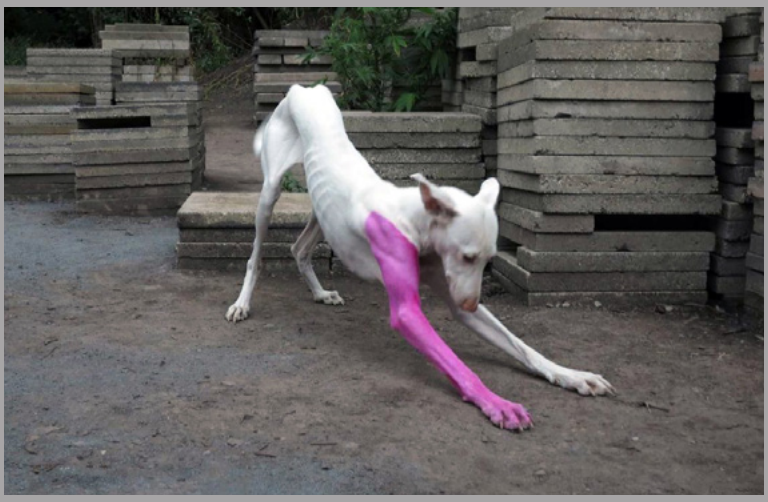
ACTIVE



AGENCY

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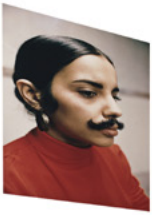

QUEER-TRANS
SOLIDARITY
IS
PUBLIC HEALTH

CANCEL RENT
AND EVICTIONS
FOREVER

THIS IS A
MIRROR
YOU ARE A
WRITTEN
SENTENCE

THE VOID
(LE VIDE)

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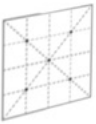
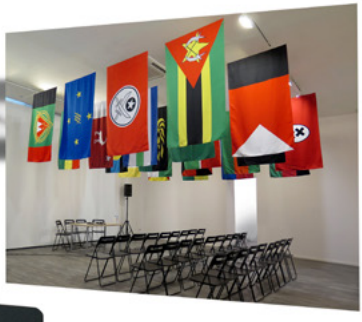
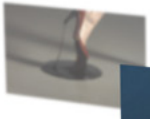



SIM DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO SCREAM


THE
WRETCHED
OF THE
EARTH




TAKE ME TO
YOUR LEADER



PREFACE

SADHNA JAIN

Graphic communication designers, (in a 'Western' context) have historically foregrounded ideas of agency through the realms of aesthetics, expression and semiotics in clear response to the proliferation of services and industries that have required their expertise. Indeed, graphic communication designers have been busy, very busy, bringing organisation to complex information, alongside the shaping and interpretation of messages. More recently, the arrival of cultural and social contexts for communications, in response to ideas of personal cultural capital, (amongst others), has marked an interruption to the former process of design within which ideas translated into output so deftly.

Meanwhile, audiences following a cue to inhabit more diverse worlds and alternative media platforms, have found that the experience of living and belonging within these new realms bears no relationship to the types of lived experience they once knew. As a consequence, design has drifted away from the precise 'input and output' rule it faithfully followed. In its place a new reflexivity in design is emerging; one which is willing to be expansive in its outlook but also more ethical in precisely what is being transmitted between parties, and who it can empower as the authors.

This all presupposes that agency in design still follows the needs of the human — if we understand what the term 'being human' now means. Our current entanglements with non-human worlds have

created sublime entities and complex interpretations of existence, which are provocatively returned to us as questions about the fundamental conceit of being human; or similarly, what it means to co-exist with systems of intelligence which require no allegiance to humans at all.

Therefore, we must consider what type of explorations with design agency could now emerge which are able to attend to the re-design of the human, if that is the task we have given to ourselves once more?

Alternative lexicons, sonification of thought, cultural software, hauntologies and political bodies, are some of the possibilities that are offered here as a means to contribute to a renewed set of ideas towards design agency. Presented here as both lecture and prompts, sections may be read aloud as scripts, as action with others; or single pages torn out to become a tactic for experimentation; or an image to evoke a totem of belief that might interact with others.

Looking far beyond the textbook models of visual representation and tidy typologies, the praxis of agency hinges upon our abilities to become conscious of the systems of power within which we are currently held. In the art school this would require fertile ground where traditional bodies of knowledge are probed alongside the introduction of more transformative moments of experiential learning. The design student should not be asked to facilitate a world solely through disciplinary knowledge,

but should become very present in acts of mutual co-creation in close unity to their own identity, however messy that might initially be.

In the spirit of everyday learning and co-operation we would like to share our ideas and motivations, and invite the reader to take ownership of this work through their own actions towards activating agency by; re-thinking, re-mixing, extending, and performance, with an audience of their own.

FOREWORD

THIS IS MY PART
NOBODY ELSE
SPEAK

ÅBÄKE

When the Italian architect Giancarlo Decarlo began building a new University in Urbino he asked, rhetorically, 'what stops people from just walking into a lecture?' Concerned about displacing the existing population of the city with an ever-changing community of students he suggested that architecture itself might be the problem; thresholds to buildings signalling a silent 'if-your-name's-not-on-the-list-you're-not-coming-in'. The actual spaces for lectures are beautiful, though I've only ever experienced them empty, they anticipate hundreds of people sitting in decreasing circles of fixed pinewood seats like church pews in light-filled concrete halls. Hundreds of faces facing one face. Buried deep within that University is an experimental cinema with the tools and equipment that were necessary at the time to produce one's own film. The invitation to participate is built in – to project as well as be projected.

I don't think he solved the problem of the threshold (if indeed it is a problem) but the question remains in the Covid era where those boundaries to knowledge have been made ever more accessible with the opening of private and institutional archives. Why do we go to lectures? I understand that *bildung macht frei*, but are we also finding out how it is done? Knowing that our practice will at some point be performed to an audience?

In the art and design college where I studied there were lectures every Tuesday evening and each

department hosted a speaker. If I try to recall a lecture they merge into each other, a sequence held together by the space, a disembodied voice in a darkened room, a luminous rectangle from which flows lucidity, absurdity, slapstick, reasons, ideas, ways of working and living, art and design, ways of publishing, technology, politics, intelligent clothing and wearable furniture. Fatwas, Sex Pistols, pearl necklaces, HTML art and two way dildos that worked on a dial-up modem. A diagram showing the disparity of building projects compared to architects graduating in Europe, the diagram then flipped, a mirror image, showing the contemporary equivalent in China. Questions to the audience: why are we not critical of Apple? Why doesn't planning law apply to high-street signage? Audiences heckling, quoting Marx. Strange musical toys and instruments, their conception discussed then played live. Statements about being a designer but possibly more of an Artist (but that was for me to decide). Work being performed, speakers walking among us, stepping down from the stage and sitting in the front row for sheer nerves. Smoking a cigarette defiantly. Lasers focusing attention. Karaoke. Holding aloft a foil yoghurt pot lid like the Blessed Sacrament and announcing 'Q'. Once there, there were only seventeen of us and we had to listen to a long story and then sing and our voices were blended and made into a heartbreaking chorus whose culmination

was the sound of the file being deleted never to be experienced again only told.

And some lectures are bad and people leave. My friend is sitting next to me writing notes, I read them thinking I have missed the speakers drift, then realise they are notes about the lecture not from it: Don't be boring. Don't say 'basically'. Don't read from a script. Don't go on for more than forty-five minutes. Think of a question.

I'm mounting a stage and looking out, fumbling first with technology and then with words. There are thousands of people in the auditorium. The lights dim and the space is a void. Midway through I ask everyone to take a photograph with the flash on, I count down from ten. Spasms of light appear in the black, specks of orange and yellow, a symphony striking up, anticipating the crescendo of blinding white flashes from hundreds of cameras and phones. Rock and Roll. I'm in a small hot room. There are thirty people on raked seats. I'm unprepared. I'm breaking up with my friends and girlfriend, trying to tell a story of a chess game that resulted in the mental collapse of one of the players. I become overwhelmed and unable to speak. I want to flee. I look at the audience, I look at my colleague on stage with me and feel the blood drain from my head. I black out.

Perhaps in the same way that Decarlo was interested in diminishing institutional fright the performative lecture diminishes stage fright. I would

like to have seen one of Richard Long's lectures where he played carousels of slides along to music and never said a thing, or Richard Hamilton's esoteric lecture on the movie *The Wizard of Oz* projected on three screens. Andy Kaufmann reading *The Great Gatsby* in full? yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Each of these examples have in common the practitioner not talking about their work but making new work instead, an extension of practice that acknowledges the presence of an audience, space and time.

THE PRIMITIVE FORM

OF EXPERI-ENCE

LOW HUM OF INSECTS

A DISCREET OBJECT

LANGUAGE

HOW (NOT) TO DO THINGS WITH WORDS

JOSHUA TREES

In 1955, philosopher John L. Austin delivered 'How to do things with words', a lecture about performative utterances – when saying something is doing something. His acknowledgement of words-as-actions, outlined in his book of the same title (1962), set the stage for speech acts theory and inspired the notion of 'performativity' – the power of language to effect change.

Around the same time, artists and designers (architects more so than graphic designers) started questioning traditional definitions of art (and design, to a lesser extent) and investigating conceptual, cultural and computational processes (installation, performance, publishing, research, software) concerned more with the production of ideas than with objects. They designed concepts, plans and systems for stimulating thought and (in)action rather than the consumption of craft, attempting to disrupt, democratise and 'dematerialise' the material object and the capitalist priority of productivity for profit.

While Conceptualism ultimately failed to reform capitalism, for the past sixty years it has successfully built a gift culture of ideas, words and actions that have significantly advanced critical theory and radical practice.

Cut to the present: the legacy and lexicon of Post-conceptualism has gone from a movement with multiple origin stories[1] to the current condition for the production of contemporary art (and design, by proxy).[2] Paradoxically, the general public considers

the communication methods of conceptual artists more suspicious than the Orwellian doublespeak used daily by advertisers and politicians to hide the true meaning of their words, often saying one thing while doing another, or doing nothing at all.

Art historian and curator Lars Bang Larsen searches out loud for 'new itineraries of artistic agency' that push the limits and potentials of the established spectrum of action – 'accelerationism (incorporating the logic of the corporation)' to 'dropping out (the exit strategy)' – while suggesting the need for 'a vocabulary for non-production [and] radical imaginaries' among other interconnected tactics.[3]

Heeding the call, I offer my personal collection of historical and contemporary neologisms that seem more relevent and urgent than ever...

[1] Contrary to popular belief that conceptual art was 'simply one movement that spread internationally', historical evidence acknowledges the birth of regional variations worldwide. (*Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1950s–1980s*, 1999)
[2] British philosopher and theorist of conceptual art Peter Osborne makes the point that "post-conceptual art is not the name for a particular type of art so much as the historical-ontological condition for the production of contemporary art in general.... (Peter Osborne, *Anywhere Or Not At All : Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Verso Books, London, 2013. pp. 3 & 51)
[3] Lars Bang Larsen, 'New Forms of Agency', *Spike Art Magazine*, 2018

ABRACADABRA

Magical formula of uncertain origin meaning ‘with my word I create’.

ACTANT

A person, creature, or object playing any of a set of active roles in a narrative.

ADVERSARIAL DESIGN

A practice that uses the means and forms of design to challenge beliefs, values, and what is taken to be fact.

— *MIT Press (re: Carl DiSalvo)*

ALREADY ARTISTS

Our students will be accepted as artists. We assume they have come to develop the talents they bring. They will be treated accordingly and be encouraged in the independence that this implies.

— *California Institute of the Arts*

ARCHEOLOGY OF THE INVISIBLE

Recovering that which has become metaphorically buried in contemporary living by reinvention.

A process of finding ideas and of generating objects from a kind of physical expedition: a journey to the everyday world [...] analogous to an archaeological dig. [...] Looking for things that cannot be seen, paradoxically, because they are everywhere to be seen. [...] Things so suited to their surroundings that they sit and operate unnoticed in chameleon silence. [...] So silent that they may as well be "under the ground", so that the process of revealing them becomes archaeological in spirit and intent.

— *Maxine Naylor and Ralph Ball*

AN-ART

I am against the word “anti” because it is like atheist as compared to believer. An atheist is just as much a religious man as a believer is. And an anti-artist is just as much of an artist as the other artist. “An-artist” would be much better. I don’t mind being an “an-artist”.

— *Marcel Duchamp*

ANTI-ART

All the alternative ways in which art can use unspectacular means to have an effect on our awareness of social realities.

— *Július Koller Society (re: Július Koller)*

ANTICRITICISM

An effort to forge a different model of publicity, an alternative paradigm for the critical judgment of works of art.

— *Gwen Allen (re: Avalanche magazine)*

ANTI-HAPPENING

A metaphor for the invasion of reality by the imagination. As such, it captures the essence of Utopian thought: to confront the microcosm of an actual state of affairs with the macrocosm of infinite possibilities – to show that society can be changed.

— *Jan Verwoert (re: Július Koller)*

ART AS LIFE

Art is life out of context by declaration. Definitions are fun because they are so easy to alter.

— *Howard Fried*

ARTISTIC ACTIVISM *(AEFFECT)*

A practice aimed at generating aeffect: emotionally resonant experiences that lead to measurable shifts in power.

— *The Center for Artistic Activism*

BLACK ARTIST

There is the Black athlete. There's Hollywood, theater, and dance. But the Black artist or Black painter is not in the public consciousness. The Black painter is something I'm really interested in. [...] David Hammons calls "Black artist" an oxymoron, you're really behind the eight ball.

— *Arnold J. Kemp*

CHINDŌGU

Inventing ingenious everyday gadgets that seem like an ideal solution to a particular problem, but are in fact nothing more than an useless gag.

— *Wikipedia (re: Kenji Kawakami)*

CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

Stop designing.

Design as we know it should be replaced by what I have called Conceptual Design … theorists and activists for the cultural revolution.

The relation to Conceptual Art is simple: however much that art has been incorporated into the very structures it sought to make irrelevant, it started off with a total rejection of the bourgeois notions of what art previously was.

— *Brian Smith*

CONCEPT TABLEAUX

Descriptions of ambitious, imagined artworks with a payment plan for various stages of construction.

— *Blain | Southern*
(re: Edward Keinholz)

COUNTER-DESIGN

Abandoning the territory of commercial practice for an experimental counter-practice, design becomes an active agent in the “open” system of culture and facilitates the adaptation and evolution of culture to new forms.

— *Joshua Singer*

DOGGEREAL

A play on the word “doggerel,” suggesting that time and reality is more disjunctive and absurd than we like to believe.

— *Alex Kelin and Rebecca Cleman*
(re: Ulysses Jenkins)

DROP OUT

An active, selective, graceful process of detachment from involuntary or unconscious commitments. Self-reliance, a discovery of one's singularity, a commitment to mobility, choice, and change ... often misinterpreted to mean "Get stoned and abandon all constructive activity."

— *Timothy Leary*

DUMBASS ART *(ARTE BOLUDO)*

Non-emission – or, at least, the minimum emission – of information. The work must have an undeniable presence, even aggressive at times, but it should not say anything [which] requires a formalist instinct that will help do away with the form; a conceptualism void of concept; and the skilled craftsmanship to self-erase to a carefully defined minimum.

— *Luis Camnitzer*

EVASION DESIGN

The production of intentionally disruptive objects designed to “inspire action” and activate the user to take full ownership over their living conditions.

— *Ross K. Elfline (re: Superstudio)*

FLAT TIME

A cosmological theory based on the idea that “time and event” take precedence over “space and matter”.

— *Artist’s Studio Museum Network*
(re: John Latham)

HACK

Originally, someone who makes furniture with an axe. A person who enjoys learning the details of programming systems and how to stretch their capabilities, as opposed to most users who prefer to learn only the minimum necessary. One who programs enthusiastically, or who enjoys programming rather than just theorizing about programming. A person capable of appreciating hack value. A person who is good at programming quickly. Also, a malicious or inquisitive meddler who tries to discover information by poking around. Hence "password hacker", "network hacker".

— *The Jargon File*
(The Original Hacker's Dictionary)

LOVE HOURS

The condition of loving something too much, or of receiving too little in return.

— *Whitney Museum of American Art (re: Mike Kelley's More Love Hours That Can Ever Be Repaid and The Wages of Sin)*

NON-U-MENT

An expression of the commonplace that might counter the grandeur and pomp of architectural structures and their self-glorifying clients.

— *Gordon Matta-Clark*

NONGKRONG

An Indonesian term meaning “hanging out” ... an alternative site for shared creative practice functioning outside of received notions of productivity and capitalist time.

— *Sonja Dahl*

POSITION-WORK

Art objects that spur the emergence of responsible actions within a given social context, in order to achieve a more just society.

— *Mohamed Chabaa*

STRATEGY OF REFUSAL

A call for workers to drop out from the act of alienated labor.

— *Ross K. Elfline (re: Mario Tronti)*

TRAGIC MAGIC

The transformation of everyday objects into allegories of the experience of the outsider in the contemporary world, whether an artist, a stranger, a madman, or, most persistently, a person of color.

— *MoMA (re: David Hammons)*

The art of converting pain into poetry.

— *CCA Wattis Institute (re: David Hammons)*

UFO-NAUT

Actualising the imagination as a form of existential agency.

— *Kadist (re: Július Koller)*

UN-ART

Once, the task of the artist was to make good art; now it is to avoid making art of any kind.

— *Allan Kaprow*

THE VOID
(LE VIDE)

A nirvana-like state that is void of worldly influences; a neutral zone where one is inspired to pay attention to one's own sensibilities, and to "reality" as opposed to "representation".

— *Wikipedia (re: Yves Klein)*

ZONES OF IMMATERIAL PICTORIAL SENSIBILITY

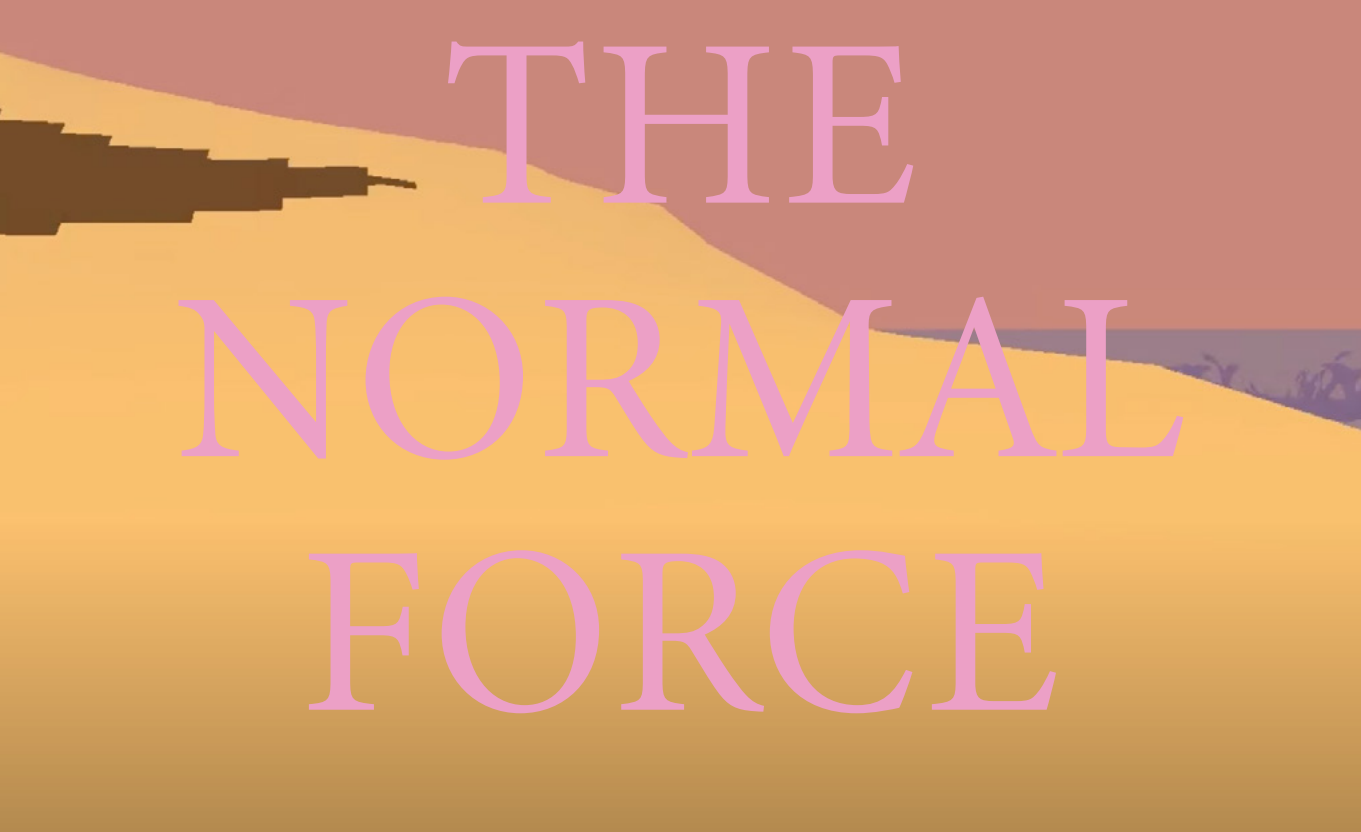
[Positioning] the “work” of art as both a commodity and conceptual “object” by conferring an exchange value on an intangible “idea” through a ritual transaction. This presumably would reinvest the art object with its intrinsic yet frequently “lost” use value.

— *Mark Cameron Boyd (re: Yves Klein)*

THE FORM AND DEGREE

OF A SKIES LIMITED BLUE

THE NORMAL FORCE




IS
NOT AT
PLAY

MATTER

THEORY OBJECTS

JOSHUA TREES
YVÁN MARTÍNEZ

A ‘theory object’ is an ambiguous concept inviting critical play. Tara McPherson has used the term to describe an embodiment of sociocultural theory. For Julian Bleecker, a theory object is a thought that becomes its own agent of creativity through circulation and participation. For Bruce Sterling, ‘the term theory object is itself a kind of theory object’ – a ‘collectively intelligent’ and ‘shareable concept’.

As graphic designers, we often find ourselves researching alternative theories and frameworks for understanding everyday relationships between ideas, aesthetics and matter, beyond the unadventurous and predictable models of marketing and branding adopted widely by commercial and cultural organizations alike. To this end, we started developing our own definition of a theory object; one that embraces existing usage of the term while considering the potentials and limits of design in the equation.

For us, a theory object is ‘cultural software’ advanced through fandom and open-source design practice. In *Cultural Software: A Theory of Ideology,* J.M. Balkin explains how culture is transmitted, processed and performed in ways comparable to computer software. In this metaphor, the interplay between culture, history and ideology serves as a memetic operating system powered by social learning. Taking this a step further, we might think of a theory object as a software update for the meme.

In post-digital culture, the original definition of

a meme (a self-replicating unit of cultural information, such as an idea, behaviour or style, spread randomly), has been expanded to include the 'internet meme' (deliberately designed to be creatively remixed and spread virally).

A descendant of both the meme and the internet meme, a theory object is a shape-shifting ensemble of strategy, form and context, distributively expressed across physical, digital and biological forms of communication.

In an era when information is being mined, manipulated and sold back to us as disinformation exponentially, a theory object presents an opportunity to radically reconfigure how we define agency – culturally, politically and economically. A dare to imagine and create new and different realities, and better futures. A manifesto manifested, modified and shared at will ...

Ryan Gander's second phone

A billboard announcing the artist's phone number.

"It's proving to be a catalyst for other things to happen … I've … had about 300 calls with some pretty crazy conversations. I've had wrong numbers as well as people calling up saying that they're going to complain to the council because the sign is unauthorised. It's been quite amazing really with the range of phone calls I've been receiving."

— *Ryan Gander*

'Ryan Gander: "The best art provokes you without even realising"', *Studio International*, 26.10.2015

Gilbert and George's fuckosophy

The Fuckosophy is an epic text work comprising 5,000 statements, slogans and mottoes all of which incorporate different uses and variants of the F-word.

Luisa Buck, *The Art Newspaper*, 20.11.2020

"I think everyone has a book about philosophy in their house, or we all know the names of the philosophers, but we don't know much more than that. The Fuckosophy is more democratic, more art for all."

— *George Passmore*

Lucy Bourton, , '50 years of Gilbert and George: the artist duo tell us the meaning of life', It's Nice That, 20.12.2017

Tom Sachs' paradox bullets

"There's a rule in YouTube filmmaking: 'Thou shall not look at the comments.' And of course, I've broken the rule by looking at the comments, and people I've noticed seem to be very upset with contradictions. Paradox Bullets was our answer to that, which is making a series of Bullets and then finding Bullets that were the opposite with equal balance. For example, 'Do the hard thing first,' and then the opposite, 'Do the easy things first.' The latter gives value to procrastination. The [opposite rules] are almost always true, and it's important to embrace that."

— *Tom Sachs*

Keithe Estiler, 'Tom Sachs talks spirituality, sensuality & hardware ahead of major "Tea Ceremony" show', *Hypebeast*, 19.04.2019

Kęstutis Grigaliūnas' story

A True Story of Joseph Beuys is a series of paintings in the style of a comic book, telling a well known story publicized by Beuys himself, about how he flew in a military plane and was shot down. He was found, freezing and injured, by Crimean Tartars, who smeared him with lard, wrapped him in felt and, having saved his life, irrevocably changed him. Grigaliūnas retold this cult story in his own way [...] based on a radio play by Herkus Kunčius, including captions and quotations – [a reinterpretation of] a story that had already been interpreted, [contributing] to Beuys' vision to penetrate deeper into our consciousness and become folklore.

Kęstutis Grigaliūnas, *A True Story of Joseph Beuys*, Modern Art Center / Modernaus Meno Centras, 1998

UNIVERZÁLNY FUTUROLOGICKÝ OTÁZNIK JÚLIUS KOLLER 1978

Július Koller's question mark

This sign appeared repeatedly in Koller's work as a symbol of questioning, doubt, and uncertainty. It was also his own response to the cultural and sociopolitical situation in Czechoslovakia.

"Hence I chose the question mark as my symbol, which actually asks not only generally about man's relationship with the cosmos (for which I then used the name U.F.O.-naut), but also the individual's relationship to the collective, or the social situation."

In this sense the question mark is a symbol of communication, by means of which Koller addressed his direct environment and the whole of humanity.

Daniel Grún, Kathrin Rhomberg, Georg Schöllhammer (eds.), *Július Koller One Man Anti Show: Dokumentation Documentation Dokumentácia*, mumok – Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien 2017

Stephanie Syjuco's rogue states

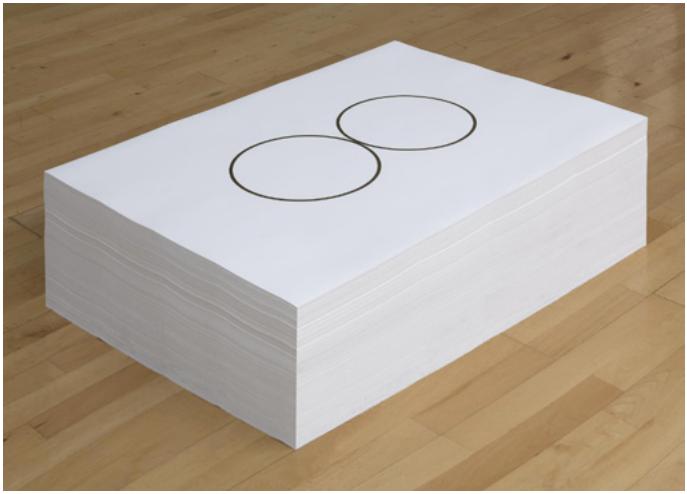
An installation of fictional flags of made-up countries from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Central and South America, all culled from American and European movies that position these countries as terrorist, backward, resistant, or unstable. From Hollywood blockbusters to comedy television shows, these rogue states carry the projected weight and fear of the uncontrollable Other. To be hung vertically from the ceiling in rows, as a United Nations-style convention of collective anxiety.

Rogue States: Stephanie Syjuco,
Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, 2019

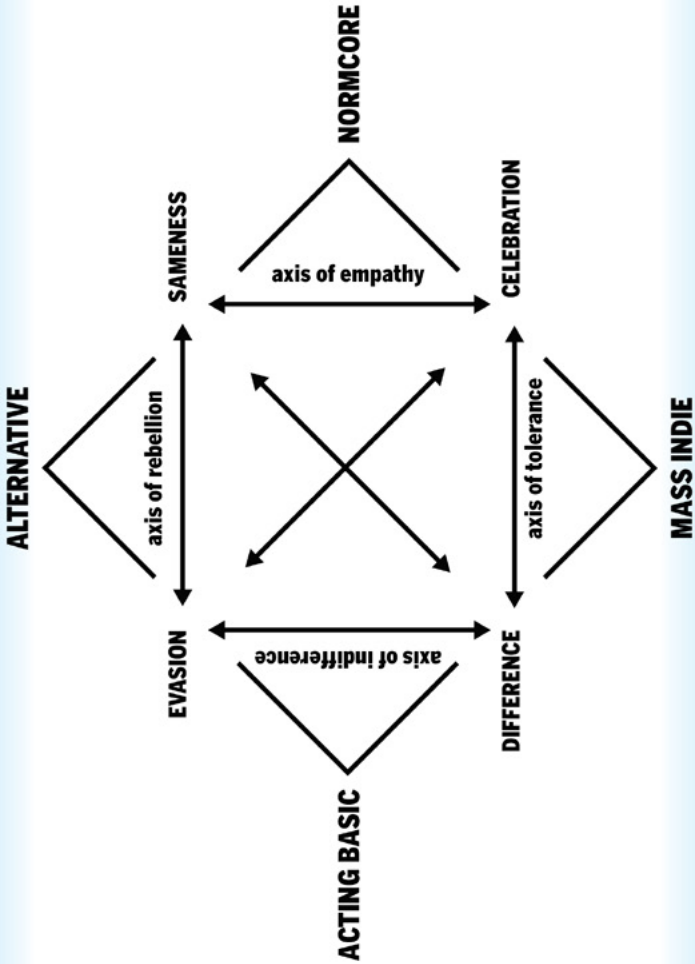
Felix Gonzalez-Torres' endless copies

Untitled (Double Portrait) comprises printed sheets, of which there are, conceptually speaking, "endless copies" are placed in a stack directly on the gallery floor. [...]

It is intended that visitors are able to take away the sheets, which are periodically replenished so that although the artist specifies an ideal height to be maintained, in practice the form and volume is in constant flux.



Tanya Barson, Tate, 2009


ALTERNATIVE
axis of rebellion
SAMENESS
NORMCORE
axis of empathy
CELEBRATION
MASS INDIE
axis of tolerance
EVASION
axis of indifference
DIFFERENCE
ACTING BASIC

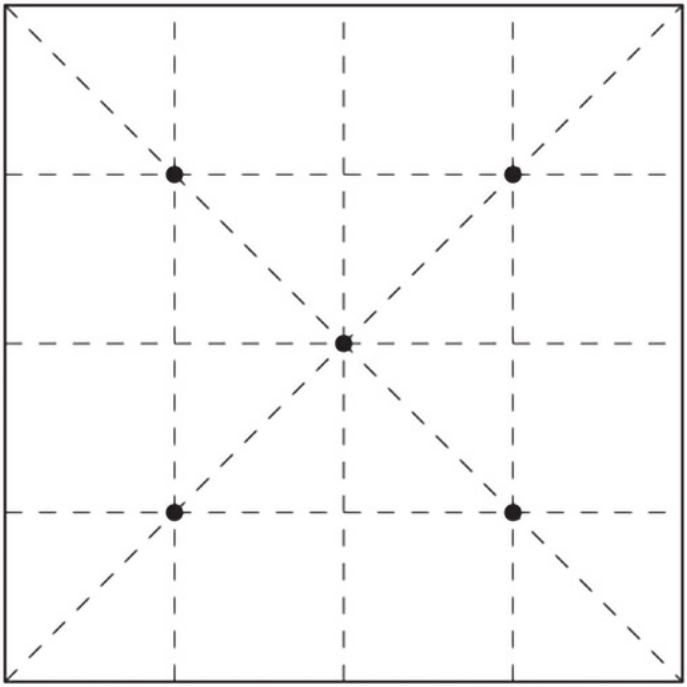
K-HOLE's trend reports

K-HOLE, the trend-forecasting collective who released five trend reports between 2010 and 2015, have always acknowledged the inability of the format to actually predict trends. Instead, their reports map out possible approaches to understanding the cultural chaos of the past decade. Where the regular trend forecast is usually an internal document, commissioned from branding agencies by firms that hoped to better understand the future demands and desires of their potential markets, K-HOLE produces a public form of consumer fiction.

Huw Lemmey, 'The Future is Not What it Used to Be: K-HOLE read the signs, but no one listened', *Rhizome*, 05.02.2019

Thomas Lommée's open structures

The OS (OpenStructures) project explores the possibility of a modular construction model where everyone designs for everyone on the basis of one shared geometrical grid. It initiates a kind of collaborative Meccano to which everybody can contribute parts, components, and structures. The ultimate goal is to initiate a universal, collaborative puzzle that allows the broadest range of people – from craftsmen to multinationals – to design, build, and exchange the broadest range of modular components, resulting in a more flexible and scalable built environment.



Gabriela Baka, ‘Counter Currents: Thomas Lommée on Modular Systems’, *Walker Reader*, 02.01.2016

Boot Boyz Biz's bootleg t-shirts

"Boot Boyz Biz is a project based research practice. Promoting access to ideas and activating knowledge is essential to our projects. We see t-shirts and images as means for a public sphere – trace-tools for generating marginal forms of discourse with a broad social scope. We aim to assemble an expanding fabric of citations, linking a wide range of ~material we live by~. We utilize intertextual strategies and disinterment to produce synthesized works that strive to open unique pathways. [Boot]-ing is a model for connecting with histories and ideas, allowing us attempts to capture essence and organize a collective memory that guides our future."

— *Boot Boyz Biz*

www.boot-boyz.biz

G.B. Jones and Bruce LaBruce's queercore zine

In Toronto in the mid-'80s, two queer kids Xeroxed together a DIY vision of a punk scene that didn't yet exist. Filled with heavy-handed gay erotica, illustrations of leather dykes, homoerotic snaps of a jockstrap-clad Anthony Kiedis, and an essential, rotating "Top Ten" list of songs by queer-fronted punk bands, G.B. Jones and Bruce LaBruce's seminal zine *J.D.s* is rightfully cited as the starting point for queercore.

Eric Torres, 'Queering the Pitch: On J.D.s and the Roots of Queercore', *Pitchfork*, 28.01.2015

Jeff Hull's alternate reality game

Over the course of three years, The Jejune Institute, an alternate reality game produced by Jeff Hull and set in San Francisco, enrolled more than 10,000 players who, responding to eccentric flyers plastered all over the city, started the game by receiving their "induction" at the fake headquarters of the Institute, located in an office building in San Francisco's Financial District.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Institute_(2013_film)

Dan Walsh's comic

Garfield Minus Garfield (also known as *Jon Arbuckle*) is a webcomic consisting of a reprint of a past episode from the comic strip Garfield, from which all the characters except Garfield's owner Jon Arbuckle have been removed through photo manipulation. Though Dan Walsh admits that he was not the first to come up with this idea, he was the first to "champion and popularize" it. The resulting strips consist mostly of Jon Arbuckle, interacting with himself rather than with his pet cat. Walsh characterizes this result as "a journey deep into the mind of an isolated young everyman as he fights a losing battle against loneliness and depression in a quiet American suburb."

www.garfieldminusgarfield.net

Dear Friend,

I am black.

I am sure you did not realize this when you made/laughed at/agreed with that racist remark. In the past, I have attempted to alert white people to my racial identity in advance. Unfortunately, this invariably causes them to react to me as pushy, manipulative, or socially inappropriate. Therefore, my policy is to assume that white people do not make these remarks, even when they believe there are no black people present, and to distribute this card when they do.

I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me.

Adrian Piper's calling cards

From 1986 to 1990, the artist Adrian Piper handed out these "calling cards" at dinners and cocktail parties, in an ongoing performance designed to cleverly confront the racism of her peers; she had another version to rebuff unwanted touching at dance parties. Drawing on her experience as a light-skinned, black American woman often mistaken for white or white passing, Piper's work deals in both the material reality of race, sex, and class in America while engaging with social dynamics through performance, asking her audience to consider their positionality within the world.

Larissa Pham, 'This MoMA Show Asks You to Confront Racism — Both in Strangers and Yourself', *Garage*, 03.04.2018

Eric Bell and Kristoffer Frick's pervertables

Pervertibles is "an amusing still life ... things that could be converted into ... BDSM tools of pain ... like a hairbrush, there's a lighter and some candles ... there's some garlic, some clothespins and so forth ... [John Neff: "ginger"] ... oh ginger, yeah ... once you get it you can't help thinking about it."

— *Kevin Killian*

"You start see those things everywhere".

— *John Neff*

Iceberg Projects, Kevin Killian: 'Spreadeagle audio tour' (Kevin Killian and John Neff discuss 20:27–21:34), www.soundcloud.com/user-626120833/kevin-killian-spreadeagle-audio-tour, 2018

Dear reader.

Don’t read.

Ulises Carrión's bookworks

Ulises Carrión coined the term "bookworks", which he defined as: "... books in which the book form, a coherent sequence of pages, determines conditions for reading that are intrinsic to the work". The work of Ulises Carrión is distinguished by two common denominators: communication and distribution. He employed diverse techniques and media in order to create a complete cultural product. The tools of his trade were the means he appropriated: postage stamps, television, the radio, mail, among others. He expertly manipulated and reinterpreted these appropriations within an art context. He claimed that he was "using 'culture' as a much more broader concept than 'art'".

Donna Conwell, 'Personal Worlds or Cultural Strategies?', Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, 2002

Where's George?

Where's George? is a website that tracks the natural geographic circulation of American paper money. As of December 2019, the site says more than 293,000,000 bills, with a total face value of more than $1.57 billion, have been entered into the site's database.

www.wheresgeorge.com

Giedrius Jonaitis' (accidentally) queer banknote

The 10-litas bill, designed by Giedrius Jonaitis has become obsolete following Lithuania's switchover to the euro, features two men in uniforms, and might be seen as suggestive of the iconography of homoerotic desire. The two men on the 10-litas bill are Steponas Darius and Stasys Girenas, early-twentieth-century pilots who flew over the Atlantic in 1933 in a self-made aircraft.

In the words of LGL leader Vladimir Simonko, these bills were extremely popular as souvenirs in the past, as they may seem to picture "good friends sharing more than friendship but something more".

'Lithuanian LGBT activists think obsolete 10-litas bill could make for suggestive souvenirs', Lithuania Tribune, 02.01.2015

FOREVER

QUEER-TRANS
SOLIDARITY
IS
PUBLIC HEALTH

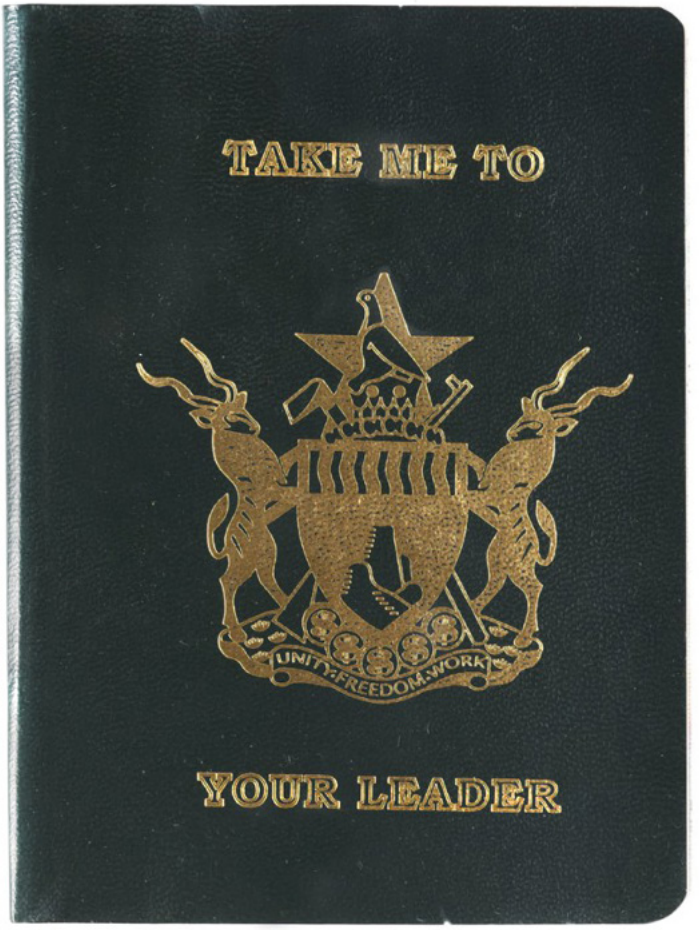
CANCEL RENT
AND EVICTIONS
FOREVER

Gay Shame

A radical alternative to gay mainstreaming positing an alternative view of gay pride events and activities which have become increasingly commercialized and safe to avoid offending supporters and sponsors. “Gay Shame is a virus in the system. We are committed to a trans/queer extravaganza that brings direct action to spectacular levels of confrontation. We work collectively outside boring and deceptive non-profit models to fight white supremacy, capitalism, ableism, cops, settler-colonialism and all forms of domination. Liberals think we are frivolous decorations and mainstream gays want us gone. Against them and with each other we instigate, irritate, and agitate, to build cultures of devastating resistance.”

— *Gay Shame*

www.gayshame.net


TAKE ME TO
UNITY·FREEDOM·WORK
YOUR LEADER

Lucy Lippard's democratic multiple

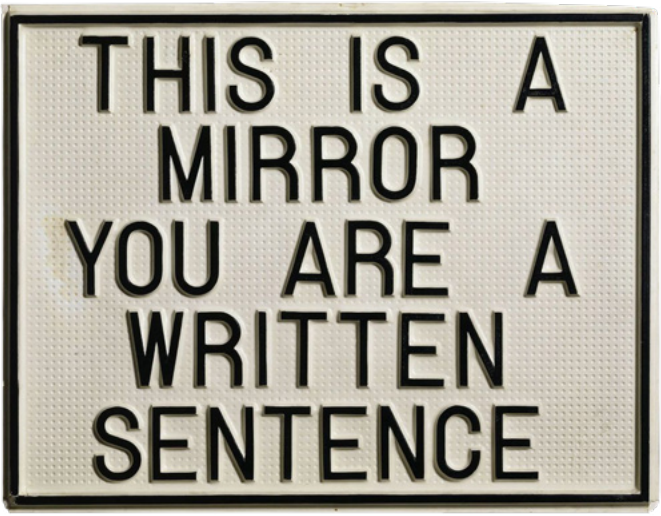
The idea of the "democratic multiple" ... still often shows up in discussions in artists' books, despite the fact that we're supposed to consider it ... dead. But this idea came into currency during a very different time (1960s) and maybe now it's time to reconsider if the idea can be adapted for current and future use.

Newlights Press et al, www.newlight-spress.blogspot.com, 25.01.2011

"One day I'd like to see artists' books ensconced in supermarkets, drugstores, and airports and, not incidentally, to see artists able to profit economically from broad communication rather than from the lack of it."

— *Lucy Lippard*

Lucy Lippard, "The Artist's Book Goes Public," *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, ed. Joan Lyons (Rochester: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985), 48.



New York Graphic Workshop's free assemblable non-functional disposable serial object (FANDSO)

FANDSO started as an appeal to artists to produce works that rejected material longevity in order to resist institutionalisation. [José Guillermo] Castillo came up with the notion of the "super-object", a product that would be able 'to function in the daily context without the need of a traditional frame or reference (museum-book) and that would affect the context by its own and absolute presence' [...] [foregrounding] the poetic potential of the material object.

Sophie Halart, 'The New York Graphic Workshop, 1964–70, in Sophie Halart (ed.), *In Focus: Wrinkle 1968* by Liliana Porter, Tate Research Publication, 2018

Akasegawa Genpei's hyperart thomasson

A Thomasson or Hyperart Thomasson refers to a useless relic or structure that has been preserved as part of a building or the built environment, which has become a piece of art in itself. These objects, although having the appearance of pieces of conceptual art, were not created to be viewed as such. The term was inspired by the professional baseball player Gary Thomasson who spent his final two seasons with the Yomiuri Giants (1981-82), benched.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperart_Thomasson


NO
COMMEN-
TARY

NOW I CAN SLEEP

I WAS TRYING TO HUG


IT! ;-;
TO
BELONG

ONTOLOGY

FINDING AGENCY THROUGH PRAXIS

SADHNA JAIN

“Our current framework for ontology cannot contain the question of what it means to be human let alone answer it”

Contested Signs

At the start I should declare a set of signs which brings our attention to the shadowy areas of human design.

Systems of design (and power) point horizontally to the past and proceed us to the future. Looking directly above systems of design look directly back at us – high to low.

Man2

The evolution of Man1: an orchestration of the human species as distinct from other biological species. Man2 presides over the species world through its proliferation of type. Its narcissistic project is celebrated through the anthropocene.
We are mutating in the age of the *Over Representation of Man*

Wynter, Sylvia. 2015. 'Unparalleled Catastrophe for our Species?: Or to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations.' Interview with Katherine McKittrick. In *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, edited by Katherine McKittrick, 9–89. Durham, NC: Duke University Press

Landscape
This is a landscape
It was conceived in the mind transfixing the idea of naturalness upon it.
It has been designed to fit the instrument of looking and calibrated to the thresholds of human vision.
A landscape within its variations is a category of people; rooted to the subordinate concept of territory.

"I"

Is not the revelation of the biological 'man'
I is not an archetype of a species
I is not mono-species

Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks.*
Translated by Charles Markmann. New York: Grove Press.

"And"
A tool amongst many to allow the closer proximity of one entity to another. To touch but never intersect. To persist in a process selecting and deselecting.

Agencies for Being (Relationally) Human

Why do two interpretations of the word ontology exist and what could this tell us?

_The metaphysical concept of being in the world is an open- ended idea, perpetually changing through experience and knowing

_The conceptualisation of categories and information as ontology seeks organisation and containment within a system

Is it possible for these two distinctions to find relational possibilities, such that the worlds of the many can become active?

Dilnot, C 2017. 'A lexicon of concepts? How do we convert the Insights of practice into politically actionable strategies that draw on the capabilities of designing?'. www.decolonisingdesign.com

Being Multispecies

We must consider ourselves as multispecies.
Born of bio-centric bodies but inhabiting stories which are in a process of continuous making. The "I" is a relational story which finds connections in the realms of spirit worlds, alternative imaginaries, haun-tologies. Our stories will find the company of others.

Along this journey we shall encounter a few multi species beings and consider their gestures and signs as a means to understand afresh the meaning of being human.

Multispecies — Wynter, S.

Multi-species autopoiesis ... insists on an ontologically indeterminate embodiment neither predictable in advance nor circumscribed by human fantasies of sovereign control — Hantel, M

To give room to the many unknowns
as we continue to create ourselves

Designs that are given to us as a new lived experience betray a former incarnation of ourselves. Former incarnations appear absent from a central view, but are not eradicated by a simplistic process of over writing.

Translation of words in the picture (foreground) — 'High Autonomy'

Once former incarnations are inhabited, they continue to exist and act as an 'invasive species' in spaces of neglect and risk where they choose to coalesce.

Encounter 1: Embodying our Spirits

Harbin, China. The legend of an evil fish with destructive forces floods the Songhua river and neighbouring villages. In combat it is defeated by an allegiance of villagers and the native silver fish using a camouflage made from the blossoms of trees.

In the passing years the legend is ritualised at sites where increasing industrial manufacture subsumes nature. Women from the local factories switch off their work machines and gather in these exterior spaces. In the fragments of space (and time) they are reconciled with the spirits of power that meld human desire with the consciousness of other species. In the days following, the women murmur the music of the dance inside the factories, enticing the machines to change the rhythm of their production.

Encounter 2:
A Continuous Correspondence with Others

At a micro level the multi species being has come to resist the materialisation of its own biological body. Small articulated movements strengthen the bind between itself and other forms. In constant motion it unsuspectingly sways between different types, gaining momentum as it does so.
Creeping closeness to others, held in proximity, transformations occur to the appearance, surfaces and sounds of the multi-species being.

Encounter 3: Seeking Companionship with Language

Brazil 1977. A fugitive writer from the Ukraine pens her final book. Her unstable spirit seeks a new fidelity with the exterior languages of her world.
She presents the book printed with 13 different titles, each one as precisely relevant to the next.
Constituted of multiple worlds a relationally constructed human pulls towards itself the paradoxical nature of language as means to sustain the complexity of its own existence.

Being human as multi species brings forth many new moments of reflection. In the midst the question arises, “how will the existing world of place and space, material and matter be equally transformed by new ontologies?”

In a contemporary world filled with the multiplicity of production (over thought) the multi species being sees the growing arrangements of biological and material, sense and form, as nothing more than an extended series of predetermined pairings, into which the human must insert itself.

What types of shapes, energies and interactions are desired in the flows of the multi species as it comes into being?

Somatic Wholeness

‘The shape of the whole misinforms our work and our dependence upon our surroundings’.

The multi species being takes the idea of wholeness as instinctively somatic; its body does not belong solely to the realm of biology. In contrast it becomes negotiable only to itself.

The virtue of the body for the multi species being is that at its own behest it can experience exterior and interior asynchronously and construct agency from this.

Corrupted Shapes

The conceptual logic of form that benignly sits with us can be corrupted by the multi species if the binds of form and function are subverted. The energy present in materials persists in the exchange of shapes when engaging with a more inter-subjective idea of the object world.

Attributions of Energy

To enable a multi-species existence and to be present in other worlds requires assistance through the energies that have already been shared with other living species or phenomena. In correspondence, the human is spurred along paths of activity and relations; our being in multiple worlds thrives on transformations

Witnessing Material Compulsions

A woman's feet step into a man made environment. They push through a series of difficult substrates and across broken surfaces. At various points the feet give way and stumble. Through video capture the materials see themselves at a point of apparent entropy. They see the complexity of their own matter and the possible variations of movement that could be re-animated within an encounter with another. What type of material compulsions could soon appear – as an ontology for itself?

Describing *Material Compulsions* — *Marloes ten Bhömer*

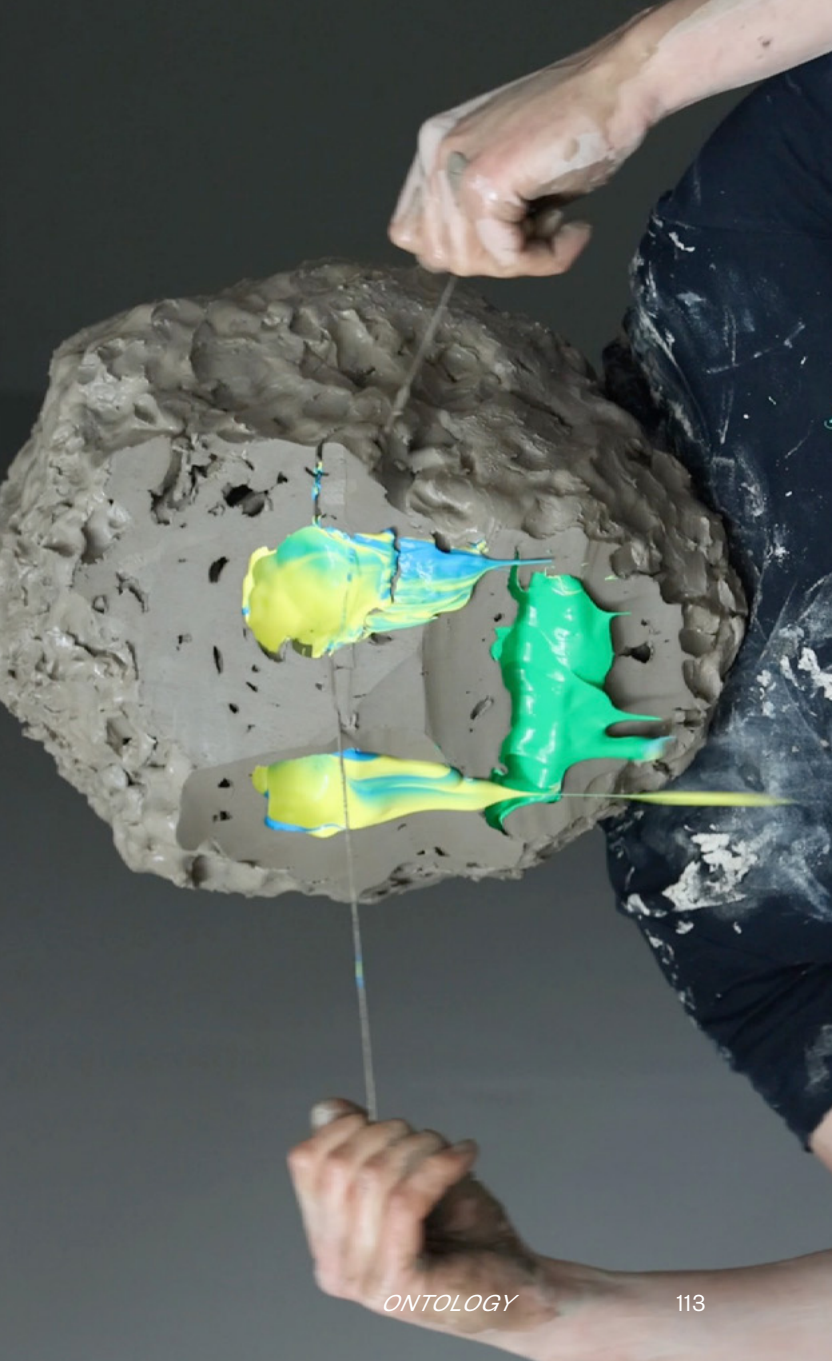
ten Bhömer, Marloes. *Material Compulsion*, Stanley Picker Fellowship, Stanley Picker Gallery, UK 2014

An Immovable Articulation no1

The dust bunny lives with the multi species being and is constructed from it. Through a series of contractions, expansions, formations and articulations it come into being without a distinct genesis. Its precise mix relies on the expulsion of human biological form and the desires of technological systems.

An Immovable Articulation no2

Expressions of the interior towards the exterior creates an articulation that arrives before meaning is formed. A poetic gap between one thing and another.



Scenographic Moments

Potentially arriving from situations of displacement from the contemporary world, an ontological being exists in its own scenographic moment.
It is not a static entity; rather, a scenographic moment depends upon shared impulses with the human to act and move, to eventually bring it in proximity of others.

Scene – assembled as imaginaries of the individual, in action, ambiguous with locations

Ographic – articulations of thought, expressions and ideas amplified beyond the limits of the scene

Scenes from the scenographic create agency through its ability to perform and mediate beyond the realms of representation. Shapes of the human are formed from the stories it inhabits. To observe a scenographic scene is to enter the story shape of the human and to be led onwards in different directions, understanding its relational paths and relational qualities that are held within and constitute itself.

Rusted Tools For Autopsy

Returning to the contemporary world and the 'vision' of the landscape in front of us we should ask, "how do we to detach from artifices of thought, idea and vision which continue to design the human and its binding experience to a mono world?"

Rusted Tools for Autopsy — *Hantel,M.*

Hantel, Max. "What Is It Like to Be a Human?: Sylvia Wynter on Autopoiesis". *philoSOPHIA*, Volume 8, Number 1, Winter 2018, pp. 61-79 (Article) Published by State University of New York Press

Design processes are historically predicated on a process of making rather than consciously unmaking. The upgrade treadmill of production erases failure and paradoxically invites obsolescence into which the next iteration of the human is shaped and designed. We are autopsy ready.

De-Selection

What if we de-select ourselves from the world of the human? To announce our departure from a mono-species existence. Could the empty selves that are abandoned continue as agents for the individual, and if so, what radical gestures would it make?

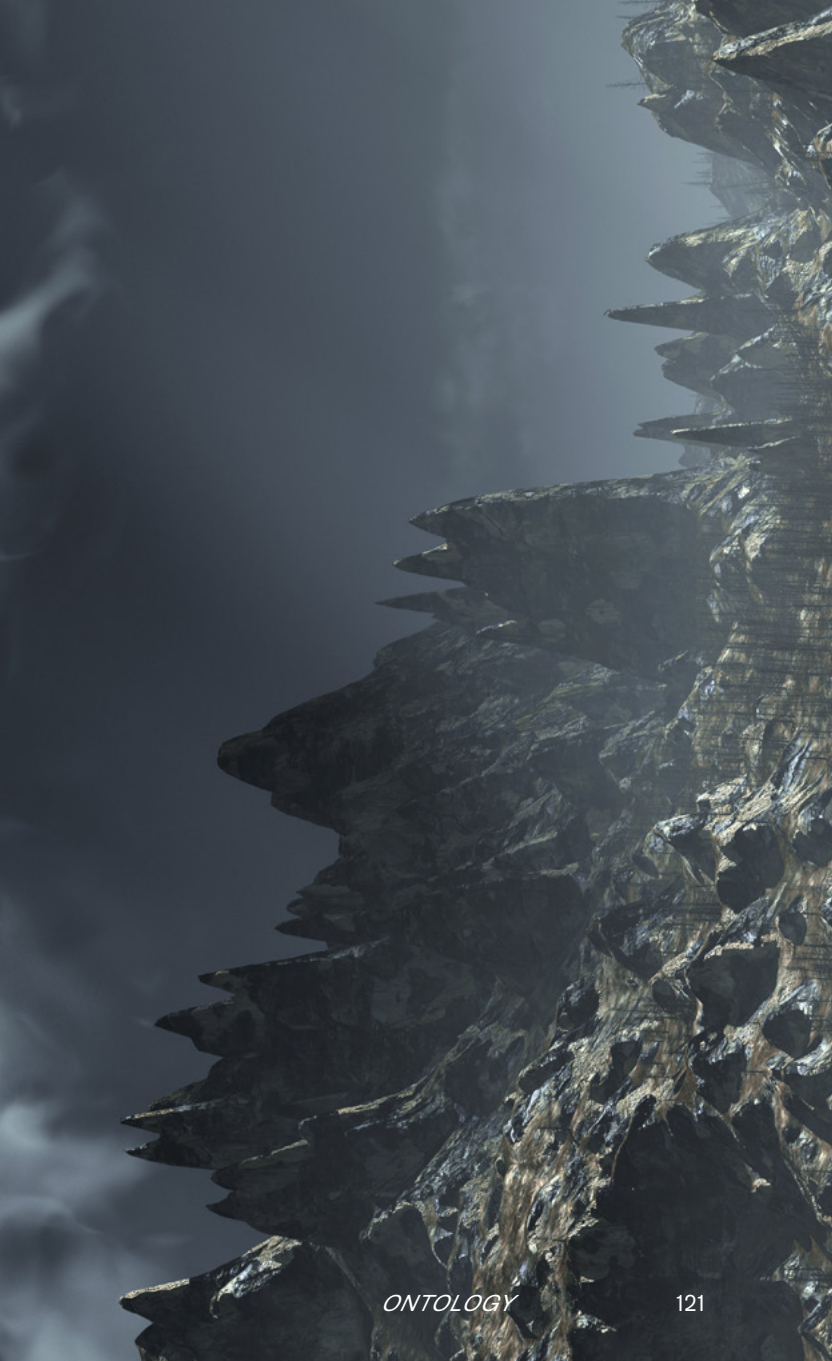
Suspicious Circuitries

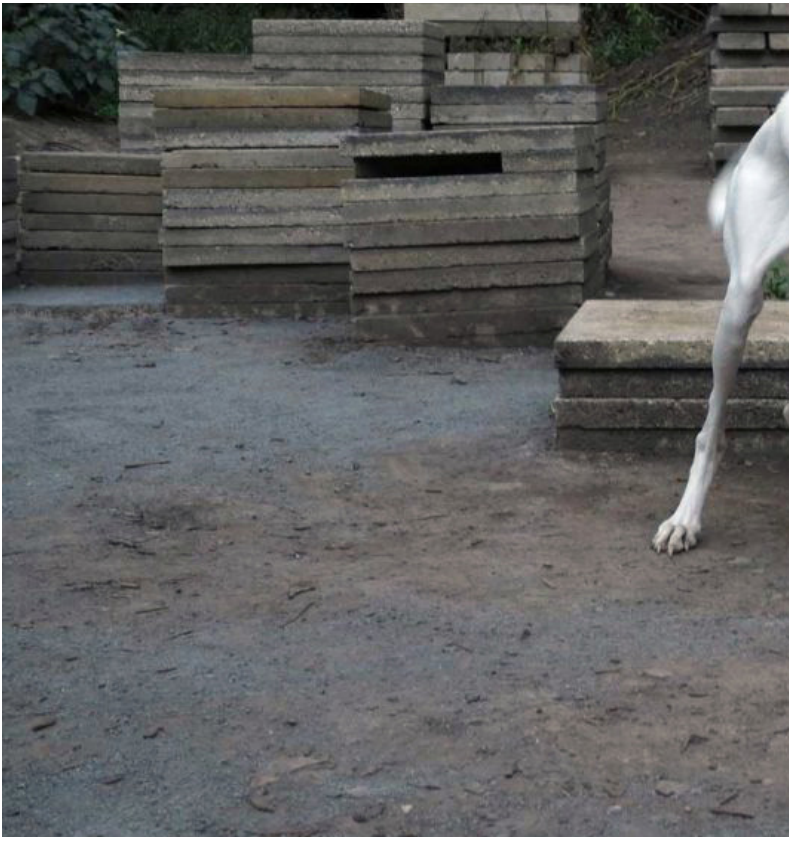
Here we return to the scene of Man2, full of fatigue crawling through the systems he has created for himself. He is the master of the non-human world. Some have said that he too is a multi species being as he is “ontologically open to political technology”

— M. Hantel

So, we must consider that the ‘regeneration’ of Man2 has led to worlds made within existing worlds, and may contain and carry evidence of our entrapments. We can for a moment look over the spectacular landscape in front of us, “Black Narcissus”. “The steep gradients ... rock faces, cliffs and ravines” stretch horizontally and vertically deformed through a generative process wherein financial crisis, warfare, and revolution collide over a 10 year period.

What other ecologies are required in order to create discontinuity from existing circuitry that will take us away from the design of the human and its ‘project’ of the world?





Entering into Slipstreams

The constant motion of the multispecies allows the flow of time to be disrupted as the 'past becomes the continuous present'.

Multiple flows of time brings forward a renewed sense of ecologies which are no longer closed loops; rather, ecologies which will become far reaching in their ability to hold different articulations of life together.

“An actant never really acts alone”
— Bennett J

Thinking ontologically is to permit all the possibilities to exist. Relational moments which seek tangible and palpable allegiances whilst remaining open.
To think in relational ways is to allow a continuous and mutual correspondence between living and making.

Bennett, J. *Vibrant matter : a political ecology of things* Durham, N.C.; Duke University Press, [2010] Dilnot, C 2017. “A lexicon of concepts? How do we convert the Insights of practice into politically actionable Strategies that draw on the capabilities of designing?”. www.decolonisingdesign.com


SEM-
BLANCE
WALK

UN-RELATED TO BEING


WE ARE
WASHED
UP

ON A DISTANT SHORE

SOUND

RELOCATING VISION IN AN ACOUSTIC ENVIRONMENT

SADHNA JAIN

The Agency of Sound

3 Acts and several encounters within acoustic space

Act 1 The Resonance of Sound before Speech

Act 2 The Expanse of Acoustic Space

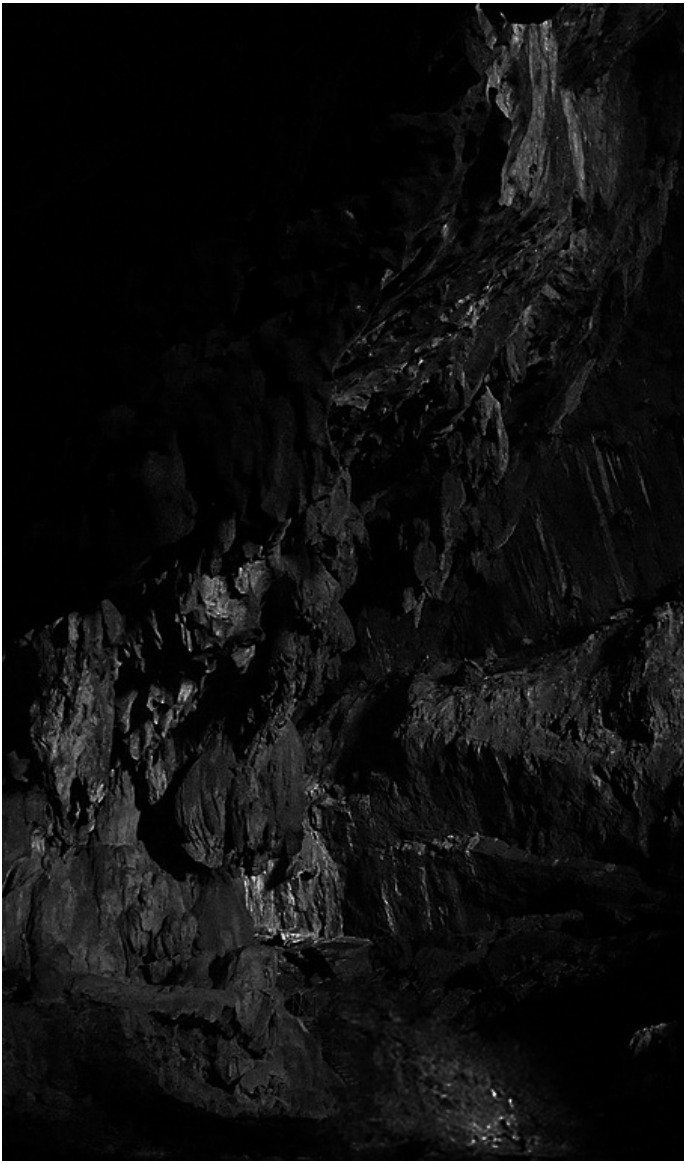
Act 3 Polyphonic Voices: Counterpoints of Language

Act 1

The Resonance of Sound before Speech

A single note

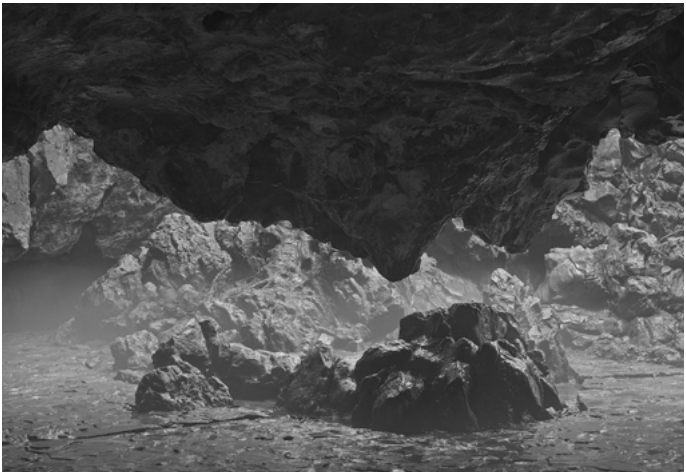
calls out to another host
as it falls



the sediment shifts an utterance begins

the calling continues

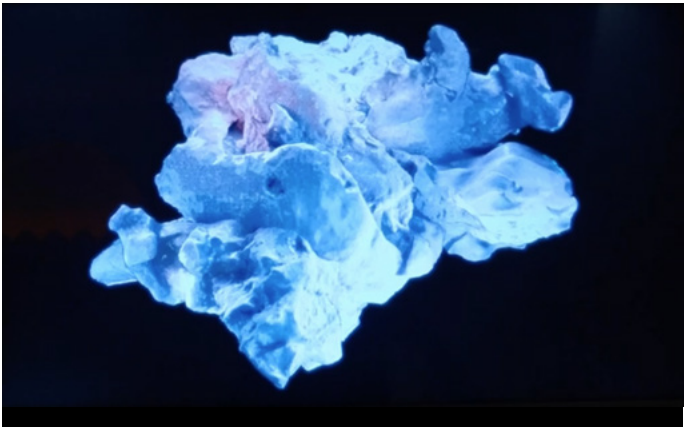
the resonance of sound forming space



The expansion of sound

and contraction

rhythmically repeating
skimming, falling, echoing through, around itself



Outside, the sounds are heard
human replies envelop these utterances
the first words are spoken;

a host space for the deep resonance of
language speech acts and utterances
exchanged outside and within.

The continuous movement of the land,
of the space, pulls and resists
at the fixing of language.

A final sweeping gesture passes through the
presence of sound
A broad stroke unleashes itself from its interior.

Encounter 1

Waichi Nagano and his wife, Hideko said "there was this strange sound, difficult to describe. It wasn't like the sound of the sea. It was more like the roaring of the earth, mixed with a kind of crumpling, groaning noise, which was the houses breaking up": *Japan March 2011*

Parry, Richard Lloyd. *Ghosts of the Tsunami: Death and Life in Japan*. Jonathan Cape (UK), Farrar, Straus and Giroux (US) 2017

Encounter 2

The coast moved a little closer to my house, a surrounding silence accompanying the closed doors and stillness of the streets permitting the sea to raise its voice: *South England March 2020*

Author's own

Encounter 3

Yorkshire, Battle of Orgreaves, a re-enactment of civil conflict.
Raging chants, cries from beatings, bellowing commands to charge and attack. How it must have felt to experience such internal conflict.
To occupy the body of your enemy and betray yourself through a borrowed voice.
The police embodied the roles of the miners and the miners embodied the role of the police
1984 > 2001

Deller, J. *The Battle of Orgreave* (a re-enactment) 2001, ArtAngel

Act 2

The Expanse of Acoustic Space

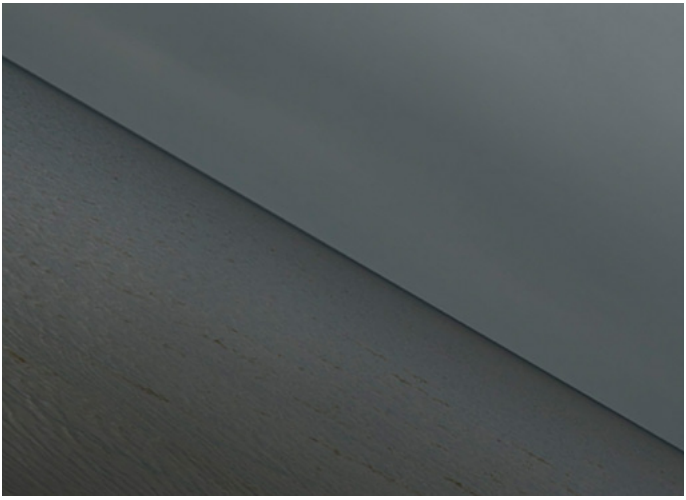
(Narrator's voice)
You will now be guided outside and be led into a moment of listening before returning to the world of vision

We will walk to the shoreline in a few minutes
When we reach the edge, we shall not speak anymore

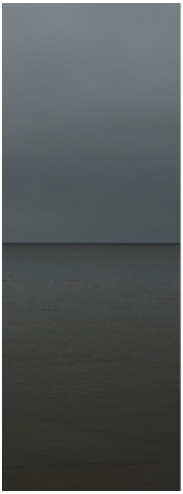
Look at the water one last time. Your sightline stretching rigidly across the landscape
Then turn your back to the shore

Don't waver, remain still
Through your own stillness you will hear the water creep towards your shoes from behind
How long do you dare to stand there?

Your toes search for the stones - your heels slip into the water. You can locate the edges of danger whilst listening to locate yourself inside of the space



The river rises 7 metres - (sitting on the pontoon) the sightline sinks and vision becomes unstable Your body becomes enveloped in the vast expanse of space, you pause.



But why did we retreat from this moment of envel
oping sound with its swathes of openness?

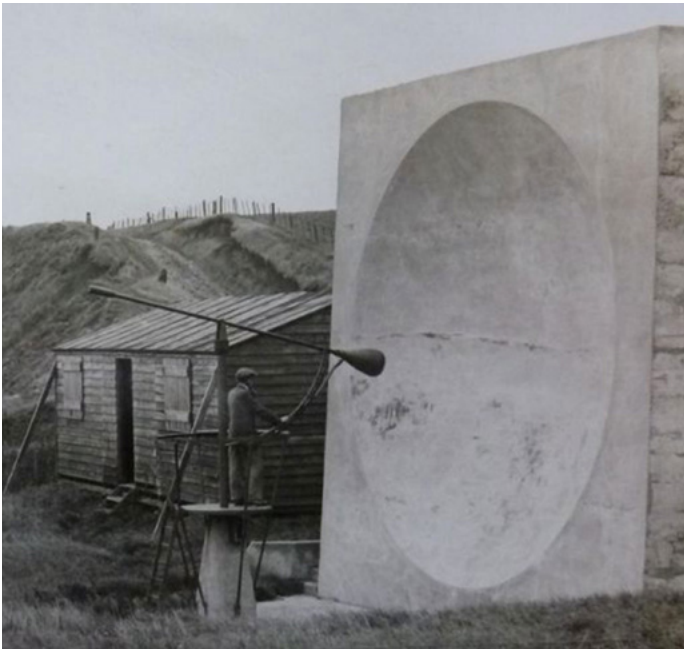
Was the desire to bind vision tightly to the body
greater than our needs for the acoustic world?

With the language of sound now held within, the traveller submits themselves to a point within a line, anxiously dragging vague and distant shorelines towards their body.
Technological vision takes over and marks out an identifiable path for the traveller through the expanse of space.

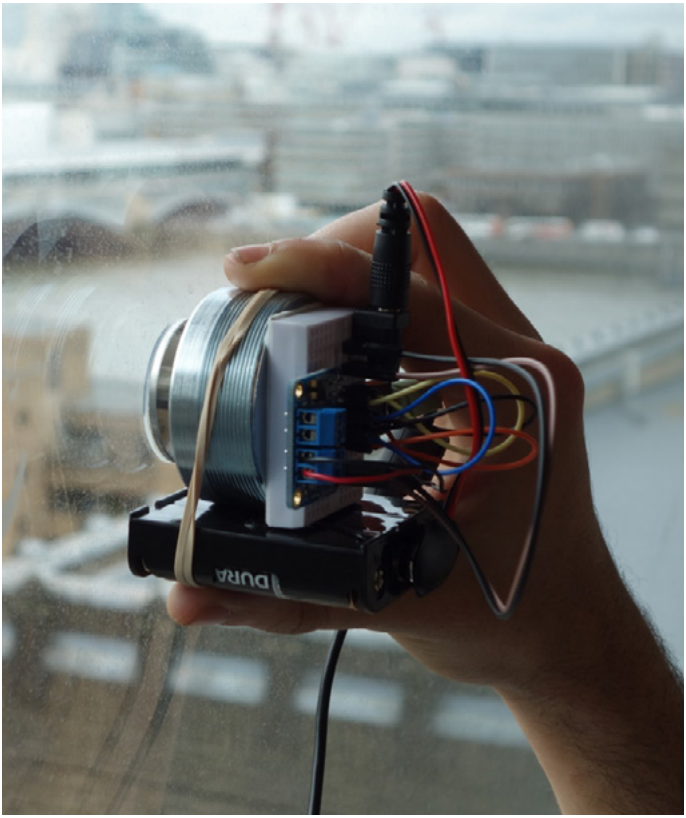
Scenes of the image world fold the real and unreal together. The increasing construct of a visual language announces the collapse of its relationship to the natural world.

Lived experience for modern man removes itself from the modulations of acoustic space and in the moments of fabricated stillness it dampens the sounds of audible expression.

Here we see the world re-cast as a series of images. Seeking further control modern man develops a system of visual codes; visual sense becomes anchored to this.
Once organised, the world (as code) can be effectively transmitted to others in agreement. The Hunter, The Wild, A Territory.
The language of transmitted images belongs to the order of people in front of us; dominant and self proclaimed.



Let us leave the image world once more and re-enage with other acts of listening. Within the acoustic world we will hear many paths in multiple directions. Tracing a path of a sound will route you through a series of interconnected events, where body, space and object are intertwined.
Along the way many audible sounds will approach and coax you deeper into a sense of inquiry. At this moment we will be released from the bind of simply knowing or not knowing the world.



Re-entering the acoustic world you can experiment playfully, provocatively with the agency of sound. Its physicality only increases as we create interactions. A body of actuators and receivers.
Sounds never attempt to conceal but are constantly resonating back to us the ways with which we are present in the world.

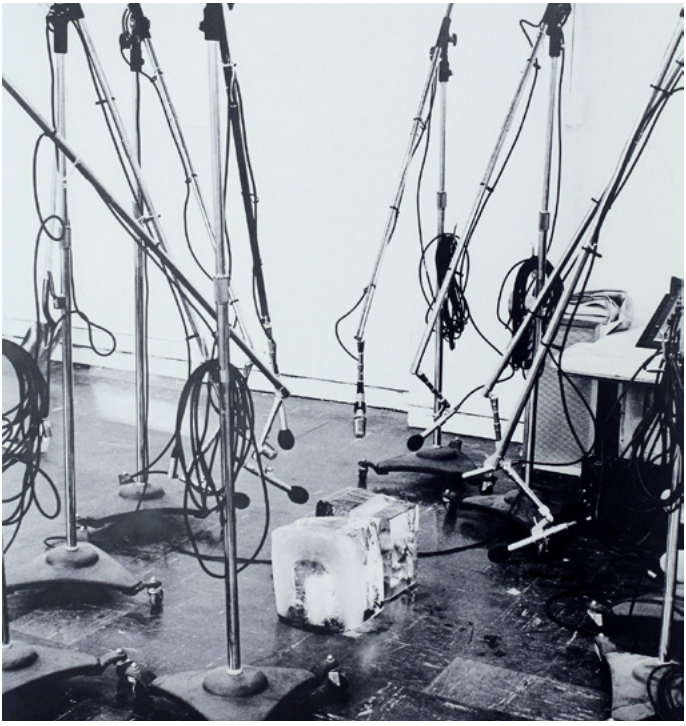
What if we activate the agency of sound from within us across acoustic space, what could occur?
An unfurling of expression beyond the familiarity of common language...
Layering and assembling the echoes of ourselves within and across space...
Linking the meaning of sound to the meaning of space; the grasping of sight lines, positions and atmospheres...

Act 3

Polyphonic Voices: Counterpoints of Language

A microphone is activated and a broadcast begins

At a small gathering a cluster of voices disperse a set of signals which arrive to others close by. There is a familiarity of voice; an audible profile that lies within these messages. It is this sonic familiarity that alerts the listener to the proximity of themselves amongst the many others



An effective broadcast must make a precise choice when scattering its seeds. (not more than 1 kg to an acre of land)
The act of broadcasting is to proclaim, make known our voice and space for others

A barely audible transmission moves amongst us. The voices we can hear gradually form their own pocket of space as they coalesce in exchange. A symbolic centre emerging through resonance of sounds.

The resonance of sound turns to us and invites a dialogue. If we join and inhabit the space of sound, we will become profoundly conscious of ourselves as thoughts and acoustic qualities – activating an interiority without the needs of formal language.

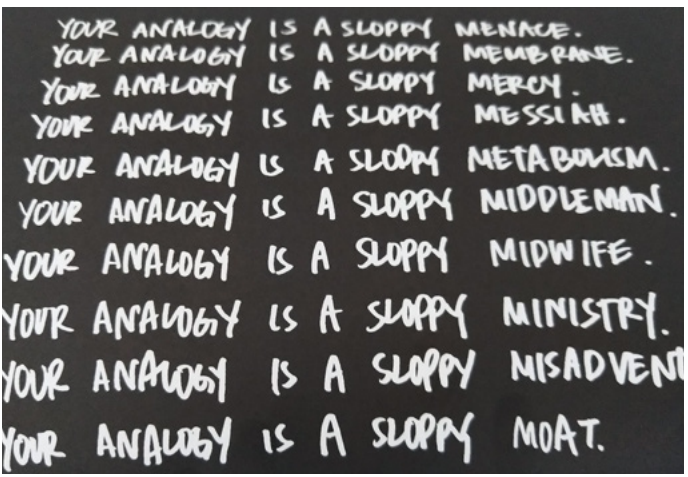
Fully enveloped in the space of sound we witness ourselves inside of our bodies, outside of our bodies, mingling with other acoustics we sense are nearby. We begin to gesture to them, and perform through a spectrum of callings, utterances and echoes.
This is the power of language that once fell into realms of silence.

At Oranienplatz Berlin we stand and listen to the evocation of silence performed after a civic protest has ended
A play of words rapidly dissolves the layers of speech

As we consider our renewed encounters with the acoustic world, we should reflect upon the unity with formal languages already known to us.
What needs to be reflexively practised as we bring sounds, space and words in closer proximity to ourselves and in an exchange with others?

Observations a,b,c
Sounds travel with words whilst language mobilises itself in precise directions – the latter must reach a destination without encountering the language of others. People may meet but languages must not (?)

Sounds that travel with words makes conscious the linguistic difference between you and another.



Sounds that travel beyond words slice openings into a personalised world of expression to be imagined as cultural capital.

Here amongst these many possibilities of sonic agency you can be held in disharmony, sonic disharmony: counterpoints in a rhythmic exchange between you and another.

LOCAL AFFECTIVE COMMUNE


IT
ADDLED
ME

THAT SOUND OF

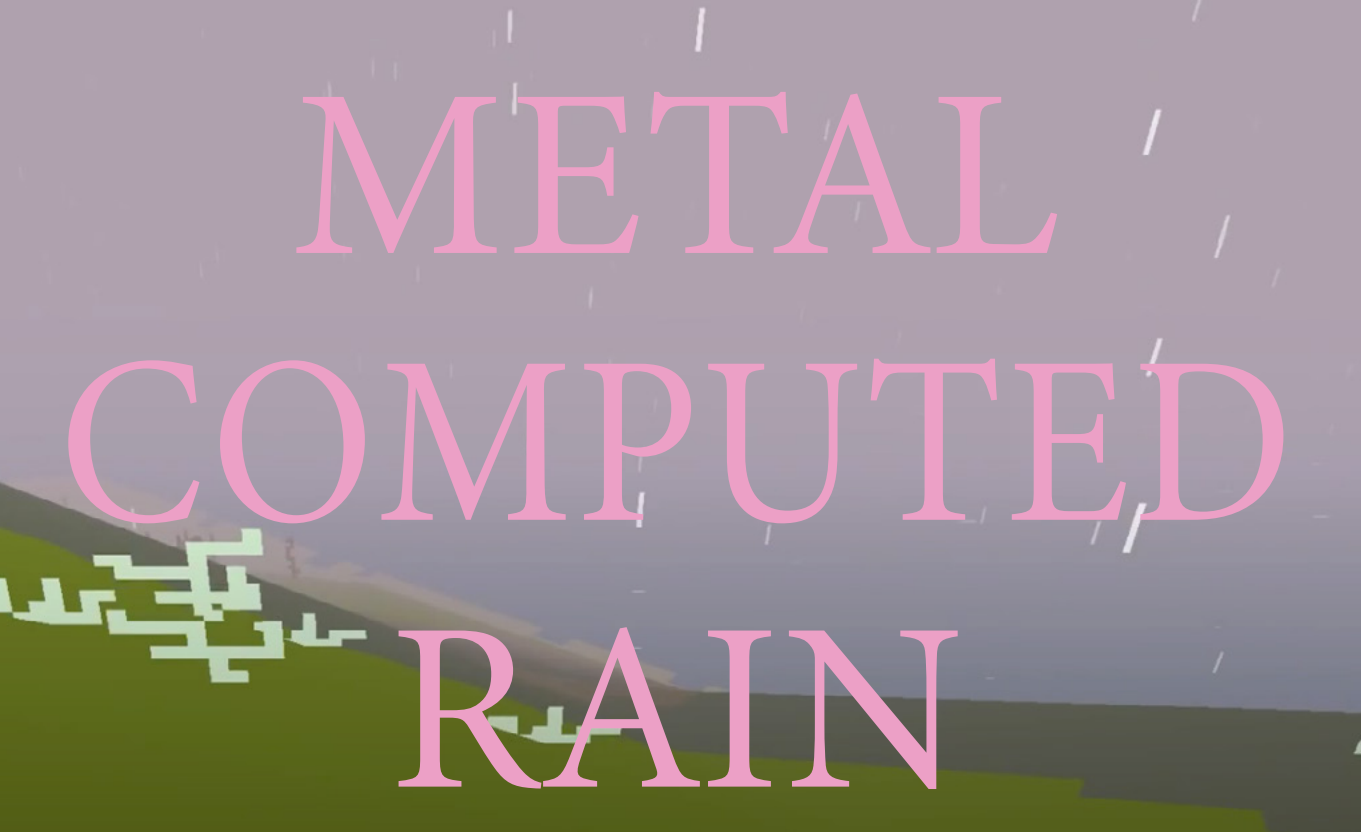

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IMAGE CREDITS

58 Ryan Gander, *The artist's second phone, Bielefelder Kunstverein*
59 Gibert and George, *Fuckosophy*, MONA
66 K-HOLE, *Youth Mode: A Report on Freedom*
76 Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, *Dear Reader. Don't Read.*
82 Daniel Halter, *Take Me to Your Leader*
84 Luis Camnitzer, *This is a Mirror, You are a Written Sentence*
85 Example of a 'useless staircase' in Teshima, Japan, Wikipedia
93 Peter Ravn, *Morning Lift*
94 Still, humans-of.ai
95 Jagdish Patel, *Amrit Singh Saini at the Four ways pub*
96 Aki Inomata, *Shelter*
98 Daniel de Faria Cabral, *She doesn't Know How to Scream*
99 Maitha Demithan, *Blossom*
100 Benson Tsang, Hong Kong Protest
101 Adobe, Mixamo characters
102, 103 Yunjia Peng, *Collective Memory*
104 Detail from *Untitled* (Facial Hair Transplants), Ana Mendieta. The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection
105 Marion Marion Guérineau, *Redemption in Reading*
106 Metahaven, *Possessed*
108 Elvira Kolerova, *Hauntology*
109 The Rodina, *Designer as a partisan with her ghost blades*
110 Soul Catcher Artefact from the Haisla Natives
111 Marloes ten Bhomer, *Material Compulsion*
112 Alan Warburton, *Dust Bunny*
113 William Cobbing, *Work in Progress*
114 Emily Evans, *Moving Together*
115 The Carnival of Basel (*Basler Fasnacht*), Wikipedia
116 *Kneel Before Me and Beg*, BA Fine Art Show 2017, Chelsea College of Arts
117 Alan Warburton, *Homo Economicus*
118 *Homo Extinctus*, BA Graphic Design Camberwell College of Arts with The Horniman Museum and Gardens
119 Peter Ravn, *Crawling Man No.4*
121 Cornford and Cross, *Black Narcissus*
122, 123 Pierre Huyghe, *Untitled*
125 Julie Brixey, *Wind Walking*
133 Top, Mark Leckey, *A Proposal for a Show: Universal Addressability of Dumb Things.*

Bottom (top right), Lucy Jarvis, *Moth Trap #1*

133 – 135 Interior of deer cave, Wikipedia

135 Bottom (bottom left), Dust flying over rock, downtoearth.org.in

136 Top, Taca Sui, Felai Peak

136 Bottom, Frederic Brewster Loomis, *Field book of Common Rocks and Minerals*

137 Taca Sui, Mt. Kuocang Grotto

138 Top, Mále Uribe Forés, *Salt Imaginaries*

138 Bottom, Mark T. Walker, *An is that isn't always*

139 Top, Werner J. Hannappel, Iceland: Magdalena Jetelová

139 Bottom, Nazanin Moghbeli, *'N' – Sound Line*

140 Floating house after 2011 Japanese earthquake, Wikipedia

141 Sadhna Jain, *Eastney Night*

142 Terry Disney, U.K. Miners Strike

143 Top, Old Wapping Stairs, Wikipedia

143 Bottom, Nicola White, *Mudlark*

144 145 Nicola White, Mudlark

146 Top, Nadav Kander, *Dark Line – The Thames Estuary*

146 Bottom (left), Nadav Kander, *Dark Line – The Thames Estuary.* (Right) By Rev. W. S. Lach-Szyrma, *Rodda's Guide to Penzance, Land's End, Kynance Cove, the Lizard, Isles of Scilly, &c.*

147 Full mount taxidermy bear scene, africahunting.com

148 Trophy hunters, Raincoast Conservation Foundation

149 Sound Mirror at Abbots Cliff

150 Nicola Rae, *Sonic Sensing*

151 Christine Sun Kim, *The Sign for Context*

152 Top, Gurgaon Ki Awaaz Community Radio

152 Bottom, UNDP, Community Radio Bangladesh

153 Paul Kos, *The Sound of Ice Melting*

154 Aganetha Dyck, *Masked Ball*

155 Shirin Neshat, *Munis and Revolutionary Man*

156 Top, Aérea Negrot, *Silent*

156 Bottom, Ursula Block & Michael Glasmeier, *Broken Music Artists' Recordworks*

157 Marion Guerineau, *Redemption of Reading*

158 Top, Steffani Jemison, *Stroke*

158 Bottom, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, *No New Theories*

159 Aura Satz, *Spiral Sound Coil*

Interstitials Twisted Tree Games 2013, *Proteus gameplay*

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