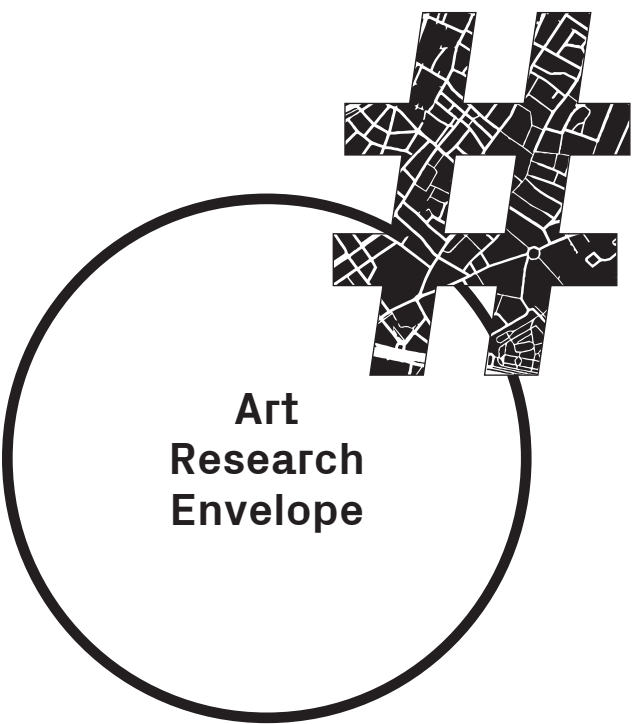




“#4” is the fourth issue of an open format documenting relevant developments in the field of art and research, published by Zentrum Fokus Forschung.



Intro: Art Research Envelope #4

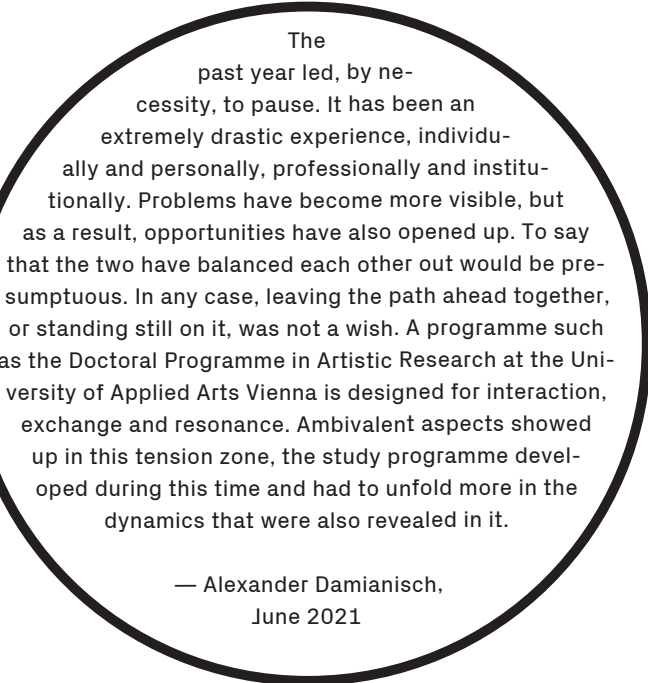
Envelope #4 is the fourth issue of an open format documenting relevant developments in art and research published by Zentrum Fokus Forschung. This publication provides an update on the current growth and the shared experiences made inside the Artistic Research PhD Programme of the University of Applied Arts Vienna. The core of Envelope#4 documents content provided by PhD candidates based upon their artistic research. These visual and written traces portray the current state of the art within their continuous research processes. Jointly developed between Margarete Jahrmann, Professor for the Artistic Research PhD Programme since 2017/18, and Alexander Damianisch, head of Zentrum Fokus Forschung, this open format tries to follow and reflect our experiences through a tentative way of sharing, as well as providing reference and provocation.

The Artistic Research PhD Programme is a postgraduate study programme in the field of art. The focus is on artistic work — which is regarded as the basis of knowledge production — and topics and practices of artistic research govern it. The six-semester long study programme in English starts each autumn and is located at the Zentrum Fokus Forschung. The selection criteria are the topicality, innovation potential, and social relevance of the artistic research issue described in the exposé, and knowledge of its national and international research context. Doctoral candidates are tutored by professors from the



University of Applied Arts Vienna, recommended by a committee in charge of candidate selection.

For further information and deadlines, please visit <http://zentrumfokusforschung.uni-ak.ac.at>.



allem erfahren, was es bedeutet, unter den besonderen Bedingungen der pandemischen Realität selbst künstlerisch geforderte Forscherin zu sein. Jeder Schritt muss allzu zügig gesetzt werden. Der Pfad bewegt sich, verändert sich ständig; zwischen öffentlichen Präsentationen im intensiven Programm der Forschungswoche im Garten des Prater Ateliers und dem mit Wanderlust gespickten Ausstellen von Artefakten des Forschens. Wesentlich für das Verständnis künstlerischer Forschung sind diskursive Objekte, die ich ausgehend von meinem Konzept der Ludic Objects innerhalb des Artistic Research PhD Programms weiterentwickeln konnte. Diese diskursiven Objekte funktionieren in der künstlerischen Forschung als prismatische Objekte, die den Weg des Forschungsvorgehens mit im gesamten Spektrum aller Farben aufgefächertem Licht beleuchten. Das selbstreflexive Aufnehmen der eigenen Grenzen ist eine Praxis der aktivistisch selbstkritischen Kunst, die in den letzten drei Jahren in Seminare zu Methoden und Praxis künstlerischer Forschung eingeflossen ist. Auch für die Möglichkeit der Entwicklung und Ausarbeitung dieser Thesen ludischer Diskursobjekte, ausgehend von den Seminaren, möchte ich mich bei allen teilnehmenden Studierenden bedanken. Einige der Ergebnisse sind in den unten angeführten Publikationen des Jahres 2021 nachzulesen.

Doppelschritt Conclusion

Auf unserem Weg der künstlerischen Forschung über das akademische Jahr hinweg wurde in einer eindrucksvollen Tour de Force deutlich, wohin es gehen wird: in eine hybride Welt. So bestanden auch die Abschlüsse der PhD Kandidat*innen aus einem Rundgang am wunderbaren Ort unseres Programms im Atelier im Wiener Prater, an diesem Ort ohne festgetretene Wege, der es erlaubt, Innen und Außen zu verbinden – nicht nur räumlich, sondern auch konzeptuell – und festgefahrte akademische Formen weichzutreten. So wurde auf dem Hin-Weg zu den ersten Artistic PhD Abschlüssen demonstriert, dass künstlerische Artefakte weit mehr als die Evidenz einer These sein können. Die in einer Ausstellung im großen Vortragssaal (mit noch größeren Fenstern) nach draußen gezeigten Arbeiten dienen dem Aufziehen des Vorhangs, dem Lichten des Schleiers in klarer Erkenntnis – bis wir den grünen Prater sehen können. Artefakte unterstützen die Argumentation, sind Diskursobjekte zur diskursiven Reflexion und erschließen Kunst dabei neu: als lockeres Format einer experimentellen Kunst in gedanklicher Bewegung. Nach der Erlangung der künstlerisch forschenden Doktorwürde ist ein Rückweg in die Kunst nicht nötig, denn unsere künstlerisch forschenden Doktorats Kandidat*innen gehen nie weg von der Kunst. Eher umrunden sie ihre Forschungsfragen im Prater-Parcours auf einem Rundweg, der sich schliesst und immer wieder neu aufgeht.

Dieses Jahr schließt sich der Rundweg auch für mich persönlich. Ich möchte mich von Herzen für die im Zentrum Fokus Forschung und im Artistic Research PhD Programm gemeinsam zurückgelegten Wege bedanken. Für mich ist nun der Weg das Spiel!

Rundweg in Bewegung: das Artistic Research Programm
Mehrere Gedanken-Schritte
mit Margarete Jahrmann

— Prateratelier, Juni 2021

Das Angehen essentieller Fragen ist in der künstlerischen Forschung wesentlich. Künstlerisch Forschende sind diejenigen, die sich in Diskurs ergehen. Bewegt von einem intrinsisch motivierten Forschungsinteresse agieren Künstler*innen bewegend. In Bewegung gesetzt wird das Verständnis zwischen Diskursgruppe und Forschungsfrage in Form von diskursiver Reflexion – die in unserem neu entwickelten Verständnis künstlerischer Forschung als Bewegung der Gedanken nicht zuletzt im letzten Jahr in zwei erfolgreichen Artistic Research PhD Abschlüssen demonstriert wurde. Diese Abschlüsse wurden in einer jeweils zwischen On- und Offline Präsenz beweglichen Defensio begangen, vor Ort und live online-gehend. Als Vorsitzende der Kommission fühlte ich mich als Wiedergängerin zwischen den Gedanken der geladenen internationalen Prüfer*innen und jenen Bewegungen in der Doctores in Artis in Disputation, die bekanntlich am besten im Gehen ins Fließen kommen. Den neuen Artistic Research Doktor*innen wünsche ich alles Gute auf ihrem weiteren Weg.

Schritt 1

Bewegung an der frischen Luft, en plein air, ist gut gegen Zoom fatigue! Eine solche Müdigkeit haben wir nach zwei „Public Kolloquien“ zu den aktuellen Positionen der künstlerischen Forschung im Online Format überwunden. Diese Kolloquien sind ein wichtiger Moment für die Gestaltung des Forschungsprozesses durch eigene Bewegung, für das Sich-Einverleiben einer neuen Form künstlerischer Forschung, im Gehen zwischen den Disziplinen und urgenten Fragestellungen. Wie gehen wir vor, um auch in der virtuellen Form einen gedanklich freien Spaziergang zu ermöglichen? Nur in einem besonders strukturierten Regelformat, das offenes, freies Gehen erlaubt, können wir das Erleben und die Bildung einer Diskurskultur gewährleisten, die sich kritischer und kollegialer Öffentlichkeit stellt. Mit thematischen „Provokationen“, denen sich die PhD Kandidat*innen als ihre eigene Peer Gruppe stellen, zwischen Themen der neuen Materialität, des Medialen, des Ökologischen etc. haben wir versucht, dynamische Spielregeln als Schrittmacher künstlerischer Forschung vorzuschlagen. Indem die Thesen der PhD Kandidat*innen öffentlich diskutiert werden, indem sie geladenen internationalen Reviewer*innen und einem internationalen Publikum zugänglich gemacht werden, erhalten wir das Public Kolloquium Format begehenswert und zugänglich als öffentliche Plattform für Artistic Research Doktorand*innen und Interessierte. Dieses Jahr hatten wir Gastreviewer*innen unter anderem aus der Professorenschaft der University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg, der University of Birmingham und der University of Plymouth – und all das ohne belastende Reisetätigkeit. Ich hoffe und kann nur anregen, dass zumindest einige dieser äußerst spannenden Elemente beibehalten werden und zu einem Welt-verträglichen Fußabdruck für ein aus weltweit verstreuten Studierenden bestehendes Programm der Forschung und Kunst beitragen.

Schritt 2

Für alle, Doktorats-Studierende, Kolleg*innenschaft des Zentrum Fokus Forschung und die künstlerischen Doktorate betreuende Professor*innen der Universität für Angewandte Kunst, war das erstmalige Format der Präsentation von Forschungspositionen in einem rein virtuellen Format hoch spannend. Es hat sich gezeigt, dass der konzentrierte Fokus auf den gemeinsamen Diskurs als essentielles Schrittmuster des Programms hervortritt. Genau dieser „move“ wurde von den Studierenden als positiv anerkannt, als wertvolles Bewegungsmuster identifiziert und in weiteren Formen des Austauschs beibehalten. Informelle Formen im formal gebundenen online Format erfinden, ist im Artistic Research PhTea gelungen. Über ein Jahr habe ich jeden Dienstag um 10 Uhr morgens ein informelles Teezeremoniell für die aktiven PhD Kandidat*innen abgehalten, in dem ich bewusst vermieden habe, strukturell zu diskutieren, um möglichst assoziativ zu bleiben. Es war ein Versuch, ein sich antastendes Trippeln im allgemein verordneten Format des Video-Conferencing. Das ergab einen inspirierenden Raum, in verschiedenen Zeitzeonen von Japan über Dubai nach London und Budapest bis Wien. Deutlich wurde das Verbindende der Online Meetings: die Konversation in Schrittempo zu verlangsamen und zu erlauben, mit Verzögerungen zu spielen. Weitere Schritte in diese Richtung sind sicher, erfordern aber Balance in der Gangart. Ich bedanke mich für dieses Experiment bei allen regelmäßig und auch sporadisch hereingehenden Studierenden!

Schritt 3

Prinzipiell baut künstlerische Forschung auf künstlerischen Positionen auf und ist formal ein avancierter, methodologisch-reflexiver Zugang. Künstlerische Forschung treibt die Künste voran, oft die eigene Kunstproduktion, und bringt sie in andere Zusammenhänge. Im Arbeiten mit künstlerischer Forschung erfährt man als Künstler*in auch eine andere Anerkennung von prozessualen Elementen der eigenen Arbeit – was in einen innovativen Erkenntnisprozess, bei der „Bildung einer KÜNSTLERISCHEN Tatsache“ (referierend auf den historischen Wiener Kreis der Wissenschaftstheorie und assoziierend im Austausch mit einer Gruppe junger künstlerisch Forschender in Jena, <http://www.kuenstlerische-tatsachen.de>) unmittelbar Eingang findet. Artistic Research als Expedition ist prozess- und erkenntnisorientiert. Exploratives Heran-Gehen stößt einen anderen, alternativen Erkenntnisprozess an: es geht um ein Objekt, das nicht fertig ist und als solches auch erkannt wird. Das Experiment und der Prozess stehen im Vordergrund. Vom Ansatz her ist die Kunstproduktion im Rahmen von Artistic Research aus dem klassischen Kunstbetrieb ausgekoppelt – aber der Zugang zu einer Vielzahl neuer Felder der Kunst eröffnet sich durch den kollektiven, partizipativen und transdisziplinären Prozess. Die unfertige Arbeit in der künstlerischen Forschung als Diskursobjekt öffentlich zu machen, ist ein Wagnis hin zu einem anderen, experimentellen Erkenntnisgewinn – losgetreten durch den Weg zum Objekt.

Schluss Schritt

Im letzten Jahr als Professorin im PhD Programm Artistic Research der Universität für Angewandte Kunst habe ich vor

Circuit in Motion: The Artistic Research Program
Several thinking steps with Margarete Jahrmann

— Prateratelier, June 2021

Addressing essential questions is fundamental in artistic research. Artistic researchers are those who engage in discourse. Moved by intrinsically motivated research interest, artists act movingly. The understanding between the discourse group and the research question is set in motion in the form of discursive reflection — which in our newly developed understanding of artistic research as a movement of thoughts — was demonstrated last year in two successful Artistic Research PhD degrees. The thesis defenses moved between online and offline presence, on-site and live streaming. As chairwoman of the commission, I felt like a revenant around thoughts from international examiners and those movements in the Doctores in Artis in disputation — which are best known to flow when walking. I wish the new Artistic Research PhDs all the best on their future path.

Step 1

Moving in fresh air, en plein air, is good against Zoom fatigue! We have overcome such fatigue after two Public Colloquiums on current artistic research positions held in online format. These colloquiums are essential for shaping the research process through our movement, embracing a new form of artistic research, and walking between disciplines and pressing questions. How do we proceed to enable a thought-free walk also in the virtual form? Only in an exceptionally structured regular format (which allows for open, free walking) we can guarantee the experience and the formation of a discourse culture that faces the critical and collegial public. With thematic “provocations” that the PhD candidates face as their own peer group, between themes of New Materialism, the Media, the Ecological, and many more manifestations, we have tried to propose dynamic rules of the game as pacemakers of artistic research. By publicly discussing the theses of PhD candidates, making them available to international reviewers and a global audience, we keep the Public Colloquium format walkable and accessible as a public platform for Artistic Research PhD students and interested parties. This year, we welcomed guest reviewers from the professorate of the University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg, the University of Birmingham, and the University of Plymouth, to name only a few — and all without burdensome travel. I hope and can only suggest that at least some of these recursive elements will remain to at least contribute to a world-compatible footprint and for the good of a program of research and art composed of students scattered around the globe.

Step 2

For all doctoral students, colleagues at the Zentrum Fokus Forschung and professors of the University of Applied Arts Vienna supervising the artistic doctoral candidates, the first format of presenting research positions in a purely virtual format was exciting. It showed that a concentrated focus on joint discourse emerges as a basic step pattern of the program. Our Students recognized this “move” as positive and it was identified as a valuable pattern of movement, and therefore retained as a vehicle for different forms of exchange. Creating informal arrangements in a formally bound online format succeeded in the Artistic Research PhD. For over a year, I held a casual tea ceremony every Tuesday at 10 am for the active PhD candidates. I deliberately avoided discussing structurally but instead kept it as associative as possible. It was an attempt, a mutually probing tripping in the generally decreed videoconference format. It created an inspiring space in different time zones: from Japan to Dubai, from London to Budapest and Vienna. What became apparent was the unifying nature of online meetings, slowing conversations down to walking pace and allowing people to play with delays. Further steps in this direction are unavoidable but require balance in the pace. I thank all the regular and sporadic students for this experiment!

Step 3

In principle, artistic research is based on artistic positions, and is formally an advanced, methodological-reflexive approach. Furthermore, artistic research drives the arts forward (often also an artist's own production), and brings it into other contexts. When working in the field of artistic research, as an artist, one can also experience a different recognition of process-related elements of the work, which results in an innovative cognitive process in the “formation of an ARTISTIC fact” (I'm referring to the #historical Vienna Circle of Philosophy of Science and associating in

exchange with a group of young artistic researchers in Jena, <http://www.kuenstlerische-tatsachen.de>). Artistic research, as an expedition, is both process and knowledge-oriented. The exploratory approach triggers another alternative cognitive process: It is about the object that is not finished — and is recognized as such. The experiment and the process are in the foreground. In terms of approach, art production within the framework of artistic research is decoupled from the traditional art business. However, it has access to many new fields of art through the collective, participatory and transdisciplinary process. To make the unfinished work public via artistic research, as a discourse object, is a risk towards a different, experimental gain of knowledge — starting from the path all the way through to the object.

Final Step

In the last year as a professor in the Artistic Research PhD programme at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, I experienced what it means to be an artistically challenged researcher under the special conditions of the pandemic reality. From now on, every step has to be taken quickly. The path moves and constantly changes between public presentations in the intensive programme of the research week in the garden of the Prater Atelier and the wanderlust-filled exhibition of research artefacts. Discursive objects are essential for understanding artistic research, which I was able to develop further within the Artistic Research PhD programme based on my concept of Ludic Objects. In artistic research, these discursive objects function as prismatic objects that illuminate the path of the research process with light that is fanned out into the entire spectrum of all colours. Self-reflective acceptance of one's own limits is a practice of activist self-critical art that has been incorporated into the seminars on methods and practice of artistic research over the past three years. I would also like to thank all participating students for the possibility of developing and elaborating these theses of ludic discourse objects based on these seminars. Some of the results can be found in the listed below publications of the year 2021.

Double Step Conclusion

On our path of artistic research throughout the academic year, an impressive tour de force made it clear where we are headed: into a hybrid world. The work of the PhD candidates also consisted of a tour of the beautiful place where our programme takes place in the Atelier in the Vienna Prater. This place without well-trodden paths, allows connecting inside and outside — spatially but also conceptually — while it also helps to dilate stagnant academic forms. On the way to the first Artistic PhD degrees, it was demonstrated that artistic artefacts could be far more than the evidence of a thesis. The works shown in an exhibition in the large lecture hall (with even larger windows) serve to open the curtain, to clear the veil in clear recognition — until we see the green Prater. Artefacts support the argument, are objects of discourse for discursive reflection, and open up new art forms and expressions as a loose format of experimental art in thought movement. After obtaining the artistic research doctorate, a return to art is unnecessary since our artistic research doctoral candidates never left art. Instead, they circle their research questions in the Prater course on a circular path that closes and opens up again and again.

This year the circular route closes for me, too. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the paths we have walked together in the Zentrum Fokus Forschung and the Artistic Research PhD programme. For me, the way is now the game!

References / Related outcomes / artistic research readings:

Jahrmann M (2021). LUDICS: THE ART OF PLAY AND SOCIETAL IMPACT. In: Franke, B (ed.). NOT AT YOUR SERVICE. MANIFESTOS FOR DESIGN. Birkhäuser, Basel, pp. 319–329. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783035622751017>

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Jahrmann M (2020). LUDIC GAMES: PLAYFUL FORMS OF INSIGHT. In: Mateus-Berr, R (ed.). Teaching Artistic Research. De Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 30–40. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110665215-006>



List of projects participating in this open format

2020

- Margit Busch, A garden for a fish, Supervisor: Virgil Widrich
- Cristiana de Marchi, Casting a shadow. On disappearance, emptiness and the haunting power of absence, Supervisor: Judith Eisler

2019

- Niels Bonde, Paying with your face, Supervisor: Margarete Jahrmann
- Micha Payer, Re-Enacting Tableaus, Supervisor: Paul Petritsch

2018

- Barbara Graf, Stitches and Sutures, Supervisor: Barbara Putz-Plecko
- Anahita Rezvani-Rad, What role does art play, if any, in archiving and effecting collective memory, Supervisor: Henning Bohl
- Barbis Ruder, COUNTERACTIONS. What are the possibilities and restraints of (body) optimization?, Supervisor: Hans Schabus
- Fabian Weiss, Ideal Self: How We Use Photography and Technology to Present and Optimize Ourselves, Supervisor: Margarete Jahrmann

2017

- Cordula Daus, Kay, or a Case for Intensity, Supervisor: Ferdinand Schmatz
- Charlotta Ruth, Choreographic Contingencies for on and offline, Supervisor: Margarete Jahrmann

Credits (projects)

As detailed on the individual project posters

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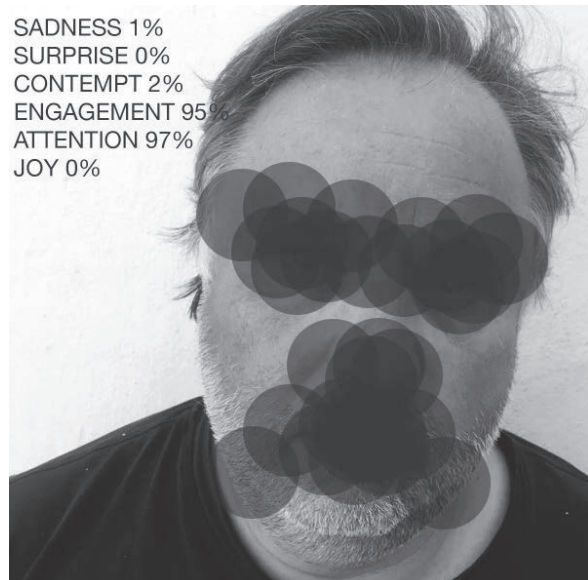
ZFF online open access exposition in Research Catalogue:



dr.'angewandte

University of Applied Arts Vienna
University of Applied Arts Vienna





NS. Emotion Analysis Portrait. 2021.
Print.



NS. Old School Pixellation. 2021.
Venetian glass mosaic.



NS. Possible Portrait. 2021.
Depixelated from mosaic.

Who's Afraid of Facial Recognition?

Research on Facial Recognition and Emotion Analysis.

Niels Bonde 2021.

What is Facial Recognition (FR) and how does it affect us? How are our portraits stolen and our facial expressions exploited by Artificial Intelligence (AI) sifting through databases and organizing datasets? In a few decades FR has gone from science fiction to an everyday presence, and now even our emotions can be quantified through AI. I will test software and datasets, look at AI, create new - and modify - existing hardware, by combining rationalistic with empiric approaches in my investigation, doing fact-based research on how we are automatically recognized, matched in the datasets and how AI measures our feelings, even as it sounds paradoxical.

Facial Recognition and analysis are used in a growing number of critical contexts, as law enforcement and in health care; furthermore, the technology has spread diversely to more mundane fields as a means to direct payment of burgers to mapping moose. The ubiquitous use is the cause of the emergency. In research and experiments I will acquire empirical knowledge and not only present ideas based on feelings, however these two are intermingled in my research topic. Using and shaping algorithms to decipher feelings and interpret them in a way recognizable to humans, will affect both "subject" and "object" as at times those two overlap. The subjective factor is not a flaw, but a feature, that allows the viewer to make up her own mind. In my main experiment I will be researching FR and analysis in a test setup that is also an artwork. It will be situated within „Gedenkstätte Museum in der ‚Runden Ecke‘ mit dem Museum im Stasi Bunker“ that through its collection establishes context, involves and engages visitors. The historical background of the museum collection offers relevant insights to the roots of facial recognition. The exhibition and experiments within the exhibition will be inspired by social practice and performance art as well as autoexperiments by scientists ranging from Sanctorio Sanctorius (1561–1636) to Barry Marshall (1951 -).

My focus is questioning the use of Facial Recognition, data collection, logging, and tracing. In a discussion on surveillance a recurring argument is: "if you have done nothing wrong, you don't need to worry". "Surveillance makes us safer" is another classic. Other hurdles of discussing FR and privacy issues are technical: "what does it do, and how does it even work?". "But it is so easy so convenient" is the argument that sums up how surveillance technology appeals to our inherent laziness. I will try to address these arguments and questions in my research, and argue that we should monitor Facial Recognition and Machine Learning to understand the ramifications of ubiquitous use. For that, we need to develop an active language in order to discuss how this technology works and especially how it affects us. This language can be developed through art.

One example of what I will look into is Clearview AI, a company that scrapes images from social networks like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and millions of other sites to create a repository of billions of images. Using Clearview's app, law enforcement and government agencies can upload a photo of a person and the database will return matches to more photos and links to where the pictures came from, and link it to all sorts of information on the person in question. There are many problems in this. The information could be incorrect, or the person could be misidentified, and on top of that, the information has been obtained at best dubiously, and at worst illegally.

The ethical challenges are the reason for the research, but it is impossible to do research without experimenting. To do fact-based studies and not just voice an opinion, it is necessary to try, test, and measure. That is the central principle of academic research, and even artistic investigation. Then how is it possible to discuss and do artistic research on these issues? The theorist Karen Barad says: "Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming. The separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter, and discourse."(i) In order to demonstrate and clarify the workings of Facial Recognition, without it being a work based purely on assumptions, I must get my hands dirty in the research to fully show the methods of FR.

Why artistic research? Facial Recognition is precisely about the image and creation of images, which is why visual art can make poignant research and important arguments in a debate on this topic. Through artworks I will offer new perspectives on Facial Recognition, in order to facilitate discussions. How is artistic research different from research? If we exclude the term artistic, we get more specific answers. Is it possible without "loosing" the art? It is, if we look at the discussions of what art is, from Plato (Art as Imitation), and Aristotele (Dramatic Imitation), Clive Bell (Art as Significant Form) and David Hume (The Standard of Taste) to Arthur Danto who in "The Artworld" speculates that theory has finally eclipsed the sensory as the primary experience in art. Danto concludes that a theory must precede your experience of art: otherwise you risk mistaking an urinal or a Brillo box for what they actually are "... to see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld"(ii). Though the theories from Plato to Hume differed, it was roundly agreed that works of art possessed something that was absent in every other human endeavor, that there was one thing that without which, a work of art would cease to be. The battles were always over what that quality was, with no one doubting that it was essential and universal, or created by artists. Going back to Danto's argument, Social Practice(iii) with its audience participation is the artistic theory that would lay the groundwork for the reading of the project as art. The audiences reactions are crucial in order to test algorithms and applications and get the data the project needs. My experiments are guided by the insight that the knowledge is there, but so far it's academic knowledge and not used in artistic practice. These experiments will be my primary tool for new knowledge and insights.

(i) Karen Barad: Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter (2003)

(ii) Arthur Danto: The Artworld (1964)

(iii) Claire Bishop, Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship (2012)

the fish I know

One day Zhuangzi and Huizi were strolling across the bridge on the Hao River.

Zhuangzi said, "Look how these fish are swimming about with great ease. These fish are happy."

Huizi responded, "You are not a fish, so how do you know the happiness of the fish?"

Zhuangzi said, "You are not me, so how do you know that I don't know the happiness of the fish?"

Huizi said, "I am not you; therefore I do not know you. By the same logic you do not know the fish. So it is impossible for you to know the happiness of the fish."

Zhuangzi replied, "Please return to the beginning. When you asked me, 'How do you know the happiness of the fish?' you already knew that I knew, and therefore you asked me. My knowing happens over the Hao River.

Ames, R.T., & Nakajima, T. (2015). Zhuangzi and the Happy Fish. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. pp 102, 103
Originally published in Ehu Journal 29 (1977): 2–12.

what does knowing mean?

Do I know a fish if I can distinguish it from others? Does becoming familiar with fish mean knowing them? What does 'knowing' mean in the role of a trans-scientist interested in the *Umwelt* theory of the biologist Jacob von Uexküll (1864-1944).

organism and environment / a matter of semiotics

Jacob von Uexküll advocated considering organisms as subjects that can only be understood in the context of their respective environment [*Umwelt*], an environment that represents a cut-out of the world according to the meaning to the subject. *Umwelt* is a matter of semiotics. The subject carries its environment with it, as if surrounded by a personalised bubble of opportunities for perception and action.

resonance / being represented in the Umwelt of the other

I am not a fish and we don't inhabit the same Uexküllian bubble, but I have made the fish a part of my environment and thereby have become part of their environment. I imagine the Uexküllian bubbles to be malleable, constantly changing and exchanging – may be they are not even bubbles but energy fields. They form intersections, corridors and bridges, they have channels of exchange; they resonate and are sometimes in tune. It is a constant process of communication, negotiation and adaptation. It is as if each subject reflects and is reflected by the whole.

medium

In the introductory dialogue, Zhuangzi's knowledge happened over the Hao River, trusting that there is a medium that has the ability to transmit knowledge. Does knowledge become universal in its subjectivity when it is transmittable?

*... a subtopic of a 'garden for a fish'
in which the zebrafish Danio rerio
plays a central role*

Zebrafish are tiny cyprinid fish from the Ganges and Brahmaputra river basin region that were introduced into laboratories as a vertebrate model organism in the 1980s and subsequently became quite popular.

* Demin, Konstantin A et al. "Cross-species Analyses of Intra-species Behavioral Differences in Mammals and Fish." Neuroscience vol. 429 (2020): 33-45.

objective

Science claims to generate objective knowledge and the publication list of research involving zebrafish is long. The Zebrafish Information Network [ZFIN] - a comprehensive online information database for zebrafish - lists nearly 45,000 publications to date. However, it is rarely the fish as such that attracts the interest of the researchers. Rather, the fish serves as a tool [an object?] to gain insight into universal mechanisms and common principles or as a bioassay in pharmacology or toxicology. Do universal mechanisms let me know the fish?

living with / dynamics / death

I have been keeping zebrafish since early 2019, starting with an ordinary 54-liter all-inclusive tank. Over time, I learned about the dynamics and fragility of the small man-made indoor habitat and witnessed developments in the water system that were detrimental to some of its vertebrate inhabitants, the fish. The fish that died were not nameless.

Individuals / zoom in

Without giving it much thought, I tried from the beginning to distinguish the individual fish, which was easy with some as they had distinctive features that set them apart from the average. With others [the average], it seemed almost impossible at first glance. But gradually, you learn to zoom in and focus your attention. In a mixture of subliminal perceptions, casual and structured observations, one becomes aware of the individual characteristics.

photography / naming

Five fish have survived the instability of the aquatic system. I can clearly distinguish them. Photography helped to verify minimal distinguishing features such as small irregularities in the stripe pattern. All the fish were given a name.

tracking / drawings containing stories and a clarinet

Tracking, a method also used in science [usually using software], helped me further familiarise myself with the fish. I used a grid (as a landmark) and followed the movements of each fish with a pen on semi-transparent paper. In doing so, I learned about the habits, relationships and spatial preferences of each fish. From these drawings, I can read stories about their idiosyncrasies. In another setting, I tried to translate the movements of the fish into clarinet tones. The result doesn't sound as bad as I expected.

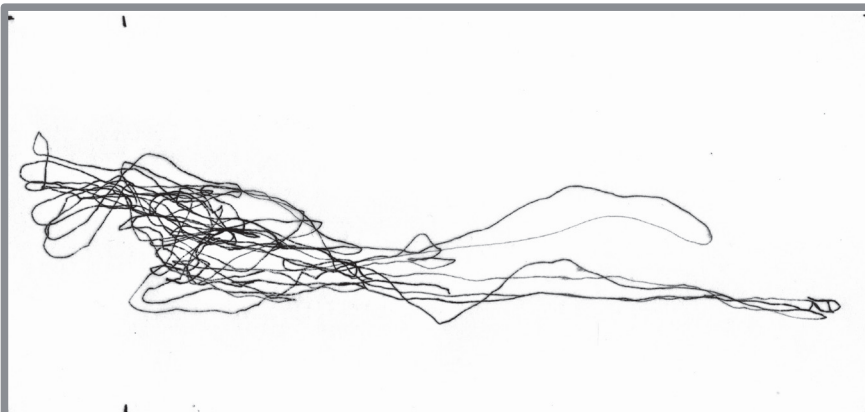
peculiarities, time and personalities

It is not only the physical appearance that enables me to recognise individuals but also their behavioural peculiarities – time matters when it comes to knowing the idiosyncrasies of someone or something. A peculiarity is not a single event. Peculiarities are what make organisms personalities. In their uniqueness, they can say something about the whole.

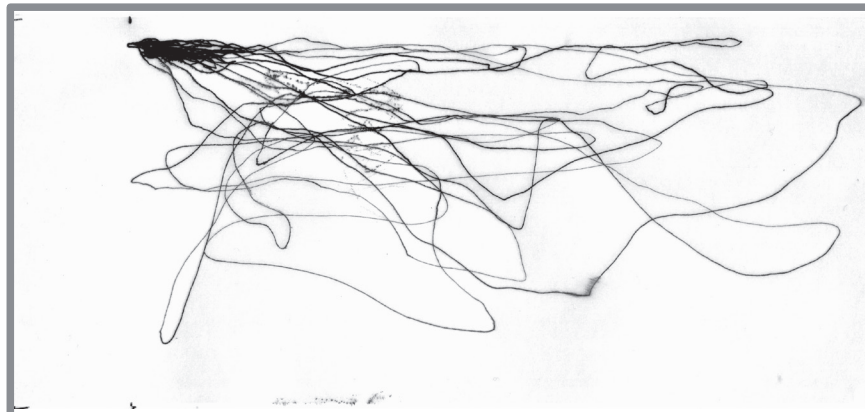
laboratory settings / real life

In laboratory settings, individual behavioural variance is usually a nuisance because it affects the reproducibility of experiments. However, since it reflects "real" live conditions, scientists are beginning to wonder whether they should investigate individual differences more thoroughly instead of trying to minimise them.* Given Uexküll's concept of *Umwelt*, which considers organisms and their environment as a unit, the study of behavioural variability under different environmental settings seems an essential component to me of getting to know a fish.





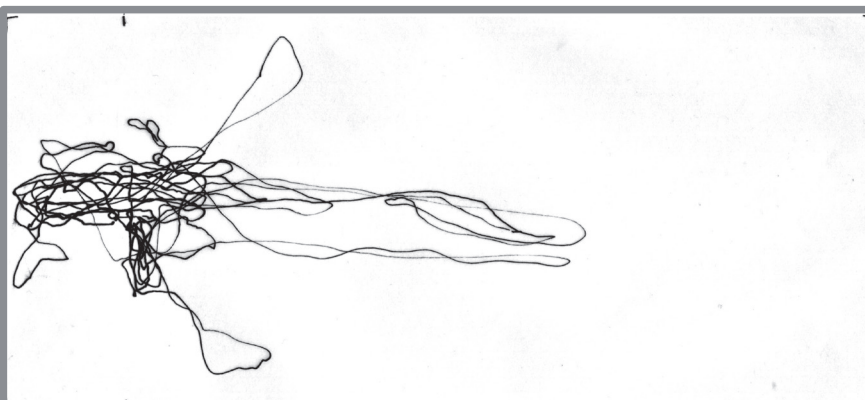
BENT is a female. Her spine is a little crooked, the pattern of her stripes has irregularities. BENT is not a nervous character. She swims where she likes and is a frequent guest in the compartment*. There she sometimes chases 1POINT. She herself is chased by JOE BLOW and occasionally by FORK, but this usually happens outside the compartment.



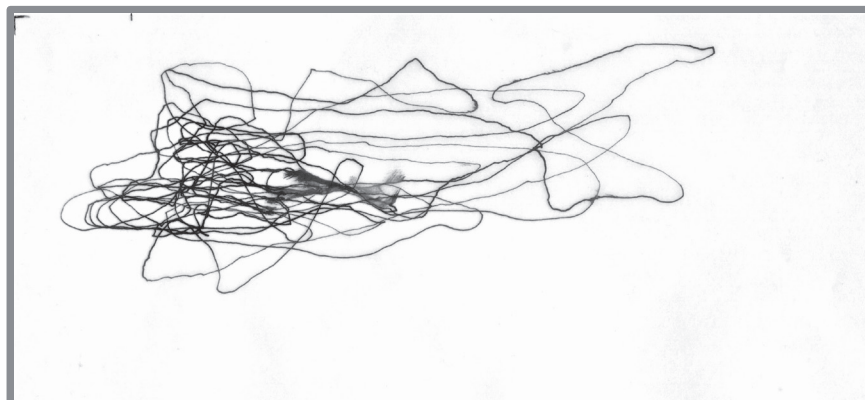
JOE BLOW is one of the smaller fish. He is certainly male. His bright stripes shine strikingly yellowish-golden. He is the most active of the fish and a dedicated pursuer. He spends a lot of time near the water surface and has frequent and fierce encounters with HEABEA through the plexiglass.



HEABEA, definitely a female, once declared the compartment her primary residence, which she only leaves on rare occasions. She spends most of her time near the surface. BENT and 1POINT are accepted as occasional sub-tenants, at least in most cases. Separated by the plexiglass, she often has fierce encounters with JOE BLOW.



1POINT is most likely a female. She has become quite thin – I assume she is ill. She cannot regulate her buoyancy properly and has a clumsy swimming style. She spends quite a lot of time in the compartment, presumably to escape the pursuits of JOE BLOW.



FORK is one of the biggest fish. I always thought he was male – now I'm not so sure. S/he makes a healthy impression. S/he visits the compartment very rarely. A few months ago s/he was the one having passionate encounters with HEABEA, separated by the plexiglass.

*[the compartment]: The fish do not navigate through an empty tank. There is vegetation and a subdivision that I installed some 6 months ago. It is indicated as small markers on the tracking drawings. The resulting separate chamber has a volume of about 8 litres and has become a favourite hangout for one fish. The dividing plexiglass has openings through which the fish can swim. In the beginning, the fish tried to pass the partition at any point – they did not perceive the transparent barrier as such.

The drawings show 3 min of fish tracking in March and April, all at around 5pm. They were selected to illustrate the characteristics of the individual fish.

La Mago: Repeat the following phrase, please –

I love you.

Their voice goes up on love and down on you.

Nyam: I love you. Nyam: I love you.

It's the first time in Ray's life. She says it again.

Ray: I love you.

She can say it. Yes, she can!

La Mago: Beautiful. Don't forget to work on it every day.

La Mago hands a fruit to Ray and Nyam.

La Mago: Take and eat, this is a strawberry.

They swallow the fruit and kiss.

flip page

Cordula Daus in conversation with [M] Dudeck

C: *Higher Love* is the title of an episode of the novel SEHR, written by the German author Kay. It tells the lightning love story between the homonymous protagonist Kay and a man-like creature called Nyam. Kay and Nyam meet at a public swimming pool in Berlin. A few days after, they marry. The ceremony is conducted by La Mago, a character that, as far as we know, has been inspired by yourself. You knew the author personally, didn't you?

[M]: Yes, Kay was a close friend of my husband and me.

C: You're an artist and witch doctor yourself. And I'm very happy that you accepted my invitation to engage in a close reading of a book which sparked controversy when it came out in the early 2020s. But let's jump directly into the text. I was wondering about the groom. In the introduction we learn that Nyam's face is made of foam. How do we have to picture this "man"? Is he a mere puppet or a human at all?

[M]: To be precise, the German text says: "Fresse aus Schaumstoff, Augen so schwarz wie keine Kohle." So foamed material meets coal, metaphor meets matter. I personally do not think Nyam is a puppet, nor a cyborg. He is a being made of flesh, material and letters.

C: In the courting scene on the lawn, Nyam reveals a sudden masculine athleticism which makes him attractive for Kay: He does a capoeira-style handstand and spontaneously carries her child on the back. Kay decides to marry him almost instantly. The crucial passage reads: "Kay is determined that Nyam will take her to the next level without passing the falling-in-love-field: higher love!"

C: What is meant by *higher love*?

[M]: That's a complex question and we need to look at the novel as a whole to approach it. Kay developed a linguistic metric and erotic style of her own. The term *higher love* stands in relation to *meaning lesser sex*. Our protagonist has literally fucked herself to a heightened state of consciousness. She realizes that things do not work out with heterosexual men – and that, in a Lacanian sense, there is no relation – not even a so called casual relation. The solution Kay comes up with is to marry someone outside of the human species. But to get there, she needs the help of La Mago, the witch doctor.

C: Grammatically speaking, we're dealing with a comparative of second degree: love – *higher love* – highest love. Still it is unclear to me what is being compared to what.

[M]: This has been a problem for me prior and remains one to this day. It aligns with my distaste for New Age plastic notions of a "higher self" which descend from Freud's notion of the Superego (which itself descends from Jewish principles of abstract monotheism.) The notion of "higher" in terms of transcendental theology is generally meant to describe the spiritual subtle plane lacking in sediment or polluted by base desire, the bodily, or the abject (Kristeva). This Higher Plane within the Abrahamic religions is typically performed by the androgynous angels – who lack bodies of flesh and are instead made of light, merging male and female in heavenly ether. I don't think Kay was after this kind of dematerialization. She had no desire to ascend to Mount High and disintegrate. Rather, I felt that she longed for a liaison – part flesh, part fiction – a liaison, or an interdimensional consort.

C: Why does Kay immediately upgrade the courting ritual to permanence? Why do you think she wants to marry at all?

[M]: The story confronts us with a strange inversion of the culturally prescribed chronology of feelings. The love confession, expected to occur in an intimate setting before the marriage, is performed publicly at the center of the wedding ritual. As readers, we witness the production of love through its vocalization. We argue that through Kay's realization that Nyam is fabricated aligns with the earlier signals that what she has been seeking all of this time is the hybrid – a being that is only partially sentient – and she wants not only to merge, but to build and grow and form an institution.

C: If we look at the first edition of the book, 'I love you' is written in superscript. How must we imagine the sound of this sentence?

[M]: To grasp the full meaning, I suggest we read the scene out loud together.

Flip page.

[M]: As you just heard, 'I love you' is being repeated, and sung – not only spoken. The musicality can be understood as a form of artifice seeping into the ritual. From another point of view, it is a simple mimicry of the way I used to say and still say 'I love you' to my husband.^(O) The question is still why Kay has to learn to say 'I love you'.

C: To be honest, I can totally identify with her. Only very seldom have I said 'Ich liebe Dich' to a lover or partner. There is no way I can own this sentence. But putting my own psychological disablement aside – I think there is also a cultural dimension to that constraint. It seems to me as if the German language imposed a higher pressure of truth on the native Ich-liebe-Dich-Sayer. Deutsch seems to suggest: "Say it like you mean it, or shut the fuck up!" But how does it sound when we *really* mean something? And – more importantly – could we get into loving just by saying 'it'? Loving and the will to believe seem to be very much connected.

[M]: Can we believe in something that we have invented, fabricated ourselves? This is one of my fundamental questions. A short answer is: of course. Do you believe in Justice? Do you believe in Morality? Do you believe in Love? Most of the things humans believe in are fabrications or constructions. But going deeper – the question whether a person can believe in an overt fabrication, a fiction that is glaringly obvious, is far more interesting and theological. Belief is a matter of projection. When one goes to see a healer who does a ritual of transformation, it is not the healer who heals you, it is your belief projected onto that healer that enables you to heal yourself. Placebo effect is the essence of Religion. *Higher love*, in Kay's sense, might be about restoring the belief in one's capacity to create one's own reality.

C: 32 years ago you began to create your own religion. That was at the same time you came out as a witch doctor, right?

[M]: Yes, exactly. I have always preferred the notion of making Magick over Prayer. Prayer is passive whereas Magick is assertion. In prayer, one humbly asks for things to happen as one wishes them, in Magick one decides that what one seeks is already happening. The origin of the Hebrew word "Abarakadabara" literally translates to "I say it and therefore it is."

C: If I wanted to marry tomorrow – how would we go about it?

[M]: In my Religion as Art, literally everything in one's life must be created by oneself, or collaboratively in terms of collective living. This means that the holiest person is one who has created their own home and clothing, has grown, spiced and cooked their own meals, designed their own languages, created their own religious frameworks, their own rituals, their own codes and constructs. Therefore, if we wanted to get married tomorrow, we would have to build our house, build the temple for our marriage, draw the invitations^(V), design robes for all the guests, choreograph the ritual, make blueprints for our love-temple and design our intents together.

C: There is so much left to talk about^(E), yet I'm afraid we already hit the bottom of this page.

M: Abarakadabara.

(L) This text has been generated through a conversation-as-material approach. Spanning over several months and still ongoing, [M] and Cordula have experimented with different forms of co-fabulation: putting words into each other's mouths, re-writing and reading one another, trying out pronouns and shifts in time. Audio messages have turned into a script, into a video conversation, into text again.

(O) [M] has always thought it was his Italian intonation that he copied into his 'I love you' (*Ti amo* or *Ti voglio bene*). But after Cordula sent her questions, his husband told him that he actually started to pronounce it this way based upon a story from his childhood. [M] used to have a dog called Misty and as a child he would always say: "Misty, come!" [slightly singing the two words]. Years later, that very sound reappears in a novel by the German writer Kay.

(V) Many thanks to Vasilis Marmatakis for the graphic design of side B.

(E) About strawberries and entheogens, for example.

Cordula Daus is a writer-artist working with and across theory, fiction and performance. Her research *Kay, or a Case for Intensity* examines the reciprocity of body and language focusing on the concept of 'intensity'. More specifically, *Kay* describes the interrelated states of fucking, loving, grieving. The work takes a ficto-critical approach. It invents a literary female character, the eponymous Kay, and speaks from and about her.





Casting a shadow. On disappearance, emptiness and the haunting power of absence

Cristiana de Marchi

To say 'Absence' is to give Presence to that which is removed from Presence.

Absence is a relevant *topos* in the articulation of a narrative (or a story) that draws on the roots of European culture and history, and is often considered to be close to the concept of travel. The theme of travel is strictly connected to that of separation, disruption and the inevitability of making farewells. The reverse of these feelings is the attempt to neutralize or even annihilate the evidence of severance through a series of stratagems, which are methods that voyagers, travelers and migrants have perfected over the millennial history of humanity or, individually, during the course of one's existence.

Fragments of a Wall

The work addresses the notion of political irreconcilability as a form of negation, a declination of absence, in contrast to the romanticised, nostalgic approach that is more generally associated with the idea of absence, mostly suggesting a sense of longing and reminiscence.

Absence is here investigated as the result of conscious decisions, as the effect of a political decision, as an act of violence that creates a division, a disconnection, a gap; it literally annihilates what/who is behind/on the other side of the wall; hides and negates existence.

The reproduction of the 'separation wall' - ideally in full height and here explored at a sample scale - in a different material: a soft, malleable, penetrable one, almost as if it were a membrane, instead of being a firm, solid structure, introduces notions of a power balance / imbalance / rebalance.

The pieces that have been completed so far are conceived as samples for a scaled-up installation, although they could function as well as smaller sculptures to be integrated in a larger composition.

Thinking of the process itself, the very act of sampling, of testing from the perspective of scaling-up the work brings to mind the idea of prototypes, a step into the experimentation within a research methodology. It also fits quite well into a wider sculptural tradition where smaller models, or models realised in different, less expensive or more accessible materials was, and still is, the preliminary step to verify the feasibility of the artwork, to envisage its visual outcome and, in case, to rectify it based on any dissatisfaction.

The idea of creating sculptural pieces out of textiles also represents an investigation on traditional sculpture, which is commonly made of and identified with marble or bronze, thus questioning the very nature of sculpture, and its potential.

Ambivalence is at the core of the work, with questions of disempowerment vs. empowerment and a denial of imposed categories as crucial issues to explore. In this attempt to experiment with materials

Absence is generally perceived and represented as a void, an emptiness, a negative entity that catalyses attention while negating contact. Both in its acceptation of "a state or condition in which something expected or wanted is not present or does not exist", and of "a failure to be present at a usual place" the notion of absence is related to that of a frustrated expectation, of an unfulfilled desire.

Following the concept of a curatorial project titled "Poetics of Absence" (Dubai, 2017), which premise was based on a number of figures of absence that I then identified as relevant (among them, "The Farewell", "The Horizon", "Nostalgia", "Exile", "The Sound of Absence"), and wanted to collect as a treatise, in my research project I intend to focus on the interconnection of notions of absence, blindness, and camouflage in order to arrive at an artistic outcome that privileges the use of negative space and liminality to explore these very ideas.

and solutions, I am in fact reflecting on the assumed softness which characterises a considerable segment of my practice, and on ways to give the material a more solid form. It is indeed a circular process, as the works are informed by socio-political issues that I attempt to translate through textiles: the hardness from which the project conceptually originates morphs into the softness of the material, which I then harden and tend to assume a solidified shape.

The question, therefore, revolves around the need for this double passage, which returns the material, in a physical appearance, closer to the original and yet remains significantly different.

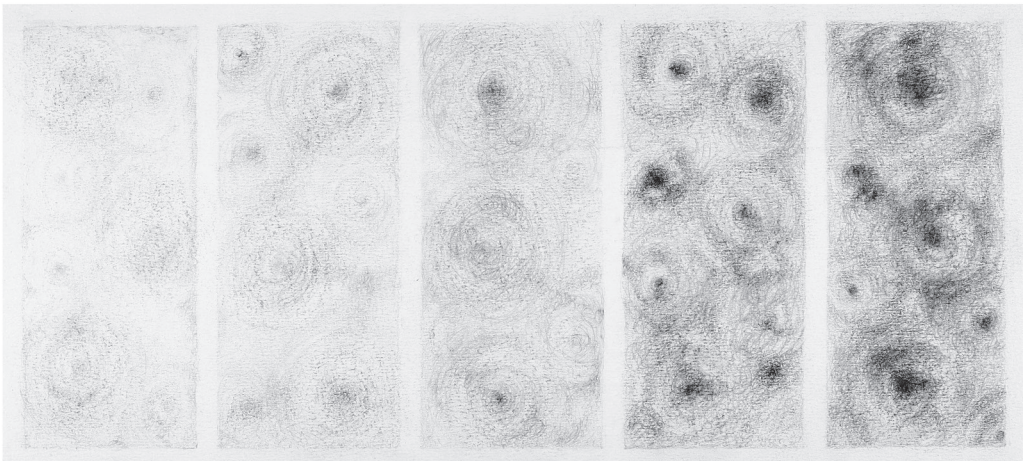
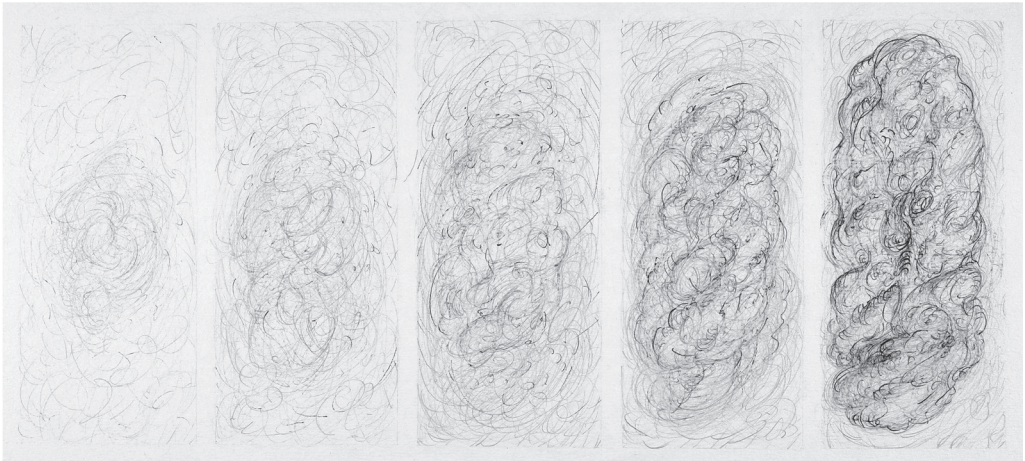
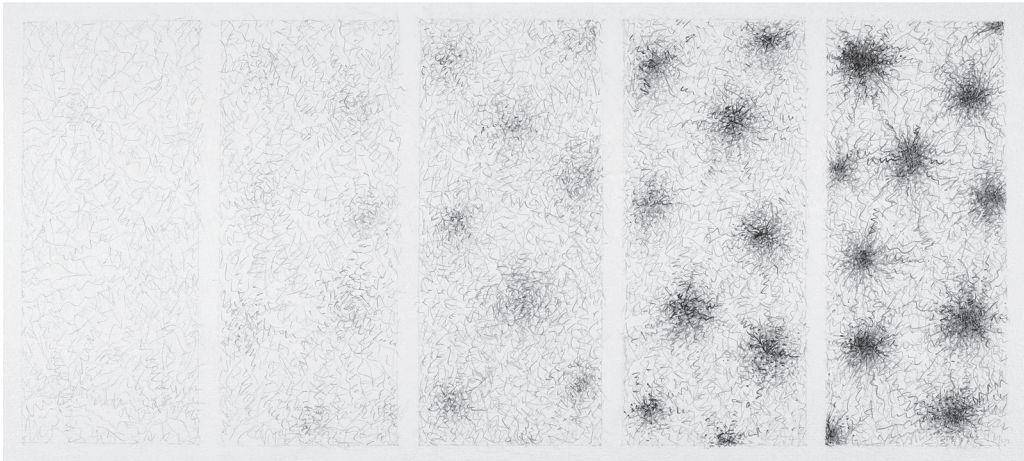
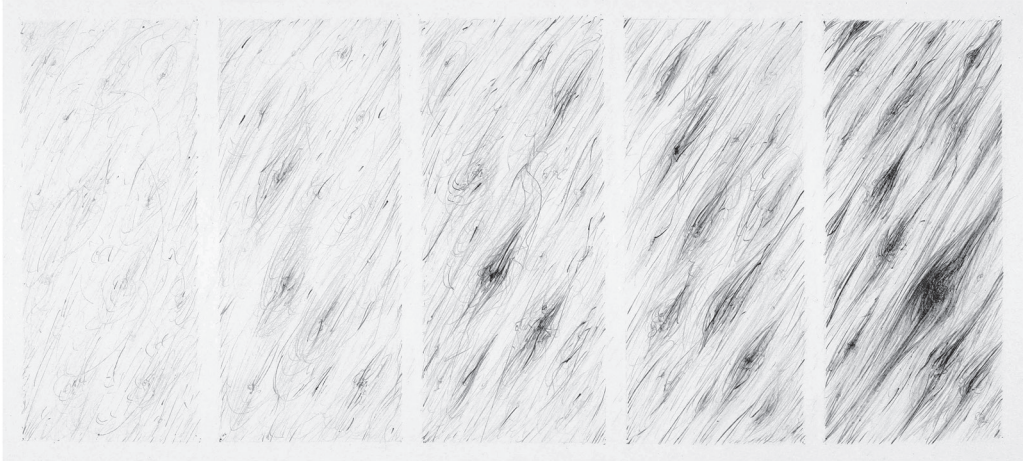
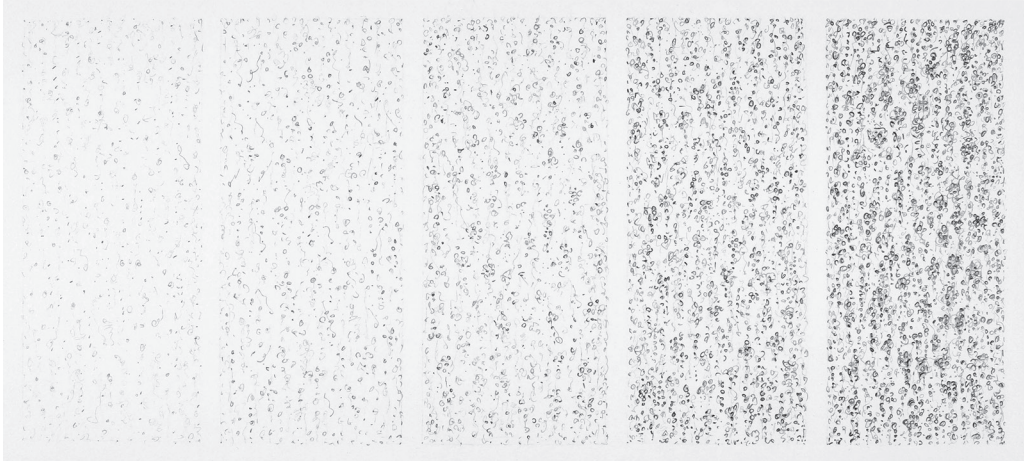
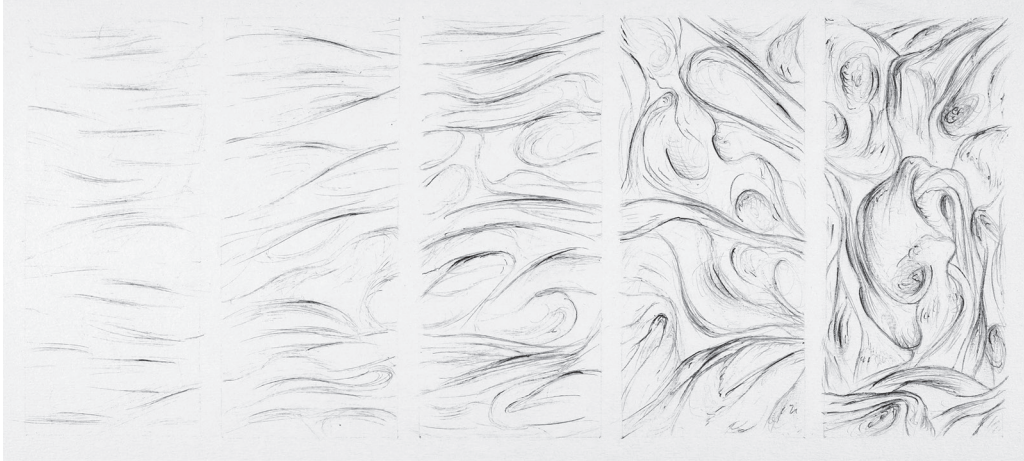
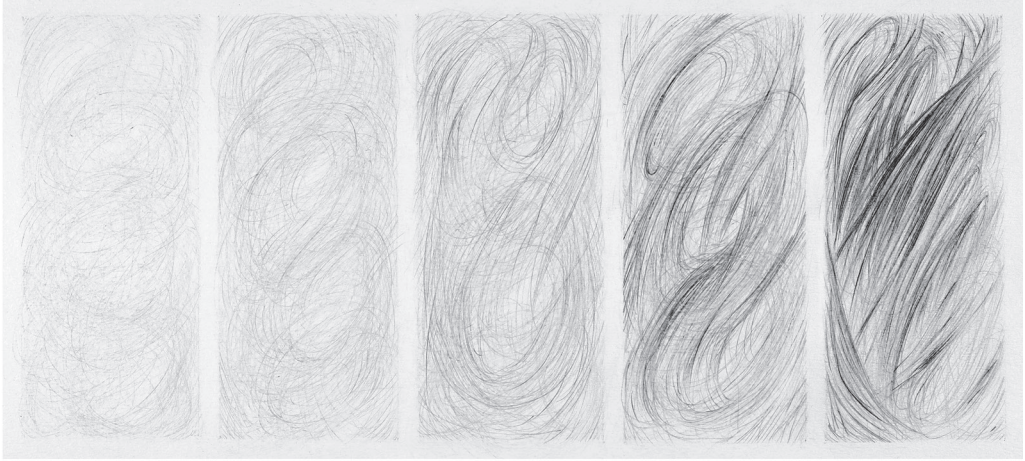
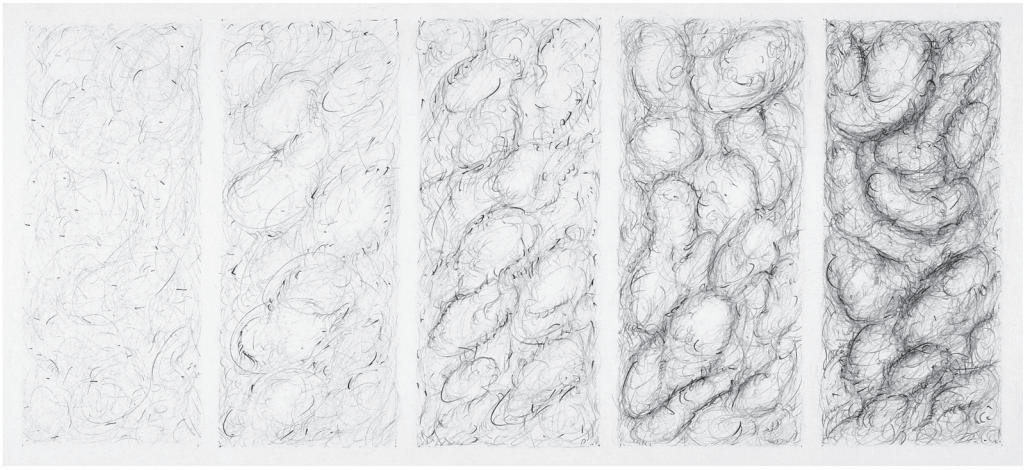
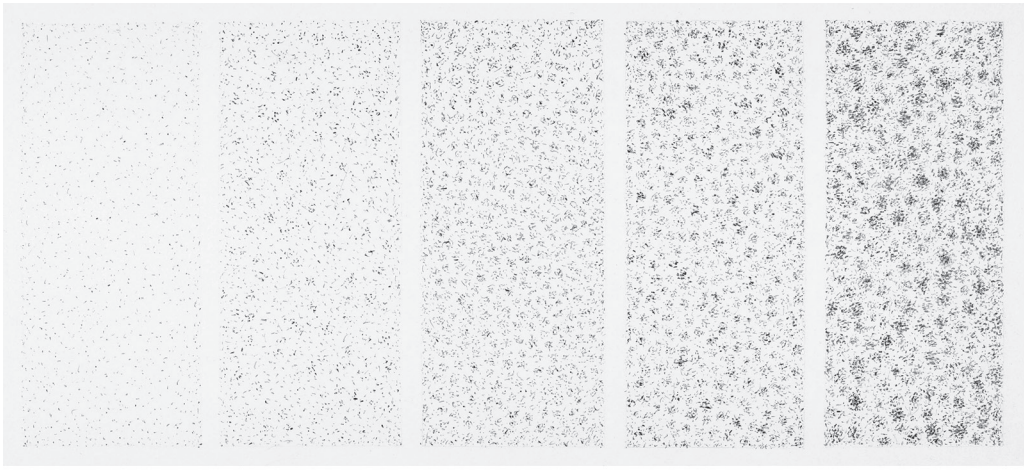
Keywords | Dichotomies:

softness/hardness; political/domestic; masculine/feminine; white / black; presence/absence

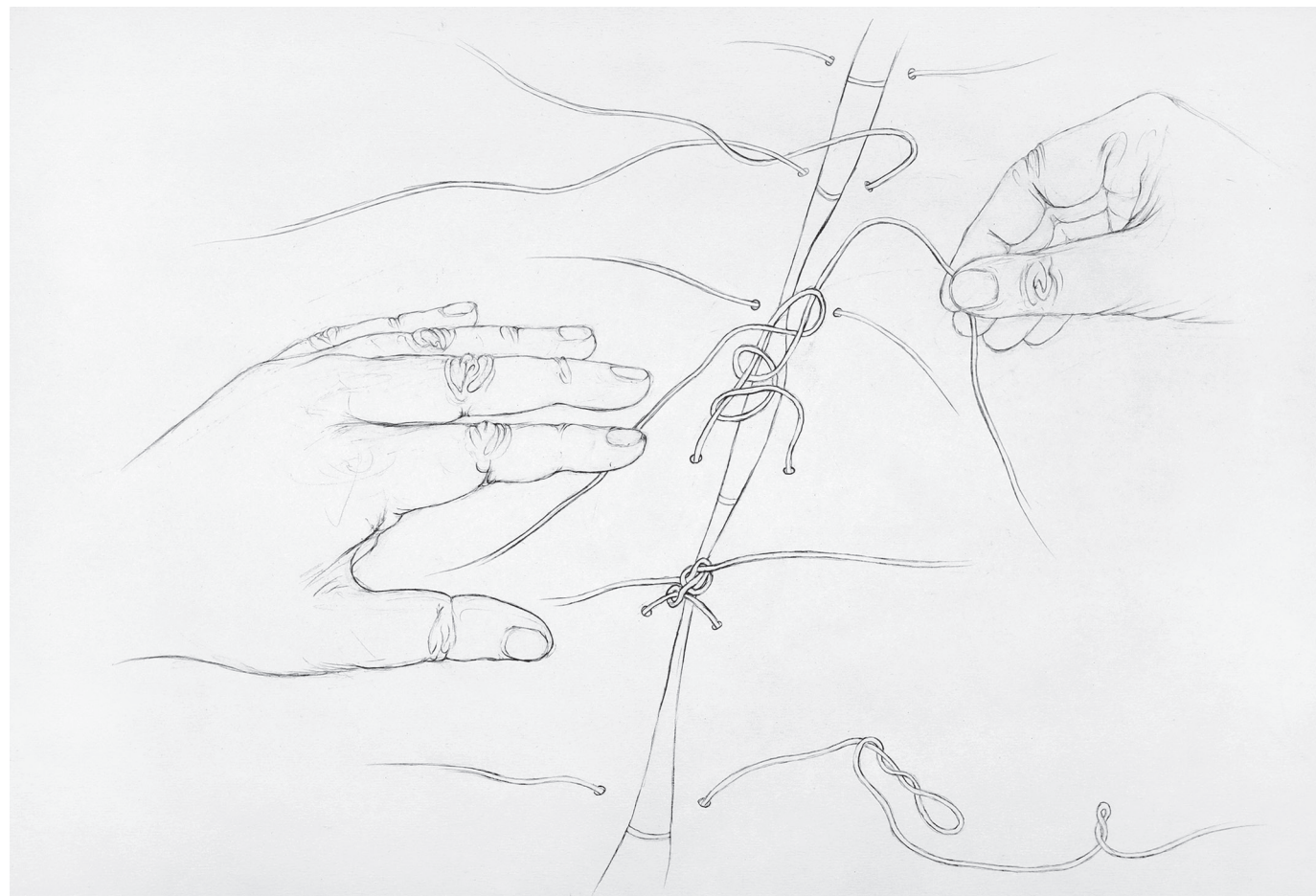
Cristiana de Marchi (b. Italy. Lives and works in Beirut, Lebanon and Dubai, UAE)

Cristiana de Marchi's practice explores social and political terrains, from memory, places of the past and present, identity and contested borders to the paraphernalia of contemporary nationhood. Using textiles, embroidery, film and performance, she instigates processes that draw attention to currencies of power by exploring their structures.

She received her Master's degree in Archaeology from the University of Turin, Italy and in Museum Didactics from the University of Rome. She has taken part in residency programmes at the University of the Arts, Philadelphia; Santa Fe Art Institute, USA; Rijksakademie, Amsterdam; and MOCA Yinchuan, China. Her work has been presented at the Yinchuan Biennale, Santa Cruz Biennale, and Singapore Biennale, among others. In 2015, de Marchi was awarded the Italian "Premio ORA". She is a graduate of the Salama bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship (Abu Dhabi). She is currently a PhD candidate in the Artistic Research Programme at the University of applied Arts, Viennna



One of the essential aims of the project *Stitches and Sutures* is to investigate how physical sensations can be made visual and how these representations relate to my earlier artistic work, personal experiences and images recorded in my memory. I refer to the questions I ask and my reflections on this relationship descriptively as stitches, and the reflective sum total of what emerges from this activity is a seam, a discourse, a form of embodied knowledge – a suture, a temporary and flexible connection.¹



In recent years, I have drawn explicit bodily sensations. I use the term “explicit” to characterize those sensations because they force themselves upon me and are not things that I sense purely out of active attention. When doing these drawings, my focus has been on paresthesia, sensory disorders caused by multiple sclerosis (MS). An artistic exploration of ways in which the invisible and subjective experience can be represented is thinkable in the case of any kind of sensation. However, reflecting on altered body perception caused by irreversible nerve damage is quite different from reflecting on a sensation that is perceived only temporarily. The investigation thus begins with a deviation from a form of physical perception that has, at first, nothing conspicuous about it and is presumably normal. As I proceed, I also ask myself how long it will take for this deviation to become normality, and whether the memory of my earlier body perception will persist or whether it will fade or change as a result of introspection.

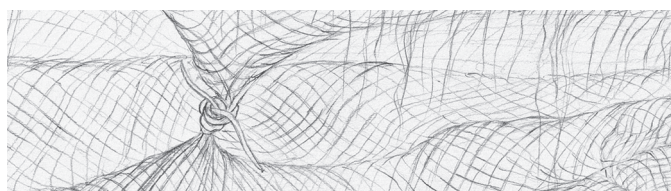
The sensory disorders that I experience occur without external stimulus and are caused by disturbances in the transmission of signals by the neurons of the central nervous system. Irritatingly, these sensory disturbances can cause me to perceive things that resemble everyday experiences, such as the simple act of wearing socks or gloves. They can sometimes be deceptively real, so real that I find myself trying to take off a non-existent sock.

As soon as they occur, physical sensations connect with past experiences. They become meaningful as things perceived; a sense emerges, although in the case of paresthesia, it is a bizarre sense. I compare my current bodily sensations with artistic works that I created before I was diagnosed with MS. They consist mainly of sculptural body-shells or drawings that represent textile fabrics. These works can be connected with my current experiences by reason of similarities with respect to both expression and visual aspect, but they do not necessarily share the same causality. The background of the way the works are generated is not always the same. Reflecting on the relationship of actual physical experiences, on the one hand, and objects that have been created, on the other hand, may seem tantamount to making a faulty, unequal comparison. However, linking the two categories opens up an associative and productive space.

¹ Suture is a term that was introduced by Jacques Lacan in “Seminar XI” as a pseudo-identification or as a connection between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Subsequently, the term was shaped, essentially, by Jacques-Alain Miller, who transcribed “Seminar XI” as well as other seminars. See Jacques Lacan, “Conférence du Mercredi 11 Mars 1964,” (pp. 228–230), accessed April 1, 2021, <https://ecole-lacanienne.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/1964.03.11.pdf>.

Inspired by Jacques Lacan’s notion of suture, I stitch this space – a gap – with anchoring points.² I understand stitching not only as a procedure involving sewing materials or as a psychological and metaphorical process, but also as an artistic method of relating. Current experiences relate to the past in ways that constitute retrospective production of meaning. Points of convergence connect the signifier with the signified. Lacan describes this as a fluid and dynamic process and compares it to punctures being made in an amorphous, flowing mass that is always ready to dissolve. It is also during this process that images and feelings emerge.³

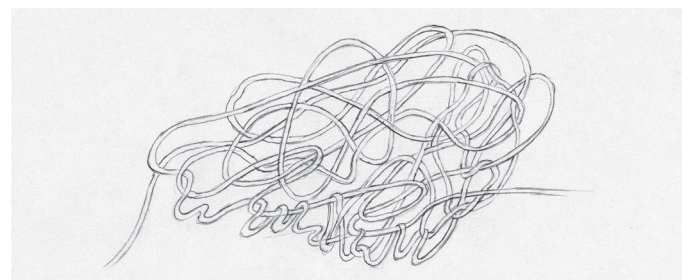
Points of convergence, as the notion is understood in psychoanalysis, are not consciously produced. I transform the act of stitching into an artistic process to ask the question: What are the images, memories and experiences that guide me when I depict bodily sensations that cannot be seen? Is it possible to access a “pure” sensation directly? And as soon a “pure” physical sensation has occurred, is it not by virtue of its mere occurrence a perception, which is therefore inseparable from the sensation itself?



Representing a sensation perceived as fabric touching the body, even if it is an illusion, seems to be a relatively simple process in terms of drawing. I draw an object that I know from experience can trigger a specific tactile sensation with respect to the given area of my body. When the drawing is shown to someone else, evoking a similar sensation in that person can be expected, assuming he or she has had a similar tactile experience. It works similarly with sensations of pressure that start from the surface of the skin and extend deeper into the body. As far as a system of reference is concerned, it is more complicated to represent sensations by means of abstract structures than through narrative forms of representation. However, such a manner of proceeding may come closer to the actual sensations in question, in that they are not material substance themselves, but rather phenomena triggered by (the illusion of the presence of) a material substance or other kinds of influence such as temperature. Furthermore, abstract and isolated representations enable me to depict sensations that occur in the inner body that, for the most part, cannot be represented as tactile experiences – sensations such as tingling, trickling, twitching, buzzing, burning or sensations of tension.

² See Jacques Lacan, “Séminaire du Mercredi 6 Juin 1956” (later published as “Seminar III, Chapter XXI,” transcribed and edited by Jacques-Alain Miller), accessed April 1, 2021, <https://ecole-lacanienne.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/1956.06.06.pdf>. In English, Jacques Lacan’s term point de capiton is variously translated as “quilting point,” “anchoring point” or “upholstery button.”

³ Lacan refers to Ferdinand de Saussure’s schematic diagram of the connection between the signified and the signifier: it consists of two parallel undulating surfaces of what resembles water or mattress fibers; the connection between the two surfaces is indicated by means of vertical dashed lines. Ibid., XXI/7–8 (377–378).



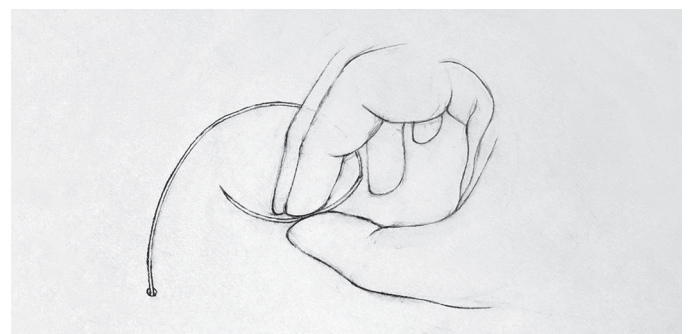
On a scale of 1 to 5, similar to the pain scale of 1 to 10, I depict twelve different sensations as micro-phenomenological structures. However, my intensity scale has to do not only with quantitative increase but also with qualitative transformation resulting from the intensity. While drawing, I imagine myself as a seismograph, and the pencil as an extension of myself recording the sensations. Or, as I record them, I pretend that I am looking at them through a microscope. But what does the pencil actually record? And what guides it? Is it a set of images and structures that I have stored as if it were an alphabet for drawing?

I do not have to consciously think of how Raphael depicted hair, Pieter Bruegel topographies with their natural flora; Correggio, the nebulous cloud-hand of Jupiter; Leonardo da Vinci flowing water and the deluge, etc. These are stored visual experiences that formulate themselves on a sheet of paper – with no conscious effort on my part – as a kind of drawing vocabulary. When I walk through Vienna’s *Kunsthistorisches Museum*, I find various structures and material objects in the paintings that evoke sensations I have had, textile structures, often gloves and footwear that literally make themselves felt, like the phantasmal clothing that I perceive, as if they were placed in the paintings to connect with my perceptions. Might context shifting also work in the other direction? How might my drawings be received if the context was unknown or if a different one was assumed?

In the beginning, I tried to avoid direct references as much as possible and draw exactly what I sensed in a very straightforward manner; but more or less independently of any awareness on my part, references began to creep into the formulations. Reflecting on and researching these and other possible references contributes to the emergence of an enhanced picture of processes of transmission – a picture that is part of a continuum. The more I draw and the further I pursue my research, the more I find myself being influenced by stored images. They interfere with the process of transition from sensation to perception, imagination and representation and form a mesh that has no beginning or end. Is it precisely such linkages of meanings and references that make subjective and introspective investigations accessible to outsiders, since these linkages refer to experiences that are similar and a similar cultural vocabulary?

A person affected by phenomena similar to mine once said, pointing at my drawings, „...that’s exactly how it feels.“ Clinicians and experts in the field of medical humanities see communicative and therapeutic potential in these visualizations. To others, the drawings convey corporeality as an empathic resonance space or corporeality manifested in pencil strokes on paper as an embodied gesture.

Sometimes I perceive the material that seems to be touching me as part of my body; sometimes I perceive it as extraneous to my body; then there are times when both impressions merge fluidly into each other, which is ambivalent because it signifies an appropriation of something material that is alien to the body. At the same time, it is an alienation of the body. In addition to fundamental questions of perception, representation and mediation, the investigation I am undertaking makes it possible to give language to irritating and disturbing sensations and to transfer them to an outer locus as a means of gaining a form of self-assurance and of experiencing altered body perception not just as something alien.



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RE-ENACTING TABLEAUS



Zentrum Fokus Forschung
University of Applied Arts Vienna

RE-ENACTING TABLEAUS

Micha Payer

1. Tableau! [...an exclamation of surprise]¹

The starting point for my research is a rediscovery and rehabilitation of a notion with multiple meanings, which, so I assume, seems to be very vivid in our visual culture.

Tableau; 1. Rooted in the latin word tabula, meaning board, panel, painting, map, list, index and register² 2. Untranslatable, but approximate to “english: picture, painting; german: Malerei, Gemälde, Bild; greek: zôgraphêma, pinax; italian: quadro; latin: tabula”³ 3. An organisational form of knowledge; ordering multiplicities organizing, structuring and summarizing information; visual and synoptic codifications of knowledge that allow to draw comparisons (commonly used in encyclopedias)⁴ 4. Multiple pictorial arrangements, since early modern period, but especially in a natural-scientific context in 19th century, with a didactic purpose and to popularize knowledge⁵ 5. Used in an expanded way by French philosopher Michel Foucault as a paradigm describing the epistemic configuration of the classical age in Western European culture (Inanimate things as well as living creatures partake in a process of differentiation and have their immutable position in a well-ordered system: the Tableau. The age of the Tableau ended, when man became the object of investigation and knowledge became sequentially, temporally, archeologically structured)⁶ 6. The name for a visual analytics platform with the “mission to help people see and understand data”, no matter if one is an “analyst, data scientist, student, teacher, executive, or business user”.⁷

The notion Tableau is connected to knowledge and visibility and has the function to make complex issues both understandable and accessible through visualization. The two aspects on which “Re-enacting Tableaus” focuses, and that are questioned from the perspective of artistic research are The Order of Knowledge and The Aesthetics of Knowledge.

A. The Order of Knowledge

The fear of a hypertrophy of knowledge can be traced back to the Italian Renaissance scholar Francesco Petrarca, who claimed that too many books could harm one’s mind.⁸ Peter Burke uses the term “Explosion of Knowledge” to describe the situation in the 17th century, when the invention of the steam press and the use of cheaper paper led to an increased book production, which was perceived as an oppressive situation for many scholars.⁹ Burke further applies this term to our contemporary situation, where knowledge explosion means “a rapid expansion and fragmentation” of knowledge, and a “growth in the number of scholars and scientists”, followed by an increasing number of publications and discoveries.¹⁰ Finally the contemporary status quo of our knowledge society means that knowledge is treated as a resource that is exchanged within networks and is increasingly gaining economic significance. It also means to navigate through a flow of information. In the middle of a “fourth industrial revolution”¹¹, and regarding our involvement in a globalized, digitalized and highly technologized world, the fear of a knowledge overload reaches new dimensions. “The feeling of dispossession is acute, with so much information, knowledge and thinking power now being produced and situated outside the traditional container – which used to be the human mind, embodied in an anthropomorphic frame.”¹² How can we think of order as a coping mechanism for this situation? What is the role of visual ordering systems in this context, particularly in a world of digital disorder? How can we capture the emotional atmosphere of this situation, a world of information flows, growing complexity and fragmentation, of contingencies and uncertainties? Under the assumption that the Tableau – as ordering system in books, as graphical representation of complex matters, or as a smooth well-ordered surface on our digital screens – acts as a visual manifestation of this problematic, it could function as a conceptual artistic pattern.

B. The Aesthetics of Knowledge

Bruno Latour introduces the term ‘inscription’ to describe the mechanisms that signify a transition from a prescientific to a scientific culture, namely to invent and establish a myriad of immutable mobiles, which enable a “simple drift from watching confusing three-dimensional objects, to inspecting two-dimensional images which have been made less confusing”.¹³ Finding allies, convincing and mobilizing is made easier by using these small, flat, scalable, superimposable, combinable windows that are a fixed component of scientific paper work.¹⁴

We can probably read Tableau Software’s mission statement under this motive: “We make analyzing data fast and easy, beautiful and useful”.¹⁵ But what role does beauty play in the context of scientific discourse, where communication is based on tables, graphs, peaks etc. that are extracted from data? Here, the conception of the Tableau can serve as an artistic instrument for questioning formal-aesthetic principles and particularities of inscriptions and scientific representations.

2. At the Epicentre of the Episteme

The venture to re-enact Tableaus is a terminological recycling process from the perspective of visual arts, with the main focus on drawing as a method. The drawings are contextualized within an encyclopedic ordering system and based on a conceptional approach.

My central question revolves around epistemic ruptures that become visible and analyzable through scientific pictures. Daston and Galison describe the permanent movement and changes in epistemic virtues from “truth to nature” over “mechanical objectivity” to “trained judgement”, resulting from a meticulous analysis of numerous atlas images from different scientific fields.¹⁶ Epistemes change, modalities of vision change, modes of presentation of scientific facts change. The use of different technologies, such as scientific drawings, photography, light microscopy, magnetic resonance imaging etc. leads to a production of images, which have an effect on epistemic processes and shape a specific way of seeing and ordering the world.

With the emergence of technical images a shift in our visibility occurs that changes our “experiences, perceptions, values and modes of behavior”.¹⁷ Where do we find ourselves in this visual world? There’s this idea that the layered windows which are so omnipresent in our digital culture, popping-up and overlapping on our screens, are forming the collective visual experience of the present.

To re-enact Tableaus means to focus on the aesthetic experience of this specific contemporary situation of visibility, as described above, it means “thinking [AND DRAWING] with eyes and hands”¹⁸ as “old-fashioned anthropomorphic engine”.¹⁹ It means to use depictions from encyclopedias, antiquarian and contemporary atlases and from the internet that describe or explain a fact and that transfer knowledge in a visual way, and to put them in a new order based on a transposition of meaning [Bedeutungsvertauschung].

Readability, as the quality and purpose of these depictions, is questioned, and a process of dissection is undertaken by disconnecting the informative value from the depiction. Doppelgänger – visualizations whose counterparts are physical facts in a real world – are the elements that are drawn, opposed, transformed and assembled as multiplicities in a counter reality where nothing needs to be proven.

REFERENCES: 1. Definition for „Tableau [–blo] n.15 1 (Theat.) wirkungsvoll gruppiertes Bild 2 (El.) Tafel, auf der Ereignisse angezeigt werden 3. (veraltet) Gemälde 4 (österreich) Tabelle, Übersicht • –! (Ausruf der Überraschung, bes. wenn man sich geschlagen geben muss) [frz. <lat. tabula ‚Tafel‘].“ Wahrig Wissenschaftslexikon, <https://www.wissenschaft.de/wissenschafts-lexikon/wahrig/tableau/>, accessed 4.4.2021. 2. [Das semantische Spektrum der lateinischen Vokabel tabula erstreckt sich von Brett und Tafel über Gemälde und Landkarte bis hin zu Urkunde, Liste, Verzeichnis und Register.] Steffen Siegel, *Tabula. Figuren der Ordnung um 1600*. Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2009, p. 65. 3. Barbara Cassin (ed.), *Dictionary of Untranslatables. A Philosophical Lexicon*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2014, p. 1109. 4. Detailed analyses of the term Tableau can be found in Annette Graczyk, *Das literarische Tableau zwischen Wissenschaft und Kunst*. Fink, München, 2004 and Steffen Siegel, *Tabula. Figuren der Ordnung um 1600*. Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2009. 5. Cf. Horst Bredekamp, Birgit Schneider, Vera Dünkel (eds.), *Das Technische Bild. Kompendium zu einer Stilgeschichte wissenschaftlicher Bilder*. Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2008, p. 116. 6. Cf. Michel Foucault, “Die Ordnung der Dinge: Eine Archäologie der Humanwissenschaften”, in Michel Foucault, *Die Hauptwerke*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 2016, pp.414–419. 7. <https://www.tableau.com/why-tableau/what-is-tableau>, accessed 15.4.2021. 8. Cf. Steffen Siegel, *Tabula. Figuren der Ordnung um 1600*. Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2009, p. 29. 9. Peter Burke, *The Polymath. A Cultural History from Leonardo da Vinci to Susan Sontag*. Yale University Press, London, 2020, pp. 128–131. 10. Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge. From the Encyclopédie to Wikipedia*. Polity, Cambridge, 2012, pp. 248–249. 11. A term coined by Klaus Schwab, *Die Vierte Industrielle Revolution*. Pantheon Verlag, München, 2016. 12. Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*. Polity, Cambridge, 2019, p.14. 13. Bruno Latour, “Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together”, in: Henrika Kuklick (ed.), *Knowledge and Society Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present*. Jai Press vol. 6, 1988, p. 5. 14. Ibid., p. 4. 15. <https://www.tableau.com/about/mission>, accessed 15.4.2021. 16. Lorraine Daston, Peter Galison, *Objektivität*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 2017. 17. Vilém Flusser, *Ins Universum der technischen Bilder*. Edited by Andreas Müller-Pohle. European Photography, Berlin, 2018, p. 9. 18. This term is borrowed from Bruno Latour, “Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together”, in: Henrika Kuklick (ed.), *Knowledge and Society Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present*. Jai Press vol. 6, 1988, p.1. 19. This term is borrowed from Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*. Polity, Cambridge, 2019, p.14.



Painting and archiving through storytelling

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Like a photo journalist, a documentary film maker or a writer, painters bear witness to history. They record the present and leave their interpretations to the future in the shape of an artistic archive. The 'History,' wrote Paul Ricoeur, 'has always been a critique of social narratives and, in this sense, a rectification of our common memory.' But the question of the archive is not just a question of the past, as Jacques Derrida explained in *Archive Fever*; 'It is a question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow.'

If painting a particular subject can trigger fear of the establishment or even lead to an artist's imprisonment, the act of painting itself becomes a performance and is an act of resistance. If the product of this act then brings attention to a specific event and in this way speaks the truth, this practice performs witnessing through the visual medium.

Atena Farghadani is an Iranian artist and political activist, who was imprisoned for 18 months. Amnesty International considers her a prisoner of conscience. One of her drawings, in which she criticised a draft law which would outlaw voluntary sterilisation and restrict access to measures of birth control, portrayed Iranian government officials as monkeys and goats. After publishing her artworks on Facebook, she was arrested in August 2014 and was jailed in Tehran on charges of spreading propaganda, insulting members of parliament, and insulting the Supreme Leader of Iran.

In *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East*; Anthony Downey writes that: "Art does not produce verifiable knowledge as such, rather it engages in a series of ruminative gestures that give rise to non-definitive narratives and tentative forms of suppositional knowledge."

Although a painting can represent a very specific event in time, it also communicates with its audience and might trigger other, individual memories.

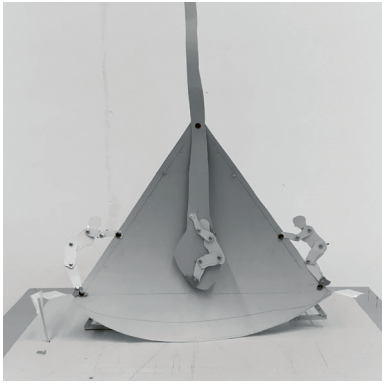
This fact has brought my research from the starting point of what role painting plays in archiving or shaping of collective memory; to the term multidirectional memory, a term phrased by Michael Rothberg.

As Rothberg argues, multidirectional memory theory challenges the previously taken-for-granted link between collective memory and group identity that lies at the core of memory studies, explaining that groups do not simply articulate established positions but emerge through dialogic acts of remembrance that take place on a shared but uneven terrain. The shared terrain creates possibilities for unexpected forms of solidarity.

It is on this very terrain of solidarity that I hope to build, to communicate with an audience that does not share my "memory". Finally, my aim is to make connections, to be understood and to communicate.



A Inscription of the body into an architecture



Inspired by the gothic architecture of the Dominikanerkirche Krems, Austria, my new work **"A"** negotiates the body in relation to architectural spaces.

The system of measures and proportions is based on the human body and has been a pervading topic throughout the entire development of the history of

arts. The units for length and size derive from the body extremities. For example, the ell, as entity for measurement, is one of the oldest known nature-based standards. It was used in the Egyptian, Persian, ancient Greek and the Roman Empire. The ell measurement had differing dimensions depending on the region and time it was used in. To agree on one common size, ells to refer to are still to be found in central Europe on ancient city town halls and churches.

The artwork **"A"** is a three-part work that relates to this idea of finding a common ground or units. It is made up of a performative instrument, inscription and sound. It spans a triangle for body, mind and soul, which can oscillate in a slightly uncontrollable manner.

In the process of creating a work for three people, it became very clear that there is a problem when one tries to combine three exactly equal bodies in a performance, a sculpture, or even a system. It is easy to orientate when hierarchies or sizes are clear: In a performative setting there is often an imbalance in presence or skill. You can often find a front person with two people supporting in the back or one person being the playball between two others. Three equal players aren't easy to balance unless they are taking turns or different tasks.

In the course of the research, I stumbled upon the astro-physical explanation of this problem described as the three-body-problem. It is easy to get along as long as there are hierarchies: for example, our "small" moon orbits around the earth and the earth, which is quite small in comparison, circles around the sun.

If these three bodies are equal, there are infinitely many variables of relation and movements. In the given case of planets in a weightless space, such a balance is only possible if three planets of exactly the same size drive in an infinite loop. Only then they are able to keep in balance as they stay in the exact same distance to each other. This situation is not possible on planet Earth. The same applies for the development of the instrument.

Still: "Three is a magic number". It is not only a song by Bob Dorough, but universally important in art and liturgy: be it a triptych with one central piece and two side panels or the triad with one base note from which the chord is built up. Three opens up space for the most interesting constellations. Three points stabilize many constructions; for example, a chair on three legs is more stable than one on four.

How a momentum for three can be created to be stable and volatile enough in itself became the central question in the process of developing the work.

A system of bodies needs to agree on a certain norm and order to function. Especially when sharing a limited space, societal and cultural codes of behavior play an important role. But norms can also be repressive and often leave many out. Still, after agreeing on particular norms new spaces and encounters may be enabled.

An exemplary focus with a more tangible space for collaboration can be found in the field of music. This limited and open space is represented in the title of the work. It is the stable point that musicians agree on

with the concert pitch **"A"**. **"A"** is the pitch that the whole orchestra will agree on. A clean **"A"** promises harmony – a common basis that is "passed" from a tuning fork or piano to the strings. Then wind instruments are tuned in. Before a concert begins, this is the one common reference point that everyone adjusts to. The standard concert pitch or normal pitch, which has been the rule in many countries since an international conference in London in 1939, is fixed at $a_1 = 440$ Hertz while in German and Austrian symphony orchestras $a_1 = 443$ Hz is considered common, and in Switzerland it is even $a_1 = 442$ Hz.

Just as when it comes to sizes – there are cultural differences. A triad is best sung by a four-part choir. A three-quarters beat might need its fours to make it work. Indeed, a three may need a four to balance its three-body-problem.

The work complex around the **"A"** consists of three unequal but complementary parts.

— The instrument **"A"** is a kinetic sculpture consisting of a triangle based on a roof truss, using the technical skills and knowledge from architecture and carpentry. The bottom is rounded to form a seesaw, a long pendulum holds the triangle at its top and rises far into the sky. It is an instrument for body, mind and soul and is played

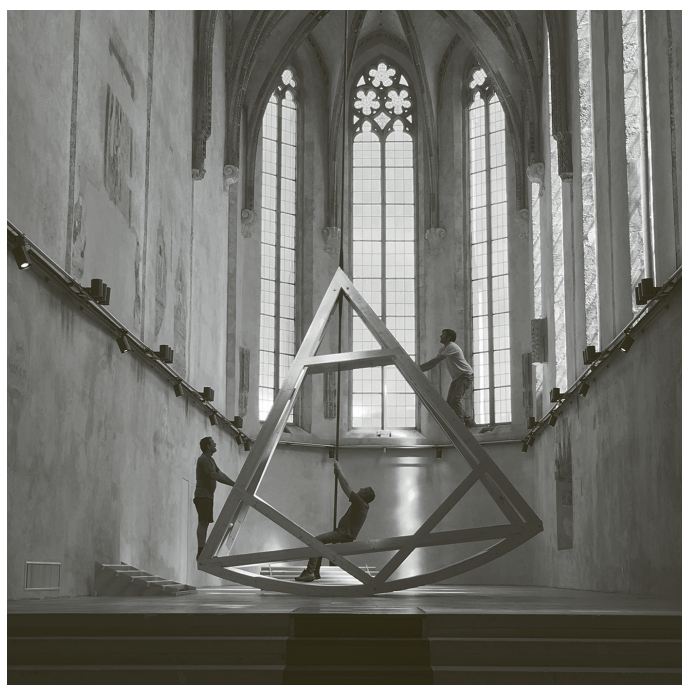
by not less than three friends at the same time. One sits at the base of the pendulum, while the other two are standing or climbing on the edges. Two different roles for at least three people. Together they set the pace. They make the composition swing with and against each other, like a slowly trembling metronome. It remains exciting and unclear whether there will be a tipping point or whether the construction will remain in its equilibrium.

— The **"A"** – as a photographic inscription of the body in space, is a multilayered exposure within the architecture of Dominikanerkirche Krems. The image is shot in the choir of the church using the body as measurement tool for the outline of the edge of the floor. It takes 20 bodies lying behind each other to cover the edge and capture the space in relation to the body. In the final result it remains as an organic irritation.

— One singing voice may be able to fill the room with its resonance for a short time. Choir **"A"** locates the note **"A"** as a singing choir recorded in the architectural choir for a video work. Taken over by the tuning fork, the voice expands in space and sound. The performers in the video are all the same person and appear in a ghost-like manner. They are created by layering four takes into one video with half transparency. The partially present and absent singers represent the oscillating and fleeting nature of sound as a comment on the current possibilities of togetherness.

In addition to this three-part work, an AR (Augmented Reality) installation for smartphones is shown. This makes visible an animated model of the work in motion – and expands the space by means of a digital exhibition. To bring in the AR exhibition, there is a cooperation with the Artificial Museum, which embeds artistic works into the digital public space and locates them on online maps. Thanks to augmented reality, anyone with a smartphone can view and experience these digital artistic objects: artificialmuseum.com.

CREDITS IDEA / CONCEPT / PRODUCTION Barbis Ruder – barbisruder.com **INSTRUMENT** ARCHITECTURE & PROJECT MANAGEMENT Philipp Reinsberg – philippreinsberg.com **PHOTOGRAPHY** Jana Enzelberger **AR** Litto / Daniela Weiss – artificialmuseum.com **WITH THE** KIND SUPPORT OF bmkos and Bildrecht GmbH



A CONVERSATION
BETWEEN DIFFERENT
ME/S

[a rhythmical dishwasher in the background]

21.30.00
OK, GOOD EVENING, IT’S LATE... THE KIDS
ARE SLEEPING, LET’S DIG INTO THIS
ONLINE-OFFLINE THING, HOW DO “WE”
BEGIN?

[key board typing]

21.32.15
*Well, first of all I just want to say that it’s
the movement between on- and offline that
I’m really curious about. ~~The constant switch~~
~~between realities~~ and how we hover these dif-
ferent realities inside ourselves and between
other bodies in our daily life.*

constant switch between realities

When I want to make a significant change in my
life, I often think of it in terms of switching di-
mensions. My attention is focused on my current
reality right now, and my desired situation can
be said to exist as some alternate reality outside
of my primary focus. In that other reality, there’s
another me who’s already where I want to be.

21.33.53
LET ME UNDERSTAND THIS BETTER...
YOUR GOAL IS TO BECOME ANOTHER ME?

[typing]

[typing, you can hear a sound of a stiff sleeve touching
the keyboard]

[sigh...and the fast tapping sound of deleting things]

[typing again]

[dishwasher in the back becomes quiet]

[typing so long as if writing a letter]

21.40.41
*The goal is rather to grasp how all those
“me/s” or “you/s” go in and out of places. You
know... simultaneously being inside a video
call, switching off the video to check the kids’
home-work, getting distracted by an instant
message, quickly answering an email while
someone searches for a file they want to
screen share. Ahh.. and not to forget the very
foundation: that we are of course also in our
head space. Am I the one making breakfast
tomorrow?*

21.41.42
YOU SHOULD CHECK IN ON YOUR FATHER
TO SEE HOW HE’S DOING.

[silence]

[a wuipl! sound of a mobile device]

[typing]

21.42.54
*Thanks, I just texted him. How these realities
of different ~~importance~~ co-exist, creates the
simultaneity of extremely different “us/s”.
To be or not to be is not the question any-
more. We can be and not be at the same time.*

[silence]

[coughing]

[gentle keyboard clicking]

21.49.27
WHAT IS...

Importance

1. The quality or condition of being important.
2. Personal status; people of great importance.
3. Obsolete Meaning; import.
4. Obsolete ~~Importunity~~

[typing, laughing a bit]

[dishwasher rinses out the water]

21.49.52
WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE PHD
PROJECT THEN?

Importunity

is when you beg someone to do something.
“Please, please take me to the mall!”

[dishwasher fan turns on]

[typing]

[dishwasher fan stops]

21.51.55
*To understand how to make creations that
play with our capacity to move and switch
seamlessly and to make tangible conditions
we begin to take for granted. I want to make
the communication gap more graspable.
I also want to hide surprises in there.*

21.52.31
YES PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE HIDE AN
EASTER EGG IN THERE!

[typing]

[sighing]

21.55.27
*Maybe it’s a generational spell... to be a
bystander to communication development...
How we talk now was science fiction just a
few decades ago. I learnt to grasp the world
without digital means. I cannot forget that
how we exchange information today is
~~rather fantastical~~.*

[gentle keyboard clicking]

rather fantastical

An idyllic, awe-inspiring landscape of a sunny
sky shining luminously on a verdant forest deep
in the Pacific Northwest fills the screen. It is a
peaceful scene, made more so by the presence
of a deer entering the frame. Yet, the peace is
shattered rather brutally. For this is not some
wildlife and nature reserve, but the land on
which Ben Cash (Viggo Mortensen), his wife Les-
lie (Trin Miller), and their six children live, away
from the trappings of modern civilization.

21.58.01
IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE DOING?
EXPLAINING MODERN CIVILIZATION TO
YOUR CHILDREN?

[typing frenetically]

[sighing]

21.59.27
*Actually I’m not dogmatic at all. For instance
I’m much more easy going with “harmful”
screen time than other friends. My daughter
knows all the lyrics of Frost 2.*

22.01.00
SO WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

[typing]

[pwing!]

22.01.06
GOOD, NO FEVER AND HIS TASTE HAS
RETURNED.

[typing]

[silence]

[typing frenetically]

22.03.01
*I’m afraid that I will not feel or recognize real
emotions anymore and now I’ve said “I” here
because it feels really rude to say that I’m
afraid that you or others or the world won’t be
able to feel real emotions anymore and since
I am “you” in this communication it’s obsolete
to think about who won’t feel you or me, are
you for instance having a ~~deeper experience~~
than me cause the score allows the moderator
to take a bit of distance?*

[silence]

[sighing]

[photo click]

great experience vs deep experience

A complete search of the internet has found these
results: great experience is the most popular
phrase on the web.

22.05.30
SO... IN THE MEAN TIME WE FOUND OUT
THAT IT’S MORE POPULAR TO HAVE A
GREAT EXPERIENCE THAN A DEEP EXPERI-
ENCE. HOW DOES THAT FEEL?

[typing]

22.06.45
...AND YOU LIKE DEEP EXPERIENCES? YES?

[typing]

22.06.50
*Well, how do I feel? I guess it’s my everyday
disappointment with - sorry for lumping a
vague category together - people. I’m not
surprised though. If it’s more popular to have
a great experience than a deep one it speaks
a lot about ~~our time~~, doesn’t it?*

our time

Login - OurTime. Forgot your password? Login
Join Free. Keep me logged in. © 2021

22.07.30
BUT DO YOU HAVE THE TIME TO LOG
YOURSELF INTO DEEP EXPERIENCES?

[typing]

[typing frenetically]

22.11.25
*I think it’s not so much about doing deep
things - whatever this is - it’s more about
doing things repeatedly or in a shifted way so
that you begin to feel the edges of that spe-
cific action in time and place. In this way even
the mundane has a chance to become deeper.*

22.12.30
LIKE... WHAT DO YOU MEAN, IS IT POSSIBLE
TO ALSO GO ~~DEEPER ONLINE?~~

[typing]

[clicking gently]

[sudden rhythmic stressy happy background music]

[willkommen zum Einführungsvideo des aufwerfbahres
fischfinders deeper chirp plus ein herkömmliches und [...]
laufende Abfolge von Frequenzen und eine Bandbreite
von tief bis hoch...]

[sudden silence]

[typing]

[dish washer making its satisfying last sound]

22.17.33
*Yes - what would deeper online be?
Better online research? How does it feel to go
deeper online? The online is and is not.
A limbo, a non-place and a place at the same
time. So what happens if you go “there” and try
to be as attentive as you can be in real life?
Can we visit it more like an imaginary space?
Can we heighten our awareness also in non-
physical environments?*

How does it feel to go deeper online?

The rest of the conversation where the me/s
eat chocolate, one of them enters into a déjà-vu
feeling and we try to talk about our relation to
time and collaborative process/es can be found
on:

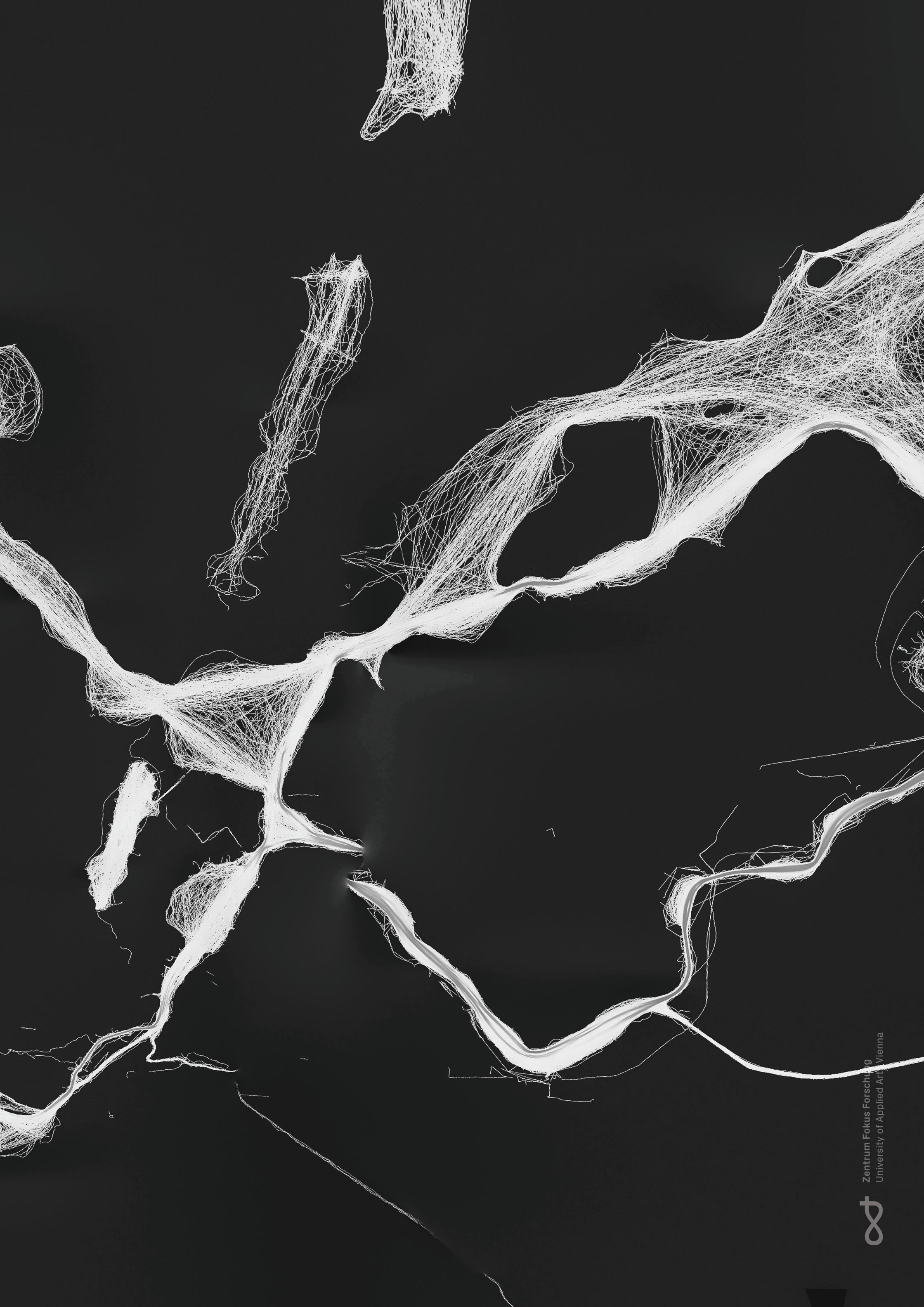
choreographic.contingencies.charlottaruth.com

This offline to online movement has been pre-
pared to circumvent the poster/offline spatial
limitation of 1100 words. Thank you for coming
along so far!

The text boxes were generated through searching the highlighted words on the web on 20.04.21.
Material was retrieved from these sites (in order of appearance):
<https://stevepavlina.com/blog/2012/03/how-to-switch-dimensions/>
<https://www.thefreedictionary.com/importances>
<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/importunity>
<https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/A-rather-fantastical-scenario.627503>
<https://texttranch.com/305015/deep-experience/or/great-experience/>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gdx_unBbkU

CHARLOTTA RUTH (S/A) plays with time and
perception inside choreography, game-design and
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missions for City Games Vienna and Brunnenpas-
sage. Ruth holds a MFA in choreography with
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University of the Arts. She also studied Compu-
tational thinking, Media Activism, E-poetry and
writing of Live Action Role Play.

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Fabian Weiss—Ideal Self: How We Use Photography and Technology to Present and Optimize Ourselves

Supervisor: Margarete Jahrmann

“In the heat of the day” Algorithms and Body Optimization

The human body is a product of society in the sense that our handling, knowledge, feeling, and notions of the body are defined by societal structures, values, technologies, and systems of ideas. On the other hand, the human body is a producer of society in that our social organization is essentially affected by the physicality of acting individuals, and the human body contributes to social production as people labour. Bodily interactions play a crucial role in the construction of social reality and the visual representation of an optimized body has been throughout history of interest to human societies. The topic of politics of the body has become more and more present—especially since the last decades of heightened individualization. Arthur Kroker asserts that we are “drifting through many different specular performances of the body” (Kroker 2012, 2) and in our current society, we occupy a multiplicity of bodies: imaginary, sexualized, disciplined, gendered, laboring, and technologically augmented bodies.

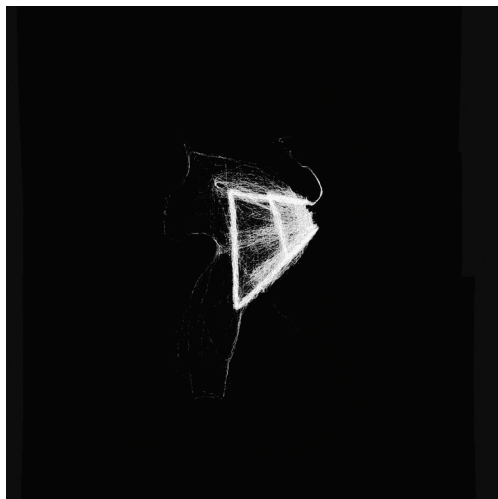


Fig. 1. Fabian Weiss, “In the heat of the day”, #1

The human body has become a product and a producer of code at the same time. Today we are living in a decisive time, where technology, medical science, and interconnected knowledge disrupts our handling of the body allowing us to modify our bodies in dimensions never known before in order to push the ‘human’ to uncharted territories. Bodies are rendered into carefully cultivated images, carried into conversational practice and discursive interaction as our world becomes more and more structured by algorithms. And they are on the forefront of shaping and enhancing our current and future bodies as we are increasingly intertwined with algorithmic calculative devices when we consume information, inhabit space and relate to others and to the world around us. Louise Amoore and Volha Piotukh sum up this current state of intertwined connection: “Just as being human may also be closely enmeshed with being algorithmic, these calculative devices also alter perception, filtering what one can see of big data landscapes, how one makes sense of what can be perceived.” (Amoore & Piotukh 2015, 24)

Through our use of digital technologies and gadgets we expose massive chunks of data about ourselves and our surroundings, revealing details of our movements, activities, everyday life, and behaviors. Calculative devices transform the nature of human subjectivity, pushing the limits of what can be read, analyzed and thought about (Amoore & Piotukh 2015, 37), and with new forms of data aggregation also come more advanced forms of profiling human behavior, fueling the emergence of often poorly regulated business models and new forms of governmental and commercial dataveillance. Tracking regimes we once thought bizarre are becoming normal (Wolf, 2010), challenging us to re-evaluate what normal means. By various means of seduction, coercion, lies, and cooptation, “everyday life has been irresistibly colonized by forces collectively known as Big Data.” (Horning 2015) Corporations as well as state agencies use communication networks and digital surveillance to collect huge quantities of information on the activities of all bodies using their services in hopes of predicting their next moves.

From this data, digital profiles— digital bodies—are created and these shape the treatment or response individuals receive from state and non-state actors. (Tactical Tech, 2021) Instead of cells and organs, digital bodies have data and metadata—with the connected parameters and data points growing day by day. Unlike a physical body that exists in one place, our digital bodies are scattered throughout the servers that make up the internet. Individuals are isolated or detached from their own digital bodies and cannot intervene: The digital shadows are controlled exclusively by the environment they live in (Lee & Toliver 2017, 6) and are increasingly exploited in order to model, anticipate and preemptively affect possible behaviors as much as to track, control and suppress the flesh-and-bone individuals behind the digital bodies. While our physical bodies converge with our digital ones, the collected data gains more and more real-world implications. Norbert Wiener was already sounding the alarm over 60 years ago about interweaving humans and big corporations too closely: “When human atoms are knit into an organization in which they are used, not in their full right as responsible human beings, but as cogs and levers and rods, it matters little that their raw material is flesh and blood.” (Wiener 1989, 185) and with artificial intelligence we are now seeing new forms of manipulation and surveillance “not necessarily in the form of authoritarian politics but in a more hidden and highly effective way: by changing the economy in a way that turns us all into smartphone cattle milked for our data.” (Coeckelbergh 2020, 103)

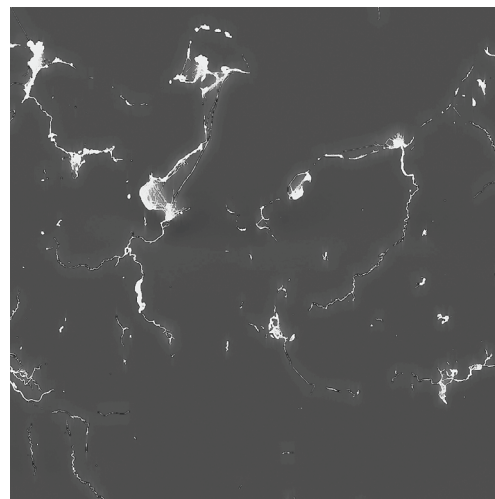


Fig. 2. Fabian Weiss, “In the heat of the day”, #2

The series “In the heat of the day” (2021) explores algorithmic structuring of the world by exploring and rearranging location data from fitness trackers made available through the service STRAVA and visually exposing the traces we and our bodies leave somewhere in the cloud, acting as a driver of debate around topics of privacy, safety and obedience. Through the abstracted images and highly stylized forms and colors, the viewer is confronted with the idea that machines and algorithms are constantly looking at us and our digital bodies as well as the question of how our bodily movements are informing the code and vice versa.

References

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