

## EDITORIAL

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# The material imagination, or ten years of *Artnodes*

*Artnodes* has reached the age of ten. In this time we have published twelve nodes and a great number of the highest quality articles from authors from around the world. We have seen all kinds of practices, theories, authors, collectives, institutions, categories and histories appear, grow, disappear and consolidate. We have learned to distance ourselves critically from the diktat of the new while continuing to keep up with the latest from the great debates taking place worldwide. We have been able to consolidate our position in terms of the academic journals on art and now set forth on a new process of internationalization of the journal's structure in order to face up to the new challenges that this will entail. Thus, we want to be able to continue focusing the upcoming monographic issues on the crucial debates and leading topics in art today.

With this in mind, the issue presented here focuses on a topic of particular importance, which over recent years has been framed within a “new materialism” – a topic that has stood out for the great amount of confusion it has caused and the important implications it has led to. Following years and years of visionaries preaching the immateriality and bare ethereal virtuality of digital culture and art, raising up the discursiveness and their symbolic paradise over the brute materiality of things and converting artistic practice into the act of an active subject giving shape to an inert and passive material which becomes a mere receiver of the idea. . . . after all this and more, digital culture and art now turn out to be made of things, things that sometimes break and stop working (we’ve all experienced that).

Things, parts of things, systems of things, amalgams of all kinds of different things, materials, techniques and technologies that organize the materiality that underlies all cultural practice, regardless of how virtual or digital they might be. Curators and artists themselves have been battling daily, though they have known for years. While the former concern themselves with the best way to preserve the materials and technologies that articulate the work, the latter choose one or other material, technique or technology to make or explain some things better than others. In both cases, they are not banal decisions on “mere inert receptacles”, rather they fully affect the sense of the actual practice.

This may well be the main point of incomprehension inherent in the still present idealist aesthetic and underlying formalism in contemporary art with regard to new media art – a perspective that is obviously unable to see the materials, and the techniques and technologies used in these media as authentic cultural artefacts that are the subjects and/or objects of meaning in the construction of the aesthetic experience. In the last node, number 11, we looked at this radical and explicit incomprehension between the great theoreticians in each of the two camps, Peter Weibel and Nicolas Bourriaud, in terms of the practices, theories and systems of new media art, art-science or contemporary art in general. What is in play is the conceptualisation of materiality in the very practice of art: whether it is a mere receptacle or the formulation of an unbreakable semantic-material hybrid and, indirectly, attributing technological and material culture the role that it deserves in the constitution of the history of art, leaving the way open for new creative forms that connect intimately with our contemporaneity.

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