

ALEX ARTEAGA (ED.)

ARCHITECTURES OF EMBODIMENT

DISCLOSING
NEW INTELLIGIBILITIES

THINK ART
DIAPHANES



how does the architecture
condition the emergence
of sense

This book was originated within the research environment *Architecture of Embodiment*, which I started in November 2013.¹ I conceived of this research environment following the intuition that a methodic inquiry into architecture from an enactivist perspective could bring forth new insights in both fields—principally in architecture, but also in enactivism. My way to activate the enactive approach to cognition as a ~~conceptual~~ framework for researching architecture is based on my understanding of the material modification of surroundings through design-based construction as a condition in the process of the emergence of sense. Accordingly, when I initiated this research environment, I posed the question: how does architecture condition the emergence of sense?²

I thought that an efficient way of realizing this investigation would be through practices that enable immediate and unmediated relationships between researchers—acting as highly sensitive

Glossary:

enaction: the manner in which a subject of perception creatively matches its actions to the requirements of its situation {p. 8}

bodies due to the intensification of their perceptive and emotional skills through these practices—and the inquired architecturally conditioned environments. Aesthetic research practices, as systematized sets of aesthetic actions, can realize this variety of relationships. These practices in aesthetic research are not intended to stabilize. In doing so, they enable researchers to operate not only with their own agencies, but also in deep interaction with the agencies of the architectural surroundings to be inquired. Researching in the resulting field of *shared agencies*—that is, researching aesthetically—enables an intimate touch with the researched objects and their main aspects, and the process of the emergence of new senses.

Aesthetic research practices and other practices of research that build on their results are systemically organized here as hybrid methods conceived specifically for and with each inquired issue. These sets of practices are structured as research cells. This term designates a field of inquiry designed and stabilized in order to act within certain spatiotemporal frames and social contexts through specific methods realized by a determined set of researchers.

By inquiring into architecture in and through this research environment, my aim has been primarily not to formulate answers to the aforementioned research question and related ones but, firstly, to provide aesthetic and methodological and communicative conditions for researching architecture in the framework of the enactive approach and through aesthetic practices. Furthermore, my intention is to destabilize each specific object of research as well as the concept of an architecture of embodiment in order to allow myself and other researchers to disclose new intelligibilities of the issues confronting us. In this sense, *Architecture of Embodiment* aims at fulfilling what I consider to be a fundamental cognitive function⁵ of processes of research through aesthetic practices. My attempt to identify the specificities of aesthetic research as an autonomous variety of inquiry leads me to address the following question: What is the goal of aesthetic

research practices? Or, more precisely: What do they intend to achieve in relation to the issues they inquire into? Aesthetic research offers an alternative to the production of knowledge—that is, the compilation of artifacts relating to the object of research by way of explanation, description or modeling. By destabilizing—both perceptually and conceptually—the researched objects and, on this basis, disclosing new intelligibilities—new potentialities for addressing the objects' phenomenal co-constitution—aesthetic research contributes to the general field of research, and beyond, as an unavoidable ultimate goal, to the transformation of society. Accordingly, I conceive of aesthetic research as a form of fundamental research capable of disrupting the stability of the inquired phenomena. It is a way to subvert sedimented phenomenal manifestations endowed with unquestioned meanings and forms. This destabilization is accomplished fundamentally through the generation and organization of conditions for new forms of sensuous interaction. Aesthetic research practices generate aesthetic apparatuses *dispositifs* that dispose the objects of research and the bodies that investigate them in ways able to disturb their habituated reciprocal relationships. These dispositions of the researched objects and the researching bodies lead to specific forms of mutual exposition that induce discontinuities in the stream of sense emerging out of their dynamic connection. Consequently, the phenomenal manifestation of the researched issues—and thus, unavoidably, of the researcher—enter a state of crisis, a liminal order of no-longer-and-not-yet. Inhabiting the uncertainty of these uninhabited, meaningless, diffuse presences, driven by the ineluctable power of intentionality—that is, of making sense and beyond, fixing meaning—unforeseen and unforeseeable possibilities of understanding can emerge: new intelligibilities of the inquired objects and of the inquiring bodies can be disclosed.

Aesthetic research processes end up at this point. Other research procedures realized through practices oriented towards the stabilization of new meanings—towards the closure of uncertainties—can

The idea of this book was born in this context. Towards the end of the workshop, we decided to continue our open-ended dialogue within the horizon of making a book together and so we met twice again: first at the Zurich University of the Arts and then at La Virreina Centre de la Imatge in Barcelona. We decided that the structure of the book should not only mirror our process of dialogue, but should be another moment of this conversational procedure. This is the reason why the book you are reading is a constellation of coexisting autonomous artifacts:⁸ the texts of each author in dialogue with other authors

[illegible]

constellation of texts interrupted by comments

and further comments

contingent conditions for the emergence of open trajectories of sense through reading—another enabling, contingent, and necessary constraint. In this sense, this book is understood as a dialogic research dispositive: an invitation to participate in a common, diverse, and open-ended process of research in the framework of a growing ecology of research practices.¹¹

This book is the result of the confluence of the excellent work of wonderful people. This is the moment to express my sincere gratitude. First of all, I would like to thank Ana García Varas, Dieter Mersch, Gerard Vilar, Jonathan Hale, Lidia Gasperoni, Mika Elo, and Susanne Hauser for their generous engagement and outstanding intellectual work throughout the process of realizing this book; additionally, I thank heartily Dieter Mersch and Gerard Vilar and their institutional frameworks for ensuring the financial viability of this endeavor; I would like to thank as well Gunnar Green for his patient observation of this process and his ability to find a graphic form for our dialogues and Jens Rudolph for making the design of this book tangible. I would like to express my gratitude to Dunya Bouchi and Hans-Jürgen Commerell (AEDES / ANCB) for trusting my research and providing the conditions for sharing it publicly. Finally, going back to the beginning, I would like to thank the Einstein Foundation Berlin for supporting the first phase of Architecture of Embodiment with an Einstein Junior Fellowship and the whole teams of Sound Studies (now Sound Studies and Sonic Arts), the Institute of History and Theory of Design, and the Berlin Career College—all of them part of the Berlin University of the Arts—for hosting and supporting my research.

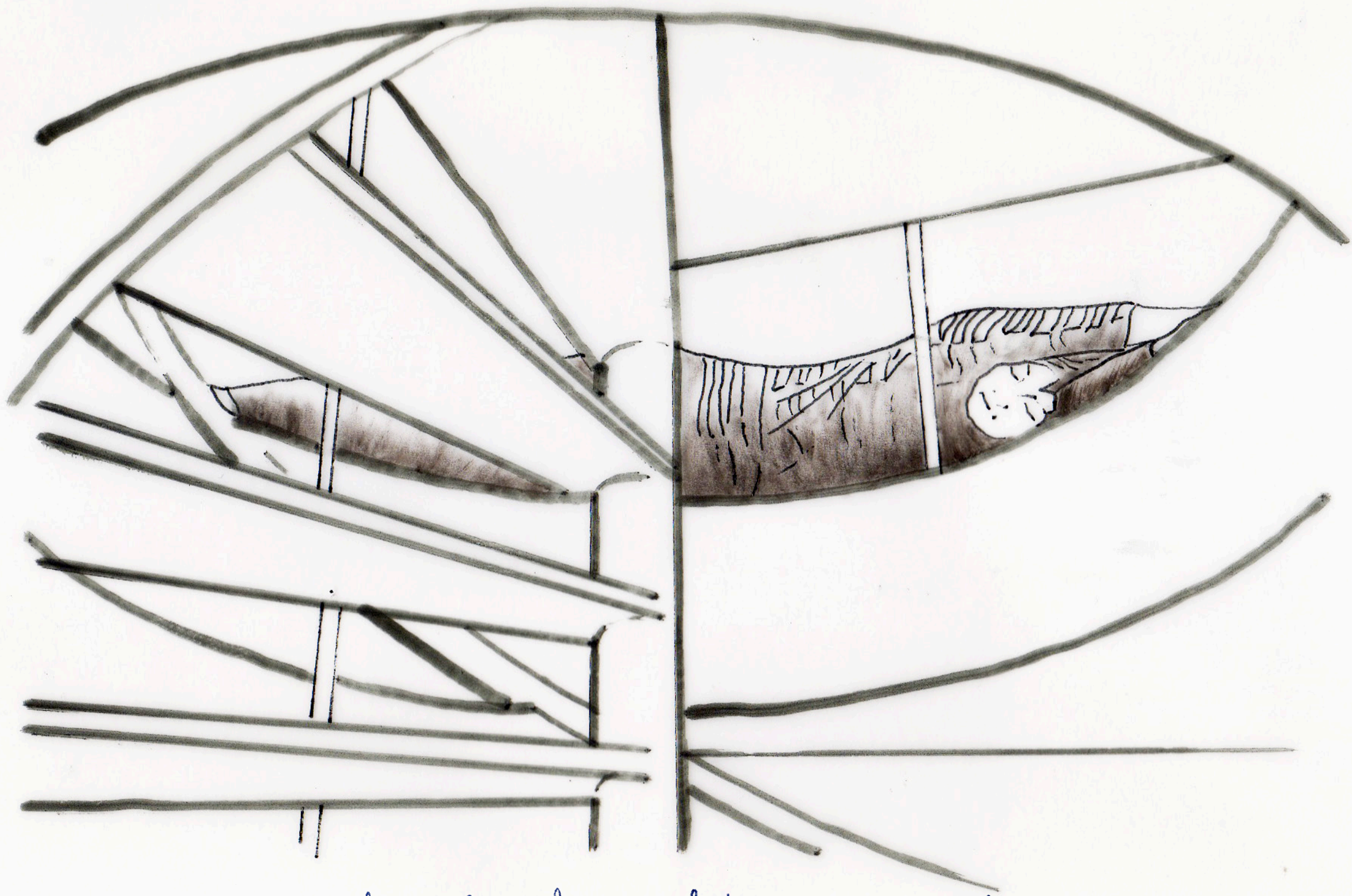
an invitation to participate

a dialogue that breaks open any form of fixed reading.

- 1 www.architecture-embodiment.org [accessed Oct 28, 2020].
- 2 The term “sense” is understood here according to its enactivist meaning. Although there is not an explicit enactivist definition of this term, “sense” refers in this context to the way in which environments appear to the subjects that inhabit them due to the specific way in which this process of inhabiting—technically speaking: the structural coupling between bodies and surroundings—occurs. For a clarification of these processes see Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), especially part two: *Life in Mind*.
- 3 For an outline of my incipient concepts of aesthetic action, aesthetic practice, aesthetic cognition, and aesthetic research, see: Alex Arteaga, “Embodied and Situated Aesthetics: An enactive approach to a cognitive notion of aesthetics,” *Artnodes* 20 (2017), <http://doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i20.3155> [accessed Oct 28, 2020], and Alex Arteaga, “Aesthetic practices of very slow observation as phenomenological practices: steps to an ecology of cognitive practices,” *RUUKKU – Studies in Artistic Research* 14 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.22501/ruu.740194> [accessed Oct 28, 2020].
- 4 I coined the term “research cell” as one of the key operative ideas of the Architecture of Embodiment. I am happy to see that this concept has been fruitful in the field of artistic research. See, e.g. its use in the Research Pavilion #3: www.researchpavilion.fi/ [accessed Oct 28, 2020].
- 5 The term “cognition” here is not limited to designating the performance of rational skills. In contrast, it is used according to the extension of its meaning realized by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, who equate the concept of cognition to the concept of life. Accordingly, the autopoietic and, furthermore, enactivist concepts of “sense” and “cognition” are intimately connected. See Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing, 1980).
- 6 This expression shows once again the phenomenological orientation of my thinking. Accordingly, the processes of destabilization and disclosure that I briefly described can be properly understood as forms of aesthetic epoché and, maybe, reduction—or better, transduction. For my incipient ideas on an aesthetic phenomenology, see Alex Arteaga, “Aesthetic practices of very slow observation as phenomenological practices: steps to an ecology of cognitive practices,” *RUUKKU – Studies in Artistic Research* 14 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.22501/ruu.740194> [accessed Oct 28, 2020].
- 7 A documentation of this research cell, including the full text of the lecture, can be found here: <https://www.architecture-embodiment.org/architecture-of-embodiment-an-aesthetic-research-dispositive> [accessed Oct 28, 2020].
- 8 The autonomy of each text manifests not only in the free selection of the addressed issues and the practices of writing but also, formally, in the diverse use of sections and forms of citations.
- 9 In order to lighten the process, after the Barcelona meeting where each text was presented and discussed, I

- assigned two main commentators to each text, although every author was free to comment on all texts.
- 10 Mika Elo, “What calls for thinking?,” *RUUKKU* (2014), <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/59435/59436> [accessed Oct 28, 2020]. In reference to Jean-Luc Nancy, “De la Struction,” in *Dans quels mondes vivons-nous?*, ed. Aurélien Barrau and Jean-Luc Nancy (Paris: Gallilée, 2011), 79–104.
 - 11 On the concept of ecology of (research) practices see: Mika Elo, Tero Heikkinen, Henk Slager, ed., *Ecologies of Practices. Special Issue of RUUKKU – Studies in Artistic Research* 14 (2020), <http://ruukku-journal.fi/> [accessed Oct 28, 2020].

Joanne Hogg, Exhibition.
The building is the third character
in the film, an interplay of the house and its inhabitants {p.15}



a structural coupling between bodies and surroundings - occurs

Aesthetic Research.

An Exploratory Essay^[A]

Alex Arteaga

[A] ^{JH} I enjoy this text in many ways, but especially as piece of poetic writing. It seems to exemplify an idea of life as continuous flow that is developed later within this text and others in the book. This idea suggests that if (a) life is interrupted it might not always be able to resume—if dormant for too long it might lose its viability. I therefore find it a little challenging to intervene in a useful way during the body of the text, without feeling like I am interrupting a vital process and threatening its viability!

1.

We search. Constantly.

We are incessantly modulating the course of our actions. First of all, to make them possible, to continue making them possible. To continue making possible to adequately insert our actions-to-be into the flow of a dense fabric of action configured with other actions, which are conditioned—sometimes enabled—by our actions and which constrain—sometimes enable—our actions.

We search, constantly, uninterruptedly, in order to continue acting—to continue inter-acting. To continue realizing our ability to act—to inter-act.^[B]

[B] ^{DM} To start with search in order to understand research means starting with its genuine etymological root. Research stems from search; however research obviously addresses a specific kind of search. So starting with search requires a thorough observation of the shift from one to the other. But search does not only mean to inter-act with the world. Instead I would like to claim that, in the first place, searching and desiring are co-relative. Searching in this view is a part of our longing, our striving for something. Both are mutually related to each other, and both point at a fundamental human practice, not necessarily a goal-oriented action, but a vague and indeterminate longing, a desire, as it were, for nothing specific, however a desire that sometimes is rewarded with some contingent findings. Searching, therefore, is more important than discovering, more important also than success and fulfillment. There is search because there is alterity, not in terms of capturing it, incorporating or absorbing it, but there is something other that attracts or affects us, touches us, speaks to us, provokes us.

^{AA} I basically agree with your comment Dieter but I would like to make some remarks. First, I agree that search does not mean to interact. I didn't mean it in my text. My point was that action—and therefore, necessarily, interaction—is the condition of possibility for any search. We come to search because we interact: we act with others. Accordingly, I agree with the first aspect of your last point—"there is search because there is alterity"—and I would add that this alterity is not distant: we are in touch with it, we interact with it. Second, I tend to interpret the kind of longing, striving or desire for something vague, for a non-specific object as expressions of the motivation of maintaining or maybe in this case rather extending or intensifying the viability of our actions, the fluidity of our existence, of our interactions. The fulfillment of the kind of desire you succinctly describe expresses itself as an experience of expansion, in my view, of possibilities of action. Therefore, I agree that search, understood in this way, is not object-oriented and consequently, cannot be about "capturing" or any similar operation.

We search in order to continue being able to adequately braid our actions with other actions which are operatively present—before they, perhaps, appear perceptually, before they, if this comes to be the case, are perceptually constituted as “other actions,” as “the actions of others,” as a not-me-in-action. An “other”—or “others”—which, through its intimate relation to my-self, through the radical intimacy of the mutual touch, operates as the necessary counterpart, as a dynamic whole “out there”—as the-other-of-my-self, the otherness of my selfness.

A diverse other, acquiring its singularity as the otherness of my singular self. A multiple other, a myriad of acting others, subsumed in this singular other—the environment, my environment, my world, the world, a world-for-me.

A singular other thus mirroring my singularity, the singularity of this plural, diverse self I call my-self from no other spot than this self recognizing itself through its participation in the dense meshwork of its world.

A worldly “selfless self.”¹ A self emerging as a “project of the world.” A world only possible as and through the realization of this self-recognizing-self while and because it cognizes its world.²

A world—my world, the world of this my-self^[C]—also as a place of and for a myriad of acting others. Others interacting with one another, I guess, but certainly interacting with me, noticing immediately and in an unmediated way the constant alterations of my embodied self, of this self that notices also immediately and in an unmediated way—first operatively, as an alteration of the dynamics that connect one another—that they/it notice(s).

A radically active, plural otherness only possible as such—as other, as this other, my other, the other of my-self—by virtue of its dynamic coupling with a self—an active, plural self—which acts by virtue of its selfness—the embodiment of its own organization—enabled by the dynamic coupling with its otherness.

[C] ^{DM} Here I would prefer to avoid any implicit egological perspective. Expressions such as “my world” or “my-self” prerequisite an already constituted me, a self as being already given or formed and contoured—by what? The self is not primordial, but secondary in relation to the other. The outcome of this is that search mainly is a function of the riddle and strangeness of the world. Therefore I can only find and, literally, de-fine myself through appearance and reception beyond intentionality. Hence, intentionality first and foremost comes into place by secondary reflection and repetition. Both produce a certain awareness, a refinement of search, turning it into re-search.

^{AA} I basically agree with your comment. I think neither that the self precedes the world nor that the world precedes the self. I think, according to the enactive approach, that self and world co-emerge: they arise simultaneously in a continuous process of mutual conditioning. It is on the basis of this strong interdependence between self and world—of this “structural coupling” in terms of Maturana—that I talk about “the world of a self” the same way I could invert the terms and talk about “the self of a world.” I also agree with your second point: the world becomes strange to (its) self and this is the origin of search. This is coherent with the idea of the co-emergence of self and world: there is a disturbance in the process of co-emergence and this manifests for the self as estrangement. And I also agree with your comment on intentionality if we understand this term here as the will-based performance of certain intentions generated, as you wrote, through reflection. This refers, as you remarked, to research. Nevertheless, if we understand the word intentionality phenomenologically as the unavoidable aboutness of the self’s actions, intentionality is constitutive for the self’s realization—and the arising of its world.

And vice versa.

And so on.

We search, constantly, in order to maintain this “so on.”

To maintain the continuity, the fluid consistency of the realization of our acts in touch with other acts—without interruption, without break-in-between, neither between them nor between them and the acts of others.

An extremely dense and complex succession of actions—we would say, if we would reflect on this continuum, if we would come back again and again to it (if we would re-flect) and singularize sections of this unceasing flow as distinct actions, if we would construct, better, re-construct, continuity as a chain of singularities: an artifact created by certain forms of reflection.

We search continuously, with the same continuity of the actions which are, at the same time, the object, the goal—if we are not able to conceive and accept the existence of goalless actions, of a radical absence of teleology—the medium and the realization of the search.

Our acts, thus, as search.

A search without distance—between the search and its object, between the search and the searcher, between the search and its field, between its ostensible parts or moments.

A radically continuous, immanent search.

An invisible search. Invisible because we see, perhaps, our actions and, probably, their consequences—objectified, apparently, outside of the realm of action.

A search hidden under two layers of visibility linked to one another by direct causality: what we do and what follows.

We search, constantly, without being aware of the search because we are constantly finding without being aware of our findings: ways of continuing to act, of continuing to inter-act, of navigating our world without noticing, most of the time, any friction.

We search through our acts—due to our acts, because we act, by acting, as action—for “something in them”: an aspect, a constitutive trait of the actions, a capacity embedded and realized in and through the actions themselves.

We search for the activation, for the maintenance, for the operative realization of a twofold ability to adapt: to our actions—to their uninterrupted flow, their smooth succession without a gap—and to their counterpart—the actions of our environment, the perturbations of the surroundings touching our acting body, constantly, uninterruptedly.

We search, incessantly, in action, through the very same actions we are realizing and in which we are searching for ways to sustain their realization by sustaining its adaptation to its own flow and, simultaneously, to the flow of the other actions with which our actions develop their course.

We search, by acting—in/through our actions—for ways of enabling to keep the touch touching,^[D] to keep the dynamic contact between the acting body and its active surroundings, to maintain the possibility of inter-acting. Not of re-acting but instead of radically, constitutively, immanently acting-with. Of in-corporating: of maintaining through action the stream of embodiment, the incessant realization of structurally connected bodies in action—the touching actions of the body's surroundings, the body's not-itself but with-and-for-itself—while and through acting.

[D] ^{DM} I fully agree with the interrelation between action and touching. Western metaphysics has always privileged the eye or the optical system and underestimated the tactile system. The visionary system always already presupposes distance and, hence, abstraction, while the tactile is comprised of the immediate dialectics of touching and being touched and is therefore related to the experience of existence. Before there is something—as a finding—there is something unknown, unassigned and even unsettled that has already touched us and gives rise to a “being-there,” a “thatness” or just an irritation that my perceptual senses cannot ignore. Therefore search is primarily related to “being in contact with,” whatever the “with” means. Before there is something as something, there is something as “touch,” as a “given existence” which I also would like to call a “gift.” Thus, if we search constantly, by acting (and also by responding), we, at the same time, receive gifts we never wished for. Findings, in the first place, are gifts or donations given by no-one.

We search, immanently, for ways to continue participating in the dynamic system that our actions contribute to enable, that enables the realization of our actions and that constrains—constantly, continuously, along and throughout their course—their realization.

We search by acting—implicitly, through and in each single action—for adequate forms of participation in this complex dynamic system in, through and by virtue of which every single action becomes possible and comes to be.

We search for ways to maintain the viability of our actions.

We search for the maintenance of the viability of our actions, contributing in doing so to maintaining the viability of the whole system.

We support, through the subtle, persistent maintenance of our adaptability, the dynamic system which supports the maintenance of our adaptability.

A closed, multilayered, self-supporting meshwork of mutually adapting, reciprocally supporting actions.

A medium—our actions—in a medium—the whole system.

To keep the dynamic contact between the acting body and its active surroundings, to maintain the possibility of inter-active

Two interlaced, mutually conditioning media enabling through their interlacement their possible continuity—and, as a constitutive aspect of it, the viability of our actions through and with it.

We search—constantly, implicitly, silently, humbly, operatively, below the line of the perceivable but in constant touch with it—acting—by and through each single action—to make the next, not yet existent action possible—the next, not yet given moment come to be.

I'm not writing about anything special, anything extraordinary. I am trying to look into the inner structure of the quotidian—into its inner infrastructure—into the operative virtuosity of every single small action we perform everyday, every moment, since we open our eyes and find, or better, lay down our path through the day. ^[E]

I am writing about the way our feet adapt to the ever-changing floor allowing the rest of our organism to make a new step, about the way our hands adopt precise shapes changing constantly, fluidly, to allow the realization of each interaction—opening a door, shaking another hand, using a utensil adequately, caressing another body, configuring the gestures that allow the communication, the collective micro-realization of the fundamental common: the intimate touch that joins, mostly in an implicit way, our body to other bodies.

I am writing about, or better, I am trying to get in touch through organizing words, through pressing keys on my laptop and seeing how signs appear on its screen, through the way we are constantly articulating words—with one another and with the realization of the agency of each object, of each picture, of each material, of each other speaking voice that our speaking voice meets in the course of its own articulated production.

*opening a door,
shaking another hand,
using a utensil adequately,
caressing another body*

[E] ^{JH} I think this is an important aspect of the enactive view of perception (as put forward by Alva Noë et al.), but also has an interesting link with the idea of the mind as a "prediction machine" suggested by Andy Clark and others exploring so called "predictive processing" within the brain. If we are constantly searching, in the sense described here, it is perhaps also because we are constantly projecting forward our perceptual (motor cognitive, in Merleau-Ponty's terms) anticipations of what we are about to experience, (based on our sense of what kind of situation it is that currently confronts us) and with this comes the need to find out if those predictions are correct, or, perhaps more precisely, to attempt to correct them, in order that they conform to what we have apparently just experienced, and to prepare us better for the next time we experience it.

^{AA} Without negating our ability to anticipate, I feel a certain resistance to admitting prediction as the basic operation of our conduct. Writing this text I have been rather envisioning a situation of "radical present": acting while neither knowing what is the next step nor the ground on which it will be made.

I'm writing about, or better with, the intimate howness of each silent touch, of each quotidian, irrelevant, banal—we would, unfairly, say—contact, with the viability of our acts emerging out of each minimal encounter, of each realization of the plasticity of our constant realization as bodies among bodies, of our ability of finding, or better of co-generating ways to realize this ability and, simultaneously, its conditions of possibility.

I am writing about, with and as a realization of the very quotidian search for ways to act—to inter-act—to do—and sometimes to make—to continue doing, to continue being active in, with and through the world—the world that supports our actions and is co-constituted by them.

I am writing about and in touch with something invisible, unnoticed, non-objectified, ungraspable, simply because it is continuously performed, because it is inseparable from everything we do, from everything that happens—underlying it, supporting it, being what makes it possible “from within” (within the systems of relationships) and therefore occluded by everything we do and everything that happens.

I am writing about and with(in) the constitutive search of the quotidian, of every gesture, of every single act—even those which will never come to be but were possible and even would have been possible.

I am observing, looking at and for—going about, around, wandering—the searching nature of (our) nature.

And there, in the silent, meaningless but senseful quotidian life, we do not stop.

We act. We search—implicitly, intimately, continuously, by acting, through action—for the next possible action, for the next adaptive turn

when actions fail, we become aware of them

[F] ^{DM} The fascinating approach of the text is its very meticulous reconstruction of the turning-point between acting as searching and its moment of rupture and conversion into the reflective mode of re-research and re-cognition with certain emphasis on the "re"—the attempt to understand thoroughly the progress from doing to thinking. Arteaga's way of argumentation reveals itself as strongly anti-reductive.

[G] ^{JH} There is also here a suggestion of the idea that perceptual events might be better understood not as isolated percepts but as momentary fluctuations (or perturbations) in an otherwise continuous flow of perceptual activity. In this case life itself (organic/metabolic processes) could be thought of as fundamentally rhythmical in character, and therefore that the things that stand out, or show up, for us as objects, things or events, are actually rhythmic modulations in a constant flow or interchange of energies and information between the organism and its environment. For me, as an architect, this idea echoes Gottfried Semper's claim regarding the primacy of rhythm in the emergence of art as a practice of ordering (or organizing) of things in the world. For Semper the knot was seen as a kind of *Ur-form* of human making, the primary artistic unit out of which all other forms of making might have emerged. The knot in a piece of string could be seen as a modulation of flows, whether acting as a mnemonic device, or as a technique for measuring the speed of boats.

[H] ^{DM} This I consider as the most important part of the argumentation: starting with a phenomenology of search as incessant action, a striving for understanding and discovery as the very nature of our being-in-the-world, which often remains latent, unconscious and almost automatic and ending with cognition and knowledge. In the first place therefore acting seems to be a constant flight, a getaway, a permanent restless doing; and then, all of a sudden, a startle, a perturbation, a disruption happens which interrupts our continuation. Arteaga calls it a temporal nano-existential impossibility. It forces us to turn our head, to look twice and to start with reflection, in one word: to turn search into re-search. The main idea here is, that this which makes us think, derives from negativity. However there is still a certain indeterminacy: the undecidable decision between a rupture or impediment as cut, as distinction, as difference that makes differences, and just as a meaningless break or interruption that blocks our ability to understand. Maybe this undecidability remains contingent.

^{AA} I basically agree with this comment. Nevertheless I would like to introduce a difference that for me makes a big difference. For me thinking begins with the first, minimal action. According to the enactive approach—and furthermore with the ideas formulated in the framework of the theory of autopoiesis—cognition is not the performance of "higher skills" but rather every contribution to the incessant process of sense-making, that is, of co-emergence of selves and worlds as significant entities. Consequently, there is no difference between acting and thinking—furthermore, there is no difference between organic activity and thinking. There are, undoubtedly, different varieties of thinking as different forms of action. Thinking, therefore, does not begin, but I certainly agree, that there is a form of thinking that has a "negative" origin: it does not work and we have to find a new way to make it function. Following this line of thought, I would reformulate the distinction described at the end of the comment: there are "meaningless breaks or interruption" but they all are senseful.

The interruption of fluid transition

Temporary, maybe, minimal paralysis: cut apart, standing beside—out of play, momentarily excluded from the dynamic meshwork of interactions, of mutually supporting actions.

Out of the world. Only for an instant, maybe. Maybe nearly unnoticed and forgotten away with.

Unexpectedly, we do not know how to proceed. We did not know before, but we did not need to know. We were acting—simply acting.

We were navigating, smoothly, the emergence of sense that our interactions enabled and that supported the realization of our actions—without noticing it, without needing to notice it. Without knowing—being knowledge an artifact articulating a satisfactory description and/or explanation of the phenomenon to which the one who knows refers.

We did not know. We did not need to know. We were simultaneously co-constituting and performing^[1]—that is, performing in both meanings of this term—the viability of our actions in, through and with the shared field of action that enables and constrains this viability.

But now the continuity is perturbed, the fluent adaptive performance and the unfolding of its performativity collapse.

And suddenly, unexpectedly, we do not know—perhaps we even say it, we speak it out. We do not know what's next—what is going to be, what could be the next move, the next gesture, the next displacement, the next turn, the next sound, the next word.

“It does not make sense”—we would say, perhaps—“it does not make sense anymore.”

Nothing dramatic, but existential—nano-existential, we could say: the affirmation of a temporary impossibility.

Nothing special. Again, nothing extraordinary.

as soon as we reflect

we are unable to act

[1] ^{DM} The idea here is obviously the duplicity between constitution and performance. Often in philosophy both are separated: as long as we perform our action, there is no need for reflection; and as soon as we reflect, we are unable to act. To take this incompatibility between practice and theory for granted is here very rightly thrown into question. And the cautious steps forward of the text, its slow moves and its hesitation is necessary to identify the subtle oscillation between both and the turning-point where things suddenly become different.

^{AA} As I argued in my answer to your last comment, I definitely try to integrate constitution and performance: each act is potentially an act of phenomenal co-constitution.

The temporary lack of sense—the break down of the emergence of sense—and the impossibility of simply continuing to act appear simultaneously, as two sides of the same phenomenon. Or better, addressing it from another perspective, with another conceptual strategy: the impossibility of acting, the interruption of the adaptation, of the flow of actualization of our agency, expresses a gap of sense, the discontinuity of its dynamic and relational constitution.

The impossibility of acting—of simply making the next step, of simply saying another word—objectifies, in the moment of its disruption, the immanent operativity of sense. It brings to light, it makes explicit the implicitness of a so far constantly successful search, of the searching component of action that is collapsing now, that requires a modification in its performance in order to once again accomplish its performative function.

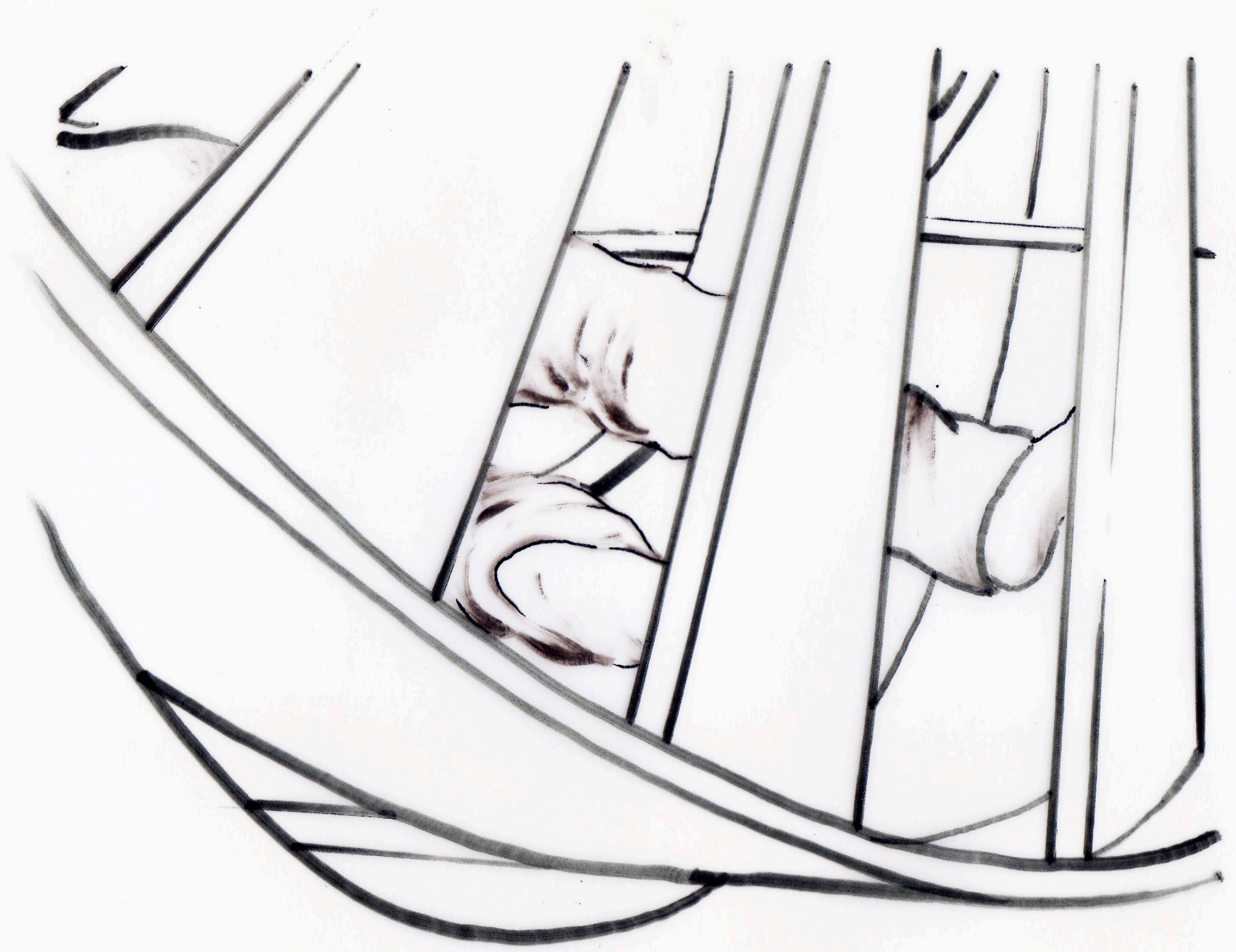
And then we stop. We have to stop.

We cannot do anything but stopping because we don't know how to proceed now (and now we need to know because of the implicitness of the emergence of sense, the unspoken, the “unsayable”³ viability of our actions has lost, temporarily, its silent voice).

We stop because we don't know and need, ineluctably, to know—or at least to sense—how it goes further, how we can successfully couple again, how we can restore the fluency in the realization of the coupling with our environment.

We stop and consider.

We wonder—probably in an unspoken way, implicitly, rather touching, tentatively, around, sounding our closest domains, our habitualized spheres of action—what's next, how to do what we want or maybe



need to do, what can be the next gesture, the next move, the next sound, maybe an articulated one, the next word. We speculate about—we look and we look for—how can it—the realization of the connective dynamics between my-self and my-world—go on.

We stop and revise, revisit, reconsider. We look and explore again and again—the circumstances, what has happened, how everything in a surrounding time and space appears—in a fuzzy way, sounding, slightly touching with our fingertips, the possible, the plausible, the feasible.

But also, if necessary, if it still doesn't work, analyzing, grasping, dissecting, manipulating.

We look for right choices—we have to choose, now, explicitly, we have to decide, now, in a strong maybe even literal meaning of the word, we have to cut off a caesura, to bring dislocated parts together. We consider and, if necessary, we judge possible actions as adequate ones and discard, explicitly, others instead of simply, implicitly, adequately performing our actions.

We estimate, compare—iteratively, again and again.

We do not move forward—not yet. We keep on standing, still blocked, and see—what appears out of our iterative considerations. Repeatedly, over and over, again and again.

We no longer search-in-action. We are not simply doing, performing our actions, finding, without noticing—that we search, that we find—through each action the next action to follow.

We begin, thus, incipiently, to re-search.^[J]

We step out of the unnoticed fluidity of our unnoticed search-in-action and situate ourselves spontaneously—maybe, at least at the beginning, in the moment we stop—in the position of the observer.

We observe the phenomena that we constitute and throw them in front of ourselves—our provisorily non-viable self, the domain of this temporary impossibility, the environment that appears now as incoherent, as non-transitable.^[K]

We ob-jectify now operative presences that have been dodging explicitness in order to maintain their fluidity.

We take distance—we could say, repeating an uncritically accepted formulation—without breaking the connections. We generate a space—without abandoning the field, without fully retreating—in which we can provisorily inhabit the non-viable.

We camp. We create a provisory shelter, a protected base out of the flow that flows now without us—or better, without our contribution—but always stay in touch with it.

A place—an incipient observatory, a germinal lab, an inceptive studio—in and from which to observe, to con-sider—to watch the moving stars, to see with the stars and get oriented again, to watch the stars with the stars and let con-stellations (patterns, forms) arise: new, explicit forms of guidance.

An alternative performative framework. An extra-ordinary sphere born out of both the impossibility of simply continuing to act and the imperious necessity of restoring the lost viability.

A new way of organizing action through which we expect to find out new possibilities to act—to inter-act—again.

[J] DM Here we arrive, after a long journey over more than half of the text at the very aim of the exercise: gradually shifting perspective from searching as a fundamental human practice to the empire of (scientific or artistic) re-search. And still at this point the difference between art and science remains unsettled. Thus at this point we have to say that the difference between both is not general because both are originated in the same source: a split or rift, as fissure or caesura in everyday life experience.

AA I completely agree!

split, rift, fissure or caesura {p. 193}

There is a nice passage in the book Nothing in which Gilles Deleuze is trying to explain how you're not always aware of moments of transformation in your life, they take place in the gaps between events, in the breaks, in the fissures, in the caesuras:

[K] DM It seems to be a tiny crack that chances everything: a small cut, a hardly noticeable transition, a displaced syncope, an inconspicuous detail that makes the world incoherent and forces us to reinterpret our understandings. However this is exactly what I mean by the moment of alterity: the incomprehensible or mysteriousness. Here we have to say that it happens, without knowing why, because the longer we look at things (or at our neighbor) the stranger it or he or she seems. There is always something uncanny in the world, but the most uncanny thing is the social other, the other human being.

AA Yes, I agree situating alterity in this moment. It is the most radical alterity, the most primitive, original not-knowing: the provisory lack of sense—way beyond a temporary absence of meaning.

“If you want to apply bio-bibliographical criteria to me, I confess I wrote my first book fairly early on, and then produced nothing more for eight years. I know what I was doing, where and how I lived during those years, but I know it only abstractly, rather as if someone else was relating memories that I believe but don't really have. It's like a hole in my life, an eight-year hole. That's what I find interesting in (people's ~~lives~~) people's lives, the holes, the gaps, sometimes dramatic, but sometimes not dramatic at all. There are catalepsies, or a kind of sleep-walking through a number of years, in most lives. Maybe it's in these holes that movement takes place.” Francis Mc Kee, From Zero to Nothing in No Time, Nothing, Eds Ele Carpenter & Graham Gussin (Sunderland: Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, 2001) p. 22.

If “the formal organizational properties distinctive of mind are an enriched version of those fundamental to life or more precisely, the self-organizing features of mind are an enriched version of the self-organized features of life,”⁴ the organizational properties distinctive of research are an enriched version of those fundamental to the quotidian, unnoticed search implicit in each action.^[M]

2.

The search—the continuously flowing, implicit seeking for immediate viability of each unnoticed act, of each act to be—and its iterative, repetitive, explicit, even systematized, methodologically organized variant^[N]—the re-search—both are interventions in a twofold articulation: in the articulation of our own acts—the organization of inflections in the continuous actualization of our own agency—and, simultaneously, in the articulation of our actions with the flow of other actualized agencies with which our actions are in constant, mutually constitutive touch. Search and research, thus, as an intervention in the conjunction of two articulations—the articulation of a dynamic ownness with the dynamics of an otherness.

But we can try now to come closer. We can pursue another strategy in order to overcome the apparently conspicuous differentiation between ownness and otherness, between the spot from which we observe and an outside subsuming the rest—the not-me, the not-self, the vastness of the other, of all others.

[M] ^{JH} Yes, I agree, and I have tried to make a similar point in relation to Dieter Mersch's paper.

[N] ^{DM} If we look at the dialectics of search and research from this angle—as suggested—research is not necessarily linked to certain procedures and methods. Method—Greek met'hodos—originally means to follow a pathway. The pathway is already preordained. I have to follow the lines, on the beaten tracks, with no real alternative, otherwise I risk going astray. Research, without method, means to work heuristically, intuitively, like a wanderer who has no clear goals or draws circles. Research, although organized, therefore does not necessarily need to be disciplined. However for scientific work some minimal criteria are essential, which does not hold for artistic research. Also science adheres to instruments, to documentation and archives which make its results readable, while art is confronting us with the non-understandable. However we should not claim distinctions between both too early, for what is true for creativity and intuition or inspiration in art is often also true in science. Both seem to have more in common than we normally admit. And here again, it seems to be prudent to argue step by step in order to make our distinctions rigorous (and here, I think, we have to keep in mind, that art and philosophy share more things in common than art and sciences. Arteaga's phenomenological approach, his way of thinking—as an artist and as a philosopher, implicitly indicates this).

^{AA} I basically agree with this comment. I would like to point out that I consider the method—the pathway—originally to emerge from the research and not to precede it. Like in the poem of Antonio Machado, often quoted by Francisco Varela, “there is no path, we lay down a path by walking.” It is the repetition that constitutes the act of walking, which enables the configuration of methods. And once recognized—by walking, by re-searching—they can be described, taken out of the flow of the search and considered as reference, without any prescriptive or deterministic function, for future research processes. I am claiming here a circular continuity between re-search and method.

We lay down
a path
by walking

Since the sixties, town planners have often used the term 'lines of desire' to describe those paths or tracks produced by people taking repeated shortcuts across the land. Within an urban context, they are those visible routes across areas of grass, perhaps outside civic or municipal buildings, or through public park-land and common ground. Of course they may also be seen and used in the countryside where they may have emerged from an interplay between people and animals, e.g. people seeking the 'best way' of crossing hills and fields 'by way' of existing goat or sheep tracks. This kind of marriage of desires between sentient beings may take place over vast periods of time across deep time. It is desire to achieve a destination point by the quickest and safest means. Here desire surfaces within a journey as a complex of urges and aspirations. What interests me increasingly about the collection is the way in which a conventional art exhibition exists as a meeting point of desires. Within an exhibition there exists simultaneously a range of desires which include: the aspirations and the interpreting viewer; the artist's own motivation, and intentions as evidenced or lost within the work; the curator's longing for a thesis or some sort of taxonomical strategy. The artist is often viewed as being the most significant guardian of desire within the exhibition process when in actuality the function of the artwork on display is in a constant state of negotiation, caught in a triangle of artist, curator and the audience - the audience who 'reads' and experiences the work. The desires of the artist and curator exist at best as traces or ghosted intentions, or, at worst, as a nostalgic longing for authorial control. The exhibition space is potentially, a zone of conflicting desires. How we move through this zone is in itself then a creative act on behalf of the visitor, for it is they that ultimately negotiate the art space. The gallery can never successfully 'guide' its visitors through its complexities. There is always the potential for routes which transgress values and traverse organised systems of knowledge. There are always lines of desire."

Vim Brenman, Lines of Desire, The Henry Moore Sculpture Trust (Ed. Dorcas Taylor), June / July 1998.

We can take a perspective now that allows us to overcome the seemingly natural, the ostensibly given differentiation between my actions and other actions. A perspective that allows us as well to overcome the concept of interaction—a first attempt to transcend, to go beyond, or, more precisely, to climb across the ownness of what we tend to call our actions, without negating the difference, their demarcations, their limits but establishing, additionally, a mutual causality or, at least, a reciprocal conditioning between mine and other actions.

We can try now to address the situation of immanently, intimately, radically shared agencies, of constitutively intertwined actions, by activating the etymological configuration of an alternative term: conduct—to lead with.

A term that allows us to resituate, to intensify the function of the commonness that informs each singular action: the commonness underlying, enabling and constraining each action. The commonness being the most fundamental source of agency—of agencies, without the necessity of further specifying—and not the result of a subsequent, supplementary confluence. The commonness which allows every single action to develop in the very way it does, which modulates its course, which enables and constrains its realization.

A commonness—I would say in a first move, just to compensate established positions but not yet fully expressing mine—that does not follow individuality: it is not an addition, a supplement, a consequence, a result of an addition qualified by the use of prefixes like “multi,” “inter” or “trans,” but its most fundamental condition of possibility.^[O]

Or better—to try to come even closer to the specificity of the relationship between this kind of commonness and the singularity of each action, to try to avoid a reductionist description establishing a unidirectional causality, formulating now, specifically, my approach—a

[O] ^{LG} Would you agree with the definition of this commonness as a transcendental level of agency? It seems that the way in which you differentiate individuality and commonness precisely addresses the difference between the empirical and the transcendental level. The first deals with the contingent constitution of our activity, to which agency belongs, while the second concerns a condition of possibility of agency and is independent of the individual acts of constitution.

^{AA} I am trying to blur the categorical differentiation between individuality and commonness and to situate the common as a necessary condition for possible individualizations. And I guess I agree with your comment situating my approach close to a transcendental perspective related to the contingent—and consequently common—constitution of agencies.

commonness that enables each single action while, simultaneously, the realization of each single action constrains the common: a relation of mutual conditioning possible to be described as a system of co-emergence—the co-emergence of the singular and the common.

A relationship between the singular and the common, determined by the simultaneity of their mutuality: the singular and the common developing at the same time, reciprocally conditioning one another in the most intimate manner—without being able to trace a clear delimitation between both spheres (unless we take the distance that analysis requires and produces, unless we step out of the experience that presents action operatively, in its course, from its “inside”: not the inside of one actor, not the inside of the own, but the inside of the whole dynamic meshwork, the inside of the common action). Or better: the common inside of action, the inside of the radically shared agency—a radicality that blurs the boundaries of the own and of the single without excluding the identification of different nodes of agency: different expressions of the common, different ways of inhabiting the common, of actualizing it, of in-forming it.

Search, thus, and re-search as well, as the immanent drive of each action to ensure the possibility of the common action, the common of all possible actions—the withness of the lead, the viability of the share ductus, of the path laid down, inevitably, together—of each action as con-duct.

Search and research participating in the immanence of an immanence: the immanence of action in the immanence of the common—and the other way around.

Search and research as two ways to realize a constitutive trait of each conduct: the attempt to enable its viability by enabling the common—by looking for ways of maintaining the possibility of the immanent, constitutive coupling, or better, trying again to overcome the duality of ownness and otherness: the further viability of the implicit, aprioristic interlacement of a myriad of selfless micro-dynamics, the inherent coalescence of a tide meshwork of vibrant particles, the most fundamental commonness of their possible common duc-tus.

3.

Departing, thus, from the common, taking the common as a base or better—trying to overcome another duality, the one formulated as a constructive metaphor in terms of base and superstructure, a duality expressing on the one hand an irreversible sequence and on the other hand a unidirectional dependence—departing from the co-emergence, the simultaneous and mutually conditioning constitution of the common and the singular. Departing therefore from the impossibility of a pure singularity—and consequently, from the impossibility of an absolute commonality—we can take now, again, the perspective of a single unit—let's say one of us—the perspective provided by the experience of its participation in the field of shared agency in which it unfolds its own one.

We take now a first-person-perspective—pluralized in order to allow, in a fictional way, to perform the writing/reading as a shared process—and we focus on one specific conduct, on one variety of

To perform
the writing / reading
as a shared process

engagement in the common in which it participates. A variety of conduct I term aesthetic conduct.

We establish contact with a new entity. We begin now to be in touch with it.

And, let's say, we stop there: we maintain the touch, we indwell the contact, we inhabit the possibilities enabled by the performance of our sensorimotor skills—by the fundamental, relational and dynamic unit of motors and sensors that enables the primary constitution of phenomena, that allows us to perceive, and, before that, to realize operatively the presence of a presence-to-possibly-be, to notice it without inscribing it, to sense it, to incorporate it in the process of emergence of sense we are participating in.

We relate to this new alteration of the otherness. We operate with this new presence in the domain of potentialities that we begin to share and shape basically by actualizing our sensorimotor skills: the connective and connecting patterns developed throughout a long process of embodiment.

We are and remain, literally, in touch, in a sensing/moving contact enabled and constrained primarily—I would tend to say “exclusively” to make my point clearer—by the spontaneous realization of our sensorimotor logic: the field of possibilities enabled and constrained by the habitualized link, the embodied connection—the interdependence implemented as and through organic matter, as and through flesh—between sensors and motors.

Our active relationship—the articulation of our conducts, the dynamic actualization of our agencies—results now, primarily, out of this spontaneity: out of the uninhibited, uncontrolled actualization of the closeness of the systemic network that allows our movement to unfold, to realize its direction and velocity by virtue of the activity of our own sensors, which in turn develop their activity—the transduction of environmental perturbations, the basic communication, the first doing-together—by virtue of the conditions provided by our movement.

Conducting ourselves aesthetically means, therefore, firstly, to allow the spontaneous unfolding of our sensorimotor skills to lead our common course.

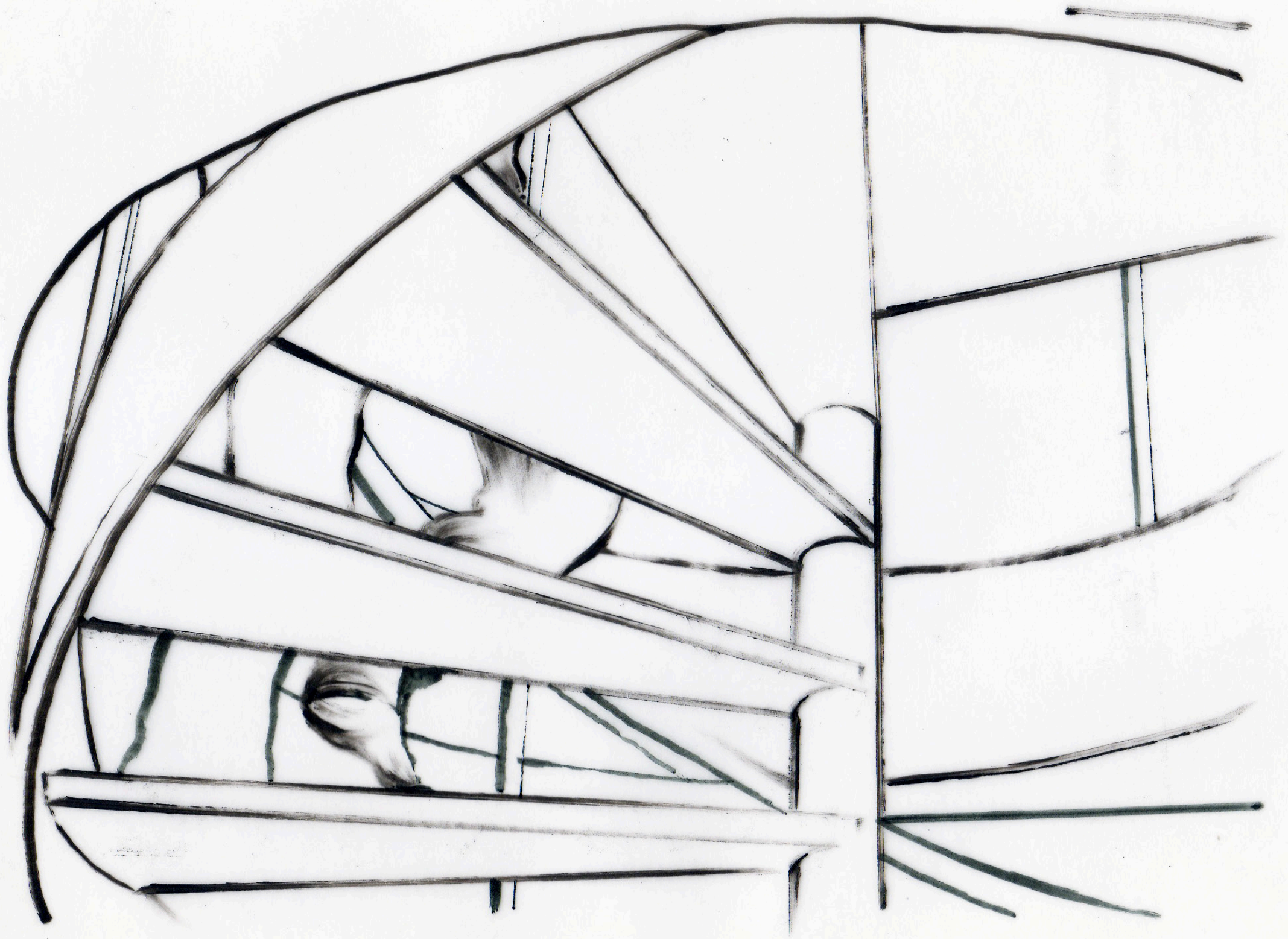
Moving, now, according to the work of our sensors, and sensing through moving—being led by the mutuality of sensors and motors for the contingent constitution of our selves and our world—we have to recognize the agency of another skill at work, situated as well in the join of sensing and moving.

We have to recognize that we “are moved” as well—and, perhaps, that we “are sensed” as well.

The use of the passive form,^[P] the grammatical introduction of passivity in order to address, now, emotionality as another inalienable driving force in this variety of conduct I call aesthetic, intensifies the problematization of the ownness-otherness issue and at the same time the definition and demarcation of the first term of this pair: Would I say that it is me who acts, when the driving force is the spontaneous enfolding of the sensorimotor patterns? (I know—being knowing the “possession” of a descriptive and/or explicatory artifact—that they are “my” patterns—that they “belong” to “my” body, that they, better,

[P] ^{DM} Looking at different methodological approaches—goal-orientation, repeatability, generalization, and exoterian (open to public) verifications—seem to me one criterion to distinguish between artistic and scientific research, because in art there is no clear target, often artistic work insists on its irrepeatability, its non-generalizable singularity and its subjective idiosyncrasy. Looking at different understandings of the role of identity, consistency, and logic in science on the one hand and contradictions in art on the other, also seems to be essential. However, with respect to perception and the senses, one of the main differences between both is the difference between active and passive. The text here is hinting at this. But starting with search as activity seems to miss the trait of art from its beginning, because aesthetics genuinely is based in a primordial passivity, for perception firstly is reception. Everything here depends on the understanding of search—as an active exercise or, as it is meant by Arteaga right from the beginning, as an inter-action or inter-relation that starts from otherness, responding to its attraction, its attack or urgency. Here, I think, we arrived at the most important point of the consideration, worth a second thought. Scientific work, with the help of technology, is intervening into the world and therefore violating it in order to reveal its inner truth, while art is touching it by being touched by it, being moved by it, leaving it as it is, just challenging its inner contradictions in order to show its complexity, its non-reductive riddles, its incomprehensibility. The first (science) sticks to certainty and therefore to the visible, the audible in one word: that what can be identified; instead art sticks to the tactile, the uncertain, the singular and unspecific. Therefore art is “intensifying doubts,” making our experience of the real more unstable, more abyssal. The radicalness of art results from this.

^{AA} I agree with this comment. There is only one, classic problem: the term “passivity.” The way you characterize art (research) at the end of your comment presents art as a form of activities different from the ones performed in the realm of science. Both are fields of action. Perception, and reception, are as well forms of action. If, I’m implicitly positing in this text, there is no no-action, what we tend to qualify as “passive” can only be understood as a variety of action. I see the fundamental differences between “passivity” and “activity” in the role of will and the level of distribution of agencies. I refer to passivity as a form of action which is not will-based and consequently does not pursue the achievement of a goal, and allows other agencies to become more relevant in the interaction. To express these or related ideas we tend to associate touch—a goalless, sounding touch—with passivity, although we can “touch” and “be touched” also by the agency of images and of vibrant bodies if we look and listen “passively.”



constitute “my” bodily “mine-ness”—but: would I still recognize this conduct as “mine,” as the conduct of “my”-self? Would I recognize my-self when other skills of mine—will and target-oriented acting—retreat (they have to retreat!) in order to allow my sensorimotor self to act spontaneously? Is this will-less, this dis-oriented, aim-less, goal-less self—furthermore: is it a self?—still my-self?).

And moreover, further intensifying the doubt: How should I interpret the “e” (this shortened “ex”) that qualifies motion in this concept: emotionality? How should I connote this presumable exteriority? As I did before, saying that “I am moved,” locating implicitly the motoric source of an emotional experience somewhere “out there” while affirming the interiority, the ownness of sensorimotor action?

Only an exhaustive and comparative phenomenology of emotionality and the sensorimotor self could help here. But incipiently, as a trial—as an essay—I would tend now to accept, speculatively, that both, senso-motoric and emotionality, express the realization of “our” skills—skills situated right there, in the boundary, between our skin, its sensors, our muscles and what might touch our skin—may be this is the primary place of aesthetics ...

Despite the attribution of my actions’ source to one or the other side of my skin, emotionality brings about another quality of action: a direct, immediate and unmediated action mobilizing the whole organism—the organism as a whole, as an organized whole—in, maybe, the most intimate touch, the most touching touch, the most intensive touch with the new perturbation of its environment.

A holistic alteration of the embodied organism, changing at once—immediately and in an unmediated way—its disposition toward its otherness and, maybe, as well toward itself varying its disposition toward the whole system self-world: coloring it, modifying, exhaustively, its

tonality, its overall and most basic texture. Modifying, thus, fundamentally, radically although temporarily, the primary framework of action. Generating—or probably better, manifesting—a fundamental contingent layer—a layer between potentiality and actualization, between the structure of our agency and its realization: a medium, I would tend now to say, acknowledging its character of basic all-over setting of conditions of possibility for the realization of our conduct.

The actualization, the spontaneous—again, meaning not constrained by any functionality, by any instrumentality triggered by the performance of our will and our ability to set a goal, to “devalue the present by projecting on a future, on a not here and now”⁵—unfolding of our emotional skills, our capacity of fundamentally, extensively, implicitly, potentially connote—not as an addition to a denotation, but as its condition of possibility, as marking together the field in which singularities will be marked, will be signified—the environment in its process of becoming environment: the process in and through which our surroundings—the necessary accomplice of our emotional action, of our emotion as action—turn to acquire a significance, turn to be an environment-for-us.

Aesthetic conduct: a form of participation in the common enabled and constrained fundamentally by the spontaneous, unpremeditated and thus radically present unfolding of the logic of the sensorimotor and the emotional.

A radical form of touch: of being, intensively, exhaustively, intimately, silently, attentively in touch.

An implicit but radical attentiveness—a basic awareness of the innermost touch of touch—through which the commonness of the common acquires an undeniable experiential expression.

[illegible]

A variety of conduct that allows the intensification—through the neutralization of our capacities of control in favor of the realization of our most basic forms of vulnerability: the constitutive fragility of the sentient organic matter—of the receptiveness to other agencies without strengthening their otherness but rather the commonness, the contingent character of the shared agencies.

Aesthetic conduct, therefore, as primarily and the most radical form of participation—of realization of the common.

4.

We search. Constantly.

We search for maintaining, maybe increasing, the viability of our conduct by dynamically modifying the disposing of the skills that structure our agency—our capacity for transformative action.

We connect, distribute, activate, repress, limit the actualization of our skills—in different degrees, on different levels, with different timings—configuring variable and complex networks: the infrastructures of multiple varieties of conduct, of different ways of participation in the common.

We search, also, aesthetically.^[Q]

We search letting our sensorimotor and emotional skills—our most basic connective skills (perhaps disregarding even more basic

[Q] ^{DM} Here it becomes clear, that aesthetic search, and hence aesthetic research, signifies only one mode of the most general search-practices that characterize our being-in-the-world. However, it seems necessary to me to distinguish between aesthetic and artistic search and also aesthetic and artistic research. Aesthetic search is more general, while artistic search and research seem to be more specified; the first includes all investigation based in what Gilles Deleuze called “percepts,” while the latter addresses a peculiar way of thinking, that forces open normative limitations, not as an end in itself, but as a way of reflecting them and demonstrating their inner illegitimacy. Therefore the constant emphasis of the concussion, the break and disrapture of order, a plea for more noise, more nothingness than sound being. So just pointing at aesthetics, at least in my view, wouldn’t be enough to found art and in art the way of artistic re-search.

^{AA} This is an important issue, thematized extensively in Gerard’s text. An exhaustive comment on that will exceed the limits of a comment. So just to sketch the guidelines of my approach: first, yes, I think it is important to note the difference between the aesthetic and the artistic; second, I consider art to have undeniably aesthetic roots, that is, I think that for a practice to be considered artistic, it has to be rooted in a form of being-in-the-world I term aesthetic conduct; and third, I don’t think that all aesthetic practices are artistic because not all fit in with the normativity that the (social) art (system) has been consolidating throughout its history—yes, I think too that art breaks normative limitations but it does it in the frame of its own normativity.

ones that enable metabolism, like breathing, eating, drinking or excreting)—lead the search.

“Letting them lead”: releasing the control of another skill—will—and, probably before that, of another one—rather a close network of abilities: to identify, select and fix targets.

Letting our conduct not be driven by the determination and achievement of goals.

Breaking temporarily with another variety of action, with a different disposition of our organic activities centered in an incisive, projecting, narrowing, engraving, manipulating participation in our world: an instrumental use of our body, a functional conduct demanding our body to work, to accomplish certain functions determined by a body, the very same body, that does not present itself to itself as a body but as a superior, disembodied entity that governs, subdues, controls “its” body, the body that “belongs” to it, that serves it.

Breaking temporarily with an ostensible disembodied self that organizes itself—its undeniable bodily self, it-self, inevitably, as body (not the body that “belongs” to this emergent sense of self but that enables its emergence without appearing as such).

Breaking with the instrumental organization of our skills by a functional self, an organization that simultaneously enables the functional self to emerge and to maintain itself—a self that subdues its body, that makes out of “body” “its body,” in order to subdue its environment.

An egocentric self that reduces body and environment to means and stages for its own accomplishment.

Aesthetic conduct—aesthetic participation, aesthetic being-active-with-the-world—thus, as one possible alternative to functional conduct.

A non-tensed, non-controlled conduct. A provisional suspension of a variety of engagement imposed by a single component of the whole system—the target-oriented will of a single unit—blocking the spontaneous formation of intentionality—the vector linking the unit to its surroundings, orienting their coupling. Blocking the tendencies emerging out of a non-hierarchical unfolding of our most fundamental connective skills—out of the communication, the intimate dialog of the common.

A temporary interruption of control: of rolling-against—against everything that resists, that opposes itself to the realization of the goal previously fixed by a singularity. Against the radical common: the common emerging out of itself, out of the spontaneous communication between its parts.

We search aesthetically, letting the adaptive actions—the actions-to-be, the possible actions because possibly viable—be informed by multiple agencies in touch: by converging contingent agencies.

We search for the viability of our conduct by disposing the skills that configure it in a way that allows for the emergence of the viable out of the fluid communication in a field of shared agencies.

We search reinforcing, extending, radicalizing the we, the common, letting it happen by intensifying the porosity of the touch—letting the viable arise out of the spontaneous performance of the viable.

But maybe, from time to time, it does not work. It simply does not work, and we have to stop and modify the search, make it explicit—explicitly organized, systematic, even methodic. We have to re-search.

Without ceasing to realize our agency in an intimate network of agencies, without renouncing to the lead of our coordinated sensors and motors, of our ability to be moved as a whole by and to the outside—to be e-motionally moved—we begin then to develop another form of awareness of it—of the way we are acting, of our aesthetic participation in the common.

We can realize—in a tight combination of both meanings of the word: understanding by doing, or even tighter, understanding as doing—the specific actions we unfold by acting aesthetically—again without imposing, without overwriting what is happening, but simply realizing it, noticing it, following it.

We can, thus, begin to turn our actions into practices—our aesthetic conduct into a network of aesthetic practices—and consequently our aesthetic search into aesthetic research.

We are, then, inevitably, inhabiting a thin space: a line, a boundary, a limit. The boundary that simultaneously separates and joins the spontaneity with which we move-by-being-moved and a certain degree of control, a minimal, iterative resistance to simply allowing everything to happen but without hindering that everything can happen: a minimal, subordinated reactivation of our will in order to come back again and again to what is happening—in order to reflect.

In order to organize—minimally—the spontaneous unfolding of our most basic organization.

*Search turns into research
when we have to stop,
modify the search
and make it explicit*

In order to practice instead of simply acting—without blocking the simplicity of our aesthetic conduct.

We are inhabiting then, unavoidably, the boundary in which the realization of a purposiveness—our fundamental and ineluctable intentionality: the constitutive aboutness that links us with the not-us—without purpose—without adding, without imposing any other intentions—is possible.

We research aesthetically: we let the connective dynamics of this field of shared agencies in which we are acting now unfold spontaneously in order to enable new possibilities of action, of viable action, to emerge and simultaneously to notice—and, perhaps, to notate—the forms the paths take: in order to allow unforeseen trajectories of sense in new, emerging fields of intelligibility to be disclosed.

We research aesthetically in order to (yes, there is an intentionality in this form of conduct, in this form of research, but it is operating in the background, it is, let's say, suspended, abandoned, ignored, as a way to let the non-intentionality or better, again, the spontaneity of our fundamental, unavoidable intentionality to unfold) realize forms of viability that we—now in a narrow meaning of the plural—cannot conceive by ourselves, cannot produce—cannot lead to our outside—cannot make, cannot design—cannot mark out of the flux, in which they appear and in which they should find an articulation.

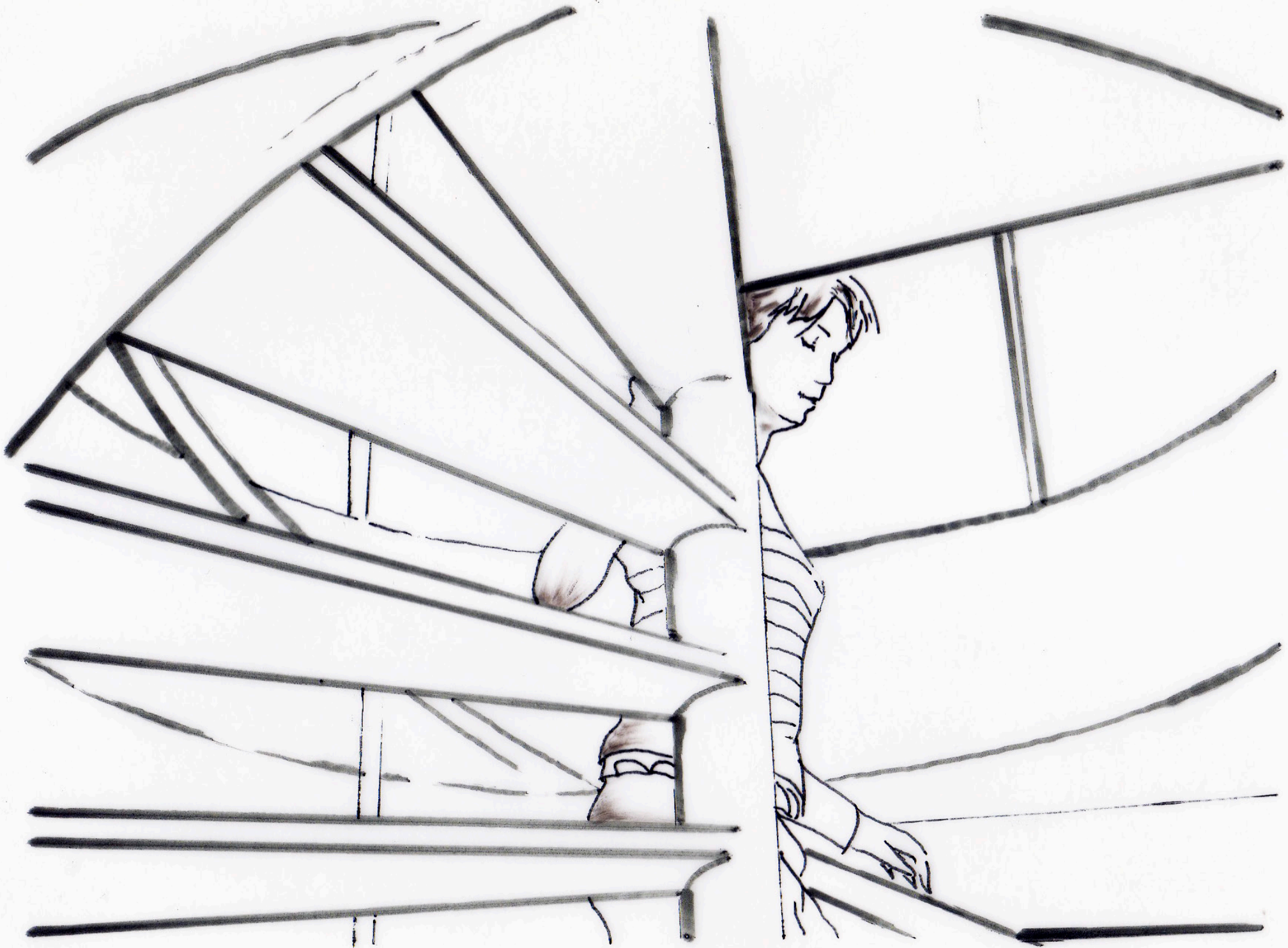
We research aesthetically to mobilize the inherent cognitive power of the common to find ways through the common to understand it.^[R]

[R] ^{DM} ... but also, in part, to escape from it, to find new and yet unknown ways of co-existence, of cooperation, of communication and thus, the social.
^{AA} ... which are new ways of understanding these concepts (and new ways of understanding, that is, of constitution of co-existence, cooperation, communication and the social).

^{ME} “We [...] And so on.” This highly selective quote highlights the gesture of exploration conducted throughout this text. Its textual habitus builds on a series of more or less recognizable philosophemes that privilege continuity and contact instead of gaps, adaptability and flow instead of blockages. In a word, its key gesture is “con-.” With this gesture the text delimits its scope and unfolds its exploration within the horizon of what might be called the “paradigm of construction.” It clearly does not engage with all those matters that we find in the basket labeled “the sublime.” The specific form of research envisioned in the text—“aesthetic research”—departs from the “common,” “establishes contact” with new entities and finds its “most radical form of participation,” that is, “realization of the common,” in “aesthetic conduct.” In my view, this implies that the search described, or more exactly, notated in this text tracks down “the aesthetic” in terms that avoid questions of desire, paradoxes and the pathic fracture lines of experience. I am not sure whether “coherence” has its roots in hairesis or not, but the compelling co-herence of Alex’s text, lives off the basic choice of privileging the “con-.” As a consequence, my comment might appear as heretic, as a choice to depart from the common otherwise, diabolically, questioning the value of consensus. Another variety of aesthetic search?

^{AA} My intention is not to privilege the con- over what you nicely termed “the pathic lines of experience.” I’m trying to escape the duality of con- / dis- by developing an inclusive approach able to articulatedly encompass both tendencies on two bases: first the fact that, whatever happens, life—as a process of sense-making—goes on and second that this is unavoidably a common endeavor—a constant and plural process. Adaptability, as the performance of plasticity, is one of the main skills not to avoid or exclude “gaps,” blockages, “desires” or “paradoxes” but rather to recognize and legitimate their function in the process or better networks of processes of sense-making. And examining the aesthetic way of participating in these processes, I would only accept the term “constructive” in its etymological interpretation: to structure with—to assemble or arrange together. I’m not interested in a concept of coherence based on any form of heresy but on the unavoidable necessity of, in all possible forms including all variants of separation understood as a structural element, “sticking together”—of maintaining structural coupling, to put it in Maturana’s terms. Following this line of thought, it is, somehow, always about allowing the emergence of common senses—consensus. Aesthetic conduct and, beyond, aesthetic research can contribute to that in a very specific and powerful way.

- 1 See Francisco J. Varela, "Organism: a Meshwork of Selfless Selves," in *Organism and the Origins of Self*, ed. Alfred I. Tauber (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 79–107.
- 2 Paraphrasing Maurice Merleau-Ponty in: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962).
- 3 See Dieter Mersch, *Epistemologies of Aesthetics* (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2015).
- 4 See Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology and the Science of Mind* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).
- 5 Paraphrasing Pep Quetglas in Pep Quetglas, "Cometa de seda en ráfagas de viento," in *Arquitectura de la Indeterminación*, Yago Conde (Barcelona: Actar, 2000), 16–21.



Stuff Framed:

Moving Boxes, Vitrines and

a Lot of Words

Mika Elo

One must start somewhere, turn a specific situation into a starting point. This implies departing from a familiar place.^[A] In this essay, I will develop some thoughts about exhibiting. I will also touch on some connections between exhibitions and changing one's residence, which involves literally taking up a place called home. This connection makes me especially interested in thinking about exhibition as a place. What kind of place is an exhibition?

Unlike home, an exhibition is a temporary place.^[B] It is a place where things and materials from different contexts are put together on display for a limited period of time. Visitors come to the exhibition from circumstances that do not necessarily relate to each other in any other way, other than the fact that all these people happen to be visiting the same exhibition. This implies that an exhibition is a place where something new emerges; it is a place where new connections and new associations, quite literally, take place.

[A] Or to turn a space into a familiar place ...

[B] "Home" can also be "temporary." The sense of a space to be "home" does not necessarily depend on length of time one has lived there, especially if this happens through different cities and countries, the coalescence of temporary and home—even the senses of a nomadic home not necessarily based on space but on objects that are brought—take home. According to the traveling exhibitions you present in the following lines "home" can be traveling too.

Yes, many people need to be very flexible in terms of working and living conditions. I myself am "based" in Helsinki and Bremen. The contrast I will draw between "exhibition" and "home" could be supplemented with a distinction between private and public space. "Being based" at home takes place more in the private sphere, whereas exhibition is in some sense of publicity.

Exhibitions often travel as well: from town to town, from museum to museum. The modern emblem of this dynamic aspect of exhibiting is the series of world expos designed to showcase the achievements of nations. These world's fairs conceived the whole world as a traveling constellation of displayable objects. The *Great Exhibition* in London in 1851 showcased the whole world condensed in a huge vitrine, the Crystal Palace.

An exhibition, in other words, “takes place” in two senses: Firstly, it occupies a specific space for a period of time. Secondly, an exhibition takes place in the sense that it is something that happens. It is a transient event that has the power to gather people and things in a defined spatio-temporal frame. However, unlike a concert or a performance, an exhibition is an event that subsists also in the absence of the audience.

There is a nocturnal reverse side to the exhibition: the time and space of things among themselves without humans.¹

Nowadays, exhibitions often also extend to the internet, and some even take place completely in a virtual space.² Further, a series of exhibitions can be connected to each other through curatorial gestures. Curation can be supplemented with other types of mediation and algorithmic connections, thus opening up a horizon of “systemics,” where things are connected as part of a wider and more complex system.³ Within this horizon, curating turns into a practice of programming that has its counterpart in computer programming, tagging, and the management of metadata.

An exhibition is a place that has a meaningful order. It is arranged with regard to signification. In this respect, exhibition practices are deeply rooted in our everyday life. Indeed, this might even hold from a phylogenetic perspective, as prehistoric humans, too, had the tendency to arrange things in their living environments and thus make sense of a situation by sorting out its parts.⁴

The German word *Stellenwert* (“place value,” “standing status”) gives us a hint of the intimate relation between place^[C] (*Stelle*) and

[C] ^{AA} I'm not sure that *Stelle* should be translated here as “place.” I understand it rather as “position.” Consequently I tend to understand *Stellenwert* as the value something acquires by virtue of the position it takes. This interpretation does not invalidate your use of this term here.

^{ME} I see the point. Further discussion here should include a differentiation between space, position and place. Part of the problem is certainly the quite complicated “fate of place” in western thinking.

value (*Wert*). Moving from one flat to another is one of those moments when we concretely face the fact that spatial order and meaningfulness are intimately connected: squeezed into a moving van, our precious objects start to feel like stuff that just takes up space instead of constituting a place. A successful move has to be methodically executed. Boxes need to be packed according to some clear categories,^[D] and it is good to have the boxes labeled as if they were vitrines that are temporarily not on display. Boxes stuffed with diverse things in a hurry often remain unpacked for a long time after the move. Do we touch here upon something like the domestic form of the material logic of all history?

An exhibition never consists of just “stuff,” since the act of exhibiting endows all odds and ends with a potential meaning. An exhibition is a place of transformation: it transforms stuff into items. Something that just takes up space turns into something that makes up a place. The disturbing aspect of this process is the fact that in order for something to make up a place, it also has to take up space in a specific place. To make up a place is to take a place somewhere.^[E] The container and the contained are intertwined. The spatial paradoxes of the relational character of what we are accustomed to call “form” and “content” are addressed in a playful way in Maija Närhinen’s work *Content* (2017)—a wall made of cardboard boxes filled with cardboard boxes.⁵

Even if exhibitions “come and go,” as we tend to say of these kind of organized events, they do not take place within an already existing empty time. They do not occur on a preexisting time line, even if the program booklets of museums around the world suggest otherwise.

These program slots are not exhibitions in the strong sense. Strictly speaking, the time of exhibiting emerges only within an exhibition. A set of gestures marking the “taking place” itself is at the core of an exhibition. It is worth noting that gestures, even the ambiguous and ambivalent ones, are necessarily finite: a gesture is a gesture *towards* something, and it always excludes something else.

[D] AGV What is a “clear category” in an exhibition? Categorizing is a question of placing, of setting things next to each other, as in the well-known example of the animal classification in Borges’ *The analytical language of John Wilkins*. I wonder if it is possible to evaluate or specify more that kind of placing, that categorizing. In the natural sciences there are criteria for this (completeness, mutual exclusivity, etc.). How could this placing in an exhibit be further differentiated? And, more importantly, how would this placing or categorizing be connected to those “forces of differing and gathering” (below), those forces of emplacement, that are pondered in an exhibition?

ME In my view the exhibiting gesture implies a thematisation of some kind of figure/background relation which in turn has to do with categorising. Of course this gesture can remain suspended, as is often the case in art exhibitions. Then the emerging categories are obviously not clear.

[E] AA I wonder if the introduction of a second term like “space” would help to formulate the transformations you are describing. Similarly to the relationships between *Umgebung* and *Umwelt* by Uexköl (see Lidia’s text) which I translated respectively as “surroundings” and “environment”, “space” could designate the topographical entity which will turn into a place through the operations of exhibiting. A weakness of this strategy is that there is no topographical unit that in touch with an observer does not become, more or less immediately, significant to the observer. That is, it becomes an environment, and consequently the existence of a “neutral”, non-connotated, non-significant topology—a surroundings, a space—is merely speculative.

ME Here we touch upon the fate of place again. My choice is to stick with everyday language as a way of asking whether our meaningful surroundings can be penetrated by a clear spatial scheme or does meaningfulness imply messy paradoxes.

Exhibitions thus have implicit and explicit rules. Visitors are instructed how to behave, how to view, how to walk, how to touch or not to touch, and how to speak during and after the visit. Various “metadata” help communicate these instructions: wall texts, handouts, catalogues, image captions, and work titles. Another name for these rules could be “techniques of aesthetic detachment.”^[F] These techniques involve a certain habituation of the viewer’s body, as Mireia Saladrigues’ work *A Specific Representation* compellingly suggests.⁶ It is, at the same time, also a question of mental habituation, as the *Humanoid Hypothesis* by the Other Spaces live arts collective convincingly demonstrates.⁷

An exhibition in the strict sense is an uncanny place where the accustomed sense-order is, at least temporarily, displaced.^[G] With reference to the peculiar etymology of the Finnish word for place, *paikka*, I would say that an exhibition is the “place of a place,” *paikan paikka*. I am not making this detour to etymology in order to establish more solid conceptual proof. Instead, I want to highlight (in a Benjaminian vein) the fact that language is a rich and multi-layered archive of displaced similarities and connections that contribute to the sense-order we tend to take for granted.⁸ The Finnish word *paikka* has its equivalents in many related languages.⁹ Together they show multiple connections between conceptions of place, patch, filling, spot, and target. The pattern that can be discerned from these etymological connections shows that the notion of place, in the Finnish language, is characterized by a tension between showing and covering differences in relations of juxtaposition. On the one hand, *paikka* is a “clearly discernible spot.” On the other hand, it is something that mends disruptions, fills in, and seals gaps. In a word, place is a relational setting traversed by the forces of differing and gathering. An exhibition in the strong sense offers a place for these forces. To make an exhibition is to work out an articulation of a sense-order that invites people to ponder these forces of emplacement.^[H]

[F] ^{AA} Why “detachment”? I understand that taking distance from what is not the exhibition, from what is or remains outside of it, can be a condition of possibility for experiencing the exhibition, but I think that you are referring rather to the contrary move: the actions that seek to establish a strong connection with the exhibition.

[G] ^{AA} And, furthermore, a place that aims at displacing or destabilizing established senses—of course in saying that I’m referring implicitly to exhibition of contemporary art and/or artistic research.

[H] ^{AGV} In my view, it would be illuminating to elaborate further on how that kind of pondering takes place and its relation to some of the questions opened up in other chapters, as in the case of the ideas of aesthetic understanding and/or aesthetic knowledge.
^{ME} Definitely, I hope I will have the chance to do so in the near future.

Here, my choice of the word “emplacement” is motivated by Samuel Weber’s translation of Heidegger’s *Gestell*.¹⁰ In Heidegger’s vocabulary, *Gestell* is an epochal configuration of technics that formats our sense of time and space. In modernity (since the Renaissance), its mode is representative: it tends to render the whole world as an image.¹¹ In more concrete terms, emplacement is the operative aspect of an apparatus that prepares, delimits, and formats the configuration of meaningful discourses, practices and techniques, as the related terms of Foucault’s *dispositif* and Agamben’s *dispositivo* (in English “apparatus”) reveal.¹²

These philosophical references hint at the ways in which an exhibition that invites visitors to ponder the forces of differing and gathering also operates on an ontological level.¹³

An exhibition is necessarily enmeshed in the power relations prevailing in a specific historical context. Otherwise it would not function as an exhibition; its gestures of exhibiting would not be recognizable as such. This implies that the exhibition as an articulation of sense-order is fragile; it takes place in a contested space of discourses, practices, and technical arrangements. This is particularly true of art exhibitions, since in art contexts, the exhibition as an apparatus is an “open machine.”¹⁴ It is not sealed, so to say, to serve predetermined functions only; its elements can be “re-functioned” through the very gestures of exhibiting.

Contemporary art exhibitions confront us with two compelling issues¹⁵: 1) Multi-dimensionality of sense, which implies that sense cannot be reduced to meaning. Neither the artist’s or curator’s explicit intentions nor discursively established interpretations can serve as ultimate points of reference. All facts are made; they are factishes that imply selection and reduction in regard to the excess of sense. 2) Non-human agencies: Artistic gestures do not take place only on the level of (verbal) communication or thematic content, and they cannot necessarily be traced back to the author. Material circumstances

interfere in the hermeneutic horizon. Artworks have an agency of their own, or perhaps more precisely: on their own, independent of particular human settings.^[I] This means that artworks have real effects independent of their interpretation.^[J] Guan Xiao's work *David* (2013), which was exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 2017, demonstrates this in a rich way by focusing on various appropriations of and cultural phenomena related to Michaelangelo's *David*.¹⁶

An art exhibition is an exhibition *par excellence*. An art exhibition is not just a display. It is not just a means of representation. It is not a closed machine, at least when it is not fully immersed in the mechanisms of the art market. That which is shown in an art exhibition is shown through a set of gestures that are part of the setting. In other words, one could say that an art exhibition makes it impossible to completely bracket various parergonal elements.¹⁷ This implies that it has aesthetic stakes. It engages with the tension between the overwhelming richness of sense experience and the unifying tendency of conceptual thinking. When visiting or experiencing an exhibition, the focus of attention can be set either on topical issues or on framing conditions. But it is important to note that the very gesture of setting the focus is an aesthetic issue, since appropriate focusing can emerge only in accordance with the aforementioned tension (the tension between sensing and conceptualizing), which is, necessarily, something felt.^[K]

This implies that an exhibition in the strict sense is an *aesthetic apparatus*. Exhibition practices that incorporate the questioning of their aesthetic conditions into their gestures of showing can be considered aesthetic research. But how does this relate to art? Is there a difference between aesthetic research and artistic research? In order to unfold these questions a bit further, we need to consider more closely the concept of "apparatus."

Here, my main point of reference is Giorgio Agamben's expansion of the Foucauldian notion of *dispositif*.¹⁸ For Agamben, an apparatus (*dispositivo*) is "literally anything that has in some way the capacity

[I] AGV In principle, I would agree with that position, but how is that idea of agency of artworks characterized? Do artworks actually act and do things? If so, how do their actions, independent from their author's intentions and from the interpretations they might originate, relate to human actions? Can they be completely isolated from each other (if not, what does "independent" here mean)? Also, is there any kind of intentionality in this non-human agency?

[J] AA Yes, "on their own" but not "independently of a particular human setting." I absolutely agree with the idea of the autonomous agency of artworks—and furthermore of architectural and non-architectural components of the space of exhibition and its surroundings—but they unfold their respective agency in a system of relationships, that is as contingent agents (see Ana's text). Accordingly, I agree that "artworks have real effects" but not that they are independent of interpretation. On the one hand because these effects can only be identified as part of interpretations—understanding "interpretation" here in a broad and fundamental sense as "constitution of significance"—and on the other hand because the "real" emerges out of the interaction between different "effects": among others, the ones caused by the agency of the artworks and the ones caused by human agency, including "interpretation."

ME In another vocabulary we could speak of "affordance." Artworks suggest various connections and perspectives as much as they tease out certain kinds of reactions and interpretations. I am less thinking of intentionality here. But of course the matter is more complicated than this. We should specify, for example, "real" effects in relation to "potential," "virtual" and "actual" effects.

[K] AA This dense formulation seems to me to be problematic. Probably the basis of the problem begins a few sentences before. It is not clear to me if both "the overwhelming richness of sense experience" and "the unifying tendency of conceptual thinking" belong constitutively to aesthetics or if this is the case only in reference to the first term. If the second option is the right one, I would not agree with your affirmation that "setting the focus is an aesthetic issue," since setting a focus reduces necessarily the richness of sense experience. And although the tension between both terms is, as you write, "something felt," this would not be a necessary and sufficient reason to consider it to be aesthetic. It could be simply a case of "liminal" use of the senses (see Gerard's text).

ME Well, I am referring to the Kantian primal scene of aesthetics and its relation to schematism. To argue this through philosophically would require quite some work and open a whole new chapter.

to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings.”¹⁹ For him, the key issues at stake in such apparatuses are “processes of subjectification,” “humanization,” and “the possibility of knowing the being as such,” that is, the construction of a world.²⁰ In short, an apparatus is an assemblage of material circumstances and technical arrangements that determines—as the etymology of “apparatus,” *apparare*, “make ready for,” suggests—the phenomenal horizon of experience. Agamben, in other words, expands the notion of apparatus beyond the historical specificity of Foucauldian knowledge/power settings to include all kinds of cultural techniques and their ontological effects.

Agamben’s account highlights the relevance and historical variability of the sense-making processes operative in exhibition apparatuses. It is important to note that Agamben insists on the multiplicity of apparatuses. As medial settings of sense they never appear alone, but are always embedded in one another’s co-appearance; they intersect and intermingle in multiple ways. The intersemiotic encounters between different modes of articulation in an exhibition constitute moments of reconfiguration through relations of exteriority, both material and expressive in kind.

As a sense-making apparatus, an exhibition is an assemblage of relations between the languages or modes of articulation that it brings together in a space. Instead of speaking *of* things, an exhibition speaks *on the same level* as the things it brings together. An exhibition takes place *in medias res*; it participates in the world of things.^[L] This comes close to what Deleuze and Guattari call an “abstract machine.”^[M] In their account, language is an abstract machine that does not appeal to any extrinsic factor. When conceived in terms abstract enough, a language machine is no longer just a matter of verbal language; it appears as the machinic aspect of the collective assemblage of acts, statements, and incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies.²¹ An exhibition (as an assemblage) is the place—the force-field of differing and

[L] AGV What consequences does this *in medias res* situatedness of an exhibition have for the kind of research that it can carry out?
ME In order to go with this question it would be helpful to delve into the discussions concerning “expositionality” (Schwab) in artistic research. The key issue here is the impotence of a search for any convincing meta-perspective. The research gestures take place, so to speak, “in medias res,” without the back-up of an “extrinsic factor.”

[M] LG The “abstract machine” is defined by Foucault as a diagram, and Deleuze also interprets this term in relation to Francis Bacon’s painting practice. A diagram, in Peirce’s theory, is constituted by relations and should not be equated with an iconic image. Applied to exhibition, could we say that exhibition is a medium of relations that, like the diagram, generates new possibilities of sense? Does place in this sense become a diagrammatic *dispositif* of the constitution of meaning?
ME Yes, exhibition is a “medium of relations,” but perhaps in the sense that the relations first emerge in and through this medium.

gathering—where techniques, practices, and discourses *entangle and emerge* as distinct aspects of sense-making.

During the past few years, “artistic research” has gained the status of an overarching label for various research activities within the arts and art universities. In its broadest sense, “artistic research” refers to a wide range of research activities and approaches, for which the arts do not constitute the object of study but rather the practical and methodological terrain of research. In a narrower sense preferred by some authors, the term refers to a specific methodology or a field of research. In both cases, the question of its status as a discipline arises.²²

I think the focus should be shifted away from questions of discipline towards dispositions that move beyond the logic of representation. Viewed through the lens of assemblage theory discussed above, the apparatus of artistic research appears as a distributive unity of processes, technics, arrangements, material circumstances, regulations, and articulations that format the experiential horizon of artistic inquiry.

Thus, one of the key challenges of theoretical discussions on artistic research is to grasp this set of loosely related arrangements and agencies in terms of its capacity to generate sense. Attention has to be paid to the consistency of distributed processes instead of to the proprieties of a conceptually or institutionally delimited field of research. This implies considering artistic research as a frame that transposes various elements rather than as a discipline.

Here, a shift in the vocabulary is needed, since “artistic research” is a problematic notion. The problem lies in the qualifier “artistic” and its implied counterparts “scientific” and “academic.” The key issue is not whether particular research is “artistic” enough to qualify as *artistic* research or “academic” or “scientific” enough to count as *artistic research*. Supporters of this kind of view end up reproducing normative conceptions of art and of research. The real question is how to conceive of a framework in which multiple forms of inventive processes fostered in the arts can be critically discussed and developed

further in terms of research relevant for artist-researchers. We need to divert our reading of the term from its disciplinary connections to the sphere of its dispositional surplus: the commitment to transform “knowledge production” into a “space of thinking,” as Michael Schwab puts it.²³ Leaving open the question as to what extent this space is also the space of aesthetic thinking, I think it is important to assert that discussions on artistic research have to grapple with the question of *multiple* forms of research, not only because there are multiple arts, and not because different artistic research projects might have a vast range of motivations, but due to the dynamic character of the whole constellation within which a distinction between “artistic research” and “aesthetic research” can be worked out.

Pondering the differences between “artistic research” and “aesthetic research” is one way of working against the disciplinary closure of artistic research. I hope that the thoughts concerning exhibitions as aesthetic apparatuses developed in this essay will prove themselves helpful in this delaying battle.

[FULL TEXT]

^{GV} I have two main comments to the text *Stuff Framed* by Mika Elo on exhibition spaces as apparatuses.

1. He takes for granted that exhibition spaces are very special spaces. Unlike home, an exhibition, to mention only some of the features listed by the author, is a temporary place, it is a place of transformation because it transforms stuff into items ordered in a significant form. It is an opening or disclosing place, strange and disturbing; it is a space of thinking and it is an apparatus, or open machine, organized in such a way that an exhibition can be considered a practice form of aesthetic research. Elo, then, subscribes to the thesis that exhibitions are an *Espèces d'espaces*, to use the title of an inspiring book by French writer Georges Perec (*Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, London: Penguin, 1997) which is completely different from everyday spaces. Everyday places are not evident, but blindness and anesthetic (“*car ce que nous appelons quotidienneté n'est pas évidence, mais opacité : une forme de cécité, une manière d'anesthésie*”); i. e., the opposite of exhibition spaces.

Such a thesis, however, is not completely evident, because the quality of everydayness is relative. For professionals of art theory, art criticism, curators or artists, students and teachers in the field of art, exhibition spaces can be as familiar as the living-rooms of their homes. However, what home is for one depends on the kind of person one is. For some people home is a space of self-creation, of permanent change and transformation, with movable furnishings and decoration.

Consequently, the radical opposition between exhibition and ordinary space must be, at least, tempered.

2. Furthermore, I find that Elo's list of features misses a practical and pragmatic effect of the kind of space that an exhibition is: it is also a space of power. The placement of a place is also the institution of a space of power relations, because someone selects some work(s), some artist(s), some discourses instead of others. This is especially the case when institutional curators establish programs reflecting strong ideas about what should and should not be exhibited.

^{ME} These two comments indicate the fact that exhibition, obviously, needs to be characterized as a public space as well. This might even be the most decisive aspect of an art exhibition as a place. In order to address this, I would discuss curating as “*paikkaaminen*,” as preparing a place, which, as the Finnish word “*paikka*” suggests, involves gestures of “patching” and “mending” that direct the attention to certain issues while downplaying others.

For some people, rather than their possessions bringing solace and comfort, they actually are like the encrusted shell of a (snail) snail, trapping one into a particular set of memories triggered by the objects. And the only relief from it occurs when you shut the front door of the house and walk away. I appreciated the way Laura Grace Ford in her PhD dissertation referenced these ideas in relation to the writing of Virginia (Woolf) Woolf.

"Shifts in spacial and temporal zones allow new modalities to emerge in the writing, they permit an interweaving of voices. Writing becomes solvent, it dissolves geographical distances and boundaries. In this way it is possible to establish a series of contacts with hidden narratives, a process which articulates the relational dimension of aesthetic experience.

In *Street Haunting* Virginia (Woolf) Woolf writes

If we step out of the house on a fine evening between four and six, we shed the (~~friends (ours) know us as~~) self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous tramps, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one's own room (Woolf, 1930, p.2).

In the shuttered rooms of a private home, her eyes fixed on familiar objects, trinkets and ornaments which give rise to weary anecdotes. The domestic sphere for Woolf is a drum resonating with the broadcasts of old things, things that fix and cement a biographical I. The house is cluttered with 'objects that perpetually express the oddity of our own temperaments and enforce the (memory) memories of our own experience.'

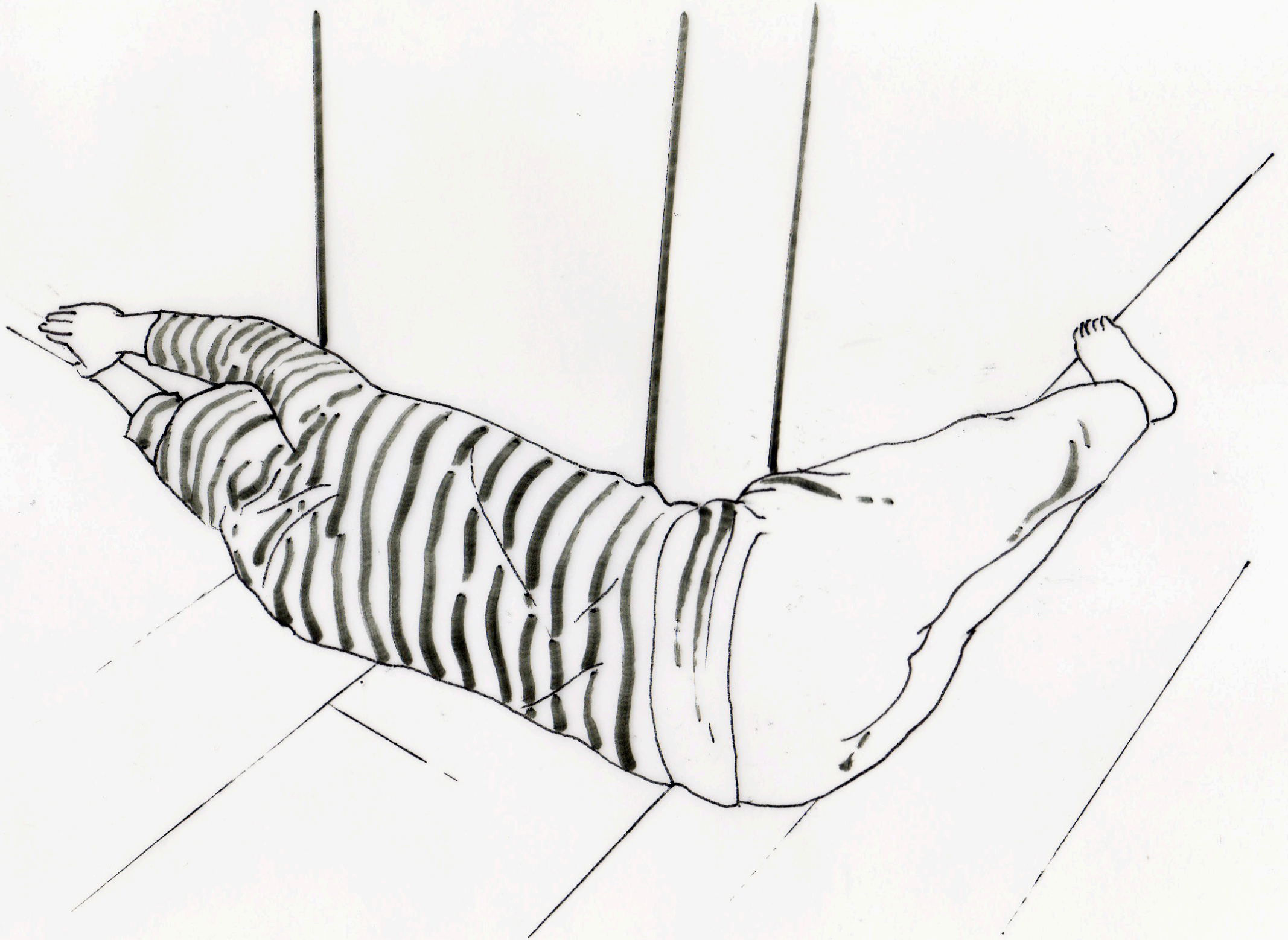
It is not until she crosses the (~~threshold~~) threshold that we fully grasp their restrictive influence. Objects are suffused with anecdotes, and images are fixed like glazes. Each ornament, garment and household thing has its place in a reticulation of biographical markers, memories become frozen images like outdated data caches.

The escape is exuberant, as Woolf shuts the door and escapes this universe of objects, psychic space is liberated, she becomes a vessel, an all-encompassing eye.

The shell-like covering which our souls have secreted to house themselves in is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye.

This enormous eye is the multi-subjective self, the radial, all-encompassing point of view. Movement in and out of psychic life worlds dispenses with an idea of essentializing identity, the self is present, not as a monolithic, insoluble I, but a vessel channeling stray signals, a composite of voices." Laura Grace Ford, *Threshold Cartographies: The Poetics of Contested Space*. Royal College of Art, PhD, September, 2020, pp. 60-61.

- 1 In popular culture, the nocturnal life of the exhibits has fed the imagination in ways that speak to wide audiences. The American fantasy-comedy *Night at the Museum* (2006), for example, was a great box office success.
- 2 For example, Google Art and Culture project is a massive attempt to translate physical exhibitions into virtual ones. In her artistic research work, Mireia Saladrídues thematises this kind of virtual extension of exhibitions <https://virtualpresenttour.com/> [accessed Dec 17, 2017].
- 3 Joasia Krysa, "Introduction: Systemics of Systemics," in *Systemics* (or, *Exhibition as Series*): Index of Exhibition and Related Materials, 2013–14, ed. Joasia Krysa (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), 7–14.
- 4 This has been pointed out for example by André Leroi-Gourhan. "[T] the prime originality of Leroi-Gourhan as a prehistorian was his realization that spatial relationships – from cave drawings to objects in a habitation – was the key to an understanding of what remains of systems of thought and the daily life of prehistoric peoples." (François Valla et al., "From foraging to farming. The contribution of the Mallaha (Eynan) excavations 1996–2011," *Bulletin du CRFJ* no. 10 (Spring 2002): 73). Mary Douglas has thematised questions of dirt and purity in a similar vein: dirt is matter out of place. See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1966).
- 5 <http://www.maijanarhinen.fi/works/content/> [accessed Dec 17, 2017].
- 6 <http://www.mireiasaladrigues.com/w/specific-representation> [accessed Dec 17, 2017].
- 7 The performance starts with a "humanoid training," a bodily exercise which prepares the participants for a humanoid mode of perception. The participants trained as humanoids will then accomplish a 45 minute long expedition in the urban surroundings, or, in one variant of the performance, in an art exhibition. <http://toissati-loissa.net/humanoid-hypothesis/> and <http://kiasma.fi/nayttelyt-ja-ohjelmisto/kiasma-teatteri/toissati-loissa-maan-ulkopuolinen-taide-humanoidihypoteesi-2/> [accessed Dec 17, 2017].
- 8 This mimetic dimension of language plays an important role in Benjamin's philosophy of language. See for example Walter Benjamin, "On the Mimetic Faculty," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Michael W. Jennings et al., vol. 2, part 2 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 722.
- 9 Kaisa Häkkinen, *Nyky-suomen etymologinen sanakirja* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2004), 854.
- 10 See for example Samuel Weber, *Massmediauras. Form, Technics, Media* (Palo Alto CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).
- 11 See for example Martin Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes," in *Gesamtausgabe. I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1914–1970, Band 5. Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977).
- 12 On relations between *Gestell*, *dispositif* and *dispositivo* see for example Susanna Lindberg, *Le mode défaut. L'être su monde aujourd'hui* (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2016).
- 13 In his Artwork-essay, Benjamin presents a multifaceted analysis of the ways in which an artwork incorporates in its very structure key elements of the framing conditions of its display. He thematises this in terms of Aura, Zerstreuung and Sammlung (Mika Elo, Valokuvan medium, 69).
- 14 For the implications of this Simondonian term, see for example Erich Hörl, "A Thousand Ecologies: The Process of Cyberneticization and General Ecology," in *The Whole Earth. California and the Disappearance of the Outside*, ed. Dierich Dierichsen and Anselm Franke (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 121–130, 123.
- 15 Mika Elo, "Ineffable Dispositions."
- 16 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3Y7UpGPZXg> [accessed Apr 29, 2018].
- 17 See for example Jacques Derrida, *Truth in Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
- 18 I have presented the following argument earlier in Mika Elo, "Ineffable Dispositions."
- 19 Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 14.
- 20 Ibid, 12–14.
- 21 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2014), 87–91.
- 22 For a useful terminological mapping see Vytas Michelkevicius, *Mapping Artistic Research. Towards Diagrammatic Knowing* (Vilnius: Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 2018).
- 23 Michael Schwab, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place," in *Intellectual Birdhouse: Artistic Practice as Research*, ed. Florian Dombos, Ute Meta Bauer, Claudia Mareis, and Michael Schwab (London: Koenig Books, 2012), 229–247, 243. See also Mika Elo "Ineffable Dispositions," 290.



This book is a collection of essays that explore the relationship between architecture and embodiment. The essays are written by a group of architects and theorists who are interested in the ways in which the body shapes the way we experience the world and how architecture can be designed to respond to this. The book is divided into two main sections: 'Embodiment' and 'Architecture'. The 'Embodiment' section contains essays by Alex Arteaga, Mika Elo, Ana García Varas, Lluís Gaspar, and Kathryn Hall. The 'Architecture' section contains essays by Susanne Hauser, Dieter Mersch, and Gerard Vilari. The book is a dialogue with one another through comments and commentaries on the essays. It is conceived as a dialogical research project that aims to participate in an open-ended and ongoing research with a focus on the ecology of research practices.

This book is a collection of essays that explore the relationship between architecture and embodiment. The essays are written by a group of architects and theorists who are interested in the ways in which architecture can be used to create a sense of place and community. The book is divided into two main sections: the first section contains essays that focus on the theoretical aspects of architecture and embodiment, while the second section contains essays that focus on the practical aspects of architecture and embodiment. The book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the relationship between architecture and embodiment.

Architectures of Embodiment is a constellation of collaborating artists, architects, texts by Alex Arteaga, Mika Elo, Ana García Varas, Lluís Gaspar, Judith Hahn, Susanne Hauser, Dieter Mersch, and Gerard Vilari in dialogue with one another through comments and commentaries on the collection. It is conceived as a dialogical research project that aims to participate in an open-ended and ongoing research with a focus on the ecology of research practices.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

2014

ISBN 978-0-226-30111-1

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