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INTRODUCTION

Art and speculative futures

“What would happen if...?”

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Approaching art from a speculative point of view also involves thinking about other possible worlds beginning in the invention of futures that defy the logic of continuity and that can still surprise us. It means asking ourselves “what would happen if...” and completing the second part of the sentence as might the “idiot”, that conceptual character able to generate the interstice from which other questions emerge, questions for which the conclusions can neither be taken for granted nor can it be assumed that the seeking for their meanings was exhausted. To speculate is to formulate these questions in the form of future fictions and to seek out possible responses without being ashamed of the uncertainty or faltering attempts. To speculate about the future is also to speculate about the present and the past, to create contemporary fables, far-reaching accounts that induce thought.

These future fictions inherently involve an act of repositioning, which dispels the ideal of a primitive origin in the past and multiplies the presents of enunciation, irrespective of their retrospective rationality. A movement that opens to futures in plural cannot otherwise have its counterpart in its temporal conjugations. An opening that puts a strain on and cracks the “hegemony of the present” and, if we are sufficiently alert, we can see traces of

discontinuity and chance in those fissures, oblivion and myths that we will be able to pull from so as to construct other narratives “able to offer us a wholly different earth to which we had been blind”, so says Rick Dolphijn in his article in this edition.

These cracks can be understood as creative practices in themselves, the result of an activity that is always relational between humans and their surroundings, and immanent to the process of life (Ingold, 2009). As such, speculation as a breaking tool cannot be aimed at a future or used to construct a history. It is in the plurality of perspectives where it gains poetic and political sense. Through this cluster of dispersed accounts – whose dispersion protects against their becoming dominant truths – is where one can explore the multiple paths and ignored or omitted histories of the arts, which include artists, materials, technologies and political zones excluded from the oft-repeated and commonly accepted accounts.

This edition of *Artnodes* brings together some of these cracks that coexist in their differences, that strain, crack, open up the world, that make the tension visible between the order of things and the constructed discourse, or, in other words, between the flow of life and the system through which we have explained it. These articles are closely related to the debates at the congress of the same name

held at the Barcelona Centre for Contemporary Culture (CCCB) and at Arts Santa Mònica on 27-29 October 2016.¹

This edition begins with **Radek Przedpeński's** "Manifesto for metallic avant-garde", in which he poses the question: "how can art be untimely?". Or put another way, "how can art work counter to time and for the benefit of a time to come?" Przedpeński's article is structured to be an ethological, ethical and aesthetic response to this question, with which the philosophical concepts of Deleuze and Guattari and some of their philosophical interlocutors are interwoven through transversal encounters with diverse artistic practices. An experiment that seeks to affirm, in the author's own words, the Nietzschean "belief in the future". An exercise that fosters a future aesthetics that continues to be "problematic so as to preserve its creative potential", irreducible to the anticipation, the calculation and the prediction. A future that goes beyond any linear formulation: cracked, in a permeant state of renewal.

If Przedpeński introduces us to the Deleuzoguattarian narrative, **Rick Dolphijn's** article "The Cracks of the Contemporary" embodies it with special lucidity. In his text, Dolphijn deals with the central theme of this edition: how to think about art in relation to time –virtual, current, absent, permanent, irrelevant and speculative pasts, presents and futures that come into play from a deep-rooted materialist perspective. Dolphijn weaves together elements of literature and philosophy to show these moments of 'crack' – rupture, breakage, fracture – that alter the linearity of time and the hegemony of the present in economic, political and social terms, and continue playing with this concept while we face up to "an earth that we, for some reason, was unthinkable before".

"The present territorialises the earth, the economic, social and political realities of the day; measures the earth; fixes it; fixes it and intends to realise it according to its standards [...] Yet always too fast. Dangerously fast", says Dolphijn. It is against that sophisticated and intrusive acceleration of the world so inherent to the capitalist system, that **Rafael Pinilla** speculates about in making his case for a 'community of fatigue'. He rails against the pre-eminence of productivity and action, with the subversion that 'fatigue' and 'slowness' imply in our modern times, since "if we are not able to create a kind of 'dream resistance'" the 24/7 temporality will neutralise any chance of imagining – of dreaming about – a better future. Through art and literature – arguments on the fringe of "everyday occupations" and the *vita activa* that they impose on us – one can constellate a past for fatigue as resistance and, in the same movement, imagine a future with new structures for the re-appropriation of our bodies and its times: colonised, fragmented and accelerated.

The role of *bodies* in constructing the imaginary in future art practices is also the subject of the article by **Emma Brasó**, who questions in her text (and the word 'text' here is not accidental) another of the major themes of capitalism: the authentic self. "Be yourself" they tell us, when in reality what they are saying is: "pretend that you are being yourself while you play out the role we expect from you". Parafictions are considered as strategies for going beyond questions of racial, gender and religious stereotypes, all the while evidencing and questioning them. The writer analyses different "parafictional" creations (Donelle Woolford, Reena Spaulings, Barbara Cleveland and The Atlas Group), by means of which "certain expectations about who is legitimised to produce and present, to say and see" are modified. Brasó imagines – and then proposes – a near future in which parafictional artists are multiplied and become ubiquitous.

Brasó describes some parafictional practices as post-identity positions, and **Jazmin Adler** also wrestles with matters of identity in her text, but from an angle from which one's own multiplicity is not the key to imagining other futures for art, its histories and its institutions, but rather it is the plurality of territories and geopolitics that matter. Adler unravels the modernisation and specific future ideas present in Argentina, as well as its "oscillating institutional developments". It is in these aspects that she finds the key to understanding the history of art, science and technology practices in Argentina, and the ways in which the local institutions have taken on those disciplinary intersections. The 'future', for Adler, seems to be anchored, deep-rooted, situated. The 'future' is not a generic, a homogenous time period; on the contrary, it is a world-building horizon.

Adler builds her analysis on two proposals exhibited during Electronic November in Buenos Aires – *Elevaciones* by Leo Nuñez, and *Hysterical Machines | Mega Hysterical Machine* by Bill Vorn. An exhibition is also the starting point for **Federica Matelli's** article, which focuses on *Speculations on Anonymous Materials*, an exhibition commissioned by Susanne Pfeffer at the Fridericianum de Kassel Museum, in order to deal with questions central to the theme of this edition, such as the 'futurisation' of the present and the 'presentisation' of the future in connection with reflections about the *hyper* and *trans* stylisation of everyday life in today's society, "in particular in terms of its ultra-digitised artistic capitalism".

Federica Martini's contribution to this edition analyses cases in which artistic practices connected to industrial culture and production are made visible and are reconstructed, with a special focus on the materials, materiality and production processes. The majority of these histories emerge from informal archives both from artists'

1. Jointly organised by the research groups Art, Architecture and Digital Society (AADS) and Art, Globalization, Interculturality (AGI), both from the University of Barcelona, and the Open University of Catalonia research group Mediaccions, in the context of their respective research projects: "Art, architecture and new materialities" [HAR2014-59261-C2-1-P], "Critical cartography of art and visuality in the global era: New methodologies, concepts and analytical foci" [HAR2013-43122P] and "D-FUTURE: Future practices, digital creation spaces and social innovation" [CSO2014-58196-P]. For more information about the Art and Speculative Futures congress, visit: <<https://artfuturesconference.wordpress.com/>>.

workshops and from the factories where their praxis took place. Martini undertakes an exercise involving the historic re-reading of art, highlighting areas little explored – or even directly ignored – in the official narrative. And she does so from an archaeological perspective, focusing on the evidence from the material vestiges of the works and the understanding of its tacit creation process, like other testimonial forms that go beyond the meta-information contained in oral accounts, history and documents.

A different perspective, and almost the counterpoint to that presented by Martini, is the one taken by **Marc Koscijew** in his analysis of the materiality of documentation and its associated practices. Koscijew underscores the importance of understanding documentation as a means of materialising artistic information.

And so from a diverse range of perspectives all these articles tackle the “what would happen if...” scenario. Speculating on pasts, multiplying the presents and proposing the futures. Opening cracks.

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