. AMAE felt close to her feelings and wanted to explore those feelings in a way that might develop / represent a merger between the artist and the muse. Many questions arise from this kind of artistic coupling, addressed as they have been at the point of genitalia and skin. Where will these identities lead in their support of each other?

Now the time has come to give Gaia a hand and say: 'I will jump first'. Photographic slices from this live performance tries to get at the heart of getting a 'Male to Female Sexual Reassignment' broadcast in real time from the wood workshop of The Birmingham School of Art.





Lesbian Genitalia (2013).



Clitoromegally” in Hannah Honeywill, *Queer Anatomy (dis-organ-ised bodies): A queering of Gray’s Anatomy* (2012).

Dyke: a slang term for lesbian, often used as an insult but has been reclaimed by some parts of the lesbian community as an empowered term of identification.

Butch: a lesbian woman who is more comfortable with masculine gender codes, styles or identities than with feminine ones.

Stone Butch: is a dyke (lesbian) placed somewhere on the boundary between female masculinity and transgender subjectivity. During sex they are active but don’t like to be touched and possibly will remain clothed.

Femme (also referred to as *Lipstick Lesbian*): takes on the traditional female gender role, simultaneously identifying as a lesbian.

Tomboy: connotes boyishness within women/girls, both within heterosexual and homosexual context.

Lesbian Body: a polymorphous body: the global disparity between social constructs and environments which have a rhizomatic impact on what and how a lesbian body is and becomes.

Androgynous: represents some version of gender mixing.



"He sees mountains as mountains, but it does not follow that he sees them as mountains just as he saw them before." ~ Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*.

Extremely Precise Objects of Ambiguous Use¹

For me, the creation and sustenance of an increased variety of genders is a question of transforming matter. In one sense, this transformation could refer to the cosmetic, surgical, and hormonal interventions by which transgender and gender-variant people literally change their bodies. But, gender variant people also engage in another type of material transformation that is not visible in the manner of these types of physical procedures. Bodies and body parts change, but not objectively. Your breasts are still there, but they are no longer feminine – they are your chest. Your penis is a large clitoris. Your husky voice is no longer a male signifier. Your body is the same, but in crucial ways it has changed. These types of changes are a question of belief. Belief in a *material* form. They are about the creation of new modes of perception by which the same thing appears completely different. These bodies are a mixture of the real and the virtual, where realness is virtual, virtuality is real. What Brian Massumi calls, after Foucault, "incorporeal materialism."² These bodies are both real *and* imaginary – fleshy reinterpretations of the gendered significance of their physical parts. Transforming gender is a question of transforming matter, but, more than that, it is a question of how we understand what matter is, especially the matter that is our physical bodies. Gayle Salamon, reads transgender through the lens of the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. She describes the body in general, but the transgender body in particular as "a mixture or amalgam of substance and ideal located somewhere between its objectively quantifiable materiality and its phantasmatic extensions into the world."³ Or, as Merleau-Ponty asks: "Is my body a thing, is it an idea?"⁴ Is there a way to understand materiality that can account for the complex relationships between the real and the imaginary proposed by gender-variant bodies? What is it when a body looks exactly the same but has transformed into something completely different?

1. This is an excerpt from a much longer essay: "Extremely Precise Objects Of Ambiguous Use" (paper presented at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago MFA Exhibition, May 14, 2011). For Gordon's wider account and work, please see <http://www.rehgordon.net>.

2. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. (Durham/London: Duke Univ. Press, 2002), p. 5.

3. Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2010), pp. 64-65.

4. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining ~ The Chiasm," in *The Visible and the Invisible*, translated by Alphonso Lingis. (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1968), p. 152.

The Rootless Forest

If the soil beneath our feet shifts, what happens when that foundation erodes and in its wake, our home, our country, our hopes shift with it? These, in the context of violence and war, were the questions that prompted this project.

In war, landscapes people and communities are altered, resulting in families being relocated. The Rootless Forest is a literal and metaphorical platform that gives voice to communities affected by conflict, inspiring new narratives for landscapes that are foreign and local at the same time. During the journey the boat broadcasted a soundscape, consisting of verbatim stories from people affected by the current Afghan conflict, including UK military personnel who have served overseas and Afghans who have settled in Birmingham as a result of war in their homeland. As The Rootless Forest moves slowly along the water, its continual motion poetically echoed these accounts of displacement and relocation. The Rootless Forest reflects upon the upheaval experienced by communities, individuals and landscapes in times of conflict. Inspired by the moving forest of Birnham Wood in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the trees were a motif for both camouflage and combat, a habitat for multiple voices and a transitional space between past and future.

The Rootless Forest existed as a mobile artwork, weighing over 20 tonnes, with 100 trees up to 3 meters tall planted along its 16 metre length. This mini-forest travelled at walking pace along the Birmingham and Black Country Canals, with recorded stories about passage, change and home, told by families from the military, and UK Afghan communities in Birmingham. The trees ~ all native to the UK, including alder and birch ~ are to be re-planted in Walsall Arboretum on completion of the project to become a lasting monument to those affected by conflict.

The Rootless Forest was developed by Beth Derbyshire, Wheatley Fellow at Birmingham Institute of Art and Design. Funded by the Arts Council, England and supported by the School of Art at the Birmingham Institute for Art & Design (BIAD) Birmingham City University, The Centre for Fine Art Research (CFAR) and the Canal & River Trust. The soundscape was a collaboration between artist Beth Derbyshire and voice director, Dr Tara McAllister-Viel.



The Rootless Forest, a moving landscape and soundscape, (2012-2013).

Biographies

AMAE, as a collaborative singularity, focuses on the tensions generated in marginalised bodies by heteronormative society. AMAE's research contaminates traditional languages of art communication (poetry, video, sound, photography, installation, performance) with mass media via photographic works and performances, which are often broadcast live on the web. Working on international platforms across the EU, AMAE focuses on intersubjectivity and transfer in performance art; inheritance and mimicry of behaviour; mimicry against emulation; identification and conflict; primary society and contemporary society; time and space of assimilation of empathetic behaviours; behaviours towards otherness; transient bodies; augmented reality. The aim of the current research, 58 (+1) indices on the body (working with philosopher Jean Luc Nancy) is to consider emulation as a mimicry of transit within performance art, deepening the question of identification and conflict via live audience interaction and guided by Nancy's philosophical approach to the body. www.amae-art.com

Jakub Ceglarz received a Bachelors Degree in Fine Art from Middlesex University in 2011. He is continuing his postgraduate education at Birmingham Institute of Art and Design (MA in Fine Art) and will be starting his PhD at BIAD in September 2013. His art practice focuses, in the main, on photography / imaging of the body, skin, and a sense of dis / placement. His research looks at the corporeality of sense, text and its influence in art as well as the portrayal of the body within the photography. www.kubaceglarz.blogspot.co.uk; derior123@gmail.com

Beth Derbyshire is currently Research Fellow at the School of Art, Birmingham Institute of Art and Design. She exhibits internationally and holds a BA from Ruskin, Oxford and an MFA from Chelsea College of Art. Beth has delivered a wide range of public art projects over the last 15 years working with many different communities, including people from deaf communities, military planners, refugees and veteran groups. Past projects have included Anthem (2009) launched at the Eden Project, Seven Seas (2011 with Project Ocean at Selfridges). In 2012, the Rootless Forest was launched along the Birmingham canals, giving voice to the complex narrative of both Afghani refugees and British servicemen. Derbyshire's latest project, The Ark (commissioned by

Creativity Works), is a floating sculpture and cinema which travels along regional canals making contemporary art accessible to an otherwise disconnected public. www.bethderbyshire.com

Gordon Hall is an artist and writer based in New York. Gordon has exhibited and performed in such venues as SculptureCenter (NYC), The Kitchen (NYC), Taxter and Spengemann (NYC), Samson Projects (Boston), LaMontagne Gallery (Boston), Roots and Culture (Chicago), Western Exhibitions (Chicago), Gallery 400 @ the University of Illinois Chicago, and The Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago). Gordon has been published in *Critical Correspondance*, *Monsters and Dust*, *New York Art Magazine*, *Title Magazine*, and *Make Literary Magazine*, and was the curator of Second Gallery in Boston from 2005-2007. Currently the Director of the Center for Experimental Lectures hosted by MOMA PS1 in Queens, NY. Gordon holds an MA in Visual and Critical Studies and a MFA in Fiber and Material Studies from School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and teaches at Parsons the New School for Design. www.gordonhall.net

Hannah Honeywill is a Birmingham based artist. The key concerns of her research and practice are negotiating and re-presenting queer bodies. Hannah has a degree in sculpture from Camberwell College of Arts in London and is currently finishing her MA in Fine Art at Birmingham Institute of Art and Design. In 2012 she was selected for the Art Laguna sculpture prize in Venice and in 2011 The Threadneedle Prize in London. She will begin her PhD research in September 2013 on female piracy and the body. www.hannahhoneywill.co.uk

Liam Worth's practice currently questions the boundaries of simulation within materiality and how these sources govern, define and contextualize the artist's expressive boundaries. His works are a methodological mixture of minimal-maximal structures that encompass various scientific materials to unusual affect. Before the construction takes form, his ontological approach to the work is minutely documented in compelling detail; bound within a leather sketchbook. His playful and stylized drawings formulate a makeshift construction guide to any viewer. Worth's sculptures have been exhibited in London, Ascot, Oxford & Birmingham. A postgraduate from Oxford, he is currently finalising an MA in Fine Art at Birmingham City University. www.cfar-biad.co.uk/liamworth; www.saatchigallery.com/ns/profile/%20/2212

ZETESIS VOL. 1, NO. 1

A Journal for the Intersecting Landscapes of Fine Art, Philosophy,
Cultural Practice and the Wild Sciences.

Talepiej | Jakub Ceglaz
Imagination Constructs | Liam Worth
My Body is Your Body | AMAE
Queer Anatomy | Hannah Honeywill
Extremely Precise Objects of Ambiguous Use | Gordon Hall
The Rootless Forest | Beth Derbyshire



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