Contingent Agencies

Inquiring into the Emergence of Atmospheres

Alex Arteaga
Nikolaus Gansterer
(eds.)

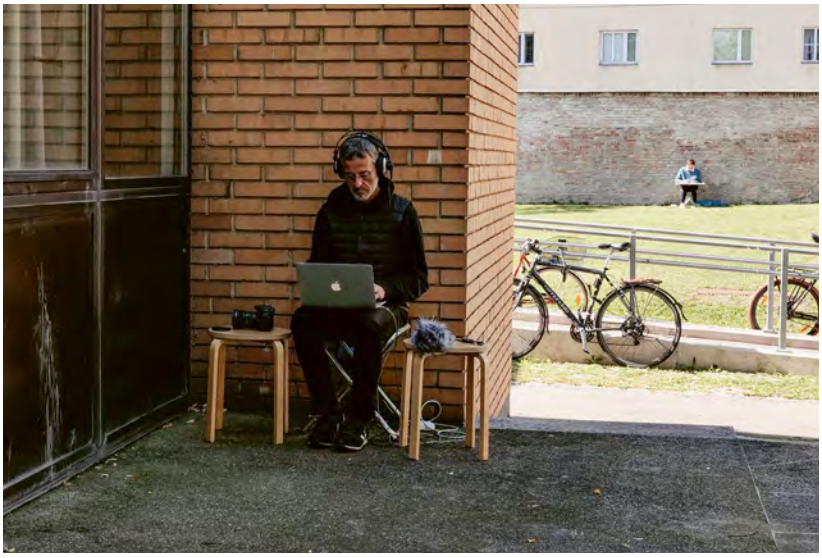












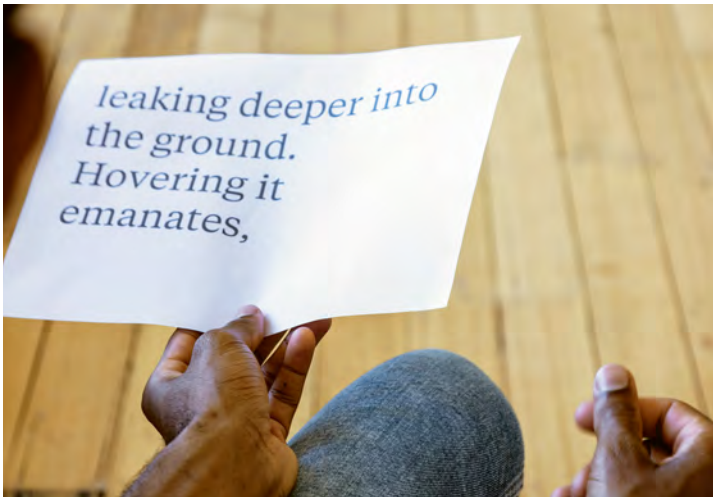

WALKING
WEAVING
OBSERVATION
SINGING
STORYTELLING
WRITING
BREATHING
TIME
MOOD
SOUND
MEMORY


The inner sole
competes with dark
metal to claim
lingering heat. The



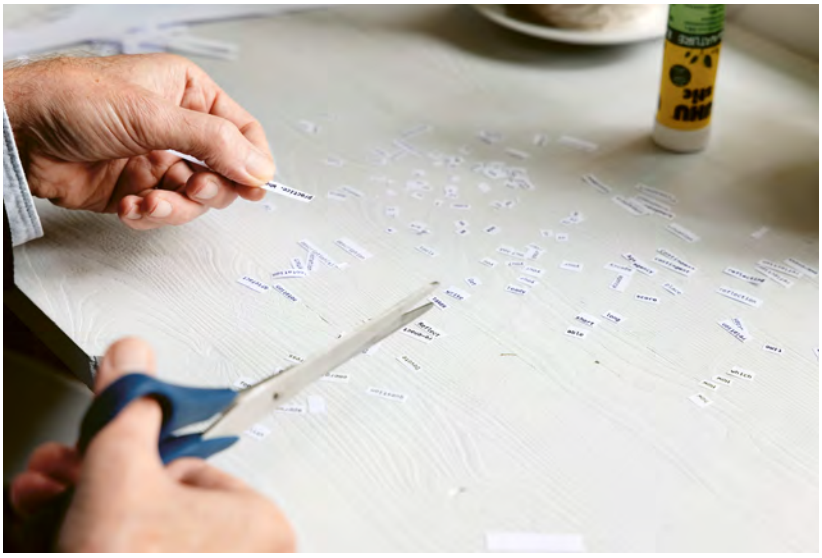




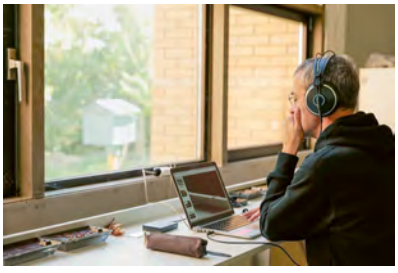

leaking deeper into
the ground.
Hovering it
emanates,

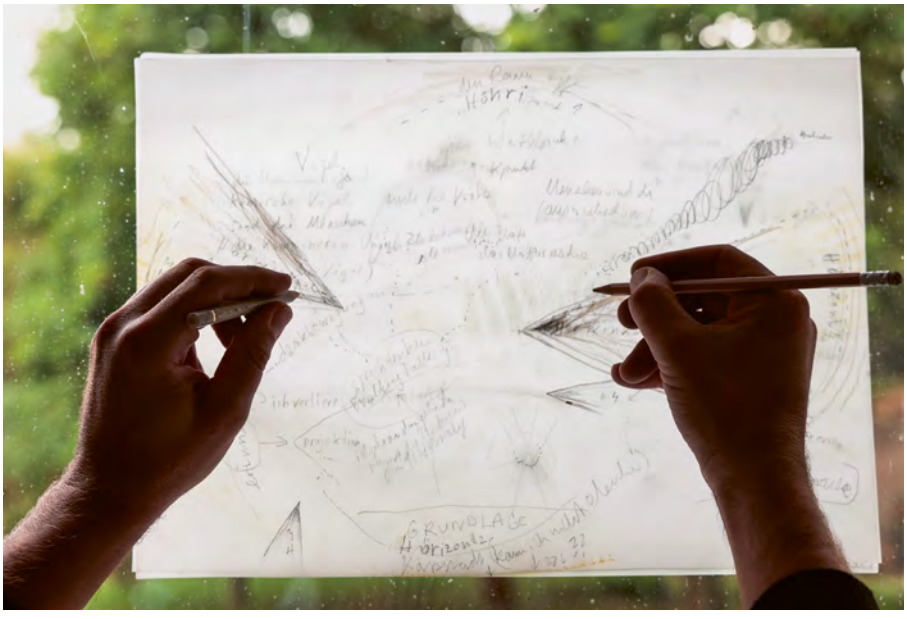



LIFE OF DREAMS


















WALKING
BREATHING
TIME
MOOD
SOUND
MEMORY
COLOUR
SKY
FLYER











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Clouds, Stars, and Knowing: "I really don't know clouds! I really don't know clouds! I really don't know love! I really don't know life!" (Joni Mitchell) — These lyrics resonate as a profound expression of the songwriter's desire to grasp knowledge from clouds, symbolic as they may be. The question remains: can we truly "know" clouds or read the stars in a literal sense? Despite our fascination with them, neither clouds nor stars yield factual knowledge; but they offer guidance. We learned to navigate by stars and take storm signals from clouds. This suggests an understanding shaped not by literal meanings but by a "literacy of contingency" — a fluid literacy that embraces the full spectrum of interpretative opportunities. In seeking understanding from metaphors, we also uncover a literacy of contingency that enables open-ended, contextual understanding. This book offers proof of this.

The Literacy of Contingency and Understanding: Nikolaus Gansterer and Alex Arteaga (together with all the contributors to this book) are guides in this literacy, bravely navigating the unknown with no set destination but the aim of illuminating the path. Together with a visionary — and supportive — funding agency and research institutions and open-minded colleagues, they embody contingent agency, willing to continuously reframe all parameters as needed. This approach — centered on exploration rather than fixed knowledge — proves that there is always more to uncover than what the sky or stars may imply at first glance, also in terms of organization. This practice of contingent agency highlights exploration and constant renegotiation, revealing ever new layers of understanding.

The Funding Agency as Catalyst for Knowledge: It is also important to point out that the funding agency supports this vision by allocating public resources to challenge existing meanings and methodologies. Readers are invited to step beyond conventional boundaries into a richly varied field of inquiry where the unexpected finds a home. It is the valuable, taxpayer-funded support that enables bold investigations and an invitation to reimagine and challenge meaning.

Embarking on a Journey of Contingent Agency: We stand somehow unguarded and open, equipped with individualized toolboxes, ready to lift the veil on understanding for ourselves and others. The array of sensations and reflections fostered in this journey underscores the unique potential of art to unlock layers of understanding, providing a richer reality that research alone might struggle to reach.

The Politics of Research—The Role of Art: If the politics of research are to be taken seriously, prioritizing autonomy and safety is essential. Yet beyond that lies the curiosity that art inspires. Even the most established forms of research are invigorated by the wonder that art brings. This volume represents a courageous leap out of existing comfort zones and into the boundless territory of contingent agency, posing a question to both art and research: how do we continue? We learn that artistic curiosity renews even the most established research forms, inviting a reevaluation of art's role within research politics.

A Kaleidoscopic Invitation to Discovery: This book chronicles the project's journey, designed as an interactive experience to be read, marked, folded, or shared. Each interaction furthers its purpose of expanding sensibilities and reframing understanding. With each engagement, it becomes a more kaleidoscopic event, encouraging readers to uncover new approaches and to wonder. Embrace the journey, and don't hesitate to return to the authors, myself included, with your stories. This step and the next are always only first steps; the future awaits. So also as an interactive work, this book expands understanding and with its rigor encourages for more immersive engagement in discovery.

Clouds and Contingency: I do not believe in clouds, nor do I believe in stars as signals of fate, as we might not know if the source was extinguished thousands of years ago. Yet sometimes help comes from unexpected sources. When the composer Arnold Schönberg, as a soldier, began researching clouds, he believed they might reveal when the war would end. Of course, the study itself did not bring peace, but by immersing himself in the ambiguous forms of clouds, Schönberg found a method to persevere without falling into the escapist trap. This contingent exploration can be seen as influencing his musical journey, opening pathways toward his bold atonal compositions where, paradoxically, contingency was distilled into precision. Maybe through Schönberg's cloud studies one sees how ambiguity in knowledge can guide one to deeper, even unexpected, revelations.

Foreword

Leena Rouhiainen

This beautiful and multifaceted book presents original artistic research practice and thinking by accomplished artist-researchers and influential contemporary thinkers. Opened by the perspective of contingency, it brings together different actors, processes, materials, and situations as atmospheric entanglements. In doing so, it demonstrates the subtle and complex interrelations involved in emergent artistic exploration and aims to articulate related reflection.

Contingent Agencies: Inquiring into the Emergence of Atmospheres is the culmination of a four-year artistic research project funded by the Program for Arts-Based Research (PEEK) of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). In this publication, the project's main researchers, Alex Arteaga and Nikolaus Gansterer, have invited twelve artist-researchers and scholars to jointly explore the ways in which situational agencies engender enveloping presences. By focusing on atmosphere, they formulate an inventive methodology that interweaves notation, reflection, and the display of aesthetic, artistic, and conceptual insight through different media. The methodology, which was introduced to the contributors to the volume, supports thinking about intricate connectivity in a variety of ways, including drawings, photographs, words, writing, speaking, dialogue, and listening amongst others. This book therefore presents diverse aesthetic and artistic modes of sense-making and speaks for the manifold opportunities artistic practice and thinking have in forwarding our ability to articulate and understand what has been conventionally considered unthinkable.

Perhaps most importantly, *Contingent Agencies* offers artistic research a new methodological outlook by introducing a persuasively argued and straightforward modus operandi that can be shared with and applied by others. Seldom do we witness artistic research procedures that contribute to addressing a generic issue by various authors and through diverse media. Usually, the methods of artistic research are artist-, problem-, and artistic media-specific. Methodologically, *Contingent Agencies* is one of the definitive examples of practice-informed artistic research. As an outcome of the utilized approach, the volume effortlessly interlinks artistic research practice and theoretical conceptualization and does so in a way that forms an inclusive composition of differences. The carefully considered structure and design of the book highlight this feature.

Contingent Agencies presents a complex and appealing artifact with a wealth of aesthetic and critical detail. Readers are offered ample inspiration and provocation as they learn about critical views on the meteorological, aesthetic, and political characteristics of atmosphere and how it involves physical, sensual, and self-reflecting planes, vital impulses, as well as ecstasy and sense, and energetics from the otherwise. The problem of contingency is detailed as something involving agency without an agent and a disturbing tactile presence that is best approached through aesthetic and artistic means. The book's methodological approach is discussed by addressing the aesthetic dispositive for reflection, which is understood as a practice of sharing and tactics of showing. In addition, non-intentional notation is scrutinized as evidencing undetermined processes of transformation. By destabilizing conceptions of scientific practice, the opportunities for exchange and hybridization between scientific and artistic research are encouraged. Readers are also offered specific displays of notations that the contributors generated throughout the duration of the project including the closing symposium. These comprise texts created through live writing and voicing observation, accounts on observations of bodily movements and relatedness to temperature, light, and wind, constellations of written and drawn notes as figuring a trajectory of artistic exploration, aphoristic poetic images resulting from atmospheric thinking interconnecting body, space, language, and potentialities as resonating matters, as well as spatial arrangements of light reflections evidencing a process of reflective notation.

The previous description can hardly convey the sensuous, aesthetic, and conceptual intricacies of *Contingent Agencies* with its imagery and design comprising evocative drawings, photos, graphic charts, dialogical commentary, glossaries, and footnotes. Together with the main chapters they attest to the wealth of discerning sense-making contained within the book. I can highly recommend *Contingent Agencies* as a topical and informative volume for anyone interested in contemporary views on artistic research and aesthetics as well as students and scholars exploring the concept of atmosphere.

A Contingent Preface

Alex Arteaga

This preface is written in two voices. Two voices in one another through tangential resonances; a two- of framing and facilitating the approach to the artistic

How to understand an artistic research project? How to address its realization? What concept of "artistic research project" is mobilized and outlined through conceiving and carrying out a project? These are different ways of posing a question that I consider fundamental; one that must be formulated and somehow answered by a project's concept, at the start and continually throughout the duration of each project—especially in the case of long projects (in our case more than four years) supported by public funding. Now, at the end of the artistic research project *Contingent Agencies* and as contribution to this "contingent introduction," I would like to provide my answers and some reflections on it, in relation to this specific case.

Basically, I understand our project as a framework for triggering, enabling, carrying out, connecting, and reflecting (on) individual and collective research processes. That means, first, that this project has been a framework for plural and diverse research. Related to this, and as self-critique: diversity —human, more-than-human, cultural, disciplinary, and geographic—could and should have been widened. Original plans to unfold the project in non-European areas were hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic, which I mention as a matter of fact rather than as justification. Nevertheless, I believe that the research approaches defined within this project allow for future developments that will achieve a greater range of variety and heterogeneity. Second, to understand this project as a framework for diverse research implies providing the conditions for the establishment of different forms of relationships between various research procedures. To this end, we concentrated on research practices, which are a constitutive and nuclear component of all research processes throughout the disciplines and research areas, and thus of all possible methods. My basic understanding of the term "research practice" is as a systematized setting of actions intending to disclose—in very different and specific ways—one object of research. The particular relation established in each research practice between the issue to be disclosed and the specific kind of disclosure to be achieved —that is, the particular movement of the research topic to a specific epistemic transformation—is what determines which actions are adequate for constituting the practice, and how they should relate to one another. In dialogue with our fellow researchers, we tried to identify the conceptual, media-specific, technological, spatiotemporal, aesthetic, and emotional con-

↓ (p. 18)

touch—two contingent voices—aiming at complementing toned entry point, as two of the many possible ways research project *Contingent Agencies*.

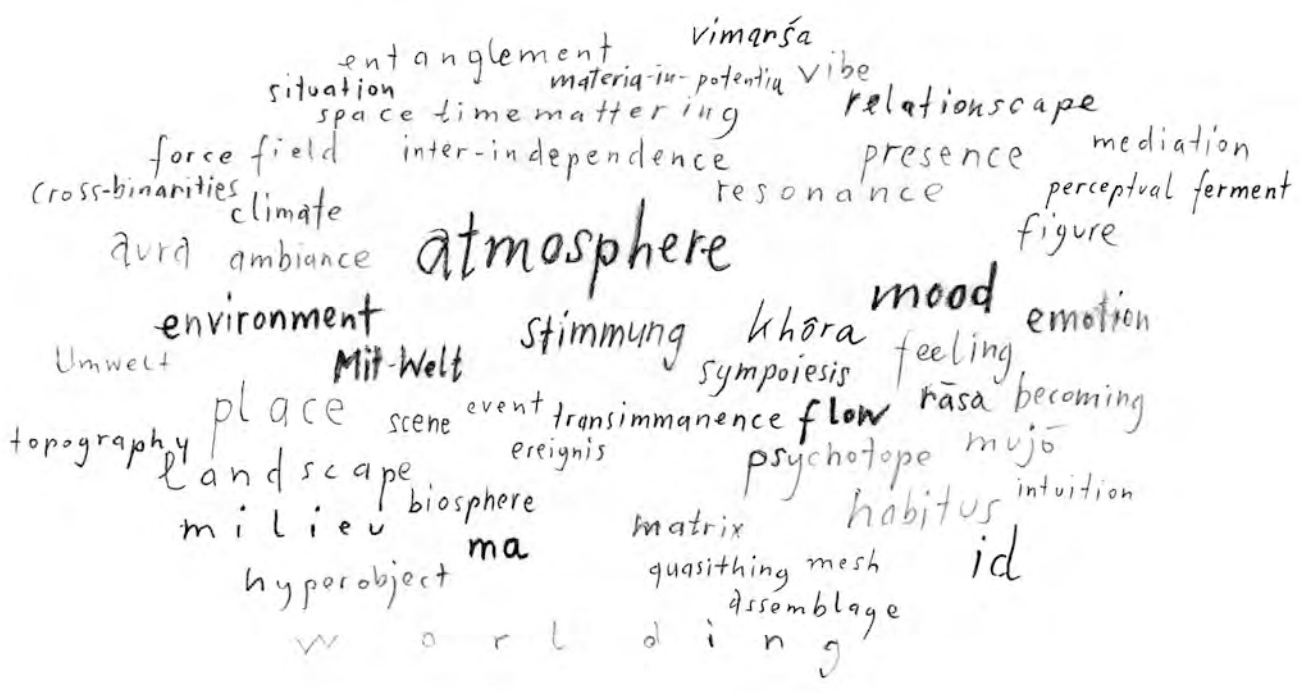
A Contingent Preface

Nikolaus Gansterer

Atmospheres. We cannot not live in atmospheres. We living beings, we critters. We animated matter. We buzzing particles. Right from the start, when breathing, when metabolizing, in pain, in joy, in motion, when dancing, communicating, when we love, read, dream, when we are creating artistically; at the moment of death, as long as we live—now.

Atmospheres are those fundamental and omnipresent phenomena that constantly penetrate and affect us all, and dissolve our borders. Atmospheres bring us into permanent mutual contact with the diverse processes of exchange between animate (and less animate) matter: a ceaseless interplay takes place of plants, humans, stones, animals, vibrant matter, and their surfaces, skins, and all their metamorphoses, often hidden deep within their inner tissues. As ongoing transformations of aggregate states, atmospheres are not static, basic constants, but rather vital, vibrating, in-between states in constant flux.

The *Contingent Agencies* project and the publication emerging from it, which you, dear reader, now hold in your hands, create a framework for a detailed approach from various sides, to this poly-dimensional, highly dynamic, and fleeting in-between phenomenon—a phenomenon that has extremely diverse names and faces, as do the complex, co-constituting aspects that comprise it.



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ditions for the realization of each practice, as a way to recognize and imagine forms of relationships with other practices and practitioners that not only support a satisfactory performance of the practices at stake but, furthermore, enrich and extend the possible processes of their realization. On this basis, different varieties of coexistence, contact, interconnection, intertwinement, contamination, and even hybridization between practices occurred and were envisioned for further development of the process of inquiry.

This was possible due to the conception and organization of different formats of encounter. The project began in May 2019 within such a format, the Research Pavilion #3 in Venice.[1] With the motto "Research Ecologies," the third Research Pavilion organized by the University of the Arts Helsinki brought together six different "research cells." *Contingent Agencies* formed part of the research cell *Through Phenomena Themselves*, devoted to investigating possible relationships between artistic and phenomenological research practices. After this first collective experience, and parallel to our individual and continuous processes of research, Nikolaus Gansterer and I separately conducted different workshops within and beyond academic contexts. In October 2021 we co-led a three-day workshop[2] devoted to delving deeper into the three fields of practices—practices of notation, reflection, and tactics of showing—that formed the foundation of the methodological approach that we developed within this project. After these collective experiences and periods of individual work, the two of us met in May 2022 at the Zentrum Fokus Forschung of the University of Applied Arts for a five-day research retreat to critically revisit our practices through self- and cross-reflecting practicing, and to conceive another collective research framework that would take place there five months later the concluding cross-disciplinary symposium.[3] This symposium was one of the main sources for this book.

Another framework of encounter that will remain active beyond the temporal limits of this project is the project's website.[4] On the one hand, this platform allows researchers who participated in *Contingent Agencie*s to share with a wide research community the artifacts produced through the performance of different practices. On the other hand, the texts included in the *conceptual framework* provide further references for other researchers to engage in our collective process of practice. On a deeper structural level, it is notable that this website is connected with the implementation of Base[5]—a digital platform for art, research, and pedagogy—at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. For the first time in this context, Base and a research project's website are linked in a way that allows the project's key researchers to upload the majority of the website's content via Base, but also to archive this content in this platform, and share it through Showroom[6]—an application developed on Base. In collaboration

— 1 — https://sites.uniarts.fi/web/research-pavilion-2019

— 2 — The participants of this workshop were Emma Cocker, Karmen Franinović, Paul Petritsch, Frida Robles, Charlotta Ruth, Nicole Six. For further information, see https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/notations-reflections-strategies-of-display-apl/

— 3 — The pictures at the beginning and end of this book provide some impressions of this event. For further information, see https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/contingent-agencies-symposium/

— 4 — https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/

— 5 — https://base.uni-ak.ac.at/

— 6 — https://base.uni-ak.ac.at/showroom/

↓ (p. 20)

What all these terms have in common is the attempt to characterize a paradoxical phenomenon, or rather, modality of presence, that is, non-objectified, non-contoured, non-neutral, enveloping, impermanent, unstable, unpredictable, intangible, vague, subtle, vital, unfolding, enfolding, immersive, and emergent. This collection of terms and paradoxical qualities is incomplete. Every term brings with it a cascade of contexts and connotations, instead of, language approaches its borders, its limits. In this project we have agreed on the term "atmosphere" as a common denominator and place holder. However, in my opinion, "*Stimmung*," an equivalent word in my mother tongue, German, comes a bit closer to the phenomenon that we are circling around.[2] The German term *Stimmung* connects the so-called "inner" felt *Gestimmtheit* (feeling, mood, emotion, flow…) with the effect of a specific situation that is supposedly experienced "outside," (atmosphere, environment, place, landscape, topography…) and its emergent, process-based character (worlding, spacetimemattering, relationscape, sympoiesis…). The *Stimmung* bears the *Stimme* (the voice) within it; speaks, sings, swings, is in communication, in resonance with the world. A global language. *Stimmung* brings those inner and outer phenomena, which supposedly exist separately, into constant, mutually-conditioning interaction, into dialogue with one another, thereby dissolving that polar inner-outer dichotomy to maneuver an "as well as" into this ambiguous, entangled resonance space in favor of a dissolution of the subject—object split.

The *Contingent Agencies* project picks up on this movement, follows this track to move precisely on, in, and into these basic ontological processes beyond oppositions. A mutual turn, both turning toward as well as delving into these "vibrant vital in betweens" (*inter*) for sensing our world, and our self from inside (*intra*, *infra*) and within—in contact with. Both a moving-with and being moved by. Co-existing. An oscillating movement from "us" to "it." *Contingent Agencies* approaches this fleeting phenomenon from various sides and backgrounds and includes different voices. An approach that comprises a cross-disciplinary exploration of the phenomenon using artistic means is central to the approach.[3]

Yet how does the complexity of an emergent phenomenon converge with an artistic-research practice and a perspective that is as non-reductive as possible (when the whole is, after all, always more than the sum of the individual parts)? How to track down, trace a phenomenon that is, itself, an essential component of any creative act?

Alex Arteaga and I came together in the context of the *Contingent Agencies* project to investigate this artistically; as two researchers with different practices and multiple backgrounds. Alex, with backgrounds in philosophy, writing, and sound research, and I, with backgrounds in drawing, sculpture, and performance—in dialogue with a changing team of

— 2 — On the history of the term, see Gerhard Thonhauser, "Beyond Mood and Atmosphere: a Conceptual History of the Term Stimmung," in *Philosophia* 49, Berlin: Springer Nature, 2020, pp.1247–1265.

— 3 — In this cross-disciplinary research project, we have opened and enabled a multi-voicedness from various perspectives and practices. Nonetheless, we have started from primarily Western European figures of thought and concepts. The phenomenon of atmospheres is, of course, global and per se, immensely broad, which in the course of human history has been addressed and linguistically identified through various cultural practices. A cultural-history examination with the inclusion of non-European perspectives and intercultural and transcultural comparisons of aesthetic and aesthetic world-views would be an exciting further research intention, but would be beyond the limits of a four-year project that has firmly set its focus on an artistic and practice-based approach. See Zhuofei Wang, "Atmosphären-Ästhetik und interkulturelle Studien," in *Auf den Spuren von Anton Wilhelm Amo, Philosophie und der Ruf nach Interkulturalität*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021.

with an amazing group of programmers,[7] we implemented new items according to the specific needs of the project that are now available for the entire research community. The concept of "research community" and its practical realization has been central throughout this project. Research is not possible without a research community—a diverse meshwork of researchers sharing practices, processes, spaces, and multiple frameworks: social, institutional, technological, conceptual, and theoretical. In this sense, the book you now have in your hands, through a combination of exhaustive and multi-perspectival reflections and research artifacts, intends to also be a place of multiple encounters, a framework for continued practicing, and thus, a contribution to an artistic research community.

This open field of research has provided not only adequate conditions for addressing the subject matter in focus, but also an ideal environment for critical reflection on the mobilized concepts of artistic research. This formulation implies at least four elements of my own notion of artistic research that I would like to share. First, and based on the generally accepted idea that artistic research is a heterogenous field, I believe that the performance of different varieties of artistic research within one project can be highly enriching for both the field in general and the individual practices. Nevertheless, this potential beneficial effect can be fully unfolded only when spaces for explicit, careful, generous, and sharp critique are opened and activated. These spaces are constitutive for an artistic research community. I believe—this is a second element of my notion of artistic research—that the diverse artistic research practices carried out in a project need to be collectively scrutinized in relation to their specific research efficacy, that is, their agency of opening up new trajectories of sense. This internal self-critique, that is, a critique carried out in and through terms, media, practices, and criteria of artistic research, points to a third trait of artistic research that I consider fundamental. I believe that artistic research is an autonomous variety of research. I understand the term "autonomy" according to the way that Francisco Varela defined it.[8] The basic idea, thereby, is that an autonomous system comes to be when its constituent processes form a network endowed with operational closure through relations of recursive co-dependence. This concept does not imply a claim to homogenize or define any kind of normativity in this field. Furthermore, it is not a call for isolation. On the contrary, artistic research should remain heterogeneous, non-normative and open to all kinds of influences provided from inside and outside of academia. My claim for autonomy refers exclusively to the possibility of generating and unfolding research agency through the recursive relationships between the practices that define this variety of inquiry as such: artistic research practices.

The fourth trait of my notion of artistic research, which I consider necessary to mention here, refers to the inherent tension

— 7 — Our most sincere gratitude to Florian Bettel, coordinator of the implementation of Base at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and to Christian Kartnig, our web programmer, for making it possible.

— 8 — Varela, Francisco J. (1979): *Principles of Biological Autonomy*, New York, Oxford: North Holland, 1979.

↓ (p. 22)

experts with different knowledge practices.[4] For me, the research work of *Contingent Agencies* now links up here, at precisely these questions: What happens now when performers and researchers take themselves out of the equation to a certain extent, and become responsive *wit(h)nesses* to the choreographies of human and more-than-human forces? What happens when we "hand over the field, or the stage" to the site, the situation as performative event? What vital forces appear and come to light, and how do they engage in this permanent performance of this *Mit-Welt*, this intersubjective space, this "with-world"? What is set in motion? What practices of notation and reflection do we then want to perform, what practices are we able to perform? How do we move and orient ourselves in this erratic, endless ocean of atmospheres? Are we those two fish who contemplate the possibility and difficulty of speaking about the environment in which we swim on a daily basis?[5] How to perceive what our own perception constantly dyes, tinges, co(n)tinges, tonalizes, to realize this hue, this timbre, without losing our footing? How to fathom and feel out the ground on which we stand? How to notate something that is, per se, fleeting, that is, per se, always too large, too complex, without "fixing" it, without formalizing and minimizing it, reducing or representing it in simplified form, and nonetheless enabling multiple approaches and points of contact as a contingent, present, living, sign-like something?

Attractive for me are precisely these paradoxical im-possibilities. Fathoming the unfathomable. "Failure" as program; sensually; with pleasure. Yet, in spite of it all, researching, investigating with all available means of art. Not in order to find a functioning model for explaining the world. Not in the sense of an abstraction or reduction of complexities, but instead, as a type of approach to the non-representability of complexities. Encountering the complexities with complexities. Not to deliver answers, but to continually search for and find questions. To draw question(ing)s. Question mark(ings)?

The *Contingent Agencies* research project therefore focuses on this specific "how." Rather than what, where, or why, it asks: How is an atmosphere operating? How is this atmosphere for you? And how can this specific and ephemeral "how-ness" be noticed, notated, and reflected upon, those qualitative characteristics that distinguish one atmosphere from another, one lived moment from the next? How can we address or even begin to engage with this fundamental "how-ness" as an ontological precondition?

We propose turning our sensual attention to the contingent agencies of atmospheres, to what takes effect in them as endless potentialities. Their agent. Their agencies. Their agencement. For the first contact, we suggest performing a small "methodological twist"; successively coming into contact with one element and its agency, with one specific force that sticks out, protrudes, rises up, addresses, speaks to you, an-agitates

— 4 — For more detailed research background see Nikolaus Gansterer, Field Notes, pp. 319–331.

— 5 — Wallace David Foster and Kenyon College, *This Is Water: Some Thoughts Delivered on a Significant Occasion About Living a Compassionate Life*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009.

↓ (p. 23)

of the formulation "artistic research." The interpretation of both terms—"artistic" "and "research"—and the relationship between them are probably the main origins of the discrepancies about what artistic research might be. To practice artistic research implies unavoidably taking a position in this regard. In this project, different articulations—not necessarily in the sense of "putting into words" but rather of "establishing specific joints"—of these terms have been developed and practiced. They are recognizable in this book—if not immediately, then from a certain distance or by reading between the lines. In my case, I have practiced artistic research in this context as a way of contributing, first, to disclosing the concept of "atmosphere" and more precisely the ways in which atmospheres come to be, and, second, to develop effective aesthetic research practices able to achieve these contributions from a very specific and unique perspective: the perspective enabled by the unfolding of the inherent agency of aesthetics—understood as a variety of relational action—of conditioning the emergence of sense. By affirming that, I posit that artistic research should be clearly located in the system "research," that is, unfold its agencies—as I mentioned before through its own terms, media, practices, and criteria—within a widespread and common ecology of research practices. In doing so, artistic research projects can contribute to opening up non-disciplinary spaces of inquiry. The concluding symposium of *Contingent Agencies* and this book are, in my view, clear exponents of this approach.

As one of the key researchers of this project, my main task—in the framework described above and in addition to the realization of my own research—was to outline, together with Nikolaus Gansterer, three fundamental components of the project: the object of research, its conceptual and theoretical framework, and a methodological approach. To finish this introductory note, I would like to summarize these issues. *Contingent Agencies'* research focuses on the ways in which different agencies, unfolding within a given situation, and therefore agencies evolving in contact with and exerting influence on one another—con-tingent agencies—condition the emergence of a specific atmosphere—the atmosphere that arises in this very situation. This formulation already manifests a certain conceptual framework. Atmospheres are understood here as emergent events, enabled by the dynamic relations between diverse processes within a situated framework. Accordingly, atmospheres are not produced by single actors. Furthermore, the proposal is that atmospheres are addressed in this project as phenomena—or, as I prefer to call them, "proto-phenomena"—that is, as presences appearing to subjectivities involved in the situation and therefore participating in their emergence. Correspondingly, atmospheres are not understood as elements of a mind-independent reality to be addressed from a third-person perspective. Phenomenology and the enactive approach to cognition are two theoretical frameworks

↓ (p. 24)

—and encountering this agency in flux through an artistic aesthetic practice rather than immediately engaging in the unfathomable multiplicity of an atmosphere—"the large whole" (which can quickly lead to an aesthetic-sensual-cognitive over-flow).

The twist is to pull out an element and observe it, how it inter- and intra-acts with the unfathomable atmospheres, to become aware of the agencies' entanglement with the atmosphere, to become part of it. To become different (to change). For me, that's always the tipping point; a point of no return. Some of the agencies are closely entangled with one another and clustered with other co-agencies, others are more casually in resonance, these relationships are in constant flux, which is the shifting focus between narrower and wider attention.[6] This presents a double-bind operation, a permanent shifting between peripheral awareness and focus on one element, perhaps comparable to the searching, pulsating, movement of a camera in auto-focus mode, steering an element in order to be steered, to let oneself be found by an agency, and at the same time not lose sight of, stop thinking of, sensing, the overall context. Immersion.

This "figuring" of an agency, the feeling, empathic sensing with and into, is therefore not at all vague or imprecise, but instead a highly concentrated epistemic sense-figuration with an open outcome; a balancing act on a slackline, a bouncing dance of attention with uncertain results. That which moves and that which is moved coalesce; a haptic encounter with an alterity; a mutual engaging in spite of it all. Figuring embodies a paradoxical combination of precision and ambiguity. This is "precise vagueness"[7] in contrast to "vague preciseness." Even if misty and nebulous, a fleeting, slippery, some-thing—staying (in touch) with it.

For this dance of attention,[8] we developed a set of interlinked practices and methodological approaches (from notating to reflecting to showing and sharing) to pursue the drive of investigative curiosity, and approach the uncertainty and ambiguity of these events as a type of productive overload, as active expansion of the borders of something that is perhaps not (yet) understandable, to fathom the spheres of the senses and the sensual (consistently differently).[9] Every practice of notation and reflection is a unique spot sample, a makeshift and provisory test drilling into the grounds, its depths and shallows of existence, an immanent snapshot that allows itself to sink into the tensor field of forces and (under-)currents, into the fissured topography of a situation that brings only fragmentary knowledge to light; incomplete, situated. We gathered and assembled an entire swarm of micro case studies, vibrating heterotopia, without a claim to general validity, rich with intrinsic logic, multilayered, disclosed, and complete in their unfathomability. The porosity is what first brings these idiosyncratic artifacts to light as contingent signs. Every

— 6 — See Nikolaus Gansterer, "Field Notes", pp. 319–331.

— 7 — See *Choreo-graphic Figures*, 2019, and also Emma Cocker's text in the current publication, pp. 73–83.

— 8 — Erin Manning, "6. The Dance of Attention," in *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance,* New York: Duke University Press, 2012, pp. 133–148.

— 9 — See Alex Arteaga and Nikolaus Gansterer "Scores and Fact Files for the Practices of Notation and Reflection," pp. 30–39.

within which these conceptualizations find a more adequate position and that, consequently, provide efficacious conceptual and practical resources for their disclosure. In line with the outline of the research focus and its conceptual and theoretical frameworks, we drafted a methodological approach based on three fields of practice: notation, reflection, and tactics of showing.[9] Whereas the practices of notation are understood here as the initial move in a process of research that aims at producing a first sign-based objectification in contact with a non-objectual subject-matter—the constituent relationships between agencies and atmospheres—the practices of reflection are oriented to providing progressively new bits of evidence and insights on this issue through an examination of specific cases. Reflection—according to our proposal—takes place through the mediation of notations, that is, artifacts generated through practices of notation. The tactics of showing, or in a wider sense, sharing, are devoted to facilitate this mediation.

The outline of these elements—focus, frames, and practices—does not constitute the framework of this project. Instead, they are resources that we, as key researchers, offer to initiate processes of critical, aesthetic, and poetic inquiry through diverse practices carried out by different practitioners. Our intention for this book is for it to be a new proposal, hopefully endowed with enough research agency to incite further investigations.

— 9 — See Alex Arteaga and Nikolaus Gansterer, "Scores and Fact Files for the Practices of Notation and Reflection," pp. 30–39.

notation poses the questions of how, and how to continue. Intense presences, present intensities, the radical intersubjective as poetic voice of a *Stimmung*. As a specific way to enter the "into."[10]

This research project is extremely topical in light of the multiple global crises of our current, difficult-to-define geological era,[11] with its catastrophic effects for the entire planet, all living beings, and all matter reaching deep into the compilation and collusion of microparticles. The exploration of atmospheres, with reference to ecological, cultural, and social *Stimmungen,* is a highly political undertaking at both micro- and macrolevels, but mainly a radically new availing of ourselves as apparent individuals in our epoch of great acceleration. It is an inquiry into the basic conditions and constraints, fundamental research, per se. The enormous, rapidly progressing fundamental changes of the planetary climate, of societies, of our vital niche calls for a much deeper understanding of the complex meshwork in which we live. In particular, the agencies of temperature, heat, and water are beginning to move in unforeseeable interactions and ripple effects. The awareness of the relevance of influences within atmospheric processes is more urgent now than ever before. I understand the *Contingent Agencies* project as providing impulses and asking questions. It opens an individual practice of collective deceleration (and vice-versa), of expanded attention with regard to other temporalities, the ideo-rhythmic and ideo-syncratic qualities of the environments that we live with.[12] This book is oriented to those who are curious. To researchers young, old, and seeking. To all who are ready for lived experimentation. It invites us to explore, again and again, the wonder of the omnipresent phenomena of everyday life. *Contingent Agencies* is also a call for radical, cross-disciplinary, creative, artistic intelligence. I consider artistic practices essential for imagining alternative figurations of the fundamentally new aesthetic "moving toward one another" and ethical "with one another," to de- and re-figuring, to exploring in response to and mainly in responsibility for our *Mit-Welt,* our intersubjective space, our mesh of relationships. Making ourselves aware of our own fragility and co-dependence on a daily basis, also with the involvement of artistic-aesthetic practices, is the only decisive tactic for developing and practicing those alternative forms of coexistence that will allow us to remain resiliently porous but also flexibly stable within the enormous upheavals that are beginning to penetrate and transform us from all sides: for those atmospheres yet to come.

— 10 — Please visit the section of artifacts on pp. 41, 103, 199, 289, and 359.

— 11 — The current debates about terms such as Anthropocene, Accelerocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene, Plantationocene, Pyrocene, etc., illustrate the great difficulty in finding suitable terms for our world's rapid transformation.

— 12 — See Alex Arteaga and Nikolaus Gansterer, "Scores and Fact Files for the Practices of Notation and Reflection," pp. 30–39.

Introduction

Alex Arteaga and
Nikolaus Gansterer

To inquire into contingent agencies requires practicing contingent practices contingently. This idea has been fundamental to our methodological approach. This formulation bears on our understanding of the concept of "contingency" —from Latin "contingere": to touch—as "happening in contact" and thus happening conditioned or influenced by contact. Accordingly, the agencies that enable a specific atmosphere to emerge influence one another in their intertwined unfolding, and the research practices that aim at disclosing them—following the principle of isomorphism between object and method of research—must likewise be diverse and practiced in influencing contact to one another. We have conducted the *Contingent Agencies* project according to this idea and have conceived and realized this book guided by the same principles. Therefore, we understand this book as a field of contingent agencies endowed with the capacity to contribute to understanding how contingent agencies enable the emergence of atmospheres.

Following this logic, this book combines texts and other artifacts produced through different practices of notation and reflection realized in diverse media by the key researchers—Alex Arteaga and Nikolaus Gansterer—and guest researchers. The artifacts of notation and reflection included here are a selection of those displayed on the project's website.[1] Each artifact presented—in the visual, textual, and aural media (in this case only accessible through QR codes)—was created by focussing on one specific agency in relation to one particular atmosphere. The information concerning the artifacts (agency, practice of notation/reflection, notator/reflector, time, place, a short description of the atmosphere, tactics of showing, panoramic snapshot, and notes) is printed at the

— 1 — https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/

end of each section. A number in a circle connects each artifact with the corresponding information. Furthermore, each artifact in the book is linked to the project website via a QR code. The agencies and their respective artifacts of notation and reflection are not grouped alphabetically, but instead are associatively organized in the form of five clusters. For example, the agencies light, night, shadow, sparkle, and twilight—or echo, noise, radiation, resonance, reverberation, sound, vibration, and voice—are set in relation to one another.

The principle of contingency is implemented in most of the texts written for this book in the form of open dialogues between researchers. These dialogues are positioned on the pages to the left, and the main texts—with the commented passages highlighted in grey—on those to the right. Each text addresses relevant aspects of this project from different perspectives determined by the research practices, purposes, and aims of each author. The disposition of texts and artifacts of notation and reflection is conceived to encourage further dialogues on the addressed topics within the research community, which is now extended by each reader, viewer, and listener. In this sense, this book aims to incite further processes of research. To make clear and reinforce this ambition, we have included the scores and fact files for notating and reflecting that we have used (see pp. 33–39) for you to join and extend the inquiry initiated with this project.

***

In two forewords, Alexander Damianisch and Leena Rouhiainen provide valuable general insights on the project as a whole from two different points of view. Whereas Alexander has precisely and directly followed the development of the project throughout, from its start in the Research Pavilion #3 in Venice to the concluding symposium in Vienna, Leena was never directly involved in its unfolding. Their considerations as experts in artistic research contribute significantly to situating our project in this context.

The text *Confluence of Influence, and the Struggle of Differentiation,* by Emma Cocker, is the result of a practice of meta-reflection on *Contingent Agencies'* thematic and methodological approach. The input for this practice are textual fragments of artifacts generated through various language-based and lens-based aesthetic research practices of "live writing" and "voicing observation" activated as forms of notation and reflection. The combination of these fragments presented together with field notes and thoughts that emerge in the process of generating this text provides a privileged and kaleidoscopic view of her own process of inquiry and, through its most vivid expression, the proposed thematic or, as she calls it, our "research provocation."

Tim Ingold's contribution, entitled *Landscape, Atmosphere, and the Weather-World,* is a revised transcription of the lecture that he gave at the project's closing symposium.[2] In this text,

— 2 — The recording of the lecture is available here https://www.youtube.com/live/HvxkawMpjEo

Tim traces back along the different paths that led him to address the concept of "atmospheres." Moving further on this complex and comprehensive route, he proposes an inspiring connection between the realization of this concept in two different and, thus far, unconnected fields: aesthetics and meteorology. Bringing into dialogue apparently dissociated terms such as "time," "temper," "tempo," "temperature," "tempest," "attunement," and "attention," he provides tracks that are as surprising as they are viable for (re)connecting the affective and the cosmic.

Through the combination of two components—a dispositive or apparatus and a descriptive and explanatory text, both conceived specifically for this book—Alex Arteaga proposes in his chapter to address the concept of "aesthetic dispositive for (aesthetic) reflection." This is the concept of a practice that can be qualified as a "practice of sharing." Pursuing a phenomenological and enactivist approach, and therefore acting beyond the regime of representation, this practice organizes artifacts of notation and disposes them to facilitate aesthetic reflection as well as reflection in other fields of action. In doing so, it implies a claim for the central relevance of what we initially call "tactics of showing" within the methodological framework of this project.

With *Dancing with/in Atmospheres* Paula Kramer undertakes a poetic revision of her research experience in the project's closing symposium through reworking notations realized through practices of "(mark-)making" and image production based on body movement. In a coda, the insights achieved through this inquiry are extended by a reflection on the concept of "inter-independence" coined by Suprapto (Prapto) Suryodarmo. This concept provides a deepening and inspiring alternative to the idea of "contingency."

As Arno Böhler writes in the abstract for *Khôra*, with his text he inquires into atmospheres from different planes—physical, sensual, and self-reflecting planes—but also through the intertwinement of Western and Indian philosophy, and through aesthetic practices that, transcending philosophy, provide his thinking with a unique epistemic agency. Activating the term that entitles his text, Arno addresses complex issues such as "cross-binarities," "waving bodies," "crossing atmospheres," and "materia-in-potentia"—to mention but a few—and shows how these thoughts inform specific processes of notation. In accordance with the cross-disciplinary character of Arno's work, the dialogue included in this chapter takes place in two media: written language and performative imagery.

Through her text *Notes on Corporal Notations*, Sabina Holzer dwells in the research sphere of *Contingent Agencies*, letting her body-centered practices of notation and reflection resonate and bring forth subtle poetic images in aphoristic form. By doing so, she performs a paradigmatic case of atmospheric thinking about body, practicing, potentialities, invisibilities, language, energy, matter and materials, inter- and intraconnections, time and space, and selfness and otherness, resulting from her aesthetic inquiry into atmospheres.

Reenacting his participation in two panel discussions in the framework of the project's concluding symposium, and on the basis of his publication *Split and Splice. A Phenomenology of Experimentation*, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger addresses the concepts of contingency, notation, and reflection, as well as their interrelations "from the perspective of scientific experimentation", as formulated in his text title. By doing so, he sheds new light on these notions, destabilizes uncritically accepted ideas on the practice of science, and allows for a reconsideration of the differences and commonalities between between scientific and artistic research as well as possibilities of exchange and hybridization.

In his contribution entitled *Diagramming Theories of Atmosphere.* Gerhard Dirmoser provides us with a glimpse into his vast research on the theories of atmospheres, which focuses on the German context and particularly on the philosophy of Gernot Böhme. In continuity with Gerhard's early work *Die Welt der Atmosphere (The World of Atmospheres),* he allows for the emergence of new perspectives on key aspects of the research on atmospheres—"questions of form," "vital impulses," "ecstasy and sense," and "fluid actors"—through five exhaustive diagrams.

Dieter Mersch also refers to the theories of Böhme (one of his philosophy professors) but this time tangentially and from a critical position. In his highly inspiring text "*Ac-cidents" and Non-necessity. On Contingency* he addresses contingency—aligned with our initial intuition—as something that touches and, furthermore, is possible, non-necessary, and escapes causality, intentionality, and categorization as objective or subjective. This path leads Dieter to propose a concept of agency without agent that presents itself and touches—a "tactile presence" —in a silently disturbing way without being invoked but rather requiring specific forms of passivity—an event (or rather an "eventing") that can be addressed, as he argues, most adequately through artistic and/or aesthetic (research) practices.

With *Field Notes: Figuring Contingent Agencies*, Nikolaus Gansterer presents traces of his journey through this project. He activates the concept of "figuring" coined in his last long-duration collaborative project—*Choreo-graphic Figures. Deviations from the Line*—as an operative red thread through a constellation of contingent written and drawn notes. This chapter provides the reader/watcher with subtle and tangential keys for addressing Nikolaus's notation and reflection—to be found in the thus-titled sections and on the project's website—and for understanding the background from which he develops his investigative work and, implicitly, his concept of artistic research.

Erin Manning's text *Perceptual Ferment* finds its point of departure in understanding processes of fermentation as forms of non-intentional notation: traces of processes of transformation unwillingly produced by those elements that enable these processes to unfold. Initiating a fascinating theoretical devel-

opment, she refers, among others, to Pierce's concept of "abduction," Whitehead's theory of perception, Massumi-Manning's concept of "entertainment," and John Lee Clark's notion of "distantism" to coin the term that entitles her text, thereby providing an enriching soil—a "milieu of relation" —for further developing our initial intuition on contingent agencies and new possibilities for notating them.

Similar to Emma, Paula, and Sabina, with his text *Passages with View on Their Legibility*, Mika Elo revisits the notes, notations, and reflections that he produced during the project's closing symposium. An initial idea—the inevitability of influencing the investigated atmospheres through the performance of his practices—led Mika to question the boundaries between notation and reflection, and to conceive and perform procedures that incorporate and thematize these principles. Through his contribution to the present book, Mika reflects on the possibility of realizing "spatial arrangements," activating light reflections, and mobilizing spatial thresholds as practices of reflective notation.

The two final contributions to this publication can be understood as two very different, unconventional, and exciting provocations. In *The Atmosphere and the Atmosphere: A Linkage of Meteorology and Metaphor* Andreas Spiegl initially addresses two accepted definitions of the term atmosphere. The first is meteorological and the second is not so much aesthetic, as in the case of Tim Ingold's contribution, but rather political. Starting with climate change as a junction between both dimensions, Andreas then delivers a sharp, critical, and enlightening analysis of the political use and significance of the term atmosphere within the current situation that, in turn, constitutes an original and inspiring scrutiny of current political developments.

Errant Wanderings/Wonderings—The Materiality of Imagining, the Imaginings of Materiality is the script of the lecture delivered by Karen Barad on September 23, 2022, in the context of *Contingent Agencies'* closing symposium. With the unique entanglement of an original take on quantum physics, critical feminism, and social justice that characterizes their work, Karen addresses tangentially the relations between agencies and atmospheres from the perspective of the "energetics of the otherwise," which reveals promising paths for further investigations within the framework inaugurated by this project.

The publication is bracketed by two series of photographs that show moments of the long, diverse, and intensive research process. These images emphasize and illustrate the hands-on approach of this inquiry.

Scores and Fact Files for the Practices of Notation and Reflection

Alex Arteaga and
Nikolaus Gansterer

The *scores* for practicing notation and reflection displayed in the following pages are fundamental components of the methodological approach developed within this project. A non-reductive inquiry into the proposed object of research—the constitutive relationships between specific agencies and atmospheres—required the identification and definition-through-practicing of artistic and/or aesthetic practices, as well as forms of interconnections between them. These practices should provide evidence of the chosen subject matter and therefore disclose it in ways that can be shared within an open research community. The implicit concept of "method" at stake—in resonance with the Greek origins of this term: *methodos*, a quest or a manner of traveling, of laying down a path, of journeying—does not respond to the implementation of predefined procedures, but instead to a careful observation of the affordances arising from the object of research and an adaptive and agile conception of organized actions—that is, of practices—able to replay and correspond positively to its requests.

The identification of two fields of practice—notation and reflection[1]—was our initial methodological gesture. The specification of these terms, heavily loaded with different meanings sedimented within diverse traditions and trajectories of thought, is driven by the main traits of our concept of atmosphere. In the score for practicing notation we propose starting with a "place"—a concept close to, even synonymous with atmosphere but with a stronger geographic component—and to then become aware of the "situation" unfolding in the chosen place. The shift from place to situation implies a change of intentionality that enables an object-oriented perception of the practitioner's surroundings. After exploring the present situation, which may

— 1 — A third field of practice has achieved an increasing relevance for some practitioners—see in this regard, for example, the contributions of Alex Arteaga, Emma Cocker, Nikolaus Gansterer and Mika Elo in the present book. We have called this field "tactics of showing", although "practices of sharing" would be a suitable alternative. These practices are mainly devoted to organizing the artifacts of notation in an adequate way for facilitating reflection. The question of the possibility of writing a score for these practices remains open in this project.

imply an identification of the sources of the agencies to be investigated, we invite the practitioner to "shift [her/his/their] attention to the atmosphere emerging from this situation."[2] This request expresses a fundamental positioning towards the concept of atmosphere: we posit that atmospheres emerge enabled by the contingent actualization of agencies of the components of a given situation such us air, animals, clouds, colors, decays, echoes, or thresholds to mention some that are thematized in this book. On this basis, we propose that the practitioner chooses one of these agencies—or let an agency choose the practitioner—and become aware of the ways in which it enables, influences, conditions, constrains, or modifies the present atmosphere. The questions formulated in this regard are not meant to be answered, but rather to incite the specific variety of awareness necessary to sense this subtle and dynamic link, which constitutes the focus of notation.

The artifacts produced through practices of notation (such as drawings, texts, diagrams, body movements, or photographs) are one of the starting points for practicing reflection. Replicating the relational structure of our focus of research, the other point of departure for practicing reflection in this context is the short description of the atmosphere included in the notation fact file. We invite practitioners to first read this description, then reenact the evoked atmosphere—inhabit it through association, memory, and imagination—and then activate the artifact or artifacts of notation provided in order to investigate how an agency—in this case, specific although abstract—in-forms the atmosphere at stake.

The scores purposefully respond to minimal definitions of the practices of notating and reflecting. Notating is addressed here as a first, immediate contact with a sensed, non-objectified focus of research—again, the relationships between specific agencies and atmospheres—and the production of a first artifact or set of artifacts, that is, the transition from a signless proto-phenomenon to an organization of signs. On the other hand, reflection—realized through different practices in diverse media and therefore acquiring multiple meanings—is basically understood here as a second investigative contact with the relationships between an agency and an atmosphere mediated through artifacts of notation. Although the differentiation between both kinds of practices seems to be clear, this distinction may blur to a certain extent through practice. In this sense, notation can be practiced as a first and immediate variety of aesthetic reflection—understood as a way of "throwing back" or "bending back" the dynamic relationship between an agency and an atmosphere as it "touches" the practitioner—and reflection can be performed as mediated notation, that is, as notating the observations of the possible influences of a distant agency—made present through artifacts of notation—on an also distant atmosphere—invoked through reenactment.

The decision to not provide further, elaborated outlines of these practices is a response to our aim of fostering diversity through practicing, always attending to the specificities of each

— 2 — Quotation from the score of notation. See p. 36

process, each agency, and each atmosphere. Accordingly, the process of writing these scores was led by the attempt to achieve a balance between definition—enough definition to incite practice—and openness—enough openness for each practitioner to notate and reflect in his/her/their own ways. The high degree of diversity of practices and artifacts of notation and reflection presented in this book may suggest that our goal has been, at least partially, achieved.

In this sense, our main motivation for publishing these scores is to facilitate a continuation of this open process of practice. In this sense, we would like to invite you, the reader of this book, to use these scores to develop, on this basis, your own research practices of notation and reflection.

The fact files included at the end of each section dedicated to the artifacts of notation and reflection. On the one hand, they are an element of support for practicing. A clear example is to be found in the invitation to write a short description of the atmosphere, which helps the notator focus on it, and the reflector reenact it. On the other hand, the fact files are a crucial element for archiving the processes and artifacts of notation and reflection, and therefore making them available for our research community. In this regard, two of the terms included in these fact files required a short explanation because they have a specific meaning within this project. The first one is "þing." This term is mobilized in this project to designate the whole situation of two or more notations realized simultaneously.[3] The second technical. Accordingly, each notation takes place within a "þing." The second technical term is "cell." A cell or research cell is a conglomerate of notations and/or reflections defined by a common element, such as one agency, one temporal frame, one place, or one phase of work. The results of the process of archiving based on all the entries included in the fact files can be found on the project's website[4] and, in an adapted form, in the last pages of each section containing notation and reflections artifacts in the present book.

— 3 — For a detailed clarification of these and related terms see https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/conceptual-framework/

— 4 — https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/

A Score for the Practice of Notation

Collect and prepare the tools that you might possibly need for notating.

Choose a place or let a place choose you. Become aware that you are there.

Devote some time to these questions:
How is the situation in this place?
What are the components of this situation?

Now shift your attention to the atmosphere emerging from this situation.
How is this atmosphere for you?
Perhaps remain silent for a moment and practice a few basic exercises to increase your awareness. Then, please write a short description of this atmosphere in the fact file.

Please choose one agency (such as sound, movement, light, materials, artifacts ...).
Become aware of the relationship between this agency and this atmosphere.

How is this agency unfolding?
How is this agency influencing this atmosphere? How is this agency interacting with other agencies?

Please address these questions through your notation practice.

When you begin to notate, write your starting time in the fact file.

Notate as long as you feel your connection with the agency and the atmosphere.

Once you have finished, please fill in the rest of the fact file.

Fact File for the Practice of Notation

– notation identifier/title:

– agency:

– practice(s) of notation:

– notator’s name:

– date and time:

– place: (name/street or square/neighborhood/city/country)

– short description of the atmosphere:

– artifact(s) of notation:

– notes:

– tactics of showing:

– þing:

– cell(s):

A Score for the Practice of Reflection

Collect and prepare the tools that you might possibly need for reflecting.

To begin, please write a short description of the situation in which your reflection will take place in the fact file.

Now read the description of the atmosphere written in the fact file of the notation that you will use as a basis for your reflection.
Please try to re-enact and inhabit this atmosphere. How is this atmosphere for you?

In case you are working with more than one notation, please realize the last two steps with each one.

Now, approach each artifact of notation.
Please take enough time to become acquainted with each artifact.

Knowing that each artifact of notation relates to a specific agency, try to situate this agency within the atmosphere you re-enacted. Try to sense a relationship between the atmosphere that you re-enacted and this agency.

Focus now on this relationship and try to be aware of the ways in which the agency influences the atmosphere. Please focus on this relationship in your reflection.

When you begin to reflect, write your starting time in the fact file.

Continue your reflection for as long as you feel your connection with the agency and the atmosphere.

Once you have finished, please fill in the rest of the fact file.

Fact File for the Practice of Reflection

– reflection identifier/title:

– agency:

– practice of reflection:

– reflector’s name:

– notation(s) of reference:

– date and time:

– place: (name/street or square/neighborhood/city/country)

– artifact(s) of reflection:

– notes:

– cell(s):

1 — 22

Sparkle

Light

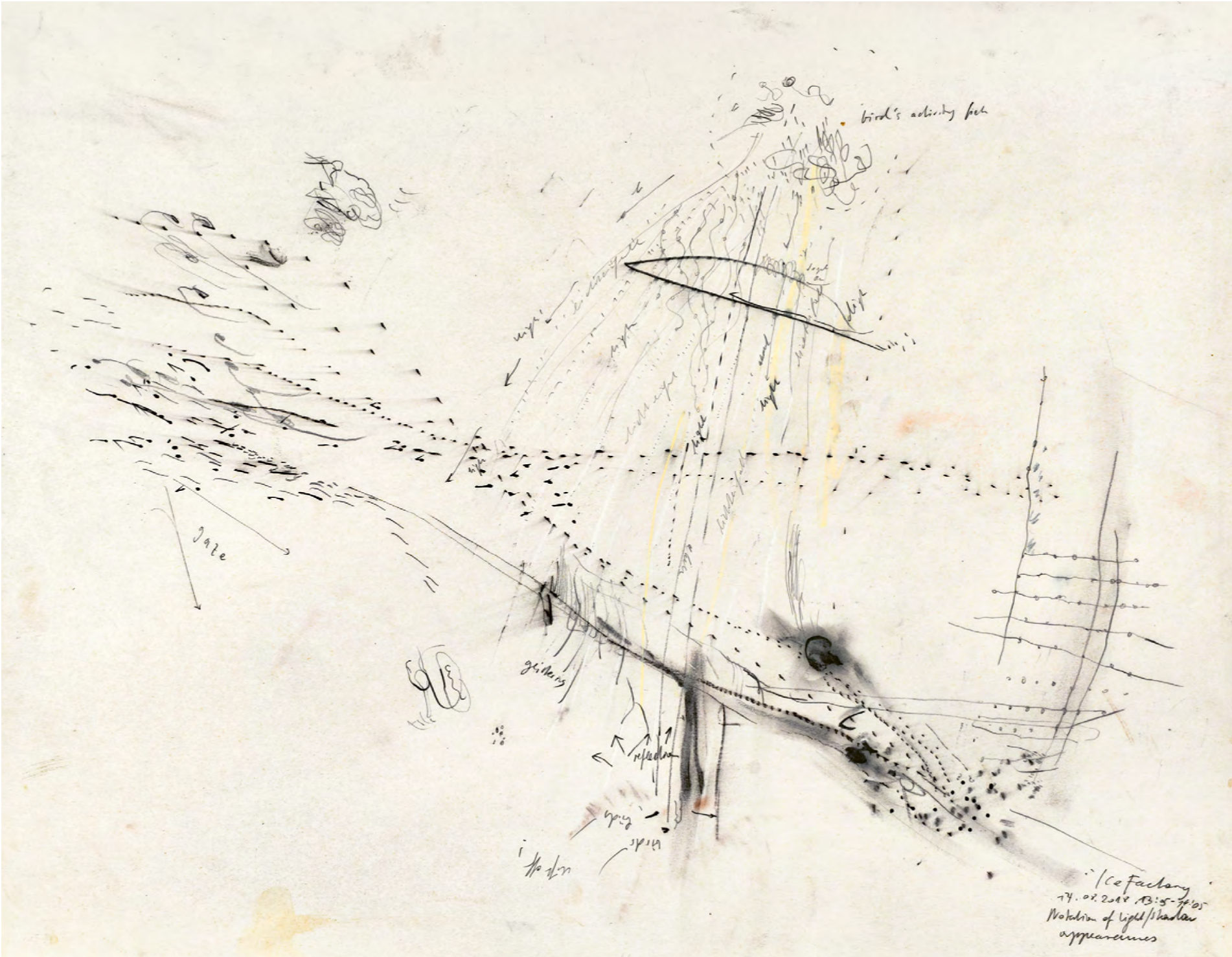
Shadow

Twilight

Night



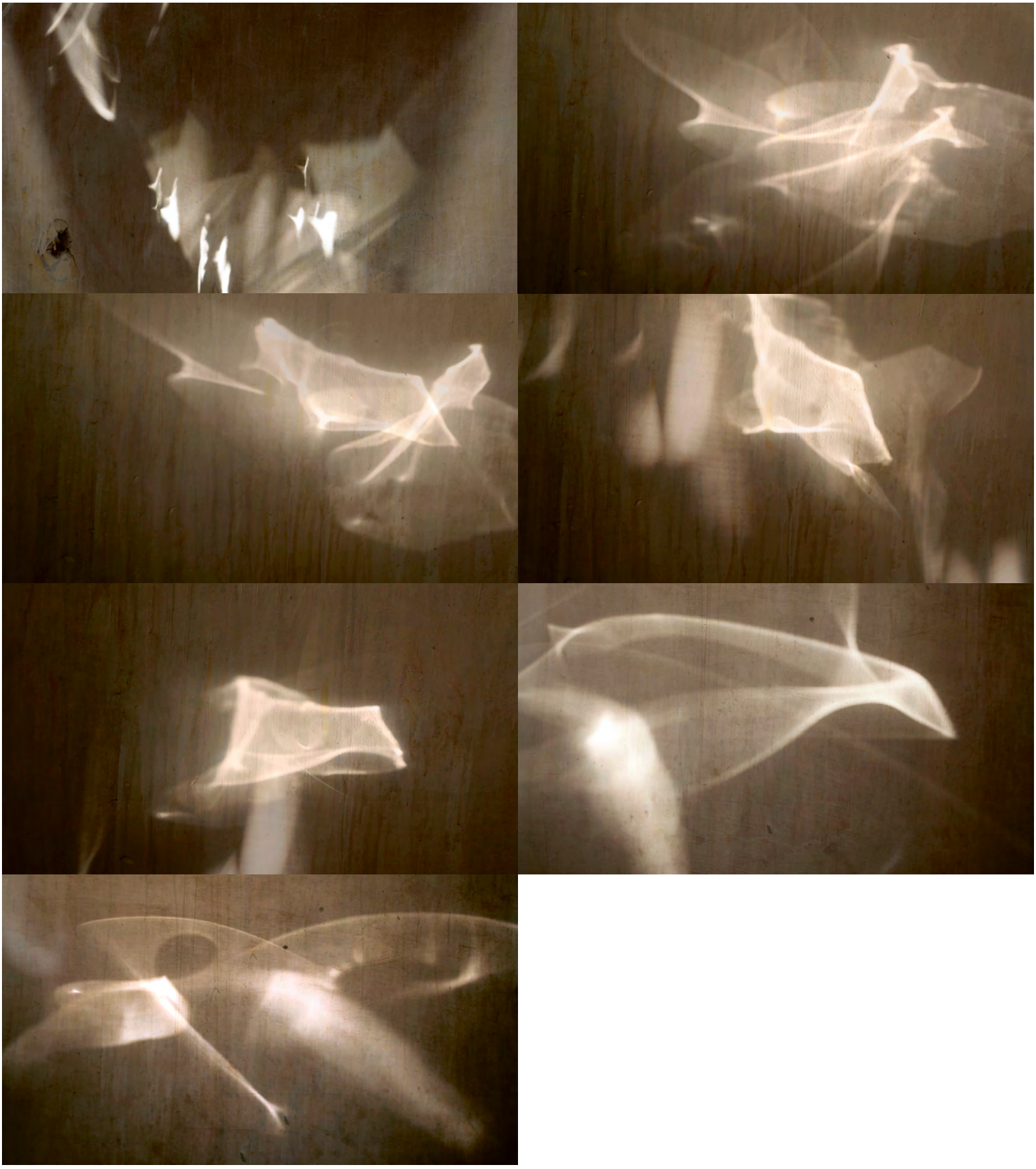
1 — Nikolaus Gansterer

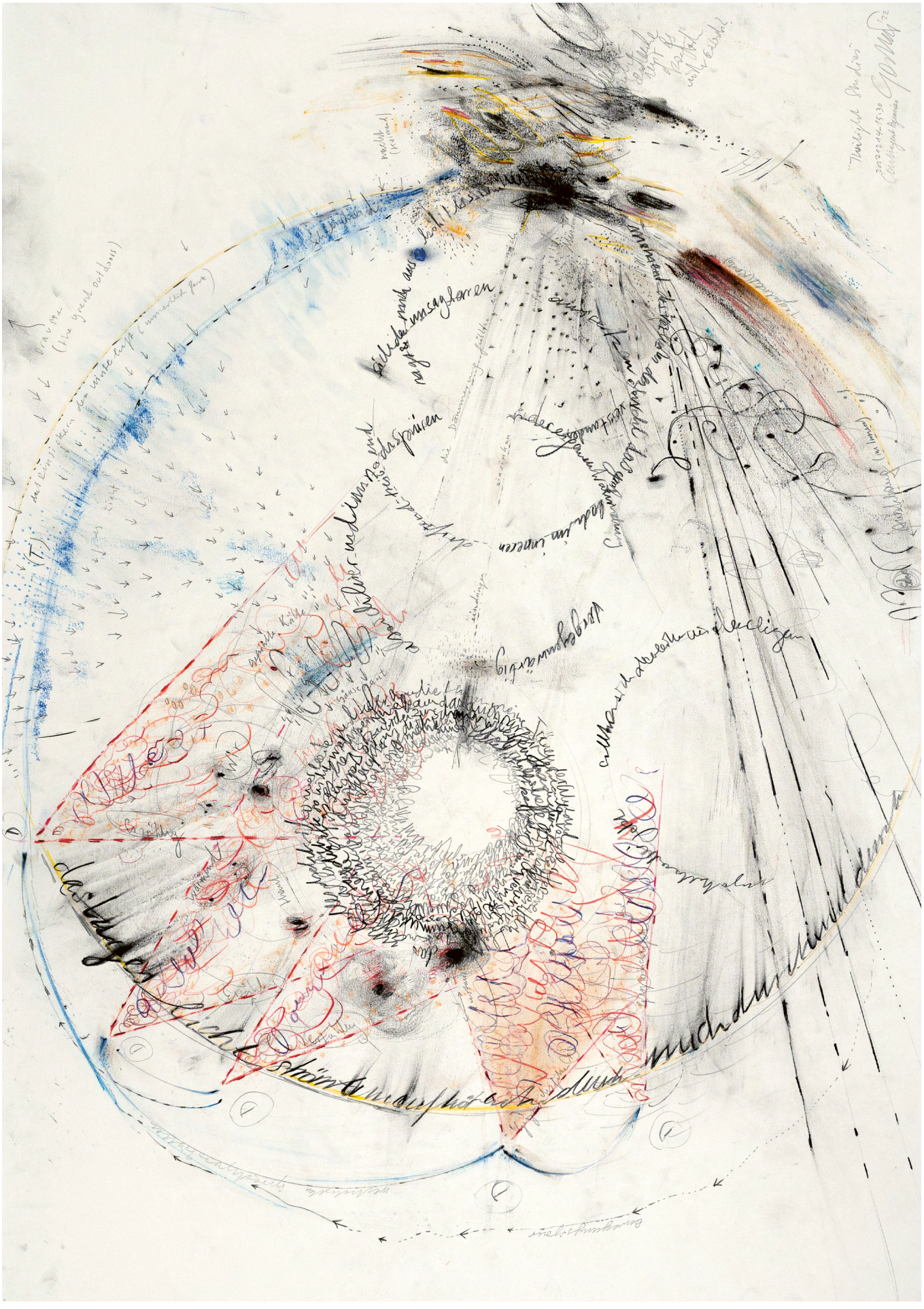


2 — Nikolaus Gansterer



3 — Nikolaus Gansterer






Resonanz raum
Abbild
Rückbild
Wirklichkeit
Licht
Schatten
Bewegung
Zeit
Raum
Farbe
Linie
Fläche
Form
Punkt

On how light conditions the emergence of an atmosphere

Subtle, thin veils. Almost invisible but filtering everything I see without being seen themselves.

Coloring or rather introducing delicate changes of tone, nuances. Variations, deviations, deflections, deviances—Abweichungen (Ab-weich-ungen). Fleeting, minimally vibrant veils.

Invisible mediations in the visible and beyond. Touching me, on the edge of the perceivable.

Introducing subdued dynamics, extremely light vectors, directionalities, germinal forms of trajectories, incipient courses—not bringing me anywhere, not transcending the atmosphere in which I am but carefully respecting its boundaries. Pointing, sometimes, as if with very small and fine fingers.

Qualities of light generating a kaleidoscopic sphere, a slightly mutating, ever-changing film conditioning, filtering all other presences here.

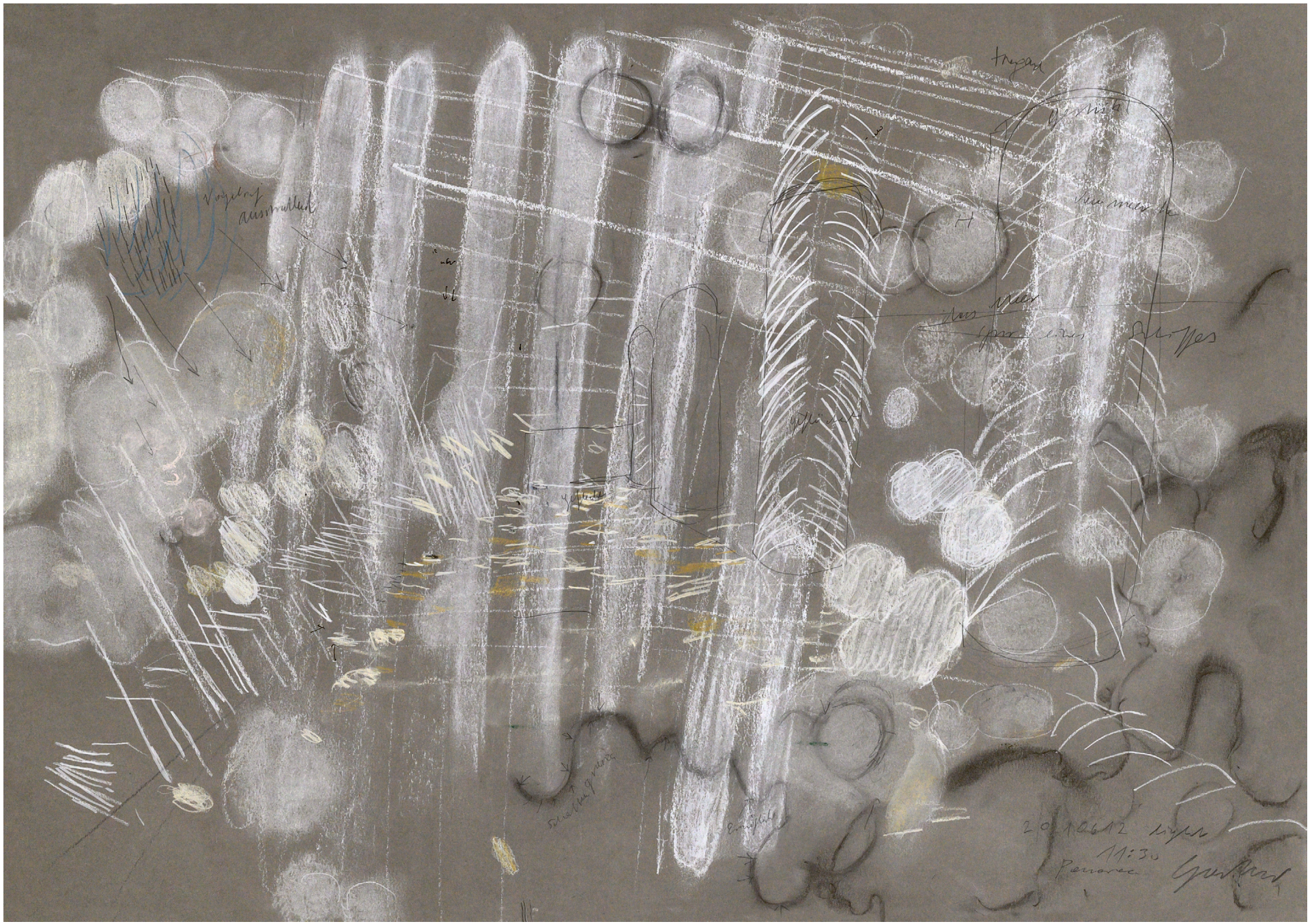
The light is too strong to allow this kaleidoscopic influence to become an objectified presence, maybe with the exceptions of few densifications: shadows, as the negation of the agencies that generate them, and slightly colored spots—diffuse zones of color without clearly defined boundaries.

The qualities of light tend to counteract objectifying agencies, tend to introduce another variety of appearance: never clearly contoured, semi-transparent, thin hints, breaths, breezes, immanent exhalations, traces of themselves. Alternatives to the solid, clear entities that inhabit and determine the resounding, forceful, dominant character of this atmosphere.

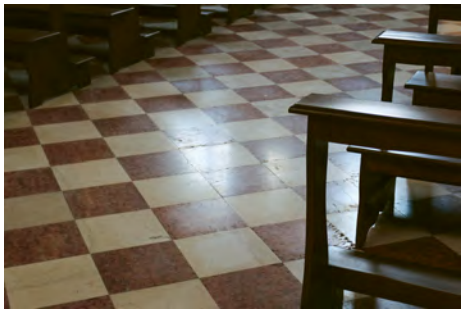
Qualities of light as an almost invisible in-betweenness hidden by the visibilities they subtly color—dye, tint.

Discrete invitations to reconsider.









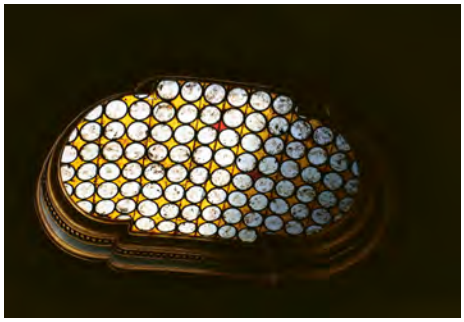


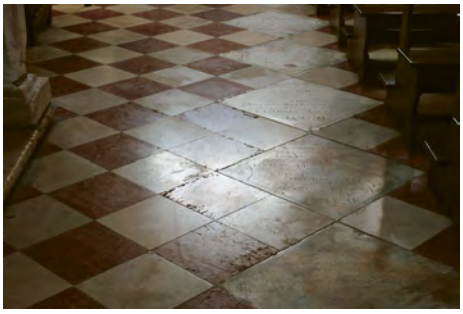






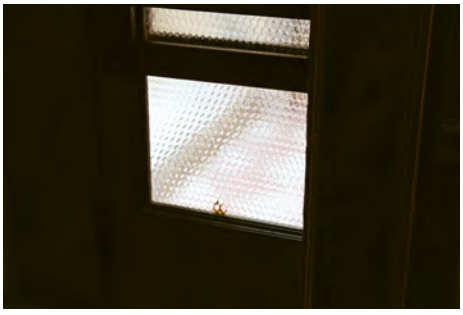


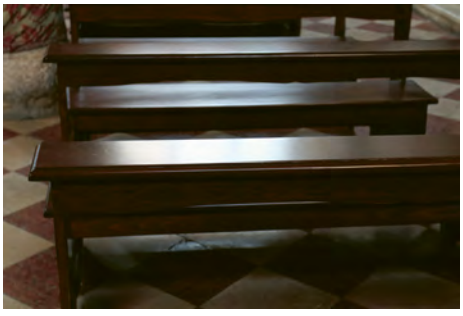





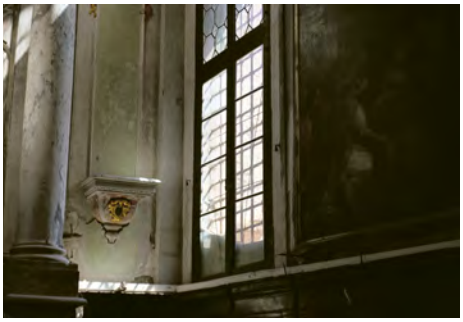




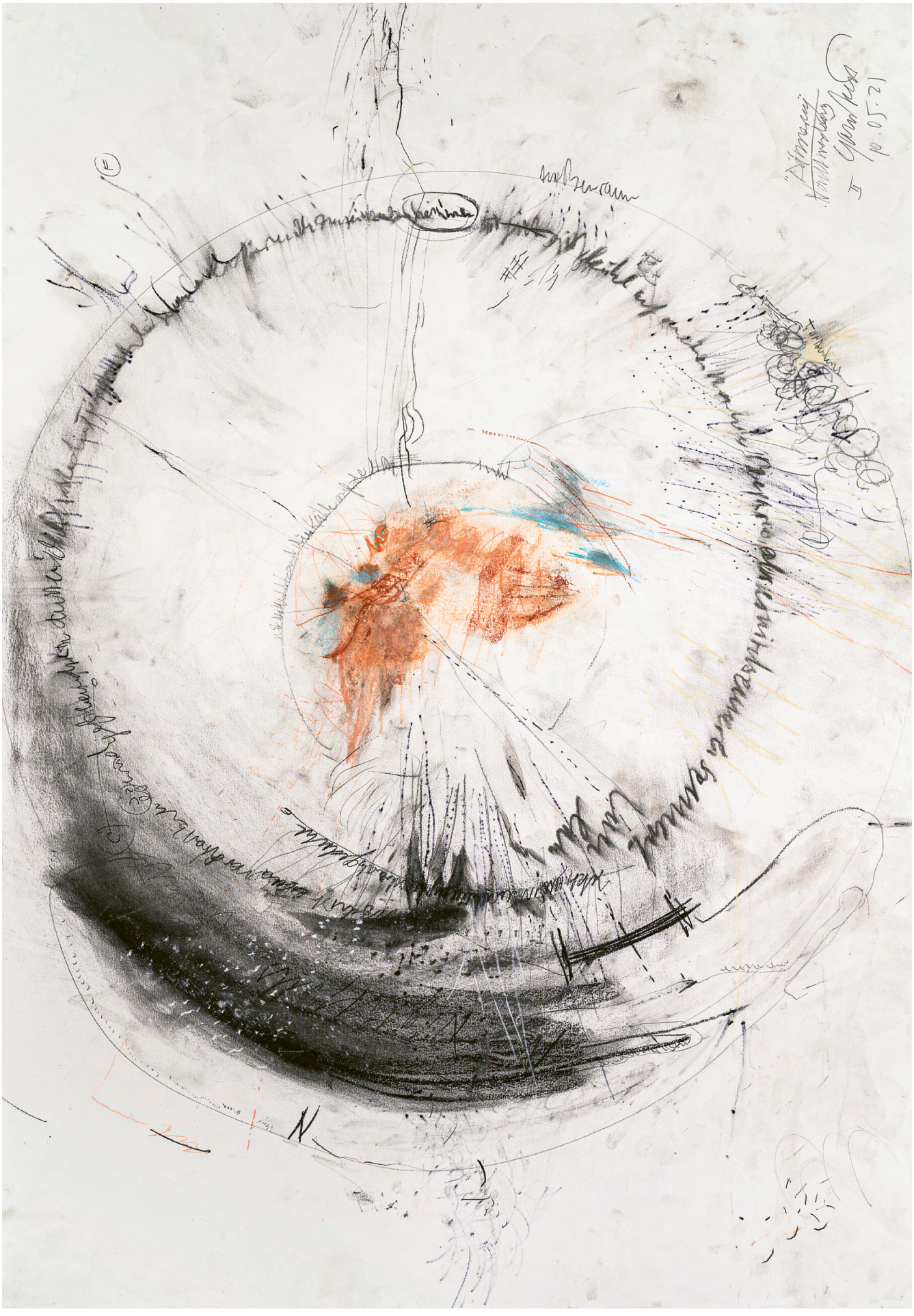


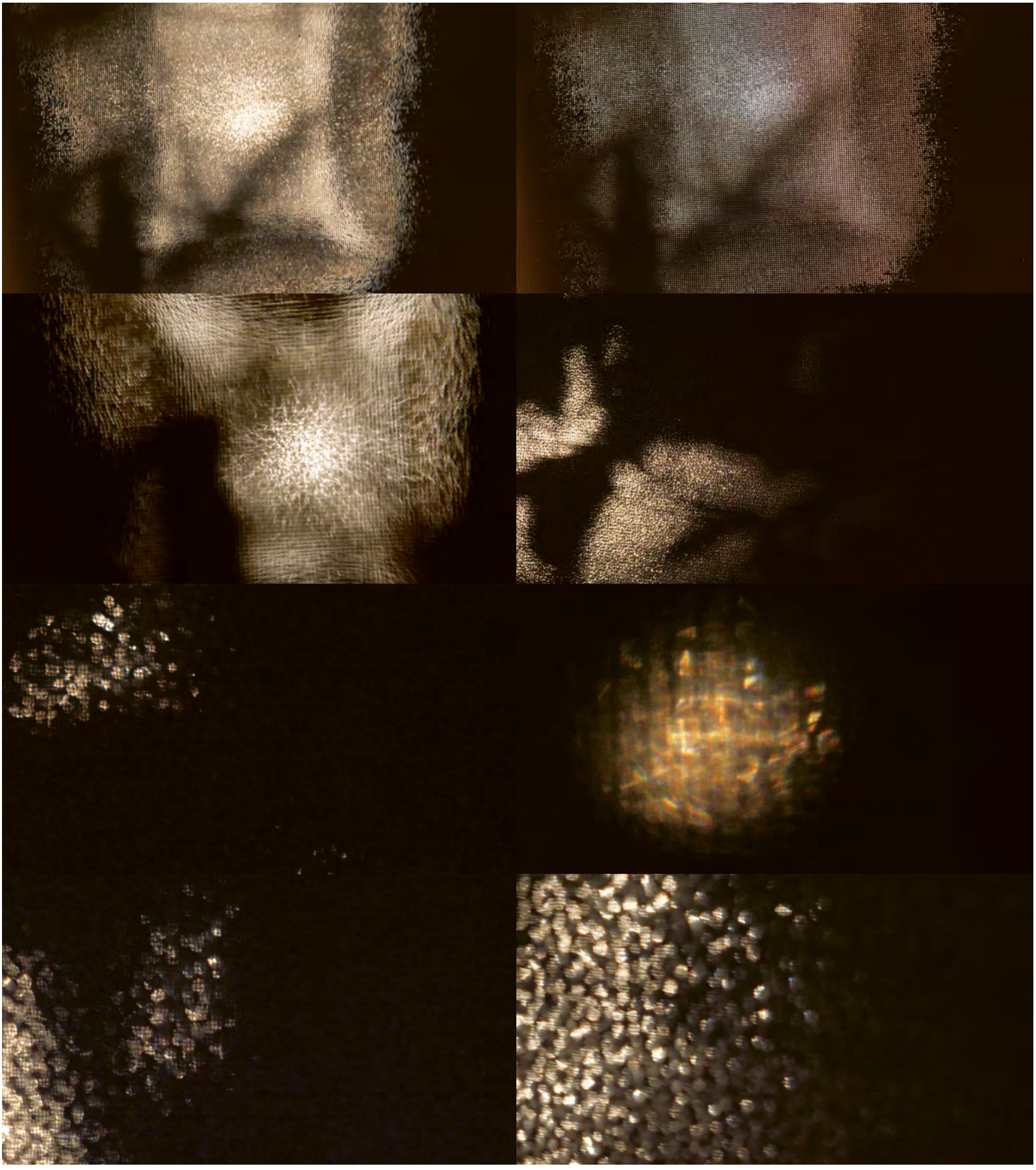



dawn studies
(movement × light)
20210511 – 16:42
Gansterer





57 Twilight




Oben ziehen die Wolken
die Wolken ziehen das oben
Obenblau
Rauschquelle
grosses dunkles Feld
I am here.
I am not here
zur Welt öffnung
schatten
licht grenze
20210507 18.30-1999

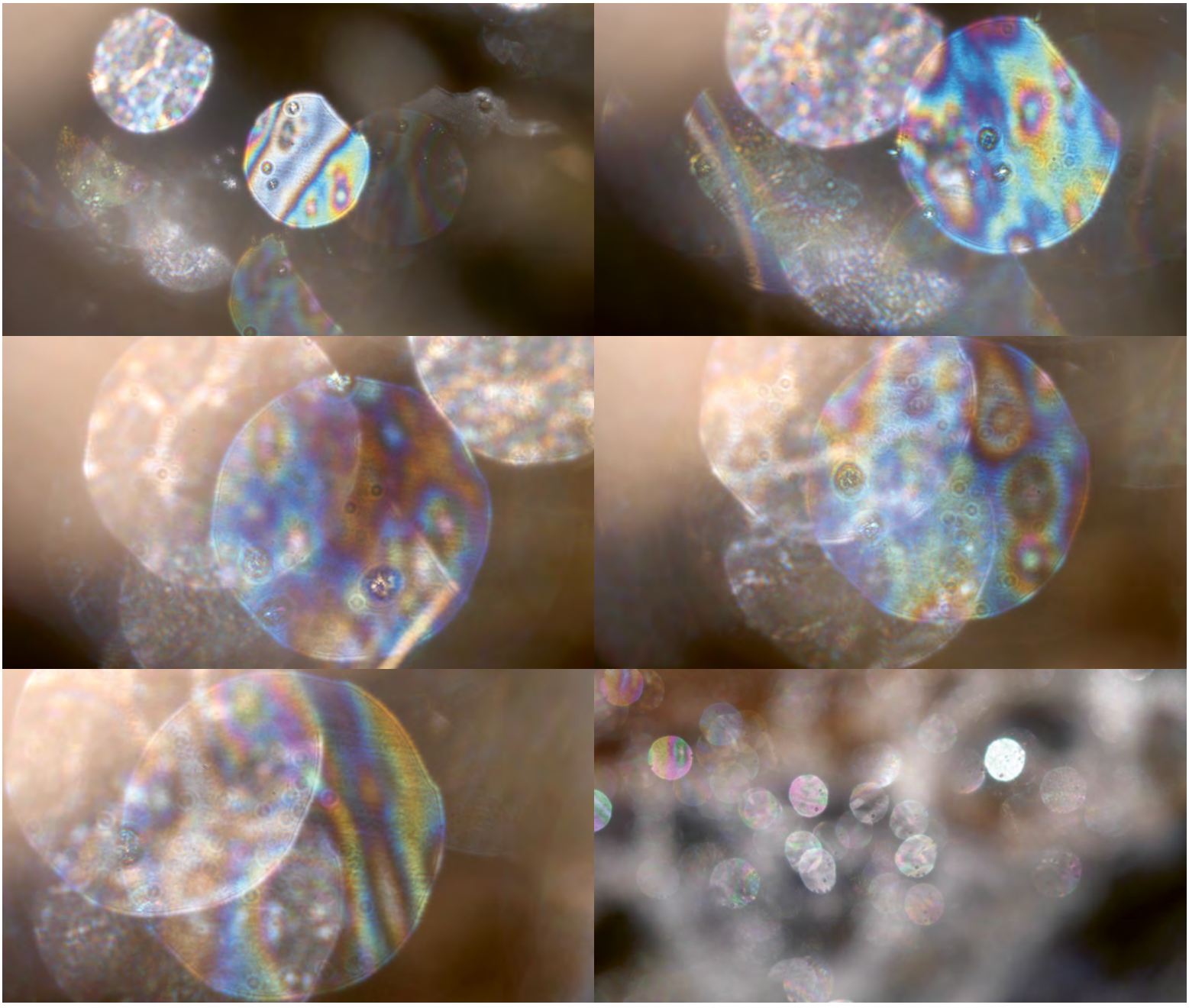


17 — Nikolaus Gansterer


ein



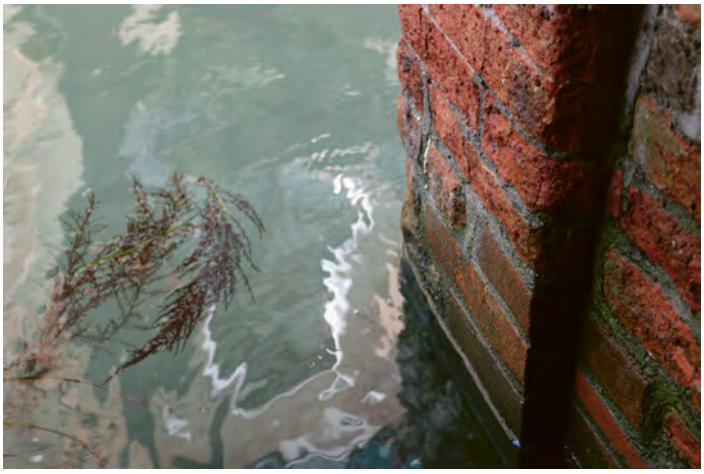






65 Night



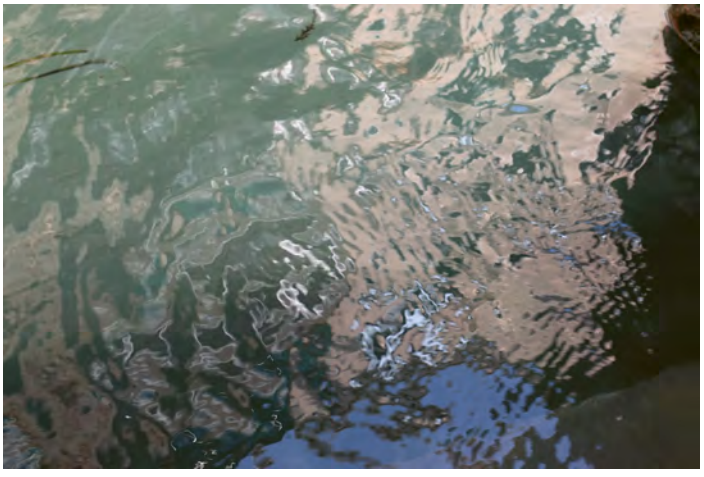
















1 — p. 42

identifier N-Ganserer-20220109-0848-Cape-Woolamai
agency light
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Ganserer
time 2022-01-09, 08:48
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai
tactics of showing footage of the Cape Woolamai film
description of the atmosphere I am down by the shore, among the bushes. A strong wind blows in from the sea. I feel unsettled, restless. Suddenly, I discover hundreds of spider webs stretched between the branches, glowing in the sunlight. Invisible, yet visible —like blinking relay signals, like a magic Morse code. Light on. Light off. Presence. Absence. Do these delicate spider architectures, with their gossamer threads, hold the world together at its core?

2 — p. 43

identifier N-Ganserer-20180813-1305-Kalba
agency shadow
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with chalk, pencil and ink on paper, 65 × 50 cm
notator Nikolaus Ganserer
time 2018-08-13, 13:05
place United Arab Emirates, Sharjah, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
tactics of showing part of the series Sympoiesis diagrams
description of the atmosphere It's still unbearably hot, like standing inside a furnace. Light streams through the tattered roof of the factory. Countless birds flutter about, each beat of their wings stirring the dust to dance in the desert light. A deafening chorus of cries fills the air. Shadows flicker across the ground with every wingbeat. A melancholic veil settles over my heart.

3 — p. 44

identifier R-Ganserer-20190205-1413-Kalba
agency light
practice of reflection installing
notation of reference N-Ganserer-20181008-1430-Kalba
artifacts of reflection An immersive light installation in an abandoned factory, dimensions approximately 1400 × 2000 × 800 cm. Two heliostat mirrors redirect sunlight from the roof onto hundreds of shattered mirrors attached onto bamboo sticks within the factory, creating an expanded cinema.
reflector Nikolaus Ganserer
time 2019-02-05, 14:13
place United Arab Emirates, Sharjah, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
tactics of showing part of the *Sympoiesis Observatory* installation at the Sharjah Art Biennial 2019

4 — p. 45

identifier N-Ganserer-20181008-1430-Kalba
agency light
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Ganserer
time 2018-10-08, 14:30
place United Arab Emirates, Sharjah, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
description of the atmosphere I feel exhausted and excited all at once, nervous, tired. Lost in the sweltering heat. Lonely. It's impossible to form a clear thought. The blinding light flows through me. A fleeting happiness as I see the first reflections dancing on the walls. Magical light-beings take shape. Will it work?

5 — p. 46

identifier N-Ganserer-20221214-1530-Vienna
agency twilight
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils and chalk on white paper, 100 × 70 cm
notator Nikolaus Ganserer
time 2022-12-14, 15:30
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
description of the atmosphere It's slowly growing dark in the studio. Dusk descends, gently falling. I hear the birds outside, and the voices of people passing by. Blue light spreads—where do you come from?

6 — p. 47

identifier N-Ganserer-20221213-1500-Vienna
agency twilight
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils and chalk on white paper, 100 × 70 cm
notator Nikolaus Ganserer
time 2022-12-13, 15:00
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
description of the atmosphere Sunlight streams through the glass panels, the old glass casting shadows on the wall. Fleeting worlds in between. Everything is bathed in a strange, otherworldly light. My heart feels heavy, yet in the moments of drawing it grows lighter.

7 — p. 48

identifier R-Arteaga-20210209-0700-Barcelona
agency light
practice of reflection writing
artifact of reflection 1 exploratory essay
notation of reference N-Ganserer-20191118-1305-Aireys
reflector Alex Arteaga
time 2021-02-09, 07:00
place Spain, Barcelona, Carrer Lepant

8 — p. 49

identifier N-Ganserer-20191118-1305-Aireys
agency light
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils on paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Ganserer
time 2019-11-18, 13:05
place Australia, Victoria, Aireys Inlet
description of the atmosphere I am sitting at the beach, next to the light house in front of the open sea, around me is an intense formation of rocks. There are caves, too. It's a beautiful sunny day, bit windy, the sun is high above me. Shadows are very short. I am watching the sea. Huge white waves are rolling in. K. is meditating in a not too far distance. I am relaxed and excited to be at this beautiful spot.

9 — p. 50

identifier N-Ganserer-20210612-1130-Panarea
agency light
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with chalk on gray paper, 60 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Ganserer
time 2021-06-12, 11:30
place Italy, Lipari, Panarea Island
description of the atmosphere I'm sitting under the thatched roof of our house. It's siesta time. Everyone else is asleep. There's a warm breeze with the crickets, birds singing. Maybe a motorboat, electric cars in the distance. From time to time there's a stronger wind, which makes the vegetation rustle. I hear an aeroplane far away. Some women whispering on the nearby tiny roads around the property.

10 — p. 51

identifier N-Ganserer-20210223-1420-Vienna
agency light
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils on paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Ganserer
time 2021.02.23, 14:20
place Austria, Vienna, Anton-Benya-Park
description of the atmosphere I'm in the park, it's almost spring. The light hits me with such intensity. I blink. I mostly draw with my eyes closed. Last night I slept very little. Piju was restless. Something's wrong. Now there's something soft about the light. It penetrates delicately.

11 — pp. 52–53

identifier N-Arteaga-20190516-1415-Venice
agency light
practices of notation photography
artifacts of notation a series of 36 photographs
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2019-05-16, 14:15
place Italy, Venice, Chiesa di Sant'Eufemia
tactics of showing Projected as a series of slides in large format.

description of the atmosphere Extremely calm, peaceful. Suspended time. Certain heaviness (of centuries, of old prayers, of old steps).

12 — pp. 54–55

identifier N-Gansterer-20210511-1620-Vienna
agency twilight
practice of notation drawing
artifacts of notation A series of subsequent drawings done with chalk and colored pencils on black paper, each 100 × 70 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-05-11, 16:20
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
description of the atmosphere I am alone in front of my studio. I have placed a large table there. I watch the sky, the changing intensities of light, the fading of light. This change is very subtle to notice, not in a moment but over time. It takes minutes. I take minutes. Night will come. It is not there yet. Later a lot of insects and mosquitos visit me and bite, a bit annoying but I am in a flow. Then it gets dark. Twilight almost gone. Lots of insects. I do not feel cold. Feel myself being drawn into the dark. Frenzy. Buzzing. Insects gone, crickets silenced, my flow run dry.

13 — p. 56

identifier N-Gansterer-20210510-1610-Vienna
agency twilight
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with chalk and pencil on paper, 100 × 70 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-05-10, 16:10
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
description of the atmosphere Warm evening light. A calming, centering silence descends on the place. The chestnut tree seems bigger and more powerful than usual. I feel love for this tree. I feel a breeze that announces the not yet evening. The first harbingers, these smallest signs. The day is still in my hands. Something shadows me.

1


2


4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6


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9


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12


13


14 — p. 57 

identifier N-Gansterer-20210510-1658-Vienna
agency twilight
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with chalk and pencil on paper, 100 × 70 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021.05.10, 16:58
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
description of the atmosphere The light is no longer warming, the yellow is yellowing. Coolness rises, pleasantly. Something contracts. In me and all around the twilight has crept out of the ground, the dark out of the bark, have they lingered there all day? Obscure thoughts rise up in side me. Insidious.

15 — p. 58 

identifier N-Gansterer-20200110-1258-Cape-Woolamai
agency night
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-01-10, 12:58
place Australia,Victoria, Cape Woolamai, studio
description of the atmosphere It is night. Sleepless. The wild scurrying of these nocturnal possums on the tin roof of the studio has stirred me from sleep. The glow of the bulb from the main house seeps through the frosted glass. The air is thick with dampness. Outside, the wind cradles the leaves. The breath of my barely one-month-old son is calm and tender. Far, far away, the eternal breath of the sea. In the prism of the windowpane, a world is dreaming on.

16 — p. 59 

identifier N-Gansterer-20210507-1830-Vienna
agency light
practices of notation drawing
artifacts of notation 1 drawing with color pencils on white paper, 60 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021.05.07, 18:30
place Austria, Vienna, University of Applied Arts
description of the atmosphere
I'm at the parking lot of the University, I look at the Transmedia studio and the garden. I am having a class with my students and we do this notation session together. It just heavily rained, even hailed. It's cold, windy, cloudy. I feel cold. My fingers are turning red. All of a sudden the sun breaks through.

17 — p. 60 

identifier N-Gansterer-20210507-2230-Vienna
agency night
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 circular drawing with chalk and pencil on black paper, d = 70 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-05-07, 22:30
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
tactics of showing framed on a circular wooden plate behind acrylic glass
description of the atmosphere It has quickly turned to night now. I'm still in the studio. Cool air flows in through the open door, bringing scents and distant ecstasies from the amusement park with it. The city is not yet asleep. Restlessness. I sink into the moment. My studio, a shelter. Calm, dreamy. Can I also touch the darkness (within me)?

18 — p. 61 

identifier N-Gansterer-20210508-2100-Vienna
agency night
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 circular drawing with chalk and pencil on black paper, d=70 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-05-08, 21:00
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
tactics of showing framed on a circular wooden plate behind acrylic glass
description of the atmosphere The door from my studio to the front garden stands wide open. The night sky catches, echoes all these human-made lights. The Prater glimmers in neon colors. It flashes like a sign. Fireworks. Explosions, engines. I feel something heavy within me. I am my own night watchman, doorman. Guarding from all sides. Deep En-nightment, benighted.

19 — pp. 62–63 

identifier N-Gansterer-20220925-2200-Vienna
agency night
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with chalk and pencil on paper, 250 × 140 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-09-25, 22:00
place Austria,Vienna, Rustenschacherallee, Zentrum Fokus Forschung
description of the atmosphere I am outside. I am on the ground, on my knees, surrounded by the wet nighty coolness from the grass and the trees. The night is ready, already switched on in the housing block, peeking over the wall, looking over its shoulder, glancing into my heart. In small windows, small lives are evening out the day. Even(t)ing. I am inwardly wide open. Raw. Darkening world, too muchness. Darkness—there is no single night, only nights, nightings, ever mighty. I give myself to you. Softly sinking in, nightynite.

20 — p. 64 

identifier N-Gansterer-20220109-0551-Cape-Woolamai
agency sparkle
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of videoclips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-01-09, 05:51
place Australia,Victoria, Cape Woolamai
description of the atmosphere I'm down at the beach. Windy. Barefoot. The sun stings. White, hot. Pierces everything. Dazzling. Deep into the material. Everything glitters, sparkles.

21 — p. 65 

identifier N-Gansterer-20211215-2303-Blairgowrie
agency night
practice of notation drawing drawing
artifact of notation drawing 1 drawing with colored pencil on grey paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-12-15, 23:03
place Australia, Victoria, Blairgowrie
description of the atmosphere I am here on the terrace at John's house. It's night, and the bright moon highlights the white clouds drifting quickly across the sky. A strong, cold breeze blows in from afar. I can hear the waves, their sound mingling with the wind rustling through the trees. Everyone around me is asleep, and a few birds add soft, peaceful notes to the night. I've eaten a lot and feel a bit heavy, but deeply blissful to be here with my family. A single bare lightbulb casts a glow over the terrace, its light sketching shadows over his artwork. In the distance, a dog barks.

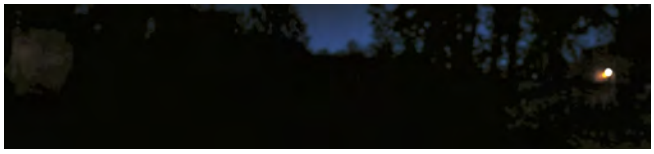
22 — pp. 66–67 

identifier N-Arteaga-20190517-1109-Venice
agency light
practice of notation photography
artifacts of notation a series of 57 photographs (printed here: 16)
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2019-05-17, 11:09
place Italy, Venice, Calle della Comare
tactics of showing projected as a series of slides in big format.
description of the atmosphere A sunny morning in a hidden corner of the city on water. Quiet. Contained joy. A small, private bubble.

14



15



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18



19



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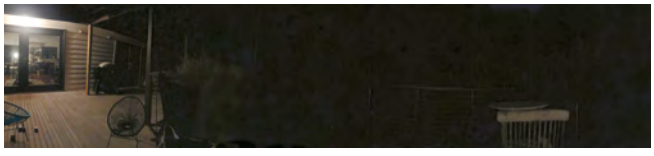

3 7 11 22 no panorama available

A

ALEX ARTEAGA

The effort of an exemplary guest to deeply understand the invitation. Thank you Emma for this fantastic summary of the intentions and the conceptual and practical bases of *Contingent Agencies!*

EMMA COCKER

Herein might also lie one of the challenges for complex artistic research projects: time. My own understanding of and thus capacity to engage with the project unfolded slowly over a long period, through a sustained or at least repeated (if discontinuous) relationship with the project. I realize now, however, that my summary of the various layers of "invitation" is still incomplete, for I have not included this final phase of "layered" invitation. The original invitation continues to expand: to contribute to the *Contingent Agencies* publication; more still, to engage in dialogue with other contributors (specifically by writing margin comments in response to Erin Manning's and Tim Ingold's texts); more still, to engage in a written dialogue based on my contribution to the book. The research process was so precisely unfolded: I wonder, is this publication part of the research process and if so, how? I wonder, what is invited through these final phases of invitation? What is at stake in this culminating act of publication, of "making public," and related dialogue? What is its focus? What kinds of "practices" are foregrounded, if not always fully named? How else? I realize that I have been procrastinating in responding to your comments—perhaps this is because the mode of comment/response feels to operate in a different key or register to how I was attempting to work-with language within my contribution. How then to navigate this shift in register? What kind of response is called for?

Confluence of Influence, and the Struggle of Differentiation

Emma Cocker

A

Guest—from the Old English *gæst, giest*: accidental, a chance comer, stranger. To guest in another's research project and process; to be a stranger in another's enquiry. To visit, to dwell with for a while; yet temporarily, only for a time.[1] To accept (provisionally) the invitation of one's host.

The invitation—to attend to the relation between "contingent agencies" and "emergent atmosphere(s)."[2] More still, to notate how a specific named agency conditions the emergence of atmosphere. More still, to conceive and practice a form of notation that might provide re-entry or access (again and again) to the phenomenal relation of conditioning agencies and emergent atmospheres. More still, to reengage with the notation in hope of re-establishing contact, enabling the possibility of a mode of reflection-with notation, a way of reflecting conceived to be still in touch with the original phenomenal event (albeit mediated). More still, to test and develop tactics of showing [contingent assemblages of those artefacts—notations and reflections—emerging in and through this process] that might somehow enable others to also gain experiential access to the phenomenal presences in question (albeit indirectly). Many layers. Many questions, so many arising questions. So many terms invoked, yet remaining still a little slippery, resistant to neat definition (in advance). Agency. Atmosphere. Conditions. Contingency. Notation. Phenomenon. Practices. Presences. Reflection. Tactics.

What follows is my response to engaging with these interwoven research provocations, comprising distilled extracts of text generated through different practices of "live writing" and "voicing observation." These language-based research practices (involving notation and reflection) were activated in both immediate and mediated relation to the phenomenal unfolding of an "emergent atmosphere" conditioned by various "contingent agencies"—including light, sound, temperature, and wind.[3] This contribution consists of two parts. (Part 1) An online exposition [available here—https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1932579/1932580/] presenting the original artifacts that were generated live during involvement in the project, conceived as time-based experimental assemblages comprising a simultaneity of unfolding texts (both voiced and typed) alongside other forms of visual, lens-based notation—multimodal, polyfocal, polyvocal, non-linear, cyclical, looping. (Part 2) Published here in this book: textual fragments (transcribed and distilled from the original time-based artifacts) are reworked for the spatial parameters of page (whilst remaining attentive to the challenge inherent within this act of translation), presented with adjacent "asides," notebook reflections and references that were occurring parallel to the practices.

— 1 — I have participated in the *Contingent Agencies* project as follows: (1) as invited reflector/respondent within the frame of the Research Pavilion, Venice, 2019, observing and reflecting alongside Alex Arteaga and Nikolaus Gansterer as they engaged in a practice of notation; (2) invited guest researcher as part of *Notations, Reflections and Strategies of Display,* a three-day workshop, Vienna (October 5–9, 2021); (3) invited guest researcher as part of the *Contingent Agencies* cross-disciplinary symposium (September 19–25, 2022).

— 2 — An attempted précis of my understanding of the research invitation offered to us as invited guest researchers.

— 3 — The sections I, II, III, IV correspond to four blocks of enquiry, each exploring the conditioning influence of a different agency/agencies on atmosphere, the original artifacts from which can be encountered within the exposition here—https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1932579/1932580/. An immediate modality of the practices attempts to be in touch directly, immediately, with atmosphere/agency relation taken as the focus. A mediated modality of the practices is activated in touch with the artifacts of the immediate mode.

B

AA This is a fantastic alternative formulation to the term "contingent agencies": influences in touch, entangled transformative forces.

C

AA I think that the way you connect "observation" to the act of serving can be related to the way Paula in her chapter links research to "surrender." Do you think this connection is plausible?

EC Dancing with the etymologies of these words—"observation" and "surrender"—enlivens other possibilities for re-conceiving the act of research, and the agency of the researcher. Firstly, there is the matter of the prefixes: *sur-* in surrender, and *ob-* in observation. *Sur-* meaning above, over, or else perhaps, beyond, in addition; coupled with *-render*, a sense of giving up, giving over, giving back. The *ob-* of observation offers a different relationality or positionality—before, near, in front of, towards, even, reversely or inversely. Observation—to watch over, to attend to, even to protect. Yet, both the *sur-* of surrender and the *ob-* of observation invoke a different relation to the over-view or even over-standing (as understanding) that you mention as typical of certain species of knowledge production. I wonder if the critical difference is somehow connected with the quality of care and attention; a willingness to commit oneself in the service of research rather than wish for the mastery of knowledge.

D

AA You are completely right! The dynamic character of actualization of contingent agencies is nevertheless not expressed in the title of the project.

E

AA Tim Ingold commented on this issue right after our notation practice. Did you consider the first option—temperature measured by technical means—in your notation practice?

EC My sense was that a different kind of attention and notation was being invited—but perhaps it could be possible to elaborate more on "why"? A different research project might approach the relation of agencies and atmospheres with different emphases: for example, by asking how (measured) change in temperature affects atmosphere(s)? There is clearly an environmental implication at stake in this reformulation of the focus. Given the current climate crisis, examining the (potentially causal) relation between different agencies and (the) atmosphere has critical urgency. However, this did not seem to be the focus of *Contingent Agencies*. What different kinds of findings and discoveries do artistic research approaches allow for? What kinds of critical urgencies does it engage? What might artistic research approaches do? Maybe this relates also to the critical matter of what is at stake within this specific project?

F

AA I think that observing agencies without agents helps focus on the way agencies condition atmospheres. One of the reasons that led me to suggest this idea is that agents have a more established objectual status than agencies—e.g., a vibrating object versus the agency of sound.

EC I have since been reflecting on Lambros Malafouris's observations on agency and agents, where he states: "Agency is the relational and emergent product of material engagement. It is not something given but something to become realised" (p. 34). He continues, "Agency is in constant flux, an in-between state that constantly violates and transgresses the physical boundaries of the elements that constitute it […] Agency is a temporal and interactively emergent property of activity […] it is the flow of activity itself" (p. 35). (See Malafouris, "At the Potter's Wheel: An Argument for Material Agency," in C. Knappett, L. Malafouris, eds. *Material Agency: Towards a Non-Anthropocentric Approach*, New York: Springer, 2008, pp. 19–36.) I guess the differentiation between agents (as you say, with a more established objectual status, potentially representable) and agencies (non-objectual, non-representable) might foreground the inherent challenge (almost impossibility) of the project—how to attend to and notate that which resists representation?

G

AA This question could be central in a further development of *Contingent Agencies* devoted to inquiry into the structure of these specific contingencies.

H

AA Also as a focus of a possible continuation of the inquiries initiated here: the way the agencies of the notation (and reflection!) practices influence the observed phenomena and the other practices at work.

I

AA On the one hand, I guess "simultaneity" is another factor that makes observation—immediate as notation and mediated as reflection—of all these contingent agencies difficult. On the other hand, the impossibility of recognizing simple causalities and instead moving in systems of emergence increases the complexity of this endeavor.

EC Or perhaps even, the attempt at observation—immediate as notation and mediated as reflection—reveals or allows to appear the very contingency and simultaneity of all these agencies. It is only through the constitutive act of "attempting" that I begin to recognize the impossibility of (or even fallacy of) simple causality, that I might begin to witness something (however slight) of the complexity of systems of emergence.

J

AA Talking with.

EC Or, together–showing.

K

AA This question is not only justified but fundamental in relation to the methodological approach of this project. If the answer were negative, the whole project should be reconsidered.

EC I wonder if there is scope for exploring this question in other ways, perhaps even beyond or in parallel to a hypothesis-structured approach? Arguably, within a conventionally hypothesis-structured research enquiry a negative answer might require the rethinking of the project hypothesis. However, I wonder whether there is scope for deviating or corrupting such conventions, indeed, practicing research in other ways. That is, what "else" emerges in and through the "attempt" at engaging with the (perhaps impossible) challenge of discerning singular agencies? What kinds of (unexpected) surpluses and excesses might artistic research generate? What might such an enquiry affirm, different from the hypothesis itself?

L

AA Is this the way the phenomenon of temperature appears, or better, appeared to you, or is this instead the result of a conceptual analysis?

EC The "sentence" comprises both immediate-notation (larger text) and mediated-reflection (smaller text)—so in this sense operates somehow between. It becomes hard to disentangle. Somehow this space "between" feels resonant—this liminal space of languaging which is "no longer" only concerned with the phenomenon as it appeared but "not yet" conceptual analysis. Maybe this is the hyphenated space between notation and reflection that felt intriguing to attempt to inhabit and extend.

M

AA Can the reinforcement of another agency—"con-centration" understood as a focused variety of attention—contribute to a positive answer? Is it necessary to develop a specific form of concentration in this case: aesthetic concentration?

EC I think that the project invites exploration also of different agencies of attention, of varieties of attention. I wonder what marks a specific variety of attention as aesthetic? Why/how might an aesthetic variety of attention be desirable within a project such as *Contingent Agencies*? What might aesthetic forms of attention do/enable differently from other varieties of attention? How is the kind of attention required for "differentiation" (perhaps even categorization, the discerning of a singular agency from others) compatible or incompatible with an aesthetic attitude? Concentration invites a certain centering of the attention—yet, how might this centering be compatible or incompatible with the qualities of decentering that might also figure within aesthetic forms of attention? As I write later: "Decentering of attention or decentering of the self as a precondition for focusing." How might both a centering and decentering of attention operate within a practice?

I

For now, [For now] it is easier [Some decision is made] to recognize … *This now of recognizing, the now of notation* … the influence of other agencies on the agency of temperature than it is to observe the conditioning agency of temperature on atmosphere. [But no, not to observe the conditioning agency of temperature on other agencies, nor the influence of other agencies on the agency of temperature, but the agency of temperature in relation to atmosphere. So many points of touch, of contact, of influencing.

B Confluence of influence. Observe—to ob-serve. To serve obliquely, perhaps.

C To serve or to attend] Nothing stays still for long. [A desire for things to stay still, just long enough] … *This desire for stillness, to observe the relation, yet relation is never still* … [Just long enough to observe a relation, but

D no, relations never stay still] All these other agencies in turn conditioned by or influenced by or affected

E by a change, in temperature. [There is temperature that is measurable, then there is temperature in terms of how it feels] The influence of temperature on my own perception. [The felt sense of temperature or do I mean the weather? How is this difference between temperature and weather? Temperature as part of the weather —an agent amongst other agents] I am distracted by all these agencies [Agent or agency. Agency or agent? How is this relation between

F agent and agency? Are there only agencies?] at play, interweaving: [All these other agencies] light, sound, raindrops, insects,

G airplanes, the agency of the sun. [How are these other agencies, in turn, conditioned by, or influenced by, or affected by a change in temperature? A change in temperature or in the agency of temperature?]

H So many other agencies [Agency—from the root *ag, meaning to set in motion, to activate, to propel, to force even, exert power] in turn influencing [Influence. In-fluence—a fluency, in-fluency. In-flowing or in-forming. In-fluent. I would like to look up the etymology of this word—fluent, fluence, this fluid flow of things] • and affecting the agency of temperature. [To cause—to transform or change or make happen. To bring into formation—to affect a change or transformation, to make happen.

I So, is this **ag* of agency causal?] The relation feels reciprocal and mutual—not sequential, not delineated,

J not causal. [Conditions—a different register of influence; even influence perhaps seems too strong. This com-bination, this con-fluence, this com-plex confluence of combining agencies. Temperature might be recognizable as one.

K, L But is it possible to discern it as a singular agency?] Temperature is mediated [The agency of temperature feels already com-plex, a combination of other agencies] both by the wind and the sun, even by the rain. [A complex web of other forces and flows] Temperature or the weather? [Is there no temperature as such—only the confluence of all these other agencies?] … *Combination—not only influence, but also confluence. Con-fluence—a flowing together* … It is hard to dislocate temperature from these other agencies

M *… Is it possible to focus on the agency of one, when it is part of a complex or mesh of other agencies? Agency from the root *ag—to set in motion. The power or capability to transform. To bring to life* … [I am waiting. Atmospheric arising, with the warming a sense of awakening. Things coming alive] Arising coming-aliveness—the situation expands, is expand-

• Fluent—meaning to flow freely, from *fluere*: to flow, run, melt; or else from the Latin, *fluentem*—lax, relaxed. To swell, well up, overflow. Liquid, fluid. Changeable, not rigid, not fixed. Or of speakers—to be able and nimble in the use of words. Influence, influent—abundant, streaming, an out-flowing of energy that produces an effect. Immaterial and unobservable forces—in astrological terms, the ethereal or occult power of the stars. How might the capacity for notating the influence of conditioning agencies be contingent upon a certain fluency with and within specific practice(s)?

N

AA From a phenomenological point of view—taking Merleau-Ponty as reference—the answer, also in the case of a "seemingly objective temperature," as you write, is clearly no. In the case of the aesthetic phenomenon—using this expression as an alternative to "meteorological phenomenon"—this negative answer is intensified. In this sense, an atmosphere comes to be enabled, among many other agencies, by the sensible agencies of bodies.

O

AA Asserting "phenomenal life"—as the presence of life or life from a phenomenal perspective—the answer in this case would be positive. What makes you doubt the existence of this temperature if you are feeling it?

P

AA In my opinion, these two questions relate to the core of any phenomenological practice. The first refers to the difference between the naïve or natural attitude and the phenomenological attitude, which makes it possible to observe a phenomenon, i.e., a thing within and through one's own experience. While the second refers to the idea of the subjective co-constitution of a (quasi)phenomenon—an atmosphere.

Q

AA Could be this (desire, need, hope?) be also understood as understanding agencies without agents? Focusing then on what (I) do, on what (I) can, or better, on doing, on being able to do. Maybe then this (I), this field of agencies can acquire enough "fluency and fluidity" as you write in the next sentences.

EC For Simone Weil, "creative attention" or even intuitive attention, involves making "an effort of attention empty of all content" (Siân Miles, "Foreword," Simone Weil: Anthology, London: Penguin Books, 2005, p. XIII). being "committed without the use of will-power and highly conscious without being self-conscious" (Miles, 2005, p. 52). Weil writes, "In such a work all that I call 'I' has to be passive. Attention alone—that attention which is so full that the 'I' disappears is required of me. I have to deprive all that I call 'I' in the light of my attention and turn it on to that which-cannot be conceived" (in *Gravity and Grace*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002/1947, p. 118). For Weil, "Only an indirect method is effective. We do nothing if we have not first drawn back." (Weil, 2002/1947, p. 117).

R

AA Being agencies among agencies, or, again, referring to Paula's chapter, participating in the "inter-independence."

EC I guess that this sense of "agencies among agencies" has a quality of "inter," taken to mean "in the midst." The dilemma of language—trying to find precise terms for what is impossible to describe in language; the tendency of language to reify, or to name as things that which is not in things to be found. I guess both the terms "inter" and "independence" maintain the sense somehow that there are autonomously existing entities. Perhaps the notion of intra-dependencies might open up ways for conceiving of this conditioning relationality, of agencies, beyond the language of autonomous agents.

S

AA Following the logic of a radical and dynamic entanglement: could "notating-with" be more synchronized than a "notating-it"? And, in addition, could a variety of notation that do not intend to grasp but to move-with contribute to it as well?

ing, opening … *An opening, an expansion, of all things—seemingly both animate and inanimate* … I am struggling to differentiate one agency from another.

[There is seemingly objective temperature—temperature that can be measured. And there is temperature that can be *felt*. Objective temperature suggests that there is only one—temperature measured, temperature gauged] … *It is not* N *a case of measuring; rather more a matter of feeling* … Can atmosphere be observed independent of my own sensory apparatus, my own feeling body? • … *What is this temperature, for it seems that there is no one temperature* … [It seems that there are already many temperatures] Give or take minor variations, the measured temperature has probably remained O much the same. [Temperature can be felt—but does what is felt not exist, as such?] Still, it *feels as though* it shifts and changes, *as if* it rises and falls. … *This con-fusion—the dilemma of differentiation, or recognition, or difference, or distinction between what it is that I am experiencing as atmosphere and how that atmosphere is experienced. And whether these two things are the same, or can ever be separated, taken apart* P … How to observe not only the effects of a given agency on my perception, my own living experience? [How does this sensing body, this sensing apparatus, this barometer of the body, how does it somehow even *give rise* to certain atmospheres?] Not (only) the influence of temperature on how I feel, ["My" temperature determines how the agency of other temperatures are felt (by me). "My" temperature makes this air feel cool against my skin. How does this air, this cooler air, feel for others, for the tree, or for the bird, or for the grass?] but on the atmosphere—I am struggling to differentiate between these two things.

• Atmosphere—A meteorological phenomenon capable of being categorized by the ratio of its gases and uniquely structured layers. From the Greek *atmós,* meaning "vapor, steam" and sphere–cosmos, space, terrestrial globe. The vaporous air or layer of gases that envelop a planet. The sense of atmosphere as a rather more subjective, sensorial, and affective phenomenon (as a locally experienced mood or feeling) comes later, remaining somewhat slippery and ambiguous. Still, how are these two registers of atmosphere interwoven? How, asks Tim Ingold, might we reconnect the affective and the meteorological; moreover, what might be at stake?[4]

II

… *Too late, too late* … I need time to settle, [I am distracted. Is distraction an agency, or the point where the agency of my attention or my Q intention wavers or gets lost?] to let go of this *I*. It is already too late—things are already changing. I am always too late or too slow. [All these agencies at work, interweaving. The sight of you drawing, or walking, or writing, or notating, or lying down] I lack the fluency or fluidity needed to be alert [To notice the influence of the agency of temperature upon atmosphere, or the felt sense of temperature; how this, in turn, conditions the possibilities of perception and R awareness] to all these changes, to be capable of meeting change *in* change. [Things unfold too fast. No, *things* are not unfolding. Time unfolds too fast. No … so what *is* unfolding, that my observation cannot keep up with?] This sense of time and of timing, and of the notation always being too late. [Fluency, fluidity—again these words. Lacking the fluency, lacking fluidity. In-fluidity, S in-fluency] Is all notation always too late? [This need to be alert, to be fluid, to be able to respond to the changes. How to keep pace? The changes, in a sense, come too quick. I am unable to register all these shifts and transformations. I am struggling to keep up, to keep up with the notation] Writing, it seems, language, it seems, has this quality of *lateness*. • [There are so many other agencies. Is one agency separable from the agency of all these other agencies? a complex web of agencies,

• Writing's lateness—For phenomenologist Max van Manen, "phenomenology is always aware that when we try to capture the 'now' of the living present in an oral or written description, then we are already too late."[5] Or for writer Hélène Cixous, "Writing is far behind."[6] So, she says: "Have on hand a notebook, a bit of paper […] That the past which arrives at full speed will engulf in a few minutes. What has just happened will perish […] Take the living instant with the closest and the most delicate words […] I write to touch the body of the instant with the tips of the words."[7]

— 4 — Tim Ingold, impulse talk within the frame of the *Contingent Agencies* cross-disciplinary symposium, September 19, 2022.

— 5 — Max van Manen, "Meaning and Method," in *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing*, London and New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 34.

— 6 — Hélène Cixous, *Stigmata Escaping Texts*, London and New York: Routledge, 1998, p. 33.

— 7 — Ibid., p. 120.

T

AA These reflections are extremely interesting. One proposal in trying to follow your chain of interrogating thoughts: not the agency of temperature, but temperature as agency; temperature as agency only indirectly, intuitively sensed through its effect, through the way it affects an atmosphere. Does this sound plausible to you?

EC I wonder if "influence" and "effect" need further differentiation? It feels that witnessing "effects" is one way in which an agency's influence might be sensed (indirectly), but perhaps not the only way.

U

AA Based on these very pertinent considerations, do you think that instead of proposing a categorial differentiation between practices of notation and practices of reflection—as we did—a better model might be based on practices that always embed three agencies—noticing (or attention), notation, and reflection—and that focus and intensify one of them and consequently adapt (not only diminish) the actualization of the others depending on the situation and the intention of the practice?

EC There are different ways of approaching a problem—for example, whether to try to solve it or clarify matters, or to problematize things further. Perhaps the problem-solving approach might strive for a better working model or hypothesis, whilst the problematizing approach might relish the murkiness and ambiguities. I wonder again, why does it feel necessary to differentiate the practices of noticing (or attention), notation, and reflection? What is enabled through this attempt at differentiation; what is inhibited? I am drawn to the notion of *kairotic* practices—practices that respond to opportunities, to the occasionality of the situation, rather than necessarily being set in advance. Still, *kairotic* practices might also require practicing. How to train oneself in practices of noticing (or attention), notation, and reflection, such that there is readiness (fluency) for improvisatory adaption when the situation calls?

U

• Struggle of Differentiation— I found it difficult, perhaps even impossible, to separate the practice of notation from the practice of reflection, preferring to conceive them together as a hyphenated practice: contiguous practices, mutually interdependent.

Both notation and reflection were interwoven with a third (even preliminary) field of practice, that of noticing or of attention. These three practices —noticing, notating, reflecting— were not necessarily sequential, rather more reciprocal, looping, somehow continuous like the thread of a trefoil knot. Not a linear relation—rather each creating the conditions for the other.

Yet, how to reflect—even enact—this interwoven-ness of the practices within the presentation of resulting artifacts? What emerges through folding one artifact into another (as a second layer—perhaps even of an-notation) within the same frame, or through adjacency, the placing of artifacts side-by-side? How might unexpected connections and relations emerge through such proximity and contiguity?

Towards "contingent artifacts" —within the parallel online exposition, I explore how different artifacts might unfold synchronously (in time) [not so easily activated on the page] creating a polyphony of overlapping narrations. Moreover, how might different combinations and conjunctions arise through looping and repetition, particularly as the initial relation between the different artifacts falls out of "sync," enabling infinitely unfolding permutations.[8]

T

together creating the conditions for atmosphere. a web, a web of agencies] This tension between the quick of living and the slowness of writing. [My own agency, the agency of this writing, of this notation, of this speaking, of this reading, of this voicing, of this attending, of this waiting] The wind conspires with the agency of temperature, [But how does temperature condition atmosphere? How is atmosphere conditioned by the agency of temperature?] it *conspires*. [What need is there of this word, *agency*? Is not agency already inscribed in the *how*?] … *Is agency a quality or a property of temperature, or does it emerge only as the capacity to affect, that is, agency is always relational. No agency of temperature, as such, recognizable, separable from that which is affected…* Enlivening, bringing to life. … *Is this registering of agency or of affect?* … [How or *when*? *How* is the conditioning influence of temperature upon atmosphere? Or rather *when*? *When* feels as if when can be marked—like *now*, or *now*, or *now*] Atmosphere coming-to-life. [Yet the conditioning influence is not discontinuous; rather, it ebbs and flows, rises and falls. At times, the relation is more evident, yet still, there is always co-relation] I am not wholly sure if I am attending to the agency of temperature or of light [Co-relation. Correlation—this co-relation of agencies and atmospheres] … *I am struggling to differentiate* … I am not sure if these are notations or reflections. •

The agency of light … *Alight, ignite, to cause to kindle, bring into flame* … seems somehow inseparable from the agency of shadow. The light somehow amplifies the agency … *Agency as igniting, to set in motion* … of the wind, of the gently swaying trees. Is it warmth or light? [Light or warmth: how to differentiate the one from the other? And so many registers of light, like so many temperatures] … *To light, to set alight. Catching alight, to set on fire, ignite. To set in motion, incite* … I close my eyes. [I close my eyes to see, to see the effect of light with eyes closed. Changes in light register as shifts, like the movement of the clouds, the shadow of the trees] Is it possible to attend to light with one's eyes closed? [This relation to the eyes: is this the only way to register light—optical, ocular. Is the agency of light somehow photographic?] Light makes the color more vibrant. [Yet more thick than visual—the density of light has thickness, a *felt* light] Light makes the shapes sharper. Shapes or things? … *The contour of shadow is not fixed, but rather, instable and ever shifting* … Contours of shadows … *To fix the shadow is to defeat it of its agency, its capacity to move, and to be moved* … The interplay of shadow … *Light does not cause shadow. Shadow is an effect of light's obstruction, of the agency of other things, intervening* … and light. … *Eyelids obstruct the light, creating shadows on the retina, as patterning and indeterminate forms* … [Light felt on the skin, the skin of the eyelids, not only through the eyes. Feeling light, less seeing light, but how is it that light feels?] … *Light, like temperature, can be measured and gauged: there are scientific ways. But it is also felt, as a lived and live event, or rather, felt in and through living. Light felt is tactile as much as visual* … [Feeling light, light felt, or is it warmth? How can I differentiate these two?] Can the agency of light [How is light's agency; and then—*here*, *now*?] be separated [Is light not already composite, an intermingling of many forces or flows?] from the agency of shadow, or the clouds? Agency of the clouds, or of the wind, determining the rises and falling of the light. Complex interplay of

— 8 — The notion of "contingent artifacts" resonates with the idea of "performing documents" or the "alternative document." See Emma Cocker and Clare Thornton, "The Italic I—between liveness and the lens," in *The Alternative Document*, ed. Ang Bartram, *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, vol. 38, no. 3 (2018), pp. 238–250.

V

AA Throughout this section centered on light, I see how concepts or maybe better, meanings, are questioned through the performance of your aesthetic research practices. Meanings are destabilized, disrupted, questioned, extended, transformed … but they do not disappear. They are not replaced by other entities. They don't lose their agency. On the contrary, the agency of meanings, the oscillation between destabilization and stabilization, is one of the forces that propels your practices. The fact that light, throughout all its crises, is continuously able to be sensed, and is meaningful for you again and again, is one of the enabling conditions making your aesthetic practices of observation possible. If these reflections are somehow valid, would you consider lessening the opposition between experience and concepts expressed in this last sentence?

EC I appreciate your observation of this oscillation between destabilization and stabilization as one of the forces that propels my practices. (I wonder whether there is a parallel in the relation of centering and decentering?) I think of this movement between destabilization/stabilization as a Penelopean maneuver (invoking Penelope's act of weaving/unweaving, or even doing/undoing in Homer's *Odyssey*). In her writing on Penelopean poetics, Barbara Clayton observes that "Penelope's web is first and foremost a process, i.e., weaving in order to unweave in order to reweave. And as a process, it participates in a network of ambiguities that undermine stable and fixed meaning" (see Barbara Clayton, *a Penelopean Poetics—Reweaving the Feminine in Homer's Odyssey*, Lexington: Lanham, 2004, p. 124). I am interested in the Penelopean poetics within an approach of "ceaselessly embracing" a system or structure (writing, language, perhaps even concepts) only to then cast it off, to "avoid becoming fixed, immobilized" (see the reference to Irigaray in footnote 16). But yes, you are right, it is not about rejecting concepts as such. Perhaps rather to resist the reifying dimension of concepts—to work-with concepts whilst remaining in touch with experience.

W

AA As a coda of my last comment: I tend to understand the dissolution of binary oppositions as the revelation of the inner and relational lives of concepts.

X

AA Or that (realistic) painting reveals itself as an impossible endeavor due to the unavoidable evidence of the unrepresentable—as you write in the following lines—nature of an aesthetically lived reality (I'm talking about Victor Erice's film *Dream of Light*).

agencies, that together give rise to the phenomenon of weather] Discontinuous observations [I am not sure whether it is *that* or *this*, one agency or another, for they seem impossible to split, separate, untangle]—yet experience is continuous … *Phenomena are time-based—arising, ceasing, endlessly changing, unfolding, in continual flow* … [Follow this through,

V stay with the experience, see where it leads. Yet not to follow into concept]

The play of light extends the frame of my attention. All these frames, … *These instable lines, blurry boundaries* … all these lives. All these other agencies. I am struggling to differentiate between … *Soft demarcations, fluctuating; animate categories, shifting, changing* … these different agencies—of

W light and shadow, of warmth and light … *Persistent binaries keep appearing. Yet when I really observe, there seems to be no one or the other—always shifting, always in flux. Changeling: a being between times, a transitional condition, between states. Inter-play, between play: inter—between* … Shades and soft transitions … *Still, do I register agency only in terms of a change or a transition?* … There are moments; no, not moments, but times, durations, where the light does not appear to change. [*Temper,* tempered, balanced] How does this unchanging light [Recall how painters often prefer the North light, even and unchanging] influence atmosphere? Not only when, but *how*. Not only change, but also

X continuity. [Less variable, less subject to change, so that a painting might be continued over many days and weeks. So that the painter might not need to start again, minute by minute, day after day] Sustained unfolding—micro-shifts and changes, instabilities and transformations … *Vectors of intensity, from one state to another, augmenting, decreasing* … that are imperceptible to my untrained eye, … *My eyes; no, my habits, those modes of attention and inattention that I have cultivated over years, ingrained ways, that require undoing. Then practicing again, relearning* … that somehow remain unseen, unseeable … *Attending only to relation, to that which is irreducible to neither the one nor the other, but rather, registered sensibly in the in-between* … intangible, illegible, … *Unrepresentable, this relational in-between* … imperceptible, unnameable. … *Attending to influence, in fluence—that which is fluid, not clearly see-able or stable* … Yet, there are always other *things* that are easier to recognize, to see and to name.

III

[I had not imagined that I would be focusing on the agency of wind] The flicker of light. [I guess you could say that the agency *called* me] Flicker of light, of artificial light, of televisual light. [No, this is not quite right. Rather, it was in intending to document one agency that another revealed itself from the sides, as an accident, one might say] The lights guard against the night, [An accidental notation, *kairotic* notation] • guard against the dark, the threat of dark. [A notational form emerging in the occasionality of the situation which it takes as its correlate. Not quite as accident, but still unplanned for] Lights mitigate against the dark, [Not light of day, but light of night] mitigate against the threat of shadows, of darkness, of the unseen, the in-visible. [Wind registering through notation,

—— 9 —— The notion of "kairotic notation" extends my ongoing interest in "kairotic practices." See Emma Cocker, "Live Notation—Reflections on a Kairotic Practice," in *Performance Research*, 18:5, 2013, pp. 69–76, alongside my reflections on "kairotic practice" in Alan Blackwell, Emma Cocker, Geoff Cox, Alex McLean, Thor Magnusson, *Live Coding: a User's Manual*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2022, pp. 197–199.

• *Kairotic* notation—The ancient Greek term *kairos* does not refer to an abstract measure of time passing (*chronos*) but rather is taken to mean the "right time," a decisive moment whose fleeting opportunity must be grasped before it passes. Etymologically related to the Greek word *keirein*—"to cut"—*kairos* can be conceived as a temporal "opening" or critical moment (a "nick" in time). Kairotic notation refers to the unforeseen event of an emergent—even immanent—form of notation, that arises live and simultaneous (in complete fidelity) to the experience that it attempts to notate/describe.[9]

Y

AA In this section you present another relationship between agencies, in this case, between light and wind/air/breath. It seems to me that they co-exist but are not contingent to one another. Was this the case?

Z

AA In this section you elaborate in two different but interrelated ways on the question of the relationship between attention and notation—which could also be extended to reflection. On the one hand, you point to the circular relationship between these actions: they reinforce—and maybe hinder as well?—one another. On the other hand, this circular relationship can also be established between practitioners. (How) did you experience this during the moments of practice within the symposium?

a

AA These are, again, key questions for *Contingent Agencies*. I believe that the main research question of this project—how does an agency condition the emergence of an atmosphere?—leads to a focus on two fundamental vectors of human existence or, maybe better, of existence from a human perspective: the constitution of enclosed units and their arising and disappearing in a meshwork of relationships. (In this regard, see again Paula's reflection on the concept of "inter-independence.") Nevertheless, my question here is: Would you propose an alternative research question from the perspective you summarize in this reflection on "conditionality"?

b

AA For me, this question has been crucial throughout the project: do we perceive atmospheres? It seems to me that you lean towards a negative answer to this question, like I do. When you refer here to "feeling" as a more adequate alternative, do you refer to our skill of recognizing our feelings and emotions? Is an atmosphere an emotional entity for you? Could an atmosphere be understood as a non-objectual sensuous-emotional presence?

EC In the Buddhist teaching of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta or "four foundations of mindfulness" a differentiation is made between "feeling" and "emotion." "Emotion" is considered as a "mind state," whereas the Sanskrit term "vedanā" translates as "feeling" or perhaps "sensation"—and generally refers to the felt experience (of pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral sensations) that occur when the sense organs come into contact with sense objects or stimulus. Vedanā or "feeling tone" is also sometimes referred to as "hedonic tone." Feeling/vedanā is the direct experience of sensation before the "I" gets involved in labeling, interpreting, naming through an emotional response. In this sense, might this notion of vedanā be closer to the feeling-register of aesthetic practices?

like the flicker of a television screen] Guarding against the night, protecting, holding the night back. [I turn attention to the wind. The wind or is it the air?] Light holds back the night. [When is it the end of wind and the beginning of air? Where does air begin and wind end? Wind ending, air beginning. Air ending, wind beginning] There is so much light, or rather there are so many lights. There is no night. [Where is the line of differentiation between wind and air? Is it in the movement—the movement of wind that takes the clouds across the sky, clouds that seem light against the dark] The temperature of night light is no longer lunar. [A dark punctuated by stars. a not-quite dark, lit by artificial light] Lit with artificial lights—the lights hold back the night, [The wind somehow makes it feel as though this space is still alive, as though this space has not yet gone to sleep] hold back the dark. [And what is it that differentiates the wind from breath?] I close my eyes. [To feel the direction of the wind as it touches against my skin] I close my eyes and try to imagine no light. [My body feels an unfaithful measuring device—instead, I look to the clouds] a dark night, [The clouds, like shadows—inverse shadows on a dark sky, punctuated by stars] unilluminated by television screens or streetlights or security lights or car lights or spotlights or lights in rooms or mobile phones [Flickering, oscillating, vibrating, pulsing] a dark night—the blackness of night. [The wind brings a sense of life, a liveliness, an aliveness] Night—dense in its darkness. [Vibrating the grass, the leaves, the trees, the hairs on my skin]

Y Yet, no darkness to this night, just lights.

Z

IV

a [Settling, not yet] The atmosphere has a soft contour. [It is like we—the atmosphere and I—first need to make some acquaintance, establish a mode of contact, a way of being in touch] For now though, it feels like I am sat on the outside. [Atmosphere waiting for discovery, waiting for my attention; no, for this bringing of my attention has agency, in turn, conditioning the atmosphere's arising] • But *where* is this atmosphere? [I am edging towards, trying not to grasp, and in this edging, gently, circling, slowly, I begin to feel a tentative emerging] … *Forgetting, forgetting each time of encounter, necessary forgetting to encounter afresh …* I still feel like I am *looking at* —this feels somewhat futile. [I cannot discern at the outset, it does not come all at once] … *Barely noticeable: first then, focusing, heightened sense of noticing, before notating …*

b Am I trying to *see* the atmosphere, [Not yet feeling its unfolding, it feels like I am sat outside of that which I seek to attend] discern it through the nameable senses rather than *feel*. … *Felt sense—feeling that is somehow more than sensation, more than strictly sensible. Sensitivity, sensibility …* Feeling operating in *another* register somehow, a different *time*. … *Already complex, so many presences, so many relationships, interwoven …* [My attention is already part of that to which I attend] It needs to be *slower*. [Patience then, to remain with. Yet this patience, this remaining with, is changing the atmosphere] I am not sure that an atmosphere can be watched or seen. Not *about*, not *on*, not *at a distance*. To feel the influence … *Influence, fluency, to be in flow, to flow into, to intermingle …* of agencies, of agency,

• Attention as a precondition for noticing, for notating—stilling, focusing, settling, as a preliminary for getting in touch. Yet, not sequential, not linear—for the practice of notating in turn sharpens, steadies, the attention. Reciprocal relations. To bring attention to atmosphere (yet might this presuppose that atmosphere is somehow autonomous, emerging independently of the agency of attention?) Indeed, how are certain atmospheres brought about by, conditioned by the agency of bringing one's attention, the agency of attention; moreover, by the agency of joint attention, of attending together?[10]

—— 10 —— Yves Citton describes the potential of "joint attention," collective attention, and even individuating attention as the "co-presence of attentive bodies sharing the same space over the course of infinitesimal but decisive cognitive and emotional harmonizations," in *The Ecology of Attention*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), p. 7.

c

AA I'm thankful for this ethical—I would even say micro-political—reflection. This project has not yet focused enough on the transformative power between aesthetic research and individual and collective behavior. The line of thought you propose here is not only inspiring but must necessarily be further developed.

EC I wonder—does aesthetic research inherently, necessarily, involve some transformation of both individual and collective behavior? Whilst this ethico-aesthetic, even micro-political, sense of the transformative may not have been an explicit focus within the project (that is, not made explicit through propositional or discursive language within the conceptual framing), my sense is that it was nonetheless present at an implicit level within the shared enquiry.

d

AA But question it, destabilize it, address it in its vulnerable temporality?

EC I was interested in the etymological relation between "contiguous" and "contingency." Contiguous—touching, meeting or joining at a surface or border, from the Latin contiguus, "near, touching, bordering upon," from the root contingere, "to touch upon"; a state of being within touching distance. The term "contingency" also has its etymological origins in *contingere*—which has both a sense of "to happen, to come to pass," and "to touch." Both terms ("contiguous" and "contingency") are related to the notion of "contact"—com "with, together," and *tangere* "to touch." This sense of "being in touch with" has recurred as an important principle within the *Contingent Agencies* project.

e

AA A beautiful expression of the confluence of apparently contradictory vectors.

f

AA Time as a generous place to dwell? And then, as you write, to return?

EC Yes, somehow the quality of re-turning invoked here was less in relation to the act of coming back—which perhaps still carries with it a sense of a linear temporal unfolding—but indeed more related to dwelling. In one sense, the lack of urgency experienced might better be expressed as lack of "urge," suspension of the will to press or push things forward. I am struck by how the words "urge" and "urgent" have their possible root in *ureg- "to follow a track," as if the track already exists and only needs to be followed. To engage then, without a sense of track already set in advance. Instead, to dwell as a research practice. Risky though—for alongside its more positive meanings (to linger, to reside, to keep one's attention on), the term "dwell" also has the sense of being led into error, to go astray, and (related to the PIE *dheu- "dust, vapor, smoke") might be associated with 'defective perception," even trance states or stupor.

g

AA Necessary? Happening in an irreducible and unrepeatable now? (But again, a now to dwell in?)

of an agency, of one agency, on atmosphere. [So many agencies at play, interplaying, interweaving, interwoven, interacting, interdependent, co-arising] From **ag*—to set in motion, to cause to move. • Action—force of action. *…Dampening and enlivening; interconnected agencies. The register of one agency on another, impossible to disentangle. The more I attend, the more one agency folds into another, into the other, into the other, into the other …* Agency—I am still not sure if I understand what this means. [Activate, act, actor, agenda: **ag*—effecting or affecting, I am never sure. To affect is also to be affected] Agency or conditions? Causes or Conditions? [Consider the principle of *conditionality* •, that all phenomena arise in dependence upon the arising of other phenomena. Dependent co-arising, dependent origination. How does this conditionality appear, become disclosed, revealed?] *… This principle of conditionality—expressed both as interdependency and as emptiness. Empty of all intrinsic existence, empty of a given self …*

Not clock time, *… Bleed of atmospheric past and now …* a time marked by other temporalities and durations *… Threshold between what was and what is now becoming blurred …* Containment of attention holds open *… Regarding, not re-guarding, not guarding again, against…* a space for my attention, [My attention—yet it is not so much mine, not my, not me, as arising through the interplay of so many other agencies] holds back the distraction of other things. *… Yet, what is at stake in this practice, this practicing (together)? Being with; being there; remaining; staying; dwelling, alongside. Co- as in co-agency, com-, co-, together, with, always interdependent …* a feeling of suspension, of protection, of seclusion, [Necessary separation as a precondition for re-connection. To touch, to be in contact, contiguous, contingency; to be in touch, yet not to cross the line] of apartness, [A-part-ness, a-way-ness, a decentering, to the sides; indirect, oblique, not direct—circling, relaxing, releasing] *… Decentering of attention or decentering of the self as a precondition for focusing …* of a contained attention, [Containment creates the conditions for openness, for opening. Containment as the holding of a space open, less that of closing it off to an outside] a cool attention. [Cool yet not cold, not distanced, not the cool of a supposed objective attention. Cool rather more like deep water, cool of shade and moon—lunar, murky]. Slowness—yet slowness is somehow not quite right. But still, there is a different rhythm *… Ephemeral constancy, circular time …* [Stilling, centering. Slow temporal accumulation like leaf mold layering, sedimenting densities] Slow transformations. [Like the rings on the trunk of a tree, expanding; circular time, not linear] No urgency, yes, no urgency. [Time expands in concentric circles, slowly, yet not progressing forward, no seizing of the next, next, next]

There is no hurry, [A slowness that is not linear, not based on velocity—rather, a concentric slowness] • which is not to say that there is nothing urgent here. *… Doubling back, folding, re-meeting, meeting again, differently, deep down—a slowness not of velocity but of re-turning. Re-ply, to fold again and again, over and to the sides …* My attention recalibrates *… Re-ply, to fold or to be folded, re- again and again, slowness accumulating in re-turns, circular time, not clock time …* to

c • What is at stake in attending to causes? Consider Spinoza's *Ethics* as a practice of becoming more aware of "causes"—of moving from a state of ignorance, from being blown about by unknown forces and flows, towards an understanding of the power of affecting and being affected.[11] Heightened attunement to the vectoral passage of both augmentation (towards an increase of joy) and diminution (towards an increase of sadness). In these terms, rather than experiencing atmosphere as a vague, indefinable presence (of whose causes and conditions one remains ignorant), awareness of the conditioning influence of specific agencies on atmosphere might enable the possibility for greater vigilance—even creative resistance—against those powers that strive to mobilize or induce certain atmospheres towards generating coercive affects.

• Conditionality—the quality of being dependent on certain specified conditions, or even perhaps, as with the term contingent, depending upon circumstances. The Buddhist principle or teaching of conditionality—the Sanskrit pratītya-samutpāda translated as "dependent arising" or "dependent origination"—states that all phenomena arise in dependence on other phenomena, expressed in the formulation: "This being, that becomes; from the arising of this, that arises. This not being, that does not become; from the ceasing of this, that ceases."[12] More than cause and effect, conditionality reflects a complex web of interdependent relations—no beginning, no end. How then to attend to the conditioning influence of one agency, for each agency arises in dependence upon other agencies, on other agencies, on other agencies […] What is at stake in focusing on "one" agency? How might this focus on "one" reveal only further the reality of interdependence?

• Varieties of slowness—Rather than slow-paced (moving at a slow rate of speed), slowing down or going-slow, how might slowness and slow practices be activated in other ways? Slow—as in taking a long time to develop, not happening in a short time. The slowness of re-turning, willingness to re-turn (again and again). Slowness, not unfolding in linear time, rather through loops and repetitions. Concentric slowness—circling around a common center, to circle around, to circle with.[13]

d

e

f

g

— 11 — On Spinoza's *Ethics*, see also Gilles Deleuze, "Spinoza and the Three 'Ethics,'" in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. D. W. Smith and M. A. Greco, London: Verso, 1998 and *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. R. Hurley, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988.

— 12 — As Buddhist scholar Dhivan Thomas Jones notes, this formulation of the teaching of conditionality is found in many places in the Pali canon including the Udāna. See Jones, *This Being That Becomes: The Buddha's teaching on Conditionality*, Cambridge: Windhorse Publications, 2011.

— 13 — This notion of "concentric slowness" resonates with the slow reading practices of Michelle Boulous Walker's *Slow Philosophy: Reading Against the Institution*, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017, where she states that, "slow reading would not simply mean always reading slowly, but would, rather, involve a preparedness to return time and time again to what we read" (p. XV). Walker's advocacy of slow reading draws on various examples including what she describes as philosopher Michèle Le Dœuff's "tendency to patiently return, reassess, reconsider and re-engage with texts" (p. XVIII), alongside Luce Irigaray's practice of reading as "attentive listening […] of listening, 'listening-to' and 'listening-with'" (p. XXI).

h

AA A variety of ways of listening?

EC This invocation of "sign-less speaking" and of wordlessness might relate to the possibility of communication or communion beyond, before, maybe beneath words; a sense that this is not a realm of words, or that there are other ways of communication untethered from our human system of signs. The quality of wordlessness also refers to both speaking and listening: a "speaking" without recourse to language, as well as a receptive state, a state of listening (to and with the world). Lispeth Lipari argues for a form of listening conceived as "an ethical relation and a way of being in the world" (see *Listening, Thinking, Being: Toward an Ethics of Attunement*, Penn State University Press, 2014, p. 3). Lipari's account of listening also resonates with the previous notes on ethics, transformation and decentring—"listening is dangerous—to truly listen to the voice of ethics means we are drawn beyond the limits of our subjective understanding and knowing. Listening … requires that our world change … It's not about the acquisition of facts or information … Our world only changes when there is a kind of de-centring that calls us to question or shed our old views and certainties about our world" (see "Listening Others," in *On Listening*, eds. Cathy Lane and Angus Carlyle, Devon: Uniform Books, 2013, p. 158).

i

AA "Dynamic" forms of "withnessing"?

EC Yes, this notion of withnessing describes a possible mode of relation, of relating, not based on capture or grasping. Within the frame of the artistic research project *Choreo-graphic Figures*, we—Emma Cocker, Nikolaus Gansterer and Mariella Greil—evolved a concept of and practices for wit(h)nessing—a neologism of "witnessing" and "being-with," In parallel, the notion of wit(h)nessing is developed by feminist theorist of affect, visual artist, and psychoanalyst Bracha L. Ettinger. Louise Boscacci notes how Ettinger's "Wit(h)nessing is a word-concept seeded in ideas of co-poiesis … that each of us is already in relationship before any assumption of an independent subjectivity—an I—is established" (see Boscacci, "Wit(h)nessing," in *Environmental Humanities* (2018) 10 (1), pp. 343–347).

j

AA As a silent enabling agency?

the attention of the trees. [Returning, again, again, over and over—not linear, not progressive, no *telos*]. Minute movements, dappling of light, insects hovering. Cool, slow, unhurried, green. [Unseen slowness, hovering—to hover, to suspend, to remain still and yet in constant movement. The movement of and in stillness. An un-space—undoing of hurry, of urgency, a letting go] The trees

h take my words, [Wordless is not silence, not silent, but rather a sign-less speaking. a wordless murmuring in dialogue with the wind] • my need to speak. [Releasing, letting go] No need, no need to speak. Words—as discontinuity, words make breaks, separating the world into things] a thinking space, a thinking, a thinking differentiable from speaking, [Each word, a cut in the continuity of the unfolding, articulation perhaps, always separating into parts] from words.

i [Towards murmuring then—to murmur or to slur] … *What alternatives to capture, to grasp? How to affirm an alternative, rather than only name that which we might best avoid?* … Cool green attention—unhurried, wordless. [Blurring the borders of words—*languaging* of bleeds and overlaps, through seepages and softening] Unthinking attending. [Sinking, disappearing. No, not disappearing, rather contours dissolving]

j Attention —releasing. [*I* am disappearing, remaining as attention] Easy, no, not easy. Release, ease.

• *Languaging* otherwise—how to eschew the risk of representation, of reification, of making a thing of flux? How to language that which resists language, that which resists representation as sign? "What is required of writing and of language? What are the possibilities of writing and what are its limits?" van Manen asks.[14] Towards precision, subtly, nuance, yes—yet how (else) might this be achieved? How might the indeterminacy of agencies and atmospheres call for other ways of being precise? Imagine "poetics as the best attempt to be as rigorous as possible," invites Karen Barad.[15] What (other) practices and approaches might be required? What (other) lineages of practice might call to be invoked? [16]

— 14 — Max van Manen, *Writing in the Dark: Phenomenological Studies in Interpretive Inquiry*, London and New York: Routledge, 2016, p. 240.

— 15 — Karen Barad, Impulse talk within the frame of the *Contingent Agencies* cross-disciplinary symposium, September 23, 2022.

— 16 — For Luce Irigaray, "Contradictory words seem a little crazy to the logic of reason, and inaudible for him who listens with ready-made grids, a code prepared in advance … One must listen to her differently in order to hear an 'other meaning' which is constantly in the process of weaving itself, at the same time ceaselessly embracing words and yet casting them off to avoid becoming fixed, immobilized. For when 'she' says something, it is already no longer identical to what she means. Moreover, her statements are never identical to anything. Their distinguishing feature is one of contiguity. They touch (upon). And when they wander too far from this nearness, she stops and begins again from 'zero.'" See Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One," in eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, *New French Feminisms*, Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980, p. 103. I am interested in the potential of what might be described as a Penelopean poetics, a poetics of "ceaselessly embracing" a system or structure (writing, language, perhaps even representation) only to then cast it off, to "avoid becoming fixed, immobilized."

A

EMMA COCKER

Yet we come to a "lived experience" of atmosphere often before we have a "concept of." How might research on/with/through atmosphere (initiated by a perceptual, experiential, affective engagement, or indeed by an artistic research approach) create a different trajectory to one led or initiated by concepts? We—co-researchers and guests within *Contingent Agencies*—might each "arrive" via different trajectories, conceptual or otherwise: how might *Contingent Agencies* accommodate these many and meandering approaches or orientations?

TIM INGOLD

Of course, we experience atmosphere before we have a concept of it! It is there from the moment we are born, if not before. I suppose the question comes down to what we understand by "research." For me, it involves thinking imaginatively about experience, and in order to think, I find I need concepts, or at least words. But for me, the idea that conceiving things is somehow disembodied is nonsense. Bringing forth words is just as much a full-bodied knitting together of experience and imagination, and involves as much sweat, blood, and tears, as any other kind of creative activity.

B

EC How do other fields of practice/thinking explore the interweaving of these different systems? I think of Félix Guattari's *The Three Ecologies* and the ethical-aesthetic "ecosophy" he conceives for exploring the three ecological registers of environment, social relations, and human subjectivity. Or even the interconnected system of niyamas (meaning "causal factors" rather than "internal observances") within Buddhist teaching (*utu, bija, karma, dhamma, citta niyamas*) where *utu niyama* describes the natural law of non-living matter, e.g., phenomena related to climate and weather; *bija niyama* is the law of living matter or biology; karma niyama is the law of ethical causation; *Citta niyama* concerns consciousness, thoughts, and perceptions.

TI As with ecological vs. social, I am rather averse to any approach that requires us to divide everything up into semi-autonomous "systems" or "registers." We end up having to split ourselves as well. And I don't think we humans, or any other living beings for that matter, live a split-level existence.

C

SABINA HOLZER

Could you please tell me which artists and scientists you found interesting?

TI I'm talking here about cultural geographers and historians of art, not artists and scientists! At that time, leading voices on the side of cultural geography included Denis Cosgrove, Stephen Daniels, Kenneth Olwig, and Yi-Fu Tuan; on the side of art history Svetlana Alpers, James Elkins, Arnold Berleant, Michael Baxandall, and, of course, the phenomenological reflections on art of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Landscape, Atmosphere, and Weather-World[1]

Tim Ingold

A Like almost everyone else, I came late to the concept of atmosphere. In what follows, I shall describe how I eventually arrived at it, possibly along a rather different trajectory than most, and I'll suggest how we might go further with it.

My background is in ecological anthropology—the study of relations between human organisms and their environments. At that time, in the 1970s and 1980s, studies in ecological anthropology were heavily biased towards perspectives drawn from the natural sciences; the idea was to apply models from animal ecology to the study of human populations. My position during the early 1980s was that humans simultaneously participate in two systems of relations: as organisms in a system of ecological relations, and
B as persons in a system of social relations. The problem, then, was to understand the interplay between these two systems, respectively ecological and social. The assumption behind this was that uniquely in the animal kingdom, humans live a split-level existence, half in nature, half out; half organism, half person. The more I tried to defend this assumption, however, the more unsustainable it became. Eventually, by the end of the 1980s, I realized that I would have to give it up and start all over again. What, then, would become of ecological anthropology?
In the early 1990s, for reasons largely unconnected with my own intellectual travails, anthropologists began to get interested in *landscape*.
C Their influences came not from the natural sciences but from the humanities, above all cultural geography and the history of art. I wondered whether the concept of landscape might give me what I needed—a way to talk about how human persons relate to their *nonhuman* surroundings, in a way that would go beyond the merely physical and organic level of organism-environment interactions.

— 1 — Text of a talk presented at the cross-disciplinary symposium *Contingent Agencies*, University of Applied Arts Vienna, September 19, 2022.

D

SH The land is woven by activities and agencies? Could you explain that a bit more, please?

TI Every living being leaves a trail behind it as it threads its way through the world, in among the trails of others. This is most obviously the case with the roots and shoots of plants, which weave a tight mesh of vegetation above and below ground. In one of many metaphorical flourishes in his *On the Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin advises his readers to imagine themselves standing before "the plants and bushes clothing an entangled bank." I understand the land here as "entangled" in this sense. Of course, with many other living beings the trails are not so immediately visible, and might have to be picked up by other sensory registers—like trails of scent, for example. But they are there nonetheless.

Closely connected with this interest in landscape, among anthropologists, was a renewed focus on the *body*. Until then, the body had figured little in our discussions, and when it had, it was treated as little more than a symbolic resource, on which humans could draw to express their ideas about social life and its cultural institutions. All that changed, however, when we began reading the work of phenomenologists, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who put the body as a living subject, as *Leib* rather than *Körper*, at the heart of their concerns.

In place of the *human organism in its environment*, we now had the *human body in a landscape*. Yet the problem of the split between sociocultural and biophysical levels of existence had not gone away. As a living subject, we were told, the body is more than a mere organism, as it might be described in anatomy and physiology; and the landscape is more than a mere environment, as it might be described in terms of ecology or geophysics. The problem, for me, was how to articulate the idea of a living being dwelling in a landscape that would take us beyond this split, since only by doing so, I believed, could we truly restore human beings to where they belong, within the continuum of organic life.

I struggled to solve the problem, but eventually found the solution in an ontological shift from being to becoming. I had to think of the human being as a *human becoming*, and of the landscape, too, as a process, as something continually under construction, in and through the activities of its manifold inhabitants.

In 1993, I published a paper entitled "The temporality of the landscape," in which I attempted to flesh out this processual view. I did so by introducing a parallel concept, of *taskscape*. By this I meant the array of different activities—whether of humans, animals, plants, or other beings or things, as they go along together and respond to one another. The difference between landscape and taskscape, I thought, is a bit like that between painting and music: the one is laid out before our eyes; the other emerges only in performance.

I have later come to regret coining "taskscape." It's an ugly word, and feeds the fashion for multiplying "scapes" of every possible kind (soundscapes, mediascapes, ethnoscapes, etc.). And it has been taken up uncritically, especially in archaeology, in a way that bears no relation to the context that led me to propose it. Meanwhile, my own thinking was heading off in a new direction, revolving around the idea of the line. Life, I realized, is lived along lines, so that what we may call a way of life is really a line traced by a living being through a world that is itself a tangle of lines traced by other beings.

It was in the first years of the new millennium that I eventually proposed the concept of meshwork, as a kind of tangle of life-lines. Ecology, I surmised, is really the study of the life of lines.[2] Thus, what had started off as taskscape became meshwork, the weave of the land.

But if I had grown dissatisfied with "taskscape," I had become dissatisfied with "landscape" as well. The trouble with

— 2 — The meshwork is quite distinct from the network. The network concentrates life into points, and the lines are abstract connections between them. In the meshwork, the lines are of living beings themselves, and they are not so much interconnected as intertwined.

D

E

NIKOLAUS GANSTERER
After your talk when we had Q&As you elaborated that this concept of earth-sky relates to a Finnish (Sami?) word. Maybe it would be interesting to bring in this reference here, too?

TI The Finnish word for "world" is *maailma*, from *maa*, "earth," plus *ilma*, "sky" or "air." Thus the world, in Finnish, is literally the "earth-sky."

F

SH I really like this list, these words placed next to each other. They create spaces full of agencies and not just actions and open their "definitional" boundaries; they are dancing ...)

TI Good!

G

GERHARD DIRMOSER
Can the list on the left (of the linealogy) be understood as a diagram criticism *(Diagramm-Kritik)* and the list on the right as its kind of liquefying (an-diagramatics)?

TI I don't know enough about *Diagramm-Kritik* to be able to say. For me, it's the difference between lines without volumes, on the left, and volumes without lines, on the right.

H

ALEX ARTEAGA
The necessity of going beyond metrics in the study of atmospheres, but also beyond the practices of reflection of philosophical aesthetics, allows us to focus *Contingent Agencies* on conceiving and performing aesthetic research practices (practices of notation and reflection). I believe that these practices are able to address this object of research in a non-reductive way, and, furthermore, to realize in a fundamentally reflective way the "attunement of attention and response to the variations and oscillations of one's surroundings" you describe here. Furthermore, I think that your text justifies the specification of aesthetic research practices in two ways. First, as phenomenological aesthetic practices that realize operative intentionality (*fungierende Intentionalität*) and allow for an awareness of "the very condition that makes interaction possible in the first place"; and second, as aural aesthetic practices, able to foster awareness of these conditions when they are invisible, as in the case of the "air."

TI I'm not sure that I understand all that, but if the approach helps, that's fine!

landscape lies in its focus on conformations of the ground surface, at the expense of what is going on both above and below. This takes for granted that the ground is a fundamental basis for life, an already given substrate. Yet the ground is not given; it is continually in formation, in the meeting of earth and sky. It doesn't divide earth from sky, but is formed in their intermingling, where wind and weather, beating down upon the soil, create the conditions for life. Thus, what we call the ground is not a hard surface *upon which* life struts about, but a zone in which all life is lived.

In turning from taskscape to meshwork, then, I also found myself turning from landscape to earth-sky world. Now my question had shifted yet again. What is the relation between the
E meshwork and the earth-sky world? Even at the start of my inquiries into the life of lines, I had an intuitive feeling that there was some relation, some deep affinity, between *lines* and the *weather*. Now, in posing the question of the relation between meshwork and earth-sky world, this was forced on my attention. And it was at this point that the atmosphere came in. As a student of lines—a *linealogist*—I had to become a student of atmosphere as well, a *meteorologist*. What kind of meteorology is this? And what's the relation between linealogy and meteorology?

As you see, I came to atmosphere from thinking about the sky, and about what goes on in the sky—namely, weather. For me, it was always self-evident that atmosphere is a meteorological phenomenon. It came as a surprise, then, to discover that there already existed a large body of literature, largely produced by German-speaking philosophers of aesthetics, that had virtually nothing to say about the sky, the weather, or meteorology. It seemed to be talking about something entirely different. I'll come back to that. First, let me return to linealogy and meteorology.

F, G Think of the affiliations between the following:

walking	breathing
weaving	the passage of time
observation	temperament or mood
singing	resounding
storytelling	echoes of memory
traces of drawing	colors of the palette
writing on the page	meteors in the sky[3]

The linealogist asks: what is common to walking, weaving, observing, singing, storytelling, drawing, and writing? But the meteorologist asks: what is common to breath, time, mood, sound, memory, color, and the sky? That common denominator is *atmosphere*.

H As linealogy calls for a concept of line that goes beyond the narrowly geometric, so meteorology requires a concept of atmosphere that goes beyond the metrics of ambient geospace. There's a parallel between the reductions of mathematical

— 3 — Our word "meteors" originally referred to portents in the sky that people used to read for what they might foretell.

I

GD Would it make sense to speak of medium instead of air/ether/space? Especially since Gernot Böhme replaced the ancient medium (of the senses) with the concept of atmosphere.

TI James Gibson (in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*) used the term "medium" (e.g., of the air), as against "substances" (e.g., the earth) and "surfaces" (on the interface between medium and substances). The medium affords movement and perception for a being immersed in it. For humans, the medium is usually air. But if you were a fish, it would be water.

geometry and of scientific meteorology. Geometry compresses life into points and defines the line as the shortest distance between them; scientific meteorology maps masses onto volumes and defines density as the ratio of one to the other.

To get beyond these reductions, the first thing to do is to reintroduce the element of air. It is extraordinary that in all the talk about the hybrid agencies of persons and things, no one has given a thought to the air. This is because, in terms of a discourse that focuses on solid objects and their surfaces, or on artifacts and landscapes, the air is *unthinkable*. We have either to pretend that air doesn't exist or that, like the proverbial ether, it is immaterial. In many discussions today, where the air is, or should be, theoreticians have simply substituted the word "space." Space may be suffused with all kinds of emanations from the things that occupy it, but it has no material presence, or dynamic, of its own.

1

The thing is that the air is not another object in the world that we can interact *with*. It is the very condition that makes interaction possible in the first place. I have demonstrated this with my students by flying a kite. The flyer interacts with the kite, with the string as a line of interaction. But she doesn't interact with the wind. Rather, the wind—the current of air—makes the interaction possible. Without it, the kite won't fly—nor, for that matter, can the flyer breathe.

If air is a condition of interaction, then it follows that the quality of that interaction will be tempered by its fluxes, that is, by the *weather*. In French, weather is *temps*, "time," from the Latin *tempus*, whence "tempo" and "tempest." But this is not chronological time. It is a time that is *kairological*, perceived not in the succession of events but in the attunement of attention and response to the variations and oscillations of one's surroundings. This is known colloquially as weather-wising.

The weather is the ever-present undercurrent of our action as we go along in the world. This is expressed in a cluster of weather-related words derived from the Latin *temperare*, "to mix" (as distinct from *tempo*, "time"). These include "temperature" and "temperament." With its twin connotations of blending and fine-tuning, the verb "to temper" captures perfectly the way our experience of weather unifies our affective lives with the aerial medium in which these lives are led. We are thus constituted as *temperamental* beings. That all these words refer interchangeably to both characteristics of weather and human moods and motivations demonstrates that weather and mood are not just analogous but, more fundamentally, one and the same. This *unison of the affective and the cosmic* is crucial, I believe, to our understanding of atmosphere.

Let me return to the difference between scientific meteorology and the sort of meteorology I need to engage with the life of lines. For scientific meteorology, the atmosphere is the gaseous environment that surrounds our planet. It belongs to a picture of the world that can only be obtained from outer space. But this isn't how it is given to the planet's inhabitants, such as ourselves. For us, it is the air we breathe, and whose unruly

J

SH Could you please explain how you mean that in terms of the climate crises we are part of these days, as it seems to me that we sense on many levels, biologically and psychologically, the changes in the atmosphere.

TI That may be true, but these sensations, whatever they may be, play no part in the science of atmosphere itself. Scientists tend to be very averse to allowing anything that might be construed as "feelings" to intrude into their observations. For them, the atmosphere is one big laboratory (and the ocean an aquarium).

K

GD Would it make sense in the context of these affect spheres to bring the concept of intensity or (with Hermann Schmitz) the "intense magnitudes" into play?

TI I have no idea; but here I'm talking about the way atmosphere is understood in meteorological science, which has nothing to say about affect.

fluxes we experience as wind and weather. Where the inhabited world of earth and sky has its weather, the global atmosphere has climate: one is experienced, the other measured and recorded. As such, in the scientific sense, the atmosphere is wholly removed from the sphere of affect. It plays no part in the moods and motivations of inhabitants; it is not something that we and other creatures ever sense.

J, K

This is the moment at which to return to aesthetics, because for aestheticians like Gernot Böhme, atmosphere has a quite different meaning. It is a space of *affect*, a spatially extended quality of feeling. Apart from a few parenthetical remarks here and there, philosophers of atmosphere have nothing to say about weather. The air and its turbulence are simply not on their radar. In short, whereas for meteorological science the atmosphere is a gas-filled domain evacuated of all traces of affect, for aesthetics it is the complementary opposite: a system of affects that appears to exist in a vacuum. Does this complementarity reveal something the two fields have in common?

Behind both lies what I call the operation of *inversion*. With philosopher Michel Serres, I take this operation to be the defining feature of modernity. According to Serres, modernity begins when the real world we inhabit (where we write our lines, and where the sun casts shadows on the ground) is taken as a *scene*, and this scene *turns inside out*, like the finger of a glove, and plunges into the utopia of a knowing, inner, intimate subject. "This black hole," Serres writes, "absorbs the world." There's a connection here with the early modern development of stagecraft, with the world recreated on stage and viewed through a proscenium arch. This was a world brought indoors, where meteorological effects had to be simulated by props and pyrotechnics. The open-air *arena* of classical theater was turned outside in. And with this, the air became ether. Actors, of course, need air to breathe, but the characters they play "breathe" the ether. As noted earlier, ether solves the paradox of matter that has escaped materiality. It allows the conflation of materiality and solidity to persist. Nowadays, we look to the idea of space to perform the same trick.

But in a kind of double inversion, the world of the theater was then turned inside-out again, projecting on the outside the perspectival space of the inside. The exterior façades of monumental buildings provide the backdrop, and the paved streets the stage, on which urbanites are expected to *perform*. The entire world would become a stage—a solid surface on which life is enacted. Through this double inversion, *inhabitants* of the earth-sky world are converted into *exhabitants* of the planetary globe. The earth beneath our feet is replaced by Earth the planet, and the air we breathe with the phantasmal ether.

This is the view of the world from which both meteorological science and aesthetic philosophy have taken their respective bearings. Meteorology was transformed from a fascination with meteors, as portents of the moral fate of mankind, into a laboratory science, the key concept of which was "atmosphere," conceived as a laboratory writ large, in which the vagaries of

the weather-world could be subjected to measurement and calculation, and understood in terms of known physical forces acting in accordance with the laws of nature. Weather was subsumed under climate, and redefined for scientific purposes as its localized manifestations, while air lost its standing as an element of the inhabited world of earth and sky that we and other creatures breathe. It became merely matter in its gaseous phase, filling the ethereal space of a doubly inverted cosmos.

If, for scientific meteorology, atmosphere belongs to the world of insentient nature, for aestheticians it is on the side of human consciousness with its feelings, sensations, and perceptions. Hence the two atmospheres, of meteorology and aesthetics, straddle the familiar divisions between nature and humanity, the material and the sensorial, cosmos and affect.

Böhme, for example, thinks of atmospheres as spaces tinctured by the radiations or ecstasies of things as they pour themselves out into the affective environment. Atmospheres, he says, are intermediate between environmental qualities and human states—their perception is a matter of subjective experience, yet they are still felt to lie "out there" as phenomena to which we are drawn and that take possession of us. They are not free-floating, like the mist. On the contrary, *it is from the coming together of persons and things that atmospheres arise*. They are not objective but inhere in the qualities of things; they are not subjective but belong to sensing beings.

But there's no weather here! At least Böhme acknowledges the original meaning of atmosphere as a planetary envelope of air "that carries the weather." But he goes on to say that the metaphorical extension of atmosphere from "the earth's air" to moods that are "in the air" has become so routine that the term's original meaning has been all but forgotten. If that were really so, however, then we would have forgotten meteorology as well! The fact that people must have air to breathe is, for Böhme, entirely incidental to the constitution of the atmosphere, which comes from their encounters with one another and with things.

It is no wonder, then, that Böhme finds the most precise and paradigmatic instances of atmosphere in the stage set. "The art of generating atmospheres," he writes, "mirrors the theatricalization of our life." There could hardly be a clearer statement of the connection between the atmosphere of aesthetics and the doubly inverted world of modernity, in which all things are staged: politics, sport, the city, commodities, personalities, the self—and, given today's date, royal funerals! But how can any feelingful encounter take place between persons and things without air to breathe?

Aesthetics, it seems, has wholly divorced the sphere of affect from the sphere of the meteorological. What would it take to bring these spheres together again? To achieve this, we would need a second inversion that would *undo* rather than extend and externalize the operation of the first, thereby restoring the world's inhabitants to the fullness of earth and sky. In the uninverted world of real life, immersion in the weather-world is

L

AA Is it plausible to aim at coining one concept that integrates the affective and the meteorological? Addressing the fact that the two concepts are the result of divergent research practices, grounded in different epistemic approaches and therefore pursuing incompatible epistemic goals, would it not make more sense to aim to connect these practices and concepts according to a non-unifying logic of ecologies of research practices and concepts?

TI I think it is not just plausible but necessary, just as I think it is necessary to get beyond the polarizing split between the humanities and the natural sciences, of which the division between meteorology and aesthetics that I've been talking about is a prime example. My contention is that the split itself has its source in the progressive humanism of the Enlightenment, according to which it is the historical destiny of humankind to transcend and subjugate a recalcitrant nature. It was this that set up the sciences and the humanities as complementary academic endeavors in the first place. I'm trying to lay the foundations for a new science, which would also be a new humanism, rooted in the conditions and knowledge of earthly coexistence. It would be "new" in the sense of renewal or rejuvenation rather than novelty and innovation. I think this offers the only way forward in the current crisis.

M

EC In parallel to the search for concepts, how might other "practices" be developed and activated for negotiating and navigating the interrelation of the affective and meteorological dimensions of atmosphere? It seems that it is not only the practice of generating concepts that is required for "restoring the world's inhabitants to the fullness of earth and sky" but also perhaps a deeper engagement with the transformative, embodied potential of "other" kinds of practices? What kinds of methodological approaches are required for engaging with, as well as thinking about, atmospheres? How might the emphasis on "practices" within *Contingent Agencies* contribute to this development?

TI That's a question for you lot, really. I'm not qualified to answer it. But anything would be good that takes people out from behind their computer screens, and pitches them back into the open air!

N

SH If I may add: inhalation defuses and transports the medium of air in the body, nourishing the blood, the organs, muscles, and cells, makes them breath.

TI Of course!

O

AA This is beautiful exemplification of what Varela called the "surplus of signification" enabled by living systems or, in other words, the transformation of the environments of the living being into the environments for the living being (Varela, "Organism: a Meshwork of Selfless Selves," 1981). This is the specific way in which living beings are "temperamental beings" and thus realize "the unison of the affective and the cosmic."

TI Yes, although for reasons that would take too long to explain here, I would be slightly wary of the term "signification." An environment for (rather than of) is one that is invested in meaning, at least for the creature whose environment it is. But in my view (following Gibson) there can be meaning without signs, in the direct, unmediated perception of what an environment affords. That's why I remain a skeptic when it comes to biosemiotics. It is axiomatic for semiotics that all perception is indirect, mediated by signs, such that the present sign stands in for its absent referent. But how long could you survive if you could only eat the signs of absent food and breathe the signs of absent air?

a condition *for*—not a consequence *of*—our existence as tem-
L, M perate, and therefore sentient beings. To arrive at a concept of atmosphere that satisfies this condition, we would need to find a sense of the term that is both affective and meteorological. And the first step towards this would have to be to reintroduce the element of air.

Where to go next? I've been particularly interested in what it means to think of *light* and *sound* as atmospheric phenomena.[4] For Merleau-Ponty, light is the spark of vision that is ignited when, in their fusion, the two poles of the affective and the cosmic—one corporeal, the other celestial—set off an explosion of sorts. Like a spark, light doesn't connect a source of emission with a recipient but bursts forth in the atmospheric in-between, in a direction orthogonal to the line of their connection. The same, I think, can be said of sound.

To conclude, however, I would like to return to my initial question. What is the relation between lines and the weather? Every living being, I've argued, stitches itself into the world along the interwoven lines of the meshwork. But every living being, too, is necessarily immersed in the atmosphere. Which of these, then, is the world we inhabit? When Merleau-Ponty, for example, talks about the *flesh* of the world, of which we are intrinsically a part, does he mean meshwork or atmosphere?

The answer, I think, is alternately both. To live, all organisms respire. One way or another, they alternately breathe in and
N out. Inhalation gathers the medium, holding it in tension. It is atmospheric. Exhalation releases the tension in issuing forth along a line of growth or becoming. It is haptic. You could compare this alternation to the breaststroke in swimming, in which the backward sweep of the arms gathers the water in preparation for the forward thrust to follow. These movements are not the reverse of one another. They don't go back and forth but round and round, such that the second movement finishes off the circuit initiated by the first, while preparing for the following cycle. It doesn't *close* the circuit, however, since after every stroke the breathing body is always, spatiotemporally, further on.

Thus, the world is atmospheric on the inhalation and haptic on the exhalation. The cycle, moreover, is not reversible: you can no more propel on the inhalation than gather on the exha-
O lation. It is this irreversibility that gives rise to time. And the living, respiring being is the site where atmospheric immersion is transformed into the haptic (feeling forward) extension of the meshwork along its many lines. It is where the weather is turned into the furrows of the ploughman, the wind into the wake of the sailboat, and sunlight into the stems and roots of the plant. It is a transformation, indeed, that is fundamental to all animate life.

— 4 — There would be a lot to say about smell, too, but this is not a line I have followed; perhaps someone else can give it a try.

Final comments

SH Thank you for your lecture and text! I was/am really inspired! I wonder if your approach (you started in the 1980s) was influenced by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, who developed the biological concept of autopoiesis? If so, did the more recent formulations and concepts of sympoiesis (put forward now by Donna Haraway) influence your thinking?

Has the fact/approach that we know today—in terms of air, for instance—that we are part of the air and the air is part of us as a human species, of the planet earth influenced you? As the air consists of nitrogen, oxygen, argon, carbon dioxides, neon, helium, methane, krypton, water vapor, and gases. In this sense, air is matter and also in relation to gravity. Not only would we not survive, we would be a completely different species, because our entire cellular structure is based on the elements of air and water. Has this "vital materiality" of sorts, as Jane Bennet puts it, impacted your thinking? If so, in which way? If not, why not?

TI I of course knew of the work of Maturana and Varela back then, in the 1980s, and I know of the work of Haraway now. But I cannot claim to have been strongly influenced by either. In the 1980s I was reading Jakob von Uexküll and James Gibson, in an attempt to find a way forward for my own field of ecological anthropology. With Haraway and sympoiesis, I don't disagree, but time and again I find her merely rephrasing ideas that I (and others) have already developed, albeit under different terms such as "togethering" and "correspondence." It's the same with Jane Bennett. I didn't really find anything in her "vital materialism" that I had not thought of already, long ago, so to say I had been influenced by her work would be to put things back to front. For example, my paper "Earth, sky, wind and weather" (all about air and elemental existence) was published in 2007, Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* in 2010. No doubt I sound like a grumpy old man, but I get a bit irritated when show-off cultural theorists steal the limelight, presenting as great new insights of their own ideas that anthropologists have already been quietly and carefully working on for ages. For me it has always been less a question of being influenced by these writers than a feeling of being eclipsed by them!

PAULA KRAMER
Berlin, May 10, 2023: Crows walk across sunny tar where I read and write, some are flying, others bathing in a large flat thin layer of water on the tar, a very few people sit and eat, a nightingale sings and a few other birds chirp. We're in the middle of the city (yet secluded) and I've just facilitated an outdoor movement class this morning here with a whole section focusing on breathing.

I swim, fall, and stumble through your text. The beginning is easy for me to follow along, then I fall into a black hole and emerge nodding again in the end. Pieces are taken apart and put together again. Throughout I breathe and I wonder about your proposal of "reintroducing air." My understanding of world or space has never been without breath, nor without air. First as a runner, then as a dancer—there is no movement, no life, without air and as I depend on and exhaust myself in/with air, it is as you say, "the very condition that makes interaction possible." But also in my movement-based theory building I deal with spectrums of densities, with materials of different orders, and air, wind, weather, atmosphere, in-spiration/ex-halation—is/has always been present.

So, yes, I wonder where air has been taken out of the equation so that it needs this reinsertion. Maybe you can unfold this one a bit further. And I am curious to take your text into movement practice, to move with "inhalation is atmospheric" and "exhalation is haptic" to see what I make of it. I am tempted to say that the two are entirely intertwined and I could make the same equation backwards. I inhale and feel the structure of my ribcage, it is haptic, I exhale and relax into space, becoming atmospheric. Let's see what you think.

TI The forgetting of air by analysts is certainly strange, and perhaps an index of how much they are trapped inside their own bubble. But it is actually a straightforward consequence of the assumption, particularly prevalent among mainstream theorists of material culture, that the material world consists of objects, and that objects are by nature hard or solid. If all that is material is locked into solid objects, then it follows that everything else is immaterial. That's why air was left out: because it was simply impossible to accommodate it within such a view of the material world. It was literally unthinkable. It only became thinkable once again when the emphasis shifted back from objects to materials. I was in part responsible for this shift with a paper, first published in 2007, entitled "Materials against materiality," in which I argued that it is time to take materials seriously. But it has subsequently become mainstream with the rise of so-called "new materialism." If we start from the premise that things of all sorts (objects, bodies, clouds …) emerge from within the fluxes and flows of materials, then there is obviously a place for flows of air, as with the wind, and with breathing. I would still maintain, however, that the cycle of inhalation and exhalation normally goes only one way (in the direction of time). It is true that it can temporarily go into reverse, as in the sniff, a sharp intake of air that is actually a way of feeling forward (if you are following a scent-trail, for example). But this goes against the grain. It is rather analogous to rowing backstroke, as you take your boat out into open water, before settling into a more relaxed rhythm of forward strokes, or to the first incisions you make, in sawing a plank, by pulling the saw towards you in short, sharp strokes, before settling down to the rhythm of sawing away from you (admittedly Japanese saws are cut to work the other way).

Echo

Reverberation

Noise Resonance

Radiation

Vibration Voice

Sound


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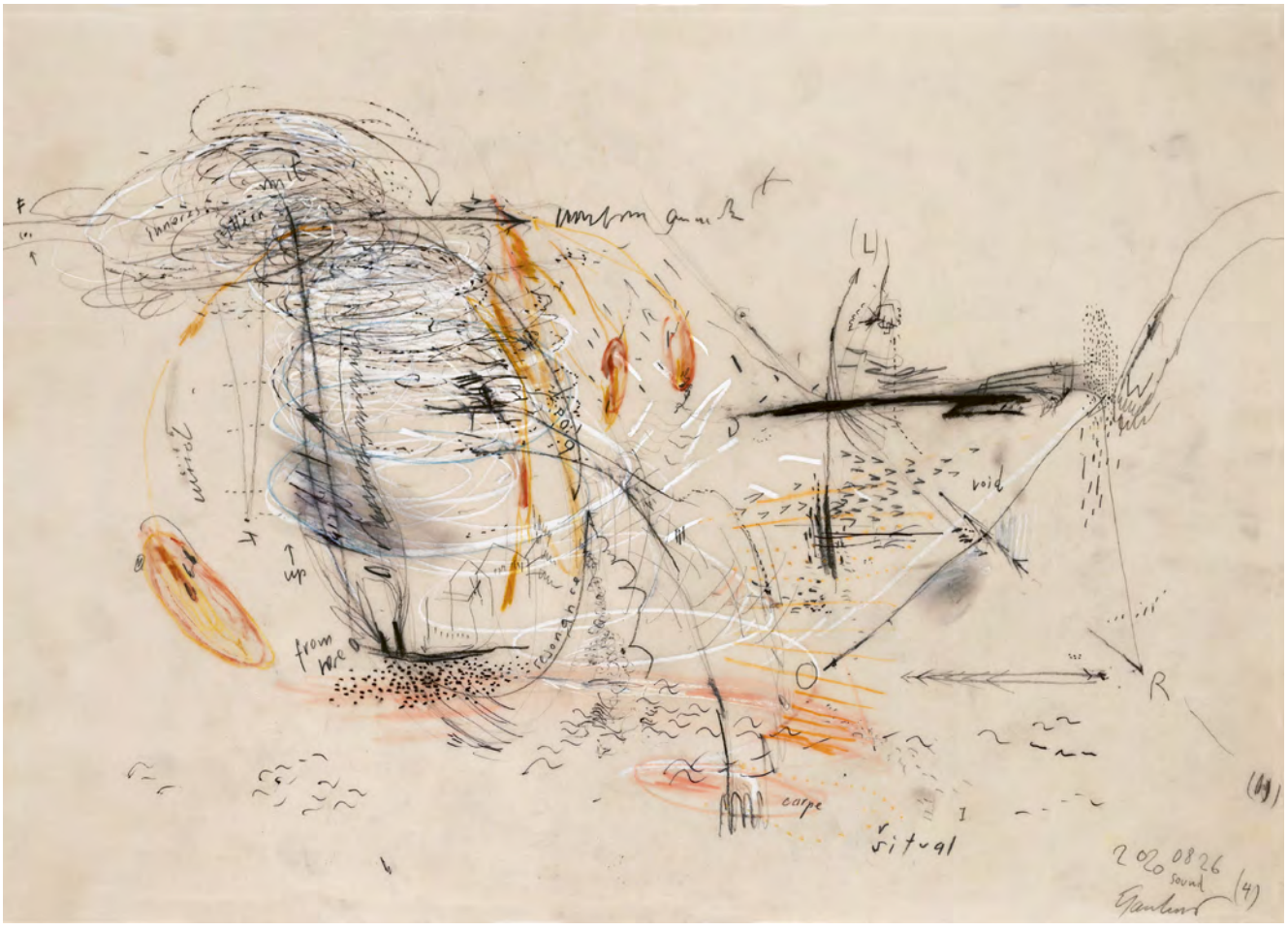
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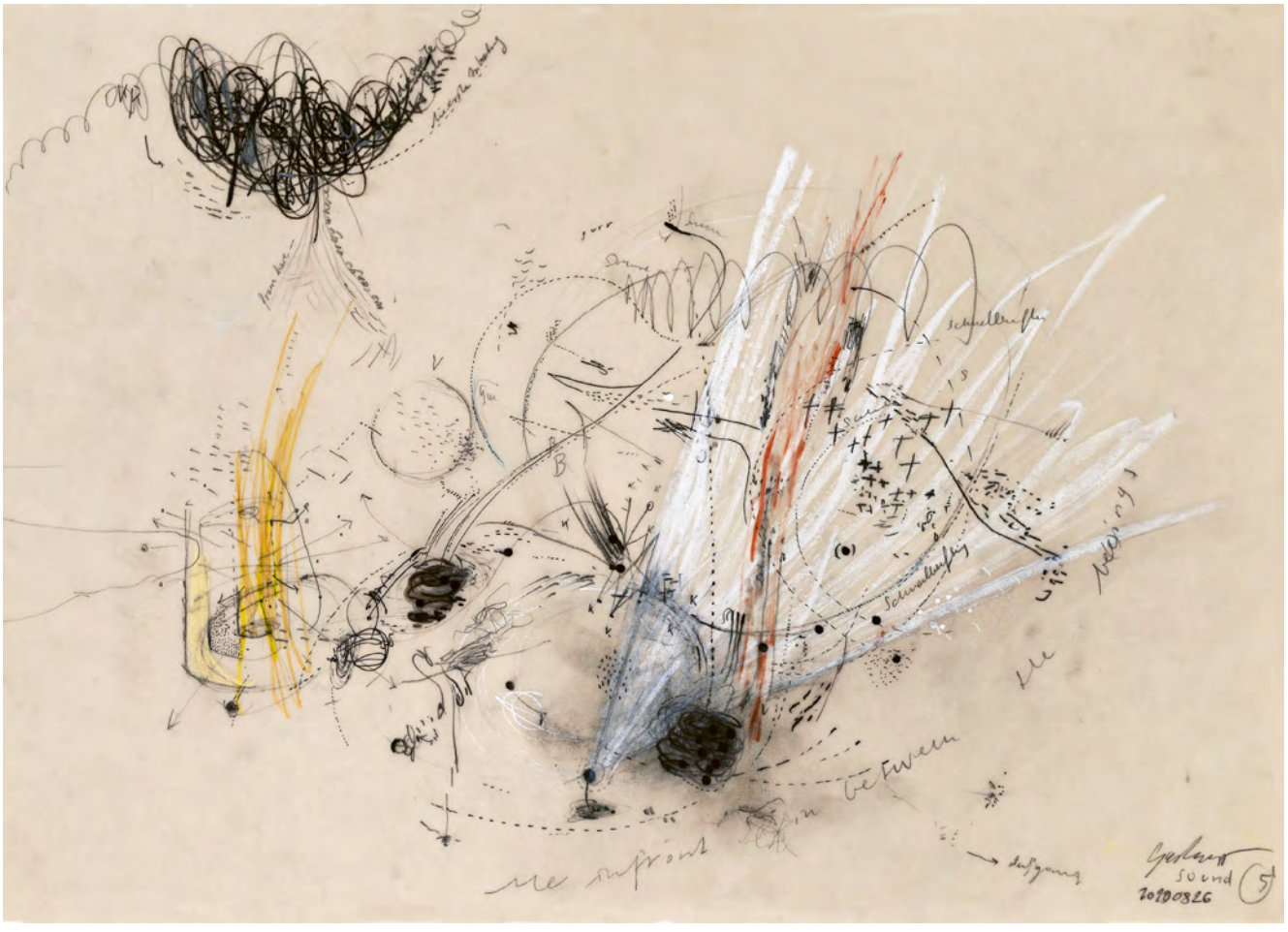
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Straße



109 Vibration
















open
stillness







31 — Nikolaus Gansterer



115 Sound



33 — Nikolaus Gansterer



117 Noise

On how the agency of sound conditions the emergence of an atmosphere

Dirtying.

Blurring in grey. Sometimes in black. In dirty pale blue—bringing, thus, certain light in (fleeing, thin light) or at least not occluding completely the background lightness of this atmosphere.

With different degrees of density. In thin layers.

With some openings.

Introducing confusion, breaking the clarity, disturbing a possible diaphanous transparency.

Marking. Inserting specific, unique although not extraordinary marks. Engraving, temporarily, provisionally. Nothing persistent—brief presences.

Introducing eccentric vectors that scratch the limpid hereness towards its outside.

Tensing. Introducing single lines of tension, or better, strained lines that induce their own tension into their immediate surroundings.

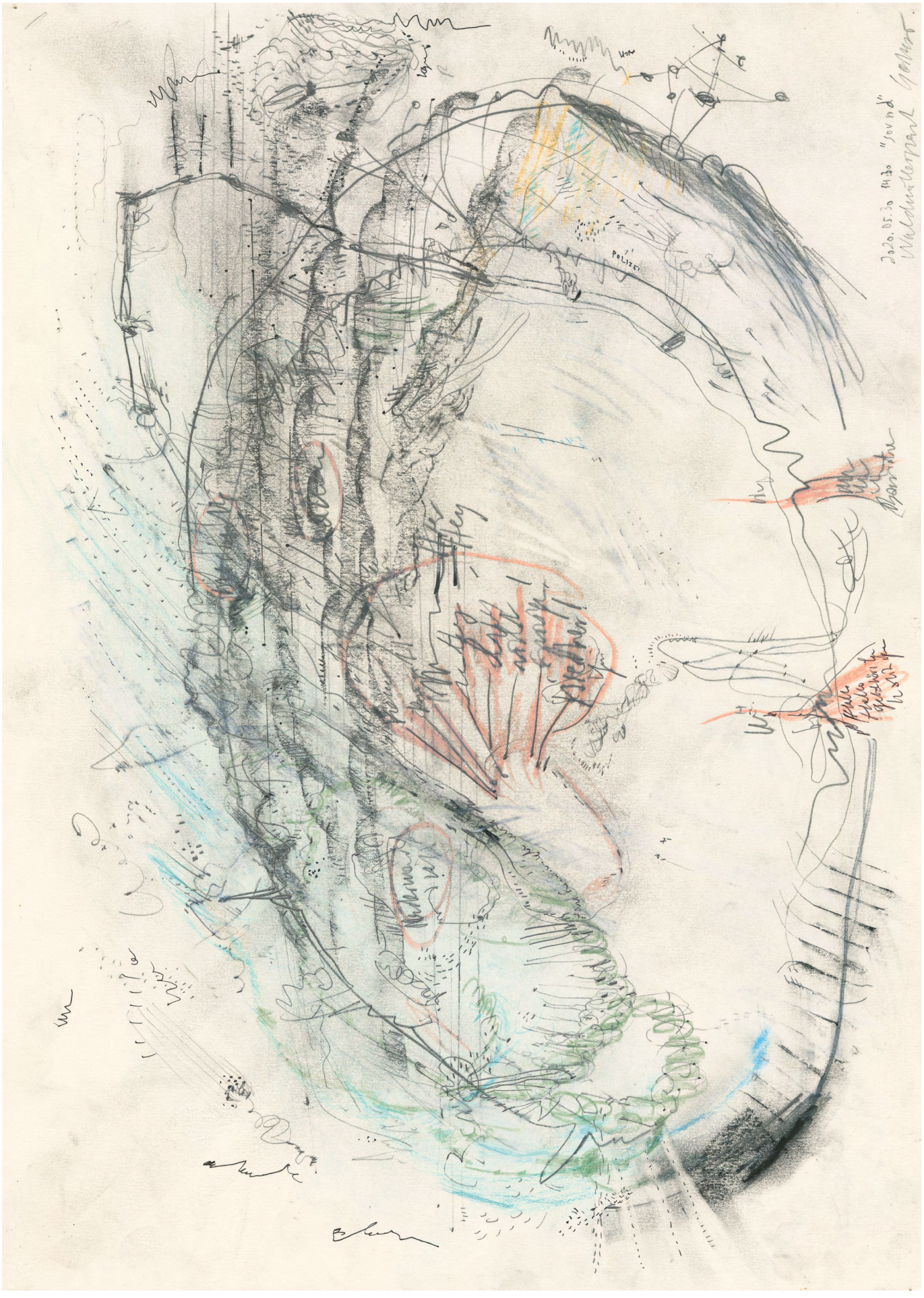
Imposing scratching, rough presences that grip me and this atmosphere, that limit our free development.

Aural presences con-ditioning—saying-with, in a way that oppresses the other voices (silence presences as the possible way of being here, under the regime of incisive loudness).

Tyrannical presences that do not allow this atmosphere to be what it could, what it would, what it might want to be.

Strong figures allowing an ordinary, everyday calm, clarity, distension to appear as the other side, as the negative form, as it-if-not.

Interjections allowing me, even demanding me, to decide: are they part of this atmosphere—is this atmosphere the messy, dirty, tense, rough environment they impose?—or is the atmosphere what they are trying to conquer, this limpid, open, dispense field?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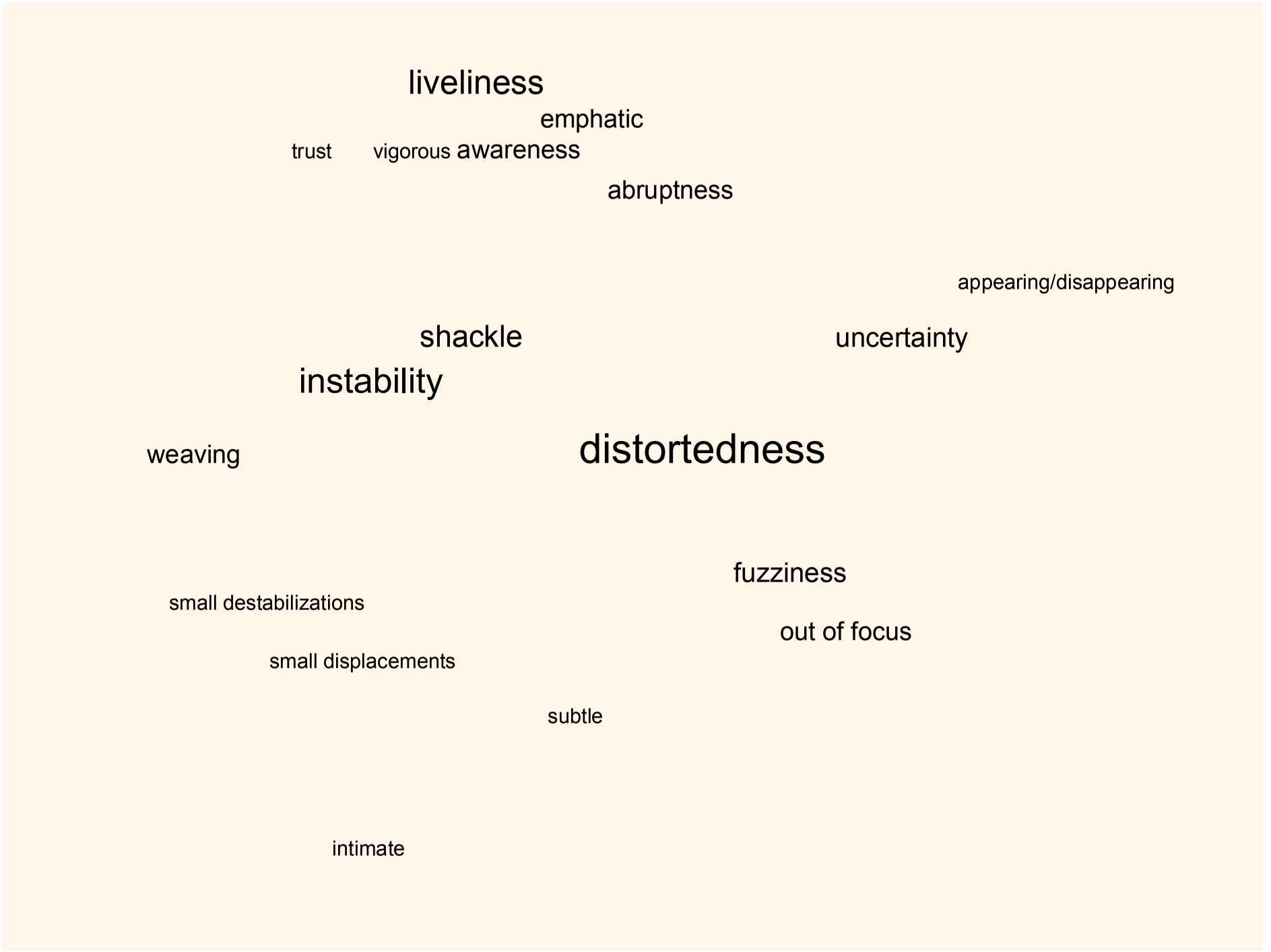

liveliness
emphatic
trust
vigorous
awareness
abruptness
appearing/disappearing
shackle
uncertainty
instability
weaving
distortedness
fuzziness
small destabilizations
out of focus
small displacements
subtle
intimate





Sounding. Everywhere. Discretely but without any consideration.

Sounding to themselves—to the sounds sounding.

Sounding without touching, without willing to touch, to establish any contact, any exchange.

Hard. Hardness. Because their absolute lack of interest, of any intention to communicate.

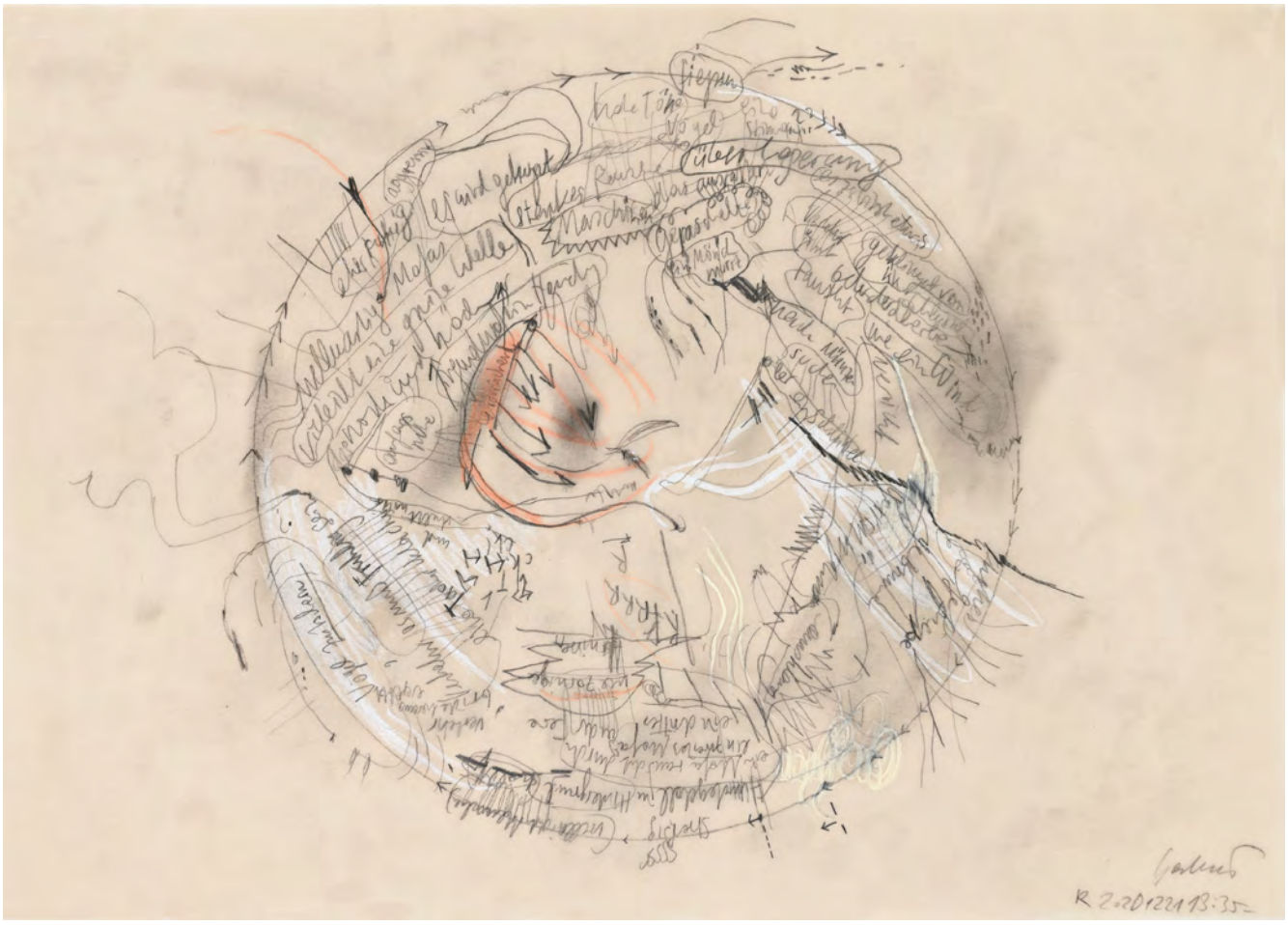
Framing the emptiness in between. Opening a frame for a void.

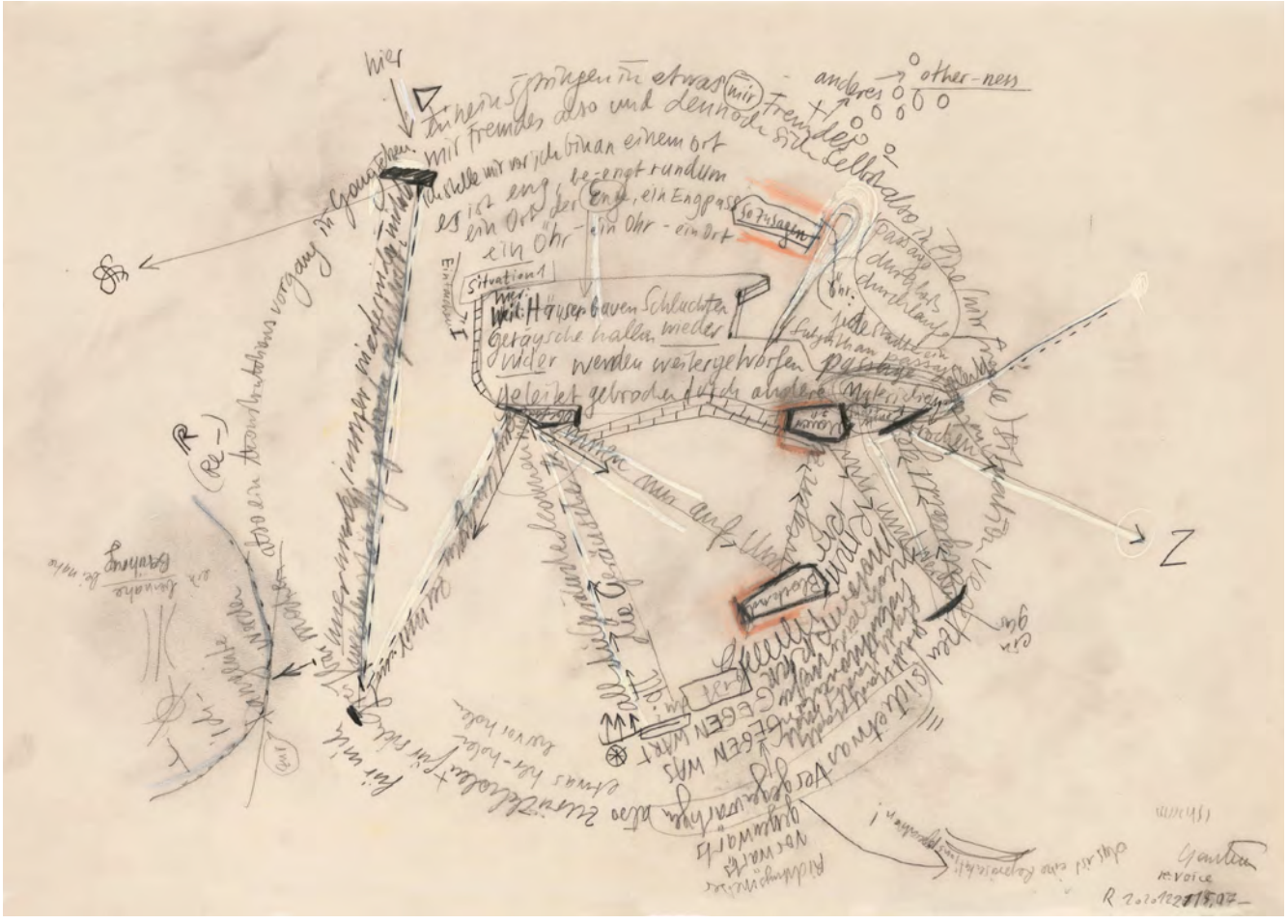
Enveloping. Amorphously.

Cold. Coldness.

Denial.

Until the pressure comes. For a short while—as exception.

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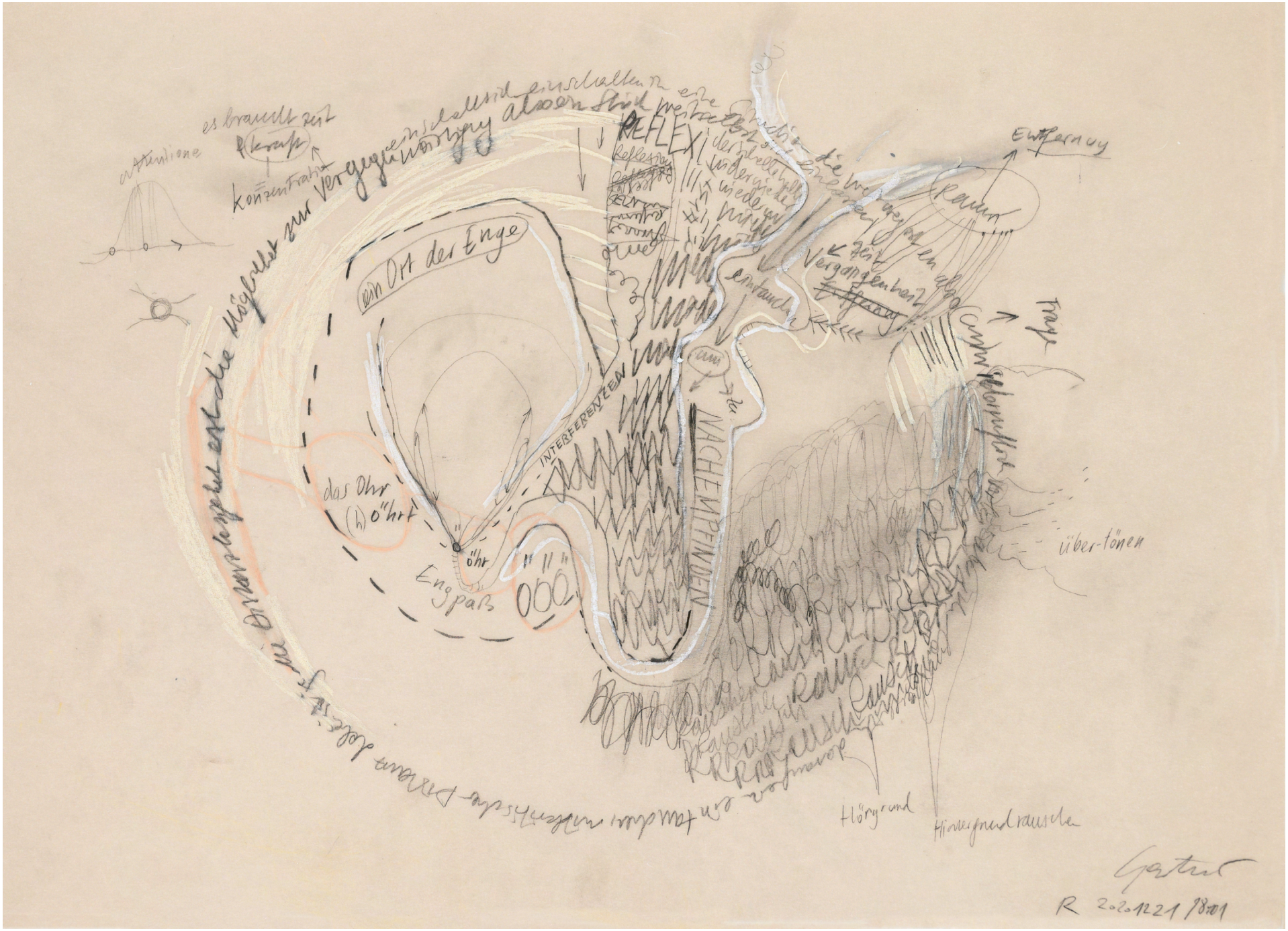
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On how the agency of sound conditions the emergence of an atmosphere

Constant background, reverberating noise, both opening the space—or rather, making the open space presence, or even better, making presence the openness of this atmosphere—and irritating though a diminution of clarity.

Voices "outside"—out of the visual field and, beyond, felt as being somewhere else, in a place I don't know where it is—reinforcing thus the irritation, the uncertainty.

Unidentified sounds—from unidentified sources—contributing as well to this minimal, basal tension.

Percussive, piercing sounds, contributing to the slightly although present enough non comfortable, non soft quality of this environment.

Aural textures nourishing the roughness, the harshness.

Invisible steps.

Chaotic sounds—sounds which not present an intention, a functional direction.

And suddenly, quite loud sounds—load and aggressive. Aggressive and senseless.

In this aural context, "musical sounds"—sounds, for example, with a clear frequency, sound produced in a deliberated way—do not have the agency of transforming the basic character of this atmosphere. Somehow, they are anecdotic, they are not credible. Since sound here, constitute a non-sensical network, a network that does not provide orientation but, on the contrary, reinforces the tensions of this atmosphere—its tensed character.

This reflection on the agency of sound was mediated by the following notation.

The artifacts on this page were produced by means of sound recording, and are therefore only accessible through the following QR codes.


42 — Alex Arteaga


43 — Alex Arteaga


44 — Alex Arteaga


45 — Alex Arteaga


46 — Alex Arteaga


47 — Alex Arteaga


48 — Alex Arteaga


49 — Alex Arteaga

23 — pp. 104–105 

identifier N-Gansterer-20200826-1710-Vienna
agency echo
practice of notation drawing
artifacts of notation a series of six drawings with colored pens on transparent paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-08-26, 17:10
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
description of the atmosphere I'm at my studio by the Prater, moving between inside and outside spaces. Echoing sounds drift over from the horse racetrack across the way. Everything reverberates strangely, even within me. My body becomes an echo chamber.

24 — p. 106 

identifier N-Gansterer-20210501-1728-Vienna
agency resonance
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 circular drawing with pencils, markers, charcoal, tape on beige paper, d = 100cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-05-01, 17:28
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
description of the atmosphere I'm in the studio, having drunk a lot of coffee. There's a trembling inside me. Everything around stirs a strong impulse within me, reacting, resonating—the light, the floor, the sounds, the walls, the materials, even my own clothes against my skin.

25 — p. 107 

identifier N-Gansterer-20211005-1121-Vienna
agency sound
practice of notation drawing (mostly done with eyes closed)
artifact of notation colored pencils on beige paper, 60 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-10-05, 11:21
place Austria,Vienna, PSK building, Kassenhalle
description of the atmosphere I'm here at the former service hall (Kassenhalle) of the old bank building with six other notators. This place amplifies even the smallest movements and gestures—it's like an enormous amplifier, a space that acts as a magnifying glass. Light from above filters through a glass ceiling, creating a soft, diffused glow—indirect, opaque, with a dreamy or even sci-fi quality. I'm a bit tired and stressed and excited.

26 — p. 108 

identifier N-Gansterer-20210512-1430-Vienna
agency resonance
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 circular drawing with various colored pastels, chalks and pencils on white paper, d = 140 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-05-12, 14:30
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
description of the atmosphere Inside my studio, afternoon mood, intense. I rushed here. Still sweaty, with my blood pumping. A rush. I feel quick, alert. Even the light seems to be moving faster through the windows, heightening my senses, receptive. More than much is reaching me—all at once making me draw—dance on the paper circle.

27 — p. 109 

identifier N-Gansterer-20190516-1539-Venice
agency vibration
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils, coal on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2019-05-16, 15:39
place Italy, Venice, on a ferry boat
description of the atmosphere I am here on the Alilaguna ferry boat. The sea is swelling, the engine of the boat is very present, loud, noisy. The waves are shaking me up. I focus on the various qualities of vibrations notating them in a shaky wiggly drawing.

28 — p. 110–111 

identifier R-Gansterer-20190308-1200-Kalba
agency resonance
practices of notation performing, live drawing
artifacts of notation A 35-minute performance using a circular mirror, activating different positions throughout the factory space.
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2019-03-08, 12:00
place United Arab Emirates, Sharjah, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
description of the atmosphere It's the opening of the biennale—tension, nerves. The atmosphere of the space has shifted from an observatory to a stage, an art circus. Inside, I feel calm, deeply connected to the intense experiences I've gathered here over the past six months.

29 — p. 112 

identifier N-Gansterer-20220612-1932-Vienna
agency reverberation
practice of notation automatic writing
artifact of notation 1 circular drawing with charcoal on white paper, d = 100 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-06-12, 19:32
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
description of the atmosphere Alone in my studio, I feel excited, agitated, and wounded. I could scream. The space seems much smaller than usual; it's humid, with thick air. I'm on the floor, moving restlessly around the room. What is happening?

30 — p. 115 

identifier N-Gansterer-20220611-1740-Vienna
agency reverberation
practices of notation automatic writing
artifacts of notation 1 circular drawing with charcoal on white paper, d = 130 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-06-11, 17:40
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
description of the atmosphere Everything that's present speaks. It creates words, lines of thoughts, and patterns within me—silently, continuously. Every thing sends signals. I murmur them to myself, like an inner radio. There's rustling by the window. Is it my tinnitus?

31 — p. 113 

identifier N-Gansterer-20210721-1440-Pula
agency sound
practices of notation drawing (mostly with eyes closed)
artifacts of notation drawing with colored pencils on grey paper, 60 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-07-21, 14:40
place Croatia, Pula, Ulica Kozada
description of the atmosphere I'm in a small garden in front of a house on the outskirts of Pula. It's siesta time. I'm sitting at a table under the patio of a kiwi tree. Four people are around me, dozing in chairs, relaxing in hammocks, or working on their laptops. My son is asleep. I can hear the neighbors eating, making sounds with their dishes. It's very hot, with a breeze coming in from the seaside. My nose is running, I have a cough, and I feel a bit sick and drowsy too.

32 — p. 115 

identifier N-Gansterer-20200809-1500-Vienna
agency sound
practice of notation drawing (mostly with eyes closed)
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-08-09, 15:00
place Austria, Vienna, Strandbad Gänsehäufel
description of the atmosphere I'm leaning against the fence at the Gänsehäufel beach near the Danube. It's really warm, a real summer day. It's Sunday. Loads of kids are playing around me. The afternoon sun is shining from the right. There are two older men nearby speaking in broad Viennese dialect about politics.

33 — p. 116 

identifier N-Gansterer-20180811-1405-Kalba
agency sound
practices of notation drawing
artifacts of notation 1 drawing with pencil and pastels on white paper, 60 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2018-08-11, 14:05

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place United Arab Emirates, Sharjah, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
description of the atmosphere We're taking a break, and I'm alone in the large hall. The workers are dozing in their air-conditioned minibus in the parking lot. It's scorching hot, and I'm sweating; the sweat burns in my eyes. The many birds on the roof and in the factory hall are restless. I'm exhausted, and the air seems to crackle with heat.

34 — p. 117

identifier N-Gansterer-20210521-1437-Perchtoldsdorf
agency noise
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils on white paper, 60 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-05-21, 14:37
place Austria, Lower Austria, Perchtoldsdorf, Perchtoldsdorfer Heide

description of the atmosphere I'm here at this big meadow with a beautiful view of Vienna. The sun is behind clouds. Windy with grey clouds, but warm. Very calm atmosphere. Hundreds of crickets are chirring. Some of my students are whispering. The noise of the crickets is hypnotizing me. After some snacks I am getting drowsy. Its so nice to lie down in the high warm grass. While notating the agency of noise I completely relax and fall asleep. After a cat nap I continue drawing with eyes closed.

35 — p. 118

identifier R-Arteaga-20210203-0700-Barcelona
agency sound
practice of reflection writing
artifact of reflection 1 exploratory essay
notation of reference N-Gansterer-20200530-1430-Vienna-n1
reflector Alex Arteaga
time 2021-02-03, 07:00
place Spain, Barcelona, Carrer Lepant

36 — p. 119

identifier N-Gansterer-20200530-1430-Vienna
agency sound
practices of notation drawing (drawing mostly done with eyes closed)
artifacts of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-05-30, 14:30
place Austria, Vienna, Waldmüllerpark
description of the atmosphere I am sitting on a park bench. It is quite warm. I am paying attention to the passers-bys and the people playing with their dogs as it seems to be this kind of "dog zone" within the park. Wafts of dog shit are in the air. Later the temperature drops as clouds appear. Its getting windy and much more noisy.

37 — p. 120

identifier R-Arteaga-20211006-1517-Vienna
agency sound
practice of reflection diagramming
artifact of reflection 1 phenomenological diagram
notation of reference N-Arteaga-20211005–1125-Vienna
reflector Alex Arteaga
time 2021-10-06, 15:17
place Austria, Vienna, Georg-Coch-Platz

38 — p. 121

identifier N-Gansterer-20210502-1617-Vienna
agency radiation
practices of notation drawing
artifacts of notation 1 circular drawing with colored pencils and pastels on white paper, d = 129 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-05-02, 16:17
place Austria, Vienna, Bildhauergebäude des Bundes, Prateratelier 19
description of the atmosphere I'm sitting alone on the floor in my studio, with sunlight streaming in intensely from outside. I have the door and windows open. It's warm, cheerful, and there's a good flow. A warm lightness percolates the space.

39 — pp. 122–123

identifier N-Arteaga-20220426-1111-Vienna
agency sound
practices of notation iteratively: sound recording, exploratory essay writing, photography
artifacts of notation a series of 12 sound recordings, one exploratory essay, a series of 18 photographies
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2022-04-26, 11:11
place Austria,Vienna, Rustenschacherallee, Zentrum Fokus Forschung
tactics of showing The essay should be printed on one page, to be read simultaneously to the reproduction of the sound recordings (played in loop as a series of sound recordings separated by few seconds) and the photographies (projected as a series of slides in small format)
notes I listened through the omnidirectional microphone. I recorded, wrote and photographed when I sense a resonance between what I hear and the atmosphere present to me.
description of the atmosphere Calm but unstable. I am surrounded (there is not so much activity right where I am). The sky is gray, heavy. Like this atmosphere. A kind of suspended heaviness, a heaviness without gravitation. As if something dangerous (slightly dangerous) could happen anytime. As if everything would be in a stand-by stand. As if a lot of possibilities (they are there but only as potentialities) could be realized in any moment. Suspended. Waiting.

40 — p. 124–125

identifier R-Gansterer-20201221-1335-Vienna
agency voice
practices of notation drawing, writing
artifacts of notation 3 drawings with various pencils on transparent paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-12-21, 13:35
place Austria, Vienna, Favoritenstraße
description of the atmosphere I am alone in my studio room. It's a winter day. I just ate a bowl of red beet soup while listening to the sound recording via speaker. Bit tired. As it slowly gets darker both outside and in, I make three successive drawings until the room is pitch black. I let the sound loop, focussing on its reverberating qualities as the darkness deepens.

41 — p. 126

identifier R-Arteaga-20211006-1121-Vienna
agency sound
practice of reflection writing
artifacts of reflection 1 exploratory essay
notation of reference N-Arteaga-20211005-1125-Vienna
reflector Alex Arteaga
time 2021-10-06, 11:21
place Austria, Vienna, Georg-Coch-Platz

42 — p. 127

identifier N-Arteaga-20190504-1317-Venice
agency sound
practice of notation sound recording
artifacts of notation 7 sound recordings
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2019-05-04, 13:17
place Italy, Venice, Giudecca
tactics of showing Reproduce as a series with 3 seconds between the recordings, in loop. To be heard with headphones.
description of the atmosphere Windy. Cold, a little bit cold. Big presence of water on the bridge. Site open from both sides.Very quiet. Sometimes some people crossing the bridge. Very cloudy—like pressed, a soft atmospheric pressure. Suspended.

43 — p. 127

identifier N-Arteaga-20200511-2009-Barcelona
agency sound
practice of notation sound recording
artifacts of notation 8 sound recordings
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2020-05-11, 20:09
place Spain, Barcelona, Carrer Lepant
tactics of showing Reproduce as a series with 3 seconds between the recordings, in loop. To be heard with headphones.
notes I listen (today with closed eyes) through the headphones/microphone. I record when and as long I recognize the agency at work (the resonance of the agency in the atmosphere).
description of the atmosphere Sunny! Open, calm, slightly festive, distended … easy …

44 — p. 127

identifier N-Arteaga-20211005-1125-Vienna
agency sound
practice of notation sound recording
artifacts of notation 8 sound recordings
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2021-10-05, 11:25
place Austria, Vienna, Georg-Coch-Platz, Postsparkasse building, Kassenhalle
tactics of showing Reproduce with one single loudspeaker as a series with 3 seconds between the recordings, in loop.
notes I started to record when I sensed a resonance between the sound and the atmosphere and I stopped when this resonance ceased.
description of the atmosphere There is tension. There is even a light irritation. But also attentiveness. Diversity. Different poles. different vectors. It is not comfortable, not relaxed, not "easy," although spacious and non-oppressive.

45 — p. 127

identifier N-Arteaga-20190509-1527-Venice
agency sound
practice of notation sound recording
artifacts of notation 4 sound recordings
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2019-05-09, 15:27
place Italy, Venice, Giudecca, Chiesa di Sant'Eufemia
tactics of showing Reproduce as a series with 3 seconds between the recordings, in loop. To be heard with headphones.
notes Sitting on a bench of the church, starting and stopping to record in certain moments.
description of the atmosphere It is luminous: it is an inside space but inhabited by the outside. It is light and there is a lot light, beautiful light. Some people, some times …

46 — p. 127

identifier N-Arteaga-20190510-0850-Venice
agency sound
practice of notation sound recording
artifacts of notation 6 sound recordings
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2019-05-10, 08:50
place Italy, Venice, outside of the Chiesa di Sant'Eufemia
tactics of showing Reproduce as a series with 3 seconds between the recordings, in loop. To be heard with headphones.
notes Siting on the steps to the sacristy. Filter bass register.
description of the atmosphere It is a beautiful day. Sunny. I'm sitting close to the water but not right at the waterfront. Right now a big ship is passing by. There are not many people around. Some of them are passing by. It is quiet but lively.

47 — p. 127

identifier N-Arteaga-20200513-2223-Barcelona
agency sound
practice of notation sound recording
artifacts of notation 7 sound recordings
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2020-05-13, 22:23
place Spain, Barcelona, Carrer Lepant
tactics of showing Reproduce as a series with 3 seconds between the recordings, in loop. To be heard with headphones.
notes I listen (today with closed eyes) through the headphones/microphone. I record when and as long I recognize the agency at work (the resonance of the agency in the atmosphere).
description of the atmosphere Very calm, small sound here and there plus more or less regularly few cars and motorcycles. It's already dark. Almost no one on the street. End of the day. Almost everyone at home.

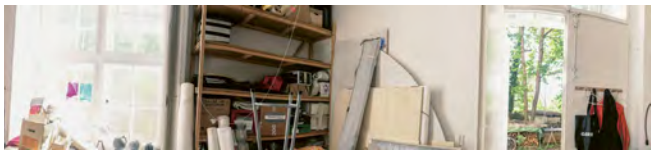
48 — p. 127

identifier N-Arteaga-20200509-2034-Barcelona
agency sound
practice of notation sound recording
artifact of notation 7 sound recordings
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2020-05-09, 20:34
place Spain, Barcelona, Carrer Lepant
tactics of showing Reproduce as a series with 3 seconds between the recordings, in loop. To be heard with headphones.
notes I listen through the headphones/microphone. I record when and as long I recognize the agency at work (the resonance of the agency in the atmosphere).
description of the atmosphere Cold, cloudy, sunset without sun. Sadness (clearly more "in me" than "out there"). Grey, rough somehow.

49 — p. 127

identifier N-Arteaga-20200514-1916-Barcelona
agency sound
practice of notation sound recording
artifacts of notation 14 sound recordings
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2020-05-14, 19:16
place Spain, Barcelona, Carrer Lepant
tactics of showing Reproduce as a series with 3 seconds between the recordings, in loop. To be heard with headphones.
notes I listen (today with closed eyes) through the headphones/microphone. I record when and as long I recognize the agency at work (the resonance of the agency in the atmosphere).
description of the atmosphere Grey, rainy. Autumn although springtime. Quite empty and silent. Less activity. Like muted, with a damper on everything.

38



39



42



44



28 35 37 40 41 43 45 46 47 48 49

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An Aesthetic Dispositive for (Aesthetic) Reflection

Alex Arteaga

(On) how the agencies of machines condition a specific atmosphere.

It is sunny.
There is no one cloud, but it is still fresh due to the soft wind coming from the sea.

It is calm.

Few people around.

Spacious, open, light.
No pressure at all.

The space is as open as the sunny morning of a beginning of a new summer.

(June 12 to 14, 2023, Kalasatama, Helsinki, Finland)

Calm.

Sunny.

Peaceful although a minimal tension of the city resonates.

Minimally windy.

Warm (slightly warmer).

Spacious and light (although a bit, only a bit, denser today).

A sunny morning at the beginning of the summer.

Very calm.

No wind.

Flat sea water.

Sunny, warm, only minimal, almost invisible clouds.

Very few people around.

The first minimal presence of summer humidity.

The light is not so clear today.

Static, almost.

Completed.

No need for any development.

reinforce

support

protect





Usually [machines] operate within the limits of this atmosphere—around it, surrounding it. As the membrane of a sphere.

An iron membrane—porous, nevertheless.

Or does this membrane belong outside this atmosphere, to what this atmosphere is not, to its exteriority?

In any case, the membrane of machines protects this atmosphere, reinforce its cleanness, its light purity.

...

A hard, heavy, although mobile, metallic curtain surrounding the windy light-full openness of this atmosphere.

...

Machines draw a clear difference, a strong contrast—like the reverse side of a mirror in relation to the light that touches its front.

...

Not framing but marking certain spots. Enclosing singularities with a subtle, marginal influence.

Announcing a possible alternative—showing a difference or rather enabling one to be seen—a potential change. Evidencing the fragility of this atmosphere.

... a subtle, a minimal indication: "It could be different, it can change, don't take it for granted."

...

Marking a spatial edge. Introducing, thus, a geographical factor. Reinforcing, this here—that this atmosphere is present here and not over there, and not beyond. Marking a *non plus ultra*.

...

Introducing indifferent, collateral presences, uninterested in this atmosphere. Surrounding it, instead, looking at its exteriority—enabling other possible atmospheres, I guess, somewhere else.

Maybe underneath—a heavy sphere under the lightness of this atmosphere.

Maybe in infinite possible worlds behind me, right now.

But not here—not in, within, as part, as enabling condition for this atmosphere, for its nucleus, for its essence.

...

marking ends

marking exteriorities

marking spots

introducing differences





tensing

introducing movement

now and then



Marking the possibility of invasion—of overwriting what is present now,
the hegemonic allover presence.

...

At the same time showing the resistance, the silent resilience, of this atmosphere—
the power of the actualization of the agencies constituting it, the strength of their
mutual ties, keeping the machine around, resisting the siege. Showing stability
before the mostly mobile and thus temporary character of the machines' agencies.

questioning

...

overwriting

potentially

Introducing movement, dynamism.

...

The development of the machines' agencies present possible othernesses—without
the power of covering, of destroying, of corrupting this atmosphere.

...

revealing through unyielding contrast


0.0

An Aesthetic Dispositive for (Aesthetic) Reflection: A Short Conceptual Outline[1]

Alex Arteaga

If you have been reading this book following the order indicated by the page numbers, on the previous pages you found what I call in the context of this project an "aesthetic dispositive for (aesthetic) reflection." With the use of this formulation, I specify the concept of "constellation" as defined by Dieter Mersch,[2] drawing partially from Agamben's outline of Foucault's concept of "apparatus."[3] In particular, I take as a reference the first two of the three characteristics of an apparatus described by Agamben as a summary of Foucault's statements in a 1977 interview.[4] According to this description, an apparatus is "a heterogenous set" and "always has a strategic function." The way I specify these principles differs from the intentions and interests of Foucault/Agamben. To begin with, I understand "heterogeneity" in the framework of my dispositives as *diversity of media and practices*. Every aesthetic dispositive is realized by activating different media through different practices. In the case of the dispositive I present here, I mobilized the media of photographic image, written language, and linguistic diagram through the practices of photographic recording, exploratory essay writing,[5] and aesthetic-phenomenological diagram.[6] These practices were performed as *aurally-informed practices*[7] in the process of generating the artifacts that constitute the dispositive conceived for this book. This formulation points to the fact that these practices have been performed on the basis of a predominantly auditive co-constitution of the investigated atmosphere,[8] that is, influenced by the accomplishment of preparatory and therefore *in-forming practices of hearing and listening*. Accordingly, the multiplicity and intertwinement of media can already be found in the process of carrying out the practices, before it determines the production of the

— 1 — The dispositive produced for this book and some of the thoughts formulated in this chapter are the result of the conjunction of two research projects. The first, obviously, is *Contingent Agencies*. The second is *The Sense of Common Self*: https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/the-sense-of-common-self/

— 2 — See Dieter Mersch, *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*, Zurich, Berlin: Diaphanes, 2015, especially the chapter "*Con-Stellare*: The Reflexive Epistemic of the Arts." See as well his contribution to this book, p. 261.

— 3 — Giorgio Agamben, *"What is an Apparatus?"* And Other Essays (Redwood City CA: Standford University Press, 2009)

— 4 — Ibd., 2–3

— 5 — For a description and explanation of this practice, see in the framework of the Language-Based Artistic Research Group's exposition: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/835089/1019928/1538/; and Alex Arteaga, "Exploratory Essay Writing. An Aesthetic-Phenomenological Research Practice," in *Phenomenology & Practice*, vol. 17, no. 1, *Practices of Phenomenological and Artistic Research*, 2022, https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/pandpr/index.php/pandpr/article/view/29479/.

— 6 — Originally I conceived this practice as an "auditory diagram." For an exhaustive description, see Alex Arteaga "Auditory Diagramming: a research/design practice," in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sonic Methods*, eds. Michael Bull and Marcel Cobussen, London: Bloomsbury, 2020, pp. 511–528.

— 7 — For my concept of "aurality," see Alex Arteaga and Raquel Ribera, eds., *Aurality and Environment*, Madrid: Ministerio de educación, cultura y deporte, 2017; and Alex Arteaga, "Aural Architecture. An approach to the relationships between aurality and environment," in *Sound Studies and Sonic Arts Reader*, eds. Volker Straebel and Julia H. Schröder, Hofheim: Wolke, 2023. I am currently developing the concept of "aurally-informed practices" in my project *The Sense of Common Self*: https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/the-sense-of-common-self/.

— 8 — Here I use a phenomenological formulation ("auditive co-constitution of an atmosphere") because I followed this approach to the quasi-phenomenon atmosphere in this project. A less technical expression such as "auditive relation to

dispositive. My understanding of the "strategic function" of the apparatuses—one of its constitutive traits according to Agamben/Foucault—is the main reason why I opt for using the term "dispositive" rather than "apparatus", the established English translation of the original French word "dispositif." The strategic, or better, *tactic* function of my dispositives for reflection is to induce a *reflective disposition*. In other words, the agency of the dispositives for reflection I produce is meant to spontaneously motivate an alteration in the way the person exposed to this agency is currently acting so that reflecting becomes the most natural—here, meaning unintentionally adequate, unforced, and viable—variety of action to be performed. With the term "disposition"—in a clear morphological connection to "dispositive"—I mean a certain operative organization of bodily skills. Focused attention, calm sensorimotor activity, conceptual relationally, or logical inference, to cite a few examples, can be understood as skills that should be mobilized and connected to one another in particular ways in order to perform certain varieties of reflection, that is, skills that typically should be connected to one another and activated in order to make the action and, furthermore, some practices of reflection possible. My intention in assembling dispositives for reflection is not to trigger the mobilization of reflection-enabling skills, or not primarily, through a linguistic invitation to reflect, and also not by writing and handling a score for reflection,[9] but instead through the exposition of the reflector-to-be to a constellation of aesthetic artifacts, that is, to an aesthetic dispositive.

The attribution of the qualifier "aesthetic" to the artifacts that constitute these dispositives—and, furthermore, to the dispositives themselves—refers neither to an aesthetic judgement of these artifacts nor to its consideration as being artistic and therefore suitable for examination through aesthetic-philosophical practices. Instead, I consider these artifacts, and thus the dispositives, to be "aesthetic" primarily because they are produced though *aesthetic research practices*. This first justification for qualifying these artifacts as aesthetic obviously requires a second, more fundamental one, which also justifies the consideration of the performed practices as being aesthetic. This fundamental justification can be found in the concept of "aesthetic sense-making" that I am in the process of conceptualizing primarily through my aesthetic research work.[10] I understand this concept as a specification of the enactivist notion of "cognition" in the field of aesthetic practices and aesthetic research and, in turn, as a contribution to providing a reliable foundation for these fields drawing from the enactive approach to cognition.[11] In a nutshell, my concept of "aesthetic sense-making" is based on considering "action" as a fundamental category. According to the enactive approach, living systems, as embodiments of autonomous forms of organization, are networks of processes structurally intertwined with processes performed by their environments. Living systems are situatedly acting networks. Bodily actions—extending the concept of "body" to all living systems and thus understanding

the investigated atmosphere" might be more generally understandable but would imply that the investigated atmosphere exists in and of itself, out there, when I begin to hear and listen to it rather than, as I think, that my practices of hearing and listening are enabling conditions for the emergence of an atmosphere that arises at the very moment I hear and listen.

— 9 — Nevertheless, a score for reflection can be complementary to the dispositive. See, for example, the score utilized in this project on p. 38 of this book.

— 10 — For the first steps in defining the concept of "aesthetic sense-making," see Alex Arteaga, "Embodied and Situated Aesthetics: An enactive approach to a cognitive notion of aesthetics," in eds. Irma Vilà and Pau Alsina, *Artnodes*, no. 20, *Art and Research*, 2017, pp. 20–27, https://www.raco.cat/index.php/Artnodes/article/view/339679/. For further development and contextualization within my aesthetic practices, see Alex Arteaga, "Researching aesthetically the roots of aesthetics," in *Choreographic Figures: Deviations from the Line*, eds. Nikolaus Gansterer, Emma Cocker, and Mariella Greil, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 255–263; Alex Arteaga, "Aesthetic practices of very slow observation as phenomenological practices: steps to an ecology of cognitive practices," *Ruukku* 14, *Ecologies of Practice, July 2020*, https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/740194/862241/; and Alex Arteaga, Emma Cocker and Nicole Wendel, "Thinking aesthetic thinking through aesthetic research practices," in *Journal for Artistic Research* (forthcoming).

— 11 — The enactive approach to cognition was defined in Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosh, *The Embodied Mind. Cognitive Sciences and Human Experience, Cambridge*: MIT-Press, 1991. For further developments, see, among many others: Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life. Biology, Phenomenology, and the Science of Mind*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007,, and John Stewart, Oliver Gapenne and Ezequiel Di Paolo, Enaction. Toward a New Paradigm of Cognitive Science (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2010).

bodily actions as dynamics of embodiment—are in a feedback relation to skills. Actions are enabled by the confluencing mobilization of skills, which in turn are developed through the performance of actions. Accordingly, every variety of action that can be defined implies a certain disposition, that is, a particular operative organization of skills. The concept of aesthetic sense-making that I am developing is based on an understanding of aesthetic as a form of action: *aesthetic action*.[12] I posit that this variety of action is enabled by an intensification of sensorimotor and emotional skills and a simultaneous neutralization of our capacities of logical and knowledge-based construction of meaning as well as will-based and target-oriented action. Through the performance of this disposition, the aesthetically acting body alters the way in which it relates to its environment. The aesthetically acting body does not take a central and dominant position. Instead, it participates in the field of non-hierarchically distributed agencies that it, by acting aesthetically, enables to emerge together with the agents of its environment. This disposition—referring now not only to the bodily skills but furthermore including all the agencies at stake in the system body-environment—leads the aesthetically acting body to *observe*, to *become aware*[13] of the actualizations of all these agencies and to act spontaneously, in-tune with the evolution of the whole system.

The way aesthetic action specifies awareness brings this term close to the concept of "reflection". Following this line of thought, it is possible to minimally outline a concept of "aesthetic reflection" as a form of giving or bending back—literally re-*flecting*—that which encounters the aesthetically acting body in its interaction with the environment, that is, a way of providing a reflection—again, literally—mediated, meaning here simultaneously enabled and biased, by the medium and the practices performed by the aesthetic reflector. This concept of aesthetic reflection comes closer to the original optical concept of reflection. According to it, light encounters a new medium and due to its physical characteristics light bends back its trajectory. In the case of aesthetic reflection, the primary medium that the activity of environmental agencies encounters is a body. The disposition of this body—what I could call "aesthetic disposition"—allows the inherent reflective agency of its matter—in this case, in contrast to the mirror, autonomously organized organic matter—to unfold its reflective agencies and thus give back what touches it. On this basis, and without excluding any other variety of reflection, the aesthetic dispositives I produce might tend to more readily induce aesthetic reflection—a kind of reflection that can only be realized through aesthetic practices.

— 12 — In Arteaga, "Embodied and Situated Aesthetics" (see footnote 9), I denominated aesthetic action as "aesthetic conduct" in order to remark that every action is an interaction, that is, a con-duct (according to its etymology: *con-*, with, and *-duct*, from *ducere*, to lead).

— 13 — See Natalie Depraz, Francisco J. Varela, Pierre Vermersch, *On Becoming Aware: A Pragmatics of experiencing, Amsterdam*, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003.

The function of aesthetic dispositives for (aesthetic) reflection in the research project *Contingent Agencies*

A fundamental aim of the artistic research project *Contingent Agencies* was to conceive and practice—actually, to conceive through practicing—artistic or in my case *aesthetic* research practices able to inquire efficiently and in a non-reductive way into the object of research defined for this project—in short: the way in which specific agencies condition the emergence of particular atmospheres. While conceiving the project, two categories of practices appeared fundamental: *practices of notation* and *practices of reflection*. Subsidiarily, a third category was vaguely defined. It referred to the ways in which the artifacts produced by the first kind of practices, that is, the artifacts of notation or simply the notations, could or even should be handled, presented, exposed, or delivered to potential reflectors for them to perform their practices of reflection in the most suitable way. This third, originally subordinated kind of practice became just as fundamental for me as the other two. The name we finally gave to it was "tactics of showing," although I think that "tactics of sharing" might be a more adequate denomination since, on the one hand it would point to a more inclusive framework for all kinds of media, especially the non-visual, and on the other hand, would manifest a more horizontal relationship between the implicated agents.

The increasing relevance of the tactics of showing or sharing in my work within this project is rooted in my conviction that the above-mentioned object of research cannot be investigated in the paradigm of *representation* or, to be more precise, in the *realist-representationalist* paradigm.[14] The key conceptual foundations of this paradigm, again in a nutshell, are the beliefs that reality exists in itself independently of the actions of those who refer to it, that is, that reality is "mind-independent,"[15] and that the reference to this reality is accomplished through processes of representation, that is, of mental replication of the reality existing beyond the mind. On the basis of these paradigmatic beliefs, one condition for representation is the *objective* status of the entity to be represented, that is, that the entity to be represented must be an object: a clearly contoured thing and therefore undoubtedly differentiated from its surroundings, something an observer can point to and identify as such, in distinction to all other objects and their backgrounds.

Throughout my research, I found the most enriching and contiguous theoretical and conceptual—and even practical!—framework for my aesthetic research practices in the phenomenological movement and enactive approach to cognition. Researching within this context, I do not share the basic beliefs of the realist-representationalist paradigm. On the contrary, I believe that the reality we, living beings, live through and inquire into is dependent on our minds—although never exclusively determined by them—and that the way our minds, which implies our bodies, relate to this reality is not based on representational apprehension, but instead, comprises a co-

— 14 — I take this formulation from and in the sense it was used in: Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosh, *The Embodied Mind. Cognitive Sciences and Human Experience*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991. In tune with my critique of representation, see also the contributions of Emma Cocker in this book.

— 15 — For a phenomenological reflection on this concept, see Dan Zahavi, *Phenomenology*, London: Routledge, 2019.

constitution or *enaction* of ever-evolving and co-emergent subjectivities and worlds. On this basis, I think that the specific subject-matters addressed in this project—atmospheres, agencies, and their interrelations—are clearly not objects. The perceptual, or better, sensuous presence of these issues are not outlined clearly and in a stable manner, either spatiotemporally or in terms of form and meaning. Neither atmospheres—dynamic meshworks of emerging sensuous-emotional qualities—nor agencies—potentialities endowed with transformative power—and obviously also not the ways they relate to one another, are objects and can therefore not be represented.

Throughout my work on *Contingent Agencies* I tried to conceive and perform—again, meant here is conceive through performing—aesthetic research practices that, assuming the inadequacy and impossibility of representation, allowed my research community and me to inquire into the subject matters at stake. The concept of "contingency" has been key in doing so.[16] Basically, I understand contingency in relation to its etymology—from *contingere*, "to touch." On this basis, I carried out aesthetic practices of notation as a way of *entering in touch*, of *encountering* in a sensuous and emotional manner, the investigated atmospheres, agencies, and their relations. Coherently, I did not notate atmospheres, agencies, and their relations. Instead, I notated *in contact with* atmospheres, agencies, and their relations. The resulting artifacts of these *contingent practices of notation*—sound recordings, video recordings, photographic recordings, texts, and diagrams—are neither representations of atmospheres, agencies, and their relations nor containers within which representations might be found. Instead, the artifacts of notations I have produced are *contingent artifacts*, that is, artifacts (hopefully!) endowed with the agency of enabling or at least facilitating contact with the researched atmospheres, agencies, and, mainly, the ways they interrelate.

My aesthetic dispositives for (aesthetic) reflection follow the same line of thought of my practices of notation and the resulting artifacts, and thus aim, first, at organizing—at disposing—the notations I have produced in a way that allows them to unfold their contingent agencies, here meaning specifically their agencies of facilitating contact with the relationships between agencies and atmospheres with which they have been produced. My idea is that the transformative power of these agencies, that is, the actualization of the agencies-as-potential, allows for inducing a reflective disposition, or disposition to reflect, as described in the first section of this text. In a second phase, once the reflector is disposed to reflect, the dispositive is meant to become her *reflexive environment*. In this phase, the contingent agencies of the organized artifacts of notation unfold facilitating the *maintenance of the contact* between reflector and her object of reflection. The reflector feels moved, so my intention, to inhabit her reflexive environment, to focus iteratively on the different artifacts, to sense and follow the resonances that may emerge between them and then, unfolding the agencies of her reflective disposition, begin to reflect, that

— 16 — For an initial approach to the concept of contingency that I mobilized in this project, see Alex Arteaga, "Das Primat des Prozesses. XX Fragmente über radikale Verkörperung und ihre Erschließung durch eine bildschaffende Strategie," in *Et in imagine ego. Facetten von Bildakt und Verkörperung*, eds. Ulrike Feist and Markus Rath, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012, pp. 255–274. With regard to my understanding of the concept of contingency, see also the dialogues with Hans-Jörg Rheinberger and Dieter Mersch in their contributions to this book.

is, begin to perform her practices of reflection. In summary: the aesthetic dispositives for (aesthetic) reflection and the artifacts of notation with which I assembled them constitute a variety of *practices of sharing* as part of an alternative for researching atmospheres, agencies, and their interrelations in a non realist-representationalist but enactivist way through (aesthetic) research practices.

On the aesthetic dispositive for (aesthetic) reflection in this book

In the case of this dispositive, the basic medium in and with which the dispositive was to be realized was chosen in advance, in contrast to other processes of conception and assemblage of dispositives.[17] Actually, the selection of this medium was the first decision made. The first medium is this book. This decision conditioned the selection of practices of notation. The chosen practices should produce artifacts that could be printed in this book. Within this framework, I made the decision about the practices of notation to be performed and the agency to be researched there, where I notated *with* a quite stable atmosphere—with certain variations it remained recognizable in the three sessions of notation carried out on three consecutive days—and *with* the agency of "machines"—the chosen agency—and, as my focus, *with* the way the second conditioned the first.

Once the artifacts of notation were generated, the work began of organizing them on consecutive 22 × 28-cm pages—the dimensions of the pages in this book. The final result, after adjusting my last draft with the help of Marie Artaker and Alexandra Möllner—the designers of this book—can be found on pages 133 to 145.

I decided to present the dispositive before providing the reader—and potential reflector!—with its conceptual framework and the following description and "instructions for use." I did so in order to enable, first, an unmediated contact with the dispositive; and second, the possibility to go back to it with additional knowledge.

The general title of this chapter includes both the formulation "aesthetic dispositive for (aesthetic) reflection" and the focus or object of reflection that this dispositive aims to facilitate: "How the agencies of machines condition a particular atmosphere." When I notated and when I assembled the dispositives, this was the question that I kept present as a background for my awareness. I invite the potential reflectors that decide to use the dispositive to do so as well.

On the first two pages of the dispositive I mobilized the short descriptions written as part of the notation fact file of each session of notation.[18] In most processes of notation, these short descriptions are the most explicit—if not the only—reference to the inquired atmosphere, that is, to one of the terms of the investigated relationship between a specific agency and a particular atmosphere. In order to reflect (on) this relationship, and more specifically, (on)[19] the ways the actualization of an agency conditions an atmosphere, this atmosphere has to be,

— 17 — For dispositives realized in other frameworks, see Alex Arteaga, "Glòries: (Eixample), *A Dispositve for Very Slow Observation*," *Site-Writing,* https://site-writing.co.uk/glories_eixample-a-dispositive-for-very-slow-aesthetic-observation-january-2021/; Alex Arteaga, "Recoleta_Justica social 555. A dispositive for very slow aesthetic observation," https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1790679/1790859/.

— 18 — To see the template of a fact file of notation, see p. 37.

— 19 — "On" is written in parentheses to parenthesize the second word, "aesthetic," in the denomination of the dispositive: the possibility of performing the reflection with the support of the dispositive, can be aesthetic reflection. If this were the case, the process of reflection would reflect the investigated issue instead of reflect *on* it.

of course, partially and in a biased way, reenacted by the reflector before they begin to reflect.[20] This reenactment pursues a re-constitution of the inquired atmosphere, that is, its emergence for the reflector. The reflector must be in contact with the inquired atmosphere in a sensuous-phenomenal way in order to be able to perform reflection. To this end, and furthermore, to intensify the *vocative agency* of these short descriptions,[21] in this case I modified their inner organization and arranged them in a specific way on the surface of the first two pages. Additionally, I provided the date and place of notation, since this information might have an agency complementary to the descriptions. I suggest that potential reflectors dwell in these descriptions, moving freely from one to another, reading them completely or only partially—reading one element of one description and then another element from another—until a sense of the described atmosphere arises, at least minimally, that is, until the reflector inhabits the reenacted atmosphere, until she has the feeling of being-with or being-within this atmosphere.

The next two pages present a first fragment of the diagram and a first photo. The relationship between the diagrammatic text and the image is neither one of illustration nor one of explanation. Instead, the diagrammatically organized words and the photographically produced image may resonate mutually, silently enabling the incipient emergence of a certain sense. I suggest reading and looking at these pages until this resonance begins to flow. As stated above, the question that should be continuously present in the background, the formulation that can help to focus the process of reflection—rather than having the intention of being answered—remains the same throughout the entire time of exposure to the dispositive: How do the agencies of machines condition this atmosphere?

Printed on the following two pages is another photo, which will potentially resonate with a first selection from the exploratory essay. The ellipses between the paragraphs in the essay indicate that they were not written consecutively.

The following pages combine photographs and fragments of the diagram and the essay in different ways. Please feel free to turn the pages back and forth, to read, to look, to close your eyes, to read again, to take a break, to continue looking … So please, take your time to dwell in this reflexive environment. In order to denominate my aesthetic research practices, in general I use the formulation "practices of very slow aesthetic observation." This is the kind of observation that I invite you to practice here: a slow, extended observation that simultaneously keeps in focus both the resonance between the printed artifacts and the way in which the agencies of machines condition this particular atmosphere.

— 20 — See in this regard the score for reflection on p. 83.

— 21 — In relation to the relevance of the vocative agency of phenomenological descriptions, see Max van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, especially chapter 9.

A

ALEX ARTEAGA

It is very inspiring the way you mobilized the verb "surrender" to refer to our invitation. Since our invitation was to "research" the concepts you mention, it results in a provokingly interesting possibility of conceiving research as surrender. I connect this conceptual shift with a possible interpretation of another related verb: "understand" as "standing underneath." Following this line of thought, it would be possible to propose the hypothesis that artistic, or maybe more specifically aesthetic research, implies situating oneself as researcher "under" the objects of research and therefore to not practice a view from above. This ethical principle would consequently imply a fundamental critique to the hegemonic theory underlying research: epi-stemology, to stay over or beyond. Furthermore, this critique can be specified as a critique of knowledge as a means of human control over the environment.

PAULA KRAMER

The notion of surrendering or surrender is fundamental to *Sumarah Meditation,* which in turn has close links to *Amerta Movement*, the lineage of movement practice in which I place myself. So it is not surprising that I speak of surrendering here, and, what is more—Suprapto Suryodarmo (see below) often worked with the word play of under-standing. So yes. And the idea of taking surrendering more purposefully into research, as a critical practice, is inspiring and something I have not specifically taken into consideration before. Coming to know in a way that lessens, rather than emphasizes, human control, yes please. What I would suggest, though, is to practice and conceptualize a researcher position that is placed within or among rather than above or below.

B

AA Reading these sentences I would say that your research practices imply the coexistence of two media: the medium of body movement and in each case the medium of each specific practice of writing, drawing, mark-making, or image production. Accordingly, your practices are always based on or, probably better, informed by body movement. On this basis, I find it very interesting that body movement makes it possible to increase the immediacy between your practices and your objects of research. Body movement could be understood then as an agency for immediate reflection. Would you agree with this interpretation?

PK I agree, yes: my practices are always informed by the body, are even reliant on the body. A tuning, receiving, surrendering, and potentially moving-dancing body. And yes: working with and through the body can allow for increased immediacy between a researching subject and the subject(s) of research. Body movement as an agency for immediate reflection ... maybe rather: the moving body as a resonant tool for practicing immediacy in research. Something like that.

Dancing with/in Atmospheres

Paula Kramer

Here's an attempt, a distillation, a reflection, and a doing again.

Whatever it comes to, my attempt here is to meet and unfold some of the experiences, insights, happenings that took place during the symposium week of *Contingent Agencies* in Vienna, September 2022. A week to practice together, a week to exchange, a week invited
A to surrender—to place, atmosphere, agencies, time-space, world.

All bound into each other, folded, layered, intertwined; co-compositions of a whole. Here we were: receiving, responding to, dialoging with all we could sense, notice, and engage with in a given moment, all there was, seen and un-
B seen, known and unknown. As a dance person, I approach such moments with the body, as directly as I can, in and through movement. Writing, drawing, (mark-)making, and various modes of producing images accompany me.

What follows is a selection of reworked notations gathered during the week. The primary agency I engaged with (as part of a shared agreement of the research group) is named after the chronological numbering (one through six) —temperature, light (dark), wind. Locations were mostly inside the fenced off area of the Zentrum Fokus Forschung (Vienna). Only once did I venture out of this designated field.

C

AA In contrast to the traditional concept of "score" as an artifact defined prior to the actions it aims to direct and the perceptions that may be derived from these actions, your score follows perception or, more precisely, is an artifact that expresses perception. How does this kind of score influence the posterior actions that took it as a reference?

PK Yes, this score was composed following perception and expresses perception—I enjoy your wording. Some aspects of the then-present context and situation made themselves known to me more noticeably than others, drew my attention towards them, fell into me. I noticed particular aspects more than others, tuned towards them. Meanwhile I was moving-dancing and some words intensified into a small poetic field or gesture. I (am) composed a short riddle or mantra (as I called it in this case). Slowly this became my score and during the process of its composition my doing and attending was impacted by it. The lines I drew, the words I wrote, the way I moved, the bird I saw, the skin I felt more prominently—all affected my further noticing, my knowing, my under-standing, my notating, my drawing, my composing and choreographing. So to answer your question finally: I would say the score generates and co-shapes the actions and reflections that take it (and that it takes) as a reference.

D

AA I believe to see a certain contradiction here. In this "agency-entangled-atmosphere"—a beautiful expression of what we mean with "contingent agencies," a clear case of Ingold's concept of "togethering" to which you refer afterwards or the concept that you introduce in the coda: "inter-independence"—includes, as a necessary agency, the experiencing body. According to the phenomenological concept of "co-constitution," a human body, actually your very specific human body, is one required enabling condition for this very specific atmosphere to come to be. Although I understand the feeling of not being needed in what appears to you—the experience of the world as given—would you agree with this other perspective and therefore with the necessary presence of your active body in/with this atmosphere?

PK Yes, I agree with the necessity of my bodily presence as part of any particular atmosphere. And, simultaneously, what I seek to document and convey here is also a deep realization, not of the world as given, but of this world not needing humans (to exist). Needing sun, yes, needing air, atmosphere, yes. But not *needing* humans. And what a relief this can be to us human beings, so conditioned into our role of mastering, controlling, or at least influencing *everything, always*. And most certainly I was fully entangled in that present moment and most certainly I also had an impact on it. And at the same time one of the central weights of being alive as a human was lifted, exactly that of being always already entangled, leaving traces, being responsible, and so on. For a split second I was also fully relieved from that weight, glimpsing the possibility of a world without humans.

One/Temperature
By the wall/
September 19, 2022/late morning/ZFF Vienna

It is quiet. Shifts between sunlight and overcast. Some raindrops fall. Some noise from cars in the distance. A little bit of wind. I meet this place, this moment, its atmosphere, its temperature, with moving-dancing, drawing, writing, listening.

It is cold. Temperature touches my skin. I see and sense linearity, lines. My outlines, yours, theirs. Maybe direction.

With a little bit more sun(light) comes warmth, a few more birds and a little bit more softness. There is surface.

Light competes with temperature, and also the wind. My cells open and contract.

Surface and lines
expansion and contraction
and
the moon.

C This becomes my score. A kind of mantra, with which I move: surface and lines, expansion and contraction, and the moon. Surface and lines, expansion and contraction, and the moon. Most noticeable now, in retrospect, is the physical relationship between coldness and lines, as well as warmth and surface. Simple. But clear information to move with, still.

Two/Temperature
By the wall/
September 20, 2022/late morning/ZFF Vienna

I am outside, by the wall. A little bit more towards the gate. Trying out a sunny spot. In the cold my body tightens and contracts. What about warmth? And what about the space? Does it also contract, or does it widen with the cold, becoming bigger?

In the warmth the ants are getting faster, I am getting slower.

The tenderness of the yellow container, the warmth of the soil.

I am not needed here (at all).

D It is not *the* atmosphere. *An* agency. It is agency-entangled atmosphere, experienced through my body. And what a relief that it becomes so clear, yet again, that I, a human, any human, is not needed here (at all).





Three / Light
Behind the yellow container /
September 21, 2022 / late morning / ZFF Vienna

Quiet, warm, sunny, relaxed, a few clouds, a little bit of business.

Sense of direction. I orientate towards the sun. Light is faster than temperature (in reaching my slow body) and I seem to be able to notice bigger variations. The human body: more susceptible to light than to temperature? Maybe.

With light I study differentiation. The surprising delicacy of three-finger grass (digitgrass).

And depth.
The immense depth between two blades of dandelion.

Light makes
structures.

Builds channels
and volumes,
differentiation and
depth.

Highlights and accentuates
three-dimensionality.

A moment to study the three-dimensionality of space, volume, proportion in and through movement.

Four / Light in the dark
Behind the yellow containery /
September 21, 2022 / evening / ZFF Vienna





I begin in total darkness, face to ground. Complete absence of form. I am so deeply tired I can hardly move. Or think. Or give shape or form to anything.

Then shapes emerge, in the presence of perfect shadows.

Light has no hurry. It is me who is hurried.

Darkness has sinking, has falling.
Light(ness) has rising, has opening, has widening.

I enjoy the softness of the dark, the allowance to sink, lie, and arise very slowly, from there.





Five / Light & Dark,
during a public sharing
Behind the yellow container / September 22, 2022 / evening / ZFF Vienna

Outside, in the dark. Behind the yellow container (again). Large. The space is magic. Both stage and backstage. Light is present, dark is present. I have extended time to move. Visitors mill about, mostly inside, sometimes passing by. Nikolaus with a large sheet of paper outside also. Others?

Serving. I am here to serve both darkness and light, shadows, thresholds, diffusion, turning of the world.

I study the rising and falling of night, of light. I disconnect. I run. My running turns on a light. A motion sensor on site.

Continuing to open—range, atmosphere. Again and again. At first wobbly. Then with might—as if I could move heaven and earth, day and night. Maybe we can touch the threshold between light and dark? Maybe we can move, move with, spatially impact, shift this intangible matter? Where light and dark meet becomes haptic, partner in moving, friend.

Wanting to die into the depth of the dark ground. But I get up again. It is possible.

Six / Wind
Park across the street / Under the trees to the left / September 23, 2022 / late morning / outside of ZFF Vienna

There's quite a bit happening. It is sunny, light and shade very present, large shade trees, a squirrel, a few crows. Various sporting activities, a woman with many dogs.

Wind appears as temperature, as space maker, as mover of everything. To insert myself into the world of wind. Entering into a version of Ingold's often quoted *togethering*.[1]

Playfulness
Surprise.

I am touched by wind
I am hit by the wind
just like the tree.

Just like you.

As a whole (body) and in parts
(hair, leaves, hands).
A moment to recognize similarities in being of material as well as being part of the bountiful buzzing understood as world.
So much happening.

— 1 — Tim Ingold (2011) *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, London: Routledge, p. 226: "Where studying of is a process of othering, studying with is a process of togethering" (original emphasis).

E

AA *INTER-INDEPENDECE*

"Inter-indepence" seems to me to be a fantastic concept in order to interlace two fundamental vectors in the process of life, clearly observable in the way organic matter organized itself within the environment: the tendency of constituting autonomous selves and the orientation towards the selves' environments. In the framework of the enactive approach, as a further development of the theories of autopoiesis, these two vectors are denominated "autonomy" and "structural coupling." I think that the concept of "inter-independence" reveals that the opposition between these two vectors is only apparent and the result of a language-based dualism. Do you think that this argumentation is coherent with Suryodarmo's concept and practices?

PK *INTER-INDEPENDECE*

We may need to return to this one. What do you mean with "only apparent"? Maybe: can only be argued for when looking from the outside onto a surface? And: whatever I would say on Prapto's behalf is mere speculation. Speaking from how I understand, have learned, or employ the proposal, I would say: Yes—a strict dualism between autonomy and interdependence is a human product, stemming from limited denominational practices. "Life" or "world" or "reality" are deeply interwoven (and simultaneously not), which is why inter-independence is so productive. It oversteps dualistic boundaries, couples and at the same time makes space, leaves room to maneuver.

What remains (for me, most prominently) from these moments of deepened engagement with various agencies and focused notation as well as our discussions on what notation or agency might be and not be—what remains is a refined sensuous knowing of agencies as singular, impactful, yet inextricably linked happenings. Of atmospheres as complex compositions of such agencies, their presencing, my/our awareness, listening, receiving, and noticing, our constant exchange. Agencies are, atmospheres are, we all are—part of a constant mutual becoming of world, of moment, of sensing in time. In inter-independence.

This term well resonates with and/or meets my experiences of dancing with a succinct focus on "one" agency (or two, or several)—inextricably linked to everything else happening, yet also expressive and noticeable on its own. I have studied inter-independence with one of my central movement teachers, Suprapto (Prapto) Suryodarmo (1945–2019), originator of the movement practice *Amerta Movement*. Suryodarmo's work is still only scarcely discussed in writing; much of the work and terminology has (purposefully) been passed on in direct, verbal teaching contexts since the 1980s up to his death.

E Inter-independence is probably one of the most impactful concepts taken into bodily practice for me personally as it allows for both boundary, clarity in motion and form, directionality, choice, and composition whilst recognizing and expressing our fundamental interconnectedness with and dependence on each other, world, situation, structure, climate, field, atmosphere, power, and so on.

Dancer Bettina Mainz, who had a longstanding relationship of practicing with and alongside Suryodarmo, defines inter-independence as "a relation that relies on but does not lie on and that can stand on its own" (2014: 81). Movement artist Sandra Reeve, also deeply engaged in the context of *Amerta* for decades, relates a memory when I ask her about her notion of inter-independence: "A practice of 'bamboo movement' in the pendopo on Prapto's land. As we were moving, seeing the bamboo grove growing further up in the land, large bamboo growing close together, and yet each cane independent, allowing the wind to pass through the spaces between—close together, not isolated and yet not leaning on each other—the space and the wind between allowing new movements, new whispers, new songs" (Reeve, personal email May 11, 2023). Whilst poetic rather than analytic I find both considerations helpful for a broader understanding of how it is that we are in relationship with the complex composition that is our world. "Dependent, independent, interdependent, inter-independent" —in this series of offers and proposals Prapto might have invited movers to explore the field of and around inter-independence. How each appear and apply to practicing movement in the context of others and world, as well as to living, making music (e.g., Jones 2014) or communicating. (Galanter 2014: 109)

F

AA I think that this formulation clearly shows how you practice "inter-independence" as a form of reflection. If this were correct, "inter-independence" would be not only a concept but also a reflective practice.

PK Yes. And were I asked to be more precise, I would say inter-independence is a foundational practice, or a basic premise, that impacts conceptual, reflective, but also bodily and choreographic practices. On the whole both a concept and a proposal for doing, trying, experimenting with.

Although I have moved with(in) the agentic forces and the bounty of world for years and decades prior to the exploratory week of *Contingent Agencies*, this week has allowed a specific (and yes, simple-not-simple) clarity through practice:

I am moving
with temperature
with light and dark
and the wind.

Inextricably linked
yet standing on their own
speaking on their own
making / marking / touching
my moving differently.

F Under this sun, I (we) cannot experience light without temperature. Or temperature without light. Or wind without temperature. And yet I (we) can turn and open towards, tune into agencies with surprising differentiation. The physical sense of each agency, of light, of temperature, of wind—is clearly diverse. Even if only momentarily—unique sensations arise in my body and movement emerges differently, whilst I am, we all are, simultaneously linked to a much wider and much more complex context.

— Ingold, Tim, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, London: Routledge, 2011. — Jones, Tim, "The Musical Portal," in *Embodied Lives. Reflections on the Influence of Suprapto Suryodarmo and Amerta Movement*, eds. Bloom, K., Galanter, M., and Reeve, S., Axminster, Triarchy Press, 2014, 157–164. — Galanter, Margit, "A Presencing Dial," in *Embodied Lives. Reflections on the Influence of Suprapto Suryodarmo and Amerta Movement*, eds. Bloom, K., Galanter, M., and Reeve, S., Axminster, Triarchy Press, 2014, 103–112. — Mainz, Bettina, "Touching Forgotten Realities. a Practice of Detecting the Happening," in *Embodied Lives. Reflections on the Influence of Suprapto Suryodarmo and Amerta Movement*, eds. Bloom, K., Galanter, M., and Reeve, S., Axminster: Triarchy Press, 2014, 75–85. — Reeve, Sandra, *Personal Email to Paula Kramer, Subject Line: Inter-Independence*. May 11, 2023.

Khôra
Touching Sensing
Tasting Reflecting
Notating
Atmospheres

Arno Böhler

My article considers atmospheres as the agency of a relational affair among lived-bodies, sensing, tasting, reflecting, and notating them on different planes:

On a physical plane, where lived-bodies register the elementary vibes in a room: the coloring of a local light situation, the sounds, acoustically gathering in a local area of space, etc. On a sensual plane, on which a lived-body starts to develop a sense of taste that allows a body to atmospherically feel the emotive quality of the relational affairs it is in touch with.

On a self-reflexive mental plane, on which a lived-body finally starts to detach from its local atmosphere to reflect on the outmost cosmic atmosphere that every body shares with all other bodies universally. Like a public park, open for all.

In *Tímaios*, Plato addressed this ultimate atmosphere under the name Khôra (χώρα). In the first place, Khôra is an empty, formless space, separable from its content. On the other hand, *s/he-id* receives all forms that appear in space. Like a nurse of becoming, Khôra even takes care that the appearance of things in space matters well into the course of their delivery. However, one of the most astonishing aspects of Khôra comprises Khôra's inflammability. *S/he-id* can catch fire. Plato's most famous disciple, Aristotle, therefore called Khôra first matter, literally first wood (πρώτη ὕλη).

But what actually inflames first matter? Tantric philosophies assumed that the aspirations of one's heart induce the mattering of first matter. Once a heart is in touch with this outstanding form of matter that covers all forms of beings, it cordially inflames first matter with the flame of one's aspirations. The tantric term for this touch is *vimarśa* (Skora 2007, 424).

Crossing binarities

I am struggling with an untimely philosophical problem in this article. Namely, with Khôra (χώρα), a term, that occurred in Plato's *Tímaios* about 2,500 years ago. Even most distinguished experts in the field of ancient Greek philosophy could not yet find a stable interpretation of this nomadic, wandering term (Derrida 1993). As if Khôra would be no stable matter at all, but a chaotic, instable form of matter, a process of mattering rather than solid matter. Matter in the making, and not as an already fully constituted form of matter that has already mattered in fact (Barad 2007, 3–38. Manning and Böhler 2014, 20).

Even the transliteration of the first letter of this word is instable: should I write Khôra (χώρα), or Chôra? And what is *her/his-id's* gender? Shall we address Khôra as *she*? Or *he*? Or *id*[1]? Or all at once, *s/he-id*?

I would vote for *s/he-id*. Because if one makes the spatial aspect the agency of one's reflection, Khôra actually appears to be a neutral space. Space, insofar as one can separate *id* from the things *id* contains. In this respect, Khôra assumes the form of an empty container that exists in *id-self,* non-identical with the materials that emerge in space.

But this is only one aspect of Khôra, says Tímaios in his speech on the cosmogenesis of Nature in Plato's *Tímaios* (Plato 2021, 47E–64D). Because the khoratic concept of space does actually imply additional aspects, which even seem to contradict this aspect of space as a neutral, empty container, that is, an *id.*

First and foremost, it is the receptive quality of space that is incompatible with the container model of space. Because, once space is actually ready to host all kinds of matters and things to emerge, space is obviously no empty container anymore, but at least potentially filled with all kinds of spatial matters and things. When light, for instance, expands in space, space is filled with a bright waving body; at least in the area of its expansion. The same happens, once a sound expands in space. The area of space, in which it expands also starts to wave, now on the acoustic spectrum. In such cases, space evidently no longer appears as an entirely empty container, but as the receptacle of a luminous and acoustic form of mattering that actually expands in space in a particular wave-form, with a certain wavelength and speed and within a certain spectrum, etc.

Waving bodies

Even before the heavens appeared in space, says Tímaios (Plato 2021, 48B), Khôra, the void, actually received the mattering of the four elemental bodies—fire, earth, water, air—and ether, which Tímaios perceived to be the most sublime form of an air-like atmosphere (Plato 2021, 58D). Ever since then, at least, space *id-self* has lost its first quality of being just a neutral container, for now *id* has become a vibrant matter (Bennett 2010), atmospherically filled with all kinds of surging materials, which actually did emerge in *id* with distinct qualities. These first bodies were not yet solid things or particles according to Tímaios, but rather waving expansions of space *id-self*:

— 1 — I use "id" as an allusion to Sigmund Freud's "Es" which is the unconscious, instinctual source of bodily needs, emotions, desires, and wants, which are already operative at birth.

Surging lightscapes, surging soundscapes, surging airscapes, surging landscapes, and even surging particles. They actually stimulated space within *id-self* by making *id* a vibrant matter that started to taste earthy, airy, watery, fiery, etheric, wherever these elemental bodies emerged. Space *id-self* thus became, at least partially, a waving matter.

Changing the perspective from the empty-container model to the perception of space as the receptacle-of-vibrant-matters actually did change Khôra's sex and gender according to Tímaios. Space shifted from the neutral *id* to a vibrant *she.* Because the *she-aspect* of Khôra is precisely a space ready to receive the countless forms of waving matters in *herself.* Being a receptacle of all sorts of matter and things that once atmospherically appeared in space, Khôra thus became a formidable *she-id.*

This double face of space marks one of the core dilemmas Tímaios faced while he was searching for the very first principles at work in the cosmogenesis of Nature. In fact, right in the middle of his talk, his mind became foggy and confused. It seemed as if his speech had reached a dead end. Losing the self-confidence of his past argumentations, Tímaios slowly started to realize, step by step, the far-reaching consequences of his insight into the double nature of Khôra: Is space an empty container or the receptacle of vibrant matter, or both at once?

It was the relational affair between space & matter that actually started to hit, trouble, haunt, and blur his mind right in the middle of his talk. Little by little, Tímaios had to grasp that the two first-principles, namely Being and Becoming, which he so far has assumed to be enough to consistently understand the first-principles of Nature, are actually not enough. For when the relation between space & matter became the agency of his reflection and philosophical inquiry, he finally realized that the very Nature of this subject compels him to postulate another, a third first-principle. To consistently explain the first-principles at work in the cosmogenesis of Nature, one needs a third principle, capable of mediating ($\chi_{(\hat{o}ra)}$) between the first two principles Being $\chi_{(\hat{o}ra)}$ and Becoming. "We did not distinguish a third entity at the time as we thought it enough to have these two" (Plato 2021, 49A), says Tímaios to his listeners: Socrates, Critias, and Hermocrates. He had to confess that this insight was not at all there right at the beginning of his speech. But in order to allow both ends Being and Becoming to be entangled and intra-connected (Barad 2007), one actually needs a space that mediates between them. Otherwise, Tímaios argues, Nature would split into two separate parts that would not be capable of communicating with each other at all. Without Khôra, the third principle, Being and Becoming, would be no relational affair.

But even though Tímaios became more and more convinced by virtue of his mindful investigations into the matter to accept the argument that one needs a third first-principle to consistently explain the cosmogenesis of Nature, he was still not sure in this critical phase of his talk, how to name and define *id*?

Because even now, while "the argument seems to compel us," his attempt to bring this "obscure [third] form in words" (Plato 2021, 49A) still remains a matter of concern and intense research for him. First, because thus far he has lacked the need to posit such a third principle among Being-χ(ôra)-Becoming at all. And second, because this third principle seems to be an instable matter in *id-self.* a wandering womb of becoming, which actually resists all final ends and definitions. Tímaios is very explicit about this. "What should we understand its capacity and nature to be?" (Plato 2021, 49A), he asks his listeners, addressing their hearts, and probably also his own. What is it, that actually makes Being-χ(ôra)-Becoming a cross-relational, intra-agential, many-layered eco-logical affair (Barad 2007, Bennett 2010, Guattari 2000, Deleuze 1988)?

After a wavering while, during which Tímaios's mind was re-considering everything he had said so far once again with fresh eyes, he finally risked to carefully propose a first answer concerning the very Nature and capacity of this third principle to his listeners and to us, the readers of Plato's *Tímaios*. The best way to characterize this aspect of Khôra's Nature is to consider *her-id* to be "the receptacle of all coming into being, like its nurse" (Plato 2021, 49A).

The pulsating space of vibrant matter is now carefully related to the figure of a nurse, namely a nurse of becoming. *She,* Khôra, being a receptacle of becoming, actually even takes care of her deliveries in space, like a nurse. In order to feel ecologically at home (Guattari 2000) in the womb of Nature with all the matterings that she receives, one finally has to assume *her-id* to be a third principle. That is, a space that constantly welcomes everything that comes into being in the course of its delivery. In this respect, *she,* Khôra, appears as the space of birth. *She* takes care that the delivery of things in space actually works out well. This mode of care overrides, indeed, the all too simple concept of space as a neutral substratum (*hypkeímenon*) and empty container that underlies everything that appears in *her-id* in the course of time.

In an interview that I carried out with Erin Manning and Brian Massumi in 2014, they used the beautiful and telling formulation "care for the event" to bring this matter to a crucial point (Manning and Böhler 2014, 14–15, Massumi and Böhler 2014, 38). Plato's nurse of becoming not only cares for the birth of things that have already been delivered, but *she-id* also takes care of those virtual events in which something starts to matter that so far has not yet gleamed, flashed, and mattered. The formulation "care for the event" thus becomes a matter-of-future-events that still wait for their hour to matter once.

In the course of Tímaios's talk, Khôra, space *id-self,* continuously gains more and more aspects and female attributes. These female attributes apparently become most intense once the field of vibrant matter, operative in the womb of Khôra, finally becomes a pregnant matter of a future tense. Like an angel of the Earth, *she,* Khôra, actually takes care that

the mattering of a virtual future to come will have taken place once, and finally, will have worked out well by its delivery within the manifest realm of Nature herself (natura naturata).

It is precisely this virtual aspect where *she* and *id* are also transformed into a *he.* Because insofar as *she* is giving birth to something and/or somebody that so far only potentially existed, *she* is inherently drawn toward a virtual form of matter, namely a *he.* This virtual form of matter is actually full of unborn possibilities that are still waiting in a virtual cloud for their hour to collapse once. I have borrowed the terms virtual cloud and collapse from quantum physics to allude to the strange similarities between contemporary physics and Plato's *Tímaios*.

In this transformative passage from the actual to the virtual, *she,* the nurse of becoming, actually is transformed into a *he.* Into materia-in-potentia or virtual matter.

S/he-id, being structurally all these energetic aspects at once, Khôra finally allows a virtual cloud to matter once and thus to immanate (Agamben 1999, 220–239) in space. Since Khôra is all these aspects at once, *s/he-id,* the sex and gender orientation of Khôra cannot be reduced to one of these aspects. *S/he-id* is simultaneously mother, child, father, and nurse, says Tímaios, because only the contingent co-operation of all these factors actually fulfills the creative assemblage of being able to let something matter in such a manner that the thing in question thereby actually appears anew in space within a concrete local situation and site-specific circumstances. "So let this concisely argued account be the one that receives my vote; there is being, space and becoming, these three, even before the heaven came into being" (Plato 2021, 52D–E).

The third principle, Khôra, must be even older than heaven, argues Tímaios, since even the planetary constellation of a sky once appeared in space. And since this third principle, Khôra, occurs between the other two first-principles Being-χ(ôra)-Becoming, right in the middle of their cross-over χ, it always remains hard to determine Khôra's definitive meaning once and for all in a stable, and not just in a tentative, nomadic manner.

Khôra (χώρα):
Crossing atmospheres χ with solid particles

Fading in … fading out. Fading in for a while, fading out again, after a while—Waving intervals, over, and over again. Appearing-Disappearing, over and over again …

Does Khôra, this movement among being and non-being, not haunt us all and always, at least as long as one lives? Is *s/he-id* therefore not exemplarily a matter that matters for all and none, to bring the subtitle of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* into this problematic matter?

For most of us, Khôra probably seems to be an idle problem of philosophers only. Something that is insignificant for the majority of people in their everydayness. But in fact, I would like to claim, *s/he-id* isn't. Because:

Being-born-in-space,
spacing,
which phenomenon does actually matter more for all of us,
especially since we are already incorporated bodies in space?
I, myself.
My readers,
and, and, and … all the non-human and over-human bodies,
with whom we, my readers and myself,
share our being-in-the-world collectively, contingently?
As a relational affair,
our being-in-the-world is exposed to all these human and non-human-bodies,
which surround myself in a worldwide manner.
And all these bodies, human, non-human, and over-human,
have taken place in space before my own delivery in 1963.
Waving landscapes and solid particles,
which trigger my lived-body and stimulate its sense of taste atmospherically.
All these molecules, plants, animals, humans, and over-human bodies,
which share their lives with my own embodied being in space,
all of them are part of my *natura naturata*, that is,
of that part of Nature which has already completed
its birth in time & space as a first perfection.

Tímaios did highlight this matter himself in his speech. The very first bodies, he argues, which emerged at the very beginning of the creation of a universe in space were not at all human bodies, of course, but waving matters: the bodies of the elements. Their bodies started to matter first as plane atmospheres, even before our planetary sky appeared in space. Their delivery in space transformed certain areas of space at the very beginning into vibrant fields. Some scholars therefore even compared Khôra with field theories in contemporary physics (Erler 2006, 460).

All the solid bodies and particles that we sense today are therefore already secondary matters for Tímaios *(materia secunda)*. They emerged chronologically on the basis of these atmospheric bodies: the particles of inorganic matter first, and, once planet Earth herself had reached a more or less solid form within the heavenly sphere among all the other planets —the plant, animal, human and over-human bodies could also

start to emerge in space in the evolutionary uprising on Earth. Step by step, performing one quantum-jump after the other, all these bodies chronologically unfolded finally on the surface of our planet, one after the other. And each of them is itself a highly complex assemblage of a multitude of bodies that contemporarily constitute their coherent Nature and cohesion.

From today's perspective, all these bodies, which actually surround our lived-bodies, have already emerged in space a long time ago. Countless mattering(s). They already took place in the geography and genealogy of our planet Earth, which today is actually still in the making. And even if more than human forms and bodies would pop up in the uprising course of our galloping times in a trans- or post-humanist future, they as well would have to appear in space, at least once, to actualize their virtual possibility within the manifest realm of Nature. Even a trans- or post-humanist species would therefore have to immanate in Khôra and ask for the special hour, where *s/he-id* would be ready to receive their over-human forms in the wake of a trans- and post-humanist delivery. And the nurse of such a becoming would have to take care that their future appearance in space actually will have worked out well at the end, at least once.

Khôra (χώρα): The taste of atmospheres

If we reconsider the question of the four elements and their waving expansions in space, we now have to add that the expansion of the elemental bodies actually disseminates a particular flavor and taste while they emerge in a certain area of space. The entire area of their expansion actually starts to taste watery, fiery, windy, earthy, says Tímaios, because their waving presence in space always possesses a certain flavor. "And yet, the nurse of becoming, rendered watery and fiery, and receiving the forms of earth and air, and adopting whatever other characteristics are a consequence of these, presents a variegated appearance" (Plato 2021, 52D–52E).

Wherever the elemental bodies expand atmospherically in a local area of space, this areal of space *id-self* acquires a certain quality, taste, and flavor, insofar as *id-self* thereby becomes luminous, bright, hot, fiery; dry, wet, watery; calm, stormy, windy; light, heavy, earthy, and so on, wherever these etheric bodies appear atmospherically. "It would therefore be most correct," says Tímaios, while continuing his speech on Khôra, "to describe it as follows: the part that has become fiery appears at the same time as fire, the moistened part as water, and as earth and air also, to the extent that it receives imitations of these" (Plato 2021, 51B. Cf. 52D–53A).

Space is not just open for the atmospheric expansion of etheric bodies, but the areas of space, fulfilled with a certain amalgam of vibrant lightscapes, soundscapes, airscapes, and earthy landscapes themselves receive the elemental flavor and taste of these waving atmospheres. They actually fill an area of space with a particular value of brightness, sound-intensity, temperature, waving-expansion, etc.

“And yet, the nurse of becoming [Khôra], rendered watery and fiery, and receiving the forms of earth and air, and adopting whatever other characteristics are a consequence of these, presents a variegated appearance. And because of being filled with powers that were neither similar nor equally balanced, no part of her was equally balanced; rather, being swayed irregularly in all directions she was shaken by those powers, and as she moved, she in turn, shook them once more” (Plato 2021, 52D–52E).

Light-waves, sound-waves, ocean-waves, electromagnetic waves, ~~~~~~~ waves seem to expand everywhere in space. All these vibrant matters actually disseminate omnidirectionally in a turbulent, diffracting manner, says Tímaios. One could say with Tanja Traxler, a Vienna-based quantum physicist and philosopher, that nothingness matters in such a case, insofar as these elemental bodies actually stimulate the void *id-self* to fluctuate and wave (Traxler 2023).

Should the first platonic bodies therefore be considered to be a sort of vacuum-fluctuation (Barad 2012, 14/39), to once again borrow a term from contemporary quantum physics?

Atmospherically vibrating spaces?

Vibrant matter?

Waving atmospheres?

Res extensa in the middle of a void, stimulating *id* to fluctuate in *id-self* as a self-affection of space within *id-self*?

“And as they move, borne continually in one direction or another, they are separated just like materials shaken and sifted by sieves and instruments for purifying grain: the dense and heavy components go one way, while the loose and light components are carried to a different place and settle there. The four kinds were then shaken in this way by the receptacle [Khôra], which was itself in motion like an instrument for shaking” (Plato 2021, 52E-53A).

Shaking space, fulfilled with the quality of the four elements, the elements started to behave differently according to their dense Nature. While Khôra functions as the shaking sieve *her/him-id-self,* the dense areas of the elementary spacing constituted the sphere of the Earth, while the light and loose energetic fields went upwards and settled there, the solar sphere of heaven. At the same time, air and water fell into the middle region between them.

Therefore, still today, every lived-body finds *id-self* right in the middle of a local atmosphere with a local color and special flavor. And every lived-body is, in addition, actually able to taste *id* atmospherically by finding itself right in the middle of a local atmosphere. In fact, they are still here, these elemental, atmospheric, waving bodies. Calm, smooth, beautiful, sometimes. But in moments of atmospheric catastrophes, these elements flood and hit us all in stormy, tremendously destructive manners (Serres 1985).

First Matter (πρώτη ὕλη): Materia-in-potentia/virtual matter

It is well known that Plato's most prominent disciple, Aristotle, actually renamed Khôra terminologically by rebaptizing *her/him-id* with the name πρώτη ὕλη, first matter. Khôra is, first of all, a first, that is to say, a formless, virtual form of matter. The very first stuff, cover, or even atmosphere that actually allows all other planes and forms to appear in space in the evolutionary course of time as its etheric foundation and virtual basis (*hypokeímenon*). In its most ancient literal meaning, *hylé* actually meant wood, which is an important hint. Because first matter has actually been perceived to be inflammable, like wood. *Id* can catch fire, which is finally its most profound and sublime quality. One can burn it (Plato 2021, 51B)!

Many scholars, and even such a prominent philosopher as F.W.J. Schelling, have therefore interpreted Aristotle's first matter to be a form of materia-in-potentia. That is, a virtual form of matter that has not yet mattered in space in the course of time, but "is" nevertheless virtually real, since it has slept in the womb-of-becoming since the very beginning of the cosmogenesis of Nature. There it hides all possibilities that have waited ever since for their hour to matter once. *Sub specie aeternitatis*, to borrow a term from the fifth book of Spinoza's *Ethics*. From the perspective of eternity, eternal possibilities that so far have not yet mattered, are, in fact, actually not manifest in space, but they are virtually real under the perspective of eternity, in which one perceives *Nature as an Event* (Debaise 2017). That is, as a space, eternally in the making (Manning 2014, 20).

When Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition,* claimed that virtual possibilities have their own form of reality, since "the virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual" (Deleuze 1968, 208), he actually does touch precisely the ancient problem of first matter: matter-in-the-virtual-state-of-a-potential. This virtual form of matter comprises not only the possibilities, which have already mattered in space *(natura naturata)*, but also the virtual possibilities, which so far had not yet collapsed, and therefore did not yet flash and gleam in time and space. But even though virtual matter, *materia-in-potentia*, is, in fact, no manifest form of matter at present, the virtual cloud of eternal possibilities nevertheless has to be considered to be *virtually real,* precisely because this virtual form of matter can actually be inflamed, like wood, at any moment, and thereby catch fire. While virtual matter is the stuff that can burn, the aspirations of one's heart (ὄρεξις) are actually the matches, capable to inflame the most sublime principle of matter: matter in the state of potency.

Being an integral part of the present condition, in which one actually finds oneself in the middle of a world, the virtual is, indeed, actually real, but not actually manifest in time and space. Though the virtual is, in fact, an essential part of our integral Nature (Aurobindo 1999), insofar as our very Nature actually includes always a virtual cloud of possibilities as the virtual

dimension of any contemporary constellation, the virtual has not yet mattered, but nevertheless is real *sub specie aeternitatis*, since it could matter once in a future to come.

In this very sense, Khôra is not just a space of all the forms *id* currently contains in fact *(natura naturata)*, but also the space of those virtual matters, Khôra is still pregnant of. Namely, in the virtual Off.

The space of a heart

In tantric philosophies this inflammable first matter does actually catch fire by the aspirations of one's heart. They trigger the golden rain of virtual possibilities, which so far resided hidden in the emptiness of a heart. The inflammable void, *materia-in-potentia*, thus becomes a matter of the heart with all its conative longings, needs, desires, wishes, aspirations, will.

Since everybody's heart continuously inhabits and inflames the emptiness of first matter atmospherically with the assemblage of desires and longings that constitutes the conatus of a body (Spinoza 1994, 152–197), first matter and the aspirations of one's heart actually gain the character of an intimate relational affair in tantric philosophies (Mueller-Ortega 1989). It is therefore more than just a metaphor when Aristotele called Khôra πρώτη ὕλη: the first wood *(hylé)*, that is, the first inflammable matter.

The relational affair between the conatus-of-a-lived-body and first-matter is therefore not simply an abstract and general one, but an intimate affair at work among the core longings of a lived-body [$\chi_{(\text{Khôra})}$] (read: versus) the-emptiness-of-a-heart (Dyczkowski 1992, 42–43)—as the most sublime and outstanding habitat, a lived-body actually inhabits in a pulsating, etheric manner. I therefore suggest in this article, that one should address and call this first, most subtle and outstanding atmosphere at stake in the unfolding of first matter, the inflammable space of somebody's heart.

In ancient Indian philosophies, this vibrating, waving quality of space *(spanda)* has often been addressed as a pulsating ocean. The Hymn of Creation (X.129) in the oldest of all Vedas, the Ṛgveda (~1500 BCE), for instance, does address the ocean of the inconscient (*apraketaṁ salilam* X.129.3), which resides at the bottom of the ocean of a heart (*hṛdyāt samudrāt* IV.58.5). From there, the rivers of clarity (*ghṛtasya dhārāḥ* IV.58.2) do actually arise, which animate our bodies and flood the cosmic Nature. It is said that the spiritual poets and seers, by virtue of their intense research and mindful investigations into their heart space, were finally able to purify these waters of clarity in such a way that they found a bright path right in the middle of their hearts, which allowed their energies to flow upwards and reach their final destination, namely, the upper ocean of their hearts. This upper ocean is addressed by the spiritual poets as the solar ocean of a luminous sphere beyond the mental sphere, from where the golden rain of virtual possibilities actually descends and thereby successively immanates in space in the course of time, step by step (Aurobindo 1998, 106–107).

The daybreak

On the cover page of his book *Daybreak* (1997), Nietzsche has consciously chosen a quote from the Ṛgveda as the overall motto for his book, which brings this entire matter of a virtual form of matter to a dense point (*aṇu, bindu*): "So many daybreaks will be given birth that sofar have not yet gleamed? Rigveda" (translation A.B.).[2]

The virtual that resides veiled in the emptiness of a heart is addressed here as a daybreak that has thus far not yet gleamed. It veils all mattering(s) and events in the virtual cloud of unborn possibilities, which are waiting to flash once.

In this particular sense, the daybreak Nietzsche himself was intimately longing for in *Beyond Good and Evil*—a book with the telling subtitle *Prelude of a Philosophy of the Future*—was actually not just a general, but also a quite personal affair. What he pled for in his prelude of a philosophy to come was actually the performative inflammation of the birth of a new species of philosophers. The delivery of these philosophers of the future is marked by a "dangerous perhaps" (Nietzsche 2002, p.6), because he could not know in advance and promise for sure, whether their delivery in space would actually happen or not. Perhaps the virtual object of his aspirations will appear once, perhaps not. The flames of such a heart are, indeed, concerned with an unstable, virtual form of matter, because, like Plato's nurse of becoming, Nietzsche had to take care in advance of the possible birth of a new species of philosophers, whose presentation has not yet gleamed and not yet flashed thus far (Nancy 1993). In this very sense, Nietzsche claimed that this new species of philosophers of the future differ from their predecessors, in particular by virtue of their different "taste and inclination." a special taste that allowed them to taste the contingent future of a dangerous perhaps in advance. Therefore, Nietzsche could characterize them as those "whose taste and inclination are somehow [even] the reverse of those we have seen so far" (Nietzsche 2002. p.6. Cf. Böhler 2020, 2019a, 2019b, 2017a, 2017b).

Probably Nietzsche considered Plato his most important antagonist in the entire history of European philosophy (Böhler 2019c), because both were artist-philosophers in the strict sense of this word. That is, untimely philosophers, concerned with the speculative creation of a future to come rather than philosophers of a past or present tense. Plato, the last artist-philosopher in ancient Greek philosophies, Nietzsche, the first one in (post-)modern times. They both developed a new sense of taste toward a future to come in their times that started to attract them philosophically from the very bottom of their hearts. Both of them therefore knew very well that Khôra was not just an amalgam of already given particles and matters—"Long live physics!" shouts Nietzsche in his *Gay Science* (Nietzsche 1974, 263 [4.335])—but a process, in which matter comes into being in the process of triggering eternal possibilities, which still rest in a virtual cloud, that so far has not yet collapsed as a flashing event.

— 2 — Original German on the cover page: "Es giebt so viele Morgenröthen, die noch nicht geleuchtet haben. Rigveda."

It is indeed difficult to determine the relation of the *Noûs* toward this third principle, says Tímaios (Plato 2021, 51B). Because, as I would like to claim in this text, it is the space of a heart that is actually at stake in the intimate relation among the *Noûs* and the third first-principle, Khôra, the first inflammable space and matter.

Cut / Notation:

Let us start here again with a fresh eye right in the middle of my article to slowly get rid of a conceptual reflection mode, and shift into a notation mode. From now on, I would like to focus my awareness on the site-specific atmospheres I was actually in touch with as a lived-body in space during the research process of the PEEK project *Contingent Agencies* led by Nikolaus Gansterer and Alex Arteaga.

Why am I even able to notate atmospheres?

In the first place, I would say, because of a long genealogy and geology of mattering events that have already taken place on our planet Earth and in the Heavens long before I was born in 1963. The atmospheric bodies, which I do sense and taste momentarily while I write down these lines—light, air, water, earth, and ether—emerged in space at the very beginning of the cosmogenesis of Nature, in which I momentarily find myself imbedded as a lived-body in space. All these inorganic bodies, which surround me and constitute the basis of my own body-assemblages of atoms, electrons, molecules, and so on—already mattered in space billions of years ago out of the womb of eternal possibilities. In addition, plant bodies, animal bodies, human, and over-human bodies have been generated in the evolutionary course of time on our planet Earth, step by step. They all appeared on Earth long before I was born myself. Artifacts were produced by others before my birth, nuclear power stations, military weapons, houses, chairs, plastics. They all occurred in space before my own delivery. Thus, they became contemporaries and part of the khoratic atmosphere that I am currently in touch with here and now. Both, from outside and from inside my lived-body.

I currently populate the Earth with all these contemporaries and find myself right in the middle of them. What a variety of relational affairs, waving-atmospheres, and waving-particles. And beyond this, they all not only surround me, but also ground me. My lived-body is actually made of all these mattering and vibrant particles, which were already available at my birth to constitute my lived-body.

And even beyond all these bodies, which have already mattered, there are still all the virtual planes, matters, forms, things, and particlesw which have not yet mattered and therefore still rest today in the virtual cloud of a future to come.

If I change from the conceptual reflection mode to the notation mode, I actually find my lived-body situated right in the middle of Khôra in a particular local atmosphere and a site-specific situation.

Alex Arteaga and Nikolaus Gansterer provided us with an open schema, how a notation could be structured. I will now present my readers four notations on First Matter, Khôra-Landscape, "Vimarśa-Drawings, and Vimarśa-Video" to describe the situation in which my reflections and writings actually took place atmospherically to re-enact these atmospheres in words. The notation mode will also change my style of writing.



Notation 1a
First Matter

Actually, I am writing this text in my private office, 1080 Vienna, Pfeilgasse 8/38, on March 23, 2023, 1:17 p.m. But also I went through these text passages several times already on other days. The atmosphere of my private office did not change dramatically during all these days. It is quite a silent space. I just hear the cooling system of our fridge, otherwise I don't sense any sound in particular. Today, no birds are singing. Almost no wind whistles. The temperature in my office is comfortable, about 21 degrees Celsius. The light is bright, the sky cloudy, with some blue patches. This peaceful atmosphere actually allowed me in the last hours to concentrate almost entirely on my writing. In fact, my mind was mainly concerned with Plato's *Tímaios*, and not focused on the local atmosphere in which my reflections actually took place. Nevertheless, it was there, even without noticing *id.*

Definitely, Khôra was the most prominent agency that occupied the psycho-mental awareness of my lived-body over the last hours. It was Plato's text that directed and channeled the awareness of my mind up to a large extent.

By the way, I really love this mode of writing and thinking, because not only my mind, but also my lived-body calms down in the process of writing, reading, and thinking philosophically. My entire being gets a rest and focus. Which is a quite pleasurable state of being. It is not just the brain that is engaged in thinking. What a foolish thesis. The entire body shifts into another mood, once one starts to write and think conceptually on a matter like Khôra. I would describe this bodily condition in the following way: my entire subjectivity subjects itself to the subject at stake in thinking. The addressee of thinking thus becomes the agency of my thoughts. *S/he-id* triggered them, slowly, step by step, in close contact with myself. In my experience, it was Khôra, the addressee of my text, who led the psycho-mental awareness of my lived-body through the text while I was concentrating on all the aspects of space in which I actually find myself. The entire psycho-mental awareness of my lived-body thereby became the sub-iectum of the subject I had in mind.

The atmosphere, which actually penetrated my office space, was helpful, since it allowed me to sit here in a bright, calm place and perform my reflections without being forced to momentarily focus on any turbulent atmospheric matter. No storm, no hurricane, no nuclear power accident. The elemental bodies were favorable to me. I could devote myself almost entirely to

the textual notation of a conceptual reflection on Khôra in Plato's *Tímaios*. What a privilege. I would love it if everybody were able to share this privilege—to be allowed to enter a calm state in which a philosophical meditation can be performed in a silent manner, right in the middle of a calm atmosphere.



Notation 1b
Khôra-Landscape

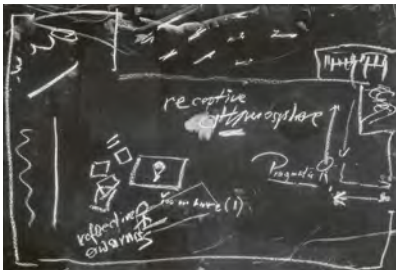
It was Sunday, March 19, 2:04 p.m. when I wrote this and the following lines some days ago. At that time, I was in Kehrbach 2, 3662 Münichreith-Laimbach. The building, which you see in the photo, indeed carries the name Khôra. It's a retreat-place for Arts-Based philosophy, created by my wife, Susanne Valerie Granzer, and myself in 2021.

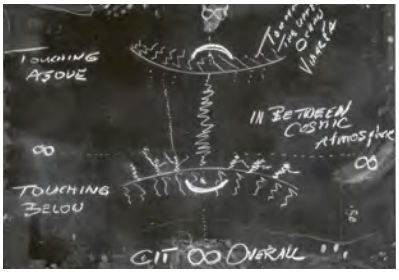
I registered suddenly the shadow of the sunlight on the floor. And there, the agricultural land with this kinglike tree on the top. And the forest in the background of the field. All these objects are co-agents of the atmosphere that constantly waves in this landscape. The local atmosphere does not exist separately from these solid objects, but *id* actually tunes and colors them momentarily. In fact, these solid objects, the floor, the tree, the forest, they all reflect and diffract the waving atmosphere of this landscape and thereby re-shape it anew in a particular, object-related manner.

Do you hear the sound of the birds there? Of course not. But I can tell you that there are almost always birds sitting in this tree there. They are waving the space acoustically while they sing.

And the wind that curls the air there? Of course, you cannot feel and hear it in the medium of a book. But probably you can sense it in an imaginative manner by recollecting memories of atmospheres that resemble this one?

My lived-body cannot not be in touch with the local atmosphere in the room that it inhabits. It cannot not be tuned, cannot not be colored, cannot not be shaped and kneaded by an abstract term or concept, but something I find myself posited in, in a local manner within a variety of atmospheric flavors. I am not sitting in an empty container, but find myself in a space, filled with an amalgam of elemental bodies and relational affairs with which I am intra-relationally involved and engaged.





Notation 2a
Vimarśa-Drawings

After more than two hours of intense debates among our key-research group on the relational affair among reflection χ (read: versus) notation in the context of the symposium *Contingent Agencies,* our discussions reached a point where I felt a strong impulse to stand up and change from the reflection mode into a notation mode. I actually followed my impulse, stood up, left the research group and went into the studio, where I took the chalkboard on which I made the following drawing a few days ago.

The drawing was inspired by Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Creation Hymn in *The Secret of the Veda*, which reads as follows:

"We find this fundamental idea of the Vedic Rishis brought out in the Hymn of Creation (Rig Veda X.129) where the subconscient is thus described: Darkness hidden by darkness in the beginning was this all, an ocean without mental consciousness … out of it the One was born by the greatness of Its energy. It first moved in it as desire which was the first seed of mind. The Masters of Wisdom found out in the non-existent that which builds up the existent; in the heart they found it by purposeful impulsion and by the thought-mind. Their ray was extended horizontally; there was something above, there was something below" (Aurobindo 1998, p. 106).

On September 19, I tried to draw the quasi-transcendental architecture of this passage on the black chalkboard with a white piece of chalk. Now, four days later, on September 23, 12:29 p.m., I took this drawing and put it in front of me on the floor of the studio. Today I wanted to orally articulate the sense of the drawing and describe it in words out loud to myself. At this very moment Victor Jaschke came into the room and saw me. He artistically documented the entire cross-disciplinary symposium *Contingent Agencies* on video and photography and immediately started to tape my notation with his camera.







Notation 2b
Vimarśa-Video

The first part of my oral notation, recorded on the Vimarśa-Video, says:

"I am sitting in the same room as yesterday. But I am not only in this room. Because I would like to draw a map of a cosmic atmosphere, and the cosmic atmosphere is usually located in between Heaven and Earth, the above and the below." *(In the video the drawing is now accompanied by bodily movements, which I performed while orally describing to myself the drawing from the day before in a dynamic state of yoga postures.)*

There [exists] an interesting term in Indian philosophy, *vimarśa*. It means both reflection and touching. It is [the self-reflective awareness] that comes from the root *mṛś*, which means touch.… We have a capacity to touch consciousness. And if we are touching this consciousness as the upper ocean, which you can see here in the drawing upstairs there, a reflection of that sphere of the upper ocean takes place. And that reflection … is called a thought. It is a way of thinking that is seeing rather than a mental way of being in touch with things, […] *pratibhā*, which is the thinking of intuition or vision (*darśana*), as they would say. *Vimarśa* performs a reflection of consciousness, […] or even of the light of consciousness (*prakāśa*), as a way of touching this plane, this [upper] sphere of consciousness … (*Vimarśa-Video,* first part, TC: 00:00–02:16)

What I tried to notate that day, September 23, 2022, between 12:29 and 12:34 p.m. at the Zentrum Fokus Forschung of the University for Applied Arts Vienna was an intimate, personal contact with first matter. I wanted to inflame *id* with the aspirations that actually did pop up in the course of my oral description of my former drawing *vimarśa* in the middle of my bodily yoga movements. It was an attempt to become a *khecarī,* namely somebody who actually moves in the sky of the heart. While describing the concept of *vimarśa* loudly to myself in a mindful research manner, I went through a sequence of bodily postures to establish also a sensible contact with the emptiness of the heart that my lived-body currently inhabits.

How does first matter actually taste in the middle of our research here at the Zentrum Fokus Forschung in Vienna? Moving my arms up and down, heavenward, toward *Ouranós*, and earthward, toward *Gaía*, triggered a sensitive relation of the psycho-mental awareness of my lived-body within my heart-space. Thus, I was addressing this emptiness of my heart on several layers at once: in the drawing, in my oral description of the drawing, in my mental reflections on *vimarśa*, and my bodily movements in space.

Even now, while I am watching these artifacts and trying to recall the atmosphere that appeared at that time, this special atmosphere still starts to resonate again strongly within me and thereby is even able to re-trigger a highly focused state of mind in my lived-body, but now in the calm atmosphere of my private office, Pfeilgasse 8/38, 1080 Vienna, March 26, 2023, 2:29 p.m.

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The Khôra text was performed live by Arno Böhler and Nikolaus Gansterer as part of their Translecture at the Volkstheater and Secession in Vienna in 2023. The images above were created live by Gansterer during the presentation.

A

ALEX ARTEAGA
In this project, I have used the concept of resonance metaphorically, to describe an alternative to representation in the practices of notation. The agencies and their influence in atmospheres resonate in and through the notation artifacts. These artifacts, as well as the agents at work, are in different ways, matter. Have you mobilized the concept of resonance in your practices?

SABINA HOLZER
Yes, I can imagine working with resonance in a similar way. In my practice, I try to be aware of the materials I work with. A couple of years ago, I was very much inspired by the saying of the choreographer Anna Halprin (1920–2021) that the human body consists of the same elements as planet Earth. It changed my practice a lot. I started to research the materials to explore more of the manifold possibilities of agencies and not just "use" something. It is a practice for engaging in ecological awareness. Where do the materials come from? Do we share similar components on an anatomical/bio-chemical level? How have they been made? What process did they undergo to become the material I am working with? What people worked on it, and where? etc.

B

AA This is a very inspiring expression of how contingent agencies embody existence, that is, how they give rise to and transform bodies and their environments.

SH Astrida Neimanis put this so beautifully into words.

Notes on Corporal Notations

Sabina Holzer

I the song
I walk here
(David Abram)

Inspiration—breathe in and breathe out. Let yourself be flooded by the surrounding spirits.

The inspiration for this: the reason for your existence is a configuration of matter.

A Matter in resonance. Matter in and around the body.

But: when is a body a body? Is the wind a body? Is temperature? Light? Isn't all matter a potential body? Matter, consisting of particles and waves; of material and immaterial body-potentialities.

Some passionate, committed potentialities become a human figure, from time to time. A configuration in time. A time-space-mattering. Pulsing. Contracting and expanding. Always in motion. Overlapping and leaping across places. Dissipations of communications. Compositions of infinite parts.

I borrow the language of Donna Haraway and Karen Barad to formulate that these matters announce various bodily interfaces, such as
B biology, cultures, contexts, and moods. They are thereby always co-worlding and become the phenomena we call our bodies. Rather than separate things interacting, they intra-act; they become what they are only in relation-with.

Co-worlding is always a collaborative process and always emergent. A body is always a congeries of other bodies, and always on the move. Nonetheless, it also settles down enough from time to time to be accounted for, and to give an (always provisional) account of itself. This accounting invites us to an awareness of being with, and to create an ethical relationship with the worlds we are part of.

SH I would say instead that my bodily perception represents the world in the way my physical constitution makes it possible (I see the world due to the anatomy of my eyes) and how I was trained to perceive it. I am not able to capture all the processes of a moment. A human adult consists of 10 to 100 trillion individual cells. Often, a neuronal (physical) consciousness is distinguished from a mental (phenomenal) consciousness. The neuronal observations are regarded as remaining, for their part, closed and diffused to the subjective perspective. Training the awareness of the body can open that a bit.

I use the term "other" in reference to this multiplicity of processes and entanglements, or, in the words of Karen Barad, these intra-actions from within, these worldings.

C

AA This is a very interesting formulation. It seems to me to express a tension between present and future that occurs the moment a body becomes aware of an atmosphere. Could you elaborate on this on the basis of your experience in the symposium?

SH Working in the field of expanded choreography with movement and text, I was challenged and wanted to bring the aspect forward that, in performance, the body is always part of the atmosphere. In the performance of a human body, the present is always a major factor. But then, when does the present start if we conceptualize bodies as interrelated systems/agencies? I used the term "future" here to indicate that the human body "knows" more than we can think, to indicate a continuous becoming. My yoga teacher always says: "Exhale more than you can think." But of course: "And think we must!" as Donna Haraway says. That's what I also loved and found very inspiring at the symposium—encountering the different practices of doing and thinking, the different ways of *languaging*. Traveling between practices, translations, and sense-abilities.

D

AA After reading this beautiful paragraph about the ways your body presents the world—this would be the way I would express your lines—I was surprised when I read the term "other." Do you consider your own body as a sensitive apparatus, as an interface between you and the body? Although you have such fine and differentiated perceptions, are you able to distance yourself from your own body—from you-as-body?

Gravity and other forces configure matters into a congeries of bodies to settle with a bodily form that is recognizable to us humans. The presence of a body is a present. It is of many bodies as well as the absence of many bodies. Unthinkable and unimaginable.

I feel: this is a matter of life and death. This is the unbearable fear of losing the other.

I know: if you are not there, everything is different. How can I be with all these presences and absences? With all these forces? How to attend to the form's momentum and its inseparability from other configurations?

… If you leave me now,
you take away the biggest part of me …
(Chicago)

C Every time I enter a space, I enter a situation. My body-minds are immediately informed by the atmosphere. In an immediate anticipation, as if the body-minds already know the future. These body-potentials, these time-space-matterings are always in motion and moving.

Moving here means the mobility of the body, of a human body, in terms of locomotion through space and time, as well as micro-movements like breathing, the heartbeat, or impulses and neurophysiological patterns in the body; means electromagnetic conversations with the light. The opening of the skin through warmth.

I practice reading my body. As a dancer, I communicate primarily with and through the bodily non-verbal realm and need to engage with how this system responds to conditions of time and space. Conditions can be the material aspects of the space or place: What is the ground like? Is it concrete? Wood? Soil? My ligaments and muscles deal with this information immediately to protect the joints and bones. Warmth or cold inform the elasticity of my muscles. Light and darkness the kinesthetic and proprioceptive nervous system in relation to sensing the surrounding space according to the visual information I get or don't get. What is the energy like, the tension in the space? Is it friendly or hostile? Happy or sad? Are the people in a good mood, is their gaze welcoming? This will have an impact on the beat of my heart, the balance and tension of my presence and movements. Because this body-mind system reacts so directly, it is my primary source of information.

D It is "the other" from whom I learn and can create responses in relation to.

Bodies are compositions of matter, always embedded in the atmosphere. Bodies as a composition of matter. As a compost. An assemblage. A community to come. Matter in resonance with other surrounding matter.

For instance: 65 percent oxygen; 18.5 percent carbon; 9.5 percent hydrogen; 3.3 percent nitrogen, 1.5 percent calcium, 1 percent phosphorous, and 0.0006 percent iron are the elemental compositions of the human body.

E

AA Based on the experience of your practices of notation and reflection, would you go so far as to affirm that "the subjective body is an atmosphere (or atmospheric)" or the other way around, that "an atmosphere is body (or bodily)"?

SH Yes, thank you! I would say, "an atmosphere is bodily." It supports my perception and attentiveness and helps me to engage in recognition, valuation, and appreciation of bodies and matters, which I think is needed today, and which we tend to ignore so easily.

F

AA It is beautiful to read how you describe the foundation of your practices of notation. I would say that you literally incorporate the agencies you investigate. They become part of your extended body. This could be understood as a radically embodied variety of attention. Would you agree with this interpretation?

SH Thank you for your beautiful way of understanding! Yes, I would say I work on it. I also want to mention here that I found the scores you and Nikolaus developed as an invitation to practice during the symposium very inspiring and intriguing. They were a great tool to work with!

G

AA The relationship between these three concepts—"gesture," "note," and "atmosphere"—is very inspiring. Gestures become notes. Notes can be understood in a musical sense but also as an atomic unit of the process of notation and/or of the resulting artifact—a notation. In the same way, a gesture can be understood as the minimal component of (organized) movement. On this basis, would it be possible to understand your practices of notation as resulting from the friction between gestures and notes?

SH I would say the friction I experience between gestures and notes is due to the ephemeral nature of performance and dance, which are always embedded by the unexpected vastness of the moment, the relations, and the structural, codified frames we design or act within. I am much inspired by Giorgio Agamben saying that gesture, deriving from *gestus*, indicates the attitude of the body, of the person. In an act, a person does not communicate a certain meaning or purpose, but is the "pure communicability of that act freed from all purpose." So a gesture travels between the readable and the illegible.

In this sense, in dance, the gesture is not only the movement, but rather, an extension between two movements, something that encloses in itself and shows the memory and future of the "whole" choreography. So a gesture is never "a means to an end" or an end in itself. If we say dance is a display of the power of the (human) body in time and space; a gesture of the body, freed from the voluntary relationship to an end (organic or social), can explore and show all the possibilities it is capable of. Maybe the friction is approached in the sentence by Hugo von Hofmannsthal: "Dancers read what has never been written."

H

AA Again, a formulation with different possible and inspiring significances. Is dancing with the atmosphere one enabling condition for its emergence? How do you deal with this simultaneous double function: enabling what you are notating, notating what you are conditioning?

SH Tuning into my senses and my breath is probably the major focus of my practice. I connect with the movements around me—indeed, with the atmosphere. The movements support my movements. They appear and disappear. It is a practice—a practice in humbleness, or in gentleness, the way Anne Dufourmantelle puts it: "Laughing, singing, loving—are powerful Dionysian acts, expressions of an authentic life. Gentleness involves the body, that is to say, the idea and the sensibility of a body that gentleness could have educated, elevated, ennobled. Its power distilled by the senses.We cannot possess gentleness. We offer it hospitality. It is there, as discreet and necessary and vital as a heartbeat. Its carnal power goes from sensuousness to the lightest pressure of the hand; it is thought when it touches and touched when it is intelligence." I also try to approach it as play.

Elements as intersections, seeking life forms, gathering to become a medium. To become a ship for messages. I practice listening. Who are you? What could you be? And how? How did you become, and how do you continue?

… And listen to the wind blow
And listen to the wind
And listen to the wind blow …
(PJ Harvey)

The air my body breathes is shared by others. Shared by you. The iron in the blood connects to the metallic components around it. Without minerals, my skeleton would not support the flesh and muscles around my bones. The moving body is relational and always situated in material conditions. Materials are resonating with body components.

E The subjective body is always part of, always embedded in the atmosphere.

Atmosphere is expressed in a kind of coloring of consciousness. Like a lore, it transforms the moving body into a nota-
F tional instrument. I align my awareness to a certain agency like temperature, sound, light, etc. Tuning the sensory system, I let these encounters, this permeation of inner and outer spaces, be the major stimulus of presence and my movements. This is the way I approach my corporal notations, which take place in space and time.

A chorus of notes is approaching me. Of signs and marks. Of micro-imprints. Nearly imperceptible. When does one start to notice it? When does the notating start? How can I become a notating instrument with my moving body? Is the notation the dance? Is it the intention? Does the notation come before the dance? Through which does notation occur if the body it-
G self is the instrument? Every gesture is a note of the atmosphere. Every gesture is guided by songs. When does a dance start to take form? Would you please dance with me, dance with us?

To dance, to create notations on site. The dance becomes the artifact. It is our shared language. We communicate through it. We continuously adapt and re-contextualize it as we move from space to space. A notating dance. A dancing notation. A dancing not-dance note.

Dance and notation collaborate. They are catching the forces of the future. A future that is always already present, as a present to come, as a gift. Nourished by the past, it unfolds in different ecologies of awareness. Expanding sense-making through the body.

H Corporal notations are dances to come. Atmospheric dances. Dances of lights, shadows, temperatures, sounds, tensions. Of stones and trees. Of a you, of an other, a being close, a being far away. Of presences and absences. Of time-spins and ghosts. It springs from an attentiveness within co-constitutive spacetimes of experiences. It is not an attentiveness in and of the human body as the major actant; instead, the dance is co-composed through different forces.

I

AA In Paula's chapter she also uses the verb "surrender" in relation to research. I would like to ask you the same question that I asked her: The possibility of conceiving research as surrender is provokingly interesting. I connect this conceptual shift with a possible interpretation of another related verb: "understand" as "standing underneath." Following this line of thought, it would be possible to propose the hypothesis that artistic, or maybe more specifically, aesthetic research, implies situating oneself as researcher "under" the objects of research and therefore not practicing a view from above. This ethical principle would consequently imply a fundamental critique of the hegemonic theory underlying research: epi-stemology, to stay over or beyond. Furthermore, this critique can be specified as a critique of knowledge as a means of human control over the environment.

SH I start by looking at surrender in the way you propose. *Sur* as a pronoun, like "über" or "hyper" and *render.* Maybe also as execute, commit, transfer, emit, or hand over. It is a way of being-with, becoming part. Saying yes to the sym-poetic phenomena of our existence. And, yes, it is definitely a critique of human control over the environment in the way it has been practiced since the industrial revolution and colonialism. Patterns that are so deeply ingrained in patriarchal structures. It is a big challenge to emphasize different ways of doing and practices; create different terms, different aesthetics to help us perceive in manifold ways.

J

AA "Passivity" is a key question for both aesthetic practices and agencies. Hamacher's concept of "afformance" (at least phonetically close to Gibson's concept of "affordances") seems to be an important contribution in order to conceive and name specific varieties of activity that differ from clearly identifiable actions. Noticing the etymological connection between the concept of "agency" and the significance "setting in motion," as Emma describes in her chapter, I would like to ask you if you consider the contingent agencies we investigate in this project as specific varieties of "afformances"?

SH Yes, it came to my mind. "Afformance" could be a good term to think about sharing trans-disciplinary artistic research, it opens different relations of the disciplines towards each other and to visitors, and supports collaboration. With *Contingent Agencies* it is especially interesting, because of the entanglements of agencies we research.

… With no words, with no song
You can dance the dream with your body on
And this curve, is your smile
And this cross, is your heart
And this line, is your path …
(Kate Bush)

In order to connect with agencies of atmospheres, I ground my dance in non-action rather than in action. I practice receiving.
I I practice surrendering, witnessing a process of becoming.
J I linger and long for a theory of the passive. The concept of the "afformative" by Werner Hamacher comes to me. It spirals to overcome the strict dichotomy of passive and active. The performative is active and generally related to the vital and the communicative. The subject with all of its cultural inscriptions is the focal point of awareness. The afformative, on the other hand, calls for a passivation: in the sphere of language as non-speaking, as silence; in the sphere of politics as non-violence or non-action, namely, as a strike; in the sphere of aesthetics and performance as a presence that makes other actors, such as space, time, and light, visible and effective. As a way to delude human-centered awareness. Furthermore, Hamacher describes an "afformance" as "a formless event of formation, to which all forms and all performative acts remain exposed." The afformative is therefore also not in opposition to a form framed by the organization of time and space nor simply in opposition to the performative; it is not non-setting, but "setting in motion," opening suspension. Rather than the virtuous, dramatized, or spectacular activities of a subject being at stake here, the question is, instead, how somebody can create space, draw awareness towards the conditions through which a situation is created. In this sense, an affordance invites an exploration of affirming gestures that connect to space, time, and the environment; to the atmosphere of a place.

In the sensing of atmospheres, the body's latent potentials for readiness are expressed; they make future modes of coupling between the organism and the environment perceptible. Atmospheres are evoked by the perception of real or imaginary situations. They reach into different time circulations and inform us about possible future body-mind potentialities.

The quiet presence of you brings relaxation to my nervous system and I suddenly feel how our breathing synchronizes, even over this distance. Seeing your chest rising and falling, I become aware of my own breathing. I follow your gaze and discover innumerable facets of green as the wind brushes through the leaves of the tree.

The afformative as formless formations futuring. The afformative to affirm being-with, becoming with, being in sym-poiesis.

Body-potentialities. Time-space-mattering. Ever always moving, ever always permeating.

K

AA This formulation opens up a complex theme, an element of reflectivity immanent to notation: the notator is notated, the one who inscribes is inscribed. How do you deal with this feedback circle in your notation practices?

SH It is so complex and yet it happens all the time. How could we forget about it? … I think I deal with it in terms of composition and representation.

… Touch, touch
I remember touch
Touch, touch
I remember touch
Where do I belong?
Touch, I need something more
I remember touch
I need something more in my mind …
(Daft Punk)

Everything, felt and unfelt, is held in motion. Invisible to the human eye, vibrational energy is both everywhere and everyone; its forces undulate in animating frequency. To vibrate-with is to resonate in emphatic and electrifying lack of structure, a formless formation that transmits a boundless series of actions. All motion reverberates in the interstices and excesses of existence, for to become is to also oscillate in the void's plenitude.

Touched by molecules and atoms of matter, we are pulled, expanded, pushed, and squeezed by these moving micro-particles. Caressed, held, and connected to the planet earth.

My skin is drawn to the sun, is touched by the surrounding air; touched by liquids and different soft tissues on the inside.

The skin is the largest organ and plays a key role in protecting the body. It is a porous vessel for 73 percent of the body's liquids. It regulates the temperature and the production of vitamin D folate. It is the largest receiver and transmitter of sensations. Through touch, the awareness of space is enlarged.

K Skin is notated by time, temperature, and the weather. It transmits the agencies of the atmosphere.

The wind gives you goosebumps while my eyes rest on you.

To touch is acting and reacting at the same time. It combines the rhythms of outside and inside, of expansion and contraction. Of nourishing and excreting, of the intrinsic and the extrinsic. And as my body approaches another—even if the other is inanimate, wooden, made of stone or metal—the space, the space between us, is condensed. We are moved and changed, however infinitesimal such an exposure may be.

The cold creeps under my clothes and eventually under my skin. It makes me wear a blanket, which I feel gently warming me. If I move, always one hand holds the blanket in place. I do not move so much. I walk through space, tracing the lines and patches of light and shadow. I am touched by the atmosphere of this room. Informed by the light, my steps write the room.

… Yes
Black, blackness
The Black side of me
C'mon, listen up …
(Nneka)

Walking through the space, I write the space.

L

AA Are these liminal spaces disclosed by your movement-informed writing practices spaces of touch, spaces within which the contingency of agencies become manifest?

SH Yes, my writing is deeply informed by my body practices. It is also informed by the act of writing, the act of writing-with. Hélène Cixous and the "écriture feminine" have influenced me greatly. I like that Elisabeth Schäfer says it should be called "queer écriture." As it is a way "of actively inventing strategies, places and subversive modes to rewrite the discourses of power and to stage new modes of writing at their fringes that perform the excluded, the non-normative, the subaltern, etc., as well as the subversive."

M

AA Language, as described in the following lines, as a medium for listening or even better, for hearing ("passivity," again, the medium itself being the field of agencies) others' voices, for intensifying and modulating your bodily interactions; for registering, seismographically, what comes about though it.

SH That is beautifully put! Thank you!

Aside from the semiotic production of meaningful signs, writing is a sensual, physical act. In this sense, both forms of expression, moving and writing, are movement phenomena.

To interlink moving/dancing and writing, I often move with eyes closed to not be dominated too much by the visual components of perception. Closing the eyes opens the other senses,

Meanings, and forms. Sounds and smells deform, unwrite, and expand the sensorial imprints and signs. Also, such a writing gesture opens itself to space and time and brings awareness to the very movement of writing, to the fingers, the arms, the pulsing of the eyes behind the eyelid, etc. It is fused with physical sensations and the unknown that they will bring; it is a writing in the break. A writing with the impossibility of w-right-ing the bodies without ruptures, reversals, discontinuities (discreteness), or trivialities. Marking contradictions and displacements of discourse within itself.

We sing and play to trace the realities of bodies. Buddying with bodies, which are neglected, made absent and invisible. Insisting upon their existence. We invite them to dance, modestly, unassumingly.

L Writing to become quite liminal and to stay at the margins.

The process of writing is to circulate,
to caress, to paint all the phenomena
before they are precipitated
(Hélène Cixous)

M I like to be a stranger to language.

In writing, I say, please talk to me, language. In dancing, I say, talk to me, space; talk to me, time; talk to me body-matter-minds, body-potentialities.

My writing comes from the night. It fumbles in the dark as the sensuous reverberation and resonance of corporal existences. It leaves traces in time and space in nonlinear ways. Forever, I am accompanied by ghosts. By ghostly matters. By body-potentialities in motion.

Words are frames to move within. Spaces of information sink through my skin and organize the impulses of my nerves system. The waves of the sounds, of the voices of humans and more-than-human, caress my body. Sometimes they cut like a knife and I feel my organs contract.

Memory triggers my actions. Words are filters. They line up my intention quicker than I can think. My movements respond—the small ones, like my breath, the outburst of my sweat; and the bigger ones, like turning towards you, to stand at your side.

Being nourished by the sounds of the rivers, the humming of the bees, the songs of the birds, I close my eyes as the pen touches the paper. Feeling the hand holding the light pen as it sinks onto it. I resonate with this touch and listen to where it is leading me. I listen to the small impulses. Micro-vibrations causing scribbles, sweeps of the pen. Listening, here, is not about remembering, but about arresting the detail and being arrested by it. I listen to my mind, producing echoes of words

N

AA Again, a virtuous circle.

O

AA An evocative hearing?
SH Language as invocation.

emerging and vanishing. My hand keeps gesturing with the pen. Sometimes I shift it into the other hand or turn the paper around. It is a micro-dance with pen and paper till a word keeps appearing in my body-mind (which is not mine) and starts sinking, shining. Till a word wants to be formed. I use the alphabet to write the word down.

It is said that our footprints, our handprints in mud or ash, pressed upon the rock, were our first writings. Later, perhaps, we found that by copying the distinctive prints and scratches made by other animals we could gain a new power; here was a method of identifying with the other animal, taking on its expressive magic in order to learn of its whereabouts, to draw it near, to make it appear.

It is a fact that the animal is already in the paint before it is painted. Our paints are made from the bones of the animals
N we paint. And no image forgets its origin. Spit and blood are added to this mix of feldspar (aluminum silicates from potassium, sodium, or calcium), hematite (iron-oxide red), limonite (iron-oxide yellow) charcoal (black), or manganese dioxide (blackish brown); from mouth to hand to rock. Time, like light, is drawn through the geologic. They are forces pulling through the darkness of prehistoric times to presuppose the future. Across this very dance of animals and the secret of the underground, energy is exchanged.

O I call you with my writing, my language-ing. Feeling you close connects with the impression of the rain on the grass, of the sunlight on a leaf. The sound of the wind. I feel the hair on my skin rise. I become other with you.

… This is a waltz
Thinking about our bodies
What they mean
For our salvation
With only the clothes
That we stand up in
Just the ground
On which we stand
Is the darkness
Ours to take?
Bathed in lightness
Bathed in heat …
(Tom York)

What is the transition between moving and writing, you ask. What is the difference between movement and writing? The weight of my body? The ephemeral imprints, invisible for humans, which I leave in space? Are the traces I leave with my emotions in space, readable for some? For the cat waving its tail on the chair? Do you recognize the traces of love radiating through space? Could you read my poem of sadness I left yesterday when leaving you? Do you know how to read me? Did you read your mother? Your father, back then? Were the spaces filled with illiterate scribbles and left you with just

P

AA Finding ways of living together through the complex logos of the sensuous?

SH A complex social challenge of tolerance, respect, and empathy. A space to practice solidarity, imagination, poetry, and humor, encouraging each other that the future is unknown.

confusion? Do you read my days? Do you have lists of my activities? Do you remember them? Or do I have to put them into words for you to read?

Your presence and gestures are living in the para-linguistic excess of language's measurement.

Our polylogs include touch, taste, smell, and the full sensorial capacities of our body-potentialities. How can we facilitate an aesthetic that challenges and makes representational norms transparent, and creates difference in both form and
P content in order to foster a community to come?

And expose ourselves to read the atmosphere, as reading (parts of) us.

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Wind

Air

Sky

Temperature

Clouds

Heat

Colors

Smell

Decay



50 — Nikolaus Gansterer


from the sea
Ice Factory Keller
"air movements / smells"
2.18/02/92 16:37 - 16:56

Searing blue

Ice cubes that refuse melting

In the depths of my bag old sweat, cooled heat

The underside

The apex

A platform that much closer to the sun

The inner sole competes with dark metal to claim lingering heat. The

shoe warmed by my body the pole by the sun.

My palm pushed into groundcover seeks the cold kind of living, rooting in tangles.

I replace hot and cold with metaphors. The breeze licks, saliva is

swampy. The air soft. In truth

Old heat dies out, fading in time and

leaking deeper into the ground. Hovering it emanates,

petrol-skin that proves life by heat.

Inner soles, my cheek on the metal

wall, back of my head/neck/back and lower legs, pushed up against the sun. There's a generous

pocket between my shirt and lower back, trapped air refreshed with the breeze.

The minute doesn't have a temperature I can register. The

spiders web, trapped seed pods and dust at the edge of immateriality even in full sun.

Sweat on my shaded lips, nose. I understand it both as an angry reaction

and a cool salve. I want to move

I lick my upper lip, I wipe the residue.

I've moved to the shade, but the Sun remains in my scalp and at the root of my hair. My skin is

another surface from which heat eventually fades.

There are rules of operation, science and equations of remaining inside. But here, these

bricks, the heat always falls away.

Away.

Colour proves itself distinct at concrete borders. The paving hot and the asphalt hotter.

A material complication, a conductor of

Scorching energy that trumps tone and shadow and my other floored theories.

It is tough, sucking heat easily.

Ignored the breath of the guy with a shopping bag, kids whispering. The stranger who sat

with his panting dog beside me, I did not say beautiful day/warm out/this bench is hot.

His dog drank water urgently, the dog said: summer's ending and enjoy it while it lasts.

Hot food in sweating bags, sweated tees in backpacks, borne,

bathed, endured, dreamed.

A misattribution of sound to heat.

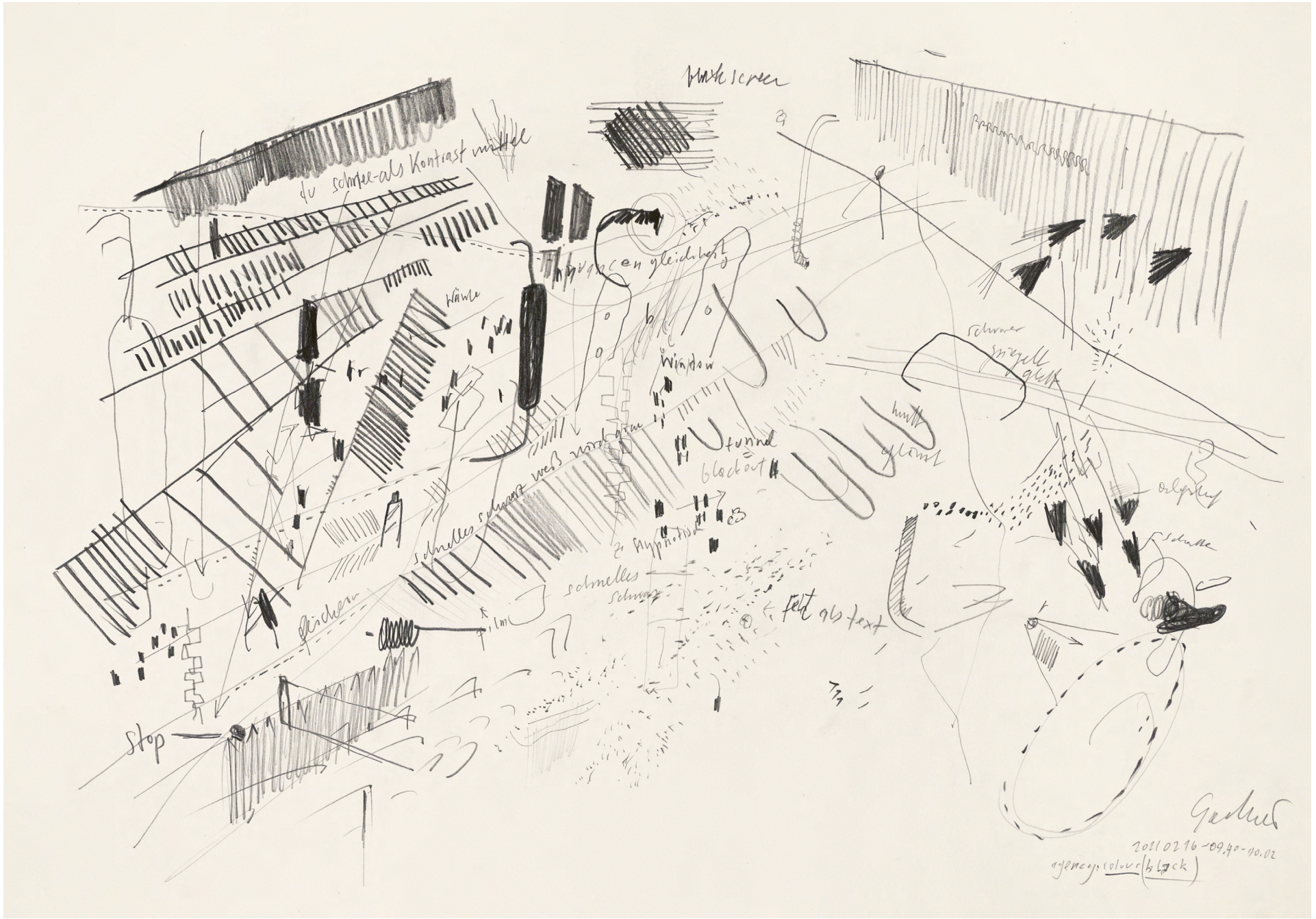
Banging made by sun bleached walls, and the song of damp soil.







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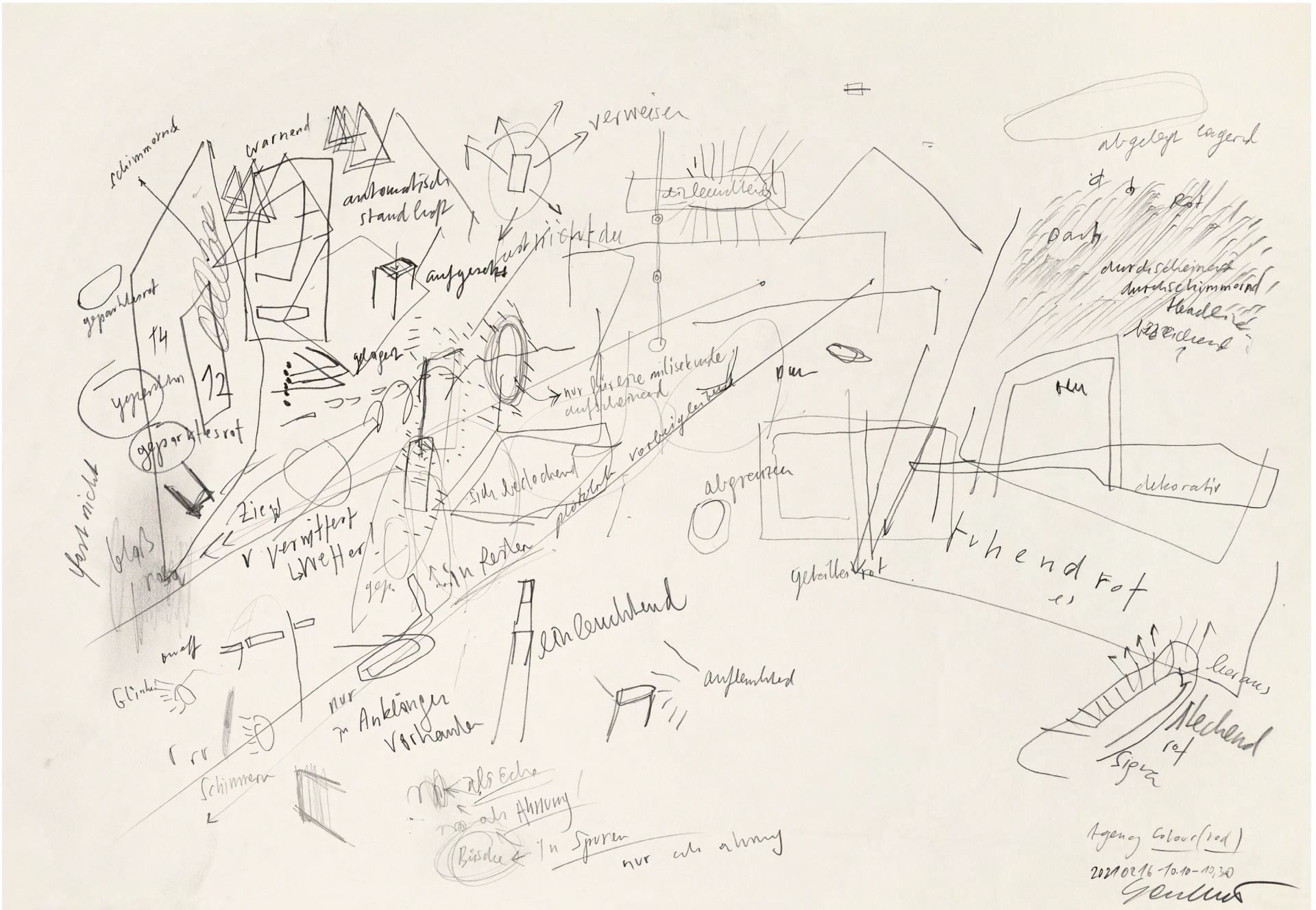
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aufscheinend
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Ziegel
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Wetter!
in Resten
abgrenzen
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dekorativ
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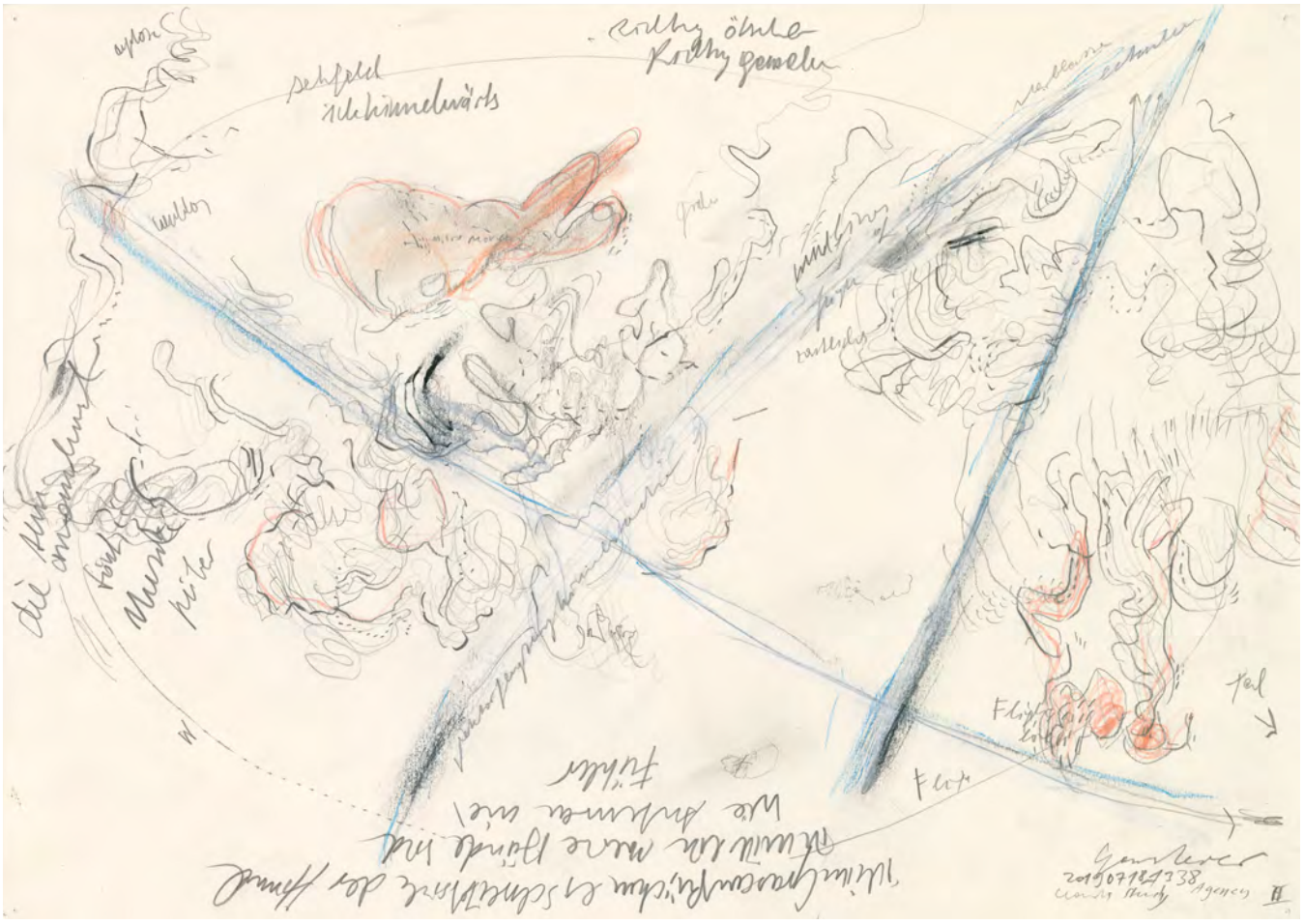
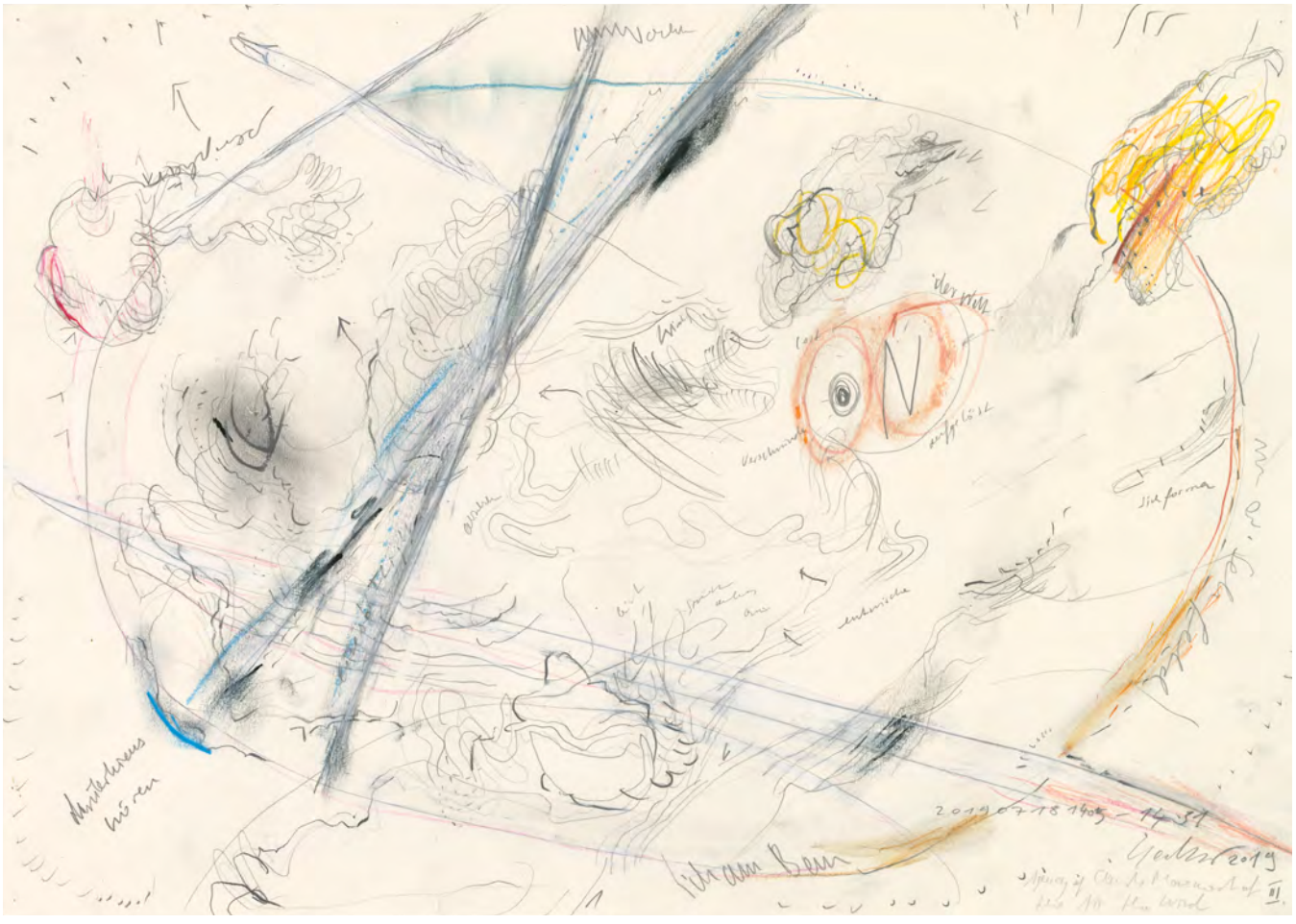
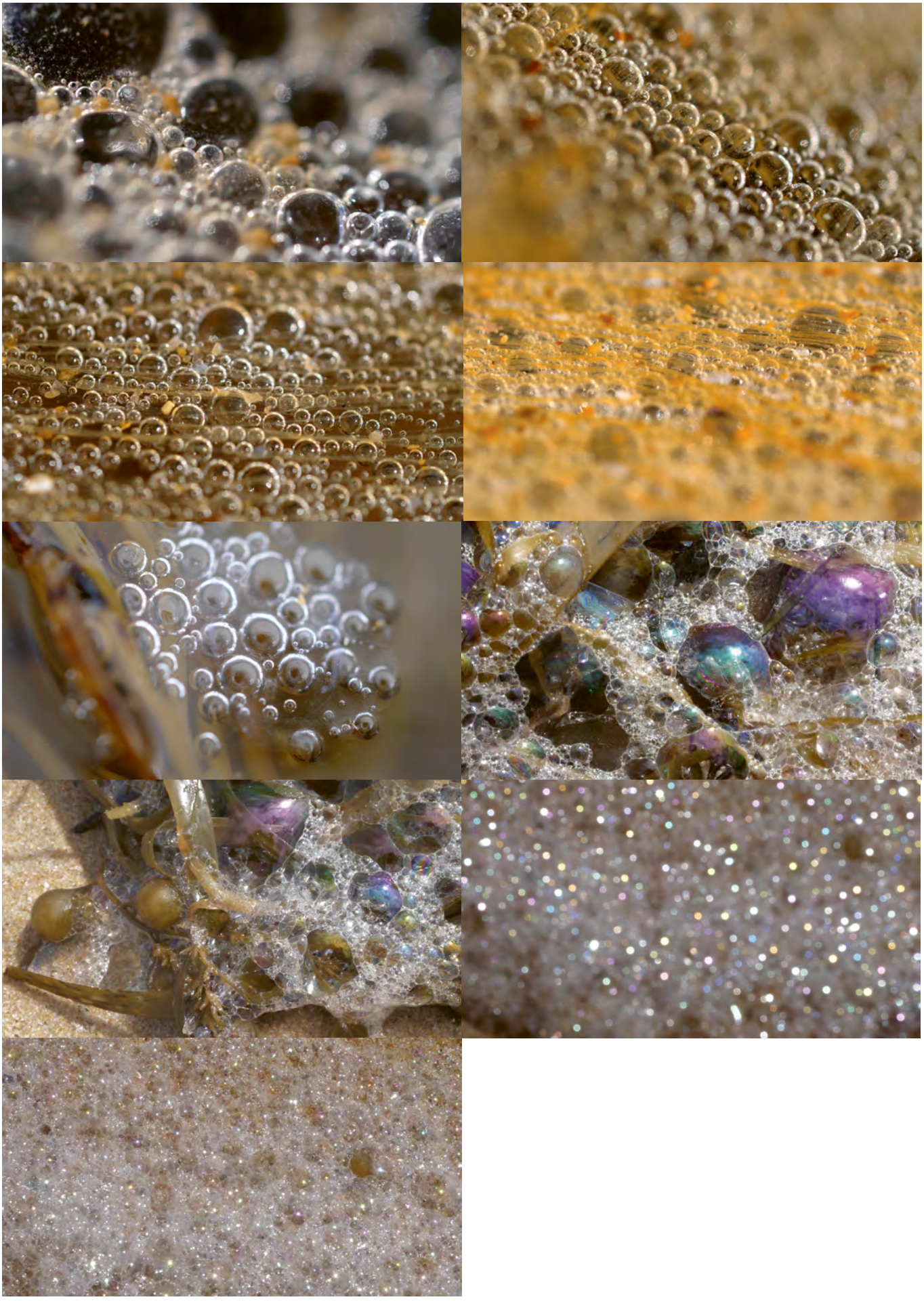


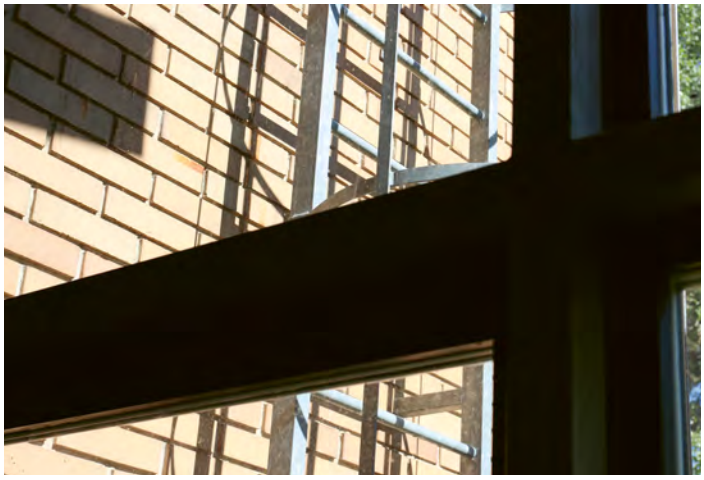










The temperature invades me—as body. It frames me. It creates a strong here—a reminiscence of the rain and my walk outside. Slowly dissolving, its agency can not modify this atmosphere, so it adapts. (The agency of the whole atmosphere is stronger than the agency of the initial temperature.) Temperature and atmosphere coexist in a fragile balance.

The initial temperature abandons me. This shift allows a certain openness to the temperature I infer from what I see in front of me—the sunny garden. The coldness retires to my feet—my legs maybe—although it resists in some others parts of my body.

The coldness, this reminiscence of the rain, resists this atmosphere. It is there in the same way that memories can resist the present. The present atmosphere was dissociated from the—from my—temperature from the start.

The opposition ceases when the temperature rises—enough to achieve a certain neutral quality, to not be a counterpart of the atmosphere.

I
Encounter of scents

To shift my awareness to smell softens my eyes.
My gaze reveals details to me.
A trade of ants creating a path on the ground
around and over grey gravels
I image these are mountains and meteorites for them.

Hot air from the wind brings different smells close to me.
Lime trees sweeten my presence sitting here.
Their scent enters my nostrils.
Little hairs to filter the air, some slime to catch invisible creepy-crawlies
then sweetness is spreading inside of my body.

And every breath unfolds a different world.
And every move engages with a different smell.
Just turn your head slightly.

If smell enters my body it connects with my immune system,
with the reflexes to identify danger in the sense of poison immediately.
Quicker than I can think.
If it enters, it transforms and exists with traces in my inner body.
It brings food to the microbial in my body.
My body hosting different existences.

II
4 scores for encounters with scents

1. Score
Hello, how are you today?
Inhale deeply and bring your awareness to the smells around you.
Move in a way so that you get in touch with your own smell.
Repeat this movement 5 times.
Vary the speed of the movement and how long you stay with your smell.
Find 3 variations.
Stay aware of your breathing.
How and in which ways does breath and smell interact?
How do you feel?

2. Score
This adventure should take max 30min.
Imagine how the people around you smell.
Create tactics to find out, if your imagination is right.
Choose at least one person, maximal three for this time.

What did you experience?

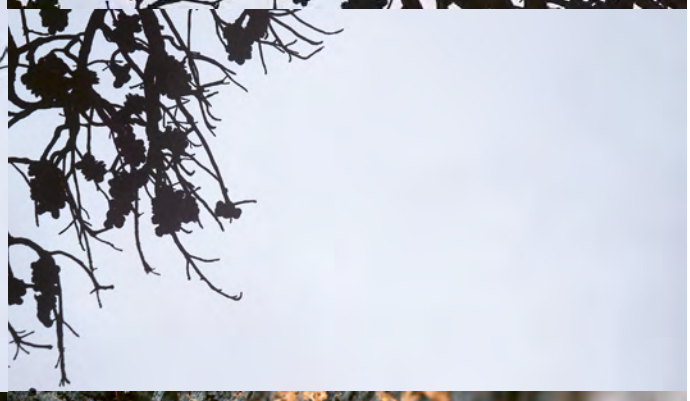
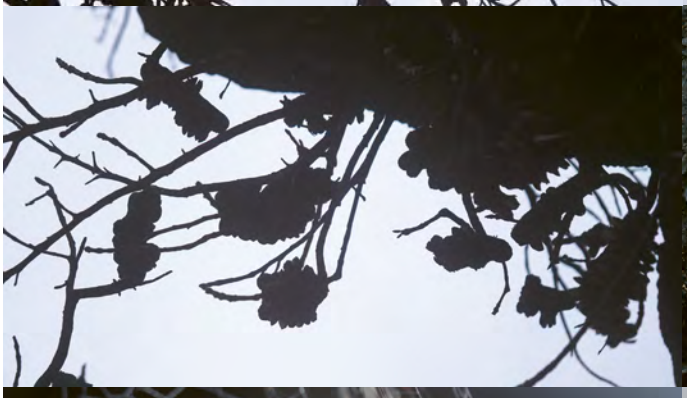
3. Score
Does this place smell everywhere the same?
Move around to encounter the different smells.

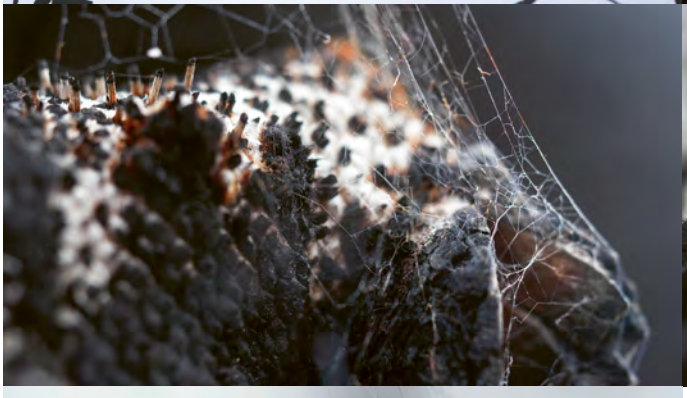
4. Score
(Take a pen and paper for this score)

The smell enters your body and existence with your breath and your taste.
It exists transformed and with traces inside of you, inside in your inner body.
What is the *inner body* for you?
Do you still carry the remains of the food you ate today?
Do you smell it? Is it mixing with the smell of your body? Of you?
Food brings the air and the surroundings of different places inside your body.
Smells are traces of things and people.

Make a list with people and things you carry with you that way.








Hot wind
Pr.
P
Temperature
SKIN
Pores
desert
Silence
(because
of Heat)
closing
Ice Factory
"Heatfields"
18.08.2018
15:4 – 15:59


AETTENTION
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AETTENTION
SPEED OF ANTS
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BRICK BATTERY
BRICK BATTERY
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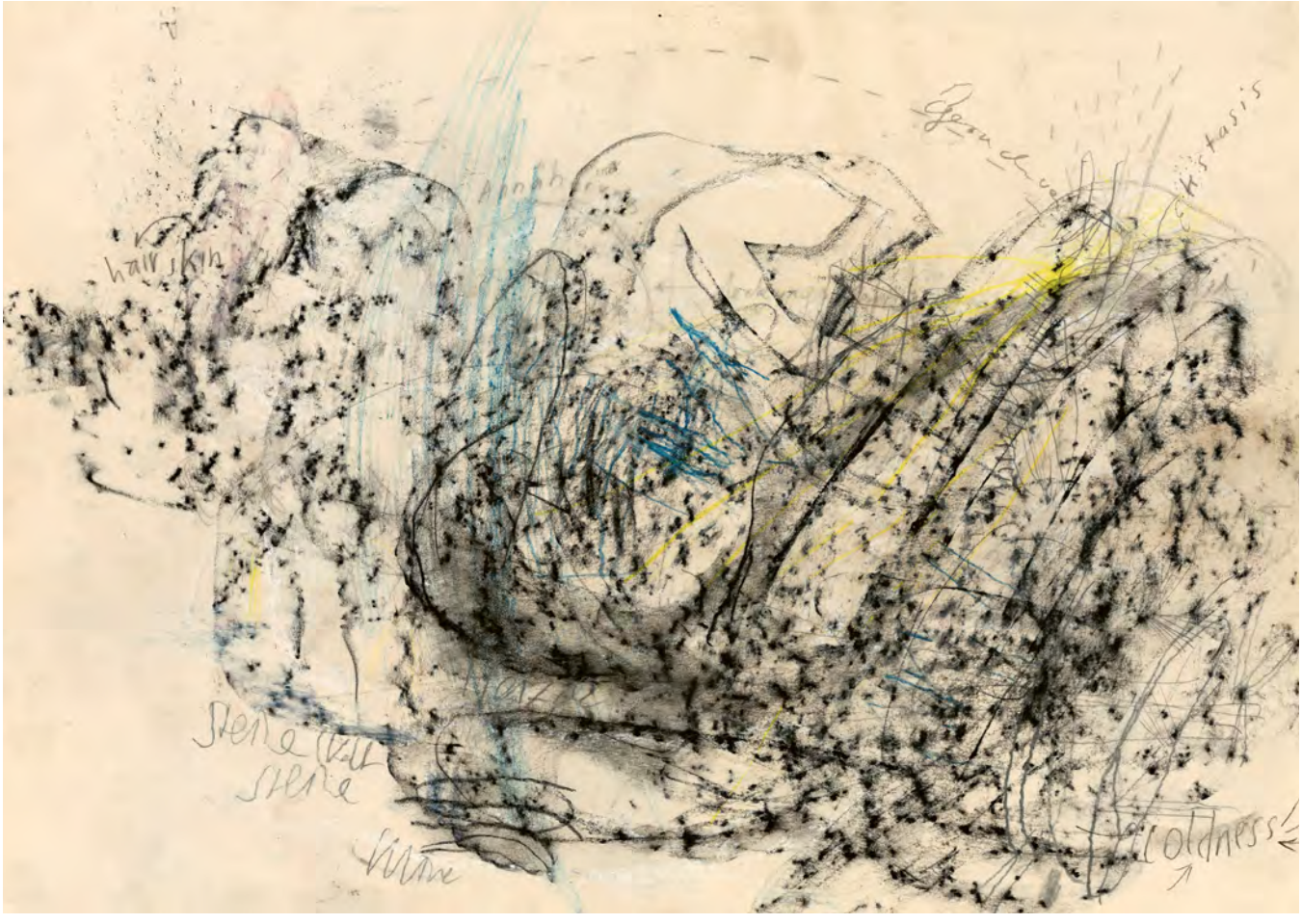
DRIED TONGUE
HISSING LEAVE S
CO.LAPSE
SHADOW COVERS
SHADOW COVERS
EXPANDING ALUMINIUM
BIN STINK
AIR CONDITION
BRICK BATTERY
GRAVITY PERSISTS
BAKING BITCHUMEN
BRICK BATTERY
AIR CONDITION
EXHAUST EXHAUST
EXHAUST
AIR CONDITION
EXHAUST
BAKING BITCHUMEN
AIR-VAPORATION
HISSING LEAVE S
ULTRA-VIOLET INDEX
STATIC TRAFFIC
STATIC TRAFFIC
EXPANDING ALUMINIUM
BIN STINK
ULTRA-VIOLET INDEX
OVEREXPOSED
HUNGER/LABOUR
IDLE MOTOR
CO.LAPSE
GRAVITY PERSISTS
OVEREXPOSED
BIN STINK
DAPPLED PATTERNS
LIQUID BONES
SOFT TEETH
SWE/EAT
CO.LAPSE
ULTRA-VIOLET INDEX
TIGHT TRUNK
HUNGER/LABOUR
SWE/EAT
BODY ODOUR FEEDBACK
ULTRA-VIOLET INDEX
OVEREXPOSED
NOSTRIL FLARES
BODY ODOUR FEEDBACK
SMEARED MAKE-UP
OVEREXPOSED
BODY ODOUR FEEDBACK
ULTRA-VIOLET INDEX
SWE/EAT
ULTRA-VIOLET INDEX
IDLE MOTOR
OVEREXPOSED


sun
weather
wind
movement
velocity
stillness
smell
warmth
temperature
skin
smell
nose
closing
forefront
wind
ear
eyes
coldness
hair
face
temperature


hair skin
coldness





221 Temperature



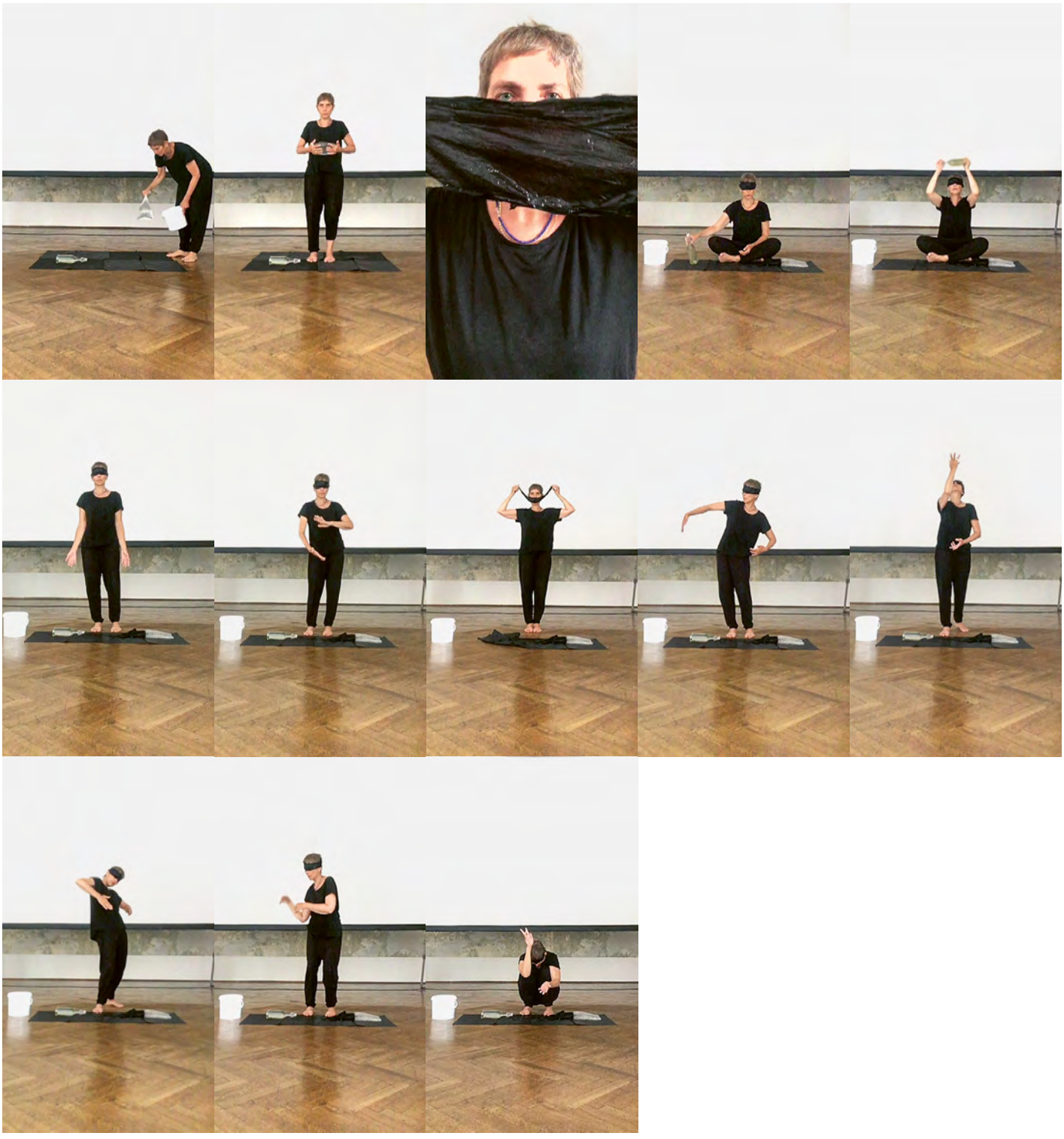

heat above me
inside




auf Wind Wechsel
Böe
Schattenwelt
Schattenbau


Schweißblatt
ich
nicht
ich


auswirkungen
Finger
Hand
das Tun
Hand-Lungsfeld
Haare
20210622 10:09 (temperatur)
panarea



72 — Sabina Holzer — This reflection on the agency of temperature was mediated by the artifact of notation on the opposite page (p. 229).

a rather shadow writing

blackness brings coolness on a sunny grass
to me skin
and kisses from the wind

    the wind always first
    winding my clothes

a support to breath

drawing with shadows
that is my dance
an open jacket buffeting blackness

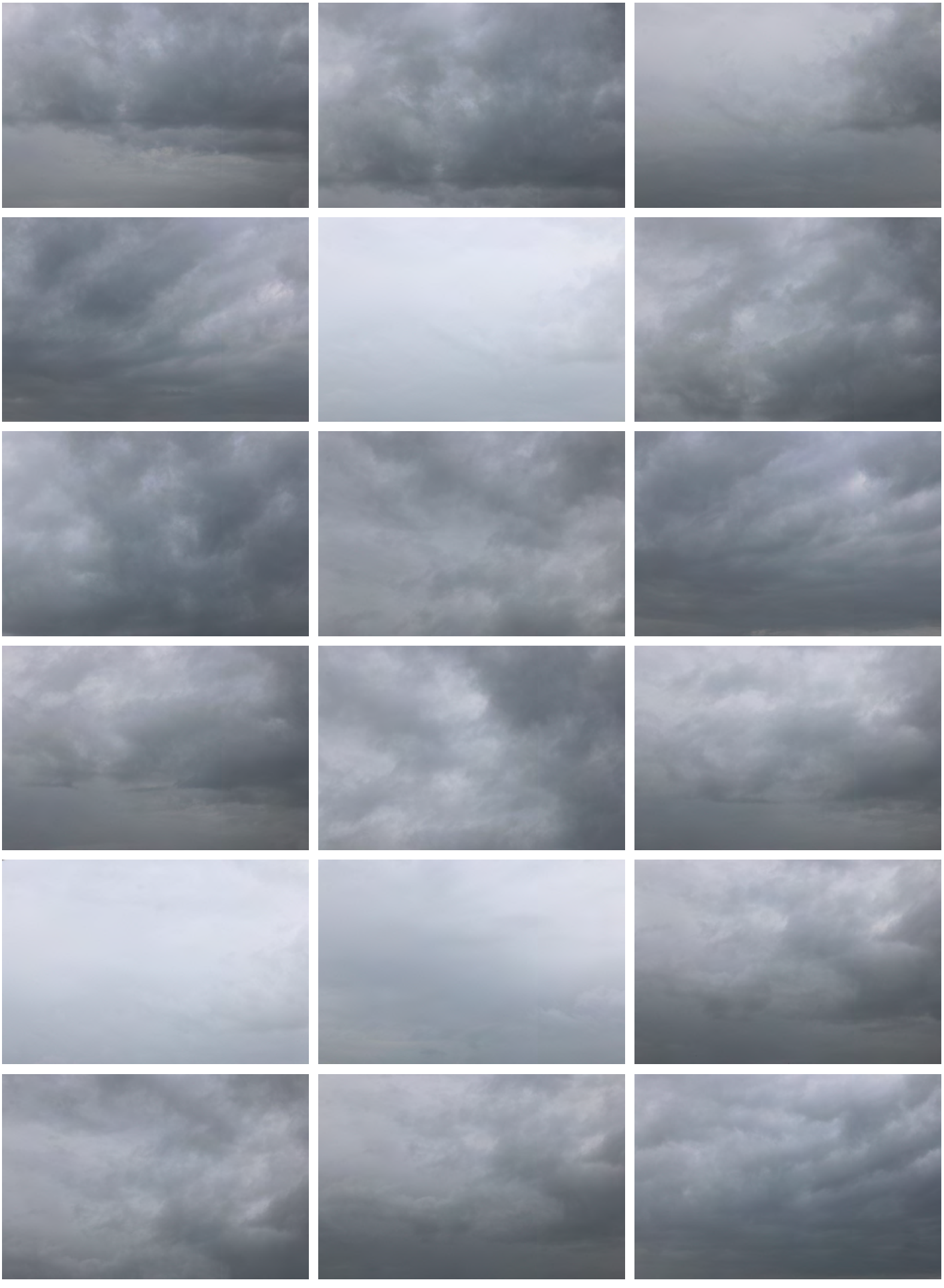
i wet my feet to bring
back
some water to the dry grass

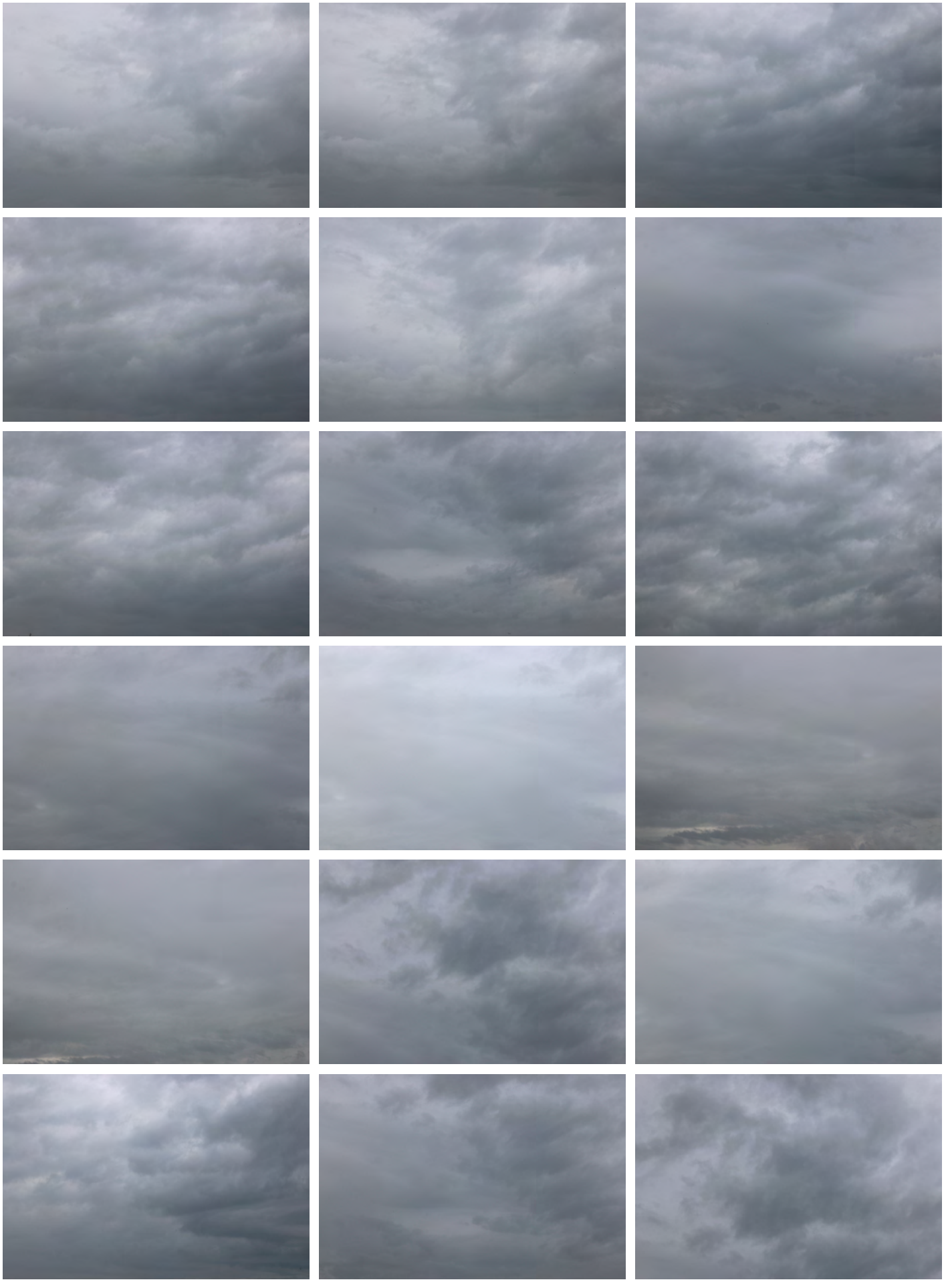
    some dead bodies heal the earth
    and some are healed

black is the color of the heat
gathering the light
shadows are

obstacles to be embraced

Score: lie beside a shadow. face the shadow. recognize your own shadow. curl yourself up, dive into this shadow. do your feel some coolness? breath for some while. roll yourself open towards your back, facing the light. breath for some while. turn towards the shadow again. repeat this at least 6x.









50 — p. 200 

identifier N-Gansterer-20180812-1532-Kalba
agency wind
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with charcoal, blue crayons and pencils on white paper, 60 × 80 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2018-08-12, 15:32
place United Arab Emirates, Sharjah, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
description of the atmosphere Still too hot, but there's more wind. Kicking up lot of swirling dust. Sweaty. Sticky. The concrete walls radiate the stored heat of high noon, intensifying the warmth. Thirsty. Tired.

51 — p. 201 

identifier N-Gansterer-20180812-1637-Kalba
agency air
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with charcoal, blue crayons and pencils on white paper, 60 × 80 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2018-08-12, 16:37
place United Arab Emirates, Sharjah, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
description of the atmosphere I'm here at the abandoned ice factory, and it's still intensely hot. At last, a slight breeze is blowing in from the sea, offering some relief. I feel exhausted.

52 — pp. 202–203 

identifier N-Isaac-20220303-1600-Melbourne
agency temperature
practices of notation writing
artifacts of notation 33 sheets of text, each 30 × 20 cm
notator Rosie Isaac
time 2022-03-03, 16:00
place Australia, Melbourne/Naarm, Fitzroy, Collingwood Yards
tactics of showing The complete text is printed out on 33 individual sheets and passed around to the audience, sheet by sheet, to be read silently.

53 — p. 204–205 

identifier N-Gansterer-20230527-1000-Kaltenleutgeben
agency colors
practices of notation collecting, gleaning, drawing, painting
artifacts of notation a collection of more than 30 color samples on paper in various dimensions, total size approx. 100 × 70 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2023-05-27, 10:00
place Austria, Lower Austria, Kaltenleutgeben
tactics of showing In the form of a field of color samples, either laid out or pinned to the wall
description of the atmosphere I'm on an excursion with my students, a full day dedicated to this notation. I am gathering colors like flowers along the roadside, from the edges of the field of perception.

54 — p. 206–207 

identifier N-Gansterer-20230528-1000-Heiligenkreuz
agency colors
practices of notation collecting, gleaning, drawing, painting
artifacts of notation a collection of more than 50 color samples on paper in various dimensions, total size approx. 100 × 70 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2023-05-28, 10:00
place Austria, Lower Austria, Heiligenkreuz
tactics of showing In the form of a field of color samples, either laid out or pinned to the wall
description of the atmosphere I am hiking through the Vienna woods. Warm, happy. Bit tired, feel very sensitive.

55 — p. 208 

identifier N-Gansterer-20210216-0940-Linz
agency colors
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with pencil on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-02-16, 09:40
place Austria, Linz, train
description of the atmosphere I'm sitting in the train, a mostly empty open-plan carriage, with a table in front of me. I'm in a drifting state as the colorful world outside races past, heart pounding, as if in flight. I focus solely on perceiving the color black—its shades, its nuances, its transitions.

56 — p. 209 

identifier N-Gansterer-20210216-1010-Attnang
agency colors
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with pencil on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-02-16, 10:10
place Austria, Attnang-Puchheim, train
description of the atmosphere I'm sitting in the train, a mostly empty open-plan carriage, with a table in front of me. I'm in a drifting state as the colorful world outside races past, heart pounding, as if in flight. I focus solely on perceiving the color red—its shades, its nuances, its transitions.

57 — p. 210 

identifier N-Gansterer-20190718-1320-Gaming
agency clouds
practice of notation drawing
artifacts of notation 2 drawings with colored pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2019-07-18, 13:20
place Austria, Lower Austria, Gaming, Eiserner Herrgott
description of the atmosphere I am sitting on the remains of an old house on top of a mountain. A beautiful panoramic view in front of me with the massive Ötscher mountain. K. is lying in the grass next to me. It's a beautiful warm summer day. Cow bells. Mild but steady mountain breeze. The sun is warm on my bare skin. Blue skies with huge cumulus clouds, which constantly morph. Childhood memories. I am focusing on drawing the motion of air and clouds above me.

58 — p. 211 

identifier N-Gansterer-20191204-0636-Cape-Woolamai
agency air
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2019-12-04, 06:36
place Australia,Victoria, Cape Woolamai
description of the atmosphere I couldn't sleep and woke up early, walking along the beach with my camera. A fresh wind lifts me, I'm mixed with excitement and nerves about the upcoming birth of my son—it could happen any moment. How will it all unfold? Then I notice the micro-worlds of bubbles and foam, tiny shimmering amniotic-like bubbles nestled among the stranded seaweed. Holding air suspended within, until they burst.

59 — pp. 212–213 

identifier N-Arteaga-20220919-1110-Vienna
agency temperature
practices of notation writing, photographing, sound recording, video recording
artifacts of notation 1 exploratory essay, 8 photographs, 8 sound recordings, 1 video recording (not included here)
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2022-09-19, 11:10
place Austria,Vienna, Rustenschacherallee, Zentrum Fokus Forschung
tactics of showing All artifacts should be shown simultaneously. The video as a loop on middle-sized screen; the photographs as a series on a same size screen; the essay on a third same size screen situated in the center.
notes I was allowing the resonance of the agency of temperature to resonate in the four media.
description of the atmosphere The sun shines after a light phase of rain. The air—the view—is clear. Calm and concentrated. Open and inspiring. Breathing generously.

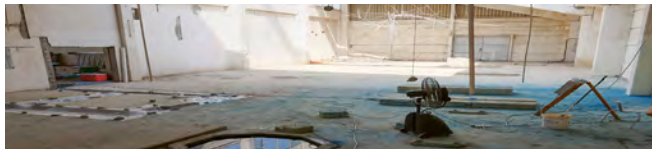
60 — pp. 214–215 

identifier N-Holzer-20220603-1240-Vienna
agency smell
practice of notation writing
artifacts of notation 4 scores
notator Sabina Holzer
time 2022-06-03, 12:40
place Austria, Vienna, Schönbornpark
description of the atmosphere Sunny & hot on a round space in the park. The ground around is made by grey gravels. A fountain with a little water springs into a pool of

50



51



resting greenish still water. I am sitting alone on a bench. Some people sitting around, eating, reading chatting. Peaceful. Little traffic. Trees, some grass and flowers add a coolness. Rest and peacefulness. Some kids play in the background. Nothing too much here, maybe the sun.

61 — p. 216

identifier N-Gansterer-20220111-0738-Cape-Woolamai
agency decay
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-01-11, 07:38
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai
description of the atmosphere I walk into the bush, where I find many charred remains of trees. Ghostly black. Life immediately continues, even after obliteration—eerie.

62 — p. 217

identifier N-Gansterer-20180818-1544-Kalba
agency heat
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with charcoal sticks and pencils on paper, 60 × 80 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2018-08-18, 15:44
place United Arab Emirates, Sharjah, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
description of the atmosphere I feel very exhausted. My eye infection is getting worse. I feel like living in an oven.

63 — p. 218

identifier N-Facility-20220303-1600-Melbourne
agency temperature
practice of notation writing
artifact of notation text printed on paper, 21 × 29 cm
notator Debris Facility
time 2022-03-03, 16:00
place Australia, Melbourne/Naarm, Fitzroy, Collingwood Yards
tactics of showing text to be performed
description of the atmosphere Opaque usage, a site I've never dwelled in, but often passed by. Warm dry air, clear bright light, hot concrete, rumbling traffic, hissing leaves, scent of rubbish and exhaust, texture of concrete and bitumen.

52



53



54



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56



57



58



60



61



62



63



64 — p. 219

identifier N-Gansterer-20220920-1005-Vienna
agency smell
practice of notation drawing
artifacts of notation 2 drawings with colored pencils, charcoal and chalk on paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-09-20 10:05
place Austria, Vienna, Rustenschacherallee, Zentrum Fokus Forschung
description of the atmosphere It's cool and windy as I walk through the garden, mostly with my eyes closed, sensing the dampness, the autumn that came over me far too suddenly, along with the summer now lost. My throat feels tight, and my instincts sense something immense, something unsettling. Between my nose and my heart, there's a hidden tunnel.

65 — p. 220

identifier N-Gansterer-20211217-1635-Blairgowrie
agency temperature
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils and water colors on beige paper, 60 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-12-17, 16:35
place Australia, Victoria, Blairgowrie
description of the atmosphere I'm here on the terrace at J.'s house. It's late afternoon on a very warm day. Trees surround me, and the garden is filled with a continuous concert of bird voices. The sky is beginning to be covered with hazy clouds. I'm naked, sitting on a chair, feeling the sun on my skin. I'm sweating slightly, and a mild breeze brushes against me. I close my eyes, focusing on the subtle shifts in temperature sensed through my skin.

66 — p. 221

identifier N-Gansterer-20220109-1630-Cape-Conran
agency temperature
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils on beige paper, 60 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-01-09, 16:30
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Conran
description of the atmosphere I'm down at the beach. Hiding between the thorny bushes. The sea is wild and loud. My heart is unsettled, heavy, angry—rising and unrestrained, helpless. In the shade of the thicket, I sink into an invisible net. The wind shields me from the sun's sharp prickling.

67 — p. 222

identifier N-Gansterer-20211230-1102-Cape-Woolamai
agency temperature
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils on white paper, 60 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-12-30, 11:02
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai
description of the atmosphere I'm here in the dunes on a beautiful day. The sky is nearly blue, with a light breeze coming from the coast about 200 meters away. I've climbed one of the tallest dunes, partly covered with sand and tea tree bushes, where I can see and hear the powerful waves rolling in. There may be two surfers out there, but otherwise it's empty. In the far distance, I see a few parked cars and someone heading toward the coastal path. I feel the sun intensely on my skin, and the sand is warm underfoot. A helicopter passes by, and the sand is marked with countless insect tracks, kangaroo prints, bird traces—maybe even a snake's trail. Crickets and birds are sounding. An argument I had earlier still sits heavy in my chest. The quiet here is profound; the dunes feel like an extension of the sea, shaped by wind and waves. I close my eyes, sinking into the presence.

68 — p. 223

identifier N-Gansterer-20220127-1800-Cape-Woolamai
agency temperature
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils and water colors on white paper, 60 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-01-27, 18:00
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai
description of the atmosphere I've laid down in the hot sand, drifting. Buried in an entanglement, inextricably connected. It comes in waves. My body, both shield and sponge. Beneath the vast sky, I feel so small.

69 — p. 224

identifier N-Gansterer-20220426-1045-Vienna
agency temperature
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils and watercolors on white paper, 60 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-04-26, 10:45
place Austria,Vienna, Rustenschacherallee, Zentrum Fokus Forschung
description of the atmosphere I'm here at the Zentrum Fokus Forschung. A grey day, bit cold. I'm sitting in the garden on a chair and a metal table. A lawnmower is operating nearby. Alex is here, notating too. The lush young green of sprouting spring signs all around me. Covered in my woolen coat, I try to stay warm. Blackbirds are singing. Tired but excited.

70 — p. 225

identifier N-Gansterer-20220429-1709-Vienna
agency temperature
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with various colored pencils and chalk on beige paper, 70 × 50 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-04-29, 17:09
place Austria, Vienna, Danube channel, Strandbar Hermann
description of the atmosphere I'm sitting by the bank of the Danube channel in the afternoon sun with my students. It's a warm, slightly windy spring day, with a flock of white clouds drifting overhead. I'm watching the water's reflections near the bridge by the Urania building. Inside, I feel emotionally worn, but outwardly, I'm here in the role of teacher, guiding them through experimental drawing.

71 — pp. 226–227

identifier N-Gansterer-20210622-1009-Panarea
agency temperature
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with various colored pencils and chalk on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-06-22, 10:09
place Italy, Panarea Island
description of the atmosphere I'm sitting under an olive tree near the sea. The sun already has an intense strength for this time of day; my skin glows warmly. A light wind comes from the front at an angle hungry for touch, for tenderness. The crickets have gone wild, their chirping loud and intense. My boy is sleeping beside me as I sit, sweaty, on a small stone path leading up to the mountain. I hear some kids playing on the sandy beach nearby. We're on our way to an ancient archaeological site.

72 — p. 228

identifier R-Holzer-20220604-1400-Vienna
agency temperature
practice of reflection moving
artifacts of reflection a movement sequence, recorded on video.
notation of reference N-Holzer-20220430-1100-Vienna
reflector Sabina Holzer
time 2022-06-04, 14:00
place Austria, Vienna, Laudongasse, Volkskundemuseum

73 — p. 229

identifier N-Holzer-20220430-1100-Vienna
agency temperature
practice of notation moving
artifact of notation A text, a score and a photo:
1) text: a rather shadowy writing
2) score: The coolness of the shadow and the warmness of the sun appeared for me. The blackness of the shadow. Black as the clothes I brought with me. Dryness and humidity. Warmth and coolness. I start moving to connect and experience the place more. As soon as I stand up there is a shadow. I dance with my shadow. There is a shadowy place I go there. The earth is soft and cool. It is a bit sucked with liquid. The stones are cool.

64



65



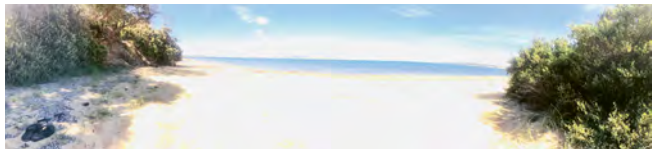
66



67



68



69



70



71



73



75



76



59 72 74 no panorama available

I feel the temperature through my skin. On my skin. Finding some feathers of a hunted bird. Black. I place my clothes beside. 3) photo: My dear shadow, you are not the ground (Nicht am Grund der Bilder), I want to lay beside the clothes and breath. I turn to the light and bend my self back inwards to the shadowless, coolness.
notator Sabina Holzer
time 2022-04-30, 11:00
place Austria, Vienna, Rustenschacherallee, Zentrum Fokus Forschung
description of the atmosphere I am sitting close to a tree with two trunks. It is a garden. A wide open field of grass in front of me. On the grass is sun. The trees give me shadow. Soft breezes. Sounds of animals and the city from a close distant. Many birds singing. Potential atmosphere of promises. And liveliness.

74 — pp. 230–231

identifier N-Arteaga-20190504-1725-Venice
agency sky
practice of notation photographing
artifact of notation a series of 44 photographies (printed here: 36)
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2019-05-04, 17:25
place Italy, Venice, Fondamenta Sant'Eufemia
tactics of showing projected as a series of slides in big format
notes sitting outside of a café right by the water
short description of the atmosphere Cloudy, almost completely covered. Raining a little bit. I'm sitting in front of the water. There are boats passing by, a few people around me. It is kind of … contained, maybe even sad atmosphere. It looks like autumn.

75 — p. 232

identifier N-Gansterer-20191225-0541-Cape-Woolamai
agency decay
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2019-12-25, 05:41
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai
description of the atmosphere I'm down at the beach when suddenly an overwhelming stench of decay hits me—like dead fish, like rotting, brackish sea, sweet and too deadly tender to bear. The seal's body glistens in the glaring light, leathery. Like a reddish-black rock. Its bloated form swarms with hundreds of flies and insects, maggots and worms winding through the leather landscape of skin. Gulls hover nearby, searching for morsels. Life moves on and on. Death as ever shifting states of vitality.

76 — p. 233

identifier N-Gansterer-20220228-1600-Cape-Woolamai
agency decay
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-02-28, 16:00
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai
description of the atmosphere I wander along the beach of Magicland, the tide low. P. and K. are with me. It's warm, damp, the air thick and pressing, barely a breeze. The sea is rough. Magicland weaves its hallucinatory spell once again—life dissolving and forming, shaping itself, searching, all at once.

A

ALEX ARTEAGA
In *Contingent Agencies* we mobilize the concept of "contingency" first of all in relation to its etymological roots (contingere: to touch). We qualified the agencies we situate in the focus of our research as "contingent" because they actualize themselves in contact to one another. Could you refer to this relational aspect in the concept of contingency you are outlining here?

HANS-JÖRG RHEINBERGER
My use of the term "contingency" focuses on its meaning as an encounter in the sense of an event that comes as a surprise. It thus comprises touch or contact, but one that is essentially unintentional. I think that the usage of the term contingency in your project also emphasizes the surprising options that emerge from such unintentional encounters, from "letting it happen."

AA The unpredictability caused by contingency in experimental settings can also be found in the dynamics of atmospheres. If you agree with this, could you speculate on further commonalities between experiment and atmosphere?

HJR It is hard for me to answer this question. If you are referring to the atmosphere in terms of the earth's envelope in which we move and breath, contingency is, of course, everywhere. If you are referring to the atmosphere in terms of a certain mood of a situation in which we happen to be, it is also everywhere. But just because of this ubiquity, it tends to lose its sharpness, its singularity. Experimentation rests on focusing contingency, not dispersing it.

Contingency, Notation, Reflection— Some Remarks from the Perspective of Scientific Experimentation

Hans-Jörg Rheinberger

Over the course of two long panel discussions in the framework of *Contingent Agencies*' concluding cross-disciplinary symposium, participants exchanged ideas and discussed approaches and concepts surrounding the idea and the practices conceived, developed, and performed in this project. What follows is an attempt at rehearsing in a loose fashion, and expanding on my spontaneous interventions into these discussions. I hope that they will evoke, to the extent that this is at all possible, something of the atmosphere and spirit that pervaded these afternoon and evening congregations. Perhaps I should add that I saw it as my task in this cross-disciplinary symposium to keep present the perspective of the research process as it characterizes the sciences. Consequently, this will also hold true for the remarks that follow. They will turn around the notions of contingency, notation, and reflection, and the relations that I see existing between them. They can also be read as a continuation of the deliberations on these topics gathered in my new book *Split and Splice: A Phenomenology of Experimentation*.[1]

A

Contingency

Generally, contingency is seen as being opposed to law-based, rule-directed, and planned behavior, be it of the forces of nature or of human agency. And planned behavior is, equally, generally seen as paradigmatically embodied by the sciences. What follows is an attempt to deconstruct this image of the sciences. As far as I can see, this traditional image is the greatest enemy and hindrance of a rapprochement between the sciences and the arts. Not least for this reason, I deem it of utmost importance to draw an alternative picture of the role and facets of contingency in the scientific research process, that is, at the core of what we call

— 1 — Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, *Split and Splice: A Phenomenology of Experimentation*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2023. The German version of the book appeared as *Spalt und Fuge. Eine Phänomenologie des Experiments*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2021.

the sciences, at the place where the pulsating life of the sciences is acted out.[2] For too long, the image of the sciences has been dominated by what Ludwik Fleck called their "official paper form," in contrast to their "living practice."[3]

Experimentation is at the heart of the scientific research process. We can look, and rightly so, at experimentation as a practice invented by the sciences for the sake of charting unknown ground, for creating knowledge that cannot be anticipated. Generally, it is assumed that in an experiment, anticipated knowledge in the form of a hypothesis is tested. But more often than not, what really happens is that a hypothesis is subverted by the experimental process, which points in unforeseen directions. What is really new, then, escapes our foresight by necessity. The experiment is a device that renders it possible to turn what at first may appear as an incident or even an accident into an event, an impact into an outlook. The term "event" is here taken in its Derridean meaning: "The impossible is the condition of possibility of the event."[4] An event is an event exactly because it is impossible to foresee it happening. Contingency is something like the un-conceptual kernel of experimentation. It allows for leaving behind the mind-frame in which we, at any point in time, are kept and within which we act. In order to be able to transgress it, an agency is needed that operates beyond this horizon. Researchers shape their experiments with all the ingenuity that is actually at their disposal, but they do so in order to possibly receive something that they were not able to determine in advance. Gaston Bachelard once captured this situation in the following succinct formulation: "There should be no hesitation: one should choose the side […] where reason loves to be in danger. *If, in any experiment, one does not risk one's reason, that experiment is not worthwhile attempting*."[5] In addition to illuminating the foregoing argumentation, the quotation transports yet another message. In experimentation, contingency is not something to be feared or avoided; it is something to which researchers expose themselves in the spirit of a risk. The art of experimentation lies in the ability to distinguish between a contingency that arises from the depth of the experimental setup and one that is merely due to the fallacies of circumstance.

Be aware that I am not talking here about contingencies in nature, such as the haphazard change of cloud formations, the randomness of quantum events, or chance occurrences in the process of biological evolution. I am also not talking about the vagaries of everyday life, or of the contingencies of historical processes in general. I am talking about a particular cultural field of agency: the scientific research process. Experimentation is a peculiar cultural technique of knowledge acquisition. In it, contingency is not encountered and experienced as something that betides us from outside, but rather as something that emerges from inside out: it results from arranging things in such a way that knowledge effects can be

— 2 — See also Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, "Postscriptum," in Lara Keuck, Kärin Nickelsen, eds., *Special Issue on Epistemic Times: Writing History 25 Years after Synthesizing Proteins in the Test Tube. Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 45/3 (2022), pp. 517–523.

— 3 — Ludwik Fleck, "Die Krise der 'Wirklichkeit'" (1929), in Lothar Schäfer and Thomas Schnelle, eds., *Ludwik Fleck: Erfahrung und Tatsache*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983, pp. 46–58, p. 50.

— 4 — "Du mot à la vie: un dialogue entre Jacques Derrida et Hélène Cixous. Propos receuillis par Aliette Armel," *Magazine littérarie*, no. 430, April 2004, p. 28.

— 5 — Gaston Bachelard, "Surrationalism," trans. Julien Levy, in Julien Levy, ed., *Surrealism*, New York: Black Sun Press, 1936, p. 188. Translation slightly altered by the author.

B

AA Could notation be understood as a space of "presentation" instead of "representation," and as a space of contact with the notated, and, therefore, as a contingent space?

HJR My basic distinction with respect to the scientific research process is that of a space of graphematicity, that is, the space of the generation of traces in the experiment, and a space of re-presentation, or data space, in which notation, among other activities, like modeling, can take place. I avoid the notion of presence—and hence presentation, that is, present-making—because it is suggestive of an illusionary immediacy. Of course, the space of representation is also a contingent space, because with its options of arrangement and rearrangement, juxtaposition and superposition, enhancement and dilution, it allows for the emergence of novel contingencies. It appears to me, however, that in an artistic practice like your notational activities, these two spaces do possibly coincide, or collapse into one, so that the distinction probably does not make much sense here. We cannot expect a one-to-one correspondence between scientific and artistic practices.

AA Could a possible substitution of representation with presentation enlarge the "possibilities of visualizing relationships" in a speculative sense, that is, beyond the relationships "implicit in the experimental setup"? If this were the case, the function of notation would not only be of representation, but include a generative if not creative aspect.

HJR: Tying notation to the space of re-presentation does not mean to deprive it of its generative potential, as I have tried to make clear. But in the sciences, we do not deal with creations ex nihilo. In contrast, that this would happen in the arts is one of the ineradicable illusions of the profession. With his notion of "material imagination," Gaston Bachelard has reminded us how deeply our capacity for dreaming is rooted in the materiality of the elements that go into artistic production, be it drawing, painting, engraving, sculpting, singing, dancing, composing, or poetic writing. We should not fall behind this fundamental insight.

AA Could another commonality between experiment and atmosphere be seen in the "new degree of mobility" gained through notation in both cases?

HJR: Experiments are not atmospheric, at least not in the colloquial sense of the word; they focus. But by zooming in, they open a new horizon of "possibles" (in the sense of François Jacob's *jeu des possibles*). To speak metaphorically, we could perhaps say that they create an atmosphere in which novelty can play out.

engendered, that events can produce themselves. Researchers are not subject to contingency, but rather the other way around: contingencies are subject to the researcher's work. They are taken into the service of the process of knowledge generation. We could possibly describe it as the "taming of chance" for the purpose of extracting new knowledge from the process of experimentation, to pick up an expression that Ian Hacking used for a different, yet not completely unrelated purpose.[6] Contingency is the driving force of the acquisition of empirically grounded knowledge about the world through experimentation.

B

Notation

It appears appropriate to add a word on notation at this point, and on how, in scientific research, notational activities relate to contingency.[7] In an experiment, research tools and the matters of epistemic interest are arranged with respect to each other in such a way that an interface is created between them. The interface, in turn, generates a productive friction that sends out sparks, which can meaningfully be interpreted as bits of information about the object of investigation, as long as one keeps in mind that they stem from the encounter with the research technology in use. These sparks, or traces, then need to be fixed in one way or another, in order to render them durable and apt for closer inspection, an operation that, as an unavoidable collateral damage, deprives them of some of their essential ambiguity; but at the same time, it makes them amenable to a new "game of the possible" on another playground.[8] In this way, a novel space is opened, a playground on which operations become possible that are excluded from the space of experimentation proper. Each of these two related spaces has its own materiality, from which a repertoire of manipulative options springs that is characteristic for each of them. In *Split and Splice*, I have elaborated on these two spaces in more detail.[9] They can be characterized as a space of graphematicity and a space of representation, or data space, respectively.[10] Each of them comes with its peculiar logic of proliferation, but in both of them, contingency occupies a central place.

With the space of representation, we enter the realm of notation. It has also been addressed as the realm of "inscription," a notion that the early Bruno Latour preferentially used.[11] You can easily imagine that with that, a new space of contingent agencies becomes available. It is a space in which trials can be conducted on paper or on a screen in a tentative and readily reversible fashion. They rest on and exploit the reduction to two dimensions that goes along with entering the space of representation. What is lost in spatial dimensions is gained in degrees of freedom to puzzle around, and with that, to do so in a newly acquired time regime freed from the constraints of an experimental setup. Above all, however, what is gained are options of making visible. Representation creates the possibility of visualizing relations that otherwise would remain im-

— 6 — Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Hacking's book was a follow-up of his *Emergence of Probability,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, the result of his decade-long study of the emergence of statistical thinking in the course of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

— 7 — For more on notation, see Rheinberger 2023, chapter 5.

— 8 — François Jacob, *Le Jeu des possibles. Essai sur la diversité du vivant*, Paris: Fayard, 1981.

— 9 — Rheinberger 2023, in particular chapter 2.

— 10 — See also "'Forming and Being Informed.' Hans-Jörg Rheinberger in Conversation with Michael Schwab," in Michael Schwab, ed., *Experimental Systems. Future Knowledge in Artistic Research*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013, pp. 198–219.

— 11 — Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, Princeton[2] 1986.

C

AA In your text you treat reflexivity as an intrinsic aspect of experimentation and notation. Could you imagine understanding reflection as an autonomous field of practice, that is, a field of practices of reflection, different than practices of experimenting and notating?

HJR I hesitate to regard reflection as an "autonomous field of practice." There is a long, idealistic philosophical tradition that treats thinking—taken synonymously with reflection—as an activity per se, of and in itself, pure reason. My impression is that we do not get far with such an assumption. I prefer to understand reflection starting from its originary meaning, that is, a light beam reflected by an impenetrable surface. When it comes to thinking, this means that there is always an interaction with matter at its core, a friction with, a resistance of matter.

AA Could "distance" in relation to experimentation be understood as a different approach, an approach characterized by adopting a position of "as if" the observed would be independent of the observer and the process of observation? In this sense, could this approach imply the contrary of a distance, that is, an intensification, even a moving closer to the investigated things?

HJR We are dealing with a dialectical relationship here. In an experiment, the objects of investigation, the epistemic things, are made to interact with the investigative instruments. The experimenter has arranged for this interaction to occur. But at the moment of the interaction, he absents himself from the scene. Hans Blumenberg, to whom I refer here, takes the animal trap as a prime anthropological example of such an interaction. The hunter creates it with all his ingenuity, but only to retreat and let the animal interact with the trap in his absence. This creates a reflexive loop. The outcome of the process is fed back into the arrangement's modification. This is the only way to come closer to things that escape our range of action.

AA To consider "conceptualization" as a synonym of "reflection" excludes the very basic meaning of reflection: to give back, as a mirror, what falls on another medium (inorganic matter), but which organic matter is also able to do. On this basis, would you admit the possibility of a non-conceptual reflection?

HJR Blumenberg calls his considerations a "theory of un-conceptuality." Again, it is the process that matters here, not a particular state of it. And again, Blumenberg uses the image of the trap to make his point. The device needs to be un-conceptual enough to be able to catch things that are not to be anticipated precisely. And it has to be conceptual enough to serve what it is meant for. There is a necessary indeterminacy involved here. Without it, concepts would not be able to serve as investigative tools in a research process.

AA In the closing panel of the symposium you mentioned that notation and reflection need the manipulation of matter—you refer to this briefly in your text using the formulations "materially enacted" and "material reflexivity"—in certain media. Is there an immanent contingency in both fields, matter and media?

HJR There is contingency both in matter and media. In fact, media are but another kind of matter. If we take matter as synonym for the research object and media as synonym for the investigative tools, we also realize that there is no substantial property that could help us distinguish between both. It is the position in the process that defines them as either object or tool. Epistemic things and technical things, in my terminology, can change places. Epistemic things can become technical, and technical things can become epistemic.

AA Could you imagine the possibility of a specific and thus potentially different definition of notation and reflection, not in the realm of science, but that of art or aesthetics? Could this shift establish a difference between reflection and conceptualization? Could another possible difference be that the "traces" in notation would not be considered as "data"?

HJR As I remarked previously, there is no necessary one-to-one relation when it comes to comparing different creative activities. Each of them has—and lives from—its unique features and constellations. My remarks on the scientific research process are meant to be used as a possible differential resource for thinking about artistic processes, not as a characterization of them. I would hesitate in feeling qualified for this latter task.

plicit in the experimental setup and that could not be identified in the scatter of traces it generates. You name the possibilities that result from the fixation of traces: combination and recombination, juxtaposition and superposition, addition and subtraction, diagrammatic arrangement and rearrangement, splitting and lumping, denomination and annotation, and more.

A new degree of mobility is gained with respect to the space of experimental interactions. Just as easily, you can imagine that the results of such manipulative operations in the space of representation need to be fed back into the space of experimentation proper. Not everything that is possible and even plausible on paper makes sense with respect to the epistemic target under consideration. With that, a process of permanent iteration, of checks and balances, is set in motion that keeps the experimental machinery going, drives it forward and gives rise to ever new differentiations and modifications. Contingent agencies in different but related spaces start to interact with each other. Notation is thus nothing less than an essential ingredient of the process of experimentation. It conveys an iterative cohesion to the process.

C

Reflection

At this point, we can start to talk about reflection. Reflexivity is usually taken to be both the anthropological hallmark of what it means to be human, and the hallmark of a mind beyond matter. Let us try to free ourselves for a moment from these abstractions. We can look at experimentation as a way to materially interact, in a reflexive manner, with the world, and notation as a way to materially interact, in a reflexive manner, with the experiment. The process of gaining knowledge is thus characterized by a two-fold reflexivity whose modes are inextricably intertwined with each other.

Let us first look at the reflexive aspects of the experiment, that is, the interaction of the experimenter with bits and pieces of the world around her or him. There is a wonderful *bonmot* that is ascribed to the French surrealist poet and writer Paul Eluard, and that captures the essence of this interaction in a flashy manner. Since it is hardly translatable, I quote it in French: *Il ne faut pas voir le monde tel que je suis*.[12] Experimenter and experiment have thus to engage in a fine-tuned interaction that at the same time involves an act of distancing. In an experiment, I do not want to learn something about myself, I want to learn something about the intricacies of the things toward which my interest is oriented. Essentially, this is achieved by an act of delegation. The essence of my interaction with the things at stake consists in arranging them in such a way that they interact with themselves in a manner that leaves traces. These traces "reflect," but ideally, they do not reflect my own conscious action, but something of the relational states of the things under consideration.[13] We can characterize this situation with the notion of acting at a distance. Hans Blumenberg sees action at a distance as the grounding gesture of conceptualization *tout court*.[14] Conceptualization is nothing but another

— 12 — An attempt at a translation may read as follows: "One must not see the world as I am." However, the ambiguity of the French "Il ne faut pas" as both being impersonal and personalized cannot be rendered in English without a grammatically weird disjunction. Gaston Bachelard used the phrase as an exergon to his book *La Psychanalyse du feu,* Paris: Gallimard, 1938, attributing it to Paul Eluard.

— 13 — For more on this, see Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, "Vom Subjekt des Wissens aus der Perspektive der Historischen Epistemologie," in Sandra Janßen and Thomas Alkemeyer, eds., *Selbstsein als Sich-Wissen? Zur Bedeutung der Wissensgeschichte für die Historisierbarkeit des Subjekts*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021, pp. 25–36.

— 14 — Hans Blumenberg, *Theorie der Unbegrifflichkeit*, ed. Anselm Haverkamp,. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007.

expression of reflection. An analysis of the experiment shows us how reflection, as conceptualization, is materially enacted in the process of knowledge acquisition.

Let us now move on and have a look, from the perspective of reflexivity, at the activities of notating. Here, in the realm of representation, frozen traces (usually addressed as data) are handled, arranged, and rearranged in an always preliminary fashion. To use another expression untranslatable into English, this time a German one, we can address the moves in the data space as *Probehandeln*.[15] It comes with its own material reflexivity. Just as in the experiment, not everything is possible. Not every note matches with every other note in the realm of representation. The space of representation is refractory, it is a space of heightened tentativeness. Every notational move is tentative. We can say that reflexivity here equals tentativeness.

And what appears to match must then be fed back into the graphematic space of the experiment, where it has to stand the test. We thus see that in the end we are dealing with a double reflexivity, or preliminarity, which connects the two realms of experimentation and notation, and in both of them, contingency occupies a central place. Contingency, in the end, is another word for the fact that in both realms, and in their interaction, the outcome cannot be determined in advance.

— 15 — In the context of psychoanalysis, the term is sometimes, rather clumsily, rendered as "behavior in rehearsal." I prefer to stay with the German expression here.

— Bachelard, Gaston, "Surrationalism," trans. Julien Levy, in Julien Levy, ed., *Surrealism*, New York: Black Sun Press, 1936, 186–189. — Bachelard, Gaston, *La Psychanalyse du feu*, Paris: Gallimard, 1938. — Blumenberg, Hans, *Theorie der Unbegrifflichkeit*, ed. Anselm Haverkamp, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007. — Fleck, Ludwik, "Die Krise der 'Wirklichkeit'" (1929), in Lothar Schäfer and Thomas Schnelle, eds., *Ludwik Fleck: Erfahrung und Tatsache*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983, 46–58. — Hacking, Ian, *The Taming of Chance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. — Hacking, Ian, *Emergence of Probability*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975. — Jacob, François, *Le Jeu des possibles. Essai sur la diversité du vivant*, Paris: Fayard, 1981. — Latour, Bruno and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, ² 1986. — Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg and Michael Schwab, "Forming and Being Informed, a conversation," in Michael Schwab, ed., *Experimental Systems. Future Knowledge in Artistic Research*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013, 198–219. — Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg, *Spalt und Fuge. Eine Phänomenologie des Experiments*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2021. — Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg, "Vom Subjekt des Wissens aus der Perspektive der Historischen Epistemologie," in Sandra Janßen and Thomas Alkemeyer, eds., *Selbstsein als Sich-Wissen? Zur Bedeutung der Wissensgeschichte für die Historisierbarkeit des Subjekts*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021, 25–36. — Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg, "Postscriptum," in Lara Keuck and Kärin Nickelsen, eds., *Special Issue on Epistemic Times: Writing History 25 Years after Synthesizing Proteins in the Test Tube. Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 45/3 (2022), 517–523. — Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg, *Split and Splice. A Phenomenology of Experimentation*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2023.

Diagramming Theories of Atmosphere

Gerhard Dirmoser

Inspired by the writing of Gernot Böhme, the *memory theater*[1] was created between 2001 and 2002. In the context of studies on performance art carried out together with Boris Nieslony, it was necessary to work on issues related to the so-called "emotional turn" and test the range of the concept of atmospheres. This large-scale depiction still provides a good overview and enables a multi-perspective entry into this conceptual field.

Guided by my interest in semantic networks, I started to build up a first small collection of diagrams in parallel, and exhibited them in 2002. By developing this basic typology of diagrams, it became clear that certain forms of folding (convolutions), fluid distributions (propagations), field-like intensities, and complex physiognomies did not quite fit into this crystalline diagrammatic framework. Based on the idea of spatially poured phenomena,[2] the conceptualization of atmospheres developed by Gernot Böhme led to an attempt to make the diagrammatic "fluid" under the working title *AnDiagrammatik*.[3] In this way, a graphemic and, most recently, a pycnography—that is, the view of the density images—were able to assist the diagrammatic.

Due to this work, I was invited in the context of *Contingent Agencies* to diagrammatically break down the general literature and current discourses on atmospheres. During the closing symposium, parts of the study *Atmosphären—Ansätze einer Aktualisierung* were presented and discussed with Dieter Mersch and Hans-Jörg Rheinberger.[4] My short impulse lectures were entitled "An Gernot Böhme anschließen," "Atmosphären entwickeln," and "Der Versuch einer Vernetzung."[5] The diagrammatic representations presented here are part of this study.

— 1 — Original German name: *Die Welt der Atmosphären*.

— 2 — Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre: Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995.

— 3 — http://gerhard_dirmoser.public1.linz.at/fluid/

— 4 — *Atmospheres: Approaches to an Update,* video documentation (in German): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKgW78c4Yao&t=3724s

— 5 — *Connecting to Gernot Böhme*, *Developing Atmospheres*, and *An Attempt at Networking.*

Questions of Form / The Formability of Atmospheres —Key Properties

In this diagram, the attempt is made to grasp the formability of atmospheres through adjectives describing their properties. This semantic network offers an entry into questions of the shape of atmospheric designs. In this mapping, broken down are visual aspects that are useful for analyzing atmospheric form-finding. These entries are also suitable for outlining key qualities of medial atmospheres. Main aspects are highlighted in yellow. Here are a few explanations:

[dense] refers to density images and thus to methods of pycnography[6]

[poured out] refers to medial issues of "spatial outpouring"

[fluid] and [edgeless] stand for an-diagrammatic formats

[continuous] makes a reference to trace-oriented concepts of graphematics[7]

[smooth] refers to a key differentiation by Deleuze/Guattari (smooth vs. striated)[8]

[folded] attempts to incorporate topological approaches[9]

[intensity] addresses the question of "intensity levels"[10]

[ecstatic] evokes material conceptions by Gernot Böhme[11]

— 6 — Katy Börner, *Atlas of Knowledge —Anyone Can Map*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015.

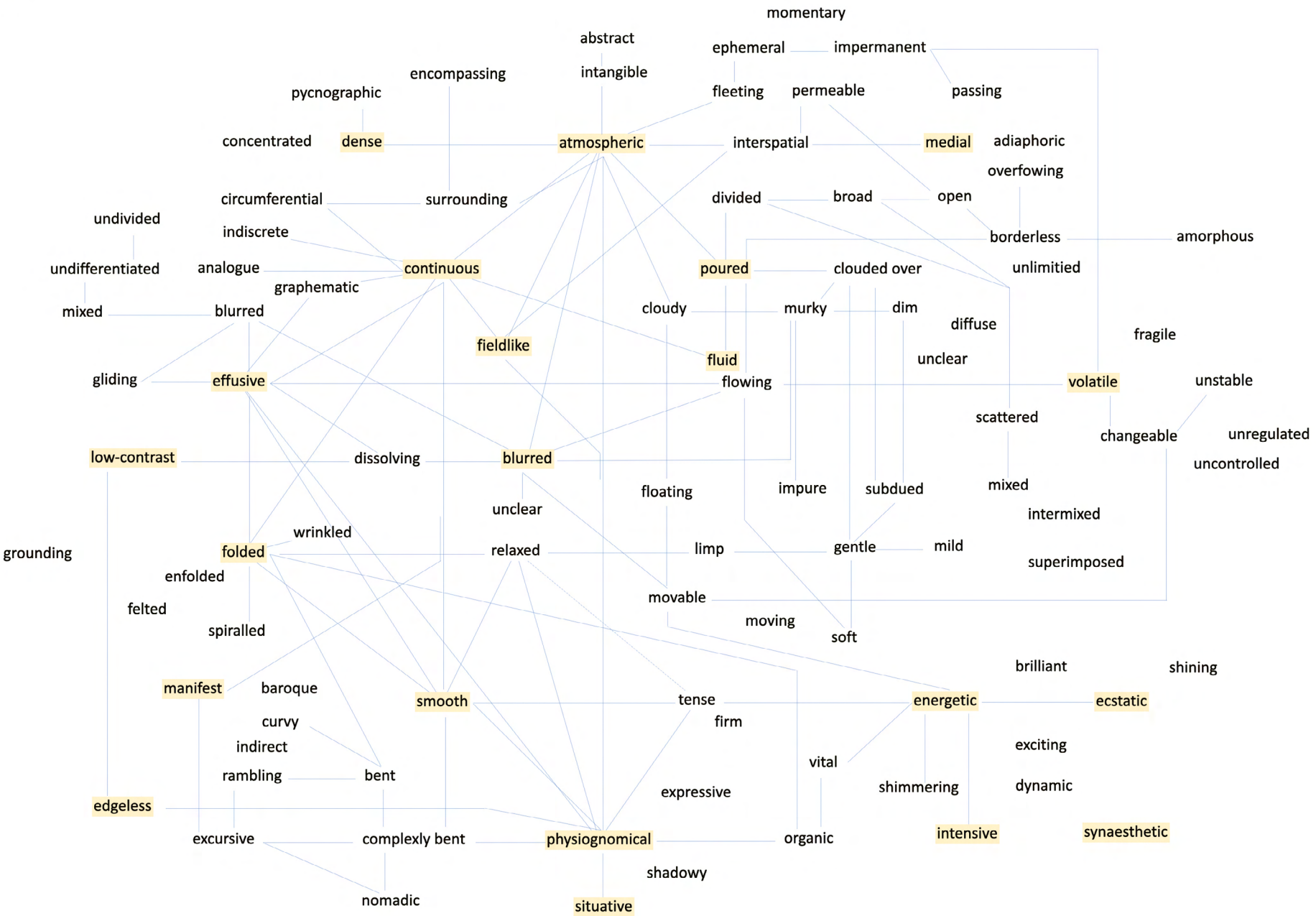
— 7 — Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, *Räume des Wissens: Repräsentation, Codierung, Spur*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1997.

— 8 — Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

— 9 — Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.

— 10 — Hermann Schmitz, "Intensity, atmospheres and music." in *Music as Atmosphere,* London: Routledge, 2021.

— 11 — Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre: Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995.


momentary
abstract
ephemeral
impermanent
encompassing
intangible
pycnographic
fleeting
permeable
passing
concentrated
dense
atmospheric
interspatial
medial
adiaphoric
overfowing
circumferential
surrounding
divided
broad
open
undivided
indiscrete
borderless
amorphous
undifferentiated
analogue
continuous
poured
clouded over
unlimitied
graphematic
mixed
blurred
cloudy
murky
dim
diffuse
fragile
fieldlike
fluid
unclear
gliding
effusive
flowing
volatile
unstable
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unregulated
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dissolving
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relaxed
limp
gentle
mild
superimposed
enfolded
movable
felted
moving
spiralled
soft
brilliant
shining
manifest
baroque
smooth
tense
energetic
ecstatic
curvy
firm
indirect
exciting
vital
rambling
bent
shimmering
dynamic
expressive
edgeless
excursive
complexly bent
physiognomical
organic
intensive
synaesthetic
shadowy
nomadic
situative

Atmospheres as Physically Tangible Effect —Vital Impulses

In this depiction, atmospheres are conceived as tangible effects. Physically tangible effects are thereby distinguished from social feelings and emotions.[12] A conceptual approach to the concepts of Gernot Böhme is hereby attempted. This occurs in clear demarcation to Hermann Schmitz, who defines "feelings as atmospheres."[13] The semantic net conceptually spans between "constricting" and "opening" in a dialectic of narrowness/wideness.[14] Schmitz describes this polarity in detail. The attributes used frequently refer to energetic or intensive dimensions, whereby, entirely along the lines of Daniel N. Stern, weaker effects are also considered. Stern speaks of "vital impulses" when he addresses this form of tangible affectation.[15] The working terminology chosen here could also be expressed in verbs, based on energetic phenomena as actors. Atmospheres describe an effect that is medially represented, which is often examined as an impression or affective character. With Böhme, this cause-effect relationship refers back to ecstasies of the surrounding objects/subjects.[16] Unfortunately, Böhme describes physically tangible effects only marginally. As in the first diagram, the main aspects are highlighted in yellow. The attributes set in red indicate in which form social feelings and emotions could also be included in this depiction.

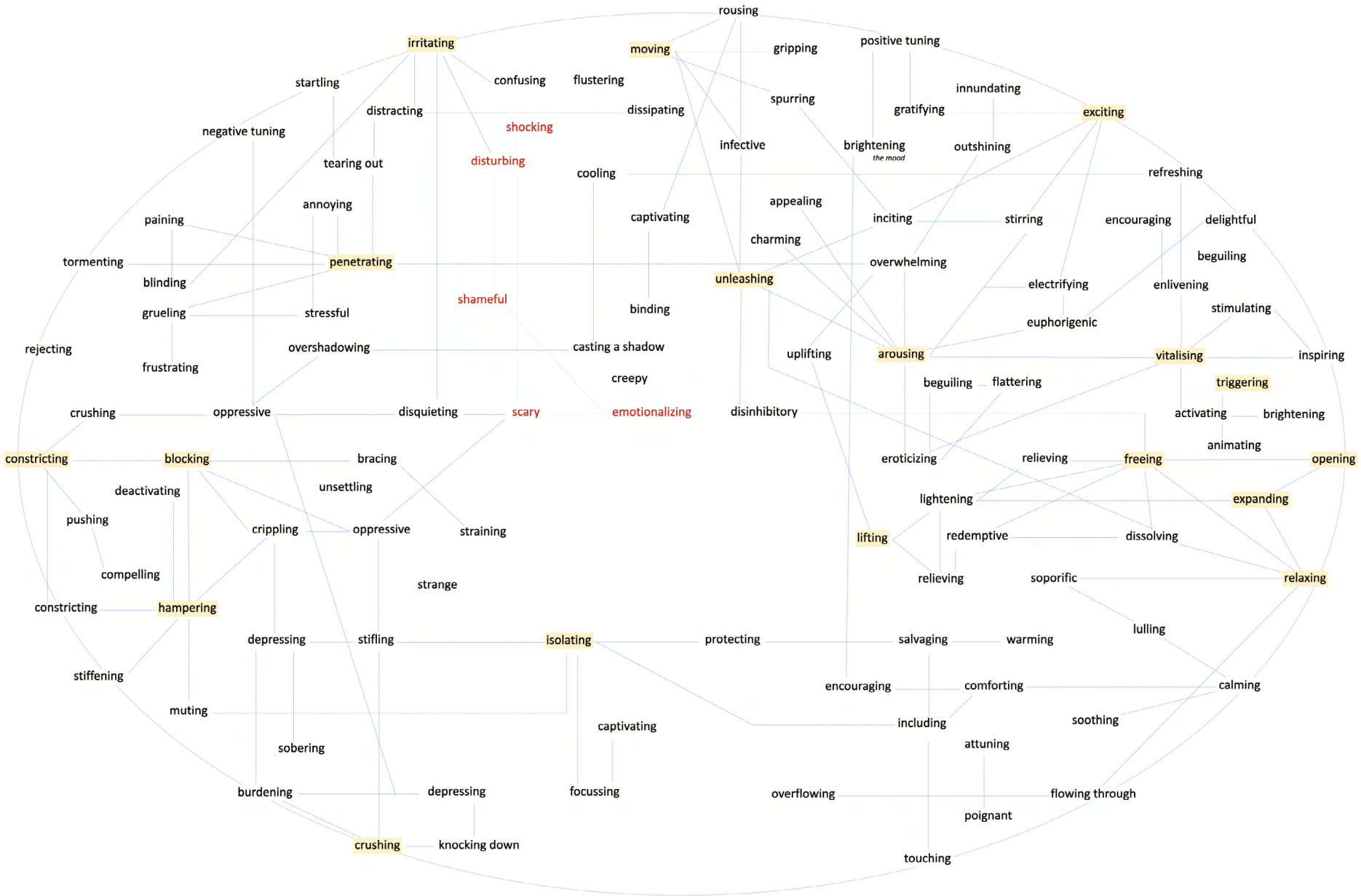
— 12 — Social feelings and emotions are marked in red in the diagram (see places of fear).

— 13 — Hermann Schmitz, "Gefühle als Atmosphären und das affektive Betroffensein von ihnen," in *Zur Philosophie der Gefühle*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993.

— 14 — Wolfgang Meisenheimer, *Das Denken des Leibes und der Architektonische Raum*, Cologne: König, 2004.

— 15 — Daniel Stern, *Forms of Vitality: Exploring Dynamic Experience in Psychology, the Arts, Psychotherapy, and Development*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

— 16 — Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre: Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995.


rousing
irritating
moving
gripping
positive tuning
startling
confusing
flustering
innundating
spurring
distracting
dissipating
gratifying
exciting
negative tuning
shocking
infective
brightening
the mood
outshining
tearing out
disturbing
cooling
refreshing
annoying
appealing
paining
captivating
inciting
stirring
encouraging
delightful
charming
beguiling
tormenting
penetrating
overwhelming
blinding
unleashing
electrifying
enlivening
shameful
grueling
stressful
binding
stimulating
euphorigenic
rejecting
overshadowing
casting a shadow
uplifting
arousing
vitalising
inspiring
frustrating
creepy
beguiling
flattering
triggering
crushing
oppressive
disquieting
scary
emotionalizing
disinhibitory
activating
brightening
animating
constricting
blocking
bracing
eroticizing
relieving
freeing
opening
deactivating
unsettling
lightening
expanding
pushing
crippling
oppressive
straining
lifting
redemptive
dissolving
compelling
relieving
soporific
relaxing
strange
constricting
hampering
lulling
depressing
stifling
isolating
protecting
salvaging
warming
stiffening
encouraging
comforting
calming
muting
including
soothing
captivating
attuning
sobering
burdening
depressing
focussing
overflowing
flowing through
poignant
crushing
knocking down
touching

Expansion Attempts: Ecstasy — Atmosphere — Sense

In the preparation of his essay on atmospheres, Gernot Böhme —quite in the tradition of ancient approaches—addresses the essential role of the "medium." [17] He positions the medium between *Naturding* (natural being) and sense. However, to account for experientiality, Böhme replaces the medium with "atmosphere" and the natural being with "physiognomy."[18, 19] In addition, he transforms sense into "mental state" (*Befindlichkeit*). As a result, for years, the medium remained hidden in his writings in favor of "atmospheres."[20] Furthermore, Böhme transforms mental state (*Befindlichkeit*) into "sensing" (*Gespür*) and "feeling" (*Empfinden*). The physiognomic approach is subordinated to the "ecstasy" or "outside-itself" of the thing. This led to the proposal of beginning the analysis of Böhme's writing from the triad ecstasy/atmospheres/sensing. Davor Löffler[21] grasps the atmosphere as a "sense for intensities" and with Jean-Paul Thibaud it seems obvious to define atmospheres as "energetic balance." In the *Contingent Agencies* project Nikolaus Gansterer and Alex Arteaga address "atmospheric presence" and focus on effective forces as "agencies." Thibaud also directs attention to the relevance of dynamic processes, and with that "movement" comes increasingly into view for performative art forms.[22] Concepts that are brought forth by Thibaud, Löffler, Stern, Gansterer, Arteaga, and Dirmoser in the context of their atmosphere analyses are elaborated in yellow in this depiction. These are concepts that Gernot Böhme considers only marginally. These concepts are to be understood entirely in the sense of a continuation of Böhme's approach.

— 17 — Gernot Böhme, *Natürlich Natur—Über Natur im Zeitalter ihrer techn. Reproduzierbarkeit*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1992.

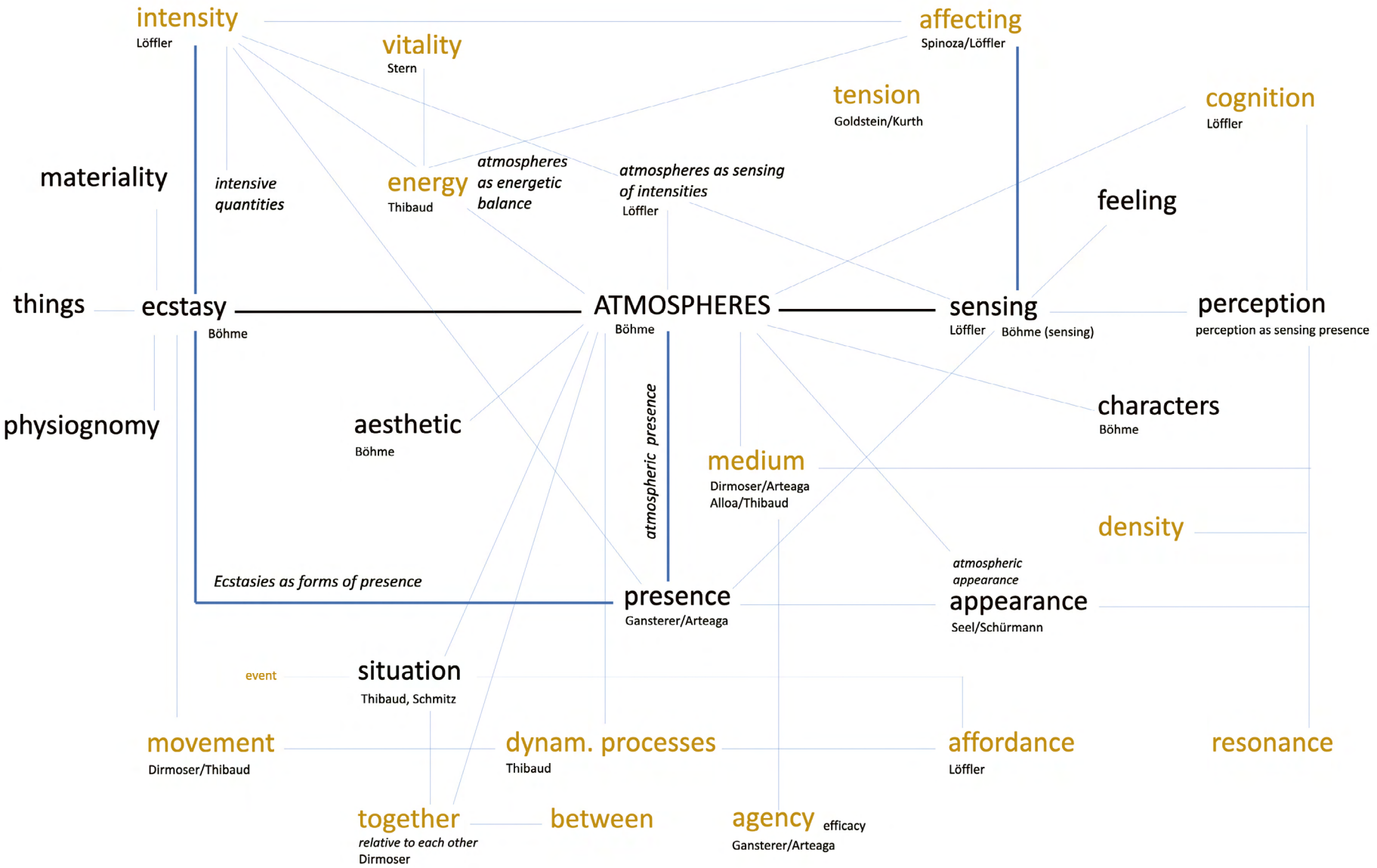
— 18 — Gernot Böhme, "Atmosphäre als Grundbegriff einer neuen Ästhetik," in *Kunstforum International*, vol. 120, Cologne, 1992.

— 19 — Gernot Böhme, "Atmosphere as the Fundamental concept of a New Aesthetics," in *Thesis Eleven*, no. 36, Melbourne, 1993, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303990518_Atmosphere_as_the_Fundamental_Concept_of_a_New_Aesthetics.

— 20 — Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre: Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995.

— 21 — Davor Löffler, "Leben im Futur II Konjunktiv" Über das Phänomen Atmosphäre und dessen Bedeutung im Zeitalter der technischen Immersion," in *Jahrbuch immersiver Medien 2013—Atmosphären: Gestimmte Räume und sinnliche Wahrnehmung*, Kiel: Institut für immersive Medien (ifim), 2013.

— 22 — Jean-Paul Thibaud, "Die sinnliche Umwelt von Städten—Zum Verständnis urbaner Atmosphären," in Michael Hauskeller, ed., *Die Kunst der Wahrnehmung. Beiträge zu einer Philosophie der sinnlichen Erkenntnis*, Zug: Die Graue Edition 2003.


intensity
Löffler
vitality
Stern
affecting
Spinoza/Löffler
tension
Goldstein/Kurth
cognition
Löffler
materiality
intensive quantities
energy
Thibaud
atmospheres as energetic balance
atmospheres as sensing of intensities
Löffler
feeling
things
ecstasy
Böhme
ATMOSPHERES
Böhme
sensing
Löffler
Böhme (sensing)
perception
perception as sensing presence
physiognomy
aesthetic
Böhme
atmospheric presence
characters
Böhme
medium
Dirmoser/Arteaga
Alloa/Thibaud
density
atmospheric appearance
Ecstasies as forms of presence
presence
Gansterer/Arteaga
appearance
Seel/Schürmann
event
situation
Thibaud, Schmitz
movement
Dirmoser/Thibaud
dynam. processes
Thibaud
affordance
Löffler
resonance
together
relative to each other
Dirmoser
between
agency
efficacy
Gansterer/Arteaga

Conceptual Fields: Ecstasy — Atmosphere — Sensing

The relevance of the terms ecstasy, atmosphere, and sensing are examined with the help of diverse applications of the literature on atmospheres. Thus, already at a quantitative level, it becomes visible which concepts are helpful in the semantic contextualization of atmospheres.

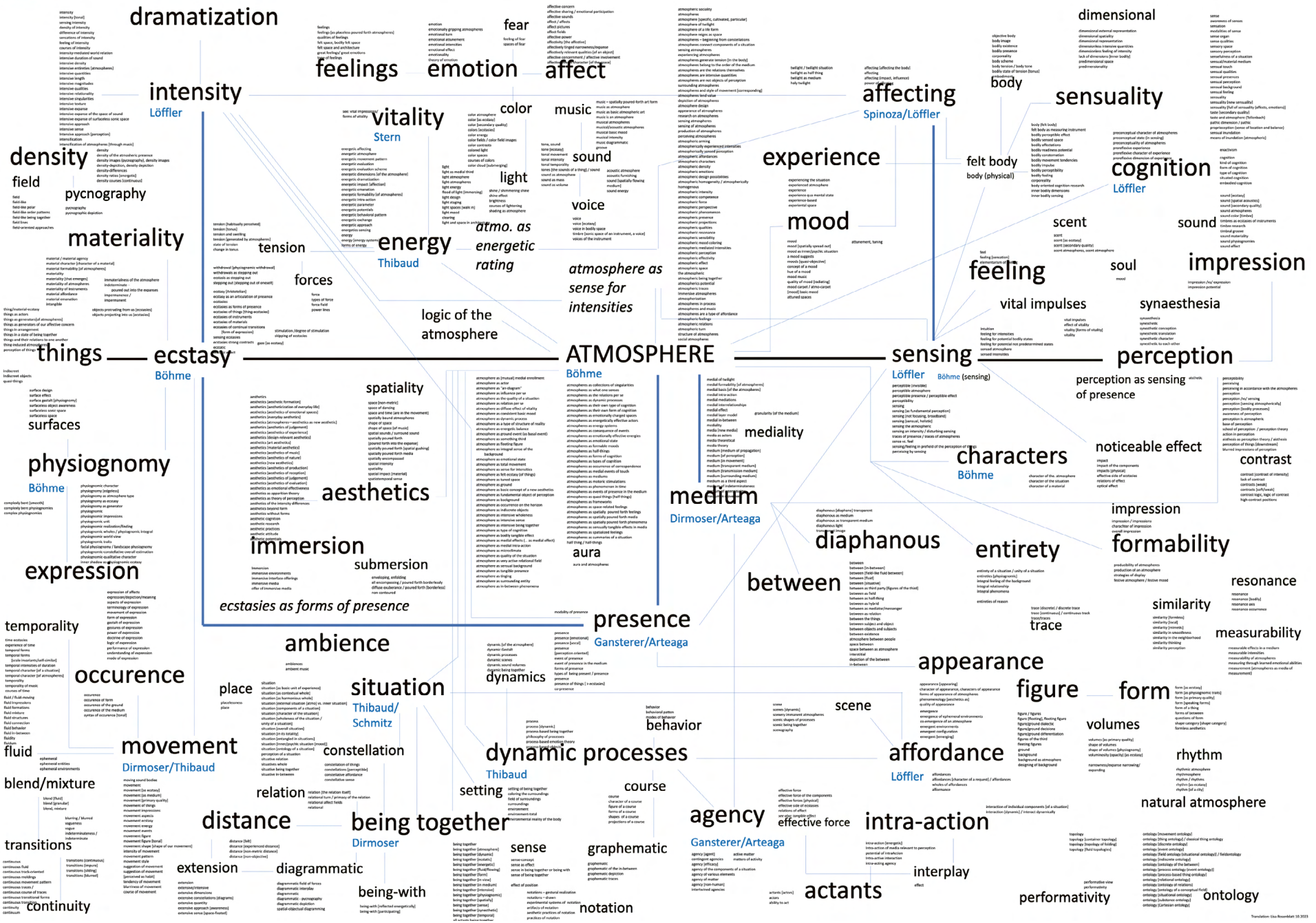
The semantic range of the included terms is shown in the degree of cross-linking and is additionally visualized in the diagram via the size of the font.

For elaboration of the "intensity," that is, the inclusion of "intensive quantities," contributions by Hermann Schmitz were helpful.[23] The study *Musik als Bewegung*, by Christian Salvesen, was a fundamental contribution for working out the movement perspective.[24]

— 23 — Hermann Schmitz, "Intensity, atmospheres and music," in Friedlind Riedel, Juha Torvinen, eds., *Music as Atmosphere. Collective Feelings and Affective Sounds*, London: Routledge, 2021.

— 24 — Christian Salvesen, *Musik als Bewegung: Die Energietheorie der Musik von Ernst Kurth*, Hamburg: Tredition, 2020.

gerhard.dirmoser@gmail.com Linz, 05.2022



Translation: Lisa Rosenblatt 10.2023

Fluid Actors:
What they do and how they do it

Since atmospheres are conceived of as, among other things, "spatially poured out," the fluid character will be discussed here via verbs. An initial clustering of verbs (*black*) has been confirmed to some extent in the approach by Nikolaus Gansterer *(blue)*, who also created a list to bring atmospheric questions into focus during his research residency at the Villa Arson in 2018/2019.[25]

In this method, the idea is to put oneself in the role of fluid actors, and to use verbs to describe what they do, or how they do it. In contrast to discussions of aesthetic aspects that are based on adjectives, verbs have the advantage of very vividly supporting the performative point of view.

The verbs written in bold are quasi at the center of these semantic fields. This selection is reflected also in the only sporadically hinted at cross-linking.

— 25 — For artifacts of notation addressing the agency of fluidity, see the current publication (pp. 361, 375, 389) and the website: https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/


overflow
flood
suffuse
unite
befall
inundate
deluge
flow along
engulf
blend
penetrate
spread
step out
well up
vaporize
surround
wrap
flow forth
wash around
atomize
obscure
invade
rain down
flow
evaporate
overflow
pour out
rush
circulate
foam
condense
blur
exude
swirl
froth up
foam over
flow
flow through
float
sail
flow into
surge
trickle off
run off
hose down
whirl up
blow away
remove
pass
trickle
spray
spray on
rise up
ripple
flow back
spurt out
spray
chuckle
gurgle
flow off
break out
wash away
melt
drain
seep away
seep in
drip off
liquidate
hit
slosh
slop over
moisten
wet

A

ALEX ARTEAGA

This is exactly my conceptual approach to the term "contingency" in the context of the *Contingent Agencies* project. I also understand the object of research of this project in this sense as the "contingent agencies" of all components of a situation, namely as enabling or modulating and constituting conditions of the atmosphere that arises in this situation.

DIETER MERSCH

I actually avoid the term "atmosphere" for two reasons: *for one*, for me, it is too closely associated with my second academic teacher, Gernot Böhme. I use different terminology for what he is trying to describe, insofar as I at least imagine that I conceive Böhme's concept much more radically, and I also avoid several inconsistencies in the reasoning, mainly with regard to the ability to stage the aesthetic of the atmospheric. In particular, I understand my own approach as beginning from the semiotic or semiology and hermeneutics rather than phenomenology. I think that the differences between Böhme and me will become much clearer in the course of our discussion. *For another,* I avoid the term—and I debated this frequently with Böhme during my time in Darmstadt—because, on the one hand, I consider the term too vague, too indefinite, while on the other hand I have difficulty with of its identification, its decomposability into elements, etc. One example would be when I enter a space and find the atmosphere "uncomfortable." At first it is neither clear what is meant, nor why. Perhaps I am perceived as a stranger and the mood may seem uncomfortable to me at the moment I enter. Then I am the reason and it is hardly possible, in turn, for me to perceive this reason as a reason because I immediately become entangled in paradoxes. The "agent" is in a sense a "participant," and their participation changes the conditions. For that reason, too, I welcome the suggestion of speaking of "contingent agencies," as the "atmospheric" is something dynamic, ceaselessly changing, which can neither be manufactured nor analyzed, and the expression "agency" refers to a general "effect" that cannot be dissolved into elements. It also seems extremely productive to me to approach an understanding of this dynamic in terms of contingencies, not only because one is confronted with something that has no causality, but also because it refers to something that is always "different," as it were, or has changed as soon as one is "in the game," or "involved." On the other hand, for me, talking about (unambiguous) "agents" seems too one-sided and confusing because it assumes determinability. Although what is addressed is what unfurls effects, isn't it actually something intangible that doesn't tolerate any enumeration or specification? In my opinion, the phenomena that have an effect are not distinguishable ones, which is why it is not possible to name the relevant components. Agencies, on the contrary, describe a fundamental effectiveness, not an ensemble of networked actors.

AA Basically, I agree with you. Nonetheless, I would like to specify which concepts of "agent" and "agency" I worked with in this project. Quite closely aligned with your formulation, I understand atmospheres as all-over, dynamic presences that cannot be analyzed, and therefore cannot be broken down into components. Nevertheless, and here it is noticeable that I actually do proceed phenomenologically, not only do atmospheres arise under specific spatiotemporal coordinates, but also in specific situations. I find myself in a situation, and through certain observational and descriptive practices I can perceive the situation, and its components and describe the existing atmospheres that are present—although, as you write, they are in a state of constant transformation—through other observational and descriptive practices (in my case, aesthetic-phenomenological ones). Based on this double observation, it seems plausible to me to ask whether certain phenomena of the situation correlate with certain qualities of atmospheres. So the question is not posed in terms of causalities, but of perceptible—if you like, even speculatively perceptible—correlations. When I now observe these possible correlations, I refer to individual phenomena of the situation that I experience in a possible correlation with the atmosphere as "agents," since I attribute to them an "agency" that in its actualization exerts an influence on the unfolding of the atmosphere. Accordingly, I understand atmospheres as conglomerates of emergent qualities that arise in correlation with certain agencies, which in turn have a correlation with certain agents. The correlation between atmospheres and agencies is the crucial one in this project. After this explanation, I think that our positions, if perhaps not identical, are nonetheless very close to one another.

B

AA My basic concept of "atmospheres" can be expressed quite well in these terms. In my view, an atmosphere is "baseless" as it cannot be traced back to a cause, but emerges by virtue of dynamic relations between contingent agencies. Furthermore, an atmosphere is certainly "possible," although not necessarily "unnecessary," since its emergence in a situation is inevitable, provided (from a phenomenological perspective) that at least one atmospheric-attentive subjectivity is involved. What do you think about this last point?

DM I agree that atmospheres are "possible"; however, not "unnecessary" because their emergence is inevitable, but "unnecessary" in terms of their appearance. But the question of the observer who describes atmospheres remains. The irreducibility of an observer, a commentator, a "rapporteur" is, in my view, an important, often forgotten point in Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory. Commentary, report, etc., however, place too much emphasis on the textual character. It could be replaced by sensitivity, receptivity, or attentiveness. This concept is productive in that it avoids the concept of the subject, which always assumes a self-contained, identifiable instance, a finished entity, so to speak. Here, too, in my opinion—as you correctly say—the principle of an attentive subjectivity is more important, or, as I would prefer to say, a site of passibility, which correlates with the contingent influences and effects, that is affectable and can therefore respond. What is lost in Latour's discussion of the irreducibility of the report or commentary, however, is the question of the extent to which the report itself intervenes into the happenings as an agency and changes them. Just as Sigmund Freud says of the telling of a dream, that it does not narrate the dream, but has already made something other than the dream out of it. If we reformulate this situation in terms of affection and response, then the experience of an atmosphere only becomes tangible through the response of a sensitive instance. With reference to the response character (but this is simply an argument about words), I try at the same time to avoid speaking of unambiguous agents; I attempt to quasi avoid the connotation of identifiable entities. What concerns the atmospheric, if one wants to speak of it, is that, in my view, it is not decipherable—more so, a bundle, an inextricable tangle of conditions that poses riddles. At best, you can only understand moments or aspects: the atmosphere as a whole eludes you.

AA What about its aesthetic-phenomenological description?

DM The moment of withdrawal refers to the question of identifiability, totalization, representation. I dispute that this is possible, which is why I so greatly emphasize the double motif of withdrawal and traction (wherein the topos of agency is contained). Aesthetic-phenomenological descriptions remain selective, or fragmentary, and in some cases they also have to admit their failure.

"Ac-cidents" and Non-necessity. On Contingency[1]

Dieter Mersch

A number of contemporary philosophies are marked by their decided rejection of concepts such as intentionality, determination, or causality. This repudiation goes hand-in-hand with just as decisive a turn toward passivity and embracing encounters with the external, non-human world. There is a connection to a specific sensibility or sensitivity, an ability to be sensitive, that phenomenological approaches in particular, as well as some neo-materialist and ecological philosophies, share with the arts. It follows that these philosophies have a particular affinity with aesthetics.[2] This holds true in a distinct manner for radicalizations of the phenomenological paradigm, which, unlike neo-materialist positions that invoke the vital powers of matter or ecological approaches that explore networks of relationships, addresses the alterity and irreducible agentiality of manifestations.

A The starting point is that we are "touched" (tangere/attingere) by something that is not ourselves or does not fit into our categories, so that we are also confronted with a complexity of contingencies that we can neither exactly determine nor explain, nor understand, but that we nevertheless cannot deny—they add a touch of something (*con-tingere*). The term "contingency" of course has many meanings. In German it is usually translated, following Immanuel Kant, as *Zufälligkeit;* in classical modal logic, it

B denotes something that is possible, but not necessary. At the same time, it refers to what is "baseless," what does not seem to have a cause but is "there" and forces itself upon our senses. This dual alignment is characteristic for the argument I shall develop below, according to which contingency is negative and cannot be addressed *as something* but also cannot be *negated*, and so is within the register of a double negation which holds an equal but indeterminable affirmative moment. At the same time, contingency asserts itself without becoming a subject, so that it must be differentiated from arbitrariness in the sense of dependent upon a will.

— 1 — Please find the original German version of this text under "Selected texts" here: https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/conceptual-framework/

— 2 — See Ferdinand Fellmann, *Phänomenologie als ästhetische Theorie*, Freiburg: Karl Albers, 1989; Brian Massumi, *Ontopower*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2015; Timothy Morton, *All Art is Ecological*, London: Penguin, 2021.

C

AA Husserl outlined various type of intentionality. The concept of "operational intentionality" (*fungierende Intentionalität)* is relevant with reference to contingent phenomena (and especially to contingent quasi-phenomena, as I would call contingent agencies). It refers to relational, not-yet-phenomenal presences (which would be a possible alternative term) and is therefore not, or at least not directly, related to the constitution of meaning.

DM Agreed.

D

AA I would relate this phenomenological approach directly to an aesthetic phenomenology or to phenomenology as a field of aesthetic practices.

E

AA I agree with you that a possible aesthetic phenomenology forces a revision of the concept of intentionality. Nonetheless, I think that the idea of co-constitution was fundamental to the phenomenological project from the start. There was never any talk of a solipsistic subjectivity that creates the phenomena. It has always been and is always about understanding the encounter of a subjectivity with the world in which the subjectivity is in the process of becoming, as cause of all phenomenality. One of the difficulties lies in being able to linguistically describe and explain the inalienable simultaneity in this process (neither subjectivity nor phenomena are there first). In my opinion, the enactivist concept of co-emergence, that is, the simultaneous constitution of subjectivity and phenomenon in reciprocal determination, is a feasible way. According to this approach, the "primacy of subjective *actio*" cannot be postulated, but in my opinion neither can the primacy of appearance. The point is to understand the specific function of all agencies, as well as the dynamics of their recitprocal emergence.

DM In principle, I see it the same way: we are confronted with an eminent linguistic problem. First of all, on the last point. In my opinion, "all" occasional agents, if that is what you meant, are not distinguishable or enumerable, as I explained previously. We don't know everything or every detail that has an impact or is relevant. We suspect that certain phenomena are important or more important than others and play a role—but the concept of atmosphere is so undefined and under-determined, that these elements are neither analyzable nor calculable. For that reason, I speak of "events." But the point is not to play off one term against another, but to emphasize or avoid certain connotations that could be associated with one type of description —because I think that when you speak of functions, you don't want to already assume that in fact *all* moments emerging in a situation can be known and identified. Second, co-constitution is a very important concept, and its assumption is, without a doubt, indispensable. Only, how should it be conceived? My proposal would be to think about it as something dynamic, and in a way that we do not assume a simultaneity but a movement, which is why I proposed reversing the direction of intentionality—as a movement emanating from the subject and its acts—and letting it begin, as it were, as a *passio* of the "objects" (which are naturally not objects, but rather events, indeterminate appearances, openings, etc.). The beginning is thus heterogeneity, an alterity so that the co-constitution occurs through a twofold "turn of reference": First, coming from another, a heterogeneous one (in the sense of "the other") and second, turning through a sensitive and at the same time, responding instance that only reveals itself through the turn. In this way, both sides are equally involved, but in a way that there is a primacy of an alterity, which only becomes a concrete other through the movement of sensitive "responsiveness" in the sense of reception and reversal.

F

AA I propose a variation of this formulation here. Our gaze, if we want to continue researching phenomenologically, should be directed at the experience of things, that is, the creation of things through the experience as phenomena, and at the same time, our attention should be focused on the power of this appearance and not on the determination of the things that appear. That's how I've tried to work in this project. To be more precise, I've tried to focus my attention on the power (*agency*) of individual phenomena (such as light, matter, temperature, artifacts, plants …) as conditions of the simultaneously appearing atmospheres. The focus of my attention was actually on the relationship between the agencies of certain phenomena and the atmospheres that these agencies condition.

DM I can go along with this formulation quite well. With the limitation that, as I said, I find the differentiability of individual phenomena problematic because it presupposes too much. Light, matter, temperature, etc., can be localized and measured; but sometimes, what is relevant is what happens "between" light and temperature, which is neither the one nor the other, whose agency can also not be assigned anywhere. That's why I actually mean something different despite the general agreement. That also has to do with the fact that with regard to "the real," "the phenomena," "appearances," or "events," I always start from the figure of a double negativity, that is, I leave what "the real," "the phenomena," "the appearances," or "events" *are* in an indeterminate realm. For that reason, also the general talk of event—what that is —remains open. It cannot be addressed as such. For that reason, too, I speak of non-identifiability, non-enumerability, non-decomposability, or non-decidability, etc. Another way of expressing it would be: in the beginning, so to speak, there is a "primordial" absence, which, at the same time, has a "pull," a "tension," and initiates a "leap" that affects our "attention." Which, in turn, makes us "turn around," or "respond." WHAT this "pull," this "agency," or "tension" is, cannot be said: but there is a restlessness, a "flicker" or an "attraction" that affects (*tinges*) our receptivity, our sensitivity. Only here does the work begin, as it were; only here do the artistic signatures, the connections, associations, and assemblages begin. Thus, what I try to avoid is speaking too readily of agents, as if they were already there. Instead, there is a vague "agency" becoming manifest in this "flickering," or in the "gaps" and "interruptions, as the "agency of an *absentia.*"

G

AA Thank you for drawing attention to the everyday nature of these abysses and cracks, as every phenomenon without exception lives in its presence and absence in co-existence with others. It is therefore not about something special. Phenomenological observation makes this logic of phenomenal existence evident. In *Contingent Agencies* we worked on the basis of the everyday, constant presence of atmospheres. We needed neither special conditions nor the production of atmospheres (if that were even possible) to conduct our research.

DM This is indeed an important point and has often led to misunderstandings with regard to my own work. "Event" —my preferred word for the situation of active agency—appears to be something extraordinary. No: being in the world means being exposed to events. The eventful is not something special or distinguished, but an elementary admission into complex phenomenalities; and also, events are dynamic and in a literal sense ephemeral and "non-ascertainable"; they cannot be touched or grasped, but they most definitely have an effect. Nancy has called the once again "primordial" coexistence of phenomenalities the "being singular plural"—all written lower case—because it contains both a processuality and a plurality of complex coexistences that at the same time remain singular. Because of this indeterminate and indeterminable multiplicity of phenomenalities, I also believe—in contrast to Gernot Böhme, who located the artistic work, especially in architecture and on stage, in the production of atmospheres—that the atmospheric cannot be produced. And I believe that we also agree on this. Of course, aspects can be artificially generated, but these aspects also remain just as fleeting and fragile—they tend to disintegrate in an extremely short half-life, so to speak—just as every design never entirely hits upon what it is meant to hit upon. I believe we have to hold on to this difference, to also avoid the hubris of artistic producibility.

C While Edmund Husserl, who inaugurated phenomenological thought at the cusp of the twentieth century, held onto the concept of intentionality in order to describe phenomena, here, in contrast, the apparitions of the world are preceded by a certain autonomy.[3] For Husserl, that which appears (the *Erscheinende*) can have many different *meanings* depending on what it is referencing. Dissident phenomenologists—in particular Heinrich Barth, Jan Patočka, and Jean-Luc Marion—took this one step further and asked about the *manner of appearance* or
D first and foremost how and that phenomena show themselves
E before they can be absorbed as such and interpreted.[4] The reflexivity of showing itself grounds this phenomenology in aesthetics, throwing systematic doubt onto the concept of *intentio*, or any assumption of the primacy of a subjective *actio*. For objects are not constituted by our relation to them—something must already be present or have shown itself before we can relate to it. We must, as it were, be "tinged" by something before it awakens our interest and we impart meaning to it.
F This shifts our attention from the experience of the thing to its force or its independent power to *announce itself*, to call attention to itself, to create an atmosphere or to provoke an act.[5]

This act of showing itself as the appropriation (*Ereignung*) of appearances, their "ek-stasis", which, as a kind of "standing out," shares a meaning with "ex-istence"[6]—always taking the active and processual character of all of these concepts into account—was also central to Martin Heidegger's thought. However for Heidegger, *showing itelf* is paradoxical and is expressed in the main as a *manifestation of a lack*.[7] The appearance of that which appears is then not presented through itself, which would include a vitalist aspect, but always only through the aporetic movement of an *absentia in presentia*, that is to say indirectly or via a lack, a gap, or a caesura, or also a flaw or failure. The apprehension of the apparition hence always begins from a place of passivity, for it does not show itself firstly as *something* that needs our interpretation to *be*, but the showing happens thanks to a rupture or crack, in the moment of absence or opening. Such fragile and literally "inconspicuous" moments of difference are difficult to pin down; nevertheless they have always been the source of inspiration for art. For it is in the extraordinary characteristics of the crack, of a dissonance or a literal "uncanniness" and gap at the center of things, it is in the moment that they appear to us as defiant (*unfüglich*) that they reveal, to speak with F.W.J. Schelling, the "thatness" or *quodditas* that lies beyond their "whatness" or *quidditas*.[8] And this happens precisely because we are confronted with the "nothingness" of an abyss that is all
G the more haunting the deeper we stare into its depths. This need not be dramatic; one can think of it as an everyday occurrence. We are constantly running into such abysses, whether it is in the erasure of traces that leaves further traces, in the form of mismatched seals that don't quite fit and remain provisional, in an unfinishedness that catches our eye, or in the form of a "silent sound," a silence that is disturbing or even

— 3 — See Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. II, 1.2, also 5.1 and 5.2, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015. See also Peter Simons, "Edmund Husserl. Die Intentionalität des Bewußtseins," in Asgar Beckermann, ed., *Klassiker der Philosophie heute*, Ditzingen: Reclam, 2004, pp. 581–600.

— 4 — See Heinrich Barth, *Erscheinenlassen*, Basel: Schwabe, 1999, esp. pp. 43ff., 71ff; Jan Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem. Texte aus dem Nachlass*, Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2000, esp. pp. 38–51 and 116–72; also Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givnenness*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.

— 5 — See also Gernot Böhme, *Atmospheric Architectures: The Aesthetics of Felt Spaces*, London: Bloomsbury, 2017.

— 6 — See Dieter Mersch, *Was sich zeigt. Materialität, Präsenz, Ereignis*, Munich: Fink, 2002.

— 7 — See in particular the analysis of entities in Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1962, §§ 15–18, 95ff.

— 8 — On the differentiation between *quodditas* and *quidditas* see Friedrich Wilhelm Josef Schelling, *Philosophy of Revelation 1841–42,* Washington: Spring Publication, 2020.

H

AA This "they are already there," could be understood in the sense of a double reality: the reality of the things, *per se*, and the phenomena or appearances of the (pre-existing) things. But I don't believe that this is what you mean. The question is then, how are they already there? And how can we "know" it? Are they there, for example, in the process of becoming, so that we can sense them? Would this "becoming" then be evidence of the world in the sense of Merleau-Ponty, which can be sensed or subtly intuited only through an operational intentionality? And furthermore, in this context, can a distinction be made between "sense" as the flow of significance of the appearance of the phenomena and "meaning" as what they are when they appear fully constituted?

DM The Kantian distinction between *noumenon* and *phainomenon* that you are hinting at here, is, in fact, not what I am aiming at. For me, decisive has always been an "attentive-of" associated with an affecting (as it is not seeing or hearing that is fundamental, but the touch, which still includes seeing and hearing), and the possibility of a "response," whereby the response is, so to speak, older than the question. We are, with respect to our environmental appearances, "always already" in an attitude of response; and then specific questions occur that can be answered in different ways. It is thus initially less about knowledge than about sensitivity in relation to the "that" of events; their "existence." The fact that something, whatever this thing is, touches me, is decisive, because only then does the question arise: "What is that?" Jean-François Lyotard spelled this out quite beautifully with reference to the *sublime*: first is the "is it happening?" then the turning towards "what is happening there?" And I believe this antecedence of the alterity in the sense of an indeterminate touch (or a *con-tingere*) is exactly along the lines of your project of *Contingent Agencies*. In this text, above all, I try to shed more light on the "logic" of the "contingent," with a view to the conceptual tradition—and emphasize the fact of the unmade, unplanned, irruptive, which strives us and which first evokes its "thatness" before we ask the question of "what is it?"

AA Although it might seem so, I am not referring to the Kantian distinction between *noumenon* and *phainomenon*. What I am trying to do through an extended mobilization of the enactivist concept of sense, I believe, is to also name what you describe so beautifully and precisely here: this dynamic, relational stream that emerges continuously but makes itself noticeable, traceable, in moments of divergent turns.

DM It is important to emphasize these moments of deviation, or turning around, *conversio*—as it is only in these moments that the reflexive attentiveness-of that we both speak of arises, which could be described as the actual source of aesthetic-phenomenological practices.

I

AA I find this turn, just as you describe it here, relevant not only for philosophy and art, but also far beyond, for our entire collective life. So-called "problems," especially fundamental and comprehensive challenges, such as climate change, can be efficiently thought of and treated only on the basis of decentralized and non-hierarchically distributed agencies.

DM I totally agree (up to the replacement of agents with agencies as indeterminate touches); to overcome the challenges ahead, we need not only the special cognitive power of the sciences, which shows us the so-called "dangers" and "developments," but also, especially, the arts. In contrast to the still dominant sciences, it is about the development of completely different sensitivities. In my opinion, the "contingent agencies" are experimental set-ups for this.

J

AA Although I understand the sense of the simultaneous and interwoven turns that you present here, I would propose an alternative approach to avoid these dualities, which imply further dichotomies such as object—subject, inside—outside, or agent—patient, in order to arrive at a radically different positioning. On the one hand, I propose an interpretation of *passio* (and also of *passivity*, see my next comment), that defines the *passiones* as forms of the active. In this, "action" is postulated as a fundamental and constitutive category of all life processes and accordingly, all forms of emotionality would be understood as the relational actionality of a situated life system. On the other hand, and also along the lines of the same relational logic, I propose viewing *intentio* and *respondere* as forms of interaction between entities of a common world/environment, which can be analytically differentiated only with regard to precise moments of a situation, although this differentiation would not really be necessary. Intention and response would, at the same time, not be essentially differentiable.

DM That is an interesting point, and in my opinion applies to the core of our mutual closeness and distance (which, by the way, I see as more of a difference in terminology—or rather: different ways of struggling for expression—than in different approaches). I often use the Latin term *passio*, which grammatically includes the first person and thus implies an *actio*. This is, of course, a trick. What I want to say is actually along the same lines as what you are saying; hence the more appropriate term *passibility*. It is, as Levinas and others have expressed it, more passive than passivity (this, too, is a linguistic trick). It identifies, namely, the ability to be passive and as an ability, includes an enabling. Instead, more accurate would be to assume something that transcends the difference between activity and passivity, that is situated beyond *passio* and *actio*, but goes beyond the linguistic possibilities in which these separations are already built in. The only problem is that here, one arrives at the "edge" of language. Time and again, philosophy is confronted with this struggle against the constrictions of language—just as art is confronted with the constrictions of our understanding of things, phenomena, emotions, etc. With regard to the terms *intentio* and *respondere,* I see it differently, as first, *respondere* represents an activity and second, with the pair of opposites, a reversal of movement is meant. As the responding is already "turned," it refers to something that has already addressed or affected us. I've tried to express this in a few other texts (and these, too, are only makeshift railings to hold onto in an otherwise inexpressible territory), in such a way that the answer precedes the questions, because when we first ask "What is this?" "What does this mean?" we are already in the intentional and our focus is on the meaning, the what. Before the possibility of the question, however, the affecting comes through the "that is," through an existence in all its indeterminacy. The movement therefore begins with an unknown, a stranger, an "eventing" that alienates (dis-affects) us and which, in turn, gains contours and definition through our *actions*.

unbearable, or that awakens expectations, in the form of something forgotten, something "on the tip of our tongue" that wants to, but cannot, speak, and similar phenomena. Heidegger gives the example of the "un-readiness-to-hand" of "equipment" (*Zeug*) as well as "boredom"; Emmanuel Lévinas speaks of the "vigilance of insomnia" that strips objects of their usual meaning and makes them seem strange.[9]

Hence it is the singularity of ex-istence that shows itself in similar moments, and not as one characteristic among others, but as a contingency of the fact that *something exists rather than nothing*, that riddle of metaphysics that Heidegger repeatedly cited in reference to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and on which he based his philosophy of art.[10] Because *something and not nothing* is paradigmatic of groundlessness, as is the impression of something *unheimlich* (uncanny, literally: not-at-home, unearthly), which, according to Sigmund Freud, is also *heimisch*, or homey, to the extent that it must remain repressed. This could also be expressed as follows: *thatness* is *before a thing appears in its whatness* and becomes definable. It must already have 'arrived' in its 'proto-negativity'. Or as Jean-François Lyotard wrote in his aesthetics of the sublime: "The happening always 'precedes' the question of what happens. *It happens* comes 'before' *is it happening? Is it this? Is it possible?*"[11] As a happening or "eventing" (*Ereignung*), it comes before even the phenomenon itself (Schelling), and not as the meaning thereof, which, as Husserl insinuates, is a result of the meaning-giving act of consciousness. Rather, it is already there before it catches our attention and submits to our study.

H

From *actio* to *passio*

The "eventings" of appearances happen, we might say, somewhere else, just as they are always something else; they do not stand still, they happen once and link to other events in an ever-changing "knot." The diffuse phenomenon of "atmosphere," which does not by chance also refer to climatic conditions, has its root here, as does the "hunch" or the feeling of foreboding. Inherent to them are, we might say, an *agential alterity* that changes from moment to moment, always presenting a new face. Thinking of this as the beginning or starting point of philosophy changes its traditional parameters, bringing philosophy closer to art. It implies in particular a shift in relations, a turn toward passivity that goes hand-in-hand with a fundamental critique of philosophy and rationality.[12] For we are not the ones who create this relationship. Instead, we are "pulled" by something that is not "something," but rather an indeterminate, and in referencing it we are at the same time led by it without sovereignty over the relationship. This turn from *actio* to *passio* or *intentio* to *respondere* is in decisive opposition both to idealistic philosophies and their spin-offs as well as to the sciences and their objectivism. Since the early modern era, the sciences stemming from metaphysics have ordered being into the spheres of subject and object, whereby subjectivity is the dominant, active, determining side and objectivity is given

I

J

— 9 — See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ibid., pp. 95ff. and his analysis of mood (*Gestimmtheit)* as a non-intentional condition and of boredom in Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, §§ 23–24, and esp. §§ 29ff.; see also Emmanuel Lévinas, *Existence and Existents,* Dordrecht: Kluver, 1978, pp. 65ff.

— 10 — "That" (*quod*) something is and not nothing is the riddle that Schelling continuously tried to think in various ways and that has made its way into philosophical experience in myriad ways: as the experience of "transcendence" in Romanticism, the "aura" in Walter Benjamin, the "face" in Lévinas, and "Being" in Heidegger. Heidegger refers here to Leibniz, see in particular "The Principle of Ground," trans. Keith Holler, *Continental Philosophy Review* 7/3, 1974, pp. 207–222. See also Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Off the Beaten Path*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

— 11 — Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde," https://www.artforum.com/features/the-sublime-and-the-avant-garde-201446/. Emphasis in the original. On the concept of "arrival" see Lyotard, "Newman: The Instant (1984)" in Keith Crome and James Williams (eds.), *The Lyotard Reader and Guide*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006, pp. 330–38.

— 12 — Dieter Mersch, *Posthermeneutik*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010, pp. 287ff.

K

AA Following my suggestion of the primacy of action, here I propose understanding "passivity" as a specific form of activity, just as your concept of "passibility" already suggests. The term that I would use for this would be "spontaneity." I mobilize this term to designate a type of action that does not take its own initiative exclusively from an isolated agent, but comes about in an encounter and by virtue of the contact between the encountering agencies. The spontaneous action would, accordingly, be a contingent action whose agent is a non-hierarchical network of conditions for the emergence of a spontaneous action. The classically named "passive subject" would be understood here as a spontaneously acting body that performs those actions that are triggered though its participation in an encounter with other contingent bodies. In this conceptual framework, the so-called "passive subject" would maintain its identity as an acting one, sharing the agency of its actions. My proposal would thus be: the so-called "passive subject" acts spontaneously.

DM That is exactly my intention and is very close to what I am trying to express in a different language. Formed by the history of philosophy, when I think of spontaneity, I think of Immanuel Kant, i.e., of something subjective; but that's not what you mean. And I understand quite well what you're aiming for with this term: something is removed from the control of the acting body, its dressage, so to speak. In the midst of a complex touch, he or she acts—not as a mere re-action, but rather, as I would prefer to say, as a "spontaneous" response, which happens more than it is consciously executed and controlled. I think it is extremely interesting that in this you emphasize the physicality: it is not a mental self that acts, but the body. The spontaneity of which you speak, would thus not be a spontaneity of a subjective faculty, like with Kant, but a non-conscious bodily *momentum*, which as "bodily knowledge," if I may use this Nietzschean image here, precedes any reason or intuition. The body is conceived as entangled in an atmospheric environmentality, and the manner of its entanglement is "being tangent-to." Artistically, you then read the contingency as it were, from both *tingere* and *attingere* (or *tangere*), that is, the simultaneity of a touch and a being-touched, a coloring or an immersion, in other words from connotations associated with the Latin expressions, whereby *attingere* is to be preferred to *tangere* as a point of reference for touch, because it emphasizes the touching, the being touched.

AA Exactly. Many thanks for the enhancements and clarifications!

L

AA For me, aesthetic sensitivity and attention are paradigmatic examples of spontaneous actions, as I tried to outline them in my last comments. The aesthetically acting and thereby experiencing body is moved (here the passive turn in the language!) by the touch of agencies that develop their altering potency by virtue of this contingency. It is this intimate relationship with the co-acting agents that seems possible only through renunciation of control and through engagement with the dynamics of contingencies, which constitutes the particularity of aesthetic sensitivity and attention.

DM Our different ways of writing (and expressing ourselves) resonate (in the sense of resonance) directly with each other here. I would have nothing to add to that! (Writing styles have their own dynamics, and their own possibilities of opening up, but also their own limitations—that's why dialogue is so important! I am aware that I remain biased in my language; but artistic-philosophical resonances arise only in the confrontation between disparate conceptual and visual worlds

M

AA This formulation seems to me to be very close to the concept of emergence, as it is defined in the theories of complex and dynamic systems. Do you also see this similarity or a possible connection?

DM Of course I see this connection. As a rule, I avoid referring to emergence because of systems theory. The transfer of concepts, the transfer of terms always contains the problem that, basically, one unconsciously drags along the premises of those theories from which one borrows the concepts or terms. Instead of emergence, I speak of event or, more specifically, of "eventing." It has no identifiable cause.

N

AA This inspiring formulation (a formulation full of "alteritarian" agency) is based on a "unique feature" of the haptic that is in line with your argument, namely its indispensable logic of reciprocity: the one touching is always touched by that which is touched.

DM Exactly. I have repeatedly returned to this figure, which is originally from Merleau-Ponty, in my earlier texts, and have therefore identified the haptic (or tactile, the one being Greek, the other Latin, with a characteristic shift in meaning) as an "existence sense." Seeing and hearing keep things at a distance. By virtue of seeing, I am placed in a world from which I can keep my distance and attach meaning to it so that we can identify its phenomena and register differences in them. The haptic, however, brings us into direct contact and in touching I can't avoid being touched by what I endeavor to grasp. Touching therefore also means: taking in and accepting things, phenomena, or events with my body, as it were. I am therefore directly involved in their existence. Incidentally, this can be seen in the way we handle fabrics: we see an interesting textile and involuntarily touch it, to experience its texture, the way it feels on the skin, its weight, etc.

O

AA This forms a basis for your idea that artistic research is the exploration (here, I would even say "tactile investigation") of the singular, the unique. Nonetheless, and without resorting to operations such as generalizing, abstracting, classifying, or categorizing, artistic research, in my opinion, is not limited to the one thing, the singular. Perhaps the quality of "permanently transforming" comprises that a movement from the individual to the not-individual (e.g. the work on concepts) is made possible in the context of aesthetic research and through aesthetic practices (perhaps, as you write in what follows, through following the traces of its contingency). What do you think?

DM The statements that aesthetic research is devoted to the singular, initially means only that in contrast to science, the object of the aesthetic is always the individual and unrepeatable phenomenon, that we are dealing, shaping, and arguing with *singularia*. (And when it comes to epistemological questions, the interesting thing is *how* art is nonetheless capable of discovering and representing complex connections on the basis of nothing but *singularia*.) A specific arrangement—let's say like Alvin Lucier's *I am Sitting in a Room*—is created and this specific arrangement brings out something or lets it appear: the particular resonance of the space, the slow fading of a voice until only reverberation remains, and so on. What emerges in this way cannot be said or argued in any other way; it eludes scientific access. Lucier's experiment proves to be repeatable—but depending on the constellation and chosen space, something different emerges in each case. It may begin with an idea, an experience, and of course it requires strenuous conceptual work to make audible what comprises the background of listening. Investigating the singular thus means not only the exposure of each single thing, but also its reflection, and indeed in the sense that, for example, a non-perceptible is made perceptible. The fact that we are always dealing with *singularia* means that we cannot develop a methodology of the artistic, that artistic research cannot be canonized. There is no model for artistic research, only examples: in every individual case, it must always begin again anew and be developed in situ, as it were.

the passive role of *determinandum*. It is always a mechanistic causal mode of thought that mediates between these two sides, and through experiment, method, and hypotheses works to tame the objectuality (*Gegenständlichkeit*) of the object, subjugating it to the supremacy of human exploitation and operational sequencing. Economy and technology are the fruits of this labor.

K As a countermeasure, more radical phenomenological theories have introduced the concept of *Widerfahrnis*, a "counter-encounter" that puts passivity at its center and recognizes phenomena as something that both comes towards us and surrounds us. Its acceptance presupposes the lack of restraint that comes with the shifting of relationships and the concurrent turn toward "passibility."[13] Passibility is here defined as the possibility or primal ability to be passive; a proto-passivity that is more passive than any passivity. In that case we are dealing not only with an agential alterity, but also with an "alterity-agentiality" that exudes a tension or gravitation that we can
L only become aware of through a particular kind of sensitivity or attentiveness such as is inherent to the aesthetic experience. While the sciences reduce relevant relations to causality and its inferential logic, these alterity-agentialities in contrast happen spontaneously. They are acausal, and continuously come upon us in new and different ways, challenging or attacking us so that we cannot assume a cause-and-effect relationship, but rather
M a mixture of varying combinations of alterity-relations. These can neither be tamed by a system of vocabularies of correlations nor by technical instruments or apparatuses of detection.
N Their tactile presence unfolds in artistic practice in particular, which, as Theodor W. Adorno has put it, is involved with experiencing the resistance or non-identity of things that attempt to hold on to their "conceptlessness" in their appearance.[14] This is the root of the will to not-will, a desire for—again literally—ac-cidents, fragments, a resistance to a work's closure, a will to the "a-economics" of non-exploitability and defiance in the face of all unambiguous judgement.

'Ac-cident' (*Zu-fall*) must however be differentiated from normal accidents; it denotes a falling towards, a coincidental happening in the sense of alterity-agentialities. To be aware of it is to discover it in its "singularity." This is why we speak of "eventings." The meanings of these two terms overlap. For every eventing is uniquely eventful—as a verb—and without repetition. Neither are we speaking of a particular event, nor
O can it be reproduced or "identified" as something. For that reason, its identity is a "non-identity" that includes its singularity. That is why the specific sensitivity or "attention" that is inherent to art relates to something indefinite and undefinable, something that is in permanent transformation and unique. Hence there is no use in finding generalities or classifying what has respectively been touched on, disassembling it into its individual parts, but rather it must be allowed to unfold its claim to continual metamorphosis.

— 13 — See ibid., pp. 248–249. The term is taken from Lévinas; see also Michael Mayer, *Humanismus im Widerstreit*, Munich: Wilhlem Fink, 2012), esp. pp. 71ff., 97ff.

— 14 — Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, London: Routledge, 1973, p. 29.

P

AA Is this confrontation one of mirroring? In other words, is this confrontation a specific form of reflection, namely, of aesthetic reflection?

DM First of all, by "being confronted" I mean nothing other than a way of relating, an encounter, an invitation, perhaps sometimes also a provocation in the sense that we are compelled to respond. In my opinion, the special nature of aesthetic reflection only comes into play when this confrontation has an aporetic quality—when we hear something strange or unheard of that forces us to look or listen twice, that compels us to want to know more precisely what it is about, etc. Aesthetic reflection—I think this is what you are getting at—is a *reflecto in rei*, a "rebounding," or a "mirroring" by means of a rupture, something that happens "between" opposites, etc.; in other words, a reflexivity that is triggered by the thing itself, and not by a thinking consciousness.

Q

AA Can this "awhileness" and this "burning out again" be understood as further indicators of the immanent reflexivity of aesthetic practices?

DM Correct. The expression "immanent reflexivity of the aesthetic" hits the nail on the head.

R

AA In my opinion, this would be another special feature of aesthetic reflection: that which is reflected develops its own potential (its own agency) rather than being domesticated or reduced by the power of the reflector and their technology of reflection. Aesthetic reflection would then not be conclusive, but rather expansive, disruptive, and destabilizing.

DM That's how it is: reflexivity in the aesthetic, *through* artistic practice as its actual medium, for example by bringing foreign, incommensurable materials into play, literally letting them rub against each other or develop a resistance. The vast majority of aesthetics—in the German-speaking world—argue exactly the opposite (I am reminded, for example, of Georg Bertram): art produces something that enables reflection or a different understanding of self. Art forms an offer, so to speak—and induces in us an act of reflection that makes us think. On the other hand, it is precisely as you say: aesthetic reflection is disruptive, converting, dislocating, unsettling, etc.

S

AA Here I read a certain critique of specific post-humanist positions that attempt to marginalize the human in favor of a "more-than-human" perspective. On the contrary, you mobilize the post-human here in order to (re-)discover the human in a form that is neither reductive nor polarized.

DM Precisely: that is my intention. By going through post-human critiques, we discover a different form of humanity.

This means, in other words, following the trace of its "contingency" (*con-tingere*), including allowing its unpredictable and accidental moments to happen "in itself." The genuine negativity that accompanies this act—the fact that appearances and their counter-encounters cannot be grasped or fixed positively, but instead flicker in their own inimitable way as an ac-cident/co-incidence—is best accessed by art because art is particularly suited to performing a play of breaks and contradictions with and through appearances. Art confronts us by "eventing," for example in the form of cumbersome materials that are incommensurable or unfulfillable. With this is intertwined the paradoxical indirectness of an *absentia in praesentia* mentioned above. This parallels the broadened understanding of "ac-ciden" also inherent to the arts, which does not draw from the calculable randomness of mathematics but allows itself to be affected by the "awhileness" (*Jeweiligkeit*) of random coincidences that cannot be anticipated and that, in their co-presence, suddenly flicker on and then burn out again.

We are moving within a ring of interconnected connotations that all reference one another while circling the concept of contingency. Just as the Latin *contingere* denotes something that also touches without being summoned or wanted, something that—as the prefix "co" indicates—convenes, inserts itself, or helps initiate,[15] the term *con incedere*, which is also based on the prefix "co," denotes something that happens jointly and thwarts the subject's initiative, something that breaks over the subject abruptly and without cause. Similarly, the event is a *diabolon*, which, in contrast to the *symbolon*, does not synthesize to make meaning, to unfold its respective poetics, but throws everything into chaos, making trouble like the devil in the detail.

Irreducibility and Incompatibility of Contingencies and Coincidences

As we can see from the above, contingency and coincidence, like "ac-cident" and "eventing," belong together. Caught in a net of counter-encounters, they elude language. The manner of working found in avant-garde art in particular, as well as in artistic research, is grounded in these facts to the extent that their epistemic efforts preference chance and things that happen for no reason.[16] In this way, they give radical "ac-cidents" and their coincidences a home.[17] To think in contingencies and coincidences—and not in the logic of what is necessary or rational—therefore means bringing singularities to the fore in a particular manner so that they expose *themselves* and do so while allowing each ac-cident to unfold its autochthonous impact, in its own right. The art of modernity and current artistic research have therefore—parallel to phenomenological and, later, neo-materialist and ecological passivity movements—through their critique of rationality and metaphysics, foregrounded ever-changing and always Other happenings as something *more* or *other than human*, primarily in order to learn from them what it means to be in a *humane*

— 15 — See Albrecht Becker-Freyseng, *Die Vorgeschichte des philosophischen Terminus "contingens,"* Heidelberg: Bilabel, 1938. Further, also in reference to the following, see the lemma "Kontingenz," in Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, and Gottfried Gabriel eds., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie,* Darmstadt: Schwalbe, 2019, vol. 4, pp. 1027–1038.

— 16 — See also Dieter Mersch, *Ereignis und Aura*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2002, pp. 157ff, 278ff.

— 17 — See Dieter Mersch, *Spiel, Kunst, Zufall: Kein Würfelwurf bringt den Zu-Fall zu Fall*, Berlin: Willms Neuhaus Stiftung, 2023, pp. 123ff., 197ff.

T

AA The idea of a non-conclusive aesthetic reflection can be extended here with the idea of aesthetic or artistic research that aims (if this can even be called a goal), at dwelling in what is observed (which, as you write, is not made by the observer, but inevitably influenced). Goethe's form of research resonates strongly here …

DM Goethe had an extraordinary and precise sense of what research in aesthetics can mean; that is why he emphasized the phenomena, the particular appearance, different cases, in which something special appears, that's why for him there is also a specific poetics of description, and again and again a sensitive observation of the most minute changes, details, and impulses, a type of sensitive immersion in the matter. However, Goethe is not my preferred reference (even though I love Goethe in all his diversity). Three decisive sources have always served as examples for my own aesthetic experiments: John Cage, Martin Heidegger, and Theodor W. Adorno. With his ideas, the latter dominates the constellation that I understand as reflexive configuring through antagonisms, as well as his idea of a "non-judgmental synthesis," i.e. a connection, as it were, of things or phenomena, in such a way that the difference or disparity, the incompatibility and contradiction of what is connected emerges first and is kept alive.

U

AA In my opinion, this formulation goes far beyond the primacy of perception postulated by Merleau-Ponty, since contingencies and coincidences can be felt or "sensed," and therefore also precede the perceptual constitution. Would you agree with this idea?

DM Absolutely!

T relationship with the world and its "oikological" alterity. A philosophy of contingency and the event therefore correspondingly entails remaining *in* that which we *are not* and *have not made.*

Philosophical tradition has not found an adequate language to express this. "Chance," "coincidence," and "contingency" belong to a marginal conceptual repertoire whose methodology has grown since antiquity, but still at best denotes modalities of assertive statements. Limited to ontological and epistemological questions, their knowledge can only be drawn from the differentiation between truth and falsehood, between possibility and necessity, and is so disfigured. The radicality of these phenomena however is their resistance to rational reconstruction; they retain their characteristic irreducibility and cannot be eliminated from the space of metaphysical speculation. More importantly, and in contrast to logical propositions, they stand for the uncertain temporality of the moment and for that which happens without source (*archē*), reason, or rationale. With only negative connotations, they point towards the space of that which is as unexpected as it is undecidable, and refuse any commensurate rationalization. Three groups of negation can be made out here, each of which in its own way deals with eventfulness and the accidental, with contingency and coincidence. First, the negativities that cannot be contained by logic and rationality; second, the acausal and senseless that are the *skandalon* of ontology and epistemology; and third, the conceptless that explodes the circle of predication and attribution and with it, judgement. Added to these are further semantic variations that philosophical analysis is again in no position to explicate. They, too, are more at home in the arts and the subconscious, or in religion and mythology; namely that which is "ac-cidental" in the meaning of "fortune" (*tychē*) and serendipity, or coincidence in the sense of the "fortuitous encounter upon a dissecting-table of a sewing machine and an umbrella" —the strange image that sparked the metaphorics of dreams in Surrealism.[18] Coming from the logic of the unconscious, to enlightened consciousness they appear at best as perplexities or nonsense, and they are supplanted by a manifest sense of reality rather than seeing in their unique poetry that play of eventing that comes from a counter-encounter with the real. Yet fortune and fate and the figurations of the night are indis-
U pensable, because they touch upon those sensibilities that precede scientific and rational approaches. They are based on perspectives of "mindfulness" that—again in the literal meaning of the word—are guided equally by ethics and aesthetics so as to privilege the passivity that makes them possible.[19]

Together they engender a genealogy with no center, so that in reference to contingency and "ac-cident" and event and coincidence we are dealing with a plurality of irregular moments. These moments possess as many disparate stories as there are impossibilities of finding their common center.

— 18 — Comte de Lautréament (Isodor Ducasse), *Maldoror*, trans. by Guy Wernham, New York: New Directions, 1965, p. 263.

— 19 — See Mersch, *Ereignis und Aura*, pp. 289ff.

V

AA Precisely this instability (this unstable baselessness), not as a stability that is *missing*, but rather as a natural state, describes the place where aesthetic thinking unfolds. Instability is not corrected as something flawed, but instead signifies a sphere of not-knowing in which aesthetic reflection is possible.

DM I agree completely! The sphere of not-knowing causes a limbo, an uncertainty, an oscillation between poles that is productive, not regressive or disintegrating. It is also a site of creativity, which is why I have always thought of aesthetic reflexivity together with the *momentum* of the creative, understood here as the event of something new, just as, in the reverse, I consider a moment of reflection to be constitutive for the event of *creatio*. The limbo, which means that we find ourselves in a state of *Je ne sais quoi*, where there is a tension that can be read in different directions, but which does not dissolve, forms the source for what I describe as a "leap," an absolute difference, without knowing where one jumps from or where one lands. Creativity is rooted in such leaps.

W

AA A radical potentiality, that does not point to any direction for its actualization, but instead depends on "ac-cidenting" contingent potentialities, to momentarily realize even provisional actualizations? And therefore, as you later quote, "it denotes something that 'can also be possible differently' at any time"?

DM That is exactly what is meant!

Coincidence and Contingency in Classical Philosophy

Philosophical thought, which has been asking about reasons and fundamental principles (*archai*) since antiquity, has attempted to tame the unsettling presence of groundless phenomena by discussing them exclusively in the context of the modal opposition between "possibility" and "necessity" and so within the framework of logic.[20] This led to a strict binary model that in its formalism obliterates the cognizance of the event. For that which is accidental is *possible, but not necessary*, just as events are *neither necessary nor unnecessary*, and contingency too is considered *unnecessary but not impossible*—a categorization that on the one hand proves the varying nuances between the concepts, but whose scholastics on the other hand subsumes their respective idiosyncrasies. Apparently, that which is without reason and unnecessary falls through the categorical cracks of classical metaphysics; its conceptual ordering circles a gap that mirrors both internal incoherency as well as incompleteness. That which has no reason must be displaced, because the philosophical criterion is everywhere the inexorable *anankē* against the background of which things can first be defined and recognized at all. Admittedly, necessity and determinism are counted among the characteristic discursive fictions in the history of philosophy, as they find no place in a world of finiteness and changing appearances, because they cannot be confined within the limits of temporality. Therefore, aside from logic and mathematics, nothing apodictic exists in the narrowest sense, but only virtualities, potentialites, or singularities. Seen in this light, the proposed reconstruction of "accident" and "event" seems like an error of categories. In fact, the experience of the singular and the contingent corrodes the unfettered persistence of necessity and hence touches upon
v a systematic instability within logical, ontological, and epistemological systems, because they neither possess a plausible *archē* nor can they be delineated by reckoning and reason. Rather they point towards a chronic unsatisfiability in the orders of causality and teleology.

As a consequence, event, "ac-cident," and contingency evade the logic of binarity and evoke a third space that in turn must be contained through a reduction to the foundational modalities of possibility and necessity.[21] Modalities modify concepts or statements in relation to being or time. They are of a logical, ontological, and epistemological nature, while also working on a metalinguistic plane, modifying statements on statements. If we add the respective negations to the corresponding modalities, we get a quadrate of the four nodes "necessity," "non-necessity," "possibility" and "impossibility," which have contradictory as well as mutually opposing relationships and seem to cover all variants of relations. Nevertheless, they apply neither to "ac-cident," nor to event, nor to contingency. In fact, the formula for contingency found in all respected modal-logical analyses is that it is *neither necessary*
w *nor impossible*, so that we are dealing with an indeterminate

— 20 — See the lemma "modal logic," in Stanford *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logic-modal/.

— 21 — See also Dieter Mersch, "Kontingenz, Zufall und ästhetisches Ereignis," in Jörg Huber and Philipp Stoellger (eds.), *Gestalten der Kontingenz. Ein Bilderbuch*, Zurich: Edition Voldeer, 2008, pp. 23–38, as well as the analysis of the term by Philipp Stoellger in the same volume. Further, also regarding the following, see Peter Schulthess, "Kontingenz: Begriffsanalytisches und grundlegende Positionen in der Philosophie im Mittelalter," in S. Reichlin and C. Herberichs (eds.), *Kein Zufall. Konzeptionen von Kontingenz in der mittelalterlichen Literatur*, Göttingen: De Gruyter, 2009, pp. 50–78.

X

AA The primacy of an emergent, i. e. dynamic and relational sense, which can be intuited first and foremost aesthetically, before the sedimentation of static meanings?

DM The primacy of a permanent *dynamis* or emergence: yes! I would be careful with the concept of relational sense, as first you have to separate relation and relationship, and second the expression "relational sense" could be understood in terms of a network, which is, indeed, used everywhere as an image, but, in turn, remains too static, too graphic, too mathematical!

AA Yes, I agree with you in a sense. I use "relational" here with reference to the concept of emergence, that is, to the emergence of qualities in correlation with the dynamic connection between enabling conditions. The image is therefore not a static network, but rather a fluid meshwork of mutual interdependencies, as Tim Ingold describes in his contribution to this book.

potentiality, which says no more than that as a product of two negatives, it eludes direct determinability. It is therefore, like event and "ac-cident," not a *sui generis* term, but at best a derivative of necessities and possibilities. Strangely transverse to the modal categories, its reconstruction turns out to be an inadmissible work-around based on setting the two guiding modalities as absolutes and deriving all else from them, relativizing event, coincidence, and "ac-cident," and robbing them of their autonomy.

There have been attempts to ascribe the formula *neither necessary nor impossible* to Aristotle, but his delineation of *endechomenon*, later translated as contingency, is ambiguous.[22] He places it between *dynaton* (possible) and *adynaton* (impossible) in that the possible possesses both the power (*dynamis*) and ability (*dynaton*) for something to happen, so that it must be differentiated from what is hypothetical, but only probable. Furthermore, the concepts of contingency and event and "accident" (*tychē*), as shown above, contain a plurality of additional meanings that include that which is unpredictable and unlikely as well as the suddenness of a stroke of luck, an idea, or a painful *katastrophē.* The binary "neither necessary nor impossible" therefore does not catch this multiplicity of meanings and excludes alternative concepts. Furthermore, that which Aristotele describes with *endechesthai*, for which "contingency" is perhaps the best translation, is reticent in its existence because it denotes something that can always be different from what is supposed.[23] This understanding informs philosophy up to and including Niklas Luhmann's systems theory, which equates the problem of contingency with the decision between a multiplicity of electable alternatives of equal value.[24] That which "can also be different" may seem to be "possible" but that is in no way sufficient to delineate its essential mutability between not-impossible and not-necessary.

In summary, there is a conglomerate of tangled derivatives that are difficult to unravel and are sometimes contradictory and which also, against their will, say something about the difficulty faced by philosophical analyses of contingencies, accidental phenomena, and eventfulness. In the case of modal logic, what is necessary or apodictic is given primacy, as a reference point for all definitions, so that necessity precedes contingency, forcing its positivistic law onto contingency and demoting it to something negative, in the sense of "unnecessary." Furthermore, contingency is chosen from a whole series of other possibilities, so that the term "necessary" as a fundamental concept fades into the background, making place for a play of various fields of possibilities. My thesis is that contingency and ac-cident, or event and coincidence, are fundamentally different in that they are based in "a possibility of difference" as well as in a groundlessness that can neither be traced to a metaphysics of being or of truth, but rather chooses a *philosophy of the ephemeral, of transformation, and changeability* that privileges not being, but becoming.

— 22 — Aristotele, *On Interpretation*, 12, 21a34–23a26. See also chapter 13 of the first book of *Analytica Priora*, which deals with possibility/probability (*peri tou endechomenou*). See also *Metaphysics*, IX.3.

— 23 — Aristoteles, *On Interpretation*, 9 and 13, 22bff.

— 24 — Niklas Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung*, vol. 1, Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018, p. 145; see also Luhmann, *Social Systems* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

X

AA I would like to return here to my comments on your first comment. Now it has become even clearer for me that an explanation of my position (and accordingly, a continuation of my practices) is based on the paradoxical affirmation of agencies without agents. It would be interesting to continue here.

Y

AA If what "falls together" or "coincides" were agencies, this term would be the densification of the title and object of research of our project *Contingent Agencies*. Accordingly atmospheres would be emergences from processes of *symbainein*.

DM That's an interesting point. As I said, I have difficulties with the concept of agent or agents and would rather speak vaguely of agencies, of effects or the like. The atmospheric arises, as Gernot Böhme put it, from "thing ecstases" in the sense of *ek-stasis*: to emerge or, also, to stand out. Things, and their materiality, confront us in space, as it were, in such a way that we can feel them physically. However, if we start from things, materials, and also phenomena that are already something specific, we arrive at ideas of a summary of different agents that affect us in different ways. But are the things, materials, etc., already there? Can they be identified or named as such? Doesn't their ability to be named mean that they have already influenced us, affected us? You probably don't mean the concept of the contingent agent in this way, as an identifiable entity that has an effect; nonetheless, I see the danger of a possible abbreviation. Furthermore, I always think of a dialectic of *symbainein* and *diabainein*, because *symbainein* always includes a bond, which the *diabainein*, at the same moment, separates or tears apart. In short: in my opinion, the coincidence of a relationality of different things falls short of the fact that not only the "together" belongs to it, but also the "apart"—the incompatibilities of agencies, their ever-imminent dissolution.

The Consistent Possibility and the Mathematization of the World

Since contingency, the event, and ac-cident are constricted in modal logic so that they lose all autonomy through their categorization between possibility and necessity, the goal is to find other dimensions of description beyond this historical confinement that perhaps do the terms more justice. One path leads to medieval logic, which takes modal theory definitions and their consequences to the extreme, to the point where they become absurd. The starting point is the Latin translation of the Aristotelian term *endechomenon* as *contingens*, whereby all real possibilities are derived from the necessity of the divine, as well as an infinite number of unreal possibilities. Everything that God does is possible, but in a divine worlds, everything runs according to plan, so that in the moment of creation, all other possibilities are already preordained. The medieval use of the term *contingens* (*contingentia*) goes back to Marius Victorinus, whose translations of at least parts of Aristotle's *Organon* were improved upon by Boethius, who sanctioned them and disseminated them at scholastic faculties. Boethius not only used *possibile* (*dynaton*) and contingens (*endechomenon*) synonymously, he also translated Aristotle's unrelated concept of *sybanein*—literally "going together" and metaphorically "falling together" or "happening itself" (*sich ereignen*)—as *contingit* or *contingens,* so that in the end, "ac-cident," event, and coincidence all ended up in one and the same concept of possibility.[25] It is therefore no wonder that the connotations of the terms overlap in meaning and merge to become one dominant meaning held together by the logic of the reason.

Y

At the same time, it is responsible for a series of paradoxes surrounding divine omnipotence, the "all-powerful" agency of his creative power that is totalized as the epitome of all possibilities, thrusting the "ground," as God, onto the throne of absolute sovereignty and therefore—especially in the early modern era—the rational principle according to which nothing happens without grounds. This is associated with very abstruse disputations on the (un)limitedness of His supreme power, which, since it is infinite, also applies to the whole of the past, present, and future. It also comprises the possibility of turning back time and undoing something that has already happened. However, the revision of calamity through divine mercy—as time travel in science fiction will later show—leads to bizarre consequences. The scholastic art of *quaestiones* provides many examples (the virginity of the Madonna is a prime example). Finally, Thomas von Aquinas, in his *Summa theologia*, ended this volatile *quaestio* by stating that while God was comprised of all possibilities, that did not include the possibility of contradiction.[26]

Here, again, coincidence, contingency, and event were brought under one logical roof when Thomas, by claiming as a result of creationist theology that "what is" and "what can be" cannot be subject to contradiction, became the first person to spark speculations about possible realities, which Gottfried Wilhelm

— 25 — See Peter Schultheiss, *Kontingenz*, pp. 60ff.

— 26 — This places logic prior to God. On the absolute conception of the possible and impossible in Thomas Aquinas's creation theory see Quaestio 25a 3 in his *Summa Theologiae*, vol 1. Thomas asks here whether God is omnipotent: *Utrum Deus sit omnipotens*?

Z

AA At the same time, this defines a new concept of the singular. The singular would be reduced here to a bit of "data" that "remains indifferent," i. e. is neither contingent nor ac-cidental, and is therefore not recognized as such, i. e. in its unique, unrepeatable fullness —in contrast to what is the case in the aesthetic realm (without any form of mysticism, as you later write).

DM You're absolutely right. As indifferent "data" that have lost their singular abundance, they are quantifiable, measurable, and calculable; they become equally valid in relation to one another. What should be thought of in the context of the atmospheric is the opposite: the non-indifference of the individual, that is, its unique meaningfulness.

Leibniz will later crown with his theory of "pre-stabilized harmony" and the "best of all worlds." This postulate puts contingency decidedly in the realm of the fable, but it is noteworthy that a third fundamental modality was established beyond the cardinal opposition of possibility and necessity, namely *reality*, which is coupled to the primacy of logic through both the axiom of consistency and of an achievable optimal state (the best of all possibilities). If we also consider that delineations of the possible and of consistency both organize mathematical calculation, then it becomes clear that we are dealing with a mathematical phantasma that tends to subjugate contingency, coincidence, and the event under its regime, transforming the universe into a sum of formalized models. This is the source of the mathematical concept of existence in particular, in which formal systems or calculations "exist" if consistent constructability can be proven. This applies to any and all constructs, so that the virtuality of mathematics comprises all possibilities, as long as they remain consistent. The totality of all possible consistent worlds is then the same as the totality of all mathematical or mathematizable worlds, so that divine omnipotence can be transferred to human beings, whose rational-logical omnipotence marks them as *homo deus*.[27] From that point on, discussions of the modalities of necessity and possibility, of non-necessity and contingency, and of reality, chance (*Zufall*), and event were held within the framework of the ubiquitous rule of reason, inaugurated by the philosophy of the Enlightenment and by modern sciences up to the foundations of digitalization.

Mathematicized Chance and the Totalization of Probability

With the founding of the logical-mathematical concept of probability and existence, the radical concept of contingency loses all relevance. The "ac-cident" and the possibility of an "ability to be different" as well as unfounded "eventing" become completely mathematicized and subordinated under the determinist randomness of probability theory. One should however make no mistake: "pure" and "radical" chance are not mathematical categories; at best they can be simulated by a series of random variables. In this sense, the actual connection between chance and probability was created with the discovery of statistics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the natural sciences began to apply empirical research through a sum of individual cases to find an average value, and mathematicians went about deriving a general norm from this practice. The event hereby seceded its unique status to the individual case and became nothing more than data. The riddle of the "ac-cident" was also in contradiction to the self-understanding of science in the early modern era, which saw itself as "exoteric" or related to a public able to understand and at all times reproduce its results. This demoted the ac-cidental event to the realm of the mysticism of the singular. Exotericism is possible only when all results are published and

Z

— 27 — Yuval Harari, *Homo Deus*, London: Vintage, 2017.

'anyone' can reproduce them in a series of experiments. This meant that science had to rid itself of the fateful mystery of the "ac-cident" and instead deal with any number of "empty" and "neutral" data that could act as variables and, abstract as they are, remain indifferent, able to link to the rationalism of the numeral.

The mathematical concept of probability should not be confused with its usual meaning, for it denotes a *sum of random variables*, not a recognition of singularity. The sum mediates all that is instable and uncertain within the singular case to find, in a shifting world, something that is unchangeable and certain. Play has always been the cultural site of the incalculable and uncertain. Accordingly, the early history of probability theory is part of the theory of play. Play is an excellent paradigm for the development of statistical thinking, but not as a dialectic of "ac-cident" and rule, or difference and singularity, but solely of the *identity* inherent to that which is different. In short, mathematical probability theory privileges only that which is the same within that which is different or "other" and changing. This cannot be emphasized enough. Mathematics obliterates the singular, the differentiality of each individual case, in favor of the equation, just as it makes play, which is actually resistant to theorization, the object of a formal language, so that it ceases to be play.

It is, characteristically, the game of dice, where each throw teeters on the balance, that forms the basis of probability theory, which in turn is founded on a system in which the singular is stabilized by the series. Blaise Pascal, who in this way formulated the basic tenets of the mathematical theory of probability, tellingly created its laws by calculating the odds of landing on a particular number in a series of throws of a dice.[28] Two thing are noteworthy here: for one, a dice is an ideal geometric figure (and so is itself a construct) and, two, the probability—or chance—of a particular result is dependent on exactly this geometrization. Since there are six possible surfaces, each face appears exactly 1/6 of the time. This does not mirror reality, but its probable limit or projection into infinity. In place of the radical, singular "ac-cident," what we have now is a search for regularity in the irregular and non-randomness in the random, or security in the unknown. We could also express it as follows: divine *tychē* that, playing blindly, distributes luck and unluck, steps down in favor of the numeral and its human schema. In this way the focus shifts from a destiny subject to arbitrary acts of God to fate, whose metaphor is a tamed game, whose indifferent chances can be calculated.

This formalization of probability, together with the meteoric rise of mathematics between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, has as its consequence much more than only the establishment of a supremacy of rationality over eventfulness and contingency. Rationalism also attempts to tame haphazard chance in all its forms, far beyond play alone, and to chain it to reckoning. This is true first and foremost of that which connoted by the fateful *tychē*, namely the indeterminableness

— 28 — On the mathematical axiomatization of probability theory see Andrei Kolmogorow, *Grundbegriffe der Wahrscheinlichkeitsrechnung*, Berlin: Springer, 1973. For a historical overview see Lorraine Daston, *Classical Probability in the Enlightenments*, Princeton University Press, 1988.

a

AA I would say that contingency is not only an object of research or an aspect of all artistic research, but necessarily a constitutive property of its methodology. In this sense, the practices that artistic research carries out, are contingent practices.

DM … and yes, in the sense of "co-touching"; but also "co-coloring," co-encompassing, enveloping, and affecting (the manifold associations of con*tingere*) … .

b

AA The theories, or theoretical fields that you refer to in this paragraph, without a doubt can be important references for certain types of artistic research. Nevertheless, the key to this form of research lies in a separate, autonomous sphere of research, i.e. research that is carried out by means of artistic or aesthetic practices. Artistic research cannot be understood as subordinate to the humanities, social sciences, or natural sciences.

DM That is precisely the way I understand it, and my first comments on "artistic research" about twenty years ago point precisely in this direction. It was also in this sense that Silvia Henke, Nicolaj van der Meulen, Thomas Strässle, Jörg Wiesel, and I wrote the "Manifesto of Artistic Research" as a "defense *against* its advocates." It is, so to speak, a manifesto against a concept of artistic research that is too simple, that turns it exclusively into a collaborative practice between art and science. Research in the arts means, instead, a very specific form of research practice, incompatible with scientific practices and therefore also incompatible with their criteria—a research whose work can be carried out solely and exclusively with aesthetic means and which accordingly pursues its own, unmistakable agenda.

c

AA Isn't it actually the other way around that the moment of an alteritarian counter-encountering is the emergent or contingent consequence of an ac-cident?

DM In what sense? Both correspond with each another. The alteritarian counter-encountering means, first, an eventing from an alterity; second, a happening, an eventing that touches, that approaches and triggers or that comes toward us without being anticipated or expected. There is nothing else that I call "ac-cident": the coming of an event that breaks in suddenly and unpredictably. Philosophy proves to be inadequate in its description here; a poetics is needed to grasp what is meant.

d

AA In principle, I agree with you. Especially with regard to the base- and causeless nature of an ac-cidental occurrence. Therefore my radical critique of Böhme's idea that atmospheres can be produced. Nonetheless, since their presence has a certain duration, i.e., since those who experience an atmosphere can be in contact with it for a certain interval of time, there is the possibility of observing it aesthetically, also with the aim of identifying (tracing, "sensing") those active conditions that are intimately bound up with the appearance of the atmosphere. It is not about recognizing the cause or the reason for the atmosphere, but tracing, for example, through notation practices, *how* (and not for what reason) it comes about, *how* it is constituted, in phenomenological terms, as a quasi-phenomenon. The fundamental idea here is that an atmosphere emerges, i.e. arises from the interaction of the actualization of different agencies, and that these agencies and their enabling or conditioning effects can be reflected through aesthetic practices.

DM Perhaps I should say a few more words about Gernot Böhme's concept of atmosphere and its weaknesses. My discussions with Böhme—when I studied with him—always revolved around three main points. First, Böhme speaks of ecstasies of things that pour themselves indeterminately into an environment. The reference to individual things means having already brought the *principium individuationis* into play. In my view, however, it's not possible to make that assumption because we must always start from things as distinguishable individual things, that is, we must always have already divided the world into distinct entities. Second, I also use the term ecstasy—but synonymous with a radicalized concept of existence. Not existence in the sense of "there is" but of a "gift." Ex-istence is, basically, the same word as ecstasy, the first in Latin, the second in Greek: something stands out of itself. The gift, standing out of itself, imposes itself, proves to be irrefutable. It is a philosophically nonsensical thought that refuses the existence of an already differentiated world in which things, places, times, and properties are distinguished. My approach in the first place is skeptical (which of course Böhme is not). In other words, the second point of my critique of Böhme was a radicalization of a phenomenological concept of existence or ecstasy, but in such a way that we are dealing with an irrefutability, i.e. with a double negation, which in contrast to affirmation always retains a share of indeterminacy. Therefore, I tend toward a "negative phenomenology": the appearance of an *absentia*, but one that emerges, manifests out of itself, as it were. Your paradoxical agencies without agents corresponds to this quite precisely. The third point of the critique corresponds to Böhme's reversal. Because things stand out and we can sense their *ecstasis*, we can work with them, stage them, i.e. create or shape atmospheres. I think we both agree that's impossible. Whatever we create turns out to be different or idiosyncratic. We can create something, and what we create has an atmosphere; but every atmosphere is unique and can be neither completely analyzed nor recreated or constructed; instead, it eludes itself and causes moments that cannot be controlled.

and incalculability of the future. After all, *aiōn* or eternal time is a *child at play*; *paidos hē baisilēē*: *the kingship is a child's*.[29]

One means of disciplining this child and implanting him with human, that is rational, principles, and so "civilizing" him in the literal sense, is offered by probability theory in the form of a systematic prognostics that helps to understand future risks as a space of possibility in which all chance is distributed equally. Again, we have the principle of equality, not singularity. It is also revealing that concurrent to the calculation of chance in play, the first insurance companies were founded at Leibniz's proposal, for it is, as Jean Racine knew, mad to trust in the future, for the future is the epitome of uncertainty. The past, in contrast, because it can be reconstructed in retrospect, allowing rational meaning to be imposed on senselessness, is the realm of necessity, which can be connected to the axioms of historical causality. When therefore contingency, the event, and coincidence are specified in classical logic only within the categories of the necessary and the possible, with necessity as the overarching standard, then this also expresses an unquestioning preference for the past rather than the future, so that appearances and their eventfulness appear as something that have already been concluded.[30]

Contingent Agents and the "Haeccitic" Knowledge of the Arts

In contrast to the above, it remains the role of art and aesthetics to restitute a radical concept of contingency and abandon themselves anew to what is surprising, unexpectable, and inaccessible. This concept shifts the ontological and epistemological framework of Western philosophies, including their concept of knowledge. *Its correlate is artistic research as the investigation of contingency and its agentiality.* One path in this direction might be aesthetic concepts of phenomenology and the varying ecological and material concepts that draw from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari—as long as these do not themselves draw from metaphysical foundations, whether through a return of speculative vitalism or through disguised scientific premises that aim to ennoble the contingent, because hypothetical, results of the natural science to the plane of philosophy.[31] I have already named a series of fundamental elements for this project in earlier explorations and bundled proposals in an *Epistemology of Aesthetics*.[32] If the starting point of "ac-cidents" and "eventing" is a moment of alterity, of counter-encountering, then this cannot be delineated positively as an entity or agentiality; rather its experience is always a double negation. Eventfulness is abrupt, without cause or reason, a sudden eruption of something as fragile as it is ephemeral. It cannot be pinned down, but neither can it be denied. Its randomness thus happens as a non-negatable negative and one must start from this non-negatability in order to arrive at that which rises up *out of itself* to con-front us (*ekstasis* or *ex-sistere*) and as such affect us, touch us (*tangere/attingere*), influence us, and provoke a wide variety of reactions from us—

— 29 — Heraclitus, fragment 52, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/heracleitus_philospher-universe/1931/pb_LCL150.495.xml.

— 30 — See Didier Dacunha-Castelle, *Spiele des Zufalls. Instrumente zum Umgang mit Risiken*, Munich: Gerling, 1997, pp. 102.

— 31 — See in particular the writings by Gilbert Simondon and Karen Barad. For a critique thereof, see Dieter Mersch, *Humanismus und Antihumanismus. Kritik der Gegenwartsphilosophie*, Zurich: diaphanes, 2023, and Dieter Mersch, *Ist der Antihumanismus ein Humanismus?* forthcoming, 2024.

— 32 — Dieter Mersch, *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*, Zurich: diaphanes, 2015.

e

AA I entirely agree with this approach. It forms a viable alternative to representation and shows how aesthetic reflection occurs: through the linking of constellating contingent artifacts with contingent ac-cidentings, which they are meant to reflect. I would therefore say that the evocation you mention is a constitutive aspect of aesthetic-reflexive apparatuses, which invoke (*vocare*) the observer (the artistic researcher) to attentive participation in this constellation of contingencies.

DM This is precisely my aim: to go beyond all representation and arrive at a process of reflexivity that includes both participation (*methexis*) and integration in a process, as well as an occurrence of *reflectio* (bend back), that stems from the materials, the things, the alterities, and the gift of ex-istence.

f

AA I agree with you once again. I think that the reason for this becoming other lies in the media in, with, and through which aesthetic reflection takes place. They are media that, unlike propositional language, do not strive for representation or correspondence with a supposedly well-founded and stable reality.

DM I agree completely.

never leaving us indifferent. Together, these can be described as something atmospheric that remains singular, is ever-changing, and most importantly exerts an undeniable influence. As something simultaneously inaccessible, unanticipatable, and uncontrollable, it is not only a matter of constant transformation, but also something that cannot be controlled by people, that can be experienced only through a primordial passivity or tracing. Within this, "eventings" can neither be addressed as subjects nor divided into subjects and objects. Instead, they appear only as indistinct effects (*Wirksamkeiten*) that cannot be avoided. This is why we speak of "forces." Atmospheres are made of these bundled forces, but they cannot be artificially managed or constructed. Instead, they create spaces that seem unspecific and nevertheless attract, mesmerize, or disgust us, but never allow us to be neutral. It is the task of contingent agentialities to approach them.

The arts have invented various methods to track these down, to make the imperceptible visible in the niches and cracks of the perceptible. We associate these methods with terms such as distance, break, difference, suddenness, alterity, volatility, unrepresentability, and incommensurability. But all of these are only examples of paradoxical constellations in which events
e occur and show their blurred face. Nevertheless, the artistic *episteme* prefers to evoke such constellations. Their nature is reflexive, which means that at the center of these constellations is their eventfulness, so that the cracks and breaks are able, in the sense of a *reflectio in re* or a *bending back within the thing itself,* to point toward that which we have called an agential alterity.

In the meantime, the concept of reflexivity has been deemed too subject-centered, and alternatives such as *diffraction*, *bifurcation*, or *reflux* have been suggested. While reflection seems to stem from an optical/physical metaphor that elevates the mirror in which one can always only see a distortion, "diffraction" and "bifurcation" are no less science-based. In the case of "diffraction" there is even the echo of an optical deflection caused by an obstacle, and in the case of "bifurcation" a fork that causes dispersion. "Reflux" in turn prefers the movement of a backflow that can never be whole but always retains something of whatever is flowing back. Still, as in the mirror metaphor, there is something "off" and unsuitable about their images, especially since they cannot really substitute for "reflection," which does not simply mean an evasion. Diffraction insinuates that the turn back is caused by a hindrance, bifurcation that the breaking goes in different directions, and reflux, that something flows back, without any clarification of the cause. The term *reflecto* in contrast, preferred by this author, implies a rebounding or returning, a literal turning around that makes us think of a turnaround. It is immanent to
f the aforementioned turning around of relations. Its change of direction does not take place in the open but rather implies a *conversio* that consists of many turns. Art as research can be shown to be a reflexive and converse *episteme* in this sense,

g

AA Or on the conceptlessness of the concept? Since, in my opinion, artistic research can also be work on concepts. How do you see that?

DM Correct. I usually emphasize the singularity of the matter, the material, to avoid any connotation with the narrowness of the discursive. This does not exclude making discursivity (and conceptuality) itself the matter of aesthetic reflection.

h

AA In order to avoid the phantom of representation once again, would you prefer "accessible," or, in the aesthetic sense, "reflectable" uniqueness?

DM I agree with both, especially since what Deleuze and Guattari call *haecceitas* is accessible only by a poetic, that is, a decidedly artistic approach.

i

AA Yes, definitely, "something other than knowledge"! My suggestion goes in the direction of "sense emergence"… but apart from the direction and naming of the alternative, can we still find or understand it within the framework of an "epi-steme"? Shouldn't we change our position in the sense of the epi-steme, that is, the standing above or over? Does this "something other than knowledge" require a different conceptual framework, which should emerge from a different perspective in order to develop at all?

DM That's entirely right! Whereby with the play on words "other knowledge" and "something other than knowledge," I also seek to describe the game that arises between "epi-steme" and the displacement of our position. Epi-steme with the multiple meanings of "epi"— the incidental, beside, and standing under as well as over. Standing "above" designates a position of power, the "meta-perspective," as has always been claimed by knowledge, which at the same time includes a knowledge of knowledge. I believe this "other" attitude unites us, also in the sense of an "other humanity of the post-human," namely the humility that opens up, allows, grants itself first and foremost.

which attains knowledge in the extraordinary moment of recognition that the reflection forces one to become "different" or "other" in the sense of a completed and fundamental re-turn.

This is what we mean when we speak of art as an epistemic practice that is well-versed in contingency, coincidence, and
g ac-cidents, as well as in conceptlessness and groundlessness: a practice that can be 'different' or 'other' at any and all times. It would therefore be a misconception to see its research practice only as a collaboration between the sciences and the arts, rather than emphasizing its autochthonic achievements.[33] There have historically been many efforts to understand art as its own mode of knowledge and to impart to art its own form of performing the truth, but no clarification of the uniqueness of aesthetic thought is successful unless the passibility of eventfulness is put at its center.[34] Less important in this context is Alexander Baumgarten's 1750 book *Aesthetica*, in which he was the first person to propose looking at *aisthēsis* as a possibly truth-bearing *cognitio sensitiva*, and more those explorations that sprung from Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, especially by Hegel and Schelling. The two elevated aesthetics to a veritable philosophy of art, which however still wanted to bind artistic thought to rationality's power of cognition. We have Heidegger and Adorno to thank for freeing aesthetics from the grasp of the rational and seeing it for what it is: a fundamentally different way of accessing the world oriented not towards knowledge of a truth, but toward *haecceitas* as delineated by Deleuze and Guattari.[35] While the term literally means 'thisness', including the particularity of each concrete and discrete singularity, for Deleuze it refers to subjectless eventing, to
h a singularity that can only be described in poetic figurations: "an hour, a day, a season, a climate, one or several years," as he says in the *Dialogues* with Claire Parnet.[36] a similar passage in *a Thousand Plateaus* explains it as follows:

> A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. They are *haecceities* in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected.[37]

The artistic sensitivity meant here is a passive correlate to a science that is geared towards generalization. It is in this sense an openness to, as Deleuze says somewhat ironically in *The Logic of Sense*, "sensitive points."[38] Its *episteme* is more of a *epi meta ta physika* in Alfred Jarry's sense, found in "superinduced" or "accidental" epiphenomenon rather than metaphysical generalities.[39] It is hence that which is shut out of the knowledge of necessity but remains a part of it as
i an ineffable nuance or individuation. It is an episteme of an-other kind, that does not simply describe *an-other knowledge* but is perhaps even *something other than knowledge.*

— 33 — On the structure of the discussion see ibid., pp. 24ff.

— 34 — Ibid., pp. 61ff.

— 35 — Gilles Deleuze, "On Gilbert Simondon," in Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts*, Los Angeles: semiotext(e), 2004, p. 87.

— 36 — Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialoges II,* New York: Columbia University Press, p. 92.

— 37 — Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *a Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 261.

— 38 — See also Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester, London: Athlone Press, 1990, pp. 52–53; 100ff.

— 39 — Alfred Jarry, *Exploits and Opinions of Dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor, Boston: Exact Change, 1996, pp. 21ff.

Surfaces

Threshold

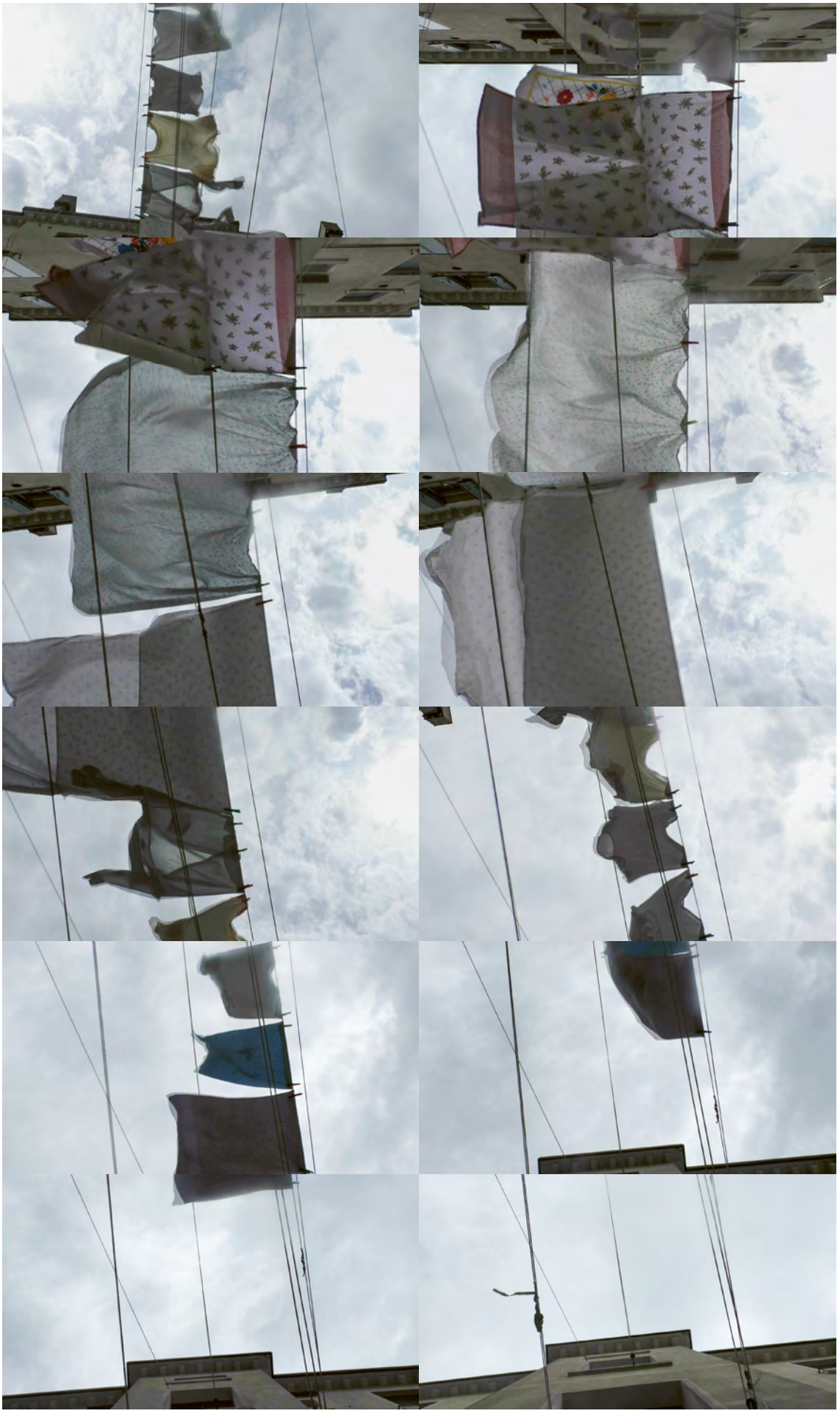
Spatiality

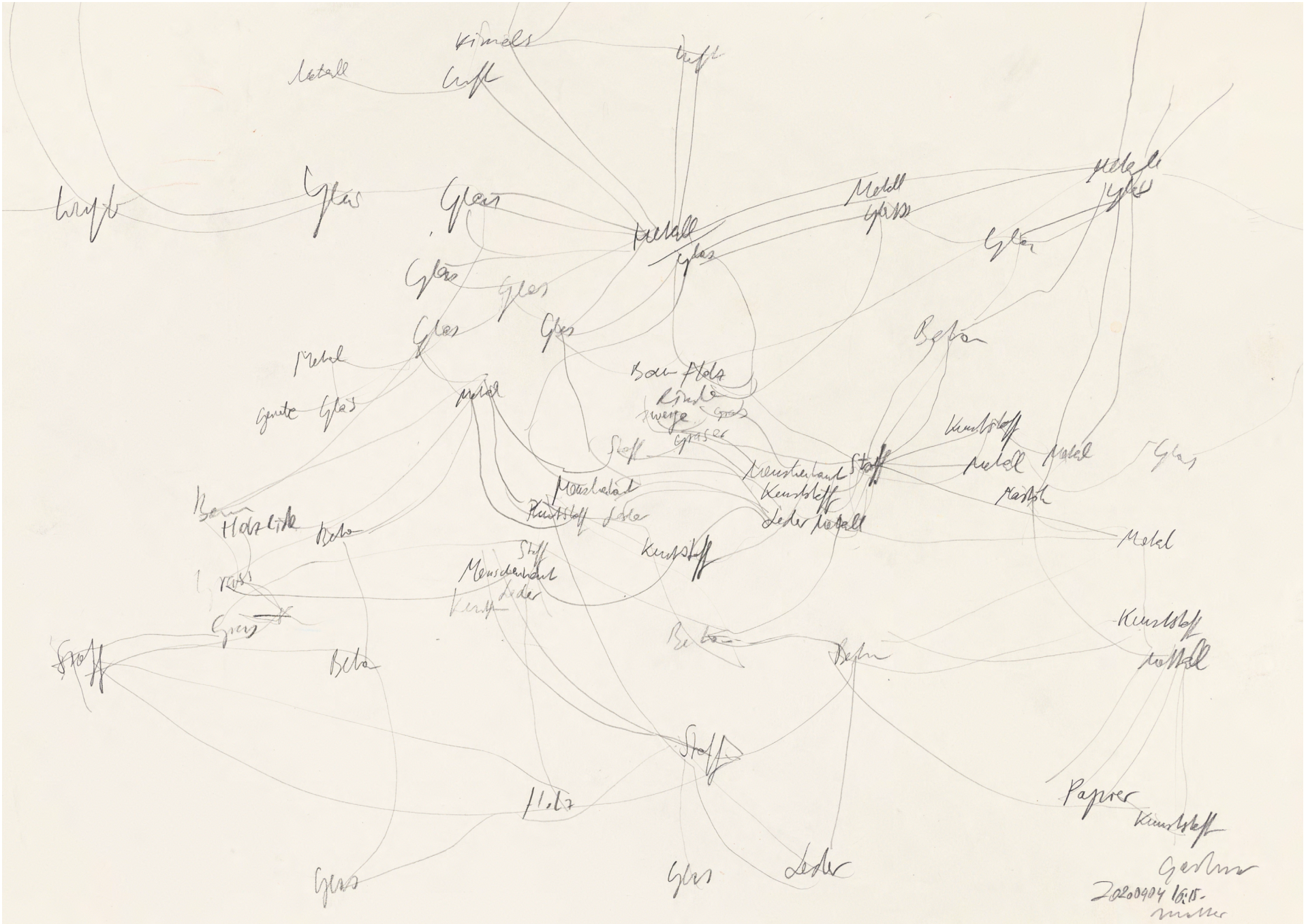
Material

Matter

Plants



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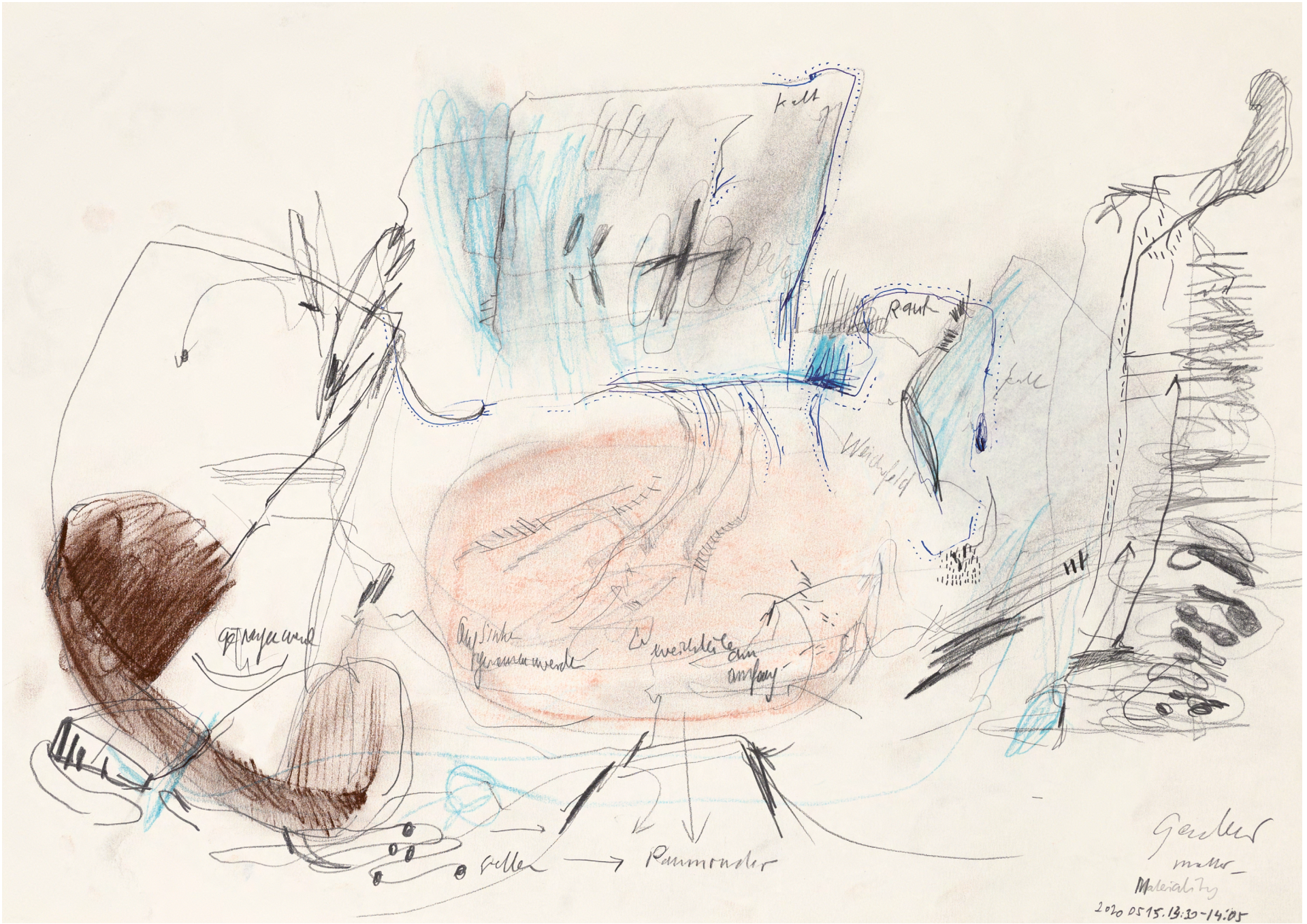
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Weichfeld
Raumwunder
Gesicht
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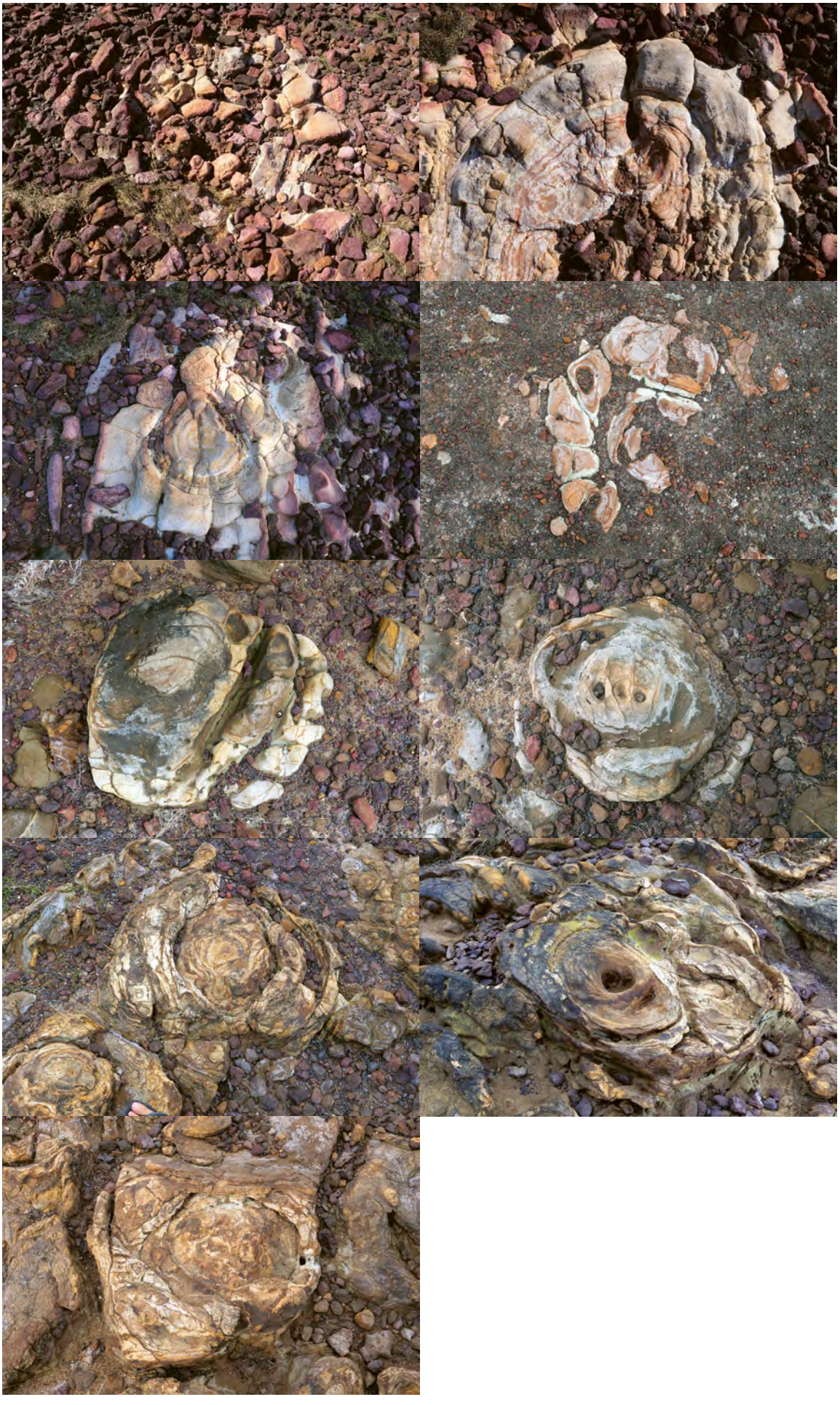
Materiality
2020 05 15. 13:30-14:05



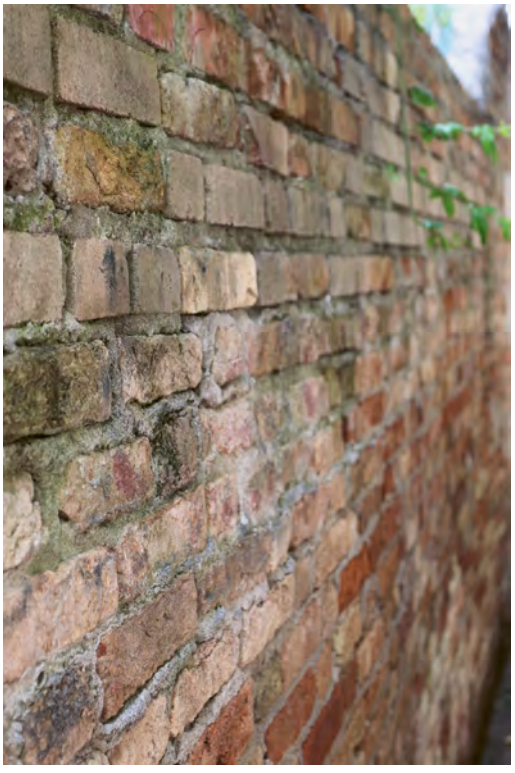




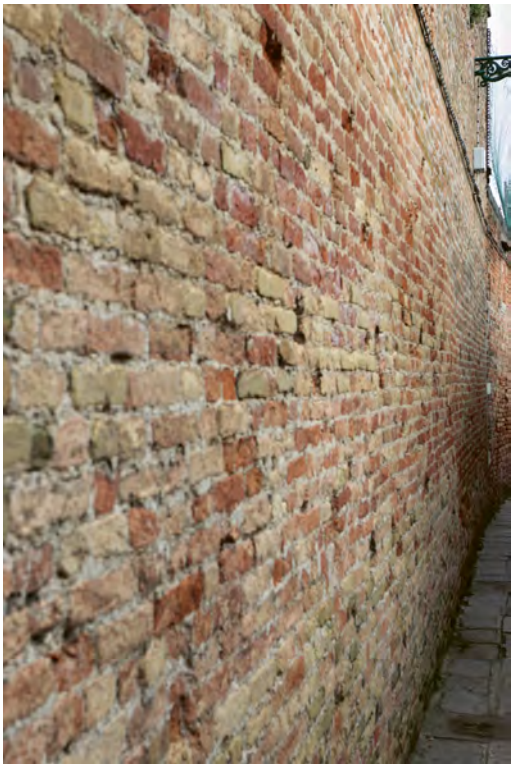










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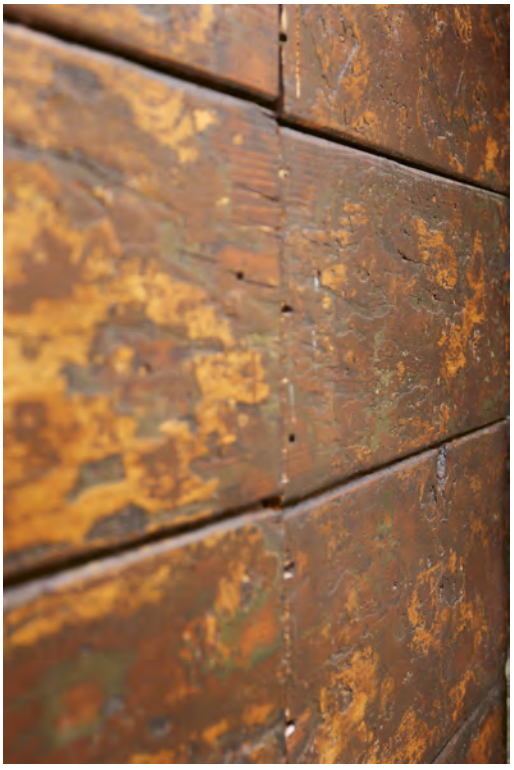


On how the agency of matter conditions the emergence of one atmosphere

Variety. Of directions, of positions, of intensities. Of intensities of presence, of degrees of directedness.

Sometimes—or in some spots—nothing. Void. Not inactive void but rather reverberating.

It is probably variation, diversity that resonates most relevantly in the atmosphere. Maybe “variation,” “diversity” are the qualities that matter in movement insufflates into this atmosphere.

Circling movements. Demarcating insides. Dividing. Breaking a possible unity.

Diffuse movements in the background. Enabling lightness, subtle waviness.

In contrast, few dense, decided movements. Small black holes without durable consequences, easily neutralized by the predominant diversity—but nevertheless present, always able to be actualized.

Blurriness. a gentle blurriness. Not chaotic, not oppressive, but light. Unfolding a field for a myriad of endless activities. a rich, multi-choice field.

I can be here for long, for very long. Nothing is pushing me out. I can be here, held—in the air—supported by so much and such diverse movement.

Small, non-directional movements. Temporary, tiny whirlpools.

Erratic movements without a clear end. Openness, indeterminacy: it is now this way, but it can be different. It must not be as it is now.

Erratic movements turning into resolute trajectories, acquiring suddenly, unexpectedly, another character, a more focused and target-oriented quality. Tensing, partially, provisionally, the atmosphere.

Very slow, discontinuous movements. Almost no-movements, establishing a reference for a categorization of movements relating to their duration and degree of continuity. Providing, thus, means for orientation.
There is not really a need to get oriented because there is no sense of being lost, of not having a clear sense of where I am, where everything is, and what kind of relationships are established between all the components of this place, of this situation.

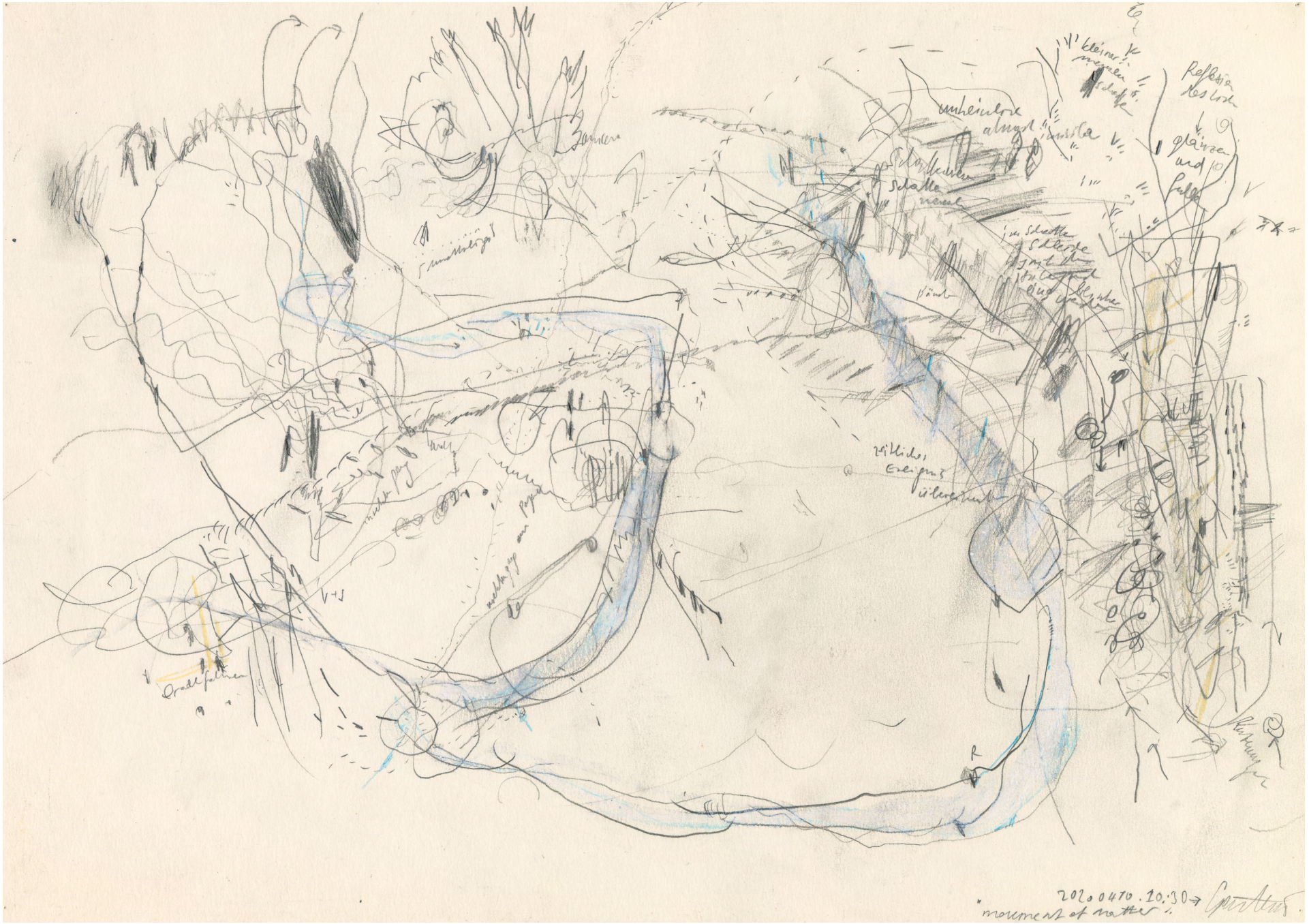
Junctions, nodal points, intersections, places of intersection, of densification. One specific quality in this so multiple environment.

Another one: movements overwriting movements. Simultaneities, maybe. Or maybe movement taking place in the place other movements occurred, recently enough to be still present, remaining where they happened.
Layered time. Without conflict, just simple coexistences. Simple in the sense of not presenting contradictions, of not providing for disjunctions, for confrontations. Instead, opening spheres for more attentive observation, for intensifying awareness, for closing the focus. “What’s there?” “What's happening there?”—without alarm but rather with increasing curiosity. Questions that will lead to enumerations rather than explanations. Because matter seems to be there, movements simply to occur. No need to explain—because there is no conflict—but a lot to see, to notice.

A subtle movement is crossing. Light and lithe, but powerful. Full of agency.
It might structure, stabilize, insert an element of calm into this so diverse, heterogeneous, and to a certain extent—or maybe better, potentially—nervous, restless environment.

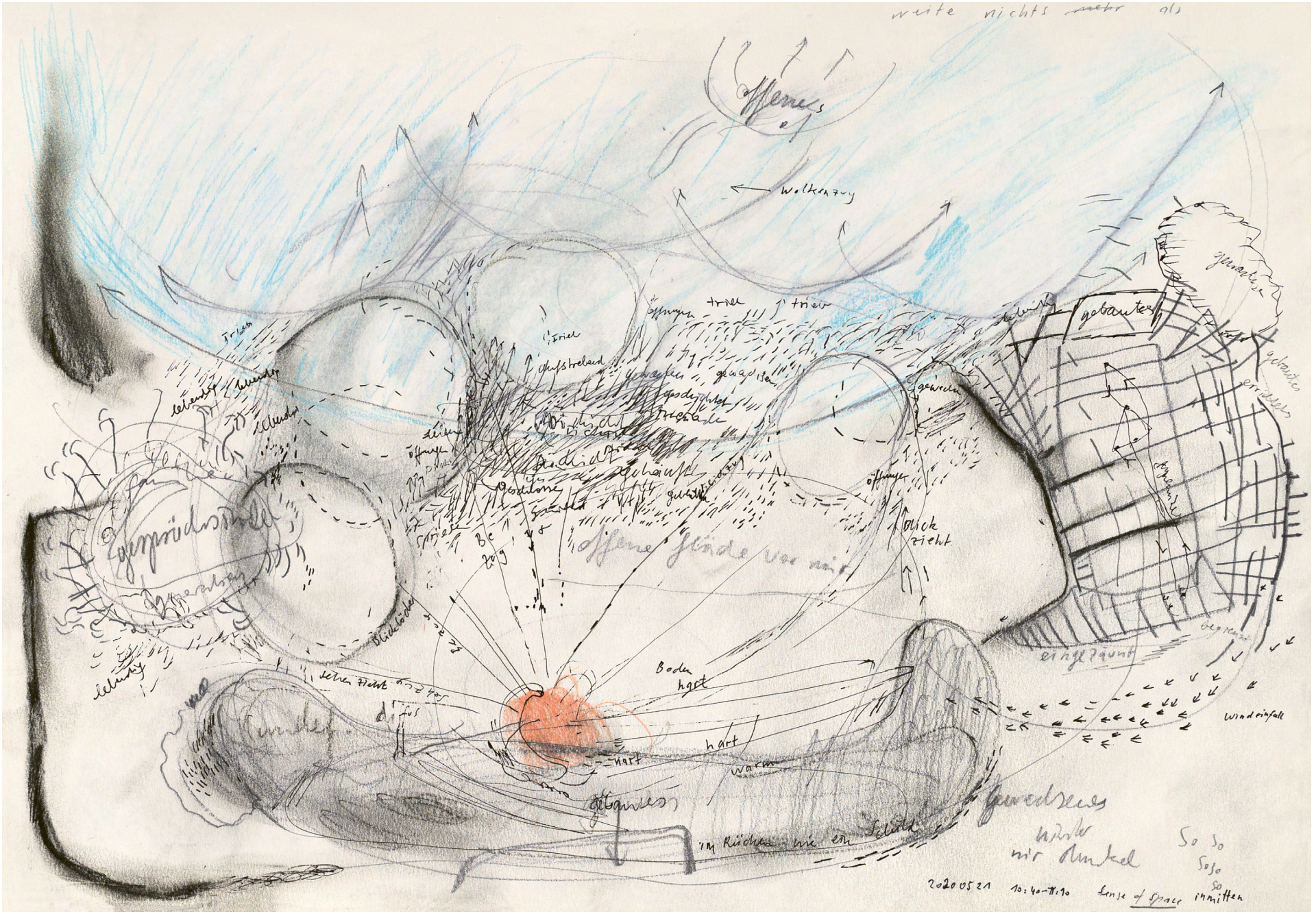
But if I now turn away and attend to other movements, if I dive into what appears to me to be the epicenter of this restlessness, this presence disappears in favor of other completely different ones: clear, sharp, short movements, sometimes with clear trajectories, sometimes enclosed in themselves, sometimes insisting on occupying a small slot. Movements tensing the atmosphere, causing, reclaiming sharp attentiveness, full attention. But also there—I have to admit, contrary to what I thought when I decided to turn my attention to these movements, to the zone in which they take place, to the sphere they generate—the the presence of subtle, patient, background movements not claiming the attention.
“Intransitive movements”—I could say. Movements affecting, conditioning the environment in which they appear and which they, without willing it, in a disinterested manner, co-constitute. Movements in and for themselves providing simultaneously a ground and an alternative to those movements wanting to be in the foreground, conquering the foreground.

Balance of layers, thus. Space for me, in between, to dwell. To decide. Or simply, to stay.


movement of matter


Fliegen an Hang gegen
Tauben
Tauben gegen
Kläffen eines Hundes
Blattwerk
Blattwerk
Olivenbaum
Olivenbaum
Stamm
Hunde gehen
Vögel
Katze
Flacon die schwarze Katze schleicht sich von


(schnell)
Wiese
Kleinere Nadelbäume
Kreise
im Laube
(Maus)?
"Agency of living Matter"
Garten der Villa Arson
15:25 – 16: 2.1.2018
20180202-1525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Wolkenzug
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im Rücken nie ein Schild
So so
So so
so
20200521
Sense of Space inmitten




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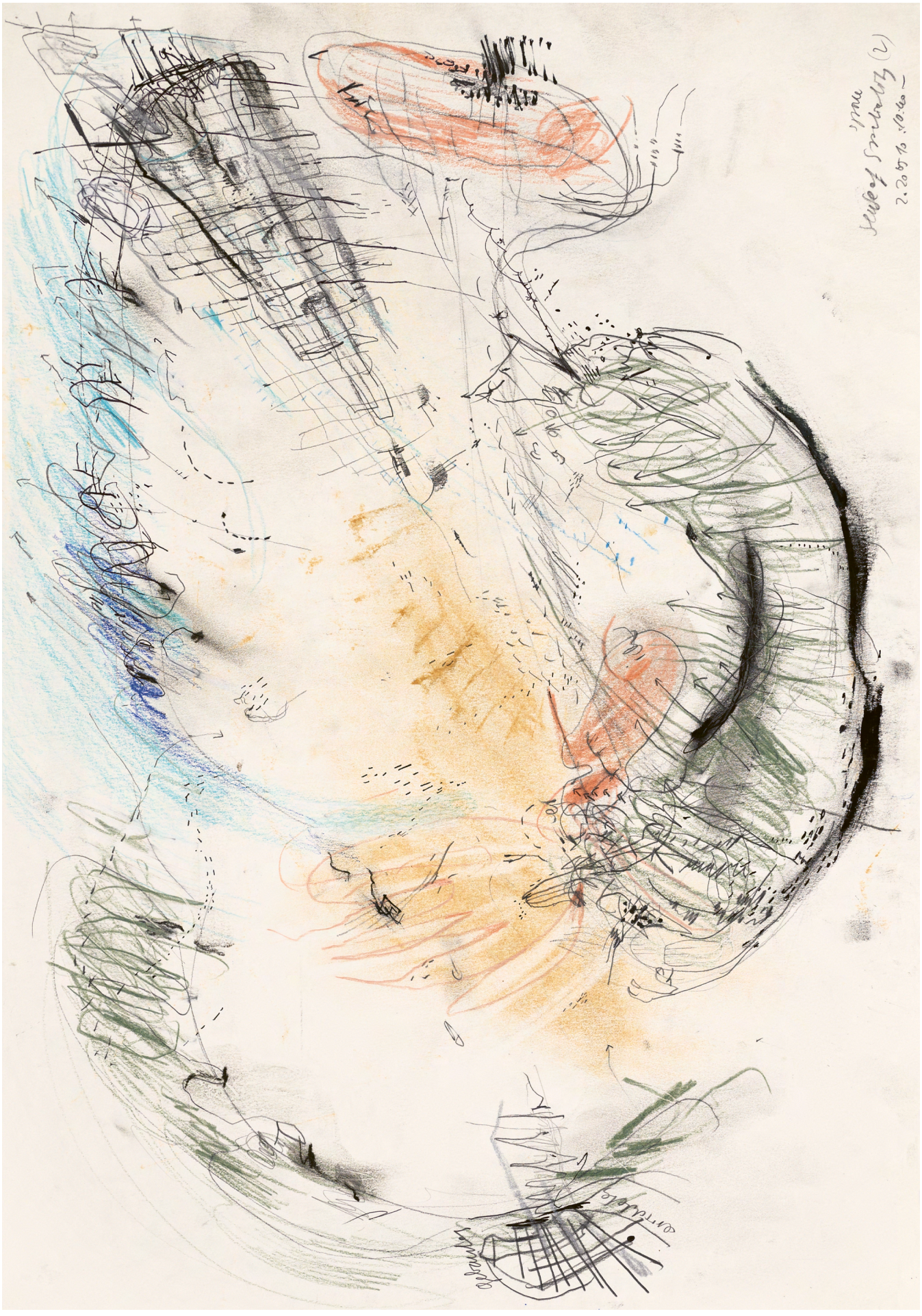
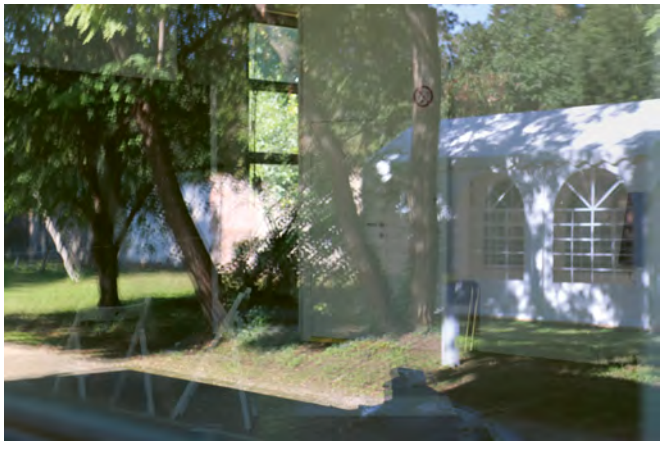
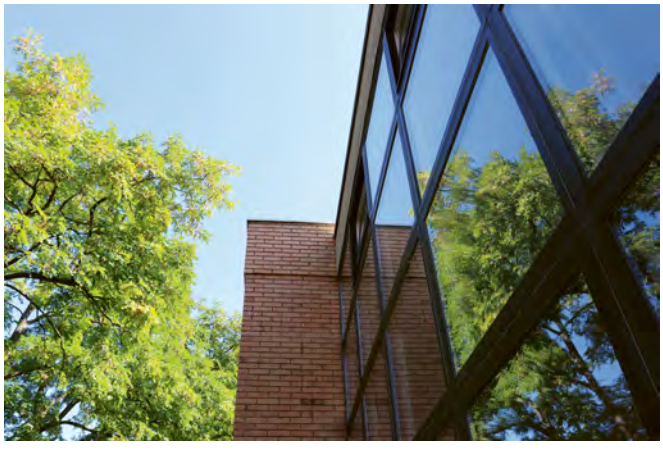
Sense of Spatiality (1)
20200510 = 10:20-10:40









Contradicting the openness of the atmosphere. Static too, but not inviting.

Reflecting—in the senses of rejecting, giving back, not taking in, not absorbing.

Everything remains outside.

Neither reverberating nor vibrating with it (the atmosphere).

[I notice that the atmosphere changes due to my observation of the agency of the threshold. It (the atmosphere) adopts the character of the threshold … unless another event compensates it.]

So if I turn my attention to the atmosphere (taking distance from the agency of the threshold), the atmosphere develops its dynamics without being strongly influenced by it (the threshold).

[I change position meanwhile, and access a double threshold with the interior.]

The interaction between both thresholds—the interaction between reflection and transparency—tunes the agency of the threshold(s) to the atmosphere.

“Durchlässigkeit”—trans-parency, permeability.

Now the thresholds reinforce the openness of the atmosphere. It (the openness) grows and the atmosphere with it.

The double threshold presents three spheres: a first exteriority, an interiority (not so relevant, not so influential), and a second exteriority—which connects with, is tuned to, the atmosphere’s openness.










The interior—its interior face, its interior side—reinforces the anonymous character of this atmosphere. Its exterior face does not contradict it—it expands, varies, colors it with a certain exteriority.

The threshold is static, imperturbable, even rigid. It offers a base for the anonymity, the non-occupied openness of the atmosphere to be settled, to be maintained.

A non-significant presence reinforcing the capacity of this atmosphere to incorporate non-significant presence—to transform (any?) presence into a non-significant one, to color all presences with its own non-significant character.

It reinforces—or rather confirms, reaffirms—the non-significance of the atmospheres. It is there, being a threshold but reducing its function of establishing a difference.

77 — p. 290

identifier N-Gansterer-20191217-1422-Cape-Woolamai
agency matter
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2019-12-17, 14:22
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai, Collonades Beach
description of the atmosphere Hot, strolling along the beach. Ancient stones, like petrified tree trunks, like colonnades of compressed time. Bit windy.

78 — p. 291

identifier N-Arteaga-20190503-1355-Venice
agency material
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation 12 video recordings
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2019-05-03, 13:55
place Italy, Venice, between Calle di Mezzo and Calle Cantiere
tactics of showing Ideally, the 12 videos should be reproduced on 12 screens simultaneously in a loop
description of the atmosphere Windy. A little bit cold. Empty. Pieces of clouding hanging between houses. Kind of abandoned although people live here. Something in between—between a lot of different things.

79 — p. 292

identifier N-Gansterer-20200404-1615-Vienna
agency matter
practices of notation drawing, writing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with pencil on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-04-04, 16:15
place Austria, Vienna, Central Station
description of the atmosphere I am currently at the new built city quarter located behind the main train station. The Erste Bank headquarters reigns behind me. The sun is shining and there are only a few clouds in the sky. It is warm and I am sitting on a wooden bench surrounded by new architecture made of glass, metal and concrete. My little boy is sleeping next to me in a stroller and there are almost no people around. The atmosphere is strange, dystopian. Beautiful new capitalist urban world, too perfect to be good. I can hear the aggressive sound of cars speeding on the ring road in the distance. The glistening sun is reflected in different ways by the glass, metal, and concrete materials. I follow my searching eye movements between these cold building materials around me and trace these paths in my drawing. I have to blink my eyes.

80 — p. 293

identifier N-Gansterer-20200515-1330-Vienna
agency matter
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with pencil and pastels on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-05-15, 13:30
place Austria, Vienna, Favoritenstraße
description of the atmosphere Another lockdown state, the walls close in, this space, my apartment, grows heavy within. No way out; every corner feels strange, as objects shift, their forms rearrange. Once familiar, now dense and unclear, Matter thickens, draws heavy near. In silence, it presses, fills every room, estrangement, a gathering gloom.

81 — p. 294

identifier N-Gansterer-20191221-2015-Cape-Woolamai
agency matter
practice of notation video recording
artifact of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2019-12-21, 20:15
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai, Rennison Bight
description of the atmosphere At the beach, these reddish stone old stones lie like petrified trees reflecting this magic light, pink clouds. Feelings of time traveling, tripping. Deep grounding. Drifting into transimmanence.

82 — p. 295

identifier N-Gansterer-20211223-0744-Cape-Woolamai
agency plants
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-12-23 07:44
place Australia,Victoria, Cape Woolamai, Rennison Bight
short description of the atmosphere Sleepless and jet-lagged, immersed through the camera's microlens, I sink into the textures of this windy shore. Mesmerized. Light pours across the dried plants, washed-out seaweed tangled on faded, silvered trees—their bleached ribs bare to the salt-bright air flair.

83 — pp. 296–297

identifier N-Arteaga-20190502-1844-Venice
agency material
practice of notation photographing
artifact of notation a series of 75 photographs (printed here: 50)
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2019-05-02, 18:44
place Italy, Venice, Corte de l'Anzolo
tactics of showing all the photographies should be printed in high resolution, with the same size, on a big surface
notes photos made while moving slowly along the walls. Through this notation I identified the idea of the resonance of the notated agency in the atmosphere
description of the atmosphere Small street. Narrow. Slightly cold. Voices at the end of the street, by the canal. Extremely quiet. Suspended time. No one or some one walking alone.

84 — pp. 298–301

identifier N-Arteaga-20190510-0940-Venice
agency surfaces
practice of notation photography
artifact of notation a series of 38 photographies (printed here: 24)
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2019-05-10, 9:40
place Italy, Venice, Calle Lunga dell'Academia dei Nobili
tactics of showing projected as a series of slides in middle format
notes Recorded while walking along the street
description of the atmosphere A sunny morning, peaceful, calm. A very narrow street, like hidden. No traffic, almost no one passing by. Compressed by two long walls, without knowing what is on the other sides. What kind of typology is this? Where am I actually?

85 — p. 302

identifier R-Arteaga-20201123-0700-Barcelona
agency matter
practice of reflection writing
artifact of reflection 1 exploratory essay
notation of reference N-Gansterer-20200410-1030-Vienna
reflector Alex Arteaga
time 2020-11-23, 07:00
place Spain, Barcelona, Carrer Lepant

86 — p. 303

identifier N-Gansterer-20200410-1030-Vienna
agency matter
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-04-10, 10:30
place Austria, Vienna, Anton-Benya-Park
description of the atmosphere I am here at the park. The sun is shining. Blue sky. No clouds at all. A soft morning breeze stirs. I am sitting on a wooden bench. Blossoming trees all around me. Quietness. The playground lies empty, marked with white and red stripes to keep kids away from playing. Corona safety measurements. Beside me, my boy. Sleeping quiescently in his stroller. I stay still. We are both breathing. I experience various states of matter as forms which move and make me move. How is matter mattering into movement and vice versa? What do I move even when not moving? A felt motionless motion. Mattering of vitality.

87 — pp. 304–305

identifier N-Gansterer-20180102-1525-Nice
agency matter
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2018-01-02, 15:25
place France, Nice, Villa Arson
description of the atmosphere I am here at the lush garden of Villa Arson. Really warm. Sunshine on my chest. Heart felt happiness inside. Life is all around me. Life is present. Life is mattering.

77



78



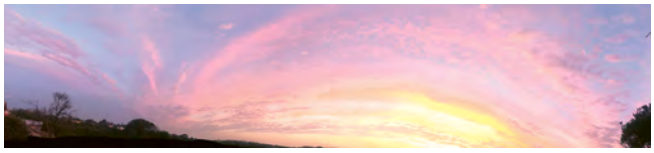
79



80



81



82



83



84



86



87



88 — p. 306

identifier N-Gansterer-20200521-1040-Vienna
agency spatiality
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with fine liner and colored pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-05-21, 10:40
place Austria, Vienna, Belvedere park
description of the atmosphere I sit in the park, the weight of the weather presses down, sinking into my bones and guts. The tidy order of the pathways feels surreal, stretching lines of flight into dream-like realms. Wind beings and cloud longing. An inner tremble reigns in this constructed space.

89 — p. 307

identifier N-Gansterer-20200107-0620-Cape-Woolamai
agency plants
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-01-07 06:20
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai
description of the atmosphere In the garden I stand before the ancient, towering cactus. Its spiny corpus half sunken, half decayed, half asleep. The plant looms like a monster. Its white veins pushing through. Delicate webs stretch over the green, weaving life to life, overgrowing the line where plant meets creature. All vibrates in the wind, branching, twisting, weaving. A mesh of plant limbs, alive, entwined. Full of caves and scars.

90 — p. 308

identifier N-Gansterer-20200510-1020-Vienna
agency spatiality
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-05-10 10:20
place Austria, Vienna, Anton-Benya-Park
description of the atmosphere I sit in the grass, morning sun warming the park, my boy sleeping peacefully beside me in his stroller. A soft haze drifts across the sky. Spring. The light is gentle and warm. Scattered families linger, children's laughter floating through the quiet of this Sunday-morning space.

91 — p. 309

identifier N-Gansterer-20200510-1040-Vienna
agency spatiality
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-05-10, 10:40
place Austria, Vienna, Anton-Benya-Park
description of the atmosphere In the park. I rest beneath a sprawling bush heavy with white blossoms. Each petal alive with bees, tiny wings dart in and out, drawn by sweetness. The air hums and trembles with their delicate dances filling the space with life, with vibration.

92 — pp. 310–311

identifier N-Arteaga-20220923-1115-Vienna
agency threshold
practices of notation writing, photography, sound recording
artifacts of notation 1 exploratory essay, 14 photographs (printed here: 8), 6 sound recordings
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2022-09-23,11:15
place Austria, Vienna, Rustenschacherallee, Zentrum Fokus Forschung
tactics of showing All artifacts should be shown simultaneously (photographs and videos as a loop) integrated on a big screen.
description of the atmosphere Sunny, open, bright, sharply clear. Calm although inhabited by different activities on different layers and distances. Nevertheless quite static, right here. Full of potentialities, open for their development. The beginning of a sunny autumn day.

93 — pp. 312–313

identifier N-Arteaga-20220921-1130-Vienna
agency threshold
practices of notation writing, photography, sound recording
artifacts of notation 1 exploratory essay, 14 photographs (printed here: 8), 5 sound recordings
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2022-09-21, 11:30
place Austria, Vienna, Rustenschacherallee, Zentrum Fokus Forschung
tactics of showing All artifacts should be shown simultaneously (photographs and videos as a loop) integrated on a big screen.
description of the atmosphere Calm. Empty—mostly of meaning. Not harmonious, but without tensions or confrontations. Open—because empty ("nicht besetzt"). A "non place". Fresh, a bit windy. Clouded —rather grey.

88



89



90



91



85 92 93 no panorama available

Field Notes: Figuring Contingent Agencies

Nikolaus Gansterer

These notes, fragments by nature, are not grand narratives but small stories, micrologies[1] of my journey into the field. Collected over the past years, this selection of notes—drawn and written sediments—share moments of minor observations and potential revelations for tracing the polymorphic and nonlinear process of figuring contingent agencies. The field of atmospheres is omnipresent, pervasive, too vast. The field is contingent, volatile, almost gone before being figured. Yet it requires no complex equipment, no special labs, no daring expeditions, no costly, energy-consuming supercomputers, no so-called artificial intelligence to get in touch with it. For entering, it requires foremost you, yourself, and an openness and uncertain curiosity. Entering the field is fundamental research, radical contact with a vital *conditio humana* or greater *conditio humana plus quam*. The field is made of countless small, vibrating niches, coalescing micro and macro fields. A mesh that permeates everything and constantly reconfigures itself. Accordingly, these field notes resonate in dialogue, are to be read as complementary. Only more than one note together can offer another entry point; operating in the interstices, between the lines are questions, provisional insights (beyond retinal seeing)—a rather corporeal retrospection, introspection, prospection—potentially serving as guiding tangents. Here, each (foot)note may act as a springboard, jumping in time and space and matter, an analog hypertext, articulated in the form of diverse figures of speech. Feel invited to follow the references into the depth of field of my research and the links into the deeper textures of the book.

— 1 — Micrology is the term for an open and speculative form of writing, of small, self-coherent figures of thought that observe an essential detail of a larger whole, which I developed as part of my research project *Drawing a Hypothesis—Figures of Thought*, see Nikolaus Gansterer, *Drawing a Hypothesis—Figures of Thought*, Springer: Vienna/New York, 2013, p. 22.

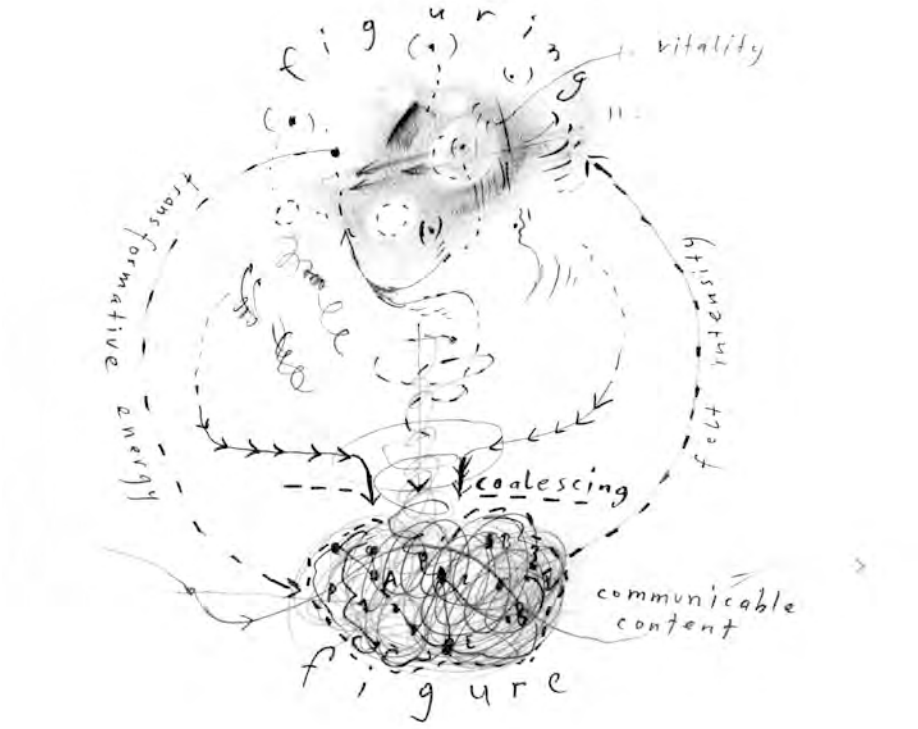
The Writer: What comes true here is that which reflects the essence of your nature. It is within you. It governs you, yet you are ignorant of it. (Anatoly Solonitsyn, in *Stalker*, 1979, directed by Andrei Tarkovsky)

It is not the thing within the space, but the space within the thing. Not the bird, but the whirl of wind in its feathers. Their moving shadows, as the writing of the sun. The agency of light draws the world into the visible, tracing marks of life living. As living matters. Not I who sit upon the ground, but the ground that has and holds me from below. Without reason. Less land, more of a landing. A grounding? The sky breathes my lungs, and the universe embraces me. A mood voices a call. Drawing attention? A pen holds my hand in suspense. Good heavens, how did I get here?

I am interested in open-ended and process-based forms; more precisely, processes of becoming form, form not practiced as a final point but understood as an event—as "per-form"—as process of figuration. Situated, embodied, diagrammatic. My work is grounded in an ongoing exploration of these dynamic forces and intrinsic correlations, the poetic and epistemic agencies of the diagrammatic[2]—its speculative potentiality—and what figures of thought, for their part, result from that. My quest is driven by an interest in performative in-between spaces and the associated choreographies of the (being) in between (*inter-esse*) and how these can be grasped in drawing.[3] This circling inquiry has resulted in diverse transmedia works involving practices of reading, or rather, gleaning, drawing, mapping, diagramming, and *auf-zeichnen*, which means literally "drawing on/onto/upon, recording, and registering" these ephemeral processes and their traces. These contingent practices of notating and reflecting are mutual impulses and also motif for my intertwined artistic-research practices. The present publication, *Contingent Agencies. Inquiring into the Emergence of Atmospheres*, marks another crucial coordinate focusing on an artistic exploration of an embodied-diagrammatic understanding of the relations between figuring >< figure >< ground and the therewith associated processes of de/re/con-figurations.

— 2 — See Nikolaus Gansterer, *Drawing a Hypothesis—Figures of Thought*, Springer: Vienna/New York, 2013.

— 3 — Nikolaus Gansterer, Emma Cocker, Mariella Greil, *Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line*, De Gruyter: Berlin/Boston, 2019.



What is a "figure"—more of a sketch, a drawing, a diagram, a character, a numeric symbol, a gestalt, a form in motion, an appearance, or an entity still in the process of forming? What treasures lie hidden in the depths of the word, in the roots where figura—a shape, a form, a figure—and fingere*—to mold, to craft, to invent, to imagine, to transform—intertwine? How does this fundamental act of becoming turn into a kaleidoscopic event that permeates the artistic inquiry itself? Is not figuring as fleeting as mist in the dawn, like a thought brushing the edge of consciousness? Like a word lingering on the tip of your tongue? Like a gesture that is still traveling deep inside as an impulse to the muscle fibers? Where does it dwell—in the in-between spaces, where knowing, feeling, dreaming, and sensing intermingle? How does it become a choreography of contacts, connections, and contingencies anchored in the elements that cradle us? Is figuring the deep space of resonance, an informing becoming, akin to the birth of weather, of moods—a breeze whispering over the sea, tides shifting their course? Do emotions swell, do moods drift, softly or suddenly, like waves, like flows? Have you ever not been part of this present pulsing field of figurings?*

A significant point of departure for the *Contingent Agencies* project lies in my previous artistic research project *Choreographic Figures.*[4] *Contingent Agencies* connects to the previous research work and moves a crucial step further. In the context of *Choreo-graphic Figures* I grappled intensively with the notation of the figurations of making sense that arise in collaborative artistic works. The hyper-sensitizing to this "highly complex, intertwined field of in-betweens" and the detailed description and naming created central reference points for the further exploration of these "varieties of presences,"[5] "minor

— 4 — *Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line* (Grant-DOI 10.55776/AR283) was an artistic research project (2014–2019) initiated by Nikolaus Gansterer, Emma Cocker, Mariella Greil, see https://www.choreo-graphic-figures.net/ together with an interdisciplinary team of artists and researchers. Alex Arteaga accompanied the research endeavor as "sputnik" and interlocutor.

— 5 — Alva Noë, *Varieties of Presence*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.

— 6 — Nikolaus Gansterer, Emma Cocker, Mariella Greil, *Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line*, De Gruyter: Berlin / Boston, 2019.

— 7 — See Gansterer, Cocker, Greil, 2019, pp. 316–329.

gestures," and "contingent assemblages."[6] Our collaborative development of "embodied diagrammatics"[7] turned focus to allowing the emergence of performative action spaces, and the observing and simultaneous experimental (live-)notation of those micro-atmospheres that occurred in the constant interaction between performers, material, and other elements, such as sound, movement, and audience in the context of durational performances.[8] An essential experience for me was especially this intensive research on the vital forces and mutual conditions between "the becoming of (choreo-graphic) figures" and an artistic, epistemic practice of "figuring presence."[9] These embodied figurations[10] only occur through the contingent interplay of the process of figuring and the form(ulat)ing of figures —consequently, they have an ambivalent and hybrid character between imaginative moving image, sign, symbol, diagram, and physical gesture—always *in actu*.

Due to the focus on the interactive performative qualities of the human actors, their individual performative practices, and the resulting scenic atmospheres, the non-human actors (agents) remained, in part, somewhat at the periphery of the explorations. Less attention was directed at the site or "place as performative event per se."[11] Since all of the project's so-called Method Labs took place in inside spaces in order to facilitate the close observation and adjustment of the settings and parameters, at the end of the project I had the strong desire to bring the many realizations that were gained, the knowledge about the fine nuances of the in between, the modular methods, and the specially developed live notation system, outside, beyond the protected laboratory setting, and test, apply, and further develop them outdoors, susceptible to wind and weather. In the research on contingent agencies we have deliberately clearly shifted and expanded the focus to the non-human forces or rather more-than-human forces of atmospheres in living spaces,[12] while at the same time, withdrawing (partly) as performers; in order to open ourselves to a type of "deep listening-sensing" and conscious awareness of atmospheres (*Stimmungen*)[13] in interplay with vital forces, materials, spaces, buildings, architectures, outside spaces, landscapes, but also their human actors and the feelings and affects in their respective specific temporalities' originalities, ideo-rhythms and poly-rhythms."[14]

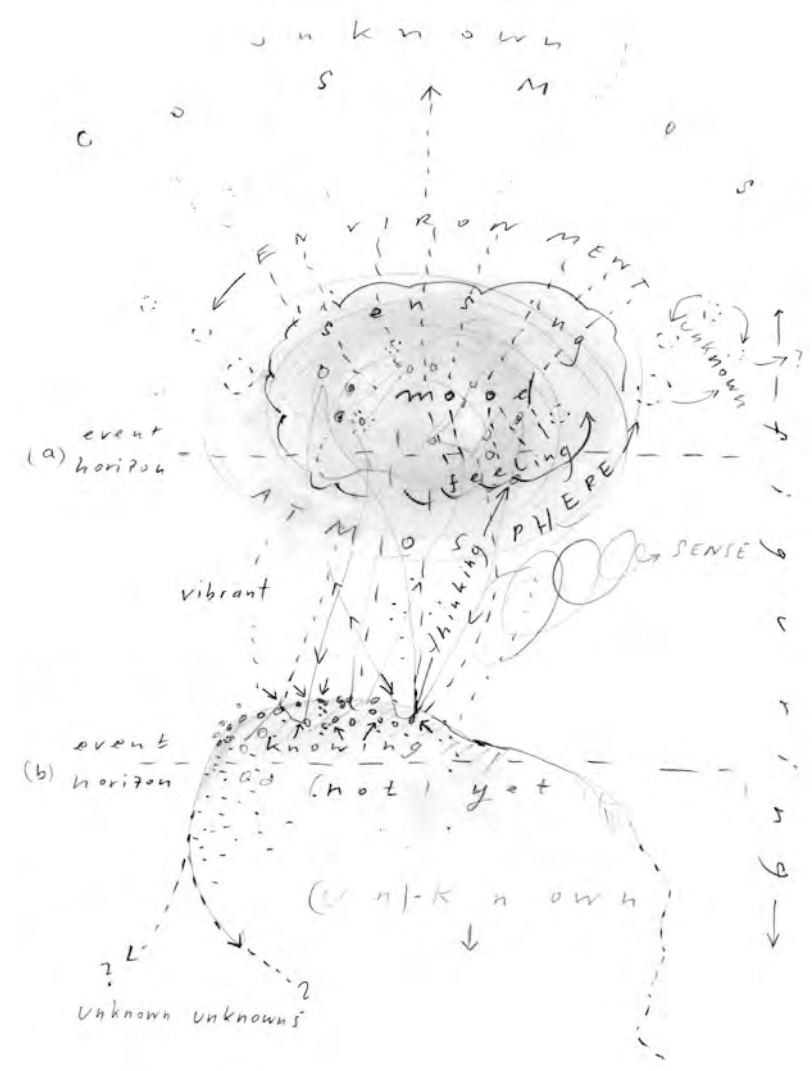
How do we trace the intangible—thoughts, feelings, moods, ambiances? How do we draw between the lines, beyond the known paths? What alternative signs must we create, what languages remain yet unspoken? How can we voice a language, unshackled from verbiage? How do we give form to the fleeting without stifling it, while making it tangible, vibrant, alive? Do the minor gestures, the barely perceptible movements, guide us into presence? What apparatus do we conjure to diagram and analyze the rhythms of life as they pulse through our collective becoming?[15]

— 8 — Three fundamental typologies of figures were developed: Elemental Figures, Empathic Figures, and Transformative Figures (e.g. the Figure of Emptying and Clearing Out, the Figure of Shared Vibrations, and the Figure of Translational Flux). See Gansterer et al., *Choreographic Figures*, de Gruyter, 2019 and the online publication including selected video examples of each figure: "Choreographic Figures: Scoring Aesthetic Encounters," *JAR—Journal for Artistic Research*, eds. Emma Cocker, Nikolaus Gansterer, Mariella Greil, Simona Koch, Society for Artistic Research, (ISSN 2235-0225), access via: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/462390/462391

— 9 — In this context, the term figuring refers to those small yet transformative energies and experiential shifts that are often hard to discern, but which ultimately influence the course of action. These affective intensities perceived as a field of forces, with minor epiphanies pulsating with presence, give rise to new emergences. The event of figuring—a heightened sense that something is happening—is felt as a qualitative shift across varying levels of intensity. It is experienced for instance as a change of taste, color, or perhaps even of textural density of an atmosphere. Whereas, the term figure refers to the moment when the dynamic process of figuring coalesces or crystallizes into something that can be communicated. The concept of figure is conceived as a multimodal, multi-dimensional, and durational intensity—a performed entanglement that integrates bodily-kinesthetic, visual-spatial, and verbal-linguistic sensibilities.

— 10 — Ksenia Fedorova, "Figuring Thought, Between Experience and Abstraction," in Stephan Besser and Flora Lysen (eds.), *Worlding the Brain Neurocentrism, Cognition and the Challenge of the Arts and Humanities,* Leiden: Brill, 2024, pp. 215–233.

— 11 — For example, the choreographic "Figure of Temporary" Closing was key to me for further studying contingent agencies as it addresses the specific atmosphere that can be experienced in the immediate resonance space after a durational performance and in sensing the charged remains and residues as a form of "provisional closing, ending and descending felt in its landing." For *wit(h)nessing* and notating in contact with an agency, the "Figure of Translational Flux" become central. See the video examples at ibid., "Choreo-graphic Figures: Scoring Aesthetic Encounters," *JAR—Journal for Artistic Research*, eds. Emma Cocker, Nikolaus Gansterer, Mariella Greil, Simona Koch, Society for Artistc Research, (ISSN 2235-0225), access via https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/462390/462391



March 2020, Vienna. First lockdown, everything stops, the world is gripped, governed by an eerie, vast atmosphere, spreading like a ravaging monster, a pandemic.[16] In these timeless days-weeks-nights, I have made strange new acquaintances, relationships of a sort. Some are growing to deeper kinships. It turned into "something more"—an "agential affair" is unfolding. I find solace in my regular rendezvous with a small bamboo forest, nestled in the botanical garden within walking distance of my home. Sometimes, the meetings are daily, a micro-retreat, often with my then few-months-old son, Piju by my side lying in his stroller. Together we listen to the sigh of the wind through the leaves, the sway of the bamboo stems. I see in his eyes, him becoming all ears. Often he drifts into one of those precise forty-minute naps of infants. These baby power naps are a perfect time span for my notation sessions, time gaps to fall or rather sink "into it." Feeling my own attention reach its peaks and valleys, the vital impulses, I am recalling Daniel Stern's *Interpersonal World of the Infant.*[17] My dearest Piju, what do you perceive? Your precious presence acts as an amplifier. I am learning from the bamboo through the wind, feeling the bamboo through the baby boy, and vice versa. Focusing my consciousness on the non-focus, the wide field of shimmering thresholds, their intra-play. As the bamboo gently rustles. (p.376, p.367)

— 12 — Diverse residencies and research cells took place, for example, in the desert in the framework of the 14th Sharjah Biennial, in and around Melbourne; at Villa Arson in Venice, Nice; and in the course of hiking excursions in the woodlands of Austria.

— 13 — Concerning the German term *Stimmungen,* see in the present book, Nikolaus Gansterer, "A Contingent Preface," pp. 19.

— 14 — Alex Arteaga introduced additional crucial impulses concerning aurality and architecture from his previous research project, *Architecture of Embodiment*, see http://www.architecture-embodiment.org/

— 15 — Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Tine and Everyday Life*, London: Continuum, 2044; French original, *Éléments de rythmanalyse*, Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 1992.

— 16 — In German it is possible to say, "es herrscht eine Stimmung," literally, "an atmosphere reigns, governs or rules." This expression reflects the one-sided dominant power relations in the German language between subject and atmosphere. In my perception, during the Covid 19 pandemic, a type of multiform macro-atmosphere emerged in society, which at the same time, penetrated all other atmospheres, intensely.

— 17 — Daniel Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology*, with a new introduction by the author. 1st paperback edition, New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Is figuring atmospheres more about sensing-thinking-feeling-knowing and not knowing? A merging "into" it, rather than a figuring "out." Event experienced as an open telos, a flight path for navigating into the not yet known. From arriving to deriving. From being to becoming. It is not about decoding or unraveling, but instead becoming entangled within the enigma. It is not drawing after nature, but being drawn by the nature of nature.[18] *On wind feet. On the loose. It is less about seeing, less about hearing. Instead, a deep listening with hands and feet. A beginningless sensing, endless presence. To become barefoot in the heart.*[19]

February 2021, Salzburg. In the middle of this state, is it the fourth or fifth lockdown? I have stopped counting the locked-up days. However, a temporal window is opening into the depths of contemporary drawing and notation practices. Séamus Kealy and I have been working on this exhibition or rather exposition—a configuration of notations—for over a year.[20] Each artistic position, a unique voice, contributes to a collective inquiry into the limits of language and thought by making signs and lines. Each work spirals outward, veering into different conceptual landscapes and expressive territories. Each piece is a question, a meditation, a challenge to the boundaries of articulation. Perhaps Ludwig Wittgenstein was right when he proclaimed "What we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence." But what if, instead of silence, we draw in wonder? How does one sketch the vibrating silence? Drawn into silence. This is not a passive muteness, but an active silence. Is there a tone, a spark, a spell? Yes, it makes me think of the profoundly haunting works of Alina Popa. Her final creations, born from the agency of illness, a metastasizing cancer, the many shadows of death, sketchy scribbles navigating the intimate terrain of her own mortality. Each stroke, a whisper of pain, a silent scream. I realize: pain, death, decay, these uncertainties are not merely life themes but lived omnipresent mighty agencies, etched into each body (p. 232, p. 233). We conceived a liminal space, teetering on the brink of existence, where the unspeakable is not shrouded in silence but brought forth in agential lines. Notating the visceral as a method of circumnavigation. How does one draw the unsayable into the tangible? How to render the silent hum of existence, the edge of being, where words falter and thoughts tremble? How to diagram the delicate balance between presence and absence? It makes me think of Morgan O'Hara's spirited transmissions in line with the agencies of movement, Nina Canell's found traces of the agency of a lightning bolt recorded inside a stone, Christoph Fink's poetic cartographies between the agencies of space-time, and Karel Malich's body diagrams of the sound of palpitation and sensed breathing in relation to his environment. Alex Arteaga and I presented a series of five artifacts of notation and correlating reflections that address the agencies of sound (p. 118, p. 119), wind (p. 386, p. 387), rain (p. 378, p. 379), light (p. 48, p. 49), and movement (p. 302, p. 303).

— 18 — My artistic research approach is not aimed at a mimetic photorealistic and seemingly objective representation of nature, as practiced by botanists in scientific watercolor painting (for example see J. de Koning, *Drawn after Nature: The Complete Botanical Watercolours of the 16th-Century Libri Picturati*. Zeist: KNNV, 2008). My interest is in the drawing of life processes and the dynamic character of figuration, which is based on a much more comprehensive corporal-cosmic concept of nature, as already meticulously drawn and described, for example, in Paul Klee's notebooks. See Jürg Spiller (ed.), *The Paul Klee Notebooks: The Nature of Nature*, trans. H. Norden, London: Lund Humphries, 1992.

— 19 — I am conducting research on the vital role of the heart (intuitive reason) in artistic research as part of the transdisciplinary project *Philosophy in the Arts: Arts in Philosophy. Cross-Cultural Research on the Significance of the Heart in Artistic Research and Performance Philosophy* (Grant-DOI: 10.55776/AR822), which is funded by the Austrian Science Fund until 2027. Initiated by philosopher Arno Böhler and actress Susanne Valerie Granzer, this investigation is based on concepts of the heart in the works of two artist-philosophers, Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and Sri Aurobindo Ghose's poetic opus magnum *Savitri*. As a methodological approach, Böhler and Granzer propose the term "field-performance" to emphasize the field-character (*kṣetra*) of the work they intend to expose on stage artistically and philosophically (cf. Bäumer 1988, 20). For them, an artistic field is, in the first place, an "area of space" (Nancy 2008, pp. 43–46) that becomes vibrant and pulsating (Bennett 2010) in and through artistic modes of stimulating a "virtual void" (śūnyatā, vyoman, ākāśa) that resides right in the middle of the emptiness of a heart (Dyczkowszky 1992b, 42). See https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/2484805/2484806 and Arno Böhler's contribution in this publication, pp. 165.

— 20 — The exhibition *… Line as Thought, Lines as Universe …* (20 February–25 April 2021) at the Salzburger Kunstverein showcased work by William Anastasi, Nina Canell, Carlfriedrich Claus, Attila Csörgö, Christoph Fink, Habima Fuchs, Nikolaus Gansterer and Alex Arteaga, Monika Grzymala, Morgan O'Hara, Karel Malich, Isabel Nolan, Alina Popa, Stuart Sherman. The exhibition was curated by Seamus Kealy and Nikolaus Gansterer. Cf. the exhibition catalogue Seamus Kealy (ed.), *… Line as Thought, Lines as Universe …*, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, 2021. Cf. the exhibition website https://salzburger-kunstverein.at/line_as_thought_lines_as_universe/

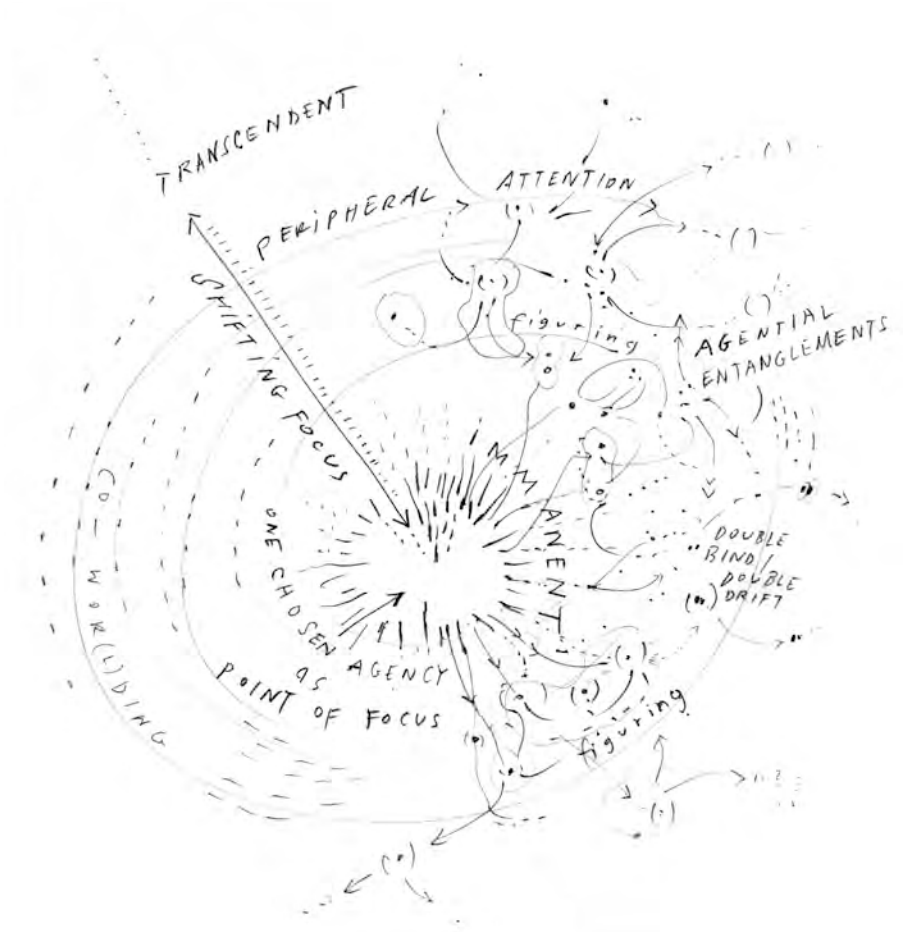
Let's dwell in these interstices to wit(h)ness the dance of lines as they trace the contours of the unseen, the felt, charting the known-yet-unknowable. Let's draw not just with ink and pencil, but with life itself, bio-graphies: bio-grams. In the end, what remains is a collective breath, a shared silence, and the wonder of lines as they form, transform, and transcend.

In the context of *Contingent Agencies*, I consistently further developed my own multimodal notation system, or in other words, an ecology of artistic practices of notating and reflecting —no rigid sign system, but instead a living modus to find signs and set them in relation to the contingency of atmospheres. It is a researching (conscious) mode to practice and articulate the discovery of languages that speak beyond the regime of signifying.

Now. I re-utter the question that accompanies me: how to notate something that is, per se, fleeting; that is, per se, always too large, too complex, without "fixing" it, without formalizing and minimizing it, reducing or representing it in simplified form, and nonetheless enabling multiple approaches and points of contact as a contingent, present, living, sign-like something?

I approached the contingent agencies by means of these different practices of notation and reflection—drawing, writing, diagramming, video recording, performing, materializing, installing, and the multiple transitions in between, curious about feedback effects and contaminations. In phases, drawing became a daily practice, which I further developed "point by point, line by line." Over the course of the project, to date more than 300 drawings have been produced in various forms, formats, and techniques on paper, canvas, and in sand. From quick notations in notebooks while walking, during train journeys (p.208, p.209), in the midst of demonstrations, in crowded Brussels cafés, or the deserted coasts at Cape Woolamai in Australia, to drawings in parks, in the woods, the French and Austrian Alps, on the highway, or at the sea (p.389)—during the day, at night (p.65), and at dusk and dawn (p.54, p.55), in the pouring rain, snow, or scorching desert heat (p.217). A small selection of these can be found here in the present book, a larger selection is online on the website.[21] In the beginning I started with small drawings and expanded these to sheets of paper that cover the entire length of my body, or also wrote, scratched directly on site, into the dusty earth. Ephemeral in situ diagrams (p.110, p.111). Over the course of my explorations, also round drawings soon arose, entirely following my own field of perception, along a perception sphere felt to be round or oval through to those edges where inner and outer spheres collide, coalesce, froth up, form bubbles, become wor(l)dings (p.62, p.63).

— 21 — https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/



At the edge of the retina, I go scenting signs—lucid harbingers of what is yet to come: quasi things, quasi objects, quasars? Impulses stir from the field. To borrow precarious signs from the periphery of things, words from the margins, language poised at the oral cavity, where the horizon unfurls, threading itself into the body—spacetime bodies—where polyrhythms are more felt than heard. Here, a writing-drawing emanates, overwrites, and configures. It is in this open field that a practice of diagramming life lines situates itself, tracing the jolty ruptures of me, the fluid transitions of you, the hairline cracks of us, fog-holes of them, and deep shallows of it—where unknown forces emerge, quietly infiltrating the scene, only to vanish as suddenly as they have appeared. Ghostly, elsewhen, at ween, spirited away.

Parallel to the diagrammatic drawing, I developed a complementary audio-visual practice, filming using an experimental hand camera. Here, there is no neutral, objective, fixed position; no, here, the gaze is always in motion, searching via the "seeker," the viewfinder. An auto-ethnographic shifting focus? The performativity of the notator is immanently present in the image and mingles with the recorded performativity of the agency—a co-writing, a co-vibrating. When filming, it is the short single shots, snippets, micro-moments observed through the macro-lens that infatuate and "draw me in." A micro-worlding, hidden from the naked eye, the micro-performativity of the agencies, very close to contingencies. Two film artifacts are examples of this practice, in the desert around the ice

factory in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (see *Desert Ice Factory: Reflecting Relational Traces*, 2019[22]), and also the long-term cinematic notations in the nature reserve at Cape Woolamai in Victoria, Australia. (see *Cape Woolamai: Sensing Contingent Agencies*, 2024[23]) I grasp the entire editing process—sifting through, cutting away, superimposing, and transitioning the hundreds of cinematic artifacts and the con-figuring to clips and sequences by adding audio field recordings through to complex film artifacts as its own ecology of practices of reflection.

Through the intense practice of film and other practices of reflection, I experienced the micro-agentiality of the agencies through to the depths of the material, which I, in turn, integrated into the practice of drawing. For example, the complex agency of color and its processuality became more tangible to me. Thus, I started collecting tiny color field samples, focusing on the presence of a single hue, its nuances and shades, its multiplicity and the contingency of its brilliance (p. 204, p. 205, p. 206, p. 207). To note and notate the agency of a color is to trace it, deep into the layers of internal memories, many of them pre-verbal, similar to the warmth of remembered temperatures beneath the skin. Sensing the infinite depths of meaning in colors feels like sliding into one's own chromatic (an-) archive. Notating colors is meeting their balance, the tint that saturates—where every attempt to capture them in words reveals the inadequacy of language and must fail, marking only a fleeting syn- chronicity or even syn-chromaticity with a moment.

There is no such thing as green but there is that delicate bright clear green of water in a stream that becomes tinged with grayish brown blue after an April storm and when the clouds open a window of light briefly develops immensely in green intensity; or the yellowed green of leaves shone through by summer at the start of autumn in which sometimes a hint of red already mixes in.

My third complementary field of intertwined practices comprises material, installation-based practices through to performative practices. The positioning of objects in space in relation to a phenomenon, the choice of material, and the shaping, the sensitive work with one's thinking hands. I often employed these as practices of reflection, as implementing them is, in most cases, more time- and material-consuming than drawing on a sheet of paper. On the contrary, the more performative practices were well suited to notating, whereby here the transitions are fluid. Each of the practices that I researched and applied opens different artistic advances and contact zones with the agencies that are addressed.

In the context of the Sharjah Biennale 2019, I initiated a *Sympoiesis Observatory* in a vacant former ice factory in the middle of the desert, where for several months I intensively studied, among others, the agencies of wind, sand, light, heat, and animals.[24] By setting up this "experi(m)ental system for

— 22 — https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/R-Gansterer-20190303-1515-Vienna/

— 23 — https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/R-Gansterer-20250111-2025-Vienna/

— 24 — See Nikolaus Gansterer's website (https://www.gansterer.org/sympoiesis-observatory/) and Claire Tancons (ed.), *Look for Me All Around You, Sharjah Biennial 14: Leaving the Echo Chamber*, Prestel Verlag: Munich, 2021.

observing myself observing" agencies under extreme desert conditions, I was able to test several notation and reflection practices and bring them into contact with one another. By observing the site closely and recording relations to the building and its surroundings, Donna Haraway's notion of sympoiesis —space understood as a complex, self-organizing, collectively-producing, boundary-less, evolutionary, unpredictable, and adaptive system—was an important figure of thought. Sympoiesis as a complementary and expanded concept in relation to autopoiesis is, in my understanding, close to the "per-formativity" of atmospheres and the interwoven relationships of environment and observers.

February 2019, ice factory, Sharjah: I've never experienced such an oppressive heat. I sweat and sweat. There's no escape. My eyes are infected from the sweat, bird shit, and sand in this absurd ice factory. It's a Tarkovsky site in the middle of the desert. The "zone" governs everything, has already burned itself deep within me, stained in. Is this the future climate of our planet? A dystopian climatope—a clima(dys)tope, that will reign and rage in the ruins of the broken glass palaces of the institutions of petrocapitalism? We already sense the agencies of money, power, greed, and the global insatiable hunger for crude oil, and all of its ripple effects, like under a burning glass. How can this strange place be targeted with still unknown spatial figures at work?[25] In this brutal zone, there is no possibility of distancing, objectifying, no safe space; thus, I must surrender to these harsh forces of the infinitely vast desert. Becoming still, becoming quiet, clearing and emptying out, making space, becoming temporo-spatial material. Entering a state of resonance. Resonance as a future tactic of resilience? What is sense-able, show-able, and say-able, and how to use the proactive gap in-between these felt intensities as a springboard for speculative possibilities to exist within these hostile atmospheres yet to come?

While notating, I imagine sinking into the genius loci. The genius loci inside. The infrathin within. The ground beneath-within is a blind spot. And yet, it resonates. So close, not even a few millimeters away. Figuring (a) ground. Seemingly still and stable, but always in a deep time slow motion—until the sudden vibration, eruption, and emergence. This ground(ing) brings forth the foundation on which these atmospheric figurations grow and go (by).[26]

— 25 — Globalization, as understood in the early twenty-first century, is undergoing significant transformations. Traditional globalization theories no longer fully explain these radical shifts. Despite the multi-faceted agencies of markets, technologies, and cultures remaining deeply interconnected, new challenges, such as trade wars, health crises, technological decoupling, and escalating environmental damage, are profoundly reshaping our spatial conception of our planet. Over the past years in the framework of the collaborative research center *Re-Figuration of Spaces* (CRC 1265) in Berlin, I had the possibility to develop together with urban anthropologist Ignacio Farías and sociologist Silke Steets new polycontextual spatial figures and experimental table configurations integrating analytical, narrative, and visual thinking. See Ignacio Farías, Silke Steets, Nikolaus Gansterer, *Atlas of Spatial Figures: Exploring Spaces of the Contemporary*, Berlin: Jovis, 2025.

— 26 — Starting from the agency of the "ground," the question of the interactions between the atmosphere and the geosphere, and the influence of humans on that, I am currently investigating specific sites with increased seismic activity in the context of the artistic research project *Shaken Grounds—Seismography of Precarious Presences* (Grant-DOI: 10.55776/AR780). By means of experimental performative practices, together with a research team (Mariella Greil, Peter Kozek, Lucie Strecker, and guests), notation forms are developed to trace precarious presences along fissures in the earth's crust and to draw also, along with them, the associated, in part, human-accelerated vibrations, shocks, and their repercussions as socio-cultural atmospheres. See https://shaken-grounds.org/



At first, submerging in "the zone, this fluid field of atmospheric becoming," usually means for me feeling a high density of information. A field full of speech, of utterings of the many other others. An em-pathic state of becoming aware of manifold connections and countless mutual conditionings. Multiform and indissoluble entanglement dances of cause, reason, and effect romp and couple with my senses. Notating is a figuring in the making, through the making of figuring, a field recording, a field figuring. These contingent notations do not attempt to de-pict anything mimetically, they cannot—they are a gauging mapping, and must remain agile. Like a sail close hauled through hidden currents and erratic tides. The notating in the field is, in phases, more of an an-notating, that is, taking notes, also a letting one-self be written and de-scribed—a fleeting mark making and point-ing the way (like an open stenography, but without knowing the [de]coding in advance), with the wind and at the speed of light, the trace tracing, to become a type of medium together with the agencies, a pore, to become permeable, to let IT write, draw, notate. Being actively passive. A motionless moving, in it an overwriting and transgressing one's own subjectivity, transcending to be here. Immanently being (it). Is it that state that Jean-Luc Nancy describes as trans-immanent? [27]

— 27 — The concept of "transimmanence" can be found in Nancy's writing when he says: "But what does art do if not finally touch upon and touch by means of the principal heterogeneity of 'sensing'? In this heterogeneity in principle (…) art touches on the sense of touch itself: in other words, it touches at once on the 'self-touching' inherent in touch and on the 'interruption' that is no less inherent in it. (...) It touches on the immanence and the transcendence of touch. Or in still other terms: it touches on the transimmanence of being-in-the-world. Art does not deal with the 'world' understood as simple exteriority, milieu, or nature. Art deals with being-in-the-world in its very springing forth. (…) One could also put it this way: art is the transcendence of immanence as such, the transcendence of an immanence that does not go outside itself in transcending, which is not ex-static but ek-sistant. A transimmanence. Art exposes this. Once again, it does not 'represent' this. Art is its ex-position. The transimmanence, or patency, of the world takes place as art, as works of art." see Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Muses*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, pp. 18; 34–35.

It's a strange moebius loophole. To not go out but in to the open field. Performing a paradoxical flip of sorts, a turning inside out along a rotating double-headed vector. Pulling the background to the foreground. To notate means to intensify the mode of noticing. It gives the notation a direction, an intention, figuring the notion of notation.

Every notation practice enables a different approach, opens another point of contact, of touch, with the utterly specific atmosphere. Every act of notation is unique. Ever different reciprocal effects appear and act between the notator and the environment (*Mit-welt*). Every agency appears different through the specific practice—a dynamic coupling? Are *Stimmungen* these all-binding intrinsic connecting *ands* between things and living beings and feelings and the ground and the universe? Never mute backdrops or mere backgrounds —maybe more of (hyper)active co-creators?

An *and … and … and*? No, instead, more of a *through and through and …* A thoroughly deep permeation, to percolate, to absorb and immerse, interfuse and transpire, to potentize and evolve a passionate patency, a "double intertwining," but also "intertwining" in the sense of an emergent co-creation, co-narration of literally "through-one-an-other." A double-bind. A double-drift.

How to reflect on a notation of an agency? Reflecting on: is it more of a mode of "re-reading a writing"? To re-turn, to re-touch, turning something over and over again, re-reading, unfolding and disclosing the inherent con-notations of an agency. From playful reflection to refraction, even towards diffraction. Diffractively engaging with artifacts of notation is an invitation to mutually read notations "through-one-an-other" in order to engender creative, contingent, and unexpected outcomes. Here, artistic research thus means not only being specifically and attentively situated in the world, but also demands and promotes continuously reconfiguring, transforming, and creating this poetic world anew through aesthetic actions towards a mode of co-wor(l)ding. This material-discursive participation (being part of it), the consciously entangled state of one's own person through research activity with the observed phenomena, emphasizes that knowledge and thinking are profoundly embodied and material practices and not disembodied actions of a knowledge subject distanced and independent from the world. Matter, meaning, subject, object, nature and culture, ego and geo emerge as intrinsically intertwined entities. Agencies are immersive driving forces and ambiguous figures in the transimmanent process of co-wor(l)ding. As notator, this involves directing attention to these subtle signs of life and engaging in an actively-passive way with the material conditions and qualitative contexts in which these vibrant speeches emerge. It means listening with the heart and tuning into its spell. Both human and non-human forces hold agency

in co-narrating the world, thus co(n)-figuring a deeper understanding of it.

What new "co(n)-notations" emerge when considering, the agencies of "rain," "light," "threshold," "decay,"or "death" across entirely different linguistic and cultural contexts?[28] Every language, with its unique repertoire of signs and words, enables distinct access to the world–for both human and non-human entities. Language is never neutral, but highly agential, communicates immanently also specific conceptual contexts, emotional landscapes, and affective natures. Histories of power, identity, gender, and culture resonate and engage in dialogue through language(s). Consciously addressing and focusing on an agency (see the score p.36) thereby implies and enables also an epistemic inquiry into the co-production of meaning at the boundaries of language. How can signs be borrowed from the edges of things, and words drawn from the borders of a more-than-human world? Do the borders of my language also signify the borders of my world, as Wittgenstein insinuated?[29]

In an atmosphere conceived as a more-than-human semiosphere, where the borders between sign and non-sign, word and world become porous, they transform into liminal fields of existence. One's own position becomes a disposition. An alterity. The mutual potentialities and paradoxical divergences of an agency as verbalized word, as cognitive concept and a sensually tangible, lived experience become manifest. The figuring of sense and non-sense, space and negative space, all at once. Even the un-sensed, unspoken, the ineffable, the (yet) unknown hold their own agency. Here, the agency of absence becomes present.

— 28 — The agencies addressed in this book and on the website are an indexical selection from an endless list of words and provide examples of the methodological approach. The dynamic relationship of language, agency and practices of notation reveal a fascinating field for further intensive artistic research.

— 29 — Parallel to *Contingent Agencies,* together with the philosopher and art theorist Klaus Speidel I read the influential work *Die philosophischen Untersuchungen* (1953) by Ludwig Wittgenstein and reinterpreted, questioned, and "translated" it in the form of drawings, installations, and performances, cf. Nikolaus Gansterer, Klaus-Peter Speidel, Éric Degoutte, and Les Tanneries, Centre d'art contemporain, *Playing with Ludwig/Jouer avec Ludwig. Figures of Thinking*, Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2022.

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A

SABINA HOLZER

May I ask why you chose to call this process "mother"? It made me smile as I connected with it on a poetic, feministic realm. But then I wondered if you took it forward from the biological processes. Did you?

ERIN MANNING

"Mother" is the term that is given to the process of fermentation I discuss. She is already named!

Perceptual Ferment

Erin Manning

In the chemical breakdown of sugars by microorganisms, the ferment produces a transduction from sugar water to alcohol to vinegar. Effervescence is the perceptible effect of this process, heat and bubbling marking the initial dephasing from mango seed, sugar, water, and yeast to fermented proto-alcoholic mixture, this irreducible interval—neither quite alcohol nor yet vinegar—carrying the echo of the sugar-water it once was as it is simultaneously transformed into the acidic milieu it will eventually become. As the new milieu phases into existence, a voyager tends to emerge: the mother, a symbiotic colony of yeast that ferments the sugar and acetobacter that will convert the mixture to vinegar. The mother—cellulose and acetic acid bacteria (mycoderma aceti)—feeds on the sugar in the mixture, thereby hastening the process of acetic transformation. This film, spongy yet firm to the touch, is one trace of a complex process of relation with oxygen as a key participant. Cut off the oxygen and the process stills, coming closer to the final form it will seem to have taken.

A Mother is both catalyst and remains. Leaving a cloudiness in her wake, she is a reminder of the dephasing from sugar water to vinegar, and of the fact that what is produced is always less a substance in itself than a relational milieu. In an ethos of a poetics of relation, the mother is the irreducible share of a process still underway. She is the trace the process produces and leaves behind. She can be excised from it, but the ensuing milieu will always carry the effects of her having been constituted by it. And when she is fed into new sugar solutions—new vinegars will be seeded by her metabolizing presence—she will continue to produce more of herself, which is to say, more potential for transduction, the activity of transformation whereby mixtures

B

GERHARD DIRMOSER
Does this sense of perception correspond to felt intensities?

EM Yes, I would say so. Especially if we don't make feltness a property of the subject, following Whitehead's work on feeling as the motor of existence (feeling as worlding).

C

GD Does the abduction thus go beyond the core areas of cognition, i.e. far into sensory areas?

EM Yes, Peirce would argue that perceptual judgement is the passive synthesis of thought as it shades into consciousness. So there is an infraconscious quality to perceptual judgement.

D

GD Is this expressive force about field-like intensive magnitudes?

EM Whitehead's account of prehension focuses on how an occasion of experience angles into its subjective form. Whereas a more typical account of perception would place it in an existing subject, Whitehead is interested in how prehension produces a subject. The subject it produces can never be extracted from the prehension that gathered it into existence.

E

GD Does this also apply to proprioception?

individuate, subsequently producing dephasings that activate new processes. And though products will emerge—vinegars with singular tastes, textures, and perfumes—these (like all products) will never be able to be returned to the sum of their parts, will never be reducible to the sugar water they once were. They will always carry the effervescence that fostered their transduction.

B Perceptual ferment is the expression of the exuberance of a process dephasing. To connect to the milieu of its individuation, abduction is necessary. Abduction, a concept proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce, necessitates what he calls "perceptual judgment." Brian Massumi calls "perceptual judgment" "perceptual feeling." a perceptual feeling, Massumi proposes, is a feeling "without the actual perception" (2011: 106). "They are judgments without the actual judgment: direct perceptions of the world's acquired complexity, incoming, flush with the bare-active firstness of experience feeling its way into a next event" (Massumi 2011: 11).

C Abduction is not inference—"a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Active in the environment of what William James calls "pure experience," perceptual judgment does its work in the immanent field of an activity's coming to expression (James 1906). This "bare active firstness of experience" into which abduction does its work is the welter in which all that is coming to expression has not yet parsed itself into category (Massumi 2011: 11).

Alfred North Whitehead has a vocabulary for the expressive force of the milieu in the parsing of the singularity of an actual occasion from the welter. He calls this causal efficacy. Brian Massumi and I have called it "entrainment" in an effort to amplify the relational force of its in-gathering gesture (2014). Across the entrainment, alongside and within it—inseparable, irreducible—is the activity of the field of sensation, or what Whitehead calls "presentational immediacy" (1927). Massumi and I have thought of this as "entertainment," which is to say, "how the field entertains itself" (2014).

D

The terms causal efficacy and presentational immediacy are at the basis of Whitehead's theory of perception, a theory that seeks to distance itself from any account of perception that depends on a traditional subject-object distinction and reifies what he calls the "misplaced concreteness" of "simple location" (1967). Perception is always abductive in Whitehead, composed in the lively interstices of a speculative pragmatism that is committed to the how of an activity in the pragmatism of its expression as occasion of experience *as well as* to the speculative quality of excess or more-than it carries.

E What distinguishes Whitehead's account of perception from most is that he doesn't begin with a subject sensing. That is to say, he refuses an account of perception that would produce the perceptual vista through the reduction of experience to sense data, perception mediated. In this refusal, he is clear that an account that situates perception as a "mediation of our bodily sense-organs, such as eyes, palates, noses, ears, and the diffused

F

GD With the study by D. Löffler and the contributions by B. Massumi, it becomes clear that the approach (event/process/temporality/movement/intensity), and thus the performative view, seems to be rarely pronounced in many articles on the atmosphere question. See Davor Löffler, "Living in the future tense II subjunctive—On the phenomenon of atmosphere and its importance in the age of technical immersion," in *Immersive Media Yearbook*, 2013, *Atmospheres: Attuned spaces and sensual perception*.

bodily organization furnishing touches, aches, and other bodily sensations by bodily sense-organs" reinforces the mistaken presupposition that "all percepts are bare sensa, in patterned connections, given in the immediate present [and] that our experience of a social world is an interpretative reaction wholly derivative from this perception" (1967: 177–178).

F Instead of beginning with the sensory (as sense-presentation), Whitehead begins in the associated milieu of relation. Worlds are activated not through the channels of sense data mediated by impressions received by a subject, but through a directly relational agencement of a field tending toward an angle of activity. This is causal efficacy: the coming into itself, for itself, of a relational field. This relational field, in its very coming to be, is imbued with qualities that tend both toward its past inheritances in the minute intervals of the present-passing, and toward potential futurities. Imbricated in this spread of intensities coming into the relational feel of this singular entrainment is the thisness of its color, its tone, its texture. This is presentational immediacy, or entertainment. By itself, if it could be separated out, presentational immediacy has no purchase on existence—it is "vivid, precise and barren" (1927: 23). It only entertains the occasion when it is entrained by it. The feel of the world does not precede the making of its relational milieu—they are made by each other, in the double articulation Whitehead calls symbolic reference.

Perception's ferment is the agitation at the cusp where entrainment and entertainment come together. As the feel of what has not yet fully phased into form, it is the carrier of the differential that foments in the irreducibility of existence to itself. Here, where perception has not locked itself into inference, where presupposition is allayed, even if for the briefest interval, the lively more-than of worlds coming into themselves can be felt. The "*Stimmigkeit* of attended presences," to borrow the vocabulary of Nikolaus Gansterer and Alex Arteaga, is at work here.

DeafBlind poet and essayist John Lee Clark has defined distantism as the operation through which the distant senses—vision and hearing—propel and police a "standing apart" that becomes inseparable from the normopathic and ableist value systems that hold up existence.[1]

Distantism is built into inference: all inference presupposes not only a standing apart (between subject and object, or symbol and meaning) but also a "common" ground of reference that is considered to be a given for all experience. In the context of DeafBlind life, this means that there will always be a presupposition that the modes of conduct and perception used by hearing-seeing people are the ideal baseline for all: walk in the middle of the sidewalk even if that means you have no bearings (don't crawl!); presuppose that what visually expresses itself in the surrounds is necessary to connect to them (feign interest in all that centers vision!); reduce or refuse touch what in any way challenges the normative standard of tact (stop reaching-toward!); learn to communicate in a language

— 1 — https://wordgathering.syr.edu/past_issues/issue43/essays/clark.html

repeated movement-trajectories. He finds these force-fields in the maps he and others draw of autistic movements over the day (a long practice of map-making that was part of his project with autistics in Monoblet). If we go back to your comment, I wonder whether the notational field you are talking about isn't like this mode of the "chevêtre"?

G

ALEX ARTEAGA

Is there a way for a (human) notator to practice notation so that she/he/they do/es not act a as mediator? I guess that one necessary condition is this: non-"distantism," non-"normopathic standing-apart."

EM I am also curious about this, and uncertain! I think notation can be immanent to the event—for instance, perhaps weeds notate an environment by shifting the conditions of a garden?

SB Thank you for formulating this question! As a body-based artist and choreographer I wonder what you would think about considering notation as a kind of marking, a space-mattering offered to be related to (to be interpreted) for a further becoming, an actualization in time & space. To be passed on, like a transduction of movements, of gestures for further translations. a passing on of mattering (hi)stories (in relation to oral [hi]stories). Maybe this is a simple statement. But I try to think about the marker not as a mediator. What do you mean by "mediator"? I connect it more to the notion of formlessness of Bataille and think about the notion of formless in *Formless— a User's Guide,* by Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind E. Krauss.

EM I love this! It definitely is provocative to consider the shapes movements make as leaving traces that shift the contours of an event-space. This is unmediated notation, as you suggest. I think also of Fernand Delighy's concept of the "chevêtre" in his collaboration with autistics. In English "chevêtre" translates to "header" or "joist," but I think Deligny's concept deviates from both. He names "chevêtre" the intensive knot of

H

EMMA COCKER

Rather than a mediating "subject sensing," I was wondering how might the notion of the "medial" and the intransitive position of the "middle voice" offer a possible way of thinking about the act of researching (and of notation) within *Contingent Agencies*, and of a mode of agency beyond subject/object relations? The "neither active nor passive" dimension of the "middle voice" recurs in literature on kairos/kairological practices (to draw a link to Tim's essay); in Heidegger's writing on "releasement" (*Gelassenheit*) for thinking beyond subjectivity/objectivity, whilst for Simone Weil (according to Simone Kotva), the middle voice is conceived as "a third space, the space of receptivity, alert awareness, and attentiveness." (See Simone Kotva, "Thinking Through the Middle Voice," available at https://attentionsw.org/kotva-replies-thinking-through-the-middle-voice)

EM I like this! I think Husserl's concept of passive synthesis is also interesting in that regard.

I

GD How could one describe the form of representation in more detail? Would density images be an approach?

EM I like the idea of density images. Would be interested to hear more!

that by necessity excludes you (make sense of signs that chiefly operate in visual space!), and know the world only through the mediation of an intervention (hire an intervenor!). If this were "just" a practice, that would be bad enough. But this is the model of perception that is taken as the baseline of existence.

Whitehead's symbolic reference refuses this common ground and the presuppositions it normalizes, concerned instead with the emergent quality of a perception activated in the associated milieu of feeling where feeling is never reducible to a preexisting subject but is, rather, the lure that motors expressibility. Imbricated in the double articulation of an overlap unparseable, symbolic reference does not refer *to something*. It abducts a something-doing that perceives (or prehends) the world into act.

In its abductive logic, this prehensive force is never reducible to its-self. The qualities that populate it and the conduit that motivates it are inseparable and unparseable. Against distantism, perception is motored into activity by a double articulation that is born of the event's own agencement. There is no intervenor here.

At the cusp of entrainment and entertainment, in the interval of how a world fields and is fielded, in the activity of perG ceptual judgment, an impasse presents itself. How to consider notation even when understood as the conduit (and not the enforcer) of a certain account of what agitates experience without adding to it the intervention of a mediator? How to remain in the abductive potential of what transversally agitates at the interstices of the thinking-feeling of what happens of perceptual judgment? How to not reduce the lively atmosphere of experience as yet unformed to a form-taking that fosters a normopathic standing-apart?

Notation, Gansterer and Arteaga propose, "cannot be performed as an operation of 'apprehension,' 'grasping,' or 'capturing' because these operations can only be realized with pheH nomena that are clearly objectified presences."[2] In its becoming-verb, notation notates "a contact with a non-objectified presence" [implying] "the establishment of the necessary variety of contact that allows for producing organized signs in sensed coherence with the notation's correlate."[3] The force of the lure for feeling is apparent here in the curiosity of what extends and escapes: notation becomes the contact zone for what is not quite capturable even as it refers back in "some organized form" to what it left behind. The aim: to "provide access," to I "allow for contact" in a "gesture of mediation, not representation."[4]

In "Against Access," Clark recognizes the role access plays in disability politics and the ways in which the fight for accessibility facilitates many of his everyday activities from crossing the street to typing an essay. And yet he warns: "The way those things are lobbied for, funded, designed, implemented, and used revolves around the assumption that there's only one world and ignores realms of possibility nestled within those same modes."[5] In the presumption of the normopathic reduction of

— 2 — https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/conceptual-framework/

— 3 — https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/conceptual-framework/

— 4 — https://contingentagencies.uni-ak.ac.at/conceptual-framework/

— 5 — https://audio.mcsweeneys.net/transcripts/against_access.html

J

AA Yes, I agree. The fundamental problem of "access" is the assumption of the stable existence in and for itself of that to be accessed. Probably, the fundamental metaphor is an inside space into which someone (who is "deficiently" outside) can enter through, let's say a door. "It is there" as a further specification of "this is that" (formulation that, in my opinion stands for representation rather than for access). In this sense, to define as a function of practice of notation to "access an atmosphere" or, even more problematically, to "access the relationship of one agency and one atmosphere" can only be wrong.

K

GD Could one speak of an energetic/intensive evaluation here?
EM Yes that would resonate.

L

EC You seem to be referring to —invoking— a specific philosophical (Bergsonian?) understanding of intuition? Yet, the more "common" sense of intuition relates to "gut feeling" or "trusting your gut"—which felt resonant with the micro-dynamic process of fermentation. However, "gut feeling" is also used synonymously with individual "common sense." Here, I am thinking of Alexis Shotwell's critique of "common sense" and questioning of "implicit knowing" in *Knowing Otherwise: Race Gender and Implicit Understandin*g (2011). How then, to disentangle the "intuitive" from the limiting dimensions of implicit or even tacit knowing, which might be wrought through with (potentially ableist, neurotypical, colonial, etc.) unconscious bias and cultural conditioning?
EM Yes, I am working specifically with Bergson's notion of intuition, far away from any notion of "common sense." I am particularly interested in the relationship between intuition and sympathy (which I've written about in detail in *For a Pragmatics of the Useless*).

M

GD Could this also be thought of as immersion in an atmosphere?
EM Yes, or atmosphering (no immersion, as that would perhaps subject a subject + atmosphere?).

existence to the able body, which is always also to say, whiteness, the nestled differential is quickly written over by all that is deemed of value, and it is there that access tends to be situated. "The question I am asked most frequently by hearing and sighted people is 'How can I make my website, gallery exhibit, film, performance, concert, whatever accessible to you.'"[6] "The arrogance is astounding. Why is it always about them?"[7]

J Access is a second-order operation that requires the sedimentation of the perceptual field into a normative framework for its translation into another realm. While generative in some circumstances, this is not a process of dephasing. There is no transduction here. Nothing is shifted from the primary site of legibility in its translation for access in the context of disability politics. The aim is one to one without remains: this is that.

This strategy of displacing the perceptual field from one register to another presupposes an external agent mediating. In the DeafBlind community, there has been ample time to recognize the danger of this mediating presence, which has as its endpoint to make DeafBlind life (deficiently) seeing and hearing by proxy.

The question is: What else can access be in the fielding of the world's immanent expressibility?

Inference will happen. But it need not be valued as the model through which the world comes to expression. Or, put differently, an attunement to the normopathy of inference can amplify the affective contours of all that was missed, inferentially.

K Perceptual feeling scintillates with intuition. Intuition here refers to the activity of fielding through which the thinking-feeling tunes toward a tendency.

Intuition does not have an object. It has a fielding. It comes with a field potential that is movingly thoughtfelt before its elements are consciously registered as the objects of a fully formed perception, and is immanent to what occurs as a function of that field. The immanence of this thinking-feeling can be parsed out, retrospectively, into different aspects or elements. But each of them can only figure because the others are there for it to figure with. They are mutually included in the energizing of the event, as cooperating factors in its playing-out" (Massumi 2015: 45).

L Intuition moves into the world's immanent expressibility without mediation. It does so amodally, abductively. Beyond any conscious reasoning, before inference, in the milieu where sensation is emergently relational, intuition fields the resonant

M forces of the event's tendings. There is no distantism here, no standing apart looking in from outside: intuition is not motivated by a subject, moving instead always from the milieu out, immediating. In the perceptual feel of abductive reasoning, "the parts coming together have already made themselves felt without requiring reflective mediation; the intensity of the event is immediately and equally thought and felt—not through a practice of deliberation, understanding, reason, or analysis, but through a 'conceptually rigorous intuition'" (Massumi 2015, 125).

— 6 — https://audio.mcsweeneys.net/transcripts/against_access.html

— 7 — https://audio.mcsweeneys.net/transcripts/against_access.html

N

AA The possibility of an "intuitive notator" as an immediate reflector (someone—close to something—that gives back, that transduces between media) of the observed—of what he/she/it/they "refer(s) to"—necessarily being (part of) it, of "the relational web of a milieu's own emergent expressibility."

EM Yes!

O

GD Also before or detached from proprioception?

EM I don't think so. Proprioception is of and with the world in a way a body.

N Intuition—which can extend to the activities that prolong it—is not what we bring to a process, it is how a process brings us with it. It is the activity of co-composition that propels us into our difference in the modality of the event's own expressibility.

Mediation requires the between-two of a perceiver and a perceived, their interactivity mobilized by a principle of access that binds the two together. This produces what Alfred North Whitehead calls a "knower-known" relation—activity on one side, receptivity on the other.

Perceptual ferment takes another approach, refusing mediation as the anchor of its logical differentiation. That is to say, perceptual ferment begins and remains in the associated milieu of the dephasing, producing a "symbolic reference" based not on a mediating externality but on the immediating quality of the transductive force as carried by what comes to be felt (Whitehead 1927).

O Intuition's amodality, its untetheredness to a preexisting body schema, culls from the event its lived abstraction, its perceptual feeling. Agitated into acting intuitively, perceptual feeling is that echo of the cusp itself that leaks into all it might come to refer to.

Symbolic reference carries the errant tendency of perception. In the cusping of the speculative and the pragmatic, where the pragmatic is tuned to the little absolute of what has come to pass and the speculative carries the force of the more-than, the pragmatic itself cannot err. What can err is the excess the event carries in the transduction. Symbolic reference includes this excess, reverberates with it. Born of excess in the more-than of all that still agitates in the coming to form, symbolic reference is immediating to the degree that it manifests a time-signature that spreads across registers of time unmoored. Symbolic reference is never a point on a line. And as such, there can be no mediation of the field it produces. There is no mediating force that can single out one tendency from another in perceptual judgment. In the "thinking-feeling of what happens," meaning is not stable, or static. Perception is never reducible to the limited form inference registers (Massumi 2011).

The spread that immediates through the perceptual field in perceptual feeling is alive with nonsensuous perception. Nonsensuous perception, the direct perception of relation in the event, allays the tendency to make perception an activity reducible to human sensation that requires reflective consciousness. For Whitehead—as for Peirce—perceptual feeling is not conscious. It is a worlding that composes us at interstices alive with inheritances and potentialities, imbued with the affective tonality of all that is already moving through it and all that speculatively exceeds it, in advance of any capacity for reflection on it. In the secondary process of returning to the event consciously to situate it in the realm of lived experience, there will always be a temptation to excise that speculative share that, though not actualized in the event, makes a difference in the cast it leaves behind. Whitehead calls this its "concern" for the event at hand. The concern for all that is welling carries with it a certain

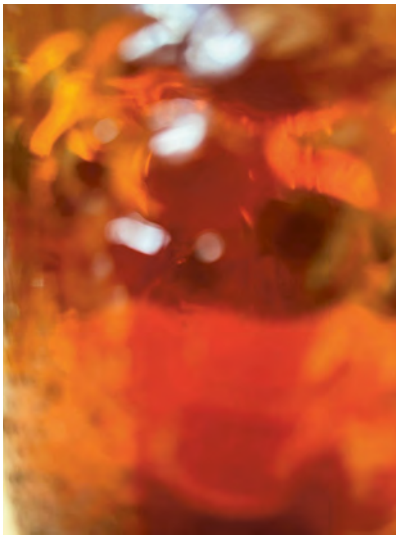














attunement to its antecedents. Yellownness has a certain carrying-over, perhaps, of a spring afternoon, or, under other conditions, of a lemon-ginger vinegar. The spring afternoon and the vinegar have no relationship to one another. But yellowness carries them both, in the concern for a certain quality of excess that inhabits it. In the relation, yellowness is imbued, in the future-presenting, with the amodality of an immediating relation. The fusing of sense-perception with nonsensuous perception pulls the relational field into symbolic reference with a concern for yellowness and its acidic aftertaste. There is no distantism here—perception cannot be transferred, only transduced into vinegary spring feelings. Entrainment is entertained with the thickness of all that relationally moved through it in the activity of being fielded in the event's concern for its unfolding. This is the ethos of process philosophy: what is made, what comes to experience, what is transduced into new processes, carries with it the concern for a relation, a relation irreducible, unparseable. This, its poetics of relation, is its unwavering commitment to a modality of difference that cannot be summed up by the forms things take.

Symbolic reference—the vinegary feel of spring or the springlike yellowing of perception's ferment—cannot be reduced to inference. Inference has no relational complex, no unmoored (time)line, no spread, no concern for the differential that swerves experience into its "consent not to be a single being" (Glissant). It is too bare a response to the complexity that has made itself felt in the activity of co-composition. Always more-than, symbolic reference's fallibility is its motor: symbolic reference is not a fact, it is a propositional field. In the errancy of its worldings, there is no preexisting primacy of meaning or symbol: "The nature of [the relationship between symbol and meaning] does not in itself determine which is symbol and meaning. There are no components of experience which are only symbols or only meanings" (1927: 10). Symbolic reference is made in the relational web of a milieu's own emergent expressibility.

What is perceived is never simply "a thing." What is perceived is the field of relation imbued with a tendency, an orientation, and angling. Perceptual judgment catches the tendency through an intuitive attunement to its affective tonality. a feel stands out, but not apart. This feel is not "ours." We are made in the feel, we are not masters of it. In the feel, it is the quality of perception's expressibility that is amplified. In force taking form, form carries the feel of its excess.

The feel is alive with perceptual ferment. Condiment, preservative, beverage, both culinary and medicinal, the slow-ferment of the age-old practice of making vinegar takes at least 75 days to metabolize the sugar and produce a high enough acid content to be considered acetic. But it is not a hard science. Mostly you go by taste. And in the tasting, there will necessarily be variation, imbued as the process of transduction is with the question of how to ascertain an absence. How to taste sugar's disappearance? How to feel what has dephased into its

P

NIKOLAUS GANSTERER
What implications do these detailed insights into the subtle processes and forces have for any artistic practices of notation? What happens when we (try to) apply these largely more-than-human processes to human practices of writing, drawing, filming, and dancing?

EM This is of course the impossible question! But I think we needn't see them as dichotomies. We are, after all, more-than-human! And so perhaps by attuning to how those forces make us, we also learn how to compose at their speeds?

Q

GD With Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, does that mean staying as close to the track as possible in the presentation? Or do density images rather offer an approach for intensive sizes?

R

EC With notation/notating too, how to remain in this verb-like register, without solidifying notation into noun, or for writing to not become "written." What other ways of languaging might be called (for)? A couple of lines come to mind from "An Ethics of Language in the Making," in *Always More than One,* where you write: "Swimming beyond the shallow end of language means composing-with language's prearticulations, its rhythms, its silences, its jumps in register. Composing-with this beyond means making mobile the inexpressibility of the more-than in the nowness of articulation," (Manning, p.167). I wonder, how might we "swim beyond the shallow end of language"? What other (especially non-representational) modalities of notation might emerge through engaging "language in the making"? Also, might the notion of "anarchiving" relate to the potentiality of "contingent' artifacts" within *Contingent Agencies*?

EM Yes! I think we can learn a lot from anarchiving regarding how notating notates ... Perhaps to connect to the question above about how to do this work from the perspective of drawing we might connect to anarchiving's own pull? All processes do some notating. They leave traces, make paths. We can become more curious about the shape those traces make and how they reorient perception. Drawing is one of the ways this happens. We can ask where else drawing takes us beyond making sense of a given situation. How it leaves process seeds for future (re)orientings.

S

SH Thank you so much for the beautiful connection between perception and fermentation! The chemical breakdown of sugars by micro-organisms is so essential for the human microbiom, which I would like to connect not just to the health of a person, but also creating "the mood," the way a person "feels" and resonates. Through your connection of fermentation and perception it becomes very tangible that the borders between human and more-than-human, subject and environment are completely permeable, always in the making. You bring "atmosphere" to an inter-cellular level, where the organic and anorganic, space and matter collapse into one another and indeed it is t/here "that we made, in the perceptual" ferment. A continuous resonance of becoming and re-sponse-ability. It helps me to relate it to artistic practices such as collaboration and improvisation, because these processes are so sensible and complex.

difference from itself? How to recognize the turn the mixture has taken as complete?

Transduction cannot be measured. There is no absolute point where one thing is itself and another thing becomes another. There is only ever the dephasing. And the mother. As expression of the dephasing it could be said that vinegar is the notational remains of the process of tending to water, mango seed, yeast, and then to mother over a period of three months. And that the mother is the form the excess takes, the document of its dephasing. But the vinegar isn't reducible to its parts—it is an expression all its own, a "*Stimmigkeit* with the attended presences" certainly, but only if the *Stimmung* has concern for the differential inflection activated in the transduction. The acidic mood of the event simply cannot be captured, let alone traced back. And the mother really is her own event, tending as she does toward new inflections on a vinegary spring day.

P The question of notation returns here. Is the act of vinegaring, of verbing the atmosphere of transduction, still notation? Or has the vinegaring, in all its symbolic reference, propelled notation into another milieu? And if it has done so, if what is being recorded is not the aftermath of an encounter but the encounter itself with the force of resonance through which tonalities of experience reverberate—atmospheres differentially co-composing—what vocabulary do we have for catching in the act a perception without perception that fields us into a worlding?

Anarchiving is the term SenseLab has used to discuss the immediating force of what moves a process into its difference-from-itself such that it can seed new processes (Manning 2021).

Q Transductive to the core, anarchiving is the curiosity for how what has been left behind, as a trace, is potentially taken up

R elsewhere (2015). Verb-like, always on its way, in the midst, anarchiving generates an adjacency in the relational field that motivates a redirection by other means of the more-than that propelled the event into activity. It does so in the recognition that process takes form, and that this form matters even as the process cannot be reduced to it, or be determinately defined by it.

Symbolic reference does not emerge out of a vacuum. How things come to shape each other matters. Modes of valuation are everywhere present in the emergent couplings of perceptual judgments. But these are not valuations that enter into the process from the outside-in. They are immanent evaluations, sorting through the differential complexity to attune to tendencies in germ. "The components of experience are not a structureless collection indiscriminately brought together. Each component by its very nature stands in a certain potential scheme of relationships to the other components. It is the transformation of this potentiality into real unity which constitutes that actual concrete fact which is an act of experience" (Whitehead 1927: 86). In the transduction of symbolic reference, the anarchic share of that potential remains as inhibition, intensification,

S affect (Whitehead 1927: 86). To draw, to sound, to move into the wake of an atmosphere is to compose with these potentials

Final comments

PAULA KRAMER
Charmouth, 20 May, 2023
I read and write after a full long day of dancing, in studio and extensively on site, in flat warm water and soft wet sand, between large flat rocks on a tidal coast in Southwest England. Abundant with some of the main ingredients you write with: "experience, sensation, immediacy." Days out dancing tend to demand all of me and are full of life force hitting me ("the welter"), multitudes of happenings, "not yet … parsed into category," as you write.

So your text is good company. And it is also (partially) difficult for me to really meet it. So many concepts, intertwined. Let me dwell in the ferment, the feel, the field, the spread, in the "vinegary feel of spring" and I fare much better. Because yes: "How to not reduce the lively atmosphere of experience as yet unformed to a form-taking that fosters a normopathic standing-apart?" In the context of moving-dancing, one aspect, concrete: How to stay in the motion of fermenting, in a continued unfolding, how to follow the body instead of pretend-following the body? And, simultaneously, honing the capacity for dancing beyond "just sensing" (with a body tuned into sensing) … I am grateful for your conceptual offer, in motion.

ERIN MANNING
I suppose I think of concepts less as sites (as hardened forms) than as modes, as affectively tuned motorings. They are their own little machines, but their modalities are quite generous, and so if they don't offer immanent directions that feel capacious, it's completely ok. That said, what I most want to do with concepts is find ways to make felt the *operative* nature of experience. To get away from the representational tendencies that metaphors draw forth. I want this so that when I say "ferment" the practicing of it *on its own terms* stands out. The thing is, we have so little language for the operative, especially given the tendency, in the languages I speak, to organize sentences by subject-positions. How to speak of the *agencement* of the process itself? Process philosophy helps me develop a kind of inner rigor for the process. By this I don't mean rigor in the neurotypical sense. I mean that the *agencement* —any *agencement*—requires precise operations to do what it does. I want to recognize this internal logic not as an endpoint but as the texture of a process. And I want to give these operations the importance they deserve.

PK One aspect I dwell on is the turn away from the subject you propose via Whitehead. I say yes! And I say how? How beyond practice, be it bodily, artistic, or textual. How in everyday speaking? My work is all about being in and facilitating movement contexts that make more accessible, or more obvious, the "milieu where sensation is emergently relational." And yes, the "… feel is not 'ours.' We are made in the feel, we are not masters of it." But as I, we, transition from moving-dancing into speaking, for example, the default way to account is so often via the "I …," "for me …" It is difficult to think, speak, account otherwise. And it is necessary for the dancer to account, as a way of integrating and transforming. And, also, whilst yes it is all about "how a process brings us with it," our tuning-not-tuning really matters, what we bring to a process has an effect (of course).

EM Isn't it interesting that it's difficult in language, and yet not so difficult in practice! In practice we are pulled into the complexity of a world co-composing. In language, in returning to that practice, it often becomes reduced to "us," to how "we"—or I—lived it. If practice makes us—rather than the other way around—we come to a realization that "I" is just a stand-in for something much more complex. It's a temporary site for locating how things orient.

As I mentioned above, since none of this is metaphorical, the question then becomes very pragmatic (if always also speculative!). *How* is the operative question: How does the world make me? What is "me" in this making? There is no flat playing field here—the limitations of identity are weaponized against those who are spoken for, those whose count doesn't register except in how it deviates from the normative standard of what counts. I think here of folks who are "identified" in their ongoing "threat" to the normative standard. This could be race, it could be gender, it could be disability. And so in an important way, the temptation to return to "I" as a willful act—to make me the center of experience —has to be seen as a form of whiteness, I think. It is whiteness in that it reinforces a certain generality—a certain capacity to consider our centeredness as a given. Finding language for this is no doubt difficult for reasons I mention above. More than anything, I think we need practices for it.

PK So here's what I will continue to wonder with: How to stay in the ferment, inviting and tuning the co-compositional force of the subject, valuing everyday thinking and speaking whilst still offering openings into streams beyond the I, the me. And onwards …

ARNO BÖHLER
"On the sense of taste." Yes, I agree. The sense of taste is a relational affair but, I would claim, within the void, which is neither a subject nor an object. Why? Because so-called outer bodies as well as so-called lived-bodies (with their inner territory) are both appearing in space, as their synesthetic medium (*koiné aisthésis*, Aristotle). The void (empty space: *khôra*, *śūnyatā, vyoman, ākāśa*) is open for relational affairs to take place indeed in an emergent manner. Here I fully agree: it is this emergent quality of something that still lies in the air that we actually feel and taste in an intensive manner.

EM I wonder what the void is—perhaps something like the open outside of the relational field? I hesitate to generalize, though, given my recent experience with ProTactile. When writing this piece, it was the experience of distantism that was most on my mind, and that has come up over and over again in the process. How to create an environment for the ferment without coming back to sight and hearing as central modalities of registration? What is taste outside of those cross-modalities?

In *For a Pragmatics of the Useless*, I wrote about DeafBlind vision in relation to John Lee Clark's work. There, I argued that his poetry carried synesthetic tendencies. I understood, of course, that in the typical ways of thinking synesthesia, John would be excluded because he couldn't see or hear, and yet these amodal tendencies and their expressive forces could be felt so keenly in his work. Here we come to the intensive as you articulate it. I think that's a nice way to think of qualities of existence that exceed sense presentation. DeafBlind vision is a reminder that the feel of existence is not mediated by the senses. The senses are born of our encounter with the world, and the singularity of this encounter shapes the relational fields that are composed in the process.

AB On distantism—are our eyes and ears not immediately in touch with the light and sound, they are actually sensing while they see or hear something? And have the eyes and ears themselves not emerged out of a specific relational light and sound milieu as a specific particularization of these fields? In ancient philosophies, I would claim, seeing and hearing were modes of touching rather than modes of objectivation and "distantism." The problem of "Gegenständlichkeit" (Kant) did arise on the threshold to modernity, not before.

EM I think this isn't entirely a philosophical conversation. What I mean is that the lived reality of DeafBlind folks is based in distantism, whether or not this is actually how we sense (and I completely agree with you about modalities of sense and how they exceed sense presentation). As I've written elsewhere, and as John Lee Clark has written, the history of DB life over the past century or more has relied on the belief that DB experience has to be mediated by an intervenor. The assumption has been that a DB life is no life, and that any quality of experi-

not toward a standing apart, an access-to, but toward an adjacency, an approximation of proximity that propels the event into the cusp of its anarchival potential. In the overlap of a milieu without distances, we draw, we sound, we dance ourselves into act in the metatactility of a foment that never directs us back to where we came from because it is here that we are made, in the perceptual ferment.

ence requires a translation into sighted and hearing experience. What this has meant in practice is that when two DB people have come together, it has actually been an encounter between two intervenors, each mediating the world to the DB folks without the DB folks ever being in contact.

ProTactile has changed this completely! But for this change to be a change of culture more broadly, it has been very important not to import distantist practices into ProTactile space. This isn't easy. For instance, despite my commitment to other ways, distantism still found me while recently in a ProTactile space. More than once, I forgot to signal my presence physically, talking across the room to my partner who can see and hear. This might seem innocuous, but it is a refusal to attend to the culture of PT, where all communication passes through physical contact.

I have come to see distantism as completely mired in neurotypicality. It's not simply the use of eyes and ears and the belief that without them life has no value, it's the assumption that life has value only if it is lived in the modalities distantism foregrounds. This affects everything: if we don't begin with establishing shots of experience, we learn completely differently. If we don't assume overviews, we have to start in the middle, and stay in the middling. If the conversation has to happen in a circle, all hands connecting, and if that conversation requires a return (a continuous spiral) that fosters the inclusion of new people joining, events become their refrains, new territorialities continuously forming to catch the dissonances produced in the metatactile mix. There is no longer a straight line—there can't be. This produces a culture that is radically different. The order word just can't function in the same way …

AB On thinking-feeling—thinking-feeling, beautiful. In Chinese philosophies and many Indian philosophies, the word heart-mind is used to highlight the strong relational affair among a mind and a heart. And the aesthete in classical Indian philosophy is literally called sahrdaya, which translates as "one, having a heart." The heart, they say, is capable of relating to both realms, being and non-being at once (Rigveda. Creation Hymn, 10.129), therefore, it cares for the virtual; and its mattering and actualization

EM Beautiful!

— Clark, John Lee, "Distantism," in *Wordgathering.* https://wordgathering.syr.edu/past_issues/issue43/essays/clark.html — Clark, John Lee, "Against Access," in *McSweeney's.* https://audio.mcsweeneys.net/transcripts/against_access.html — James, William, *Essays in Radical Empiricism.* Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1906 — Manning, Erin and Brian Massumi, *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience.* Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2014. — Massumi, Brian, *Power at the End of the Economy,* Durham: Duke University Press, 2015. — Massumi, Brian, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts,* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. — Whitehead, Alfred North, *Symbolism, Its Meaning and Effect,* New York: Free Press, 1927. — Whitehead, Alfred North, *Adventures of Ideas,* New York: Free Press, 1967.

A

ALEX ARTEAGA
One could affirm from different perspectives—among others, quantum physics, anthropology, and aesthetic research—that the involvement of the researcher in the object of research and consequently the influence of the former in the latter is constitutive for research. Do you think that this phenomenon acquires certain specificities when the object of research is "atmosphere"?

MIKA ELO
If this question were presented to me during a seminar presentation, I probably would answer: "I will come to that in a moment." With this answer, I would have admitted that the way I just highlighted "feeling" as a specifying element, might need some elaboration. Here, however, we are dealing with a text. The editorial choice of presenting the main text, the questioning comments, and the answering comments alongside each other creates an atmospheric effect. It also implies a temporal structure (text preceding the questions, questions preceding the answers), which seems to reflect the methodological framework of the *Contingent Agencies* project. If, as the text suggests, the moments of noting, reflecting, and showing intertwine in the "feel," an appropriate answer to this question might be: "Yes?"

B

AA How does reflection manifest within your notational practices? Or, in other words, how are notation and reflection entangled in the practices you performed in this framework?

ME The question implies that the way in which something like an answer is already presented in the text might need to be highlighted with the help of a supplementary note. I will leave it to the reader to decide whether this kind of note has been incorporated in the main text or not.

Passages with View on their Legibility

Mika Elo

Preamble

Alex and Nikolaus invited a group of colleagues to a one-week workshop in Vienna to engage with the methodical framework they had developed during their research project *Contingent Agencies*. The idea of the workshop was to study "atmosphere" through "notational practices" followed by "reflection" and "tactics of showing." The methodical steps of notating, reflecting, and sharing or showing provided the structure for the week. In the daily notation sessions, emphasis was on individual work; reflection was practiced in the group of colleagues throughout the week; and the moments reserved for sharing involved public exposure of some of the processes developed during the workshop.

This text builds on the notes I collected in the Research Catalogue during the workshop (https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1740899/1740900). In the beginning of the week,

A I had the strong feeling that whatever I chose to do in order to study the "atmosphere" would influence it. With this feeling I was embedded in the object of study. This feeling took an immediate reflective turn: I realized that when

B I develop notations in this setting, my "notational practice" will inevitably incorporate some form of "reflection." I decided not to try to avoid this problem, instead, I wanted to deal with it in practice. My approach evolved into an iterative process of interventions where the gestures of noticing, marking, capturing, and remarking were entangled with each other. The notations collected in the Research Catalogue testify to this approach. Here, I highlight some aspects of it.

C

AA Resonating in this sentence is the statement that Dieter Mersch formulates in his contribution in the sense that the phenomenon precedes its perception, or in other words that we have to be touched by the phenomenon in order to perceive it. Similarly, marks here precede marking. Would you agree with this interpretation?

ME I haven't seen Dieter Mersch's contribution, so I cannot comment on that. It seems clear to me, however, that the temporal relations addressed here need to be thought of more in terms of iteration and *Nachträglichkeit* (deferred action) than in terms of chronological succession.

D

AA One of the premises of my work in this project has been the distinction between "situation" and "atmosphere" as two different focuses and therefore modes of perception. The underpinning idea is that atmospheres emerge out of the unfolding of the contingent agencies with which the components of a situation are endowed. Your statement seems to contradict this differentiation. Is this the case?

ME The way in which I allude to Whitehead's concept of nature here indeed overrides the difference between perception and situation, and by implication gives nature an atmospheric status. I need to think more about this.

E

AA This formulation outlines notation as something emergent instead of something (directly) produced. Furthermore, Dieter Mersch's concept of "constellation" or my concept of "aesthetic dispositive" (both thematized in our respective contributions to this book) could be related to this idea. If all these resonances and interpretations make sense to you, would it be plausible to think that practices of notation should be understood as indirect or tangential practices, that is, practices that do not attempt to generate notations but their enabling conditions, which you call here "gestural operators"?

ME If the constellation of your questions and my answers can be seen as an aesthetic dispositive that is notational, then my answer would be: "Yes!"

F

AA Can "legibility" be understood as a "notational affordance"?

ME Yes. As a non-native English writer I am not sure whether "legibility" or "readability" would be the more appropriate term here. I am addressing the logic according to which asemic markings start to make sense.

G

AA Does the process of reflection imply a transformation of notational affordances into reflective affordances?

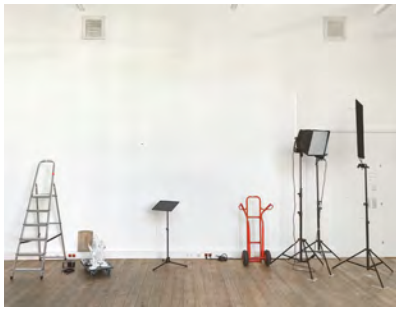
ME Yes, in a movement that I would call "anarational," "ana" meaning with and against). An alternative term for "reflection," could be "reasoning" —without a given or unified rational ground.

Spatial arrangements

Like a piano, a space can be tempered, too. It can be finetuned to meet certain expectations. In the Zentrum Fokus Forschung, where the workshop took place, this finetuning had been done in the form of spatial arrangements: pieces of furniture and equipment had been positioned in certain ways to support envisioned activities. The light conditions and the temperature had been taken care of. Objects that would not be needed had been hidden behind the dividing walls or stored in boxes and cupboards. The Zentrum Fokus Forschung had been turned into an apparatus with its affordances.

When I first entered the building, I noted that there were pieces of painter's tape on the floor in the main room. I soon realized that these interrelated markings made up a kind of notation that indicated the preferred positions of light, camera, and microphone stands used during photo sessions or public
C events. Noticing these markings triggered my notational practice. I had found a starting point. I decided to displace objects and mark those displacements with painter's tape. Since the object of study was meant to be "atmosphere," I decided to focus on objects that I felt had great potential for influencing the ways of being in the building we were working in. Hereby,
D I had formed a tentative definition: everything I am aware of in a situation = atmosphere.





We started the workshop by sitting at a big table in the kitchen area. The table consisted of two parts. I introduced a gap between them and marked the displacement with painter's tape on the floor. This move clearly had an effect, since someone soon wanted to adjust the tempered table.

I ended up lining up displaced objects along the long wall of the main space and made a mugshot of them. They were not the usual suspects, such as candles or decorative objects, known for their atmospheric effects, but rather undercover agents, inconspicuous pieces of operational infrastructure. Removed from their functional connections in the Zentrum Fokus Forschung, these utensils lined up at the long wall appeared misplaced; objects without any connection to each other—except in the photograph that binds them together in a group portrait.

Even a simple photograph that seemingly merely captures a view has its reflective affordances. Consider here, for example, the framing that lets the ventilation outlets become part of the composition. The way they visually redouble the square taping that marks the displacement of the kitchen table leg in the other photograph provides a hint about how something
E like a notation emerges as iterative entanglement of simple markings, notes, documents, and observations. Insofar as these notational elements are at least loosely interconnected, they can be seen as gestural operators, as elements that operate with
F a view to some form of legibility. They operate in a gestural space tempered by the envisioned convergence of "what" and
G "how." Working in, with, and against this horizon of expectations is one moment in the layered process I call "reflection."

H

AA The "touch of the phenomenon" (in reference to one of my previous comments) not only triggers perception but also a discontinuity in the ongoing trajectory of sense. The appearance of the phenomenon disrupts anticipation and predictability and restitutes and alters the one to whom it appears. Is this interpretation of your words plausible for you?

ME The way you formulate the question makes me think that we might understand the key terms in it differently. The answer is: "Perhaps."

I

AA Do you think that these "moments"—these operations, these gestures —remain transparent and therefore identifiable in their singularity for the viewers/readers of your images/words now?

ME The camera suggests a certain transparency and formats the moments in question according to a logic that makes them appear as if they were separable.

J

AA Or, more specifically, I would say, of "notation as intervention" as a coherent reaction of feeling involved and endowed with a transformative agency, according to the preamble.

K

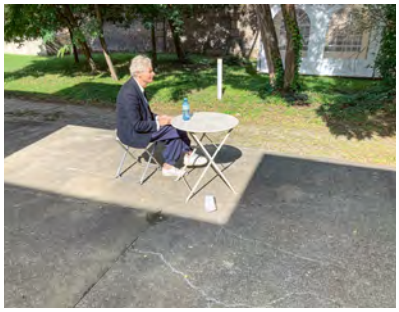
AA As the tiny hole of a camera obscura?

ME Or the prism of a camera lucida?

L

AA I tend to consider this intervention as a reflective gesture—a gesture endowed with reflective affordances —rather than as a reflection. Would you agree with this interpretation?

ME Yes, you can put it in that way.











I see what you don't see

Reflection played a role in my notations, also in what is perhaps its most literal sense: with regard to its relation to light and seeing. I am not speaking only metaphorically here, even if I deliberately use visual metaphors.

When I look at a photograph, I am outside the image space that it offers to my eyes. At the same time, I can thoughtfully
H enter that space, even become immersed in it. But when something shiny catches my attention from an angle I don't anticipate I am implied in the scene, I get caught being visible.

After the spatial attunements, the next step in my iterative process of developing a notational strategy was to focus on the "agency" of light, as I call it using the vocabulary of the *Contingent Agencies* project.

Since I did not have a sardine can on hand, I wrapped a cobble stone in aluminum foil and used it as my notational device. I varied the position of the stone in the chosen location and took photographs of it from the points where it appeared most shiny. Here, the fact that I used the camera both as the
I placeholder of my blended eye and a recording device folded together in a dense and yet seemingly transparent way moments of noting, recording, reflecting, and showing. My colleague Andreas, who is to be seen in two of the photographs, was contemplating something else.

Threshold

As the last example of my notations, I highlight here the intervention I made in connection with one of the public moments
J of sharing. I consider this an exemplary case of on-site notation.

The main room of the Zentrum Fokus Forschung, which is a former sculptor's studio, has a peculiar entrance, a double door. There is a large door that is used on public occasions. The generous opening invites the public to enter the intimate workspace. The former owner of the house probably used that passage also when large sculptures needed to be transport-
K ed to exhibitions. In both directions, this was a passage with a view to publicity. Within the large door, there is a smaller one. When the large door is closed, one can open just the small one, as we did during our workshop days.

I decided to mark the difference between the casual door and the large, more prestigious one with a white string. I underlined the gesture by bringing a doormat there from one of the
L building's other entrances. I consider the choice of publicly presenting this notational gesture there, on site, at this threshold, yet another form of reflection.

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People

Animals

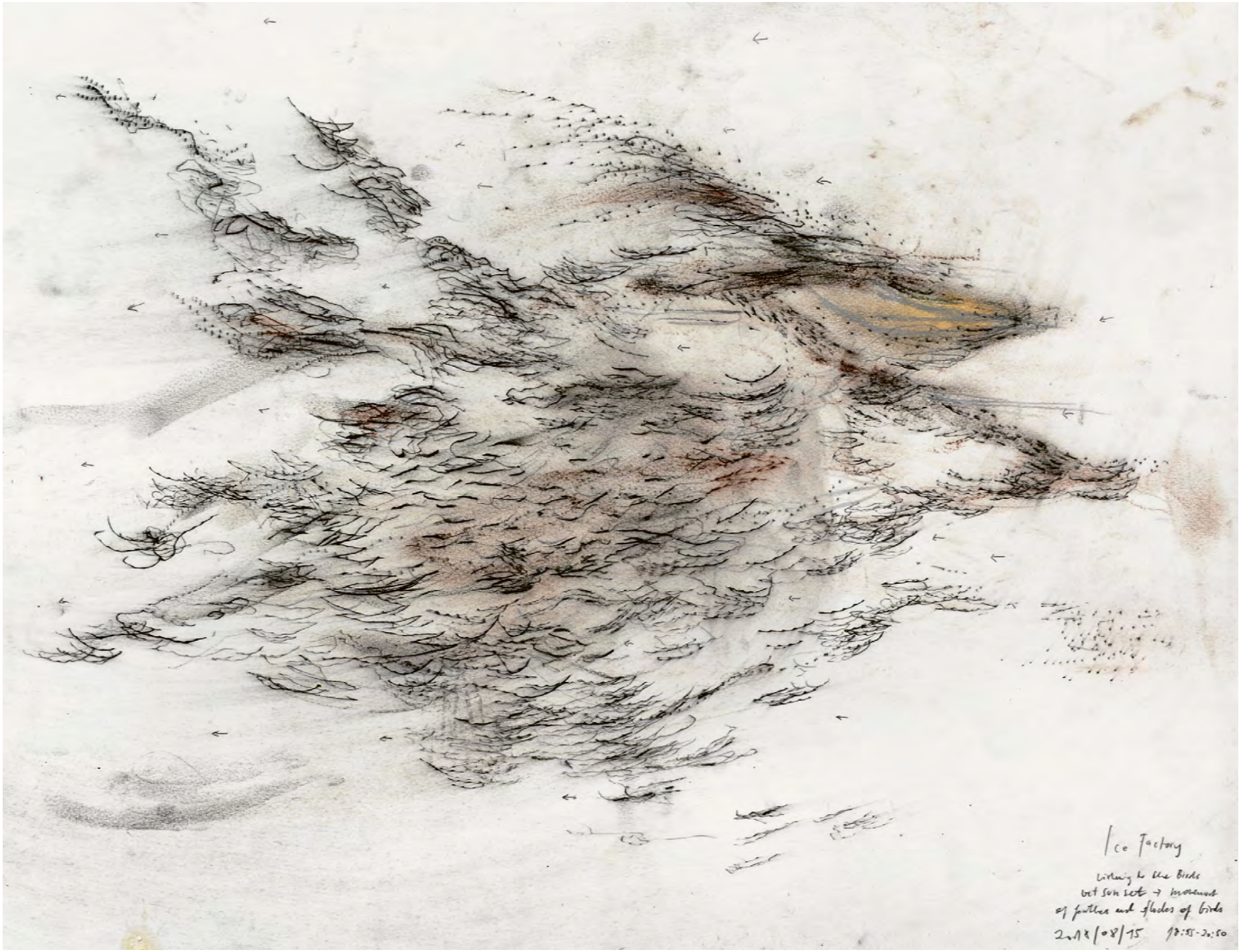
Movement

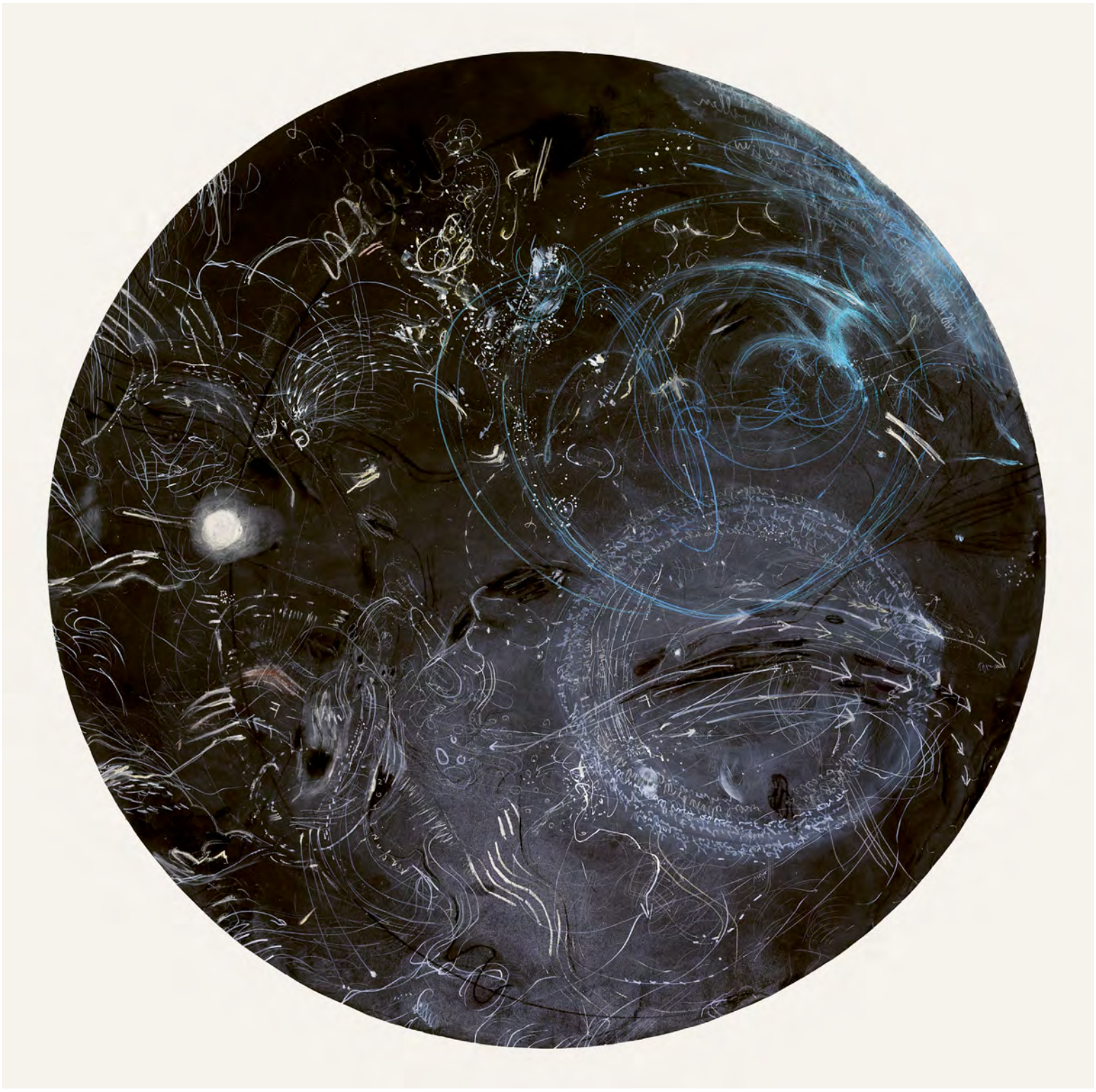
Fluidity Wind

Water

Sea

Rain


Ice Factory
Listening to the Birds
wet sun set → movement
of feathers and flocks of birds
2018/08/15 18:55-20:50



361 Fluidity

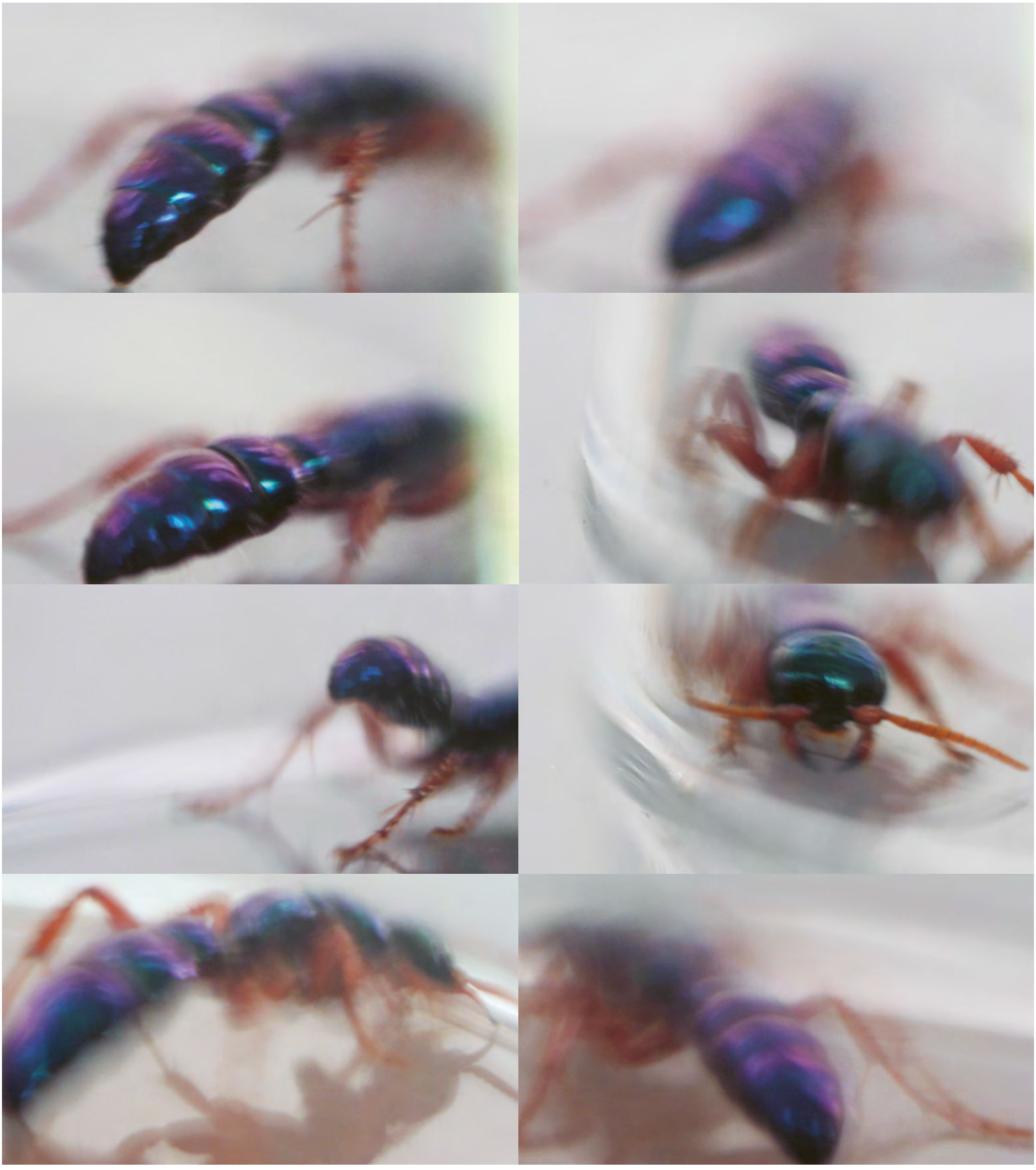




363 Movement




H
H2
H1
F
Melbourne
2022 0121 1300
Ceres Park



99 — Nikolaus Gansterer


2020 04/6 10:40–11:30
Belvedere 'movement of matter' (wind)


sceptre
PAN
ALLEN


04.12.2016 18:18
18:45
18:47
18:50
18:36
18:33
18:38
18:29
18:45

Rocky—reinforcing the disinterest that this place has for me—reinforcing its non-embracing quality.

Bringing a strong sense of individuality—of isolation.

Doing what they have to do—for themselves. No tenderness, no care. Working hard—for themselves, or even harder, to accomplish a task assigned by others.

Alienation. Offering their backs—no faces but rocky bodies reinforcing the hardness of this atmosphere.

Escaping—without understanding—if they can—if they do not have to fulfill a task that fix them to this place.

Reinforcing the non-habitability of this environment.

Introducing—from time to time, minimally—gestures of sympathy, of limited softness, of insinuated care or at least a certain openness. Small windows in this irony atmosphere.

Introducing—far away—a certain call, a certain confidence. Indicating the possibility of other places to go to.

Introducing, marginally, patience—a sense of certainty about the non-durability of this atmosphere: "no worries, it will not last forever."

Mostly passing by, devaluating this environment—ignoring it, not even escaping.

There is no intention to do so. They—we—are adapting to the atmosphere, inhabiting it in a spontaneous way (it is rather the constraining agency of the atmosphere what determines the peoples' behavior and therefore the unfolding of they agency).

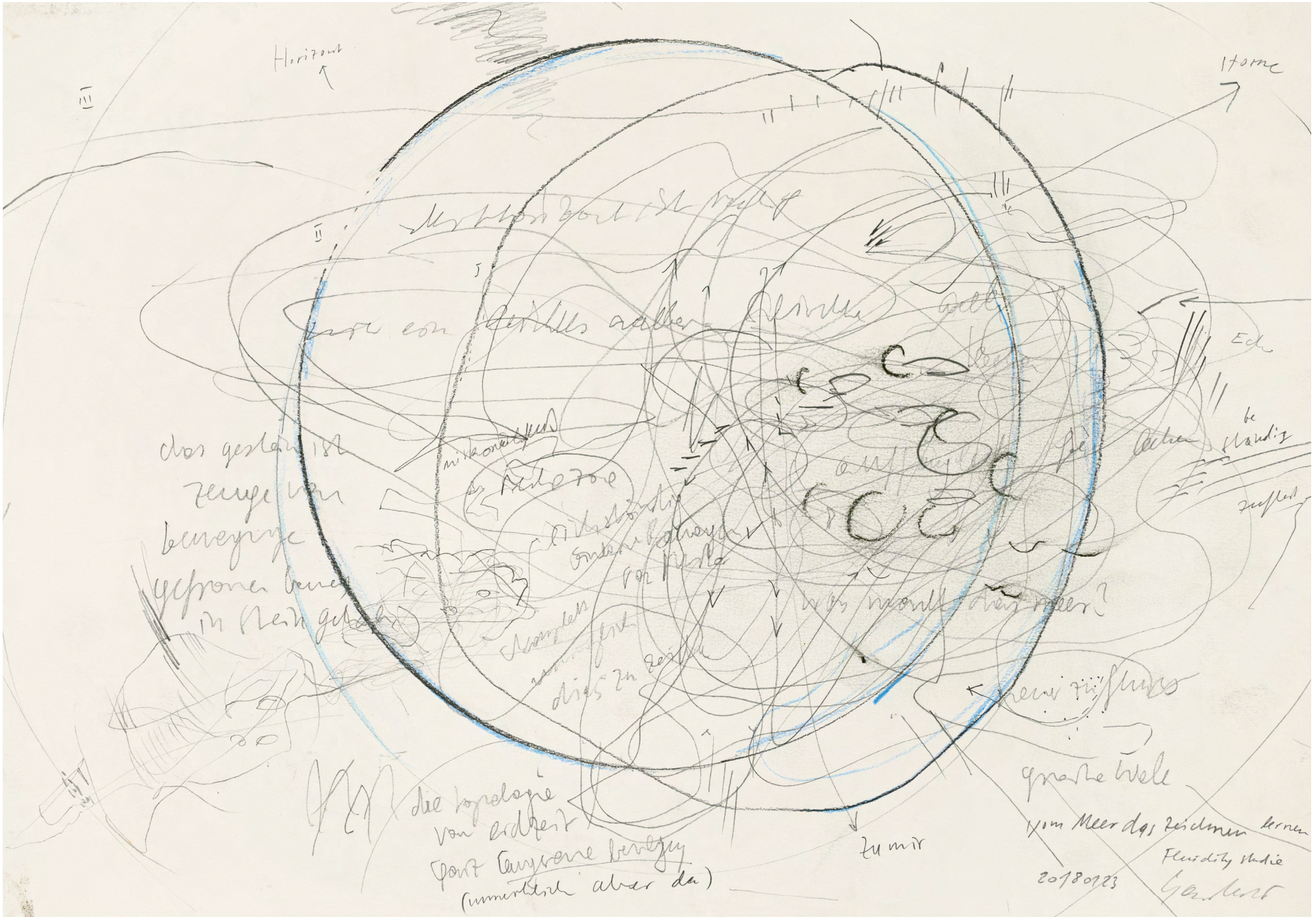


371 Movement


birds
14
out


Ice Factory Kalba
Sharjah
2018/08/11
Sound + Wind Map




Horizont
Horne
Ecke
zu mir
die topologie
von erdzeit
(unmerklich aber da)
20180123
Fluidity studie


Bäume sind
Wind fänger
Schattentanz
Wandernde Schattenzonen
Materialität) als Widerstand
aufbrausen
Geräusch
Material
Bewegung
Berührung
Wind
Blattform
Holzart
Schattentanz
Räumliche Orientierung
20200516 11-12
20200516-1100



On how the agency of rain conditions the emergence of one atmosphere

Rain affects the texture of this atmosphere. It breaks or at least modulates its continuity. It texturizes it, it granulates it.

It scratches it.

Here and there. a double fragmentation: on a smaller scale—dots, extended dots as small lines, incipient lines—and on a larger scale: zones, zonification.

Rain marking, engraving the atmosphere. Like a thin, subtle, soft surgical scalpel.

Multiplicity of grains, of minuscule entities, almost breathable but instead touching me with the particular plasticity and the coolness of water.

A myriad of air markers. Making visible the invisible. Micro-milestones, nano-buoys, giving rise, subtlety, to a thin, crystalline dynamic network—ever changing although keeping, with small but continuous variations, its structure and, mostly, its form.

The rain is the basic layer: as massive as subtle, now.

It qualifies this atmosphere.

Visually—all these small entities: from micro-drops to thin lines, and all possible variations in between, moving around, in different directions, obeying, sometimes, gravity, sometimes challenging it, floating.

Haptically, termically—I can be touched, directly touched by this little pieces of water. But even if I'm not, I'm touched by the coldness they transport. Small bubbles of cold water, everywhere. Also under my feet, inducing through all my barriers—my boots, my clothes, my skin—coldness, humidity.

Humidity, water condensation—infinite modulated presences of coldness, of water.

Aurally—dots, lines, soft, muddy, plushy surfaces also as potential aural presences. Mostly, even more subtlety: tiny impacts, delicate whistles—brief, small, controlled, complex, introverted explosions.

Synesthetic conjunctions texturizing the atmosphere, inviting to contemplation.

A subtle, ever-changing, never-ending spectacle. a soft hint of quiet eternity.

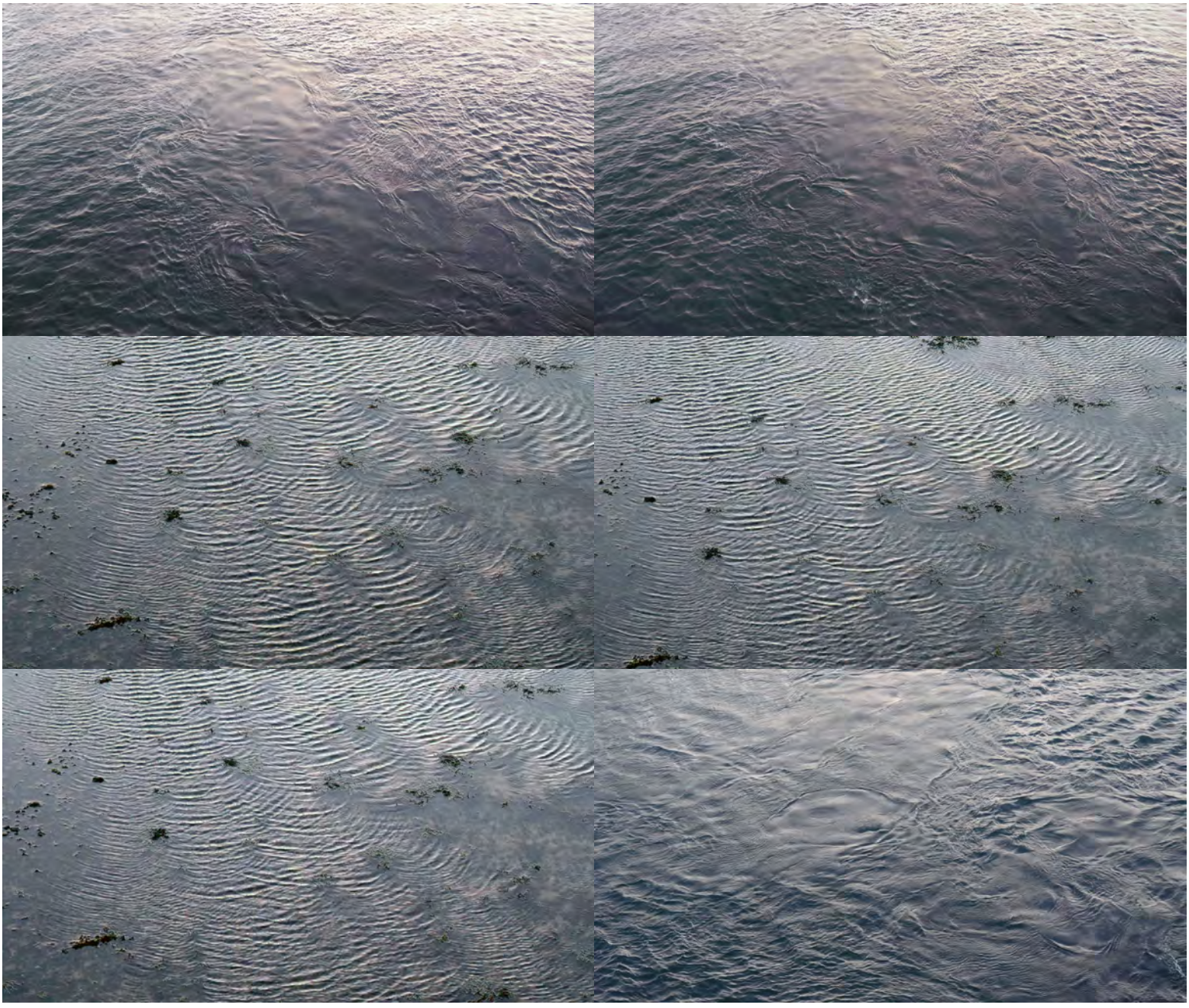
No need to do anything but observe—trying to keep warm although accepting the humid coldness. Enjoying (it).

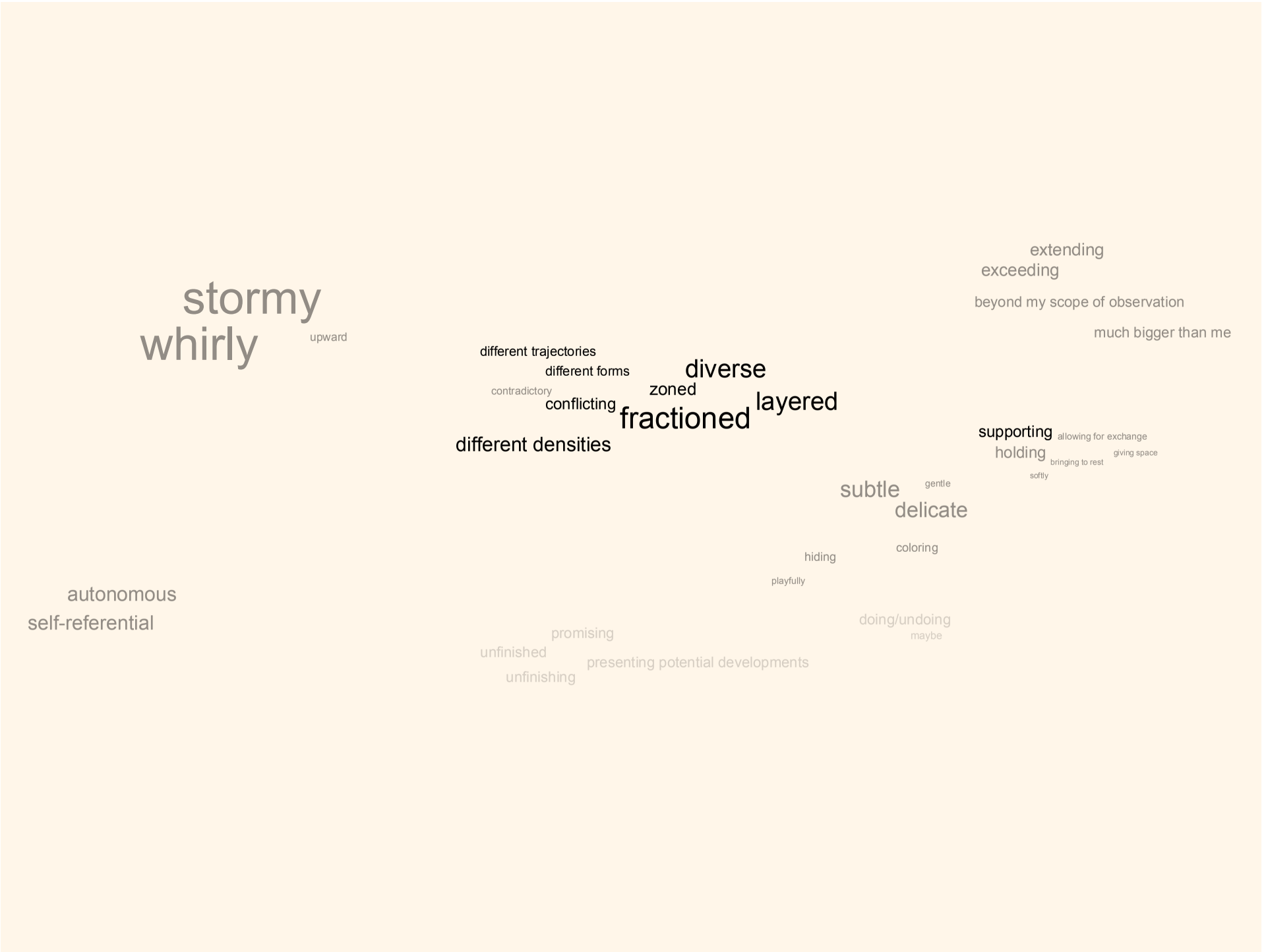
Movement. Movements. Inducing multiple dynamics. Inducing dynamic.
Presences in movement inducing the presence of movement as texture throughout all sensuous modalities.



379 Rain






stormy
whirly
upward
different trajectories
different forms
diverse
contradictory
zoned
conflicting
layered
fractioned
different densities
extending
exceeding
beyond my scope of observation
much bigger than me
supporting
allowing for exchange
holding
giving space
bringing to rest
softly
subtle
gentle
delicate
coloring
hiding
playfully
autonomous
self-referential
doing/undoing
maybe
promising
unfinished
presenting potential developments
unfinishing




Windy
Windy
Sus
PEnded
es wurmt
mich
underground activities
Lamb
W


UN-REST
vom Meer her
suspended I
müde
müde ich
misstraueninnenschlängelts sich es hoch
'Cape Conran' 20220111-1130 'wind'

On how the agency of wind conditions the emergence of an atmosphere

The wind introduces, supports, maintains a stormy, whirly quality in this atmosphere.

This quality is distributed and modulated throughout the whole space in which this atmosphere is present. The different tonalities of this stormy, whirly quality—the internal articulation of this specific storminess, whirliness introduced through the wind (this windy storminess, whirliness)—divide, diversify, layer, zone this atmosphere.

There is, therefore, a projection of the inner structure of the wind—of this windiness here and now—onto the whole structure of the atmosphere. Or the other way around: the atmosphere—as a whole, in its entirety—adopts, without any resistance, the inner structure of this windiness—of the wind, here and now, as a whole.

This atmosphere, thus, first, fundamentally, maybe, as the dynamic distribution of windy-stormy qualities—densities, textures, directions, forms of trajectories, relationships of foreground and background: from extremely subtle and fleeting, capricious, playful moves to blunt, forceful accumulations, densifications.

The wind, nevertheless, in and for itself. Obeying no other rule, no other logic than the own one—the own ones.
A non-contingent force, apparently. Maybe only humidity, a multimodal humidity is able to condition, to influence its presence, its resonance.

The wind always promising, indicating possible continuations of its gestuality.

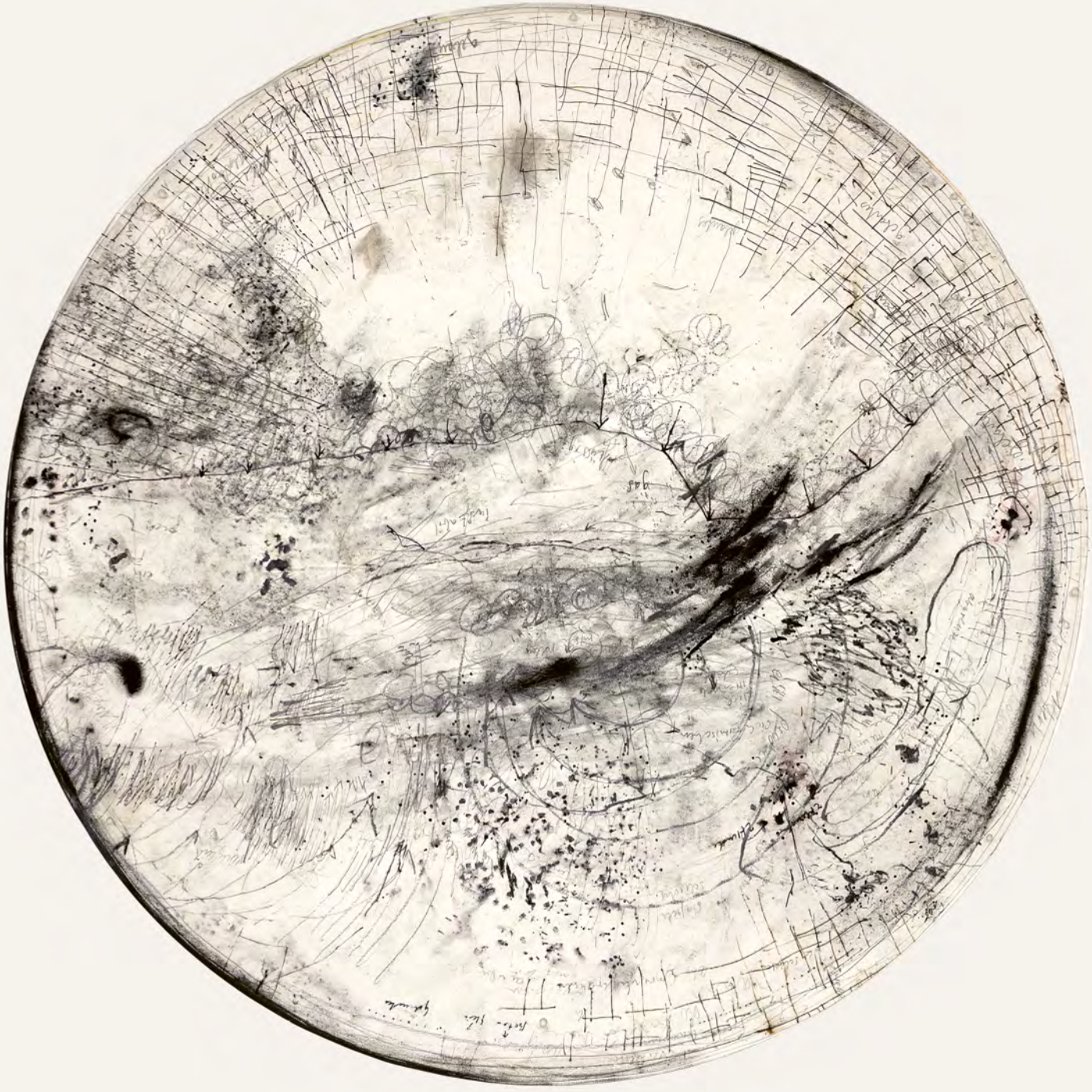
Always unfinished—unfinishing the moves, the gestures it initiates, presenting itself, appearing as a pure complex vector, as a move-as-direction, moving towards a non-existing goal—towards possibilities of infinite possible continuations.

And thus, extending, expanding this atmosphere—questioning its boundaries, exceeding its constitutive frame, exceeding our shared place.

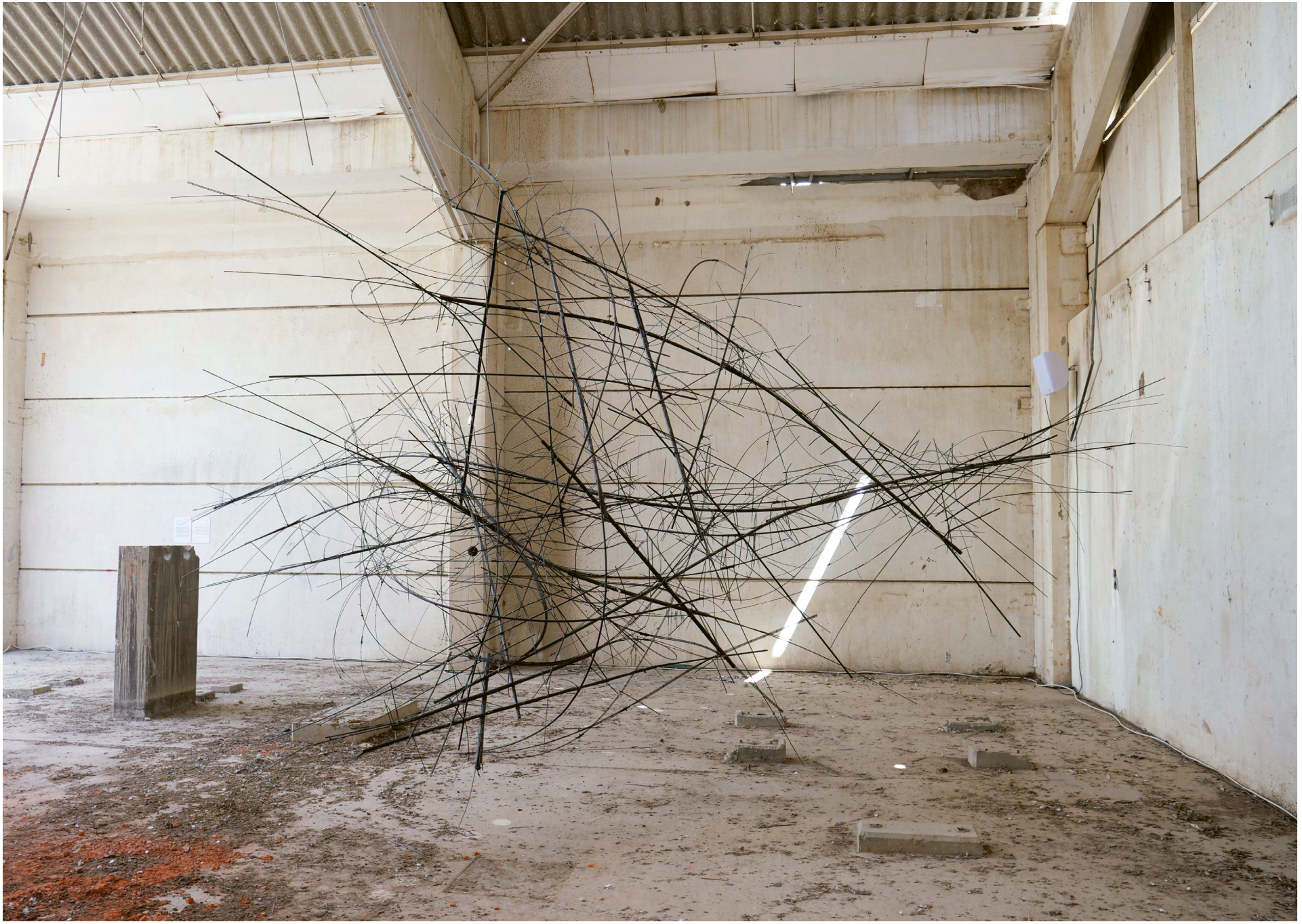
A here that does not necessarily end up here—neither in this place nor in the form in which this place is appearing now.


wind as movement
2020-05-10 15:07 – 16:33

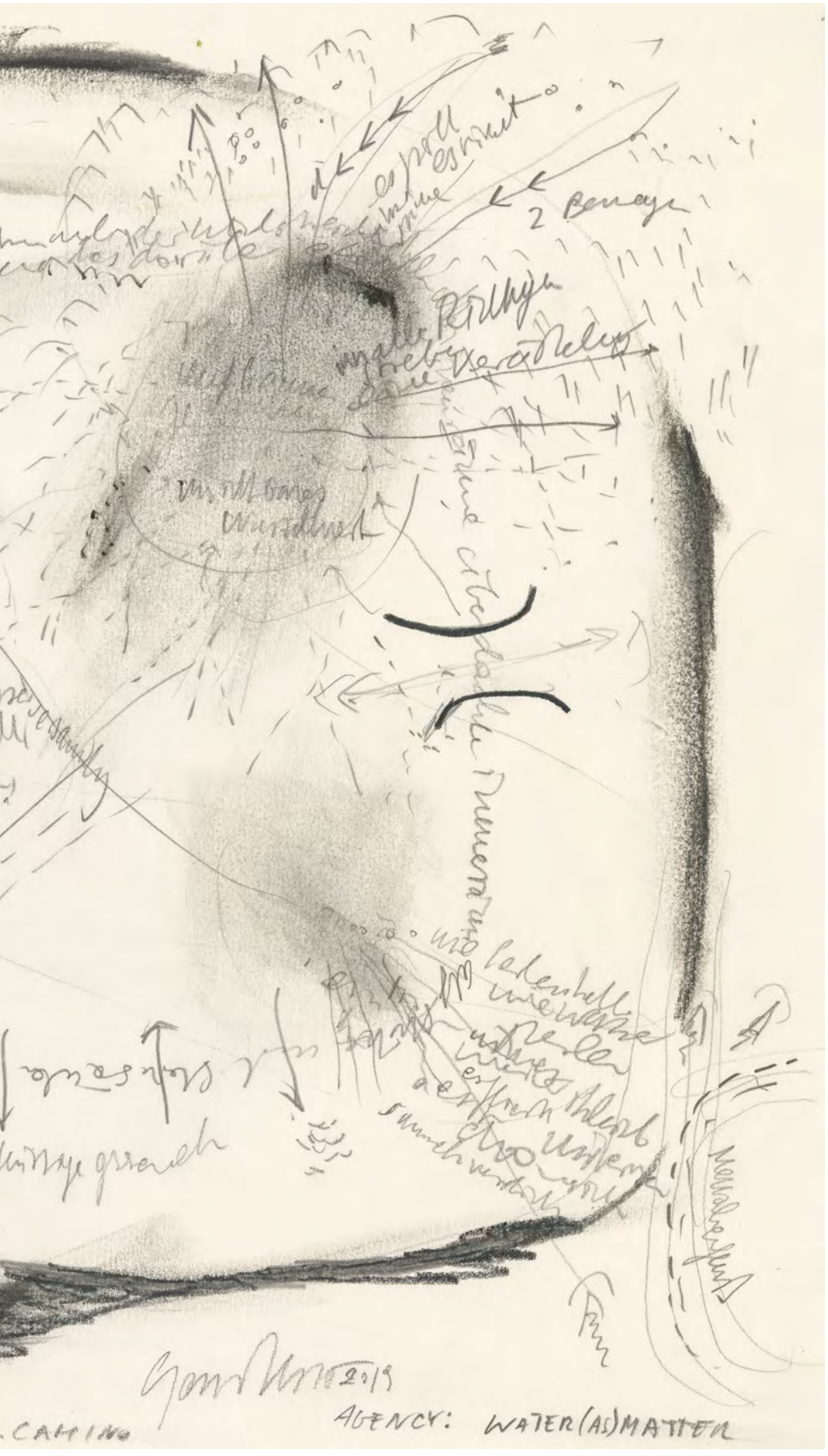









2018.05.05. 11:45-12:27 (GPS.45.4254259, 12.3233349) GUIDECCA, COURTYARD SALA


2 Berge
AGENCY: WATER(AS)MATTER

94 — p. 360

identifier N-Gansterer-20180815-1955-Kalba
agency animals
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with chalk and pencils on white paper, 65 × 50 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2018-08-15, 19:55
place United Arab Emirates, Sharjah, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
description of the atmosphere It's still unbearably hot in the factory. The walls pulse, radiating the day's fierce heat. Feverish dusk begins to settle, a feverish wind from the desert stirs. The birds have gone mad— a flurry, a scream, deafening. A constant rise and fall. Insects hum and swarm around. Wings and cries. This is all their moment. As a human, merely a tolerated alien, in this frenzy, I close my eyes. I disintegrate. Something else is taking over.

95 — p. 361

identifier N-Gansterer-20180104-1340-Nice
agency fluidity
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 circular drawing with chalk, markers and pencils on black canvas, d = 180 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2018-01-04, 13:40
place France, Nice, Cap de Nice
description of the atmosphere Down by the sea. It is wild, foaming. Wind carries the spray to my face, my skin tastes salty. It feels as if it yearns for me, this surging, quaking flow, stirring my own tides within. My inner ground water level rising, swelling, heart pounding. Restless.

96 — p. 362

identifier N-Gansterer-20220103-0611-Cape-Woolamai
agency animals
practices of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-01-03, 06:11
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai
tactics of showing footage of the Cape Woolamai film
description of the atmosphere I hear the rustling in the leaves, watch the spiny creature, an Echidna, digging into the earth. Soap-like bubbles rise from its nose, Surreal, otherworldly. Birdsong surrounds, a mode of life from another realm.

97 — p. 363

identifier N-Gansterer-20210522-1800-Mödling
agency movement
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils on white paper, 59 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-05-22, 18:00
place Austria, Mödling, Husarentempel
description of the atmosphere I'm here at the temple. It's quite sunny and windy, with just a scatter of clouds. Other hikers are arriving too. It is a scenic spot where Vienna lies far in the distance. Cradled by the landscape. Some of my students are notating on the other side of the temple. There's a wonderful flow to this place, a calm that settles in deeply.

98 — pp. 364–365

identifier N-Gansterer-20220121-1300-Melbourne
agency animals
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with color pencils on beige paper, 59 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-01-21, 13:00
place Australia, Melbourne, Ceres Park
description of the atmosphere Hot day, we're in the park, curious. Joel is with me. We're doing a test thing. The sun beats down; birds are everywhere. Parrot calls, constant fluttering. They shift positions, here to there to somewhere else.

99 — p. 366

identifier N-Gansterer-20220206-0618-Cape-Woolamai
agency animals
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-02-06, 06:18
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai
tactics of showing footage of the Cape Woolamai film
description of the atmosphere I am at the studio. I spot a glittering large insect which I have never seen before. It moves in a very strange way. It looks like an alien. It changes my entire perception of the atmosphere. Scary. Curious.

100 — p. 367

identifier N-Gansterer-20200416-1040-Vienna
agency wind
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with colored pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-04-16, 10:40
place Austria, Vienna, Belvedere
description of the atmosphere I sit on a park bench, wind sweeping through the leaves, through my skin, in gusts, making matter dance. Sometimes slow, sometimes light on its windy feet. A few strollers wander the park, bits of conversation carried over on the breeze.

101 — p. 368

identifier N-Gansterer-20211223-1239-Cape-Woolamai
agency animals
practices of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-12-23, 12:39
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai
tactics of showing footage of the Cape Woolamai film
description of the atmosphere Just as I was about to leave the studio, I noticed them —tiny ants, hundreds crawling around. The books have turned into nests. From book to book, carrying ant eggs, the whole library in the studio comes alive. A restlessness seizes the room. A new generation hatches. After maybe three hours, the entire ghostly spectacle is over. I have not the slightest clue about all the parallel worlds of life constantly surrounding me.

102 — p. 369

identifier N-Gansterer-20161204-1818-Brussels
agency people
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with fine-liner on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2016-12-04 18:18
place Belgium, Brussels, Galeries Royales, Mokafé
description of the atmosphere I am here with Alex in a tiny cafe in the center of Brussels. We order drinks. It is quite packed. People are sitting next to us, chatting. It is really noisy, intense. Somebody is trying to involve me in a conversation.

103 — p. 370

identifier N-Arteaga-20211005-1500-Vienna
agency people
practice of notation writing
artifact of notation 1 exploratory essay
notator Alex Arteaga
time 2021-10-05 15:00
place Austria, Vienna, Georg-Coch-Platz
tactics of showing printed on one page
description of the atmosphere Extremely windy. Exposed, unprotected by the buildings surrounding me. Cold—not in sense of temperature. Pushing me to not be here— I'm not welcomed. Hard.

104 — p.371

identifier N-Gansterer-20180811-1230-Kalba
agency movement
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with chalk and pencils on white paper, 65 × 50 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2018-08-11 12:30
place United Arab Emirates, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
description of the atmosphere Noon heat. The others have gone, I sit alone in the factory, back against the wall, dizzy. I notice hundreds of ants making their way through dusty floors and bird droppings. A flock lands on the roof, light dust drifts through holes above, shadows and reflections slipping across the room.

94



95



96



97



98



99



100



101



103



104



105 — pp. 372–373

identifier N-Gansterer-20180811-1905-Kalba
agency wind
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with chalk and pencils on white paper, 65 × 50 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2018-08-11, 19:05
place United Arab Emirates, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
description of the atmosphere The day wanes, and I feel burned out. Suddenly, a gust of wind rises, whipping feathers, dust, and scraps into the air. The birds scatter, my eyes sting.

106 — p. 374

identifier N-Gansterer-20220122-1717-Cape-Woolamai
agency wind
practice of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-01-22, 17:17
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai
tactics of showing footage of the Cape Woolamai film
description of the atmosphere I stand in the back garden, between the bushes. A faint breeze. Sunlight glints on the delicate spider threads as thin as a breath that hold everything together, vibrating like strings on some vast, invisible wind harp instrument.

107 — p. 375

identifier N-Gansterer-20180123-1535-Nice
agency fluidity
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with (colored) pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2018-01-23, 15:35
place France, Nice, Cap de Nice
description of the atmosphere I am engulfed by the waves, as if I am within the foaming creature before me. Each wave a whirl spiraling through my body, licking and pulling at the hard stones, smoothing them, softening them. Vast, ungraspable spans of time swell open. While the Earth turns, earthly slow, around the sun.

108 — p. 376

identifier N-Gansterer-20200516-1100-Vienna
agency wind
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with (colored) pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-05-16, 11:00
place Austria, Vienna, Botanical Garden
description of the atmosphere We return to the bamboo, listening together to the soft sigh of wind through the leaves, the gentle sway of bamboo stems. I see him, eyes wide, his whole being attuned, nestled in his stroller. I feel the vibration of life—an ancient play of forces. You, the most precious presence in my life. I sense the bamboo's rhythm within us, its growth, sunlight, shadow-dance, a shimmering interplay of thresholds, echoes and entangled becomings carried to us from far away.

109 — p. 377

identifier N-Gansterer-20200822-1610-Vienna
agency fluidity
practices of notation video recording
artifact of notation 13 videoclips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 22020-08-22 16:10
place Austria, Vienna, Donauinsel
description of the atmosphere I wade slowly along the sloping bank of the New Danube, filming the water's surface where it meets wind, plants, and light. It's a hot summer day, and dark clouds are gathering—a thunderstorm is on the horizon.

110 — p. 378

identifier R-Arteaga-20200108-0800-Barcelona
agency rain
practice of reflection writing
artifact of reflection 1 exploratory essay
notation of reference N-Gansterer-20200718-1900-Fuschlsee
reflector Alex Arteaga
time 2020-01-08, 08:00
place Spain, Barcelona, Carrer Lepant

111 — p. 379

identifier N-Gansterer-20200718-1900-Fuschlsee
agency rain
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with fine-liner and colored pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-07-18, 19:00
place Austria, Thalgau, Fuschlsee
description of the atmosphere I am sitting on a wooden bench by the lake. It's drizzling. It has been raining all day and all night. The meadow in front of me is soaking wet. Thick clouds are passing by. Mist hangs in the forest. A little breeze. A typical summer day in the rainy Salzkammergut. A motorway in the distance makes a constant low noise. Birds are singing. I am a little tired, but happy that I found time to be out here in the rain.

112 — p. 380

identifier N-Gansterer-20211005-1500-Vienna
agency wind
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with fine-liner and colored pencils on gray paper, 70 × 50 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-10-05 ,15:00
place Austria, Vienna, Georg-Coch-Platz
description of the atmosphere It's very windy. The wind affects the way I draw; the paper flutters, the air grows colder. A fierce wind, wild, blowing in from far away, nasty, filling the whole atmosphere, sharp and relentless. Aggressive. I sit on a bench at the far end of the courtyard.

113 — p. 381

identifier N-Gansterer-20200226-1916-Cape-Woolamai
agency wind
practices of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-02-26,19:16
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai
tactics of showing footage of the Cape Woolamai film
description of the atmosphere I stand on the bridge linking the mainland to Phillip Island. The tide drives the water forward, a strong current beneath me. Waves ripple in the wind—what forces are at work here? Everything is bathed in rosy evening light. I feel as if I'm standing on a ship, drifting out toward the open sea.

114 — p. 382

identifier R-Arteaga-20201210-0730-Barcelona
agency wind
practices of reflection diagramming
artifact of reflection 1 phenomenological diagram
notation of reference N-Gansterer-20200510-1557-Vienna-n1
reflector Alex Arteaga
time 2020-12-10, 07:30
place Spain, Barcelona, Carrer Lepant

115 — p. 383

identifier N-Gansterer-20180814-1730-Kalba
agency wind
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with chalk and pencils on white paper, 50 × 65 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2018-08-14, 17:30
place United Arab Emirates, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
description of the atmosphere The air barely stirs. Inside a convection oven. Light breaks through the hole-pocked metal roof, pigeons coo busily above, their mating calls and rituals, territorial dances just beyond my horizon. The air is thick with heavy smells. Sweaty, covered in grit.

116 — pp. 384–385

identifier N-Gansterer-20220111-1130-Cape-Conran
agency wind
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with color pencils on beige paper, 59 × 42 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2022-01-11, 11:30
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Conran
description of the atmosphere On the beach, wind tearing in gusts. Alone. The bushes give me shelter. Salt stings my eyes. I taste bitterness.

117 — p. 386

identifier R-Arteaga-20210121-0730-Barcelona
agency wind
practice of reflection writing
artifact of reflection 1 exploratory essay
notation of reference N-Gansterer-20200510-1557-Vienna
reflector Alex Arteaga
time 2021-01-21, 07:30
place Spain, Barcelona, Carrer Lepant

105



106



107



108



109



111



112



113



115



116



118 — p. 387

identifier N-Gansterer-20200510-1557-Vienna
agency wind
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with fine-liner and colored pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2020-05-10, 15:57
place Austria, Vienna, Belvedere park
description of the atmosphere I am sitting on a park bench in the park. It's very cloudy and windy. The trees look very green to me. Their leaves are moving in the wind, which makes a constant whispering sound. Sometimes the wind even becomes quite noisy. Restless rustling. Piju is sleeping next to me in the stroller. It smells like rain. I feel a bit sad or maybe just tired.

119 — p. 388

identifier N-Gansterer-20211223-1945-Cape-Woolamai
agency wind
practices of notation video recording
artifacts of notation a series of video clips
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2021-12-23, 19:45
place Australia, Victoria, Cape Woolamai, Beresford Drive
tactics of showing footage of the Cape Woolamai film
description of the atmosphere On the path to the sea, evening walk with my dear Piju boy in the stroller. The sun blinds me. I sing lullabies, hum softly. Insects dance around us, plants glow and sway in the breeze. Dreams rest in the trees above.

120 — p. 389

identifier N-Gansterer-20180126-1747-Nice
agency sea
practices of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 circular drawing with ink and pencils on white paper, d = 70 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2018-01-26, 17:47
place France, Nice, Plage des Bains Militaires
description of the atmosphere The sea is wild, swelling over the pier, spilling onto my drawing. A light drizzle falls. Alex is here too, taking photos. It roars and crashes. I shiver, soaked through. The sea has long since claimed me as its own.

121 — p. 390

identifier R-Gansterer-20190205-0900-Kalba
agency wind
practice of reflection installing
artifacts of reflection 1 mobile — a spatial structure, hanging from the ceiling of the factory, freely rotating, made of wood and bamboo sticks, painted silver, dimensions 450 × 250 × 250 cm
notation of reference N-Gansterer-20180811-1905-Kalba
reflector Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2019-02-05, 09:00
place United Arab Emirates, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
tactics of showing Part of the *Sympoiesis Observatory* installation, Sharjah Art Biennial 2019

122 — p. 391

identifier R-Gansterer-20190206-0900-Kalba
agency wind
practice of reflection installing
artifacts of reflection 1 mobile – a spatial structure, hanging from the ceiling of the factory, freely rotating, made of wood and bamboo sticks, painted black, dimensions 650 × 450 × 450 cm
notation of reference N-Gansterer-20180814-1730-Kalba
reflector Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2019-02-06, 09:00
place United Arab Emirates, Khawr Kalba, old ice factory
tactics of showing Part of the *Sympoiesis Observatory* installation, Sharjah Art Biennial 2019

123 — pp. 392–393

identifier N-Gansterer-20190505-1145-Venice
agency water
practice of notation drawing
artifact of notation 1 drawing with pencils on white paper, 42 × 30 cm
notator Nikolaus Gansterer
time 2019-05-05, 11:45
place Italy, Venice, Guidecca, Calle Cosmo, Sala del Camino, Courtyard of former monastery
description of the atmosphere I stand in the courtyard of the old monastery — rain-soaked, wind-torn, cold settling deep. I'm weary, exhausted, chilled to the bone. Water seeps in everywhere, creeping underfoot. The gutters gurgle, mumbling in strange liquid tongues. Wide puddles mirror a sorrowful sky.

118



119



120



123



102 110 114 117 121 122 no panorama available

The Atmosphere and the Atmosphere: A Linkage of Meteorology and Metaphor

Andreas Spiegl

While on the one hand atmosphere describes the envelope of gasses surrounding our planet, on the other hand it stands for a feeling or a mood that is associated with a space or place at a certain point in time. In the following text, I will attempt to correlate these two concepts of atmosphere, to show how the one is ignored and the other instrumentalized as a substitute for political discourse in a way that endangers democracy. This leads me to ask about the time horizons inscribed in both, and to examine that moment, so connecting and yet also critical, found between a moment and duration.

Within the scope of climate change, we learn how changes in the atmosphere affect the development of living conditions on earth, and, conversely, how our ways of life (can or should) influence the development of the atmosphere. At the same time, politics under the banner of climate change represent a global perspective demanding action and decision-making across national and continental borders, and in that, offer a meteorological reminder that each and every citizen is also a member of the community making up the world's population and that every person's individual behavior has an impact on the atmosphere, for all. The right to equality and independence regardless of age, gender, and national origins enshrined in human rights comes to mind here again in terms of the climate, as changes in the atmosphere impact all humans, without exception—albeit the consequences of one and the same effect are unequally distributed. The ignoring and procrastinating carried out by national and "international" politics in response to climate policies and global issues is analogous to the ignoring that national politics practice in an attempt to defend their state borders against their populations' self-perception of being a part of the world population.

Just as the globally changing climate is interpreted as an "atmospheric threat" to the territorial self-perception of a nation state, concern for the rest of the world's population is presented as a threat to the "concept of nation." The justification of human rights as natural rights, which are politically framed as opposing the sovereignty of state concepts, returns again in climate changes and in the laws of nature, which flout national borders and reveal their contingency. As *unheimlich*, or "uncanny," changes in the atmosphere remind us that the drawing of national borders occurs within a space in which they were previously "foreign." Where a sovereign territory is now claimed and defended, there was once a space that developed globally and continues to do so even now (also in its atmosphere). The dismay that the supposedly demarcated and secured interior is again "haunted" and threatened by a correspondingly excluded outer space allows this "at home" to be experienced as "not-being-at-home."[1] The house, the supposedly secure inner space, and the territorial sovereignty of a state seem to lose confidence in their ability to fulfill their protective function: "The apparent innocence of the familiar is but a mask that alienates by masking a more fundamental alienation. […] The uncanny is literally a 'not-being-at-home,' an alienation from the house experienced within it. With its discovery, 'everyday familiarity collapses'" (Wigley 1993, 110).

At this point, the two meanings of atmosphere coalesce: the global, meteorological dimension of atmosphere meets an emotional "climate" that was meant to convey a sense of protection and security, which now finds itself threatened by that (other) dimension. What returns as uncanny is that the population of a state has always been part of a world population and that territorial sovereignty is always already part of a space that goes beyond it and whose borders become irrelevant. Those who in this regard do not identify with a territorial sovereignty, but rather with a space that has global dimensions in which notions of an interior and exterior are obsolete, seem foreign only to those who see global space as an outside. In global space, however, which transcends territorial borders, the idea of the native seems strange. What applies in this space is: "In the end it is only the alien that dwells" (Wigley 1993, 114). And these global natives, who show solidarity with people from other states or parts of the world, come under suspicion of not accepting national sovereignty and wanting to override it. They are seen as strange or disconcerting locals who dispute the status of legitimate belonging.

The threat posed by one atmosphere combines with an atmosphere of threat of a political nature in the other. The corresponding metaphors are all too familiar: criticism "rains" or "hails" down, "shitstorms" accompany the "flood of images"; the political climate is "explosive" and "outbreaks" of violence occur … The naturalization of politics meets a politicization of nature. Democratic debate is abridged to the atmospheric production of emotional majorities. The corresponding quantification delegitimizes contradiction, which is denied a place

— 1 — See Wigley, Marc, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt*, Cambridge (MA), London: MIT Press, 1993, pp. 100f. Here Wigley grapples with Heidegger and his concept of a "not-at-home."

within the political decision-making process. Criticism is thus no longer part of the decision, but instead outside it. What remains inside is an atmospherically conveyed wholeness that is meant to apply to all who are included in this interior. The only ones separated and fragmented from it are those others who disagree or have the status of foreigners because they do not want, or are not allowed to participate in this wholeness. The global scale of the atmosphere and its changes point to a wholeness that is metaphorically preserved despite orientation to the territorial horizon of sovereign state territories: "all" still means all, but only all who belong to "us"; and then there are the others. The others should seem foreign to all who share this holistic spirit. The threat posed by the changes in the atmosphere is negated or reserved for the others in that the other atmosphere of national wholeness comes into its own as the common sense of the majority. Analogously, the corresponding globe ends at the national borders.

In order to perpetuate this atmosphere of national wholeness under changing conditions, it seems necessary to continually ramp it up. Common sense can be flexible and can change, as long as its feeling for the whole remains intact. Although the various reasons for changes in the atmosphere and the climate are extremely complex, its metaphoric counterpart appears simple in the horizon of the feeling of a totalizing national community, whose nature comprises "naturally" differentiating itself from the others and declaring independence. For lack of justifications for "natural" differences and independence, the production of an emotional community of national belonging steps in. Event-like, scandalous elements are tried and tested means of arousing emotions and generating atmospheres: the more scandalous they are, the more atmospheric is the effect which succeeds in suggesting a moment of totality. The atmospheric replaces work on the reasoning of the imagined community. *The Society of the Spectacle*[2] returns under different auspices. Events and scandals—meanwhile a symptom of everyday political life—are bound to the temporary, their terms are those of the passing and ephemeral; the systematic malfeasances (*Vergehen*) are what should "pass away" (*vergehen*) and be forgotten.

Should the event, as something unexpected and unforeseeable, be opposed to the order of what exists, within the horizon of the atmospheric it turns into an "exceptional state," as a rule and expression of duration. Should atmospheric and climatic changes be announced in a rapid course from one catastrophe to the next—from one "storm of the century" or "flood of the century" to the next just a few weeks later, this is followed by the scandals and events of a political climate change, which favors the production of atmospheres to the reasonings and contradictions integral to the democratic process. The feeling for the whole replaces the seemingly tedious and futile work on detail. Just as abstract and complex as this may appear, the atmosphere is conveyed in a tangible way—as an atmosphere in which a conversation can take place or is doomed to failure,

— 2 — See Debord, Guy, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Fredy Perlmann and others, Detroit: Red & Black, 1970.

as a mood that hangs in the air and can discharge explosively, or as a "working atmosphere" that has a promoting or demotivating effect on performance, etc. Just as comprehensively as this is conveyed as a quality that fills a space or place at a certain point in time, it can change extremely fast—a gesture, a word, a shot, or a joke is enough to turn the feeling for the whole into "an entirely different" feeling. In this sense, the atmospheric is just as obliged to the comprehensive as it is to the unstable. The temporary, once critical mass against the hegemonic duration of the normative and ostensibly normal, presents itself atmospherically as temporary totality—as an emotional state with an expiration date. Holistically perceptible and yet changeable—in other words: contingent … but without any sense of the contingency that challenges and constitutes political discourse, as this negates the possibility of providing fundamental reasonings and correspondingly, final answers or solutions.

The holistic element of atmospheric impressions overrides the particular, historical, or situational conditionality of the moment, thereby transforming the momentary feeling into an argument. The authority of immediacy and rule of the moment replace democratic debates based on knowledge of the diversity of reasonings. The atmospheric does not simply accompany discourse about the community, instead, it replaces it. Whosoever or whatsoever disturbs or criticizes the atmosphere is not included in this community. Engaged locally and on site, the holism of the particular and atmospheric ignores everything that goes beyond the corresponding borders—in the case of current climate change, the nationalist atmosphere of territorial sovereignty ignores its meteorological counterpart, which incessantly gnaws at its status and borders, even threatens them as much as the "foreigner" who is denied belonging. The atmosphere seems like a foreigner to the sense for the atmospheric. Should it nonetheless be reflected locally, then it is temporarily abbreviated as an event and exception, in order to avoid questioning the limits of sovereignty; it would then seem paradoxical to see the sovereign whole as merely *pars pro toto*. The atmosphere knows no division: all that it permits of the meteorological atmosphere is its metaphorical component.

Politically, the atmosphere is akin to a tourist who visits the country temporarily and has no right to settle permanently or become at all involved in politics: tolerated for a limited time and alien by law.

In the juxtaposition of meteorological and metaphorically conceived atmospheres, an ambiguous concept of totality appears, which on the one hand stands for a global dimension, and on the other hand for a holism of the particular. One of the central breakpoints in contemporary politics runs along the orientation of action and thought towards one or the other atmosphere, which thus involves specific concepts of community and solidarity as well as corresponding lines of conflict.

The instrumentalization of atmospheric impressions and haunting rhetoric urgently longs for a critique of the atmospheric. Although art used the atmosphere historically as a means to fight against the hegemony of an (alienated) everyday life with the temporary experience of moments of wholeness and immediacy, this has now transformed into a hegemonic political means within the horizon of an economy of the spectacle. While the "staging" of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 relied on the political impact of spectacular actions, it was just as much the rhetoric that atmospherically conjured up an "us" and a "them." The media evokes and orchestrates moods rather than critique and arguments. The extent of agreement is then based solely on the holistic feeling of the atmospheric moment—the contingency inherent in this impression eludes perception; a gallop from one scandal and event to the next occurs to the score of a politics of the atmospheric, holding together things that have no coherence. The vocabulary for it is torn from the relevant context to present the fragment as the whole … as "us," as "majority," as "the people" and "nation." For good reason, the former invocation of the universalistic is no longer available for criticism of this holism of the particular; the same applies to the universalistic reconciliation of nature and culture. What remains available for critique is an examination of the economy of the temporary, of the traces and consequences that an action still entails even when the atmospheric that made it seem so immediate, holistic, and natural is already assigned to the past. The presence of action eludes the present in which it takes place. In this sense, the concept of present is no longer sufficient to gauge the temporal radius of an action. The once instantaneous and temporary of the ephemeral present is absorbed simultaneously by its past and future. More radical than art's former invocation of the eternal and harmonious as a counterpoint to alienated everyday life, the linkage of meteorological-metaphorical atmospheres demands that attention be paid to duration, which cannot be answered with the creation of archives and documentation. Thus, in this sense, it's no paradox that precisely the things that don't last for long, last.

Errant Wanderings/ Wonderings —The Materiality of Imagining, the Imaginings of Materiality[1]

Karen Barad

My talk today, which engages questions of agency and atmospheres, revivifies a paper of mine called "TransMaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings," published in *GLQ* in 2015.[2] I've decided to reanimate it today because my sense is that this moment is thick with longings for what I'm calling an "energetics of the otherwise": for sensing, imagining, and connecting with new found energies, not in ways that ignore the piling up of violence upon violence, but on the contrary in ways that attend to the sparking up of energies within the debris, for thinking and connecting and caring otherwise.

This talk is a bit longer than I'd like it to be for a zoom talk. At least this talk with its seemingly disparate parts is shot through with the electrifying connectivities of luminous imaginaries. Even if some parts of it flit by all too quickly to grasp, I hope it will energize you, exploding settled ideas, sparking fresh imaginaries, and enlivening collective channels of revaluing in touch with the charged desirings of what might yet be/come.

A couple of important preliminary points before I begin.

When I speak about quantum physics, some people mistakenly think I am simply giving over the standard account. But that is far from the case. First of all, there is no single account of quantum physics. On the contrary, there are many competing interpretations that do not cohere with one another. Over the years I've been working on bringing forward a new understanding of quantum physics, in particular a new interpretation that is specifically crafted by diffractively reading theories of social justice and the physics through one another. This agential realist interpretation of quantum physics goes against the grain of not only Newtonian physics and metaphysics, but also some accounts

— 1 — Text of a talk presented at the cross-disciplinary symposium *Contingent Agencies*, University of Applied Arts Vienna, September 23, 2022.

— 2 — Karen Barad, "TransMaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings," in *GLQ*, no. 21, (2–3), 2015, pp. 387–422.

of quantum physics and its entanglements with colonizing projects of empire building and racialized capitalism, and other forms of oppression, while bringing forward and helping to make available radical possibilities for remaking the world otherwise.

I also want to be clear that everything I say about particles, which is simply the typical object of quantum physics, I mean about all bodies, all matter. In particular, I am not speaking analogically when I engage with questions of the political or social. In my agential realist relational ontology interpretation of quantum theory, there is no fixed and given scale, no micro and macro realms, no quantum and classical realms. It's not that scale is irrelevant but rather that scale, like matter, is iteratively materialized, and I am suggesting an underlying logics/dynamics, if you will, that is not scale-dependent. That's part of what's at stake for me when I speak of spacetimemattering rather than space, time, and matter; for these very terms—so important to philosophy and political theory as well as physics—are reworked in the alternative philosophy-physics I'm working on giving over.

One last comment, on my use of the slash in words. When I use the slash it should be understood not as an either—or or both—and, but rather as a cutting together-apart of the terms in their intra-action. That is, it is meant to suggest that the terms are dynamically engaged. So for example, "in/determinacy" indicates "determinacy"—"indeterminacy" in dynamic intra-action.

Electrifying Origins/ Flashes of Things to Come

A dark sky. Deep darkness, without a glimmer of light to settle the eye. Out of the blue, tenuous electrical sketches scribbled with liquid light appear/disappear faster than the human eye can detect. Flashes of potential, hints of possible lines of connection alight now and again. Desire builds, as the air crackles with anticipation. Lightning bolts are born of such charged yearnings. Branching expressions of prolonged longing, barely visible filamentary gestures, disjointed tentative luminous doodlings—each faint excitation of this desiring field is a contingent and suggestive inkling of the light show yet to come. No continuous path from sky to ground can satisfy its wild imaginings, its insistence on experimenting with different possible ways to connect, playing at all matter of errant wanderings in a virtual exploration of diverse forms of coupling and dis/connected alliance. Against a dark sky it is possible to catch glimmers of the wild energetics of indeterminacies-in-action.

This is an experimental talk on matter's experimental nature—its propensity to experiment, to test out every im/possibility. Matter is promiscuous and inventive in its agential wanderings: one might even dare say, imaginative. And, imaginings, at least in the scientific imagination, are clearly material. Like lightning, they entail a process involving electrical potential buildup and flows of charged particles: neurons transmitting electrochemical signals across synaptic gaps and through ion channels

that spark awareness in our brains. This is not to suggest that imagination is merely an individual subjective experience, nor a unique capacity of the human mind … On the contrary! What is at issue here is the nature of matter and its agential capacities for imaginative, desiring, and affectively charged forms of bodily engagements. This talk explores the materiality of imagining together with the imaginative capacities of materiality—although it does so less by linear argumentation than by the zigzagged dis/continuous musings of lightning. Electrical energy runs through seemingly disparate topics in what follows.

A striking phenomenon

Lightning is an energizing play of a desiring field. Its tortuous path is an enlivening exploration of possible connections. Not a trail from the heavens to the ground but an electrifying yearning for connection that precedes this and that, here and there, now and then.[3]

Lightning is a striking phenomenon. It jolts our memories, flashing images on the retina of our mind's eye. Lightning arouses a sense of the primordial, enlivening questions of origin and continuity. It conjures haunting cultural images of the summoning of life through its energizing effects, perhaps most memorable in the classic films *Der Golem* (1920) and *Frankenstein* (1931). And it brings to mind credible (if not uncontroversial) scientific explanations of the electrifying origins of life: nature's fury shocking primordial ooze to life, an energizing jump start. Lightning makes luminous connections between science and imagination.

It also electrifies our imaginations and our bodies. If lightning enlivens the boundary between life and death, if it exists on the razor's edge between animate and inanimate, does it not seem to dip sometimes here and sometimes there on either side of the divide? Shocking brute matter to life. What makes us think that matter is lifeless to begin with?

Galvanism inspired both Mary Shelley and her famed protagonist Dr. Frankenstein.[4] Shelley was fascinated by the experiments of her contemporary Luigi Galvani, a physician, anatomist, and physiologist who, while preparing dinner on his balcony one stormy night—the atmosphere crackling with electrical buildup—noticed something uncanny that would change the course of his scientific studies. As he touched the frog legs—strung out on a line before him—with a pair of scissors, they twitched. Thereafter, he took it upon himself to study in a systematic fashion the "spark of life," as Shelley referred to it. Galvani concluded that electricity was an innate force of life, that an "animal electricity" pervaded living organisms.

It was a short leap from there to consider if the harnessing of nature's fury might be used to resurrect the dead in whole or in parts. In the introduction to *Frankenstein*, Shelly writes, "Perhaps a corpse would be re-animated; galvanism had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and endued with vital warmth."

— 3 — For more on lightning's queer quantum nature, see below, and also Karen Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity (the authorized version)," *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning/Women, Gender, and Research* no. 1–2, 2015, pp. 25–53; and Vicki Kirby, *Quantum Anthrophologies: Life at Large*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.

— 4 — Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (n.p., 1818). Note that the original paper from which this talk is taken, "TransMaterialities," includes a lengthy engagement with Susan Stryker's foundational piece in trans studies, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix," *GLQ* no. 1, 1994, pp. 237–54. I deeply regret not being able to convey this crucial part of the paper during this talk.

Even while Shelley labored to write *Frankenstein*, the scientific atmosphere crackled with controversy over the nature of the relationship between life and electricity. Bioelectricity was in the air, sparking the imagination of nineteenth-century scientists.

Quantum field theory: Nothingness as the scene of wild activities

Birth and death, it turns out, are not the sole prerogative of the animate world; so-called inanimate beings also have finite lives.[5] "Particles can be born and particles can die," explains one physicist. In fact, "it is a matter of birth, life, and death that requires the development of a new subject in physics, that of quantum field theory—Quantum field theory is a response to the ephemeral nature of life."[6]

Quantum field theory (QFT) was invented in the 1920s, shortly after the development of quantum mechanics. It is a theory that combines insights from the classical theory of electromagnetic fields, special relativity, and quantum mechanics. QFT takes us to a deeper level of understanding quantum physics. It has important things to say about the nature of matter and nothingness and the indeterminateness of their alleged distinguishability and separability. QFT is an alluring murmur of the insensible, the nonsensible, or the yet-to-sensible of another sensibility within the sensible, a call to radically rethink the nature of being and time. According to (my agential realist reading of) QFT, the vacuum cannot be determinately nothing because the indeterminacy principle allows for fluctuations, or better, a dynamism of indeterminacies, *of* the quantum vacuum.[7]

How can we understand "vacuum fluctuations"? First, it is necessary to know what physicists mean by the notion of a *field*. a field in physics is something that has a physical quantity associated with every point in space—time. Or, you can think of it as a pattern of energy distributed across space and time. For example, consider a bar magnet with iron filings sprinkled around it. The filings will quickly line up in accordance with the strength and direction of the magnetic field at every point. Now we add quantum physics and special relativity to classical field theory. When fields are quantized, the energy of the field is quantized. But energy and matter are equivalent. And so an essential feature of QFT is that there is a correspondence between fields and particles, or energy and matter. For example, the quantum of the electromagnetic field is a photon—a particle of light.

Now let us return to our question: What is a vacuum fluctuation? When it comes to the quantum vacuum, as with all quantum phenomena, ontological indeterminacy is at the heart of (the) matter…and no matter. Indeed, it is impossible to pin down a state of no matter or even of matter, for that matter. The crux of this strange non/state of affairs is the so-called energy—time indeterminacy principle. The point, for our purposes, is that an indeterminacy in the energy of the vacuum translates into an indeterminacy in the number of particles associated with the vacuum, which means the vacuum is not (determinately)

— 5 — Parts of this section are borrowed from Karen Barad, *What is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity, Virtuality, Justice*, for dOCUMENTA (13): *100 Notebooks—100 Thoughts*, book no. 099, 2012. Although I don't always make it explicit, this is my specific agential realist interpretation of quantum field theory; in many ways it goes against the grain of the usual tellings about the theory.

— 6 — A. Zee, *Quantum Field Theory in a Nutshell*, 2nd ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010, p. 4.

— 7 — The move from the usual uncertainty relations to indeterminacy relations builds on my reading and agential realist elaboration of the philosophy-physics of Niels Bohr who differentiates questions of (ontological) indeterminacy from that of (epistemological) uncertainty. See Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meeting*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. My writings on quantum field theory are not a giving over of the "usual" understanding; rather, they are based on and constitute a further elaboration of agential realism.

empty, nor is it (determinately) not empty. These particles that correspond to the quantum fluctuation of the vacuum, that are and are not there as a result of the time—being indeterminacy relation, are called "virtual particles." *Virtual particles are quantized indeterminacies-in-action.* Virtual particles are not present (and not absent), but they are material. In fact, *most of what matter is, is virtual.* Virtual particles do not traffic in a metaphysics of presence. They do not exist in space and time. They are ghostly non/existences that teeter on the edge of the infinitely fine blade between being and nonbeing. Admittedly, virtuality is difficult to grasp. Indeed, this is its very nature.

Virtual particles are not in the void but *of* the void. The void is a lively tension, a desiring orientation toward being/becoming. The void is flush with yearning, bursting with innumerable imaginings of what might yet (have) be(en). Vacuum fluctuations are virtual deviations/variations from the classical zero-energy state of the void. That is, *virtuality is the material wanderings/wonderings of nothingness; virtuality is the ongoing thought experiment the world performs with itself.* Indeed, quantum physics tells us that *the void is an endless exploration of all possible couplings of virtual particles, a "scene of wild activities."* The quantum vacuum is more like an ongoing questioning of the nature of emptiness than anything like a lack. The ongoing questioning of itself (and *itself* and *it* and *self*) is what generates, or rather *is*, the structure of nothingness. The vacuum is no doubt doing its own experiments with being/nonbeing. In/determinacy is not the state of a thing but an unending dynamism. The vacuum is an extravagant, inexhaustible exploration of virtuality, where virtual particles are having a field day performing experiments in being and time.

Electric interlude: virtual touch

Touch, for a physicist, is but an electromagnetic interaction.[8] A common explanation for the physics of touching is that one thing it does not involve is … well, touching. That is, there is no actual contact involved. You may think that you are touching a coffee mug when you are about to raise it to your mouth, but your hand is not actually touching the mug. Sure, you can feel the smooth surface of the mug's exterior right where your fingers come into contact with it (or seem to), but what you are actually sensing, physicists tell us, is the electromagnetic repulsion between the electrons of the atoms that make up your fingers and those that make up the mug. (Electrons are tiny negatively charged particles that surround the nuclei of atoms, and having the same charges they repel one another, much like powerful little magnets. As you decrease the distance between them—say, between the electrons that constitute the outer edges of the atoms of your fingers and those of the mug—the repulsive force increases.) Try as you might, you cannot bring two electrons into direct contact with each other.

The reason that the desk feels solid, or the cat's coat feels soft, or we can (even) hold coffee cups and one another's

— 8 — Parts of this section are borrowed from Barad, "On Touching: The Inhuman that Therefore I Am," *differences* 22, no. 3, 2012, pp. 206–223.

hands, is an effect of electromagnetic repulsion. All we really ever feel is the electromagnetic field, not the other whose touch we seek. Atoms are mostly empty space, and electrons, which lie at the farthest reaches of an atom, hinting at its perimeter, cannot bear direct contact. Electromagnetic repulsion: negatively charged particles communicating at a distance push each other away. That is the tale physics usually tells about touching. Repulsion at the core of attraction. See how far that story gets you with lovers. No wonder the Romantic poets had had enough.

Lightning: responses to a desiring field

Lightning is an energizing response to a highly charged field.[9] The buildup to lightning electrifies the senses; the air crackles with desire. By some mechanism that scientists have yet to fully explain, a storm cloud becomes extremely electrically polarized—electrons are stripped from the atoms that they were once attached to and gather at the lower part of the cloud closest to the earth. In response, the electrons that make up atoms of the earth's surface burrow into the ground, leaving the earth's surface with an overall positive charge. In this way a strong electric field is set up between earth and cloud, and the yearning will not be satisfied without the buildup being discharged. The desire to find a conductive path joining the two becomes all-consuming.

The first inklings of a path have a modest beginning, offering no indication of the lightning bolt to come. "It begins as a small spark inside the cloud five miles up. A spurt of electrons rushes outwards, travels a hundred meters then stops and pools for a few millionths of a second. Then the stream lurches off in a different direction, pools again, and again. Often the stream branches and splits. *This is not a lightning bolt yet.*" These barely luminous first gestures are called stepped leaders.

The lightning expert Martin Uman explains the animated inanimate relatings this way: "What is important to note … is that the usual stepped leader starts from the cloud without any 'knowledge' of what buildings or geography are present below. In fact, it is thought … that the stepped leader is 'unaware' of objects beneath it until it is some tens of yards from the eventual strike point. When 'awareness' occurs, a traveling spark is initiated from the point to be struck and propagates upward to meet the downward moving stepped leader, completing the path to ground."[10] What mechanism is at work in this communicative exchange between sky and ground when *awareness* lies at the crux of this strangely animated inanimate relating? And how does this exchange get ahead of itself, as it were?[11] What kind of queer communication is at work here? What are we to make of the fact that the existence of sender and receiver follows from this nonlocal relating rather than preceding it? What strange causality is effected? Though far from microscopic in scale, it seems that we are witnessing quantum communication—a process of iterative intra-activity.

— 9 — Parts of this section are borrowed from Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity."

— 10 — Martin Uman, *All About Lightning*, Mineaola, NY: Dover, 1986, pp. 49–50.

— 11 — I am indebted to Vicki Kirby's writings on lightning, and in particular her attention to the untimely nature of lightning's connective engagement. Reading lightning as *an exemplary case of a macroscopic quantum phenomenon* (engaging causally in an explicitly intra-active sense) is my take and not necessarily Kirby's. I have repeatedly made the point that quantum phenomena are not restricted to some alleged "micro" domain. What I've been proposing is a reading of quantum physics that challenges some of the usual ways quantum physics is spoken about that still depend on Newtonian assumptions. And furthermore, it is not merely physics in any narrow sense that is at issue, but rather a consideration of all forces, fields, matterings in a dynamism of differentiating-entanglings (more like a "generalized physics" perhaps, as in Derrida's "generalized textuality").

Back to quantum field theory: a touchy subject

How does quantum field theory understand the nature of matter? Let us start with the electron, one of the simplest particles—a point particle—a particle allegedly devoid of structure. Even the simplest bit of matter causes all kinds of difficulties for quantum field theory. For, as a result of time—being indeterminacy, the electron does not exist as an isolated particle but is always already inseparable from the wild activities of the vacuum; that is, it is always (already) intra-acting with the virtual particles of the vacuum in all possible ways.

For example, the electron will emit a virtual photon and then reabsorb it. This possibility is understood as the electron electromagnetically intra-acting with itself. This happens because a charged particle is both the emitter and receiver of its own electromagnetic field. Part of what an electron is then, is its self-energy intra-action. But the self-energy intra-action is not a process that happens in isolation either. All kinds of more involved things can and do occur in this frothy virtual soup of indeterminacy, called the void, that we ironically think of as a state of pure emptiness.

For example, in addition to the electron exchanging a virtual photon with itself (that is, touching itself), it is possible for that virtual photon to enjoy other intra-actions with *itself*: for example, the virtual photon can metamorphose/transition—change its very identity. It can transform into a virtual electron—anti-electron pair, that subsequently annihilate each other and morph back into a single virtual photon before it is reabsorbed by the electron. And so on. This "and so on" is shorthand for an infinite set of possibilities involving every possible kind of intra-action with every possible kind of virtual particle it can intra-act with. That is, there is a virtual exploration of every possibility. And this infinite set of possibilities, or infinite sum of histories, entails a particle touching itself, and the particle that transmits the touch transforming itself, and then that touching touching itself, and transforming, and touching other particles that make up the vacuum, and so on, ad infinitum. (Not everything is possible given a particular intra-action, but an infinite number of possibilities exist.)

Every level of touch, then, is itself touched by and touching all possible others. Particle self-intra-actions entail particle transitions from one kind to another in a radical undoing of kind—queer/trans-formations. Hence *self-touching is an encounter with the infinite alterity of the self. Matter is an enfolding, an involution, it cannot help touching itself, and in this self-touching it comes in contact with the infinite alterity that it is.* Polymorphous perversity raised to an infinite power: talk about a queer/trans intimacy! What is being called into question here is the very nature of the "self," and in terms of not just being but also time. That is, in an important sense, *the "self" is dispersed/diffracted through time and being. Or indeed, each bit of matter, each body, is specifically entangled across beings and times, radically undoing the nature of self.*

Commenting specifically on the electron's self-energy intra-action, the physicist Richard Feynman, who won a Nobel Prize for his contributions to developing QFT, expressed *horror* at the electron's monstrous nature and its perverse ways of engaging with the world: "Instead of going directly from one point to another, the electron goes along for a while and suddenly emits a photon; then (horrors!) it absorbs its own photon. Perhaps there's something 'immoral' about that, but the electron does it!"[12] This self-touching term has been labeled a perversion of the theory because the calculation of the self-energy contribution is infinite, which is an unacceptable answer to any question about the nature of the electron. Apparently, touching oneself, or being touched by oneself—the ambiguity/undecidability/indeterminacy may itself be the key to the trouble—is not simply troubling but a *moral* violation, the very source of all the trouble.

The "problem" of self-touching, especially self-touching the other, is a perversity of quantum field theory that goes far deeper than we can touch on here. The gist of it is this: this perversity that is at the root of an unwanted infinity, that threatens the very possibility of calculability, gets "renormalized" (obviously—should we expect anything less?!). How does this happen? Physicists conjectured that there are two different kinds of infinities/perversions involved in this case: one that has to do with self-touching; and another that has to do with nakedness, with the "bare" point particle, that is, with the metaphysical assumption we started with that there is only an electron—the "undressed," "bare" electron—and the void, each separate from the other. Renormalization is the systematic cancellation of infinities: an intervention based on the idea that the subtraction of infinities can yield a finite quantity. The cancellation idea is this: the "bare" point particle is "dressed" by the vacuum contribution; the "dressed" electron—the electron in drag—that is, the physical electron, is thereby renormalized, that is, made "normal" (finite). (I am using technical language here! All except for my quip about drag.) Renormalization is the mathematical handling/taming of these infinities. That is, the infinities are "subtracted" from one another, yielding a finite answer. Mathematically speaking, this is a tour de force. Conceptually, it is a queer theorist's delight. It shows that all of matter, *matter in its "essence" (of course, that is precisely what is being troubled here), is shot through with perversities of all kinds—all matter of touchings, wandering off straight paths, alighting here and there, now and then, as this and that.*

The body electric

"It's alive!" Galvanism is alive and well in Medford, Massachusetts, where the biologists Michael Levin and Dany Adams of Tufts University have taken up the mantle of Dr. Frankenstein, or if not that of the good doctor's, then surely that of famous frog electro-animator Luigi Galvani. Wedding galvanism to more mainstream contemporary biological endeavors like gene therapy, Levin and Adams have performed a series of experiments

— 12 — Richard Feynman, *QED: The Strange Theory of Light and Matter*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, pp. 115–116.

with electrifying results for understanding developmental and regenerative biological processes.[13]

Regeneration is a capacity shared by all living creatures, but not equally. Flatworms can regenerate their entire bodies from a small bit of the original animal. Liver tissue regeneration is one of the few regenerative talents that humans have. Ecosystems can regenerate if they are not too badly damaged. Brittle stars, salamanders, lobsters, and other critters are famous for their ability to regenerate lost limbs. But something quite different is happening in the Tufts University lab, where regeneration has taken on uncanny new shapes.

Let us take a tour through some of Levin and Adam's key laboratory experiments. Like Galvani, Levin and Adams have a fondness for frogs. Now tadpoles can regenerate their tails, provided these are lost during the first seven days of life. By day eight—right around the time the tadpole begins to metamorphose into a frog—it begins to lose that capacity, and at ten days the ability has gone completely. Remarkably, in a breakthrough series of studies on the effects of electricity on regeneration, Levin and colleagues showed that it was possible to get tadpoles to regenerate their tails outside the specified time frame by manipulating the electric field around the missing tail.[14]

What accounts for this success? Levin's approach is "to understand the genetic components that underlie bioelectrical events during development and regeneration." This is galvanism with a contemporary face. Levin and his colleagues have provided evidence that large-scale electrical patterning of bodily morphology plays a causal role in embryonic development and regeneration. This bioelectrical approach is unique and producing some electrifying results. As Levin explains, "All cells, not just nerve cells, use bioelectrical signals to communicate pattern information to each other … you can tweak those signals artificially to get them to do what you want them to do."[15]

Taking things to the next level, researchers in Levin's lab took on the challenge of seeing if they could get body parts that are not normally capable of regeneration to regenerate by using the same techniques. "Dr. Levin and his colleagues have been able to stimulate the regeneration of complete frog legs. Frog legs don't usually grow back like salamander legs. But by providing appropriate electrical gradients at the frog's wound site, these researchers stimulated the growth of an entirely new limb."[16]

Regeneration is one thing, but what about stimulating the growth of limbs, organs, and other body parts that have never been? Manipulating the bioelectric fields by changing various ion channels, the researchers were able to use the bioelectric fields to monstrous effect, growing extra heads, limbs, and eyes. Four-headed planaria, six-legged frogs, two-tailed worms, and one bioelectrical mutation, which really caught the imagination of science reporters.

An article titled "'Franken-Tadpoles' See with Eyes on Their Backs" reports that "using genetic manipulation of membrane

— 13 — Research into bioelectricity and regeneration has a history going back to the nineteenth century. Although some articles covering the research activities of Tufts University Center for Regenerative and Developmental Biology position Michael Levin, the Center's director, as the direct intellectual descendent of Luigi Galvani and a scientific maverick in the midst of solo pursuit of bioelectricity and regeneration in contemporary times, this is an ongoing field of research with multiple devotees. For a history of bioelectricity and regeneration, see for example, Joseph W. Vanable Jr., "Bioelectricity and Regeneration Research," in *A History of Regeneration Research: Milestones in the Evolution of a Science*, ed. Charles E. Dinsmore, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 151–178. What is cutting-edge about Levin et al.'s approach is the study of bioelectricity using the techniques of molecular biology.

— 14 — Dany S. Adams, Alessio Masi, and Michael Levin, "H+ pump-dependent changes in membrane voltage are an early mechanism necessary and sufficient to induce Xenopus tail regeneration," in *Development* no. 134, 2007, pp. 1323–1335.

— 15 — See fn. 13 for the source of all quotes in this paragraph.

— 16 — "Unlocking the Biological Code," *What a Year! Introducing Medical Discoveries to Biology Students*, www.whatayear.org/06_13.php.

voltage in frog embryos, biologists at Tufts University were able to cause tadpoles to grow eyes outside of the head area."[17] "This suggests that cells from anywhere in the body can be driven to form an eye."[18] Not only that, it turns out that some of these monstrous eyes can see!

But perhaps the most striking finding was the result of a combination of serendipity and Dr. Adams's scientific instincts. Adams had hooked up her research camera to a microscope to film the early stages of tadpole development, and decided to leave the camera on overnight, for the heck of it, anticipating that the images would blur as the embryos moved. When she returned to her lab she did in fact find that the images were blurry, but she was able to get surprisingly clear images after computer processing. She developed a time-lapse video using a sequence of photographs, and the result was "jaw dropping." The video, she says, was

> [U]nlike anything I had ever seen. I was completely blown away. The images show an embryonic frog 'light show' in fast forward. When a frog embryo is just developing, *before it gets a face*, a pattern for that face lights up on the surface of the embryo … We believe this is the first time such patterning has been reported for an entire structure, not just for a single organ. I would never have predicted anything like it.[19]

The face-to-come of the embryo flashes in electrical patterns across the surface of the embryo.[20] It is important to take in the fact that the "electric face" appears and disappears *before* any actual features develop, that is, prior to cell differentiation! "Apparently, the genes are activated by the bioelectricity."[21] That is, what we may be witnessing are electric traces of a bioelectric epigenetic switch that regulates genes expression or the pattern of where genes are expressed.[22]

Wedding bioelectricity to molecular genetics, and charged cultural imaginaries from the past with future hopes for regenerative medicine, Levin, the lab's director, delights in playing the errant genius in search of one of life's most profound and promising secrets. As one reporter puts it: "In the world where Michael Levin's vision has come to life, people who lose a limb in an accident are able to re-grow it. Birth defects can be repaired in the womb. Cancer cells are detected and rendered harmless before they become tumors. Any number of other diseases are conquered as cells are altered and adjusted."[23] "Grow Your Own," the article's headline, makes an apt motto for the lab, even if this autopoietic framing belies the enormous labors, the patchwork of entangled practices that will be necessary to move toward anything like this futuristic goal. But this futuristic imaginary is no doubt currently sparking the interest of a host of potential funders.

— 17 — "Researchers Discover That Changes in Bioelectric Signals Trigger Formation of New Organs," *Tufts Now*, December 8, 2011, now.tufts.edu/news-releases/researchers-discover-changes-bioelectric-sign.

— 18 — "When new tissue is introduced, Levin explains, it sends out axons to make connections with host tissue. In these tadpoles, the eyes' axons almost universally connected with either the spinal cord or the gut (Levin, quoted in Michael Price, " 'Franken-Tadpoles' See with Eyes on Their Backs," February 27, 2013, news.sciencemag.org/plants-animals/2013/02/franken-tadpoles-see-eyes-their-backs).The ones that connected to the spinal cord were able to see.

— 19 — The video is available on the Tufts University website: The Face of a Frog: Time-lapse Video Reveals Never-Before-Seen Bioelectric Pattern, now.tufts.edu/news-releases/face-frog-time-lapse-video-reveals-never-seen#sthash.DgsjzC7y.dpuf. If any of the videos mentioned in this article aren't current, try people.ucsc.edu/~kbarad.

— 20 — "The flashes are caused by a process called ion flux, which causes groups of cells to form patterns marked by different membrane voltage and pH levels. When stained with dye, the negatively charged areas shine brightly, while the other areas appear darker. The result? "Electric face." Jennifer Viegas, "Electrical Patterns Found on Frog Face," July 20, 2011, news.discovery.com/animals/electrical-patterns-frog-110720.htm.

— 21 — Brian Thomas, "Tadpole Faces Form by Bioelectric Patterning," July 27, 2011, www.icr.org/article/tadpole-faces-form-by-bioelectric-patterning/.

— 22 — Daisy Yuhas, "It's Electric: Biologists Seek to Crack Cell's Bioelectric Code," *Scientific American*, May 27, 2013, www.scientificamerican.com/article/bioelectric-code/?mobileFormat=false.

— 23 — Helen Ragovin, "Grow Your Own," *Tufts Journal*, January 14, 2009, tuftsjournal.tufts.edu/2009/01_1/features/01/.

Quantum phenomena: Entanglements of disparate parts

This talk is a patchwork. Made of disparate parts. Or so it may seem. And yet, to see the traces of lightning's first inklings is to see something visually akin to the flashings of the electric face-to-come of the embryonic tadpole. Both the embryonic becoming of lightning and the lightning face of the embryo exhibit flashes that mark out the traces of (what might yet) be-coming. Preceding the flash of a lightning bolt, and preceding gene involvement in cell differentiation, electrons and photons play at making virtual diagrams, flashes of light painting possibilities across the sky and across an embryo, hinting at things-to-come. My wager is that these seemingly disparate phenomena are both quantum phenomena; in particular, instances of the virtual play of electron-photon intra-actions that QFT tells us are the elemental happenings of electromagnetic phenomena. In other words, these electromagnetic phenomena in their (ongoing) be-coming illuminate an intrinsic feature of materiality: *matter's ongoing experimenting with itself—the queer dance of time—being indeterminacy*, *the imaginative play of presence/absence, here/there, now/then* that holds the disparate parts together-apart. Let's touch on each of these phenomena once again with an eye (wherever that eye is located!) to the flashing up of yearnings yet-to-be/come. At this point I'm going to re-turn to the phenomenon of embryonic lightning and the lightning face of the embryo, going into more detail with each, and then connect up some of the seemingly disparate parts.

Embryonic lightning

At the US Air Force Atmospheric Research Center in Colorado Springs, Geoff McHarg, an atmospheric physicist, is trying to capture the elusive birth of a lightning bolt. McHarg is using a new generation super-slow-motion camera that can record thousands of images per second—visually resolving temporality on unprecedented scales that allow the human eye for the first time to see how very much happens in the "blink of an eye."

What does embryonic lightning look like? The Discovery Channel video shows McHarg at his computer terminal replaying the video of his lucky first-ever catch of embryonic lightning's electrical stirrings *before* any part of a lightning bolt begins to manifest. [24]

What the video shows is a stunning feature of the not-yet-lightning flashes: the flashes of light do not just head downward for fifty yards and then change direction and head out again. Rather, one sees erratic, disjointed sets of flashes tentatively testing out different pathways. The trace of each trial gesture vanishing as quickly as it appears. McHarg: "You can see the stepped leader coming down here looking for a ground, going back and forth. You can see the tortuous channel it is taking as it divides back and forth." Look closely, and you can see that the so-called back and forth motion is a discontinuous pattern of flashing (it flashes here and then over there, some distance away), and that some of the gestures are upward rather than

— 24 — "Lightning in Super Slow Motion," a segment from the Discovery Channel video on lightning (2007), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLWIBrweSU8/

downward. That is, what McHarg's film seems to have captured is a stepped leader gesturing toward the earth, variously expressing its yearnings. It is important to keep in mind that this is not yet a lightning bolt. Stepped leaders are the barely luminous first gestures of a lightning bolt-to-come. What we are witnessing is the potential face of lightning yet to be born—*a discontinuous exploration of different possible pathways*—before a lightning stroke explodes and shatters the darkness.

Lightning expert Martin Uman points to the fractal-like nature of the stepped leader's musings and attributes this wondering/wandering to a kind of electrical confusion:

> Possibly various airborne regions of charge … divert the leader on it strip. *More likely, the leader just doesn't know exactly where it wants to go*, except that ultimately it wants to move downward. [25]

Electrical *con-fusion*—with fusion—with fusion yet to-come! The electrons are *trying out different paths*, feeling out this desiring field, exploring its entangled yearnings, before any discharge to the ground takes place. These gestures are material imaginings, electrical flirtations signaling connections-to-come.Lightning is born of discontinuous spooky-action-at-a-distance signaling in a decidedly queer communication between earth and sky as they each exchange gestures toward the other, before either exists, signals of the desiring field that animates their intra-active becoming.[26] If this is reminiscent of the indeterminate exploration of the multiple errant pathways of a quantum phenomenon, it may not be that surprising. Lightning is, after all, the luminous activity of strong electromagnetic fields where photons and electrons engage in a quantum exploration of multiple temporalities and polymorphous/polyamorous couplings—the dance of indeterminacy.

Lightning face of an embryo

The "electric face" phenomenon that Adams caught on video is a blend of the fantastic and the scientific, utterly mesmerizing. We catch the glimpse of a face that does/not (yet) exist, but before we can fully discern its indeterminate features, it is gone, in a flash. As Adams describes it:

> The result is so remarkable it almost doesn't seem real. As cells divide within the ball of the embryo, lines and shapes glow and disappear. a slash where the mouth will form shimmers into view, only to quickly fade away. a dot, signifying an eye, appears briefly on the left side of the embryo; a moment later, a matching dot flashes on the right. Vertiginous time-lapse photography is a staple of nature documentaries, but this is different. *These features—the mouth, the eyes—didn't actually exist.* In fact, many of the genes that are linked to their development hadn't even been turned on. *It's only after the patterns fade, the ghost of features yet to come, that all the necessary proteins are activated.*[27]

— 25 — Uman, *All about Lightning*, (see note 9), pp. 83, 90.

— 26 — "Spooky-action-at-a-distance" is the notion that Albert Einstein introduced in his objection to the nonlocality of quantum phenomenon. Today, this nonlocality is understood to be a feature of quantum entanglements. See Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, chap. 7; and Karen Barad, "Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come," *Derrida Today*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2010, special issue, *Deconstruction and Science*, ed. H. Peter Steeves and Nicole Anderson, pp. 240–268.

— 27 — Quote from Cynthia Graber (2014) *Electric Shock* (eBook edition).

The electric traces of a face flash across the cells of the undifferentiated tadpole embryo and disappear. Much like the faint traces of embryonic lightning that tease with the promise of an electrifying connection, the flashes of light that paint out the face of the tadpole offer tantalizing glimpses of what does not (yet) exist. What we witness are traces of differentiating materializations-to-come, virtual explorations of making face. Internally generated lightning flashes are coursing through the embryonic body exploring different possibilities of what might yet be/have been.

What I am suggesting by drawing on quantum field theoretic imagery to describe this event is that what Adams captured is in fact a *quantum* feature of the biophysical epigenetic phenomenon she and her colleagues have been studying: the material play of indeterminacy, the teasing gestures of what might yet be/have been.[28] If my conjecture is correct, it places regeneration as a phenomenon within the emerging field of quantum biology. The stunning nature of this example is that what it shows is not merely *quantum mechanical* effects that scientists now believe account for photosynthesis, bird navigation, and olfactory function, but *quantum field theoretical* effects, like virtual explorations of what might yet materialize (or what might yet have been) as an integral part of ongoing processes of materialization in the dynamical play of indeterminacies in being and time.[29]

The sky and the frog embryo, like the quantum field theory void, are having brain flashes, imagining all matter of becomings. In their material imaginings they are trying on different faces, identities, beings, electrical patterns of differential mattering, in an undoing of self. *Experiments in virtuality, the flashing up of other time—beings—explorations of transmaterialities in their infinite possibilities—are integral to what matters.*

Final section: TransMatterRealities and queer political imaginaries

The promise of monsters is a regenerative politics, an invitation to explore new ways of being in touch, new forms of becoming, new possibilities for kinship, alliance, and change.[30] Regeneration is not about fixing or making whole what has been lost; rather, understood as a quantum phenomenon, re-generation brings indeterminacy's radical potential to the fore. The indeterminacy of time—being means that matter/materiality is a matter of material wanderings/wonderings, a virtual exploration of what might yet be/have been, dispersed across spacetimebeing and condensed into each material bit-here-now, every morsel —even the smallest bits—of spacetimemattering.[31]

Matter is an imaginative material exploration of being/nonbeing, creatively re-generative, an ongoing trans*/formation. Matter is caught up in its own and others' desiring fields. It cannot help but touch itself in an infinite exploration of its (im/possible) be(com)ing(s). And in touching it/self, it partners promiscuously and perversely with otherness in a radical

— 28 — This is yet further evidence that quantum effects, falsely believed to exist only at the tiniest of scales (e.g. nanoscale, well-below the scale of cells), are being detected at larger and larger spatial scales. Here we may be witnessing yet another inherently quantum effect at the molecular level, at the level of biology, orders of magnitude larger than the atomic scale (of the so-called microworld).

— 29 — Note that untimeliness and temporal indeterminacy are intrinsic to the nature of virtuality. See, for example, Barad, *What is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity, Virtuality, Justice.* (see note 4)

— 30 — This is an invocation of Donna Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters: a Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others," in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler, New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 295–337. I have in mind here also brittle stars among other creatures who display an array of nonheteronormative modes of reproduction, including asexual reproduction through regeneration. See the discussion of the brittle star in Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, chap. 8 (see note 6).

— 31 — For more details see Barad, "TransMaterialities" (see note 2).

ongoing deconstruction and (re)configuring of itself. Matter is a wild exploration of trans*animacy, self-experimentations/self-re-creations, not in an autopoietic mode, but on the contrary, in a radical undoing of "self," of individualism. Ever-lively, never identical with itself, it is uncountably multiple, mutable. Matter is not mere being, but its ongoing un/doing, iterative re-configurings shot through with and inseparable from its imaginings.

According to my reading of QFT, perversity and monstrosity lie at the core of being—or rather, are threaded through it. All intra-actions, all touching entails an infinite alterity, so that touching the other is touching other others, including the "self," and touching the "self" entails touching the stranger within.

Electrons, for example, are inherently chimeras—cross-species cross-kind mixtures—made of virtual configurations/reconfigurings of disparate kinds of beings dispersed across space and time in an undoing of kind, being/becoming, absence/presence, here/there, now/then. So much for natural essence. Its identity is the undoing of identity. Its very nature is unnatural, not given, not fixed, but forever transitioning and transforming itself. Electrons are always already untimely. It is not that electrons sometimes engage in such perverse explorations: *these experiments in intra-active transmaterial performativity are what an electron is.*

Ontological indeterminacy, a radical openness, an infinity of possibilities, is at the core of mattering. The materiality of the world is constitutively threaded through with the musings/wonderings/wanderings, the collective dreams of another nature yearning to-be/come! This is an experimental piece with a political investment in unleashing an energetics of the otherwise, exploding the bounds and bindings of oppressive forms of thought and opening up an infinity of possibilities, yearnings to-be-come, matters of touching and being in touch, errant wanderings/wonderings of matter: every bit, every moment of everydayness an implosion of infinite possibilities. These include imaginaries that undermine oppressive systems of thought founded on binaries of culture/nature, human/nonhuman, space/time, individual/collective, as well as foundational ontological commitments to individualism and concordant notions of kind and property which are the bedrock for racialized capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, gender oppression, and more, in their entanglements. Imagining is not the other of materiality, but rather, materiality is shot through with the imaginary. Not imaginaries of some future or elsewhere to arrive at or be achieved as a political goal but, rather, imaginaries with material existences in the thick now of the present—imaginaries that are attuned to the condensations of past and future alive in each moment; imaginaries that entail superpositions of many beings and times, multiple im/possibilities that coexist and are iteratively intra-actively reconfigured; imaginaries that are material explorations of indeterminacy's dynamism, of all matter of yearnings to be/come otherwise, a coummunal dance of differentiating entanglings alive here—now.

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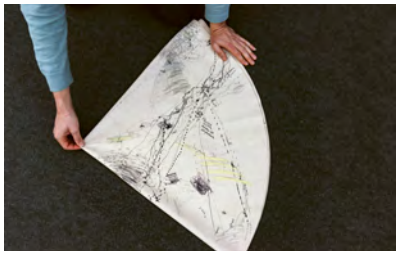











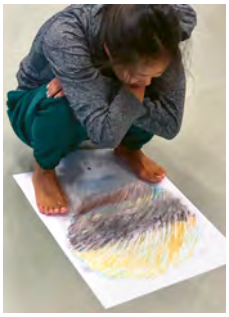


with his panting dog
beside me, I did not
say beautiful
day/warm out/this
bench is hot.





















How do atmospheres—those subtle, impermanent, non-objectified and surrounding yet intimately affective presences—come to be? What forces enable and constrain their appearance, and how do they relate to one another? How to research these complex processes in a non-reductive way?

Contingent Agencies, an artistic research project initiated by Alex Arteaga and Nikolaus Gansterer, explores the dynamic relationship between human and non-human agencies as enabling conditions for the emergence of atmospheres. This cross-disciplinary investigation is conducted through multimodal practices of notation, reflection, showing, and sharing realized in diverse media within different theoretical frameworks such as phenomenology, enactivism, and new materialism. The present book, complemented by an extensive online archive, features multiple research artifacts—including texts, drawings, photo series, diagrams, sound recordings, and video stills—as an invitation to a wider community to join the inquiry.

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