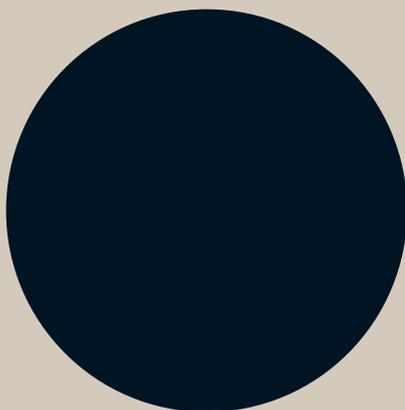
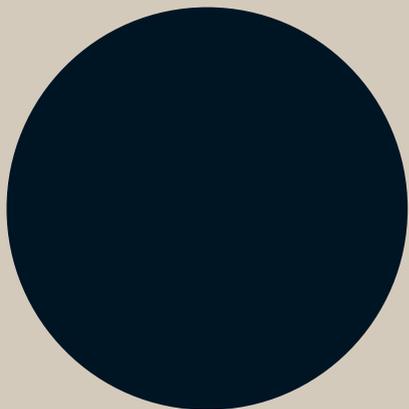


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**Issue 02**

**2019**

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This is Jackalope is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the creation, dissemination and management of contemporary artistic practices. Founded and directed by Cristina Anglada and Gema Melgar, This is Jackalope is conceived as a platform from which to produce cultural projects that experiment with formats and discourse.

This is Jackalope is born out of the aim to develop international action and among its objectives is that of generating a place for exchange and dissemination between existing discourse in different artistic communities. It also seeks to promote partnerships, relationships and encounters between people, in order to produce and disseminate knowledge.

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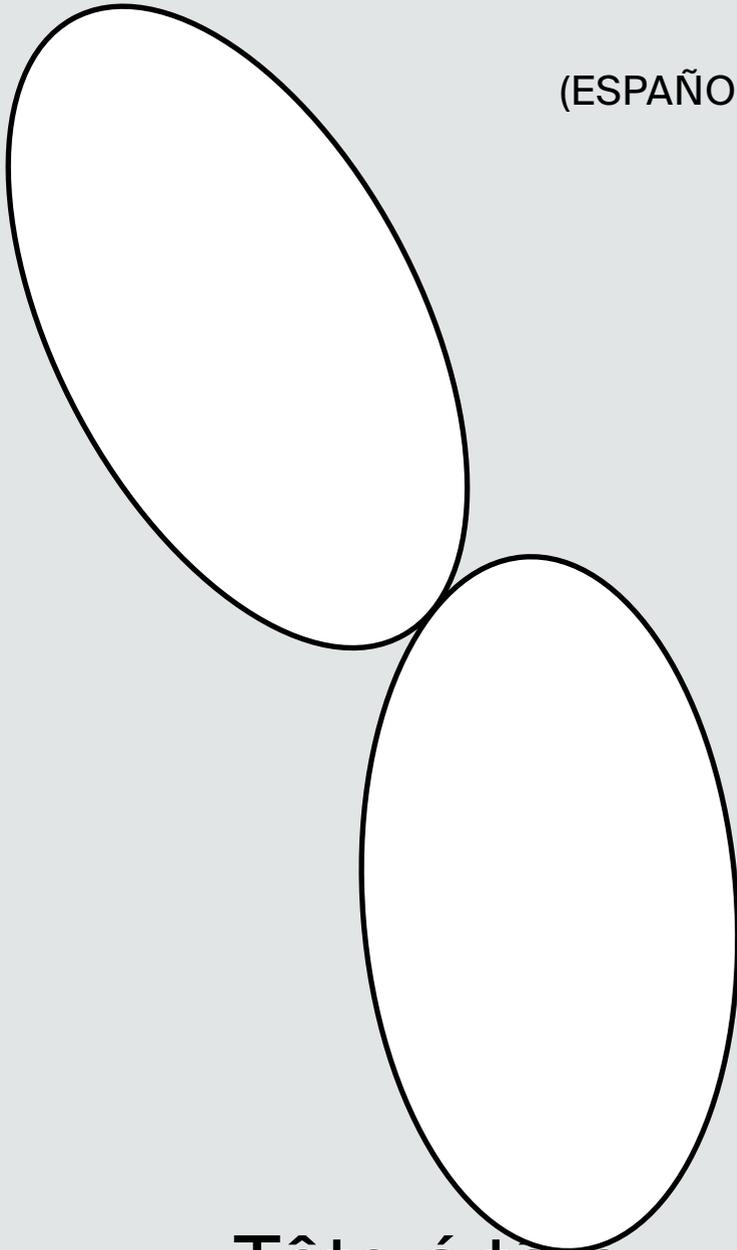
This is Jackalope es una organización sin ánimo de lucro dedicada a la creación, producción y difusión de las prácticas artísticas contemporáneas. Fundada y dirigida por Cristina Anglada y Gema Melgar, This is Jackalope es concebida como una plataforma desde la cual producir proyectos culturales que experimenten con los formatos y discursos.

This is Jackalope nace con vocación de actuación internacional y entre sus objetivos está el de generar una vía de intercambio y difusión entre los discursos vigentes en distintas comunidades artísticas. Asimismo, busca fomentar las colaboraciones, las relaciones y los encuentros entre personas, con el fin de producir y diseminar conocimiento.

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# Alejandro Alonso Díaz & Michael Marder

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Tête à tête



Ingela Ihrman. The Giant Clam. Courtesy of the artist

→ ALEJANDRO ALONSO DÍAZ: I would like to start by introducing your thinking in relation to the notion of objectivity. This concept is intrinsic to the kind of sciences that impact our world in a more physical way, and one that we have somehow uncritically inherited when it comes to a reality that is kind of crossed by the illusion of objectivity. In that sense I'm particularly interested in how the environmental humanities, and more specifically plant thinking, question this legacy. Can we start by introducing your work in relation to these ideas?

⇒ MICHAEL MARDER: Yes, certainly. As you know, there are several points of departure for my ideas gathered in Plant-Thinking, and one of those points of departure is phenomenology. In phenomenology what is really valorised and important is an intrinsic experience of the world from the standpoint of the being who experiences it. Obviously, in classical, traditional phenomenology, it is human beings that experience it, but then something interesting happens in the small historical gap between Husserl and Heidegger. In the case of Martin Heidegger, he was very influenced by the writings of Jakob von Uexküll, a biologist who went quite a long way towards expanding a perspectival and subjective approach to the world from the standpoint of non-human forms of life—more specifically, of animals. He did not go as far as plants, but he did try to

imagine how the same objective environment would feel and look and be experienced by different life-forms, —let's say by a human, by a dog, by a fly, etc. If these beings are in the same room, then the same objective space is experienced differently and different parts of it come to the foreground, while others are more obscured from the standpoint of the different species. For me, plant-thinking is phenomenological to the extent to which it tries to imagine the limits of the imaginable for us, humans. It tries to imagine how the world feels like and how it could be experienced by plants. I would say that —and this is one response to your question— the role of subjectivity is important here, precisely insofar plant subjectivity is

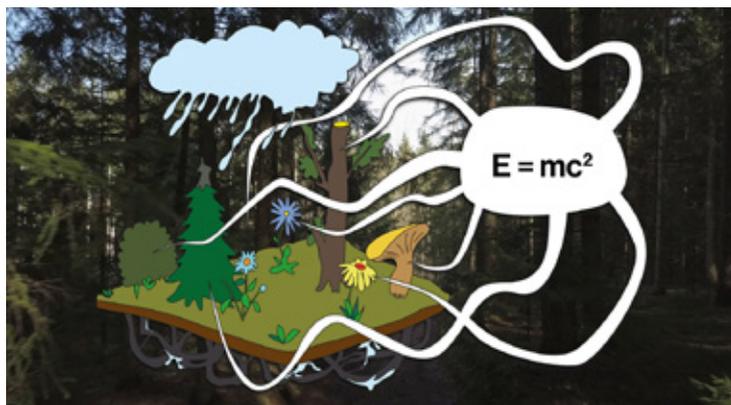


Illustration by Marek Meduna, 2019

another way of experiencing the world. But another response that I have would be in the form of a question: How do we even approach the notions of subjectivity and objectivity? These concepts are not two separate poles; I would rather say in a more dialectical mood now, that what we call objectivity is a kind of overlap of different subject positions, of different subjective perspectives, and so the place where they overlap the most is what we call objectivity. Objectivity itself is a creation, a synthesising of various subject positions. It is something that, then, gives us the appearance of being independent of any subject position, prior to and nothing to do with it. But in fact, what we call objectivity is a very complex product of a long process, in which subject positions partially converge. In the case of different forms of life —let's say a human and a plant—, the space for a convergence is smaller and that's why in *Plant-Thinking* I talk about a kind of phenomenology of the in-between —I call it meeting the plant halfway— because we can

never put ourselves in the shoes or in the roots of a plant. That said, we also shouldn't stay imprisoned in our completely anthropocentric cages, and that's why the experimental thinking that I propose basically tries to orchestrate what I call a 2 encounter of two modes of subjectivity, the human and the vegetal, from the space in-between them.

→ AAD: When I think about objectivity I also see it as a methodology that has been shaping the history of knowledge at least since the Enlightenment – for instance, the study protocols by which some disciplines connect the idea of objectivity to the practice of isolation. We isolate things in order to observe them, and this is very clear in the ways we look at things and learn about the behaviour of materials, beings, etc. On the other hand, I'm very interested in how, instead, your work looks at the world in relation to plants, allowing us to imagine and create different kinds of nets. Plants relate to each other not under conditions of isolation but in constant interaction.

⇒ MM: It is interesting that you raised this point. The notion of a controlled experiment, with the strict isolation of whatever is being experimented upon from the context in which it would otherwise exist, is, to my mind, a mirror of the alienated subject traceable back to Descartes' philosophy. Again, what we call "objective" is a mirror image of the mutilated and alienated subjects that we are. We're trying to recreate that idea of ourselves in the world outside us, in order to get to a confirmation of our own solitude in this

correspondence. In the case of plants, the idea of objectivity works even less because plants are more context-dependent than us, even if we know now that social relations have an undeniable formative effect on humans, and that who we are is not just determined by genetics but also by the context in which our lives are unfolding, within a family,

Ingela Ihrman. The giant water lily *Victoria amazonica* blooms in a small tropical greenhouse in the outskirts of Kalmar during the evenings of June 8-9



within a certain society, etc. More so for a plant, whose shape is going to be determined by the place in which it grows, how much sunlight it receives, from which direction the sun rays are reaching it, what kind of microorganisms live in the soil where its roots are, and so on. All of those things that are presumably external to a plant are as important, if not more important, than the genetic material encoded in the plant itself. So how can we even talk about a secure and objective knowledge of what a plant is, if we isolate it from that context which is integral to its very constitution, so that the outside is within it and the inner is externalized?

→ AAD: And yet, the way we look into the world of plants is very much based on classification and isolation. The awakening to the laws of interdependency seems intimately linked to the threat of our own extinction within a present embedded in environmental uncertainty. For instance, when we look at the work of Monica Gagliano now, and her research into the agency of plants, it takes a whole new meaning when we see nature responding to our impact on earth.

⇒ MM: It is important to realize that what you are describing (namely, an interdependent net of relations that is ecology) is not an isolated field of study. It is, rather, how we should see reality as a whole. So even hard sciences need to come to terms with this alternative mode of perceiving how reality organizes itself. For instance, in the 20th century someone like Emmanuel Levinas insisted that ethics is not a subdiscipline of philosophy, but that it is the first philosophy, even more fundamental than being itself. In that sense, in the 21st century we have to insist, along similar lines, that ecology is not just a branch of human knowledge, but is the first knowledge, and that in order to know anything we have to see it through the prism of ecological perception you describe.

→ AAD: Yes, and in order to grasp this ecological perception perhaps we need to activate an unlearning process. For instance, we've always studied plants through categorisation and representation, highlighting their lack of mobility, which is of course an important factor. The fact that we perceive plants as passive entities enables a kind of objectifying input, but still I'd like to imagine the possibility of a kind of knowledge that is based on experience and not on representation and to speculate on the role art could play in this unlearning.

⇒ MM: You could say that plants do move in space, but they do so much slower than our perceptual apparatus can register. The movement of plants is multifaceted, and it includes growth, opening and closing leaves, the appearance of flowers, etc. All of those movements coincide with the type of movement that Aristotle described millennia ago. For Aristotle, movement or kinesis was not only locomotion –the displacement of a body in space– but also growth, decay and metamorphosis, or change of shape. The last three types of movement are obviously very vegetal. Thus, one important issue would be redefining our idea of movement, not even seeking anything new but going back to something quite old and forgotten: the dimensions of movement we left behind in modernity when we started thinking of movement only as locomotion. The other issue is representation. Now, when you talk about representation, you obviously refer to plants as the represented elements, but, in fact, we can also put the question the other way around: do plants have a capacity for representation? From a subjective point of view, I would say that plants experience the world without representing it. They do not need the mediation of representation, but that is not at all a handicap. Take the way in which plant memory works: when trees remember light –and they need to do it in order to survive– they register, time, and archive memories about sunrays – like the last rays of the sun for the day – in order to decide about the optimal flowering time. When a plant remembers sunlight, it does not represent that sunlight to itself. That is no longer present in actuality, but a tree stores the memory of it Sun at a cellular level. This idea gives us a clue about the possibility of an experience of the world without representation, even though, we, humans, have overvalued representational capacity of our psyches. Perhaps, artistic practices from the last 40–50 years that have moved away from the predominance of representation are now trying to correct this bias and to recapture the kind of experience that does not necessarily need to rely on a representational capacity.

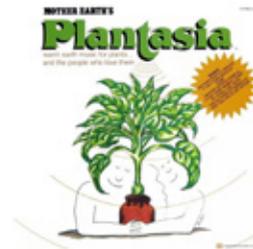
→ AAD: You have come to describe plants as “artists of the selves”.

⇒ MM: They are!

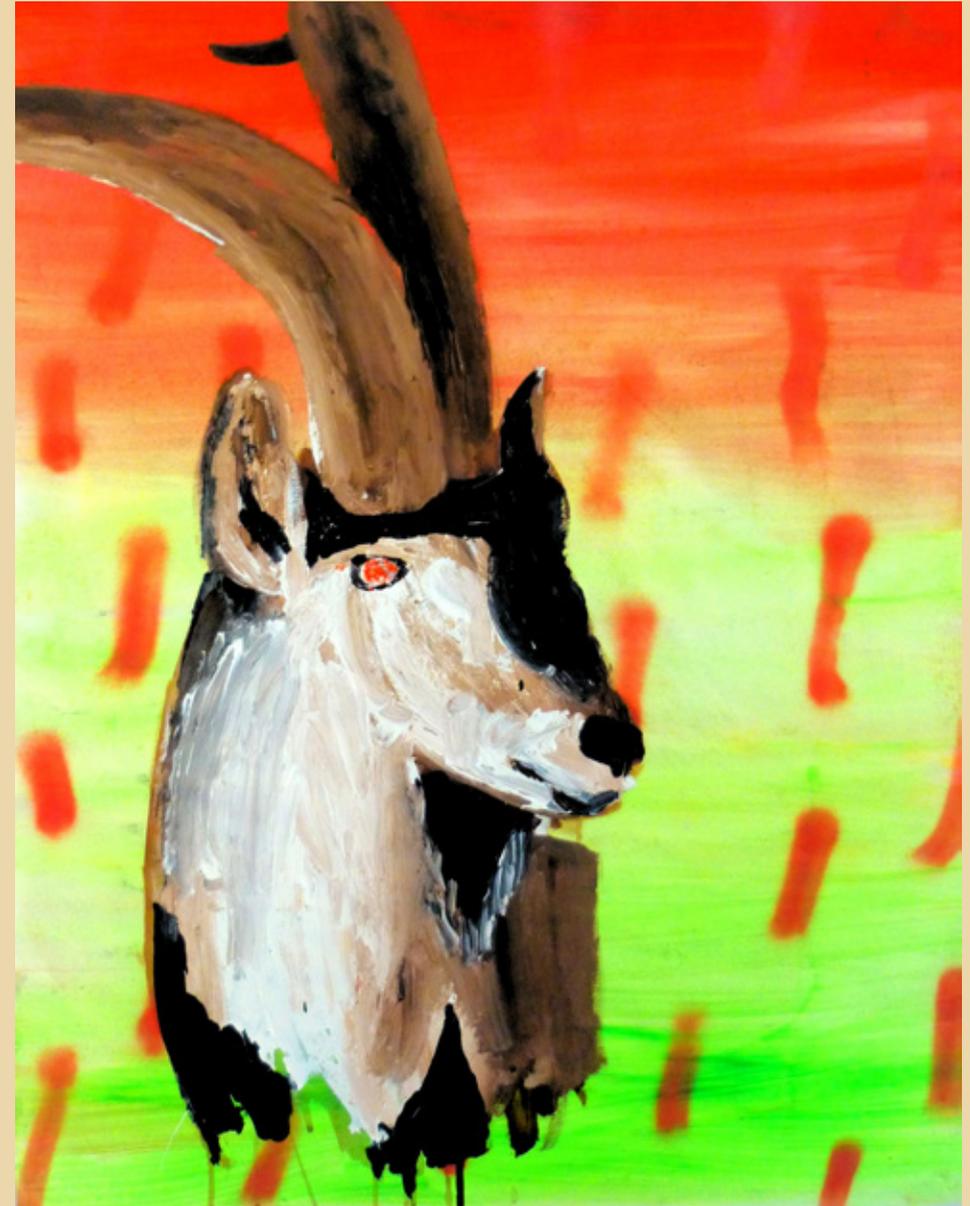
→ AAD: I like the idea of art perceived/experienced, as well as created by anyone/anything. But art also filters our own social hierarchies

and structures, something that you can easily recognise in the museological order that we apply to our museums. I think of Natural History Museums and the way our social systems contaminate this kind of “natural narratives” that, of course, also apply to the vegetal kingdom...

⇒ MM: What immediately comes to mind is the colonial aspect of the relation between plants and humans. The two moments of that relation that I would like to highlight are herbaria, on the one hand, and botanical gardens on the other. In many instances, the Empire tries to not only represent in the ideational realm but also to create itself in the miniature in lived space, by bringing different plants together. Imagine strolling in an imperial botanical garden in Portugal (there are two such gardens in Lisbon alone, one of them housing just tropical plants). You would be surrounded by species that have been brought from the former Portuguese, from Brazil to Mozambique, from Guinea Bissau to Macau. These plants are sharing a space that they wouldn't share in their native habitats. By simply putting them together in the same garden, the Empire recreates itself at the botanical level. And the same applies to herbaria, because much of modern European plant science was given an impetus by the so-called “discoveries” of the non-European shores. Very soon after the first wave of colonial trips, many plants started arriving back in Europe and seeds from various indigenous species made the diasporic journey, too. Dried up and preserved, plants became a vehicle both for the creation of colonial knowledge as a tool of domination and for the Empire's self-consolidation. The only difference I see between herbaria and imperial botanical gardens is that, in one case, plants are dry and dead, while in the other case they're living. In herbaria, the only way you could interrelate plants, is by putting / exhibiting them together or by storing them in the same archive, such that the archive becomes also a means for the self-consolidation of the Empire. In botanical gardens, though, it's the living plants themselves that strangely get the chance to generate certain interchanges that they would not have otherwise had, communicating underground through their roots.



Mort Garson. Plantasia's Cover, 1976



# Beatriz Ortega Botas & Alberto Vallejo

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## Dying, Lingering, Carrying, Persisting



Precious Okoyomon. *Life in a box is a pretty life*, 2019. Yaby, Madrid. Courtesy of the artist and Yaby, Photography: Alberto Vallejo

Tête à tête

## DYING

Death can give itself dilated in time as a dying with a long enough duration as to incorporate to its own sphere processes that are proper to life: breathing, drinking water, feeding, chewing, tasting what you eat, desiring. This duration of dying is a temporal extension that precedes death but that also succeeds it in as much as it is marked from the beginning by it. The picture could be that of a moribund person that undertakes the experience of a process of death as a continuation of a life that, at some point, acquired particular characteristics, substantially different, in a more or less indefinite countdown. But this is not a continuation of life, rather a living exercise of dying that no longer resembles the life that was exercised before. From this picture, this living exercise of dying presents itself as a vital exception that sooner or later will be finished with death, when the countdown is over. Christina Sharpe draws on another image of a life marked by death throughout its entire duration for which this mark of death is not an exception but its actual condition: the death of black people as norm is the predictable and constitutive reality of life

Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016a

in Western democracy, it is “the ground we walk on” (2016a: 7); and asks what it might mean for black people

to live with this required death. Here death is not an exception or a resolution; after it, no mourning will

serve as a closure and there will be no overcoming to bring one back from mourning into life as it was before: how does one mourn the interminable event? (Sharpe, 2016a: 19). And if death does not function

as a resolution or an end that takes you back to the start, to birth that reinitiates the life cycle of living until you die, the linearity of the circle is unraveled and temporal trajectories become strange.

There will be no future then –the sequence of past, present and future is broken–, and not even because of withdrawing from the

Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004

reproduction of society, but because such temporal trajectory will not be at all possible for this being, there will be no hope for a following stage nor the

Bliss, James. “Hope Against Hope: Queer Negativity, Black Feminist Theorizing, and Reproduction without Futurity.” *Mosaic: a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature* 48.1 (2015): 83-98

possibility of withdrawing from this hope as a way of life. Death as conceived by queer negativity had to do with desire –the desire to stop here and now (Edelman, 2004: 31)– and dealt exclusively with white life and

death; black feminism prefigured deaths and lives that share this negativity but that have not adopted



Precious Okoyomon. *Life in a box is a pretty life*, 2019. Yaby, Madrid. Courtesy of the artist and Yaby, Photography. Alberto Vallejo

it willfully (Bliss, 2015: 83), extending pessimism against the future from a recovered archive of erased eternal pasts whose non-linear posterity lays out the temporality of the interminable event for which there is no mourning or overcoming. Queer negativity, in obviating race, was unable to imagine a mode of posterity that was not linearly orientated towards the future (Bliss, 2015: 85).

## LINGERING

There is a cemetery full of graves full of signs. That message is not for me, it's for the dead. But I wonder if they are comprehending it or if the living that wrote it used the appropriate grammar. The same thing happens with flowers: there must be something that we are trying to tell the dead when we select with so much care the flowers that we leave for them on their graves, but I am not sure they are receiving the message. Or if the message is reaching who it should. Each dead will need their own flowers because their deaths are never the same: one particular kind, one color, one stem length, tied in a bouquet or planted in the soil of the burial. One same concept of death will not suffice to speak of all the corpses because death doesn't cover all bodies and all flesh in the same way. Queer negativity and Sharpe's afropessimism define, in a very precise manner, different concepts of death, with unequivocal causes and symptoms, departing from different positions and relations and bodies and flesh.

Afropessimism theorises an ontological death; for Lee Edelman or Leo Bersani, death is a question of temporality: death means queer life has no reproductive futurity and that its reproduction only leads to death. James Bliss finds advances of this negativity of white queer theory within the tradition of black feminism:

Spillers, Hortense. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* 17.2 (1987): 64-81

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2009

Hortense Spillers (1987) describes a community—the black community—whose reproduction is a priori disjointed from the father, from his law, from his symbolic function, a family whose relation with the totality of the symbolic order that Edelman rejects is always purely negative, dysfunctional (2015: 85). Beyond José Esteban Muñoz's anti-antiutopian critique of the exclusive whiteness and punk casualness of

Edelman's negation of the future, Bliss suggests to continue the line of thought of the anti-relational position in order to elaborate a queer reproduction short-circuited by black reproduction and its necessarily queer posterity (2015: 84). In this way, many dead survive, stay lingering, inhabiting a time that has a particular continuity but no future. A time of spectres, of perseverance without the hope of survival. Linda Stupart describes a death that bursts in the space of the living to draw an ontological line between the sub-

Stupart, Linda. "Some Men Have Mistaken me for Death." *\_AH* 1 (2019)

ject—living—and the object—corpse (2019). Death is a technology that operates along this ontological line (Stupart, 2019). But its direction is not one way: it doesn't go only from living subject to corpse, instead there

are dead that incessantly affect life. Spectres are impressions from the past that can cause real damage, that keep wielding this technology that is death (Stupart, 2019). The afropessimist theorisation of death establishes it as the ontological condition of human beings: it is the dead that make the life of the living possible. Queer negativity develops the death drive of Bersani to wield it and to keep queer death lethal: the queer subject that kills its own future must be celebrated because they embody the threat to

Bersani, Leo. "Is the Rectum a Grave?" *October* 43 (1987): 197-222

any viability of the social order and its reproductive futurity (1987: 222). This way of living is born from death, from disease and infection. Its processes—necrosis, decay—open up possibilities of existence that are different from those of life and open up repetitive and spiralling times that succeed death over and over again. Just like flowers are born from all the rot of the ground and bloom so well in cemeteries, by ceaseless weeds, there with the fertility of the dead.

## CARRYING

The dead as a constant presence don't come with a scare, they're not that type of ghost. They give themselves as an ubiquitous burden, as an always imminent immanence to the world that the living inhabit (Sharpe, 2016b). Spectres are part dreams, part projections, imaginations and desires, they are old wounds. Kara Keeling explains queer reproduction precisely in these terms: as a relation with the past from which signs and clues are drawn in order to understand how to configure oneself in the present almost like in a fantasy (2009: 571). Keeling borrows this conception of queer reproduction as a creative process from Grace Kyungwon Hong, one that is not based on "the real" but that instead traces from the past any potential possibilities of existence in what follows. "Perhaps that is all that we are now and will ever be: the fragments and figments of someone's imagination, of someone's desire for us to exist" (Hong, 2009). To dream of the past and to give it presence is also a way of carrying the dead with us, forming with them a "family" or an "army" the members of which originate from different times. Alexis Pauline Gumbs talks about a queer intergenerationality: "the practice of being present to what can be generated and then shared between moments in times and encounters, that is not necessarily linked to generations in the patriarchal familial sense" (Gumbs, 2010). This queer aspiration to constructing non-patriarchal transtemporal bonds and ties, Gumbs advises, has a lot to learn from black reproduction since blackness is already external to patriarchy and so is its reproduction: it's an insistence on a phantasmagoric and menacing presence that destroys (white) patriarchal structures and the norms that these try to perpetuate. It's a non-normative persistence, the continuous past flourishing again, a non-heterosexual child, a child that doesn't symbolise the tomorrow of the social order. "Fuck Annie," said Edelman alluding to the orphan girl from the musical, with no parents but the daughter of all parents, oozing innocence and optimism, an anti-queer weapon. Well fuck her, but this child is not Annie. In the posthumous life of slavery this black child inherited the non/status, the non/being from their mother (Sharpe, 2016a: 15) who

Sharpe, Christina. 2016b. "What Exceeds the Hold? An Interview with Christina Sharpe." *Rhizomes* 29 (2016)

Keeling, Kara. "Looking for M—: Queer Temporality, Black Political Possibility, and Poetry from the Future." *GLQ* 15.4 (2009): 565-82

Hong, Grace Kyungwon. "Blues Imaginaries and Queer Futurity." [Unpublished manuscript] 2009

Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. "Speculative Poetics: Audre Lorde as Prologue for Queer Black Futurism." *The Black Imagination: Science Fiction, Futurism and the Speculative*. Eds. Sandra Jackson and Julie E. Moody Freeman. New York: Peter Lang, 2011. 130-46

Precious Okoyomon. *Life in a box is a pretty life*, 2019. Yaby, Madrid. Courtesy of the artist and Yaby, Photography: Alberto Vallejo

was on the outside and who from the outside threatened and will continue to threaten the norms that white patriarchal structures impose; the reproduction of this past, stripped of any normative possibility of lineage, unfolds as a queer heritage widened through time, lived as a historical dis/continuity that is always present and endlessly revitalised (Sharpe, 2016a: 15). This child is not the future but the mere continuity of the carrying of the weight of what happened, of the dragging of the dead through the now, sharing time with trauma or, in other words, travelling through time in weird directions — "As if there is a hole between timelines, or, a glitch", your present body is overlaid by your body of the past, the no-longer-your-body that lived the traumatic event (Stupart, 2019).



## PERSISTING

Lorde, Audre. *The cancer journals*. San Francisco: Spinsters, 1980

Gumbs recalls Audre Lorde's cancer journals (1980): death was not the enemy, but something like an "invitation to investigate what life might mean if persistence is not defined by consent to reproducing social norms" (2011: 145). One can be dying for some time and never end up dying and, instead of dying, continue to reproduce, keep on continuing despite everything, at pace with cancer, passing tumours off as embryos. It's a dead exercise of living oneself. A static insistence that gains its strength in a downward thrust even if it's only to reaffirm one's own position, an outstretched eagerness to squeeze out drops from stagnation. Persisting there and

then is proceeding with disruption, spiralling the ways of blood, and with creation and novelty deviated, dislocated: “Lorde as vampire, mother, poet redefines survival to be inclusive of death and transformation” (Gumbs, 2011: 143) to disseminate from the earth non-linear children like blades of grass, like flowers sprouted in places of burial. These non-linear children, like flowers in graveyards, speak a language that queer negativity never deciphered: their intertemporal messages of posterity cannot be translated with the words “death” or “future” as coined by Bersani and Edelman. Calvin L. Warren recognises how seductive the grammar of queer theory can be when one must speak of violence and suffering, but the horizon of communicability of the logics of life and death that such grammar puts into play is fractured before these black children that Lorde disseminates; this grammar of life and death is built upon the very dissolution of the being that it is trying to name, over their death as a structural position of non-ontology (Warren, 2018: 8), incommunicable, incoherent and in irresolvable tension with one death that can name only an experience of unfreedom (Warren, 2018: 6). With Gumbs’ remembrance, Lorde’s ghost traverses a hole between timelines as undead critique and question that will live forever (Gumbs, 2011: 145), as undecipherable as it may be. A memory is an obstinate figure of persistence; traumatic memories, collective, familiar will never cease to appear. It is for this reason, as Saidiya Hartman explains, that slave traders used magic, potions, spells, guns and whips on slaves to try to erase their memory: a slave without a past –without a mother, without the name of their mother, without a town– had no life to avenge (2007: 155). There were forests of oblivion that slaves had to cross, full of branches they’d stumble into that would scratch their skin and steal their memories which stayed trapped in the web of leaves (Hartman, 2007: 156). Those forests are sites of persistence, they have grown out of violence; delving into persistence does not mean that the past is overcome, that it is left behind when a clearing is finally reached, but rather that everything in the present will become darker and darker under the branches, and more crowded and narrow. And here the litany of persistence becomes longer and longer as it continues to intensify.

Warren, Calvin L. *Onticide: Afropessimism, Queer Theory, & Ethics*. Camas Books, 2018

Hartman, Saidiya. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007



This is Jackalope  
Solo project

Lucía C. Pino

PP. 22-31

Shaleka, 2018. Photo: Diana Gujarro

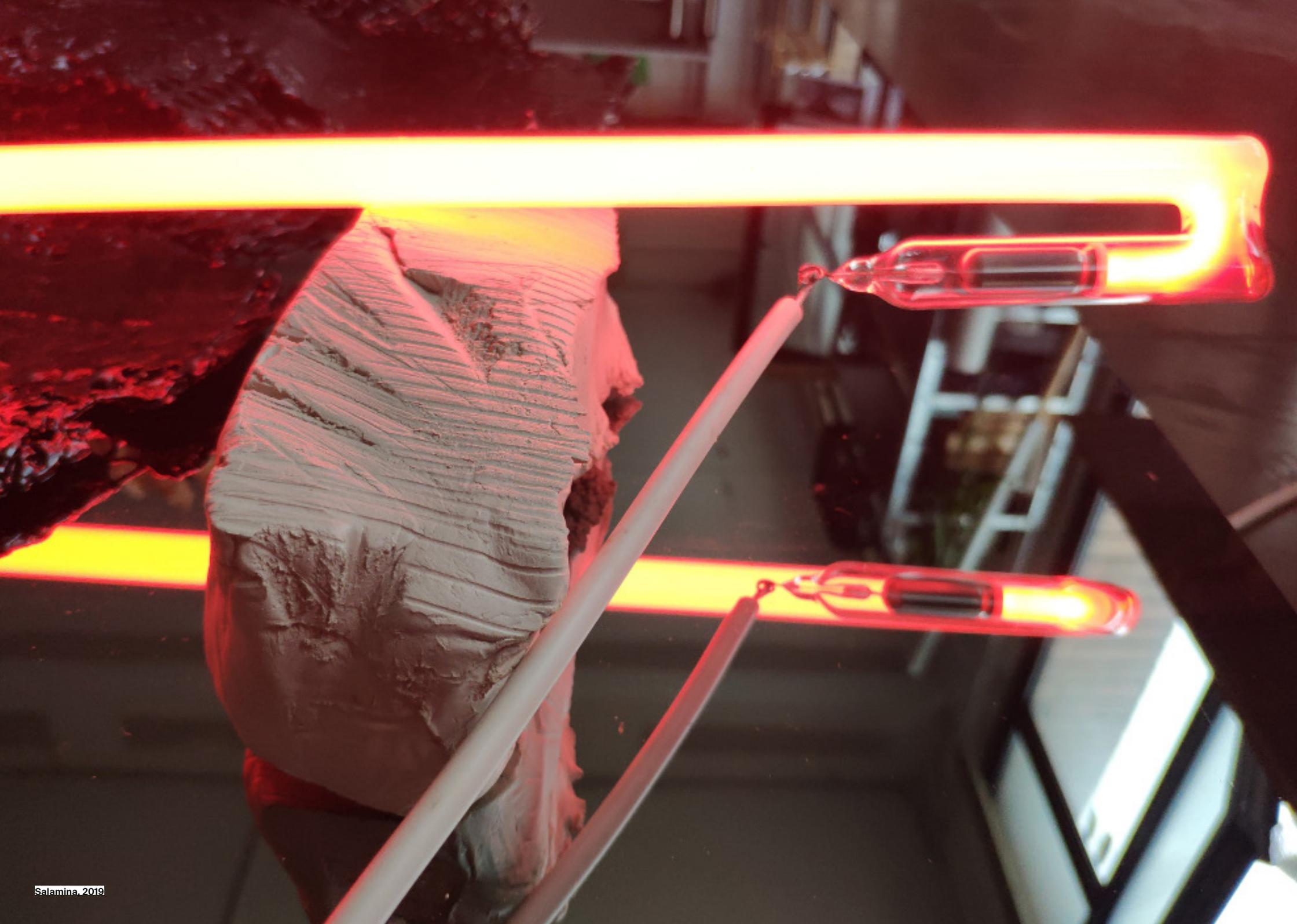




Metal Honey Shaves Her Head, ET Hall. Photo: Juan de Jarillo



Shaleka, 2018





Pelunian Switch



Fluido alto modular, ARCOmadrid 2019. Photo: Diana Rangel



[ENG] Plodding Power, 2015 / [ESP] Poder andar con paso pesado, 2015



[ENG] Plodding Power, 2018 / [ESP] Poder andar con paso pesado, 2018

## This is Jackalope Solo project

### **Karlos Gil, *Uncanny Valley*, 2019**

The film is a dystopian sci-fi story that takes the replacement of waiters in Japanese restaurants by androids as its starting point. It explores complex existential problems due to the Uncanny Valley Hypothesis in the field of robotics: in which an android created too much in the image and likeness of a human faces rejection. The underlying themes of the video deal with the relationship between machines and humans based on the encounter between an android and its doppelgänger. Through this relationship and the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in everyday life, the film reflects the socio-economic paradigm effects by the technological transformation.

### *Uncanny Valley* Karlos Gil

### **Karlos Gil, *Uncanny Valley*, 2019**

Es un metraje de ciencia-ficción distópico cuyo argumento toma como punto de partida un nuevo tipo de restaurante japonés surgido recientemente donde los camareros han sido sustituidos por androides de compañía. Explora complejos problemas existenciales relacionados con la hipótesis en el campo de la robótica: cuando las réplicas antropomórficas se acercan en exceso a la apariencia y comportamiento de un ser humano causan una respuesta de rechazo entre los observadores. El proyecto pretende reflexionar sobre las relaciones entre máquinas y humanos basadas en el encuentro entre el androide y su doble. Este hecho anticipa un cambio de paradigma socioeconómico provocado por el desarrollo de la Inteligencia Artificial y su implementación en la vida cotidiana.

PP. 32-39

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Thank you!  
¡Gracias!