



WE—THE POSTERITY

According to Marcel Duchamp, there are two important poles in the creation of art: the artist and the spectator, who later becomes the posterity.

When encountering prehistoric art, we, as spectators, are the posterity. We help to introduce mysterious signs, that might turn out to be art, for the external world. In doing so, we create a layer of meaning that might be passed on to the future. How then does this transmission come about? By observing traces, we imagine gestures. By imagining gestures, we feel and see ourselves as observers. We might even see ourselves entering the shadows of the ancient artists. We imagine the postures of the long since dead artists sitting inside a cave, painting or scraping on stone or shells thousands of years ago. Then we produce something as a way to manifest this new knowledge. To further root this identity, we might scrape stone lines ourselves, we might draw lines on paper with ochre, we might take some photos, we might produce objects, or we might carefully clean the traces to examine them from all possible angles and distances to put them in a museum or in a magazine. When confronted with the traces from ancient minds, we decode and reenact the creative spirit of those people: what were they thinking when engraving those lines? Why did they do it like that? Could I have done that? ... and so on. Or we might go on thinking: I want to make some art too. Now!—I want to do some research to find out more about the lives of the people who made those traces. Now!

In this publication, and in the exhibition which it follows, the floating roles we all have; as spectators, scientists, artists, the posterity, and the future, are activated and even unified. The different content of the publication has been juxtaposed and placed in layers on top of each other to explore what kind of light might shine from the pages and from the exhibition halls. It may be the light of a palimpsest: something having usually diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface. A layered light. A light with many shadows and with paradoxical memories.

The initiative for this publication originates from the international Artistic Research Project: *Matter, Gesture and Soul*, based at the Art Academy—Department of Contemporary Art, Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, at the University of Bergen. The publication is to be viewed as an extension of the exhibition *Dig It Up and Put It in a Bag*, autumn 2021, at the University Museum of Bergen.

The work involving both the exhibition and this publication has, in its totality, taken place during the 2020–21 Corona pandemic. Thus, the work in the project has become unusually lonely, erratic, and delayed, but also strangely reversed. The result has become more than simply planned individual approaches to specific themes; it now also reflects the manifestation of knowledge in general. The original intention was to meet and to work together early in the project period, and to produce and display results later. The timeline for the project has, because of the pandemic, been turned around. Both exhibition and publication are now not only visible artistic and scientific manifestations from (a few) discussions and fieldwork, but also a fresh start for new discussions, new forms of fieldwork, new questions, and new artistic approaches for the project, and for the public.

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