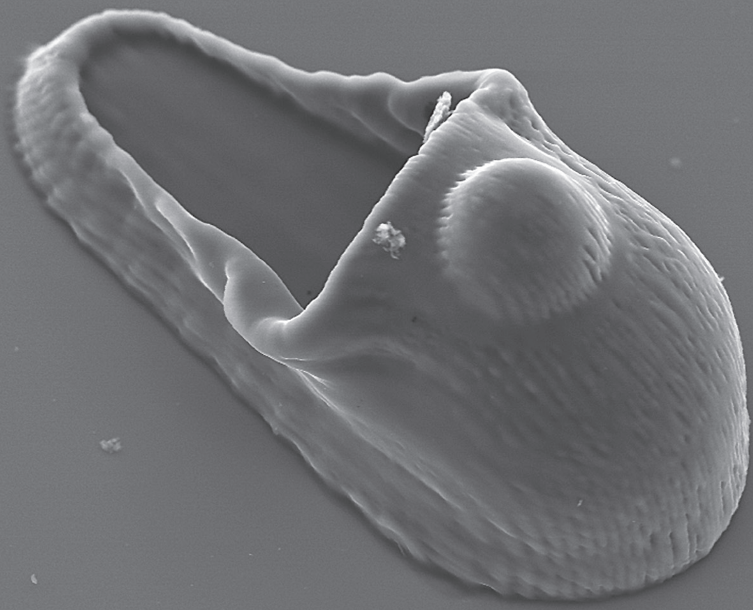
And Another Thing

NONANTHROPOCENTRISM AND ART

KATHERINE BEHAR
EMMY MIKELSON



And Another Thing: Nonanthropocentrism and Art
Copyright © 2016 Katherine Behar and Emmy Mikelson. This work carries a Creative Commons by-nc-sa 4.0 International license, which means that you are free to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format, and you may also remix, transform and build upon the material, as long as you clearly attribute the work to the authors (but not in a way that suggests the authors or punctum books endorses you and your work), you do not use this work for commercial gain in any form whatsoever, and that for any remixing and transformation, you distribute your rebuild under the same license.
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

First published in 2016 by punctum books, Earth, Milky Way.
www. punctumbooks.com

ISBN-13: 978-0692652664
ISBN-10: 0692652663
Library of Congress Cataloging Data is available from the Library of Congress

Front cover image: Zimoun. *25 woodworms, wood, microphone, sound system*, 2009. Video, 55 seconds. Courtesy of the artist and Bitforms Gallery

Back cover image: Regina José Galindo. *No perdemos nada con nacer (We don't lose anything by being born)*, 2000. Lambda print on Forex, 67 x 100 cm. Courtesy of Prometeo Gallery di Ida Pisani, Milan/Lucca

Previous page: Detail of *Pantoffel für Pantoffeltierchen (Slipper for Paramecium)*, 2007. Micro-sculpture, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist

Copy editing: Lisa Delgado
Book design: Tim Laun

And Another Thing

NONANTHROPOCENTRISM AND ART

KATHERINE BEHAR
EMMY MIKELSON

FIOS

7 **Preface**

I. Contexts

11 **Space for Things: Art, Objects, and Speculation**
Emmy Mikelson

21 **Arbitrary Objects: Minimalism and Nonanthropocentrism**
Katherine Behar

II. The Exhibition

34 **Curatorial Statement**
Katherine Behar and Emmy Mikelson

36 **Carl Andre**
38 **Laura Carton**
40 **Valie Export**
42 **Regina José Galindo**
44 **Tom Kotik**
46 **Mary Lucking**
48 **Bruce Nauman**
50 **Grit Ruhland**
52 **Anthony Titus**
54 **Ruslan Trusewych**
56 **Zimoun**

III. Speculations

61 **The Recentness of Things**
Bill Brown

69 **Demonstration and Description**
Robert Jackson

75 **Trauma Expanded / Aesthetics Expanded**
Patricia Ticineto Clough

83 **Acknowledgments**

Preface

The impetus for this catalogue is an art exhibition, *And Another Thing*, which took place in 2011. Its focus concerned nonanthropocentrism, one of the primary tenets shared by various then-emerging philosophies grouped under the mantle of speculative realism.

This volume serves to document that exhibition and to expand on two of its curatorial gambits: to prioritize art historical contexts for contemporary philosophy (rather than the other way around), and to apprehend artworks as historically specific objects of philosophy. This historical orientation distinguishes *And Another Thing* from more recent art world attention to speculative realism; both the early exhibition and this expanded catalogue are intended to highlight that contribution to ongoing interdisciplinary discussions.

The book is organized in three sections. Literally occupying the center of the volume, in section two, is the exhibition itself, represented by plates of its eleven works. Works by emerging and canonical figures lay bare the networks of alliances from which this exhibition builds. As objects in relation, they map a flat ontological field as a discursive terrain for engendering materially embedded conversations.

The works are, appropriately, flanked by their context. In the first section, two long-form essays by the curators offer accounts of the evolution of investigations in nonanthropocentrism and art, spanning eighteenth-century architectural drawing, performance, minimalist sculpture, and contemporary postminimalism. These essays raise the stakes for art and speculative realism. We see how, far from responding to philosophy, artists have figured and prefigured strikingly similar ideas about nonanthropocentrism, mirroring those now embraced as philosophically "new" realist, materialist, and speculatist insights. Moreover, in their deep, media-specific investigations, artists speak with philosophy's objects on their own terms.

Art offers object lessons to philosophy, too. Concluding the book, and with an eye to projects that lie beyond its pages, the third section includes three short meditations on the relation between nonanthropocentrism and art, and what that relation might portend for future thought. These essays, by Bill Brown, Patricia Ticineto Clough, and Robert Jackson, are in a true sense *speculative* in that they perceive futuritive potentials for theory arising from nonanthropocentrism's manifestations in art. As such, they are historically acute objects that themselves mediate interdisciplinary presents.

We hope that the publication of this volume will contribute to exciting exchanges between art and theory yet to come.

—Katherine Behar and Emmy Mikelson

I. Contexts

Space for Things: Art, Objects, and Speculation

Emmy Mikelson

At the heart of speculative realism (SR) and object-oriented ontology (OOO) is the notion of a flat ontology. Manuel DeLanda defines a flat ontology as "one made exclusively of unique, singular individuals, differing in spatio-temporal scale but not in ontological status."[1] Within the context of SR and OOO, these "singular individuals" are human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate. The very notion of a flat ontology is spatial in its conception. It provides a spatial metaphor for a dense and complicated field of both interaction and isolation, where things (read as human and nonhuman) are at moments drawn in relation to one another, and at moments withdrawn and discrete.

When we speculate about the nature of a flat ontology, we are approaching space, a dark expansive space that is unhinged from clear hierarchical codes and laws. It is a space without a center, without a sovereign surveyor, and without clear boundaries. In a discussion of Georges Bataille, Anthony Vidler remarks on the "abilities of space itself to dissolve boundaries, as, that is, transgressive by nature, breaking the boundaries of all conventions, social or physical."[2] He continues by marking this space as "a bad object—abject and ignoble in its ubiquity, endlessly invading the protected realms of society and civilization with the disruptive forces of nature."[3] It is this kind of spatial dimension in which a flat ontology unfolds.

In Norman Bryson's discussion of vision and visuality in "The Gaze in the Expanded Field," he elaborates on the work of Japanese philosopher Keiji Nishitani, who, building upon the principles of his teacher Kitarō Nishida, develops a theory that radically decenters the subject within the field of visuality: "The direction of thought that passes from Nishida to Nishitani undertakes a much more thoroughgoing displacement of the subject in the field of vision, which finds expression in a term so far largely neglected in the Western discussion of visuality, *sūnyatā*, translated as 'blankness,' 'emptiness,' or 'nihility.'"[4] This theory moves beyond Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Lacan into a field of "radical impermanence"[5] in which there is no clear and stable line of sight between the seer and the seen. Nishitani dismantles the privileged framing device that generates the safe distance between the subject and object and collapses them into the field of *sūnyatā*:

> Passing on to the field of *sūnyatā* the object is found to exist, not at the other end of tunnel vision, but in the total field of the universal remainder. The object opens out *omnidirectionally* on to the universal surround, against which it defines itself negatively and diacritically. The viewer who looks out at the object sees only one angle of the global field where the object resides, one single tangent of the 360 degrees of the circle, and of the 360 degrees in all directions of the radiating sphere of light spreading out from the object into the global envelopment.[6]

Through opening vision to an expansive dimensional space that accounts for a multitude of possible vantage points, the position of the subject is no longer singular and privileged. The boundaries between the subject and the object dissolve into a space in which sight lines are multiplied ad infinitum and everything exists within the lateral monumentality of vision. There is now a "dark or unmarked remainder that extends beyond the edge of peripheral vision into the space that wraps its way round behind the spectator's head and behind the eyes."[7] It is this spatial engulfment expanding "omnidirectionally" that marks a move away from a traditional *vertical ontology* into one that spreads and sprawls, engendering an equivocal net in which all things shift in relation to one another.

Nishitani undercuts the anthropocentric position through an establishment of vision *in the round*, a vision in which a view of an object is only a "tangent" among a multitude of other possible views. An object cannot be fully knowable through a single view; it is more complex than even the sum of these views. Or perhaps, to borrow terms from object-oriented philosopher Graham Harman, the object is *unique* and *withdrawn* and *irreducible*.

An object is therefore established as an errant thing that cannot be reduced to a single view that marks the totality of the thing's being. This single view or "tangent" only provides one possible glimpse

of a thing. To further this point, I want to borrow from Wittgenstein's discussion of aspect perception. Although this correlationist theory may seem like an unlikely place to cull from, his discussion of aspects reinforces the ways in which the seer always perceives only a slice of the seen, and therefore the act of seeing always misses the thing in sight—the thing itself resides in a blind spot. It is discrete and out of reach and never fully constituted by the viewing gaze.

Wittgenstein's extensive discussion of aspect perception entails the paradoxical condition of seeing something as changed while the thing itself remains unchanged. In his well-known example of this phenomenon, the duck-rabbit picture puzzle, one views the drawing of a rabbit head with ears in one instance or a duck head with a bill in another instance. Wittgenstein describes this event: "I *see* that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience 'noticing an aspect'."[8] Additionally, he begins this discussion with identifying these two "objects" of sight:

> The one: 'What do you see there?'—'I see *this*' (and then a description, a drawing, a copy). The other: 'I see a likeness between these two faces'—let the man I tell this to be seeing the faces as clearly as I do myself.[9]

In the latter instance, he draws attention to the relation of resemblance within the act of seeing. While elaborating on the notion of seeing, Severin Schroeder concludes that "the extent to which 'to see' is a verb of epistemic success, every seeing involves identification of kinds of objects or appearances, which means seeing them as similar to others of that kind."[10] The act of seeing pulls objects into a visual field of meaningful relations, or resemblances. Similarly, as Bryson points out, this field is preestablished and not defined by an authorial subject:

> When I learn to speak, I am inserted into systems of discourse that were there before I was, and will remain after I am gone. Similarly when I learn to see socially, that is, when I begin to articulate my retinal experience with the codes of recognition that come to me from my social milieu(s), I am inserted into systems of visual discourse that saw the world before I did, and will go on seeing after I see no longer.[11]

This awareness of a preestablished "visual discourse" provides a further undercut to the foundations of the subject's centrality. This highlights the condition in which things are not only viewed but also *recognized.* The aspect or tangent that is recognized is one of use-value or relevancy. This is how things become objects in the field of vision. In this regard what we "see" are objects; these are the shifting aspectual details and tangents surrounding things. Seeing something as a thing, as opposed to as an object, would largely be a matter of seeing it as outside of a certain set of relevant factors. An object is seen as such precisely because we recognize how it *works* for us, while contrarily "we begin to confront the thingness of objects when they *stop working* for us" (emphasis added).[12] The aspectual perception of seeing-as is akin to Heidegger's *ready-at-hand* tool analysis insomuch that "everything we perceive, we perceive in its relevant aspects: in a picture we immediately see what it represents and respond to it accordingly, just as we always see artifacts as what they are for us, what roles they play in our lives."[13] Objects are seen as varying sets of use-values within an anthropocentric structure; objects are seen as *ready-at-hand* tools.[14]

The seer/seen dynamic need not only relate to human/nonhuman relations; the relation can be reversed or exclude the human altogether. One natural analogy of this is evidenced in the phenomenon of mimicry. Early twentieth-century sociologist Roger Caillois's influential essay "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia" offers a benchmark examination of the dissolution of self within space. He explores mimicry as a pathological condition of confusing one's self with one's environment and begins by discussing various forms of insect mimicry, such as "when the *Smerinthus ocellata*, which like all hawk moths conceals its hind wings when at rest, is in danger, it exposes them abruptly with their two large blue 'eyes' on a red background, giving the aggressor a sudden fright."[15] The moth flashes an aspect causing it to be seen as something else. But this change in perception does not change the thing that it is, any more than mistakenly recognizing someone as someone else changes *who* that person is. The thing remains as aspects change. Mimicry therefore causes a flattening in the figure/ground relationship, much as is the case in *sūnyatā* for Nishitani, where "the centralized subject falls apart; its boundary dissolves, together with the consoling boundary of the object."[16] What one finds in Caillois and Nishitani is the description of space that has the ability to consume and transform the generally accepted stable distinctions between subject, object, and environment. The removal of such boundaries engenders a space that favors dynamic modes of interaction as opposed to hierarchical structures.

Seeing-as is obviously a matter of perception and couched in the perceiver (read as human and nonhuman). Art utilizes the dynamic of perceiver/perceived in this particular kind of space and unfolds it into a

network of crisscrossed sight lines and self-reflexive gestures. By either scrambling the signal or stripping it bare, seeing-as no longer retains its clear correlative. Visuality becomes a dark space where things emerge from the shadows in all their thingness, or their "specific unspecificity,"[17] as Bill Brown defines it in "Thing Theory." For Caillois this destabilized relation between the individual and space is understood as the following condition: "He is similar, not similar to something, but just *similar*."[18]

"Off with their heads!"
—Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

As addressed above, in many ways the very conceptualization of subjecthood is predicated on spatial metaphors: centrality, hierarchy, scale, etc. In what follows I want to discuss specific examples of artworks that challenge the subject through this spatial dimension. In a broader view, the history of art has been a vehicle for cataloging the struggle with representing the Cartesian subject. Who is the subject? What position does the subject assume? What is the relational configuration of the subject to its surroundings? Who defines the politics behind these questions?

When examining the history of the subject in art, one loosely begins with the divine subject, moving to the secular subject (read as white male), moving to the gendered and raced subject, and to the eventual question of *why a subject at all*? The mechanisms of questioning and challenging subjecthood are varied, both subtle and overt. In the pursuit of getting beyond these hierarchical constructions that not only frame the general malaise of anthropocentrism, but also aggressively enforce gender, race, and class, art has taken the task of chipping away at the centrality of the subject so as to destabilize this system of status. Clearly not all art is concerned with the status of the subject, just as not all philosophy is invested in nonanthropocentrism. However, through discussing these examples aimed at visuality and spatiality, I want to explore those avenues of art that have consciously refuted and lambasted the proclamation *cogito ergo sum*. It is this trajectory within art that has castrated, dismembered, and ultimately beheaded the subject. These are efforts that aid in an acceptance of questioning and refuting the ontological status of subjects and thereby opening the field to a lateral ontology. It is this particular pursuit and precedent that establishes a constructive rapport with speculative realism.

The two artists I have chosen to discuss offer different mediums, different artistic objectives, and different periods of history to consider. However, they share in their contributions a reanalysis of how the subject figures in representation and, by extension, theory. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, who was active in Italy during the Enlightenment, used the pictorial conventions of perspective and repetition in *Carceri* (*Prisons*) to create spaces that depict human figures in decidedly antihumanist ways as well as to challenge the privileged position of the enlightened viewing subject. The twentieth-century installations and photography of Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama explore the aggressive obliteration of subjecthood through repetition and patterning as she creates visual fields of slippage between subject, scene, and viewer.

"Eye to a crack in a fence, he sees cranes pulling up other cranes, scaffoldings that embrace other scaffoldings, beams that prop up other beams."
—Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778) was trained as an architect and has left behind a rich body of work, including etchings and drawings, that has continued to influence architects and artists alike. In an early series of plates, Piranesi creates foreboding labyrinthine interiors that employ a perversion of perspective and lighting to create uncanny spaces in which the human subject's centrality is destabilized pictorially as well as in terms of the enlightened viewer's gaze.[19] The *Carceri* (*Prisons*), which includes a second edition titled *Carceri d'invenzione* (*Imaginary Prisons*), is a series of sixteen plates begun around 1745 that depict inventive spaces that are both voluminous and claustrophobic in their spatiotemporal constructions. The prison operates as "a model for a vast interior space,"[20] carefully constructed and antithetical to contemporaneous humanist sentiments.

This work is of particular interest not only for its subversion of the subject/object binary, but also for its decidedly contradictory stance to the general sentiments of the Enlightenment. Piranesi's etchings convey a deeply dystopic vision of progress that does not place faith in reason and human morals. The etchings were begun over four decades before the French Revolution and the eventual crisis of Enlightenment ideals. In a discussion of the *Carceri*, Andreas Huyssen states that "Piranesi's etchings from the middle of the age of the Enlightenment point toward a critical and alternative understanding of modernity that always stood against

GIOVANNI BATTISTA PIRANESI
Carceri Series, Plate XIV, etching on white laid paper, 1745
Current location: Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

the naive belief in progress and the moral improvement of mankind."[21] Coupled with this "critical and alternative understanding of modernity," these etchings seek to fling the viewing subject and its accompanying surrogate from a privileged place of centrality into the depths of an abysmal environment. Piranesi, an architect highly trained and adept at perspectival rendering, forcefully disrupts the logic of the Euclidean plane and creates a maze of stairways and archways where shadows and rays of light impossibly bend and stretch around corners, with no localized sense of an exterior elsewhere. In his influential book *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, Manfredo Tafuri reinforces a reading of Piranesi that emphasizes "the lawless intertwining of superstructures" and "the undermining of the laws of perspective."[22] These are highly interiorized spaces—withdrawn and unique.

These overwhelming interiors herald an almost limitless expansion that does not emanate from a fixed point of reference—traditionally being that of the subject. Antoine Picon states that "Piranesi's *Carceri* mark the emergence of a new kind of representation of landscape," one in which the seeming absence of the subject proclaims "human action secondary."[23] In a larger sense, Piranesi's work plays with a constant avoidance of portraying a stable pictorial notion of subject—human or otherwise. Tafuri has pointed out that "what at first seems to be the subject is later negated and turned into a supplemental element,"[24] thereby shifting the viewer's attention from one element to the next. In regards to the *Carceri*'s treatment of the human subject, its diminutive figures toil within the voluminous space with little to no identifying markers; they are general and nondescript. Scaling down the subject within its surroundings is certainly not a unique pictorial device in and of itself. It is a strategy visible throughout the history of representation; however, Piranesi's use of this device yields effects antithetical to many canonical examples. Early Chinese landscape paintings during the Ming dynasty often depicted human figures as miniscule and dwarfed by the surrounding environment. However, the overarching Ming philosophy influencing such works, referred to as *literati* paintings, was the belief that the realm of the mind was elevated above that of the physical world, thereby elevating the subject. Similarly, the Western cultural belief in "Manifest Destiny" was integral to an extensive genre of late nineteenth-century railroad photographers, such as Alexander Gardner, and monumental landscape painters, most notably Thomas Moran and Albert Bierstadt, who depicted figures overwhelmed by a sublime and expansive natural world. The underlying theme in these highly political works is "presenting westward expansion as a necessary, inevitable, and benign sort of national enterprise."[25] It is an enterprise in which the westward traveler prevails. But what Piranesi has depicted is different. He provides no transcendent escape for his toilers, nor is there any revelation of their protagonism. The subject is simply refigured and cast down into the depths of an ever-expanding and engulfing environment.

Piranesi's diminutive shadow figures contain no identities and have no means of egress. Their potential agony, fear, or anxiety is not dramatized into picturesque images of human suffering. They are not the center of the dramatics. They are simply small and secondary. What one finds in the *Carceri* is a focus on the constructed environment in all its material details. These are images describing the space of things: ropes, chains, stairs, stone, statues, light, space, arches, shadows, pulleys, railings, columns. Things support other things and give way to yet more things, which populate a space subtly unhinged from logic. The human subject, dwarfed by the architecture, is essentially absent as things erupt with an overwhelming presence. For Tafuri, the *Carceri* depicts zones in which "not men but only *things* become truly 'liberated.'"[26] Piranesi develops interior realms that are rich, dense, and complicated. They are spaces of the uncanny where clear and stable distinctions between subject and object, self and other dissolve into a lateral monumentality. There is no place to emerge up through the confusion; it is an unknowable volume. This is the monumentality of a flat ontology, ceaseless in all directions.

It is not only through pictorial scale that the subject is unhinged from its privileged position. Piranesi's images reach out from the picture plane to further assault the viewing subject and rattle the distanced viewer's gaze. The subject is therefore assailed from within and without the picture plane. In order to confound the gaze, Piranesi collapses several perspectives into one, causing the viewer to have a dizzying experience of the work. Huyssen summarizes this experience as follows:

> Piranesi refused to represent homogeneous enlightened space in which above and below, inside and outside could be clearly distinguished. Instead he privileged arches and bridges, ladders and staircases, anterooms and passageways. While massive and static in their encasings, the prisons do suggest motion and transition, a back and forth, up and down that disturbs and unmoors the gaze of the spectator. Instead of viewing limited spaces from a fixed-observer perspective and from a safe distance, the spectator is drawn into a proliferating labyrinth of staircases, bridges, and passageways that seem to lead into infinite depths left, right, and center.[27]

Piranesi deliberately experimented with sight lines and chiaroscuro to pull away from classical rules of pictorial representation and create environments that swallowed up the subject and caused optical confusion in the viewer. For example, through lowering the sight line he skews a natural perspective to create one in "which the implied viewer is standing much below the architectural object," which in turn achieves an imposing heightening of the environment.[28] The manipulation of perspective "renders the architectural object larger than human scale would warrant," thereby breaking with ideal Vitruvian proportions. In the article "Architecture from Without: Body, Logic, and Sex," Diana Agrest makes explicit the endemic relationship between body, proportion, and architecture: "Vitruvius and Alberti point the way to the incorporation of the body as an analogue, model, or referent, elaborating a system for its transformation into a system of architectural syntactic rules, elements, and meanings." Agrest continues by identifying the gendered understanding of these ideal proportions, which are always male. Through shifting the sight line away from a naturalist viewing point, Piranesi has shifted prominence away from the subject and toward space. This allows the work to further undercut the primacy of the subject. The human subject is negated through proportion and hierarchy. The subject is no longer the rule and measure.

Building upon the manipulation of space and hierarchy, one finds in the *Carceri* a centrifugal force that continues to propel the subject from its traditional centrality. In moments, Piranesi's dark figures are pulled deeper into the architecture as their bodies are cast in shadow. Limbs are flattened into the dark spaces of corners and passageways; silhouettes seem to dissolve into the forms of columns and banisters. These moments embody what Caillois would later address as the organism's dissolving into its surroundings. The distinct boundaries between subject and field become blurred and permeable. Influenced by French psychiatrist Eugène Minkowski's analysis of "dark space" and "light space," Caillois relates:

> Minkowski's analyses are invaluable here: darkness is not the mere absence of light; there is something positive about it. While light space is eliminated by the materiality of objects, darkness is "filled," it touches the individual directly, envelops him, penetrates him, and even passes through him: hence the ego is *permeable* for darkness while it is not so for light.[29]

Through Minkowski, Caillois again points to a state lacking "distinction between the milieu and the organism."[30] In the *Carceri* dark shadows strike out from spaces and devour figures where they stand. This mimetic assimilation with architecture is a retreat back into space marking a destabilization of the rational Enlightenment subject.

The degree to which Piranesi shifts scale and perspective, to the subject's detriment, marks a highly influential development in representation. It has notably influenced such films as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) and Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). These dystopic narratives ultimately arrive at a triumph over the mechanisms of oppression. However, what one finds in the *Carceri* is a state of limbo, in which the ontological foundations of subjectivity are suspended and negated. In the *Carceri* the subject is cast into the dark with no light at the end of the tunnel.

"From whatever side one approaches things, the ultimate problem turns out in the final analysis to be that of distinction."

—Roger Caillois

Decentralizing the subject through a complete immersion into the surroundings is taken to a further degree and made explicit in the work of Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama. The artist moved to America in 1957 and produced paintings, installations, and performances throughout the socially tumultuous New York City of the '60s and '70s, before returning to Japan in 1973, where she remains active. The overall character of her work is invested in exploring the deconstruction of identity or, more accurately, *self-obliteration*.

Kusama's large-scale mirrored rooms create highly interiorized spaces that paradoxically point to an infinite expansion. Her iconic installation of 1966, *Kusama's Peep Show/Endless Love Show*, figures prominently as an encapsulation of her obsessions with dots, repetition, and immersive environments. The enclosed room lined with mirrors and colored lights is only visible through two small windows—just big enough to peer inside. The effect is a hallucinatory expanse, which multiplies the viewer's own image, plummeting the image of self into an infinite duplication that marks the ego as mere copy as opposed to master surveyor. This gesture exposes the presupposition of subjective autonomy by "placing us in an environment in which we watch ourselves being engulfed."[31] Similar to Piranesi's repeated arches and use of light and shadow to inflate a sense of volume, Kusama's use of mirrors and colored lights warps the perspectival grid into an illusory expanse, leaving the viewer as a dot among thousands.

YAYOI KUSAMA
Top: Infinity Mirrored Room—Love Forever, 1994
Installation view: Solo exhibition "Yayoi Kusama" at Le consortium, Dijon, France in 2000. Copyright: YAYOI KUSAMA

Bottom: Kusama's Self-Obliteration, 1967
16mm color film, 23min. Copyright: YAYOI KUSAMA

The *Peep Show* comes at a point in history when many self-identified feminist artists were forcing the issues of gender equality and exposing the lowly ontological footing of the female subject. Female artists, such as Carolee Schneemann, Hannah Wilke, and Valie Export, threw their bodies directly into their art practice as a means of bringing these issues to the forefront. Lucy Lippard has noted that such efforts were overwhelmingly met with this conclusion:

> Because women are considered sex objects, it is taken for granted that any woman who presents her nude body in public is doing so because she thinks she is beautiful. She is a narcissist, and Vito Acconci, with his less romantic image and pimply back, is an artist.[32]

The notion of a "peep show" draws attention to this object-status of the female body. Kusama capitalizes on that dynamic by playing with expectations: as the viewers peer inside, they are met only with their own disembodied gaze. Commenting on this thwarted voyeurism, Claire Bishop observes, "The only performers are your own eyes darting in their sockets, multiplied to infinity."[33] The *Peep Show* proposes a stage in which the traditional performers are removed and the stage folds back onto itself in an endlessly self-reflexive display of dramatics. The theoretically distanced gaze is literally reduced to disembodied eyes straining to fulfill a negated pleasure. The viewer's eyes join the infinity of flashing lights as captured performers in an endless field.

The uprooted gaze is pulled deeper into this dark space. The endless depth generated through the mirrors propels the vanishing point farther and farther away. Upon peering into the peep show, the viewer relinquishes his or her stronghold at the viewing position and is doubled at the farthest reaches of the vanishing point. The viewer is forced to operate at both ends of the viewing spectrum, as well as at infinite points along the way. It is within this structuring of visuality that "the self-possession of the viewing subject has built into it, therefore, the principle of its own abolition: annihilation of the subject as center is a condition of the very moment of the look."[34] The "annihilation of the subject" is at the heart of Kusama's work, or in her own words, "self-obliteration."

The video titled *Self-Obliteration* (1967) typifies this pursuit of dissolving the subject into its surroundings. The video begins with pulsating flashes of drawings of infinity nets and dots—a recurring motif throughout her oeuvre. The video progresses to follow the artist throughout various natural environments where the application of polka dots becomes a unifying veneer to all things: human, animal, animate, inanimate. Categories of difference are meant to dissolve under the mark of the dot. This body of work also includes a series of photographs and collages that generate a similar "flattening" effect to the ontological hierarchy. The application of dots diminishes the categories of difference and decreases contrast between subject, object, and field. Repetition becomes a democratizing force that collapses degrees of resemblance into a field of homogeneity. It is in this sense that *seeing-as* is no longer possible, as all things begin to drop aspectual differences. There is no longer a flipping back and forth between object, subject, or surround—*every*thing is every*thing*.

Caillois's essay on mimicry becomes an important sociological as well as theoretical framework to situate these works concerning immersive environments. Caillois was less interested in insect mimicry as it manifests as an evolutionarily successful defense mechanism than as it reveals itself as a "dangerous luxury," in the case of mimicry's being so successful that insects of the same species mistake each other for leaves and begin devouring.[35] It is this pathological condition that produces the "simulation of the leaf being a *provocation* to cannibalism."[36] For Caillois, this was the very real danger in the "temptation of space."[37] Space provokes that dangerous desire to lose oneself, to be engulfed, to be obliterated. It is the temptation to lose oneself in space that Kusama invokes again and again through various instances of repetition culminating in the "mimetic experience of fragmentation."[38]

For Kusama, the mark of the dot acts as a cipher for further disrupting the spatiotemporal location of the subject in its milieu. The subject for her is not only the human and singular; in *Self-Obliteration* the fractured cinematic narrative depicts Kusama in the act of applying dots to herself, fellow actors, a horse, a cat, trees, and grass, and even dropping dollops of ink into a pond. The unedited dispersal of dots disrupts the unique coordinates of one individual in relation to another by means of multiplication and subsequent conflation. This gradual breaking down of boundaries between self, other, and outside marks, for Caillois, the moment when "the organism . . . is no longer the origin of the coordinates, but one point among others; it is dispossessed of its privilege and literally *no longer knows where to place itself*."[39] This goes beyond the initial gesture of decentralizing the subject—it proliferates a "*generalization of space* at the expense of the individual."[40] This in turn breaks down a seeing-as dynamic. If all things linger in an expanded state of conflation without distinction, then there is no longer seeing one object as this or that; there is

simply a blanket *seeing things*. Beyond the diminutive figures overwhelmed and lost to the passageways of the *Carceri*, Kusama proposes the subject, herself included, be engulfed by the scene and come out on the other side indistinguishable: a thing among things.

The repeated motif of engulfment marks for Kusama the moment when the specificity of place collapses under the unspecificity of space. Under the sign of the dot, the locational identity attached to place is unhinged through the proliferation of an otherwise unique marker. A single dot in space defines an exact spot as specific and unique. However, once that unique value is multiplied and expanded, it is drained of its capacity to single out and identify. The multiplication of the dot now serves to mark an expansive space, not a singular place, and therefore whatever or whoever bears this mark is equally cast out of a unique, singular place. As discussed earlier, it is under these conditions that the subject no longer remains the origins of its own coordinates in space, as the similarity of space consumes and breaks down figure/ground, self/other relations. It is in this way that Kusama's work moves closer to Nishitani's field of *sūnyatā*. For Nishitani, *sūnyatā* is not as "catastrophic" and "threatening" as is the destabilizing force in the intrusion of the *other* for Sartre and Lacan. The subject rather, acquiesces to this space of "radical impermanence" and joins the dynamic network of interchanging relations and exchanging glances. The subject is not destroyed as much as it experiences a return to the state of things before the cultural encoding of hierarchies. Kusama's decentralizing of the subject is not born of malice; rather, it carries with it a mimetic desire for inclusion.

Through Kusama as through Piranesi, the subject is constantly challenged in a space that does not adhere to classical notions of anthro-primacy. The work of Piranesi and Kusama approaches the subject through spatiality and visuality to question its ontological necessity. They cast the subject into a dark space where it can no longer reign over the object and the surroundings. These spaces, which are populated by things, lawless perspectives, and vanishing points on an endless horizon, are exactly the same sites in which a flat ontology structures a universe devoid of hierarchical laws. Employing the devices of space and sight serves to further reinforce the dimensionality of a flat ontology and explore this as a terrain with a rich history of questioning and experimentation. A flat ontology is not one in which everything is simply leveled out and made equal—it is a dynamic field of forces. For Piranesi, centrifugal forces propel the subject into the darkened corners and passageways and generate perspectives that do not converge at a single point. For Kusama, digestive forces move the subject through immersive surroundings, breaking down its primacy and singularity, and depositing it back onto the field as plural and similar. It is such forces that dismantle the verticality of anthropocentrism—leveling it and realigning it with an expansive and endless horizon.

1. Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 58.

2. Anthony Vidler, "X Marks the Spot: The Exhaustion of Space at the Scene of the Crime" in *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 131.

3. Ibid.

4. Norman Bryson, "The Gaze in the Expanded Field," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: New Press, 1988), 88.

5. Ibid., 97.

6. Ibid., 100.

7. Ibid., 101.

8. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Aspect and Image," in *The Wittgenstein Reader*, ed. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 180.

9. Ibid.

10. Severin Schroeder, "A Tale of Two Problems: Wittgenstein's Discussion of Aspect Perception," in *Mind, Method, and Morality: Essays in Honour of Anthony Kenny*, ed. J. Cottingham and P. M. S. Hacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 355.

11. Bryson, "The Gaze," 92.

12. Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," in "Things," ed. Bill Brown, special issue, *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 4.

13. Schroeder, "A Tale," 353–54.

14. For a full discussion of Heidegger's tool analysis in relation to object-oriented ontology, see: Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court Publisher, 2002).

15. Roger Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," *October* 31 (Winter 1984): 18.

16. Bryson, "The Gaze," 106.

17. Brown, "Thing Theory," 3.

18. Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," 30.

19. This is a particular viewing subject defined by its distanced and objective position, which would be firmly established in Kant's "Critique of Judgment" in 1790.

20. Andreas Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins," *Grey Room* 23, no. 26 (Spring 2006): 17.

21. Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins," 14.

22. Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 26.

23. Antoine Picon, "Anxious Landscapes: From the Ruin to Rust," *Grey Room* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 71.

24. Tafuri, *The Sphere*, 30.

25. Martha A. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 166.

26. Tafuri, *The Sphere*, 32.

27. Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins," 18.

28. Fatma İpek Ek and Deniz Sengel, "Piranesi Between Classical and Sublime," *METU Journal of Faculty of Architecture* (2007): 22.

29. Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," 30.

30. Ibid.

31. Yayoi Kusama, quoted in Tracy Warr and Amelia Jones, eds., *The Artist's Body* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2000), 115.

32. Lucy R. Lippard, "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: Women's Body Art," in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976), 123.

33. Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 91.

34. Bryson, "The Gaze," 91.

35. Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," 25.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 28.

38. Bishop, *Installation Art*, 90.

39. Caillois, *October*, 28.

40. Ibid., 31.

The use of three dimensions isn't the use of a given form. . . . So far, considered most widely, three dimensions are mostly a space to move into.

—Donald Judd, "Specific Objects"[1]

Arbitrary Objects: Minimalism and Nonanthropocentrism

Katherine Behar

In his influential 1965 essay "Specific Objects," sculptor Donald Judd surveyed the "new work" in painting and sculpture being created by his contemporaries in the New York scene. He noted with satisfaction that the "part by part" compositional structure he identified with European tradition and metaphoric "anthropomorphism" was giving way to a holistic, environmental approach to three-dimensional space that he equated with a new kind of realism. "Three dimensions," Judd wrote, "are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colors—which is riddance of one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European art."[2]

In Judd's estimation, European art's progressive structure was unacceptably tainted by what we can understand as a form of humanism, not merely for evoking the anthropomorphic body, but for exploiting illusionistic metaphors based on false relationships in which things are likened to other things, rather than existing solely as themselves. The relative immediacy of the new work Judd favored gave it a total character that solicited its audiences into new, direct relationships with objects: relationships of singleness, in which "[m]ost works finally have one quality." In the new work now known as minimalism, viewers would encounter each element wholly, as "specific objects." Writing the next year, in his seminal multipart essay "Notes on Sculpture," Judd's peer Robert Morris described this dynamic in terms of Gestalt theory, arguing that "once [a gestalt] is established it does not disintegrate."[3] For Judd this meant that rather than proceeding like anthropomorphic art toward an illusionistic totality, part by metaphoric part, the new work established itself in object-oriented style, in his words, "one thing after another."

This vision of opaque, discrete objects, whole unto themselves, will strike adherents of object-oriented ontology and speculative realism as familiar. And it is true that many parallels might be drawn between the specific objects of minimalism and the objects of object-oriented philosophy.[4] Here, my intention is not to describe objects, but to detail how a single feature, nonanthropocentrism, is shared by object-oriented philosophy and minimalism.

Recent object-oriented philosophy has been celebrated for its nonanthropocentrism, the rejection of ideologies and ontologies that place human subjectivity at the center of all engagements with or accounts of the world. The current trend toward nonanthropocentrism is not isolated to philosophy, but appears in diverse fields ranging from the life sciences to political science to design. Rather than attempt to provide a retroactive object-oriented account of minimalism, this essay will show how minimalist artists independently developed early practical methodologies pertaining to nonanthropocentrism, which reappears today as a central tenet of object-oriented thought. While there are numerous canonical accounts of minimalism—whether written from the trenches by critics like Michael Fried or Rosalind Krauss, or artists like Judd or Morris, or ex post facto by historians like Hal Foster, Thierry de Duve, or Anna C. Chave—most are concerned with explaining minimalism's role in a larger history of modernism. Yet we might also read, running beneath the canonical accounts, a chronicle of how during the 1960s minimalist artists were cultivating nonanthropocentric practices and producing art that contributes to nonanthropocentrism in manifold ways. Excavating this prehistory leads us to a discussion of contemporary art, which in turn sheds light back on the conditions for nonanthropocentrism in contemporary philosophy.

Object-oriented philosophy is often at pains to distinguish its ontological descriptions from ideological prescriptions, and indeed to maintain a strong separation between ontology and historical contingency—which is to say, politics. Nevertheless, it is easy to see how the specificity of objects, expounded in today's nonanthropocentric philosophies, might teeter toward neoliberalism, a feature of politics occurring in the same contemporary moment. When each thing is fully distinct, all distinctions become arbitrary, leading to overaccommodating compatibilities that blithely accelerate exchange. So secondarily, and with specificity hanging in the balance, this essay concludes by asking also after arbitrary objects, those too-specific objects that made early appearances in and around minimalist

art in the 1960s and now seem to be reaching ubiquity, entering into nonanthropocentric systems of relation in art, philosophy, and the daily interactions and transactions of contemporary life.

PRESENT PHENOMENA

Minimalism has been extensively theorized as an art of phenomenology, a highly subject-oriented endeavor. In part, this is because minimalist artists and theorists were engaging with the dominant discourses fashionable in their day. However, today their artwork speaks on another level, and the public's cool reception of minimalist works suggests that as phenomenological experience, minimalist art was often at best unrewarding, even hostile to human perception as social reality rather than theoretical ideal.[5] Minimalist art leverages presence not for, but despite—or worse, regardless of—a subject.

In emphasizing presence, minimalism contradicted "metaphysical dualisms . . . of subject and object" through experience.[6] In the prominent phenomenological reading offered by Rosalind Krauss, minimalist art denies transcendence by foregrounding spatiotemporal concurrence in the present. But because Krauss's presence also necessitates copresence, i.e., of a perceiver, this blow to subjecthood seems only provisional, merely swapping an idealist subject for a phenomenological one. As Morris wrote, "The object is but one of the terms in the newer aesthetic." The viewer, or rather the "viewer's field of vision," is the additional critical term, requisite as the site where relationships form to bind "one thing after another" into a gestalt.[7]

Thus, minimalist artists' embrace of presence was not an object-oriented attempt to forsake subjecthood. Rather, in their turn toward phenomenology, they hoped to exonerate the role of the viewer, who was not placed on a par with the art object in a peer-to-peer encounter, but redeemed as a subject in his or her own right, whose perceptual experience was central to the work. So, Hal Foster argues in "The Crux of Minimalism," if Krauss's phenomenological account of minimalism is correct, it too may reproduce humanist values:

> For instance, just as phenomenology undercuts the idealism of the Cartesian "I think," so minimalism undercuts the existentialism of the Pollockian "I express"—*but do not both substitute an 'I perceive' that leaves meaning lodged in the subject?*[8]

Foster reads Morris's "Notes on Sculpture" as anticipating a "death of the author" two years before Roland Barthes would coin the term. The death of the author, in Barthes's formulation, simultaneously gives rise to the birth of the reader, an active, participatory subject who connects a text of citations, or in Morris's case, the phenomenological subject who through experience constitutes a gestalt.[9]

If we take specific objects, which are what they are without external reference, at face value, the death of the author and the phenomenological reading of minimalism remain anthropocentric. Like a tree falling in a forest, a specific object's facticity—or to borrow a term from speculative philosophy, its status as *real*—should hold irrespective of human perception. Presence occurs not for but regardless of human affirmation or interpretation.

But Foster's essay also indicates another characteristic of minimalism, its embrace of the readymade, which I argue lends nonanthropocentric nuance to human encounters with specific objects. Atypical of the readymade paradigm narrated in most accounts of early avant-garde art, the minimalist readymade does not hinge on human perception or aesthetic judgment.

AUTHORED OR FOUND

At first glance, the readymade appears to again threaten no more than the anthropocentrism of authorship. By embracing both industrial materials and outsourced industrial fabrication techniques, minimalist artists effectively removed the artist's hand from their work (and with it the expressive, anthropomorphic gesture such a hand could not help but render). Despite the machismo that Anna C. Chave astutely attributes to minimalism in her compelling 1990 essay "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," the production of minimalist works involved a certain deferral on the part of the artist, who relinquished authorial place of pride to the ecology of things in a world outside, which we might associate with speculative realist philosopher Quentin Meillassoux's wondrous "great outdoors" of pre-Cartesian things-in-themselves.[10]

For better or worse, the readymade aspect of minimalist art was deeply imbricated in capitalist commodity culture, but differently so from the historical found-object readymade. The latter represents an encounter with a complete object at the level of commodity, but the minimalists became acquainted with capitalist culture in an earlier stage, at the muddier level of production. Minimalist artists famously approached their work by appropriating the role of an American manager, "phoning it in" to order their sculptures to spec. Thus, unlike the Duchampian readymade that was a preexisting mass-produced found object, the minimalist readymade was not, strictly speaking, already made.

Instead, the work was fabricated according to technical processes, standards, and materials associated with mass production. Not the object, but its production, was appropriated from mainstream culture. The material was already there, but the object was not already made.

In contrast to Foster, who sees the minimalist readymade as evidence of a return to avant-gardism and a challenge to art institutions and the dominant ideology,[11] Chave argues that minimalist work, characterized by "the geometrical uniformity of [its] production, its slick surfaces, its commercial fabrication (often in multiples), and its stable, classic design" is "continuous with" capitalist ideology.[12] For Chave, the commercial and institutional success of minimalist work can be attributed to its compatibility with institutional mores. "Judd's work," she contends, "can easily be seen as reproducing some of the values most indelibly associated with the modern technocracy." Moreover, Chave maintains that the minimalists' rejection of authorship smacks of hypocrisy, because although they "depersonalized their modes of production to the furthest extent, they would not surrender the financial and other prerogatives of authorship, including those of establishing authenticity."[13]

Chave's interrogation of minimalism's power dynamics matches this essay's stakes in nonanthropocentrism acutely. After all, even while I suggest that minimalism contributes to displacing the anthro subject—chiefly a white male subject—from its central place of privilege, the minimalist artists and authors I cite are primarily white and male. These key players, who generated the most critical attention at the time, were white male artists by default, for myriad socioeconomic reasons, and indeed, the lack of women in the present essay reflects an anthropocentric bias writ large in culture. However sincerely one reads minimalists' renunciation of authorship, these artists could afford to flirt with relinquishing it; but in a greater irony they can now be interpreted as unhinging anthropocentrism precisely from the firm, central orientation of established subject positions.

While minimalist authorship falls short of nonanthropocentrism, unlike minimalism's phenomenological critique, the readymade rebuff of authorship does not fall back on readership and again amount to anthropocentrism. Instead the minimalist readymade thwarts authorship in a special way that evades the anthropocentric either/or of author/reader subjectivity by turning to objects, as minimalism does, through an industrial process of production. The Duchampian readymade always consisted in an authorial gesture, a *signature* that *wrote off* the sanctity of art and *sealed* the finished object—and its transgression—as a fait accompli.[14] The minimalist readymade is readymade only in its process of production; it remains unfinished, opening an object-oriented ontological field where material formability primes all parties for mutual making.

The link to deriving nonanthropocentrism from readymade processes of production, instead of found objects, comes from de Duve, who looks back before minimalism, and even before Duchamp's invention of found objects, to Seurat, whose "scientific spirit" Duchamp so admired.[15] With his theory of "divisionism" (now better known as pointillism), Seurat explicitly embraced positivistic scientific method, taking a strong stance against *la pâte*, the too-human, fallible touch of the artist's hand. Seurat's divisionist technique "rationalized this production [of choosing colors from readymade tubes of premixed paint] even further, explicitly turning the hand of the painter into a clumsy machine that operated in steps and rejected the blending continuity of handicraft."[16]

Seurat's divisionism integrates this machinic human object with industrial process. Divisionism relies on a "division of labor" that outsources the final assembly of the image to the spectator, who, through retinal blending, completes the image production, as "an active partner to the artist."[17] A direct lineage runs from this early form of outsourcing to the minimalist practice of ordering sculptures from industrial fabricators.

A Barthesian reader participates in textual production while retaining a humanist subject position, but in divisionism's industrial process, the artist is ultimately recast as a machine, relegated to producing generic objects through generic processes that foreclose the formalist specificity demanded by modernist art. Moreover, when we look closely at divisionism, we can see that surprisingly there is no single creator at all. No individual—author or reader—creates the work. Instead, it is produced through a collaborative effort, a *transhuman* industrial process involving Seurat, the viewer, and the factory.

It is worth noting how in this early scenario, industrial labor serves as a medium for systems comprising human and nonhuman objects, an issue to which we will return. Yet for the moment, we should avoid decrying such systems in which humans participate alongside other objects as dehumanizing. Rather, this arrangement foreshadows how minimalism came to develop a new vocabulary to accommodate such interactions and relations as arise among objects, human and nonhuman, as they comingle, cooperating to make form.

ROBERT MORRIS
Untitled, 1967-68
Felt
3/8 inches in thickness
Copyright 2015 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy of Sonnabend Gallery, New York

TOOLS OF PROCESS

Appearing in the April 1968 issue of *Artforum*, Morris's important short essay "Anti Form" steps back from his preoccupation with phenomenology, providing an earnest discussion of the process of material exploration. This practical investigation of process and material takes a decidedly object-oriented bent. While Morris remains committed to the gestalt, here he equates its single wholeness or "self-sufficiency" with integrity, connecting the minimalist preference for orthogonal forms with structural efficiency.[18]

Throughout the essay, Morris emphasizes process, or the nonhierarchical interactions between artist and material. The minimalist artist recognizes and defers to the form inherent in a given material, and in so doing renounces compositional preferences. Materials are encountered and appropriated from the industrial vernacular, but in raw form, which is to say, not already made. The specific form of an art object is only resolved in practice, through the process of engaging dialogically with commonplace things. For example, rigid materials efficiently form rectangles. Similarly, whole forms are more true to their materials than multiple forms, in which artists impose their own anthropocentrically biased organizational logic over the object-oriented internal logic of the material.

Morris insists that material, not process, is carried into the final form of the artwork: "In object-type art process is not visible. Materials often are," he writes.[19] But it is precisely in process, in the *negotiation* with material, that minimalism discovers and solicits the nonanthropocentric world of objects. Morris moves from the discussion of rigid materials, "reasonable" for making rectangles or the "unitary forms" he promoted in "Notes on Sculpture," to a discussion of "materials other than rigid industrial ones," such as the pliable materials in Claes Oldenburg's soft sculptures and Morris's own felt works that he was exploring at the time. Most telling, however, is the account Morris gives of Jackson Pollock, who he claims was the only abstract expressionist artist to "recover process" in a genuine way. Discussing Pollock, Morris gives the following interpretation:

> Pollock's recovery of process involved a profound rethinking of the role of both material and tools in making. The stick which drips paint is a tool which acknowledges the nature of the fluidity of paint. Like any other tool it is still one that controls and transforms matter. But unlike the brush it is in far greater sympathy with matter because it acknowledges the inherent tendencies and properties of that matter.[20]

This is truly an extraordinary account, in which a stick's being "in far greater sympathy with matter" makes room for an artist's being "in far greater sympathy" with material objects by way of his choice of a sympathetic tool.

In his well-known reading of Heidegger's tool analysis, object-oriented philosopher Graham Harman offers the insight that for Heidegger, the world is divided into two categories of things: tools, which are ready-to-hand, and broken tools, which are present-at-hand.[21] Most objects are *zuhanden*, or ready-to-hand, which is to say phenomenologically transparent, in that they readily reward our use, but exist silently, as though bracketed within a task, receding from conscious attention. Objects become *vorhanden*, or present-at-hand, when we become aware of them, either by consciously directing our attention to their study, or when they reveal their presence to us, usually by in some way stupefying our regimes of habit, as when a tool suddenly breaks, for instance. According to this schema, the avant-gardist readymade—the found object—is a broken tool in the strictest sense. It is an object that, when removed from its usual milieu and recontextualized as art, suddenly no longer functions invisibly as it ordinarily would. Found objects appear, shockingly, in the full strangeness of their being as objects. Being "found" makes them visible, both as present-at-hand and as art. It may be that art always functions in this way, as a broken tool that can't be taken for granted.

But what Morris describes is a subtly different tool relation, one that is even more nonanthropocentric than the Hegelian dynamic of servitude and frustrated servitude to which Heidegger's user/tool theory is heir. Unlike the avant-gardist found object that appears present-at-hand by *not functioning*, the minimalist found object seems to become present-at-hand *through function*, or what Morris calls *process*. In this model, humans don't find objects when they defiantly stop working. Instead, objects function to generate transhuman sympathies and attune humans to materiality. In this unexpected inversion, humans, having first been recast as machines by divisionism, now become the tools that, acting with sympathy, actualize material into its preferred form.

What minimalism *finds* is not a broken tool but a fully functioning world of things, as in this list, or "litany"—to borrow a term from the object-oriented philosopher Ian Bogost[22]—put forth by Judd: "Materials vary greatly and are simply materials—formica, aluminum, cold-rolled steel, plexiglas, red and common brass, and so forth."[23] For Judd, these materials are specific objects. And so, against the subject-oriented ideas of either phenomenology or constructivism, he goes on to

say, "there is an objectivity to the obdurate identity of a material." In this manner of nonhierarchically attuning to things, minimalist nonanthropocentrism finds its objects.

Seeking truth in materials, to humbly acknowledge "the inherent tendencies and properties of . . . matter," the artist's humanist predilections give way to transhuman collaborations with things—from Pollock's stick and paint, to the orthogonal grain of Judd's plywood, to the drape of Morris's cut and folded felt, to the propped weight of Richard Serra's counterbalanced steel. In each, a minimalist artist encounters the material's "obdurate identity" and defers to the readymade process or form that a particular material constitutes. One way of understanding Morris's term "anti form" is that "form" is not negated but reduced to material process: the readymade process preprogrammed as "tendencies" found in and as material. This modesty of minimalist process brings minimalism's nonanthropocentrism to the forefront.

With this in mind, let us return finally to the quote from Judd with which we began, his assertion that "three dimensions are mostly a space to move into." Minimalism's nonanthropocentrism ultimately rests on the question of who or what is meant to "move into" this space. Having established that materials are first to populate its object-oriented universe, minimalism further extends this material sensibility to humans, folding *us* in, as it were, to the litany of readymade materials at hand.

ROBERT MORRIS
Installation view Green Gallery, NY
December 1964–January 1965
Left to right: *Untitled (Table), Untitled (Corner Beam), Untitled (Floor Beam), Untitled (Corner Piece), Untitled (Cloud)*
Copyright 2015 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy of Sonnabend Gallery, New York

AND *ANTHROPOS*

Morris's 1964 Green Gallery exhibition consisted of structures that opened up and made visible the negative space of the gallery, such that the gallery's three dimensions became precisely a space to move into. In this seminal work, Morris exposed the viewer's own presence in the gallery. By virtue of being present in a designed space for objects, the viewer became an object too, positioned as equivalent to "formica, aluminum, cold-rolled steel, plexiglas, red and common brass, and so forth." Other minimalist works similarly construe the viewer as object into the field of materials that comprise the work. For instance, the highly burnished surfaces of Judd's metallic and Morris's mirrored cubes reflect the viewer's presence, objectifying the viewer's own body at the moment when he or she is caught in the great outdoors fraternizing in and among things.

Minimalist reflective surfaces, which call attention to the viewer's circumambulation, are often cited as foreshadowing the move to duration and installation art, which explicitly opens spaces of art objects to human cohabitants. In this way minimalism is, as critic Michael Fried worried, theatrical. Morris's negative spaces create a "situation" that includes the viewer and reveals his or her physical embodiment as matter in space. As Fried complained of Morris's work, "'The entire situation' means exactly that: *all* of it—including, it seems, the beholder's *body*. . . . Everything counts—not as part of the object, but as part of the situation in which its objecthood is established and on which that objecthood at least partly depends."[24] The situation of minimalism renders the subject an object, emphasizing the viewer's body as material, a thing. Yet recall that nonanthropocentric artworks focus on the body strategically to bring the human viewer into the same visual field or, in Fried's term *situation*, as other objects. Despite Fried's concerns, highlighting the object-like quality of the viewer as body instead of the subject-like quality of the viewer as perceiver neither reduces the human to a body nor threatens its humanness. Nonanthropocentrism never means simply reducing a thinking subject to its material body; this would merely reiterate the problematic correlationist dualism that establishes subjects as special objects by opposing body and mind.

In *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, artist and theorist Brian O'Doherty discusses the conditions of theatricality but takes a positive outlook where Fried found cause for dismay. His essay "The Eye and the Spectator" narrates how the inclusion of readymade things in art extends beyond pictorialism and "begins to define the entire space."[25] For O'Doherty, cubism and particularly cubist collage with its "fragment[s] of the real world plonked on the picture's surface"[26] instigated a new spatial awareness on the part of the viewer. Things and their attendant spatiality change the parameters of viewership. In O'Doherty's terminology, they confound the disembodied, Enlightenment "Eye" and give rise to an embodied, avant-gardist "Spectator." O'Doherty could be describing Morris's Green Gallery installation when he writes, "As we move around the space, looking at the walls, avoiding things on the floor, we become aware that that gallery also contains a wandering phantom . . . —the Spectator."[27]

Humans function in minimalist work as O'Doherty's Spectator, that is, as a bodily thing, no more or less important than everything else in the gallery. The Spectator is relieved of the anthropocentrism of premodern art's perspectival subject. By comparison, the educated, "epicene Eye" is the Spectator's "snobbish cousin,"[28] who participates in art only with the clinical remove of ocular intellectualism. "The Spectator," O'Doherty explains, "seems a little dumb; he is not you or me."[29]

Not you or me, the Spectator is not a subject. It is an object, a thing. "It has no face, is mostly a back. It stoops and peers, is slightly clumsy."[30] The human is always inherently an object among others; nonanthropocentrism simply eliminates the nonspecific quality of the subject's superiority. The nonanthropocentric Spectator of minimalism exists alongside—and must vie to position itself in relation to—other things. A far cry from an anthropocentric subject whose position can be assumed precisely because it is guaranteed, the Spectator is forced to wonder, "Where am I supposed to stand?"[31] It is in this sense that the human viewer in minimalism is, as Foster conveys, "cast back on the here and now,"[32] which is to say, cast into what Fried and Morris termed "the situation" of minimalist work.

Object-oriented ontologist Levi Bryant uses the term "flat ontology," a phrase borrowed from Manuel DeLanda, to describe an analogous situation, that of the object-oriented universe of things.[33] For Bryant, all objects occupy this "flat" space in a nonhierarchical arrangement, none taking precedence over another. This ontological leveling, which he calls a "democracy," is a comparable configuration to the installational spaces of and around minimalist objects. The negative space that Morris exposes functions democratically, forcing the already lowbrow Spectator to brush up against other stuff and making everything in the gallery equivalent as material. In a flat ontology, everything is material and is subject to material process.

Minimalism creates flat ontologies as "a space to move into." In these flat spaces, where stick encounters paint, wood encounters miter, and felt encounters fold, process is pivotal. And in such processes, humans are subordinated as colleagues to dispossessed material.

ARBITRARY BEING/S

When Judd wrote of "Specific Objects," he was responding, in kind, to the formal "specificity" promoted by Greenbergian modernism. For Clement Greenberg, the integrity of modern art hinged on painting's specificity or purity as painting, a brand of modernism O'Doherty equates with the sterile province of the Eye, since "everything else—all things impure . . . —favors the Spectator."[34] In Greenberg's view, minimalism threatened modernism by forsaking the traditions of craft that delimit painting's medium specificity and prevent its turning "into an arbitrary object."[35] It is, of course, these "arbitrary objects" that fill an object-oriented flat ontology, the impure everything else that—despite Judd's invocation of specificity—minimalism persists in producing. *Pace* Judd, minimalist objects are not specific at all.[36] Quite the opposite, they are *general objects*. While each object is thoroughly unique in its specificity and can be known thusly, for Judd, minimalist objects are ultimately established with the sole requirement of three dimensions. This lenient standard, the lowest possible barrier to entry for moving into space, grants minimalism its nonanthropocentrism.

Because all objects share democratically in their status as mere material, minimalist nonanthropocentrism renders humans, too, as general objects, diminishing human individuality. The subject is not only a *specific* object, it is a *special* one, and it is exactly this anthropocentric exceptionalism that minimalism disallows. In this, minimalism treats humans as another object—another thing, "one thing after another."

Minimalism is not the only art that engages nonanthropocentrism. For example, the tendency appears in the work of feminist body artists such as Carolee Schneemann or Hannah Wilke, who utilized their own bodies as raw art material as a means of empowerment. Perhaps more surprisingly, nonanthropocentrism also features in the work of an artist like Edgar Degas, who, by cropping his paintings in the manner of a photographic snapshot, created compositions in which human subjects appear off-center and cut off. Degas's methods abdicate his human compositional preferences by mimicking the machinic sensibility we found in Seurat's divisionism. Even a canonical example of heroic humanist artistic genius, such as Michelangelo's *Prisoners*, participates in nonanthropocentric sympathy and cooperation with material in much the same spirit Morris would come to advocate centuries later. Such examples show that nonanthropocentrism is not tied to ideology, style, or a particular set of historical conditions. Nonanthropocentrism always renders contextually.

With this caveat, minimalism's insistence on treating humans as another thing and denying the anthropocentric sanctity of subjecthood is fully borne out at present in the work of contemporary postminimalist artist Santiago Sierra. Sierra's work is formally indebted to and influenced by the art of the 1960s and conventions of minimalist practice, yet he incorporates humans as objects in a far more direct way. Sierra's 1999 work, *250 cm Line Tattooed on 6 Paid People*, is a set of casually composed photographs documenting a performance. The black-and-white images show six men of varying heights and skin colors standing shoulder to shoulder, facing a wall. Across the uneven material substrate of their shirtless backs, a perfect minimalist line has been tattooed, optically straight, level, and according to the work's title, exactly 250 centimeters in length.

This work engages and troubles each of the themes we have outlined: literally overwriting anthropomorphism with geometric abstraction; staging a found-object encounter in an exchange among strangers; outsourcing production to a hired tattoo artist; soliciting sympathy as a tendency between needle and flesh; incorporating humans as raw art material; and exposing the human object as vulnerably embodied.

In addition, *250 cm Line Tattooed on 6 Paid People* sheds light on the current political import of nonanthropocentrism. While object orientation does not in itself amount to subject degradation, Sierra's work presses the question of denigration to the forefront. The unemployed men in Sierra's photograph have been remunerated thirty dollars for their participation; they have agreed of their own volition to the terms of the job and payment. In other projects, Sierra has hired addicted prostitutes to be tattooed, paying them the cost of a shot of heroin, which would otherwise take several days of their typical work to earn. He has hired junkies to be shaven, male prostitutes to masturbate, street vendors to have their hair dyed, and undocumented refugees to remain in boxes in a gallery, push two-ton sculptures, or hold a gallery wall at an angle for a day, paying them in small sums of cash as day laborers. Resorting to the market value of labor as a universal equivalent, Sierra highlights how certain socioeconomic relationships between objects are already coded in inflexible, uneven terms. In short, among objects, certain specificities are unevenly distributed.

In these works, Sierra draws our attention to a social reality that has nothing (and yet everything) to do with art. Lining up people, one thing after another, Sierra references Carl Andre's line of fire bricks or Judd's stacked boxes, but Sierra's work troubles us, disturbing our anthropocentric comfort in a way that mini-

SANTIAGO SIERRA
250 cm Line Tattooed on 6 Paid People, 1999.
Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VEGAP, Madrid. Courtesy Lisson Gallery, London

malist sculpture does not. Sierra's human materials are not objectified by virtue of their involvement in minimalist art; they are already objectified in that they are denied subjecthood by the systems that support the art world and larger economies of labor, exchange, alienation, and exploitation. As Sierra has stated, "A person without money has no dignity."[37] Or, we might say, does not have a subject's dignity. Or, as critic Marc Spiegler puts it, Sierra's work "demonstrate[s] that human dignity is an economic privilege."[38] Here, the flat ontology begins to look more "arbitrary" than democratic.

Greenberg, of course, did not mean arbitrariness in terms of the vicissitudes of justice, but as an erosion of the features that define a unique art object in its singularity. An arbitrary object is anything but singular. It is readymade, reproducible, exchangeable, and replaceable. We might say that arbitrariness puts the *common* in *commodity*. In Chave's estimation, their brush with the processes of mass production leaves minimalism's objects "interchangeable, as neutral, and as neutered as standard consumer goods."[39] By deploying humans as objects, Sierra acknowledges how humans, too, are so neutered, so easy to commodify. Art historian Claire Bishop calls his work "a grim meditation on the social and political conditions that permit disparities in people's 'prices' to emerge."[40] While his work leverages race and class, Sierra's practice describes a universal condition. Being isn't singular, and humans are arbitrary.

Media theorist Alex Galloway has critiqued the new realist philosophies, including object-oriented thought, on the grounds that they instantiate the logic of contemporary capitalism.[41] For Galloway, that logic is mathematical set theory, which functionally underpins both contemporary philosophies such as Alain Badiou's and the object-oriented programming languages on which the software of global capitalism operates. Here, Galloway's critique aligns with what we have identified as the minimalist logic of the readymade. Rephrased, we might say that object-oriented ontologies do not engage readymade found objects, which is to say, objects found as they are, specific, present-at-hand, and on their own terms. Rather, object-oriented thought appropriates (and performs) the processes of production that appear readymade in mainstream culture.

While works like Sierra's put plainly the stakes of incorporating people into such systems, these systems function with or without humans as specific objects, to the extent that the specific members of a set are arbitrary from the point of view of the algorithm. When everyone is special, which is to say, when in neoliberal-

ism objects become too specific or hyperindividualized, arbitrariness reappears algorithmically, in the guise of relation, and specificity is encoded into predetermined, and therefore generic, attributes. What is more, the neoliberal imperative to produce self as specific catches on another feature of software: that everything is reduced to data, and the specifics of data are largely irrelevant to the operation of the system. Software requires data as numerical values but is indifferent to what meaning or specificity those values represent. As Galloway would have it, the functional process is paramount, which means all objects are rendered ready-to-hand, bracketed, and arbitrary.

Precisely in this sense, following Morris's premonition, humans in an information economy become the tools that actualize material—i.e., data—into form. Whereas in Seurat's divisionism humans were incorporated into an industrial machine, here the transhuman system is decidedly postindustrial and informatic, such that humans, when producing their own specificities, are as data is—simultaneously the input or raw material, the algorithm or process of production, and the output or commodity product.

Asked whether "the only viable anarchism is neoliberalism," Sierra replies that although people suffer to varying degrees, all members of a capitalist society are in "a state of tremendous slavery to money." While privilege is arbitrary, "It's slavery like any other form of it."[42] This is what is at stake for nonanthropocentrism. And indeed, Sierra insists, "The tattoo is not the problem. The problem is the existence of social conditions that allow me to make this work. You could make this tattooed line a kilometer long, using thousands and thousands of willing people."[43] Through his artwork, Sierra shows that nonanthropocentrism is neither description nor prescription, but a set of relations, whether realized as art, capitalist exchange, software, or philosophy.

Given this, is it an accident that objects are now appearing everywhere in culture—in philosophy, art, political science, medicine, and so on—precisely at a historical juncture when humans seem in danger of losing their specificity as objects? Human specificity is threatened first by the universal equivalent of capital exchanged for labor power (a dynamic Sierra's work succinctly illustrates), and second twice over by data: once by arbitrarily rendering everything as operative data, and again by quantifying specificity as precoded attribute selectors. Under these conditions, the emphasis on the human body as a material object—whether embraced or objected to as such—takes on the ring of a last-ditch effort to locate the human object physically, just as its specificities are on the verge of vanishing into clusters of intangible attributes distributed across disparate databases.

Sierra's work reminds us that object-oriented ontology is not a neutral position and, insofar as a world is possible in which all things are objects and the subject is eliminated, such conditions can carry darker implications than object-oriented philosophers may care to endorse. But nonanthropocentrism is best understood not as a representation of what is—neither an ontological representation nor an artistic one. Instead of representation, it should be understood as a particular formation of relations between objects, and as such, nonanthropocentrism need not amount to a vision as "grim" as Sierra's.

When not anchored around a human subject, relations constellate arbitrarily, opening a relational space for each and every thing to move into. This condition might be read as reducing everything to a universal equivalent, e.g., to the market value of labor or perhaps even more broadly to data, because the latter's ubiquity furthers the drive toward relation by enhancing capacities for measurement and calculation. A reduction of this type would indeed grimly threaten the specificity of humanity; yet an equally valid approach to the practice of nonanthropocentrism might tease out the sympathies Morris solicited with materials. With sympathy, interobject compatibility doesn't dehumanize, but simply dials human ego down. As Sierra's work reveals, human superiority or special privilege is always an empty distinction that leads to false differentiation. The superiority of one human individual over another is purely arbitrary and so, too, for humans as a class of objects. Specialness never lends human objects their specificity as such.

Sympathetic, mutual relations aren't foreclosed by any outside logic—not by the anthropocentric logics of phenomenological or metaphoric relation, nor by the neoliberal logic of informatic relation, which calculates all objects for exchange. In point of fact, neoliberalism's algorithmic computability falls prey to the same critique Judd waged against illusionistic art. Every comparison, whether algorithmic or metaphoric, relies on false relations with external standards and can only acknowledge degrees of likeness between a thing and something it is definitionally not. In either of these totalizing systems, objects are relegated to part by part, ready-to-hand components, but nonanthropocentric systems of relation engage one thing after another, using sympathy to bring awareness to arbitrary things' "obdurate identity" and specific idiosyncrasies that defy comparison.

It is well and good to speak favorably of sympathy, but especially when we address the insidious arbitrariness of social, political, or economic

inequality, we should be careful not to confuse heeding sympathy with charity. The latter always preserves a place of privilege from whence to stem. Truly nonanthropocentric relationships allow undetermined contingency between sympathetic, arbitrary objects. Such relationships emerge only when we eliminate specialness as a distinctive feature of any object, and with it the conditions that can lash human dignity together with economic privilege in the first place. In turn, this means willingly foregoing one's own status as a special object, and here it becomes clear how the grim and the sympathetic might share a good deal. Both Morris's and Sierra's works promote humility. This, more than formal structure, is the most significant aspect of Sierra's minimalist origins.

Humility not only marks the spirit of nonanthropocentrism, but also is the way to reintroduce an arbitrary quality for objects, to undercut the competitive neoliberal mentality that rushes objects toward absolute specificity. After all, how but through generalities do categories form, commonalities emerge, or politics cohere?

1. Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965); reprinted in *Complete Writings 1959–1975* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 184.

2. Ibid.

3. Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," *Artforum,* February/October 1966; reprinted in Gregory Battock, ed., *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 228.

4. Robert Jackson has begun such an undertaking in his essay "The Anxiousness of Objects and Artworks: Michael Fried, Object Oriented Ontology and Aesthetic Absorption" in *Speculations* 2 (May 2011).

5. See Anna C. Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," *Arts Magazine*, January 1990, 44–63.

6. Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," in *Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art 1945–1986* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986), 163.

7. Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," 232.

8. Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," 170–71, my emphasis.

9. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 142–48.

10. By shrugging off correlationism, "the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other," Meillassoux paves the way for nonanthropocentrism, allowing philosophy to venture into "the great outdoors" of a pre-Cartesian world populated by objects *qua* objects, not reliant on a subject to perceive or postulate them. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 5.

11. Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," 163.

12. Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric," 54.

13. Ibid., 55.

14. This authorial signature connects to Krauss's discussion of the readymade as a linguistic model that feeds into conceptual art practices. See Rosalind Krauss, "'Specific' Objects," in "Polemical Objects," special issue, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 46 (Autumn 2004): 221–24.

15. De Duve recalls Duchamp's statement that "choice is the main thing, even in normal painting," explaining that "the choice of a readymade is analogous to that of a tube of paint, *because the tube of paint was a readymade in the first place*." See Thierry de Duve, "The Readymade and the Tube of Paint," in *Kant After Duchamp* (Cambridge, MA: October Books, 1999), 175.

16. Ibid., 177.

17. Ibid., 178.

18. Robert Morris, "Anti Form," *Artforum*, April 1968, 34.

19. Ibid., 35.

20. Ibid., 34.

21. Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court, 2002).

22. Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

23. Judd, "Specific Objects," 187.

24. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum,* June 1967; reprinted in Battock, *Minimal Art*, 127.

25. Brian O'Doherty, "The Eye and the Spectator," in *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 39.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., 41.

29. Ibid., 39.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., 61.

32. Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," 163.

33. Levi Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2011); Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (New York: Continuum, 2002). See also Emmy Mikelson's discussion of the spatial condition of flatness in "Space for Things: Art, Objects, and Speculation" in this volume.

34. O'Doherty, "The Eye and the Spectator," 42.

35. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," *Forum Lectures* (Washington, DC: Voice of America, 1960); reprinted in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 90.

36. De Duve, "The Monochrome." See also Krauss, "'Specific' Objects," 221.

37. Santiago Sierra and Teresa Margolles, "Santiago Sierra," *Bomb*, Winter 2003/2004, 65.

38. Marc Spiegler, "When Human Beings Are the Canvas," *ARTnews,* June 2003, 95.

39. Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric," 51.

40. Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Autumn 2004): 70.

41. Alexander R. Galloway, "The Poverty of Philosophy: Realism and Post-Fordism," *Critical Inquiry* 39, no. 2 (Winter 2013): 347–66.

42. Sierra and Margolles, "Santiago Sierra," 65–66.

43. Spiegler, "When Human Beings," 95.

II. The Exhibition

you win dream-travel
into my naked body.
SONY

Curatorial Statement
Katherine Behar and Emmy Mikelson

Whether anxious and lonely or brave and hubristic, humans have staked out for themselves a privileged position, alone, at the center of everything. *Anthropocentrism* is the name for this ontological lynchpin that binds together centuries of art, philosophy, social theory, and scientific inquiry. The exhibition *And Another Thing* (2011) was part of an alternate movement toward nonanthropocentrism, an effort to dislodge the human from the center of discussion, to enrich the concept of being, and to open the very world itself to all things that comprise it. The world is brimming with things, and seen from a nonanthropocentric vantage, all things are equal, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral. Nonanthropocentrism repositions humans as just "another thing," no more precious or central than any other.

The works collected in this exhibition approach nonanthropocentrism variously. Yet each is remarkable for denying the human subject's centrality or for questioning how certain things come to attain subject status. By convention, humans have held a central place in art by both figuring in and producing it. Through art, the central position of humans as subjects (or as objects) has been celebrated, interrogated, accepted, refused, and tolerated. In contrast, the works in *And Another Thing* go beyond reassessing the human subject; they reject the subject/object paradigm entirely. In place of this paradigm—one based on difference—they operate on an interchangeable mereology of humans and things. The artworks do not treat humans as subjects, nor even as objects, but simply as things, like everything else.

Exhibited September 14–October 29, 2011, at the CUNY Graduate Center's James Gallery, *And Another Thing* was timely in part because interest in these ideas was then emerging in many fields outside of art, notably in philosophy. In 2007 a meeting of a budding philosophical movement called "speculative realism" was held in London at Goldsmiths College. By 2011, this fringe movement had swelled through publications, symposia, and intensive discourse in the blogosphere.[1] Both speculative realism and its offshoot, object-oriented ontology, hold nonanthropocentrism as a central tenet. This esoteric articulation of a world composed of a nonhierarchical collection of objects inspired the *And Another Thing* exhibition.

In the years that have elapsed since the exhibition, the international art world has seized on speculative realism, along with new materialist philosophies that share a nonanthropocentric orientation.[2] Indeed, a philosophical movement sympathetic to real objects seems a natural fit for the arts, and in response, the art world has positioned speculative realism as poised to inject art-making and curatorial practices with fresh insights.

And Another Thing articulates ways in which this relatively recent—and arguably obscure—philosophical program harkens back to established practices in art. According to speculative realist and object-oriented philosophy, objects are specific, self-contained, and nonreducible, and humans are objects first, prior to subjecthood. From a curatorial perspective, these concepts are compelling because they echo the ethos of minimalism and feminist body art, along with contemporary art that draws on the legacy of these movements.

Minimalism speaks to these ideas in three ways: by engaging the specificity of materials, by removing the authorial hand, and by opening up negative space around objects to include the human viewer and the sculptural object as equal occupant bodies. For example, in his canonical 1965 essay "Specific Objects," minimalist artist Donald Judd wrote, "There is an objectivity to the obdurate identity of a material."[3] We can read this statement today as indicating an emergent "object-oriented" perspective in avant-garde art.

Meanwhile, body artists turned this detached appropriation of material back onto themselves, by exploiting their own bodies as obdurate art materials. Feminist body artists confounded categories by occupying a dual role as author and artwork, subject and object, human and thing. Writing at the forefront of feminist performance art and body art in 1963, Carolee Schneemann stated, "I establish my body as a visual territory [and] explore the image values of flesh as material I choose to work with."[4] Stressing their own commodification as art objects and consumption as objects of the gaze, feminist body artists interrogated the subject/object relationship and the hierarchies entailed.

Thanks to this history (not to mention the broad and powerful social conditions of materialism writ

Previous spread and above: Installation view of *And Another Thing*, 2011. James Gallery, CUNY Graduate Center, New York

large), we are already primed to think of subjects as objects and vice versa, to identify ourselves as "another thing," and to use thingness to eschew human privilege. To achieve this, some works in *And Another Thing* destabilized the human subject by dismembering it and creating a distributed subject; some rendered the human as a thing among things; and some explored relationships between things, cutting humans out of the loop. Finally, framed most broadly, the exhibition, and the associated lectures, panels, and symposium held concurrently with it, sought to demonstrate how, in such an interdisciplinary moment, each field—art, philosophy, neuroscience, physics, ecology, architecture, political science, and so on—could be understood as itself another thing, contending with thingness, just like each artwork in the exhibition.

1. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman offer an account of speculative realism's origins in "Toward a Speculative Philosophy," the introduction to *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011).

2. For instance, during this interval, speculative realist terminology was featured in curatorial statements for landmark exhibitions including *dOCUMENTA(13)* (2012), *Speculations on Anonymous Materials* (2013) and *Inhuman* (2015) (both at the Fridericianum) and the New Museum Triennial, *Surround Audience* (2015); object-oriented ontology appeared in the pages of *Artforum* (2015); and Bard's Center for Curatorial Studies published a hefty compendium, *Realism Materialism Art* (2015).

3. Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965); reprinted in *Complete Writings 1959–1975* (New York: New York University Press, 1975).

4. Carolee Schneemann, "Eye Body," in *More Than Meat Joy: Complete Performance Works and Selected Writings*, ed. Bruce McPherson (New Paltz, New York: Documentext, 1979), 52.

CARL ANDRE

Carl Andre's pyramidal stack of aluminum ingots illustrates a part-whole relationship in which the part informs the structural organization of the whole. The formal logic between the ingots dictates the entire rationale of the piece: it is what it is. In this, *Base 5 Aluminum Stack* (2008) thwarts what object-oriented philosopher Graham Harman calls the "overmining" of its content, i.e., the impulse to write human interpretation over a thing's material facticity. In Andre's work, all questions of meaning generation become self-reflexive.

Base 5 Aluminum Stack, 2008
25 aluminum ingots
each: 4 1/2 x 18 x 7 in. (11.4 x 45.7 x 17.8 cm)
overall: 22 x 37 1/4 x 18 in. (55.9 x 94.6 x 45.7 cm)
Copyright Carl Andre / Licensed by VAGA. Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

LAURA CARTON

Laura Carton's series of photographs (2000–2003), each named for a website, begins with pornographic images downloaded from the Internet. The artist erases the actors' bodies and then digitally reconstructs the backgrounds.
By removing the human performers, she asserts that the objects and environments are equal "performers" in generating and communicating meaning. Simultaneously, Carton's work alludes to the conventional view of pornography as objectifying the humans it displays.

www.youngandtight.com, 2001
Digital C-print
21 x 27 in.
Courtesy of the artist

VALIE EXPORT

Valie Export's *A Perfect Pair* (1987) reveals the insidious nature of commercialism by taking literally the idea that the body of a consumer can become a "walking billboard." The video shows how a human subject's autonomy is consumed and reduced to the point of becoming a floating signifier. Export emphasizes the already-objectified female subject of consumer capitalism, while also extending an equal-opportunity attitude toward male objectification.

Ein Perfektes Paar oder die Unzucht wechselt ihre Haut (A Perfect Pair, or, Indecency Sheds Its Skin), 1987
Video
14 minutes
Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VBK, Vienna
Courtesy of Video Data Bank

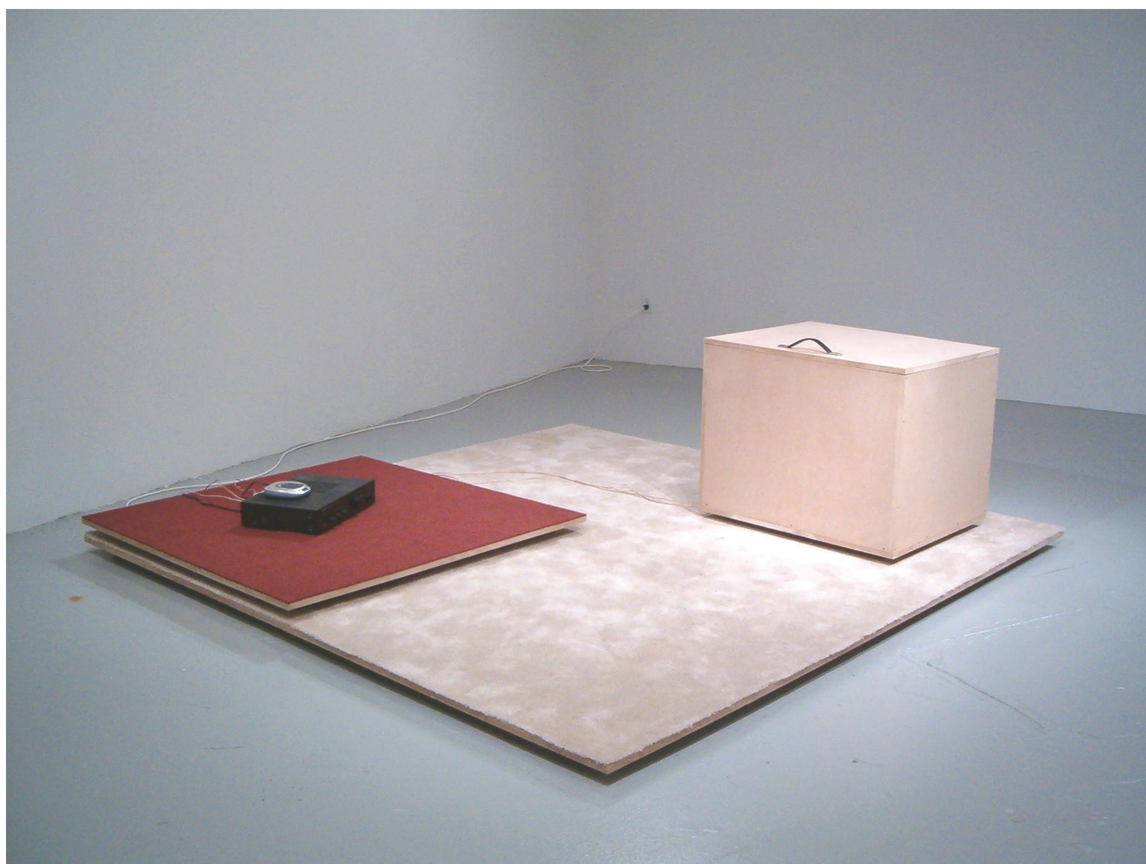
REGINA JOSÉ GALINDO

Regina José Galindo's work questions the ontological status of the female subject. Her photograph *No perdemos nada con nacer* (2000) shows the artist's naked body, bagged and discarded, in a litter-strewn landscape. The work operates through overt abjection, while also making reference to the convention of viewing the female body as messy and requiring containment.

No perdemos nada con nacer
(We don't lose anything by being born), 2000
Lambda print on Forex
67 x 100 cm
Courtesy of Prometeo Gallery di Ida Pisani, Milan/Lucca

TOM KOTIK

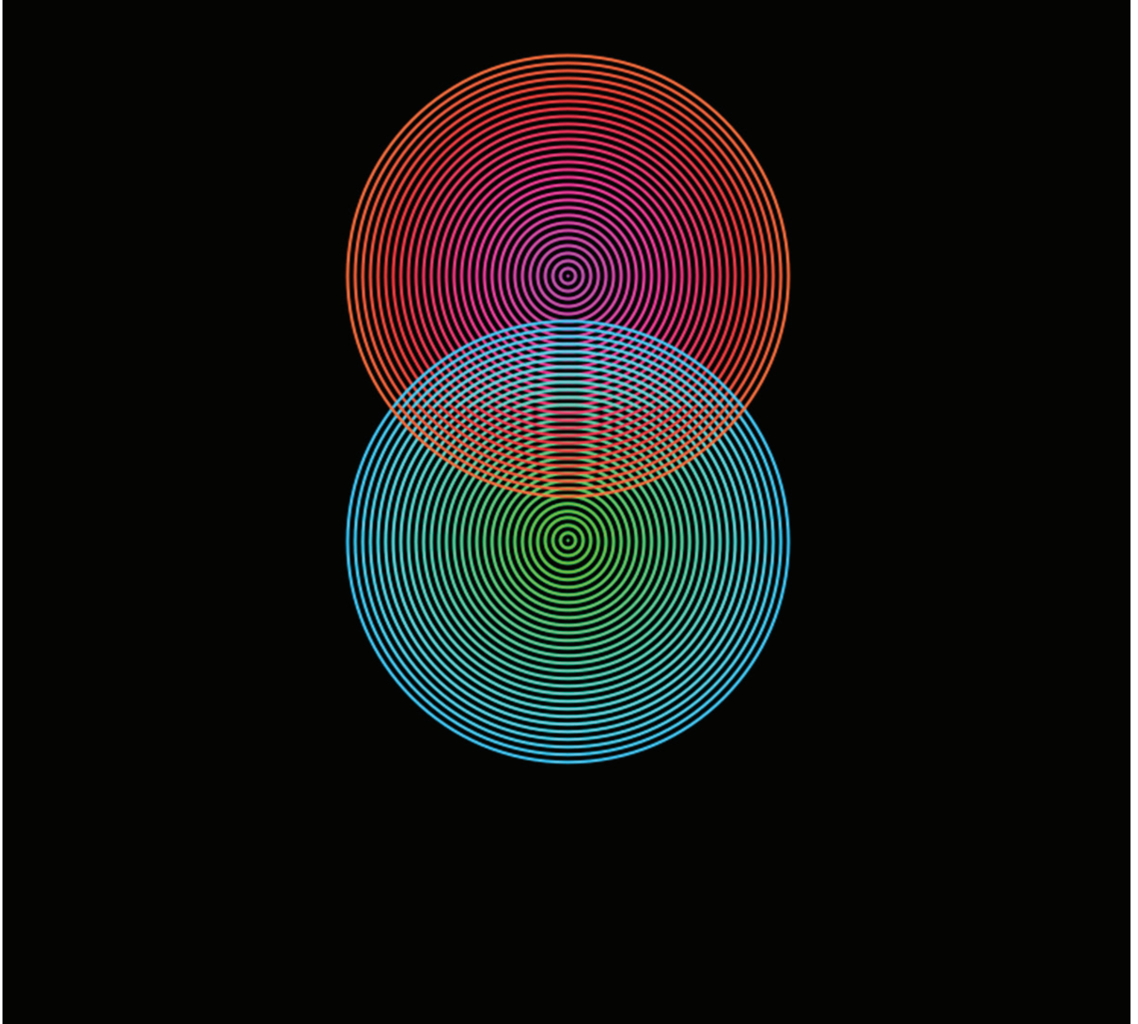
Through engineered soundproofing, Tom Kotik's box, *Rational Impulse* (2004), is able to contain the cacophony of sound within it, until the lid is opened. The unknowable interior and its overwhelming acoustic presence play not only with expectation, but also with human denial of things' complexity.



Rational Impulse, 2004
Wood, MDF, carpeting, sound-proofing, sound
96 x 96 x 40 in.
Courtesy of the artist

MARY LUCKING

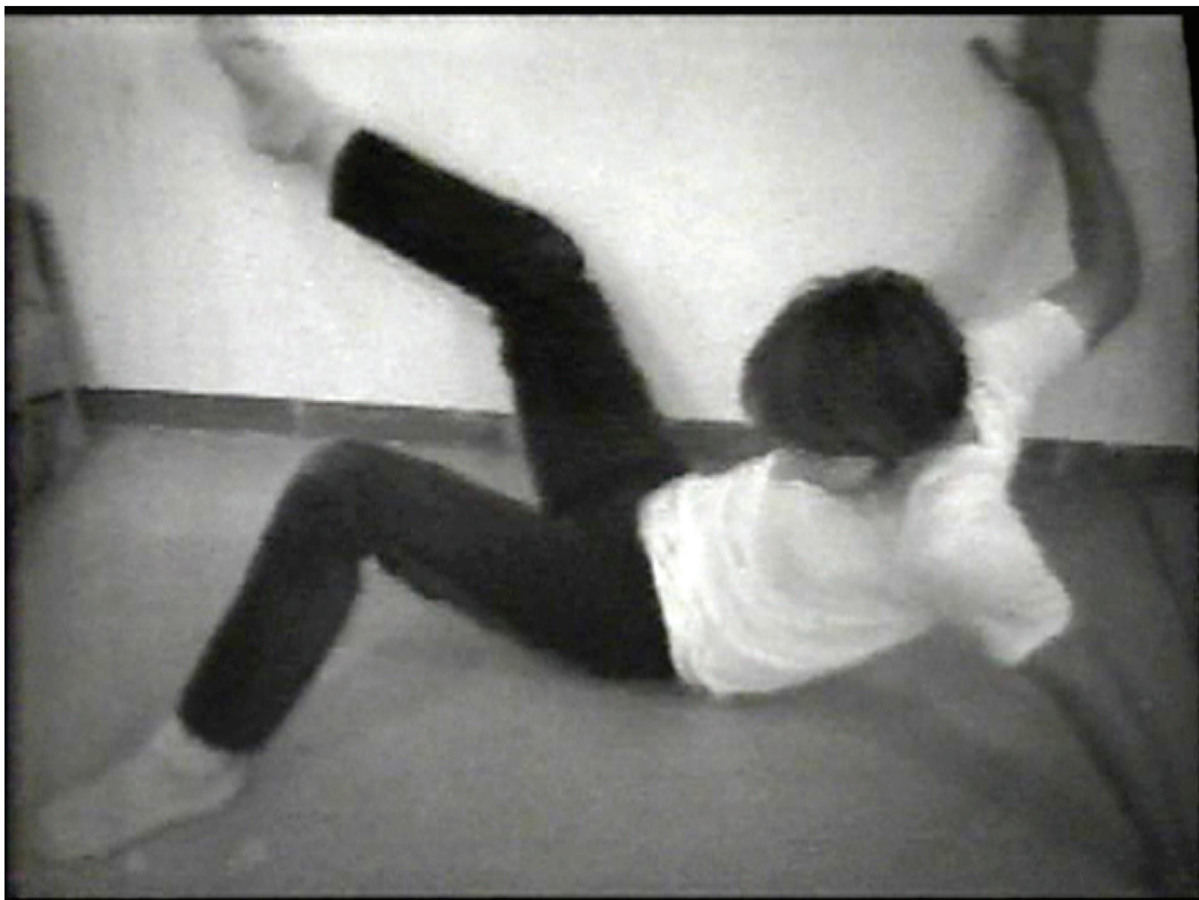
Mary Lucking uses biofeedback technology to illustrate the tension between two bodies attempting to act in tandem. Her interactive installation *Pas de Deux* (2000) invites two participants to occupy an intersubjective space in which boundaries between self, other, and environment must be actively challenged and dissolved.



Pas de Deux, 2000
Breath-sensitive belts, bench,
computer with custom software, digital projector
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

BRUCE NAUMAN

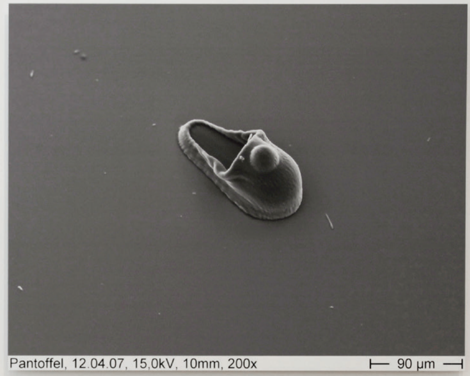
In *Wall/Floor Positions* (1968), Bruce Nauman leans, props, cantilevers, and rests his body on and against the wall and floor of his studio to imitate the manner in which minimalist sculpture is positioned in relation to gallery architecture. Nauman's mimicry effaces his human significance by making his own body equivalent to the industrial materials deployed in early minimalist sculptures. Continuing minimalism's exploration of space through relationships, the artist's body is used as a material with which to measure and study the room's dimensions.



Wall/Floor Positions, 1968
Video
59 minutes, 25 seconds
Copyright Bruce Nauman / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Courtesy of Video Data Bank

GRIT RUHLAND

A gift for the unicellular organism paramecium, Grit Ruhland's to-scale "slipper" is only viewable under a microscope. Ruhland collaborated with scientists at the Max Planck Institute for Cellbiology and Genetics to build *Pantoffel für Pantoffeltierchen* (2007), a slipper-shaped home for the slipper-shaped organism, also known as Pantoffeltierchen, or slipper animalcules. The use of scale makes this work at once humorous and an explicit rejection of anthropocentricism. The specific encounter between shelter and organism creates a closed system that positions the viewing human as outside and other.



Pantoffel für Pantoffeltierchen (Slipper for Paramecium), 2007
Micro-sculpture
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

ANTHONY TITUS

Anthony Titus's *Empty Field 2* (2007) consists of an atmospheric screen print adhered to a high-gloss enamel wood support. A series of formal cuts and folds fractures the pictorial as well as the physical space, resulting in a destabilization of the notions of viewpoint and prospect, thereby blocking the viewing subject's centrality.

Empty Field 2, 2007
Wood, metal, enamel, and screen print
44 x 11 x 30 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Museum 52

RUSLAN TRUSEWYCH

Ruslan Trusewych's installation *This is the Way the World is* (2005–2011) is composed of oscillating fans directed at a cluster of flickering night-lights whose subtle motion activates one another. The arrangement of night-lights and fans creates a closed system that exists outside of human intervention. This chaotic and random mode of communication explores entropy, even while staging a sense of equipoise.

This is the Way the World is, 2005-11
Installation with modified night-lights and oscillating fans
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

ZIMOUN

Zimoun's video of woodworms devouring a piece of wood masquerades as a still image, belying the intense activity playing out beyond human sight. In *25 woodworms, wood, microphone, sound system* (2009), the audible element is the only hint at the concealed assemblage of woodworms and wood, an intersection between two things that is at once destructive and instructive.

25 woodworms, wood, microphone, sound system, 2009
Video
55 seconds
Courtesy of the artist and Bitforms Gallery

III. Speculations

The Recentness of Things

Bill Brown

Art has the habit of appearing in object form. The habit has been difficult to bring into sharp focus, though, no matter how aggressively art itself seems to summon us to do so. For all the scrutiny devoted to *Las Meninas* (1656) as a representation of representation (in the line of thinking that Michel Foucault established in *The Order of Things* [1966]), too little attention has been paid to the back side of the painting—that is, the image of the back side, the segmented stretcher supporting the monumental stretched canvas (the unevenness of its edges clearly visible), leaning against the large easel. Diego Velázquez does not expose this back side in a small gesture; it is a full-length drama. It is a drama that means to assert painting as a material act, and to assert the fact of the object form of painting, of the material support of the image, of the bulk of the production and the product. This is certainly not the point *of* the painting tout court, but it is a point *in* the painting, and an especially poignant point in our age of digital reproducibility when (as in André Malraux's photographically mediated *musée imaginaire*) physical detail suffers the homogenization perpetrated by the image. As though in anticipation of his masterpiece's ubiquitous reproduction, Velázquez bids his audience to remember: paintings have size and shape and weight.[1]

A few centuries later (in 1966), Frank Stella also insisted on the object form of painterly production: "It really is an object. Any painting is an object and anyone who gets involved enough in this finally has to face up to the objectness of whatever he's doing. He's making a thing."[2] But in the 1960s such "objectness" came under attack on two fronts. One front was commanded by conceptual artists (such as Sol LeWitt, Robert Barry, and Lawrence Weiner) who were proclaiming that the artist's idea (expressed in words, directions, or diagrams) rendered the object itself superfluous. "Such a trend," Lucy Lippard and John Chandler wrote, "appears to be provoking a profound dematerialization of art, especially of art as object, and if it continues to prevail, it may result in the object's becoming wholly obsolete."[3] On the other front, in an essay that quickly came to structure much of the critical conversation, Michael Fried posited objecthood as the phenomenon against which art, to be art, had to define itself: "modernist painting has come to find it imperative that it defeat or suspend its own objecthood"; from such a perspective, objecthood as such was taken to be "antithetical to art."[4]

Neither front retarded the steady advance of the object, its increasing preponderance on the art scene in and beyond New York. And of course conceptual art was responding to its own sense of that preponderance—"during the early sixties when I began to think about art, the formulation was really 'art=object,'" Mel Bochner explained.[5] And Fried was responding to Donald Judd's "Specific Objects," which had described a fundamental rupture perceived across a variety of art practices; he named more than forty artists who were producing work meant to be recognizable neither as painting nor as sculpture (but simply as the object it was) precisely because, in Judd's understanding, the vitality of those forms had been exhausted.[6] "If changes in art are compared backwards," Judd wrote (with silent reference to the paradigm established by Clement Greenberg), "there always seems to be a reduction, since only old attributes are counted and these are always fewer. But obviously new things are more, such as Claes Oldenburg's techniques and materials."[7] There were lots more by the end of the decade. Not only minimalism and pop but also, say, Fluxus and the earthwork artists made it clear that art had only just begun to recognize the potency of objectness, objecthood, specific objectivity.

At the beginning of our current century, a new interest in objects, materiality, and things has surfaced across the humanities and social sciences. As one historian has quipped, "Things are back. After the turn to discourse and signs in the late twentieth century, there is a new fascination with the material stuff of life."[8] But that fascination can hardly hope to keep pace with the work going on between and beyond the disciplines—in the arts. Art now openly luxuriates in its object form and in the forms of objects, registered by the extensive use of assemblage, reconstellation, refabrication, and installation to rethink and rework

the objects of daily life: to stage some character of things as things that have yet to be grasped—indeed, to stage not the "material stuff of life" so much as the life of the stuff itself. Tara Donovan amasses vast numbers of everyday utensils (toothpicks, straws, Scotch tape, paper plates, buttons, rubber bands, etc.) and confects them into sublime objects, geomorphic or biomorphic, where the serial sameness of mass production gets dislodged into some other dialectic of quantity and quality. Styrofoam cups, gathered up and then suspended by nets from the gallery ceiling, become at once an eerie cloudscape and a hovering cellular organism, both beautiful and daunting. Sarah Sze constellates immense and obsessively intricate object ecosystems with a heterogeneous array of household products: Q-tips, tea bags, paper towels, fans, thread, lightbulbs, clamps, water bottles, twist ties, dried beans, ladders, house plants, pencils, desk lamps, sponges, plastic cutlery, duct tape, pens, and so on. The movement within the assemblages (which sprawl both horizontally and vertically) and the play of shadow and light and air seem to signal the vitality of some other network (outside the regimes of consumption and domesticity) through which these bits and pieces attain a quietly pulsating coherence only in relation to each other. While Theaster Gates refabricates the refuse from a construction site (fragments of lath and plywood) into monumental thrones, Danh Vo distributes fragments of a replicated monument (the Statue of Liberty) as isolated works.[9] And the practice of painting seems no less drawn by the materialist experiment. Marie Krane Bergman, having made a career of painting nearly monochromatic large canvases (composed in fact of thousands of distinct, individuated marks of imperceptibly different hues of acrylic), has released paint from the canvas support, conducting "pours" that are subsequently scraped off of a flat surface and hung on a nail, turning painting into the "matter-movement" of paint that continues to alter its shape, however slightly, as it hangs.[10] She now drips paint down hundreds of strings that are hung from the ceiling to form broad columns; the work thus assumes three-dimensionality while never not asserting itself as painting.

Things may be back in fields that range from political science to literary studies, cultural anthropology to sociology, but you cannot simply say that they're back in the arts because, at least for some commentators (Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Lacan), art has always been the province where things (or the Thing or the thingness of things) might become apprehensible. Indeed, it was the contention of Levinas in 1947 that the task of art is a matter of "extracting the thing from the perspective of the world": presenting things in their "real nakedness," uncovering "things in themselves."[11] He thus assigned to art the role of overcoming the epistemological limits established by Immanuel Kant (that is, the role of evading the spatiotemporal grid and causal logic that determine human perception) but not, it may seem, without specifying art's function in the context of a degraded twentieth century. He imagined that the "common intention" of "modern painting and poetry" was "to present reality as it is in itself, after the world has come to an end" (*EE*, 50). But "the end of the world" did not mean for him the destruction perpetrated by two wars; it meant, rather, the "destruction of representation," of "realism," and of the "continuity of the universe" (*EE*, 50). Indeed, even if Levinas could glimpse such an end (and thus the emergence of Being), it was, rather, the world's persistence (exacerbated by two wars) that proved to be an intractable problem: that's why the thing must be *extracted* from the world. And that's why moments of modernism, like so much of today's recent art, can be understood as provocations: aesthetic events meant to release things—or thingness—from the fetters of modernity.

Extracting things from the world is a matter of extracting the thingness of objects from the abstracting routine of daily life; of dramatizing some other thing about an object that is irreducible to its manifest form. It is a matter of disrupting common sense, of irritating the structure of phenomenology, where the object's only job is to present itself to consciousness. Thingness—some other thing about the object, which is less or more than that object—irrupts in a subject/object relation, in which an inanimate object can assume the subject position. (To use a crude example: from the perspective of the magnet, the thing about the little boy's red-and-blue toy truck is simply the ferromagnetic alloy in the steel; its material cathexis ignores the object form of the toy.) The *recentness of things* captions the recognition that art (which has always had the habit of appearing in object form) more straightforwardly assumes the task of dramatizing an object/thing dialectic. Making something "credible" (to borrow Judd's term) can no longer resign itself to the object form; credibility lies in disclosing specific things about objects, some thing more or less than the object form as such.[12]

Like other fields, philosophy has now begun to chart the new world of things, which means, for philosophy, working to shake off the Kantian hangover, to escape

the subject, to release itself from the epistemological cul-de-sac and what Hannah Arendt called the "shackles of finitude."[13] Quentin Meillassoux points very simply, in *After Finitude*, to the perplexity that science provokes by making statements about events that are "anterior to any human form of the relation to the world."[14] For on the one hand, according to the Kantian tradition, we can only ever apprehend "the correlation between thinking and being"; the act of thinking cannot be adequately separated from its content; we can only engage what is given to thought; we can say nothing about things in themselves. And yet, on the other, science repeatedly thinks what is independent of thought. The "fundamental point," Meillassoux insists, is that "science deploys a process whereby we are able to know what may be while we are not"—a process of rationalizing and mathematizing questions and answers about what occurs before and beyond humanity (*AF*, 114–15). Although there is always an obvious Kantian rejoinder—our knowledge of the before and beyond remains *our* knowledge, accessed and shaped through *our* math and *our* physics—the interest lies in the fact that philosophy is willing to indulge in realism, no matter how speculative, and to pursue ontology (the study of what is and how it is) and not just epistemology (the study of how we know what we know).[15]

Through an altogether different engagement with science—through the anthropology and sociology of science, and what has come to be called science studies—Bruno Latour has not only drawn attention to objects but also insists that only an "extraordinary form of radical realism" can begin to assuage that "catastrophe from which we are only now beginning to extricate ourselves," the catastrophe named Kant, which was only exacerbated when "society" took the place of the transcendental ego.[16] In Latour's effort not just to grant objects their manifest reality but also to demonstrate their role as participants in sociality, he has repeatedly specified that his aim is not to grant things subjectivity "but *to avoid using* the subject-object distinction at all in order to talk about the folding of humans and nonhumans" within one or another actor-network (*PH*, 194).[17] He has experimented by discarding modern distinctions to the point where, most recently, he advocated abandoning the term *human* precisely on behalf of assessing what geologists now call the Anthropocene era and on behalf of imagining some new relationship to Gaia.[18]

Latour has repeatedly argued that "sociologists have a lot to learn from artists" when it comes to recasting "solid objects" into "the fluid states where their connections with humans may make sense" (*RS*, 82).[19] Most simply, he has defined modernity itself as the project that established different "ontological zones," radically distinguishing—despite their ongoing interdependence, their de facto imbrication—the human from the nonhuman.[20] This is why I have maintained that "modernism, when struggling to integrate the animate and the inanimate, humans and things, always knew that we have never been modern."[21] Whether you consider the constructivist effort to overcome the "rupture between things and people" by "dynamiz[ing]" the thing into something "connected like a co-worker with human practice," or you confront the material objects that act and speak on their own in the Circe episode of *Ulysses* (1922), or you linger in front of Meret Oppenheim's *Le déjeuner en fourrure* (her cup, saucer, and spoon in fur, 1936), you experience modernism's persistent effort to blur (or expunge) the lines of modernity's ontological map.[22] This is one reason why Levinas could understand modern art as the effort to disclose things in themselves.

Latour means to conduct a counterrevolution (to Kant's "Copernican revolution") that has political, specifically democratic results, with democracy newly conceived by "adding a series of new voices to the discussion, voices that have been inaudible up to now": "*the voices of nonhumans*."[23] But it is from the object's point of view (if you will) that Graham Harman has objected to Latour's "flat ontology," in which all human subjects and nonhuman objects have been recast as actants, and thus the relations among them taking precedence over any discrete entity; "The more we define a thing by its relations, the more we strip it of autonomous reality."[24] What remains elided in such a scheme is what you could call the object's relation to itself (a relation *within* rather than a relation *between*), indeed the tension (at times quite a classical tension) between the object and its properties. For Harman, the real object (as opposed to its qualities, notes, accidents, relations, moments, and so on) always withdraws, both from humans and from other objects. While Latour considers an object to be "nothing more than its sum total of perturbations of other entities," Harman focuses on the "mysterious residue in the things hiding behind their relations with other things" (*PN,* 158), the residue that amounts to the intrinsic object itself, which always "stands apart" (*PN*, 208). Harman's universe, "filled with a single genre of reality known as objects," is necessarily characterized by its own ontological flattening, between what we commonsensically call the real and the imaginary (including centaurs, literary characters, and concepts).[25]

But object studies has been willing to assert that "flat ontology is an ideal."[26] It would seem as

though, insofar as it inhabits that ideal (in the realm of metaphysics), the project can make little purchase on the inanimate object world, the artifactual, or the nonhuman, the specificity of which has been theorized (ontologically) out of existence, if only on behalf of declaring, quite rightly, that so-called inanimate objects have no less being than so-called human subjects. (Moreover, it is easy to state the obvious—that flat ontology is flat, and it is ontological, only for human subjects.) And yet throughout this body of work there are insights, descriptions, and vocabularies that help to make sense of the recentness of things in art. You can think of Sze's object ecologies as exemplifying what Ian Bogost calls "the stuff of being [that] constantly shuffles and rearranges itself, reorienting physically and metaphysically as it jostles up against material, relations, and concepts."[27] Bogost has posited *unit* as a substitute for both *object* and *thing*, and the "unit operation" (a phrase from engineering) as his focus of attention (*AP*, 22–29); that purview would prove productive in thinking through the work of Zimoun—the kinetic installations in which the simplest of objects (filler wire, cotton balls, pieces of cardboard) have been attached to DC motors and arranged in a grid or a line; the objects repetitively oscillate or bounce or jiggle as a series of units that become one overarching unit within the unit of the room. Typically considered sound art (or sound architecture), Zimoun's project amplifies what Harman calls the "*black noise* of muffled objects hovering at the fringes of our attention" (*GM,* 183), the sound itself becoming object-like.[28]

Whatever generative convergence there may be between philosophy and art under the sign of the *object*, it will have been adumbrated by the work of Gaston Bachelard, whose thinking continues to shape Western thought. By introducing the concept of *la coupure épistémologique*, he provided Louis Althusser, Foucault, and Alexandre Koyré with the means of characterizing eventful change. By casting science as "projective" (rather than "objective") within his historical epistemology (established in *Le nouvel esprit scientifique*, 1934), by attending to "the empirical and emotional ambiguity that normally accompanies research on the frontiers of science," he paved the way for what became science studies, enabling Latour (for one) to see multiple participants (material and conceptual, human and nonhuman) at work in the production of facts.[29] But when it came to understanding *matter*, Bachelard drifted from the scientific fields and preferred to think with literature, as he did in his five great books on the elements, written (1938–43) while he continued to write about science. He preferred literature because he recognized that literature helped him to adopt a "material psychoanalysis."[30] More to the point, Bachelard's work *The New Scientific Spirit* provided André Breton with the substance (he already had the spirit, along with the phrase) to articulate a "Crisis of the Object" as registered by both scientific and artistic revolutions. Published in *Cahiers d'art* in 1936, Breton's essay appeared as a complement to the exhibit at the Galerie Charles Ratton (in Paris) of surrealist objects (1936), which included pieces by surrealists (Jean Arp, Alexander Calder, Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, Oppenheim, Alberto Giacometti, and Yves Tanguy, among others) and fellow travelers (Pablo Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, and Man Ray, among others), along with mathematical models from the 1870s and "primitive objects."

In "Dream Kitsch" (1925), Walter Benjamin had insisted that the surrealists were "less on the trail of the psyche than on the track of things."[31] Lecturing in Brussels under the title "What Is Surrealism?" in 1934, Breton came to make a comparable point, charting a history of the movement whose initial stages "seemed only to involve poetic language," whose spirit then "spread like wildfire," and whose future could not be predicted. But he asked his audience (and the readers of the subsequent pamphlet) "to notice that in its most recent phase a *fundamental crisis of the 'object'* is in the process of occurring": "It is essentially to the object that the ever more lucid eyes of Surrealism have focused during these last few years."[32] *L'objet*, then, named a problem and a possibility. It named a battleground. "Common sense," Breton went on to argue two years later, "cannot prevent the world of concrete objects, upon which it founds its hateful regime, from remaining inadequately guarded" against the attack from poets, artists, and scholars who mean to disrupt "the generally limiting factor of the object's manifest existence." Within that disruption, "the same object, however complete it may seem, reverts to an infinite series of *latent possibilities* which . . . entail its transformation."[33] The artistic attack on the concrete object does not discover the real object that stands apart; rather, disclosing its latent possibilities, the attack discloses the thing—other things about the object, extracted from the regimes of daily life and common sense.[34]

On the one hand, Zimoun's work evokes the minimalist tradition (Carl Andre's grid) in the simplicity of the stacked wooden or (more often) cardboard boxes, or the lines of evenly spaced wire. On the other, the animation of (or within) the objects

evokes instead the surrealist ambition of divulging some secret life of things within or beyond their manifest forms. The incessantly tapping cotton balls, the jiggling wires, the jumping polysiloxane hoses—these are at once mesmerizing and vaguely threatening, as though the jittering objects were confused, frantic insects: wasps incessantly tapping at the corner of the window to find some egress, moths unable to dislodge themselves from the attraction of the lightbulb, flies beating their wings to release themselves from the adhesive paper. (By titling one work *Swarm*, Zimoun emphasizes the biomorphic dimensions of his work.)[35] But in *100 prepared dc-motors, chains in wooden type cases* (2008), the incessant circular flopping of the vitalized chains seems to have been conjured by the opportunity to dance—the kind of opportunity once provided by surrealist film, a film like Man Ray's *Emak-Bakia* (1926), his *cinépoème* that integrates rayography, stop-frame animation, reverse motion, and double exposure, along with narrative fragments. In one of those fragments, a well-dressed man is dropped off at a house and walks in with his valise, which turns out to contain collars. He starts to rip them up, one by one, then rips off his own collar and tosses it away. The film cuts to an animated object portrait: a single collar, balanced on its back, which then begins to twirl and twirl against a black background; it does so until it begins to dissolve in double exposure, then into dancing bars of light. In the abrupt juxtaposition of the two scenes there lies a secret: much as the man longs to free himself of his collar, so too that collar longed for its freedom—to be some other thing beyond the realm of the human, some thing irreducible to the sartorial object. The *recentness of things* lies not least in art's willingness and ability to achieve such effects by playing with objects outside the cinematic frame, sharing some sense of their latent possibilities.

In "The Recentness of Sculpture" (1967), best known for dismissing minimalism as Good Design, Greenberg recognized that only three-dimensional work had assumed the burden of irritating the "borderline between art and non-art" because "even an unpainted canvas now stated itself as a picture."[36] He realized, though, that "almost anything" had become readable as art, "including a door, a table, or a blank sheet of paper" (*R*, 253). He didn't realize and couldn't predict that art, fully sustaining itself as art, would sharpen its focus on a very different borderline: between the object and the thing.

1. Although it is safe to say that the materiality of painting has been effectively elided within the discipline of art history, this too is changing. See Jennifer Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013). And note that the Clark Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, sponsored a symposium called "Materiality and Art History" (March 16, 2013).

2. Frank Stella, in response to Bruce Glaser, "Questions to Stella and Judd," *Art News* 65, no. 5, September 1966, 58–59. Reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

3. Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art International* 12 (February 1968): 31.

4. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Art and Objecthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 151, 153.

5. "Art=Idea + the Object: Talking with Mel Bochner, 18 April 1972," reprinted in Ellen Johnson, *Modern Art and the Object* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 209.

6. In his introduction to the republication of the essay in the eponymously titled collection, *Art and Objecthood*, he explains that the essay's "chief motivation in the first place had to do with my experience of literalist [his term for *minimalist*] works and exhibitions during the previous several years, in particular my recurrent sense, especially in gallery shows devoted to one or another artist, of literalism's singular effectiveness as mise-en-scéne ([Robert] Morris and Carl Andre were masters at this). . . . [I]t was as though their installations infallibly offered their audience a kind of heightened perceptual experience, and I wanted to understand the nature of that surfeit, and therefore to my mind essential inartistic (I should have said unmodernist) effect." "An Introduction to My Art Criticism," 40.

7. Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," in *Donald Judd Complete Writings 1959–1975* (Halifax: Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2005), 189.

8. Frank Trentmann, "Materiality in the Future of History: Things, Practices, and Politics," *Journal of British Studies* 48 (April 2009): 283.

9. For further thoughts on contemporary art's attention to the object world, see Bill Brown, "Objects, Others, and Us (The Refabrication of Things)," *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 2 (Winter 2010), 183–217; Brown, "Redemptive Reification (Theaster Gates, Gathering)," in *Theaster Gates: My Labor is My Protest*, ed. Honey Luard (London: White Cube, 2012), n.p.; and Brown, "Anarchéologie (Object Worlds and Other Things, circa Now)," *The Way of the Shovel*, ed. Dieter Rolestrate (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2013).

10. The phrase is from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 407.

11. Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence & Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001), 46 (hereafter cited in text as *EE*).

12. See Judd, "Specific Objects," 184.

13. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 265.

14. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008), 112 (hereafter cited in text as *AF*).

15. For an appreciation of the continental case, see, for instance, Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: re.press, 2011).

16. "Instead of a mythical Mind giving shape to reality, carving it, cutting it, ordering it, it was now the prejudices, categories, and paradigms of a group of people living together that determined the representations of every one of those people." Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays in the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 3–6 (hereafter cited in text as *PH*).

17. For the precise way in which he is using the term *network*, see Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) (hereafter cited in text as *RS*); on the agency of objects, see pp. 63–86.

18. Bruno Latour, "Waiting for Gaia. Composing the common world through arts and politics," accessed February 2, 2012, http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/124-GAIA-LONDON-SPEAP_0.pdf. This was Latour's lecture at the French Institute, London, November 2011. In a previous lecture at the University of Mainz (October 2011), "Is It Possible to Get Our Materialism Back? An Inquiry into the Various Idealisms of Matter," he also addressed Gaia.

19. It is important to note that Latour has curated art exhibitions and edited exhibition catalogs. See, for instance, Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Iconoclash: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion, and Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).

20. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 11.

21. Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," in "Things," ed. Bill Brown, special issue, *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 12. More precisely, you might want to say that it is the avant-garde (as opposed to modernism) that accomplishes this work.

22. Boris Arvatov, "Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing (Toward the Formulation of the Question)" (1925), trans. Christina Kiaer, *October* 81 (Winter 1997): 3.

23. Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 69. He goes on to argue, in the subsequent sentence: "To limit the discussion to humans, their interests, their subjectivities, and their rights, will appear as strange a few years from now as having denied the right to vote of slaves, poor people, or women." In what remains Latour's most "literary" experiment, he grants a voice to a designed but abandoned transit system in *Aramis or The Love of Technology* (1991), trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

24. Graham Harman, *Bruno Latour: Prince of Networks* (Melbourne: re.press, 2009), 208, 159 (hereafter cited as *PN*). Harman had confronted much the same problem in Alfred North Whitehead, who "ends up devouring" the "integrity of individual objects" within a "total system of relations." Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court, 2002), 233.

25. Graham Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics and the Carpentry of Things* (Chicago: Open Court, 2005), 154 (hereafter cited in text as *GM*); *PN*, 215. Despite Harman's metaphysical realism, his account of the object, defined by its elusiveness, can begin to sound like Lacan's account of the Thing: "This is what objects are for guerilla metaphysics: inscrutable holes of withdrawn energy that somehow still emit fragrance or radio signals by way of the notes that ought to have collapsed entirely into their dark and unified cores, but have not done so" (*Guerilla Metaphysics*, 184).

26. Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 19 (hereafter cited in text as *AP*).

27. Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology*, 27.

28. Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics*, 183.

29. Gaston Bachelard, *The New Scientific Spirit*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 99. See Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1979; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986)—the references throughout to *Le nouvel esprit scientifique* (1934) and *Le matérialisme rationnel* (1953), and especially the section titled "The Phenomenotechnique" (63–72). (Latour has retreated from the strong constructivist position ["From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," in *Things*, ed. Bill Brown (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 151–74], but the emphasis on participants remains consistent.) Particularly evocative of the sort of description that Latour would give to specific objects, see Bachelard's account of the lightbulb as an abstract-concrete object. Bachelard, *Le rationalisme appliqué* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975), 108–10.

30. Gaston Bachelard, *Earth and Reveries of Will: An Essay On the Imagination of Matter*, trans. Kenneth Haltman (Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 2002), 31.

31. Walter Benjamin, "Dream Kitsch," trans. Howard Eiland, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2: 1927–1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 3.

32. André Breton, "What Is Surrealism?," in *What Is Surrealism? Selected Writing by André Breton*, ed. Franklin Rosemont (New York: Pathfinder, 1978), 184.

33. André Breton, "The Crisis of the Object," in *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (Boston: MFA Publications, 2002), 275, 279. Breton published *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* in 1928 (Gallimard); that text was incorporated into the subsequent edition of the book, which appeared in 1965 (Gallimard).

34. This is a highly abbreviated version of an account of Breton I provide in *Other Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). In the same years (1934–36) when Breton was lecturing on the object, Martin Heidegger was lecturing on the thing, the lectures belated published as *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (The Question of the Thing) (Tübingen: Niemeyer, Germany, 1962).

35. For a very different project that generates some of the same effects, see Theo Jansen's *Standbeests*, large, "winged" kinetic sculptures (constructed of wood and plastic bottles, for instance) that scuttle along the beach.

36. Clement Greenberg, "The Recentness of Sculpture," *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4, Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 252 (hereafter cited in text as *R*). The problem with minimalism (as opposed to the sculpture of Anthony Caro) also lay in the fact that its provocation amounted to a merely phenomenal surprise, a "one-time surprise" (254), as opposed to the kind of aesthetic surprise that endures.

Demonstration and Description[1]

Robert Jackson

In the often cited 1969 essay "Art After Philosophy," Joseph Kosuth proclaimed that "all art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually."[2] Kosuth argued that Duchamp's historical role was to align art with conceptual function, separate from a sensual aesthetics of transcendence, the "morphological" form of which had traditionally made art favorable to conventional critical taste. Kosuth put his finger on the moment when art's autonomy was finally separated from the philosophy of aesthetics, with a smug declaration signaling "the end of philosophy and the beginning of art."[3] The relevance of discrete, portable art objects receded, and the linguistic, functional character of art as concept was foregrounded.

> When objects are presented within the context of art (and until recently objects always have been used) they are eligible for aesthetic consideration as are any objects in the world, and an aesthetic consideration of an object existing in the realm of art means that the object's existence or functioning in an art context is irrelevant to the aesthetic judgement.[4]

In a way, it's hard to criticize Kosuth; he simply took the general rejection of formalist criticism and its inherited philosophical baggage to its logical extreme. "His reasoning is in some way flawless,"[5] as Thierry de Duve once described it.

How ironic, then, that in 2015 philosophy is now influencing how some contemporary artists relate themselves to the creation of work (and all the more ironic as, in the context of this publication, language and the finitude of human concepts are no longer privileged, while objects and things are). This strange historical leapfrogging between philosophy and art would be all the more fascinating if it weren't so contingent on academic fashion, yet, Continental philosophy has now become subject to the same proliferation of ideas, development, urgency, and commitment that was evident in contemporary art in the late 1960s to mid-'70s (including Kosuth's manifesto), and like many fields of study, it's enjoying some renewed vigor after a period of vague stagnation.

Without wishing to overly generalize the situation, there has been a tremendous reevaluation of what Continental philosophy can and must do. This has, although not exclusively, been performed under the notorious title of speculative realism, a (now disbanded) movement that has galvanized dissatisfaction with language games, culture, and the overpoliticization of theory, rejecting them outright and/or radicalizing previous work, in a bid to approach the reality of things, thoughts, and the world beyond our access to it.[6] We could be guilty of calling it a genuine paradigm shift—we could also be guilty of valuing its historical importance just as the lights go out—but whatever the speculative turn happens to be, one knows something has changed when no general consensus or outright definition can describe what's going on.

At the heart of speculative realism lies the rallying call to reject what Quentin Meillassoux terms "correlationism,"[7] which is important for aesthetic deliberation, not least because it exposes the specific issues and competing tensions in the relationship between a viewer and the artwork, or to be more specific, between the thought of the viewer and the being of the artwork. The rejection of correlationism, the definition of which states that thought and being are forever coimplicated together, bequeaths a deep challenge to the arts as well as philosophy; and it has broader consequences than simple specific attempts to illustrate what current philosophers have written—rather, it splits the very Kantian core of aesthetics itself.

That said, the disciplinary goals of philosophy and art sometimes launch mixed questions at each other, with each side unsure of what its goals are supposed to be, but should either discipline seek to unite an authentic engagement between speculative realism and aesthetics, it must first inquire whether one set of goals can be mapped on the other. That hasn't stopped artists from "trying out" speculative realism, though, and the broader direction of this essay isn't to explicitly judge the aesthetic maneuvers so far, but to at least focus on that ground, focus on the tensions involved, indicate directions of future debate, and provide key tools for interrogating each other's goals, whether historical or current.

The chief aim is to illuminate one broad axis of division within the speculative realism movement and use it to illustrate or characterize certain modalities in the operation of aesthetics. Moreover, one could claim that these key differences between the proponents of speculative realism also radicalize existing tensions within art criticism that have bubbled underneath the surface and continue to remain controversial.

THINKING BEYOND THOUGHT / EXISTING BEYOND THOUGHT

The original four positions of speculative realism (Quentin Meillassoux's "absolute contingency," Ray Brassier's "destruction of the manifest image," Iain Hamilton Grant's "idealist grounding of processual nature," and Graham Harman's "autonomy of objects") can be grouped and oriented along a number of interesting but arbitrary divisions. Since the original 2007 symposium at Goldsmiths College,[8] however, it has become overwhelmingly clear that one necessary axis of division lies at the core between the speculative positions. This divisive axis originates with Kant, yet it breaks away from him into two modes of orientation.

The first insists that reality is breached through the "truth" of epistemological knowledge, to think beyond or about the reality of correlated thought (Meillassoux and Brassier), that one must be able to rationally "think" reality beyond thought itself. The second chooses to disregard the importance of human knowledge outright and favor an ontological reality that is real by virtue of existing beyond any form of thought and knowledge (Harman and Grant). This central axis of division, I argue, underscores any engagement or disagreement on speculating reality beyond thought. Steven Shaviro has argued that this central axis marks two extreme speculative positions at base, eliminativism and panpsychism.

> If we are to reject correlationism, and undo the Kantian knot of thought and being, no middle way is possible. We must say either (along with Harman and Grant) that all entities are in their own right at least to some degree active, intentional, vital, and possessed of powers; or else (along with Meillassoux and Brassier) that being is radically disjunct from thought, in which case things or objects must be entirely divested of their allegedly anthropomorphic qualities. When we step outside of the correlationist circle, we are faced with a choice between panpsychism on the one hand, or eliminativism on the other.[9]

Eliminativism seeks to test which forms of knowledge have the truer expository relationship between mind and matter, usually through formal, mathematical, logical, inferential, or scientific deduction or deliberation. In opposition, panpsychism shrugs off any privileging of human epistemology in any ontological aspect, by suggesting that human experience is only different in kind to any other entity in itself. Recently both Harman[10] and Meillassoux[11] have acknowledged the importance of this distinction, noting that each side of the argument produces different conceptions of what kind of reality will emerge. Meillassoux remains adamant that thinking reality (and it is only reality that can be thought) must pass through conceptual rigor and argument to deduce the world in its totality, while Harman insists that no amount of knowledge will make reality accessible or reveal its inner secrets, but this is not a definitive human attribute; all entities are primarily inaccessible to each other in equal measure.

This axis may be directly positioned as an explicit philosophical distinction, specifically designed to expose certain aesthetic modalities and consequences generated from either side. To coin two opposing neologisms, one could call this the difference between artists and philosophers who are interested in either of the following:

> *Demonstration:* the view that artworks or an aesthetic experience should demonstrate a view from nowhere or from nothing: it is a view expressed from the outside, or from an extrinsic principle of reality, which is to say that reality (either in itself or the reality of thought) can be deduced within its givenness
>
> *Description:* the view that artworks or an aesthetic experience should describe a view from somewhere or from something; it is a view that can only be expressed from something, a viewer, an object, or from an intrinsic principle of reality, which is to say that reality is constituted by entities in their own right, by their own reason

Both aesthetic orientations, like their philosophical counterparts, are heirs to Kant's correlate but go their separate speculative ways by virtue of whether one decides to demonstrate the literal conditions of givenness within aesthetic experience or situate the description of aesthetic givenness in nonhuman entities. If any future negotiation between aesthetics and speculative realism is to be initiated, it must surely pick its variance between Demonstration and Description.

For the author's part, my own interest and specialization lies in the computational arts, defined as any mode of artistic creation that incorporates the logic of computation in its creation, exhibition, and spectatorship. So too does computational art fall in between Demonstration and Description; in the former, the inception of computation was born from a failed totalizing, metamathematical demonstration, that is, a functional, logical entity that computed demonstrable knowledge for human thought. In the latter, it can be understood as an emergent mechanism producing undecidable surprises, which can only be described secondhand, as it executes independently from thought.

An aesthetics of Demonstration primarily demystifies the world by conceptual means. The ability of thought to demonstrate some basic logical ground, some inferential truth, or some contingent compression of knowledge becomes the means upon which all else rests. Demonstration is indicative of Meillassoux's mathematically formalist materialism, which is subject to an absolute emergence of transfinite contingency, completely knowable by thought. So too can we include Brassier's nihilist defense of a nonconceptual reality, which is not designed to be intelligible nor infused with special meaning. The contingent emergence of cognition in matter must be exposed for what it is, demonstrably passive and inert, or at least only active in such a way that it can be known and its consequences fully accounted for. One can justify a similar but different metaphysical approach from structural realists such as James Ladyman and Don Ross,[12] or philosophers who seek demonstration through deducing cognition through neuroscience such as Thomas Metzinger or Paul Churchland. Demonstration seeks to pulverize ontology by epistemological means and fully identify a variance of nonanthropomorphism from the confines of a pure rational, natural, material thought. It seeks a realism that subsists without being given, or a reality that remains entirely asubjective and yet must be entirely known, completely unaffected by sensual or perceptive understanding. With thought radically divorced from being, Demonstration reverse engineers givenness into extinction, crushing delusions with one hand while digging for tautological truth with the other. Demonstration is utterly explicit, literal and external.

Such an aesthetics of Demonstration is speculatively new but not entirely new; demonstration and contingency are the key elements of the Duchampian legacy, which persist within artworks seeking to unveil or demythologize the appearance of the pictorial, the sculptural, and the authenticity of the creator together with his/her work. It is worth noting that Meillassoux in particular has a philosophical investment in Duchamp, although this influence remains unpublished.[13] Brassier's mediations on noise and sonic practice[14] are entirely used to render the "destitution of the aesthetic," one which "exacerbates the rift between knowing and feeling by splitting experience, forcing conception against sensation."[15]

Broadly speaking, an aesthetics that operates in the mode of demonstration rests on the ability of the artist to pierce through the givenness of art and expose an explicit, subtractive view of the world, usually grounded on social experiments, jokes, hoaxes, or one-liners. Demonstrative art must at all times strive to simultaneously explain the reality of "what's going on"; expose its contingent emergence; remove any descriptive, subjective act of gesture; and rewrite (or mock) its state of affairs. In some cases it gives priority to materialist encounter, but with only a literal "nothingness" behind that focus; nothingness except impersonal conceptual knowledge. Rather unexpectedly, one could cite an example from Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*, a influential body of criticism that is explicitly grounded in the philosophical tradition of an Althusserian "materialism of encounter," for it "takes as its point of departure the world contingency, which has no pre-existing origin or sense, nor Reason, which might allot it a purpose."[16] Demonstrative art reverse engineers its way into novelty through explosions of context and the literal truth of the encounter. Any encounter in Demonstration is an encounter by nothing within nothing.

By contrast, the aesthetics of Description holds that knowledge is manqué and can never be secured, but only described and realized, or perhaps translated, absorbed, sensed, delayed, and morphized. Description is broadly championed by not only Harman and Grant, but also Bruno Latour, Isabelle Stengers, and Steven Shaviro, whose common influences, Alfred North Whitehead and William James, proceeded as if Kant never existed. As a direct opposite of Demonstration, the experience of Description seeks to pulverize epistemology by ontological means. Thought becomes "common and humble, rather than rare and preeminent."[17] Proponents of Description radicalize the anthropomorphic correlation by articulating a reality constructed by a multitude of entity-centric views, or "morphisms," that aren't specifically conscious in all cases, but in terms of appearing "sensually" and "experientially" are every bit equal to human experience.[18] The intentionality, or sensibility of things and entities is a feature of the physical world tout court

and thus treats fictions seriously, not as delusions but as creative configurations of limited translation that come together randomly. Everything that must be the case takes place within primordial pockets of description where "nothing is known—only realized."[19] The only entities that are beyond Description are more descriptions instigated into concrete objects, forces, powers, networks, or occasions. Taken to its speculative conclusion, Description's logical conclusion halts at panpsychism, but for others, it need not halt there. It is utterly implicit, figurative and internal.

Similarly, such an aesthetics of Description is speculatively new, but its roots descend from a precorrelationist history. Harman, for instance, has a deep philosophical interest in Clement Greenberg,[20] the archetypal modernist art critic who celebrated finite morphism and sought to articulate the unarticulable by appealing to the withdrawn core of the medium's indescribable form, upon which describable content could be reconfigured. Description generally takes place as an intense aesthetic fascination with the autonomy of entities and as such, this ontological, autonomous relationship is beyond Demonstration, for it revels and rejoices in a piercing sensibility of the given, at once immediate and inexhaustible, no matter what entity it happens to operate in. Any encounter that occurs in Description is an encounter of something within something.

REEXAMINING THE KANTIAN DEADLOCK

Of crucial importance is the sudden realization that there is no middle ground or synthesis to this axis anymore, not least because correlationism was a presynthesis of these two positions. Considering that the speculative realism movement is defined by its break with correlationism, this, in effect, preempts any upcoming reconciliation between Demonstration and Description. If the original intention of artists or philosophers is to reject the anthropocentric view of correlationism, they must choose either sphere outright before laying down details within its threshold. They must either demonstrate claims of an indifferent reality through the art of epistemological deduction, or they must radicalize the ontological operation of description within the indifference of entities beyond human knowledge. Such arguments between Demonstration and Description reach a deadlock: the objection that one must demonstrate the description, versus the objection that one can only describe the demonstration. Philosophy attempts to make the stakes against opposing positions clear, but the stakes in contemporary aesthetics never quite reveal themselves until after the fact.

Why are transcendent fictions unnecessary in the aesthetics of Demonstration? The answer is that implicitness is not accepted in this aesthetic, as it is inherently dominated by the explicit, literal fact of the matter. The circumstance of human sentience plays the primary role by foregrounding the literal, contingent circumstances upon which sapience is grounded. In opposition to the aesthetics of Description, entities are not entities in their own right because they aren't "literally" there; Demonstration's chief role is to reduce them into scientific facts, mathematical functions, relational forces, or more favorably, political production. There is no knowledge to be made by grounding "pseudoentities" like artworks, objects, or institutions as autonomous instigators of aesthetic appreciation, let alone physical reality. Demonstration is utterly fascinated by correlationism, but only insofar as it bequeaths an undiscovered portal toward the literal truth of its own circumstance in the world.

By contrast, Description defends itself by arguing that Demonstration never fully articulates the reality it's trying to uncover, for any such move is still a description and not a perfect, literal communication of what it purportedly performs. Description refuses any saliency for human sentience and focuses instead on something deeper that can account for any form of causal relationship in the cosmos; such an unfathomable descriptive mode of causation is reality, and under these conditions, the aesthetic effect for thought is one general instance of relation, or of a featured gradient, between any entity. To recount an aesthetic experience in Description is simply recounting one instance within a causal metaphysical scheme.

Having identified a very broad outline of this necessary distinction for speculative realism and art, we now have the operative tools to open up other key works, exhibitions, curatorial practices, texts, and publications, which offer their own insights into the logics of Demonstration and Description accordingly, and thus offer their own correspondences on a possible understanding of reality beyond human access, together with the purview of art. To reiterate, this essay does not judge the act of choosing between these two aesthetic experiences, but seeks to understand the speculative consequences of artists and philosophers choosing between these two aesthetic orientations. Such an understanding will not require a cataclysmic theoretical or curatorial break with all previous understandings of art, and especially not a simple import of philosophical insight fused with artistic

illustration. Rather, it will require a deeper, speculative reexamination of how artists have approached and will continue to approach the conflicting Kantian relationships between a viewer and the artwork in this new era.

For Demonstration, it may require the dismantling of this relationship to expose the literal truth of what is between viewer and work. The ontological discourse of being in Demonstration is of the fact. To be is to be a fact.[21]

For Description, it may require the expansion of this relationship to expose the wider, plural relationships between viewer and work. If there is such an ontological discourse attached to Description, then it must be of the thing that describes and is described. To be is to be a thing.

Continental philosophy and contemporary art already have a deep, complex history of reexamining their own and each other's past; however, the conflict between Demonstration and Description, which bubbles underneath speculation, brings with it a set of renewed challenges but also new problems. With nothing to unite the two, we also have the most important orientation of all for the production of art: an orientation of persistent urgency.

1. The majority of this essay was written in the subsequent days following the "Aesthetics in the 21st Century Conference" at the University of Basel (September 13–15, 2012). In two ways, then, it is a response born from the general outcomes of the conference (or what I felt to be the case), and thus a comment on the future of speculative realism and its connection to aesthetics.

2. Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," in *Studio International* CLXXVIII (October 1969). The essay was reprinted in Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art: Themes and Movements* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 232.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Thierry de Duve, "The Monochrome and the Canvas," in *Kant after Duchamp* (London, MIT Press, 1996), 279.

6. For a detailed introduction describing this "turn," see Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman's introduction "Towards a Speculative Philosophy," in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 1–18.

7. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008), 5.

8. Ray Brassier et al., "Speculative Realism," in *Collapse* 3 (November 2007): 307–449.

9. Steven Shaviro, "Panpsychism and/or Eliminativism" (lecture, OOOIII conference, New York, September 2011, and the SLSA conference, Kitchener, Ontario, September 2011), accessed November 12, 2012, http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=1012.

10. Graham Harman, "Wolfendale's piece in the Speculations Issue," Object-Oriented Philosophy, accessed September 4, 2012, http://doctorzamalek2.wordpress.com/2012/09/04/wolfendales-piece-the-speculations-issue/.

11. Quentin Meillassoux, "Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition: A Speculative Analysis of the Meaningless Sign," lecture given at the Freie Universität, Berlin, April 20, 2012, trans. Robin MacKay, accessed November 10, 2012, http://oursecretblog.com/txt/QMpaperApr12.pdf.

12. See James Ladyman and Don Ross, *Everything Must Go: Metaphysics Naturalized* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007).

13. See Graham Harman's interview with Meillassoux in Harman, *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 173–74.

14. Ray Brassier, "Genre is Obsolete," in *Noise & Capitalism*, ed. Mattin and Anthony Iles (Donostia-S.Sebastiá, Spain: Arteleku Audiolab Kritika Saila, 2009), 60–71.

15. Ray Brassier, "Against an Aesthetics of Noise," interview with Ray Brassier by Bram Ieven, NY 2009, accessed November 30, 2012, www.ny-web.be/transitzone/against-aesthetics-noise.html.

16. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods, and Mathiew Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2002), 18.

17. Shaviro, "Panpsychism and/or Eliminativism."

18. It's worth noting that in Graham Harman's nonrelational ontology, he does not endorse the notion that all objects have experience (i.e., have relations), and it is entirely possible that an object can exist without any relationship to the outside world.

19. Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* (London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 159.

20. For a very brief exposition of Harman's influence in Greenbergian criticism, Graham Harman, *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2012), 19–21.

21. Brassier et al., "Speculative Realism," 392. Here I cite Meillassoux, "The ontological is concerned with demonstration. The discourse of being is, for me, demonstration, because for me, to be is to be a fact."

Trauma Expanded / Aesthetics Expanded
Patricia Ticineto Clough

In their curatorial statement, Katherine Behar and Emmy Mikelson propose that the exhibition *And Another Thing* was meant to critically engage the privilege of the human in relation to art, materialism, and the recent turn to ontology in the philosophical movements known as speculative realism and object-oriented ontologies. Here, I also want to engage the ontological turn, its reconception of materialism and the privilege of the human, while giving special attention to developments in media technology. After all, nearly all media technological developments have raised questions about the human in that they often trouble, if not transform, the relationship of time and space, memory and forgetting, embodiment and disembodiment, privacy and exposure, individual and collective, matter and life. In this sense, the development of a new media technology often is traumatic while providing a unique form of transmitting trauma. As Marshall McLuhan put it: "The emergence of a new media is too violent and superstimulated a social experience for the central nervous system simply to endure."[1] It is the usual relationship, or perhaps I should say the usual opposition of life and matter, that is central in this most recent ontological turn, a turn, I would propose, that is especially resonant with the traumatic changes wrought with the development of digital technologies.

The resonance with digital technology of the recent turn to ontology is in the latter's aim to recover matter from its opposition to culture, to nature, to life, even to the extent of refusing cultural construction or the assimilating act of human consciousness deeply embedded in most of our materialisms. That is to say, materialist philosophy or the philosophical positions that we mostly share have presumed the impossibility of a world without human consciousness or knowing; our philosophical positions have been characterized by a primordial rapport between human and world, a correlation between knowing and being. Asking us to critically rethink what Quentin Meillassoux[2] has called "correlationism," this most recent ontological turn has signaled the end of materialism or, conversely, the creation of new materialisms.

In their introduction to a collection of essays titled *New Materialisms*, the editors Diana Coole and Samantha Frost suggest that the new materialisms "are rediscovering a materiality that materializes, evincing immanent modes of self-transformation that compel us to think of causation in far more complex terms, to consider anew the location and nature of capacities for agency."[3] The new materialists suggest a rethinking of agencies and causation because they are conceiving matter as vibrant, vibrating with information/energy. Matter is conceived therefore as affective independent of cultural interpretation or cultural construction as well as independent of human cognition or consciousness. In a similar vein, the philosopher Timothy Morton takes up objects, proposing that "motion is not something that an object 'does' on occasion: motion is a deep ontological feature of a thing," an ontological feature that is inciting a new ecological awareness in which each and every thing or object in its singularity is lively and with agency or the capacity to affect and be affected.[4]

Along these lines, critical theorists, myself among them, have been arguing that affect, at least in the Spinozian-Deleuzian sense, is immanent to all scales of matter, from quantum to human to cosmic.[5] Affect is matter's capacity to affect and be affected; it is matter's agency, its capacity to inform itself. This conceptualization of affect deeply disturbs the history of the use of the term *agency* because here affect is not confined to the human subject; it is not the human subject's agency alone or even primarily. This reconception of matter as affective therefore puts ontology and epistemology out of sync with one another since affect is conceived as real, or an experienced experience, if you will, before it is a humanly known or conscious phenomenon or even an unconscious one. Thus the new materialisms are not a culturalization of matter in that there is a refusal of the thought of culture as an enlivening form or meaning to be given to what is presumed to be its opposite, inert or dumb matter.

This shift to rethinking matter as lively, unsettling culture as the privileged source of meaning, and the carrier of the agency of human subjects raises a question about what we have called cultural mediation, making us rethink media technology and transmission, as well as the transmission of trauma. What is invited is a rethinking of trauma and media technology, acknowledging the massive development of digital or computational technologies and the specific ways these can extend matter or intervene in matter's materializing itself. For example, nanotechnologies demonstrate this as they offer a new kind of materiality that Luciana Parisi describes as an "artificiality . . . advancing underneath the natural strata" and as such can change the primary and the secondary (or the real and the sensual) qualities of matter, showing what atoms and molecules have been doing all along.[6] Here technology heightens or intensifies (it can also deintensify) what already is in motion, what already is affective and circulating at nonphenomenological speeds.

Similarly, digital technologies allow for the appreciably rapid connectivity and virtual proximity of social media by mobilizing the affective allure of nonsymbolic images circulating at nonphenomenological speeds, thereby supporting the wildly popular dissemination of the autobiographical through the profiles of Facebook, self-blogs, YouTube, Twitter, and the like, while, however, bringing to a near end the articulation of subjectivity in terms of memory and forgetting that is pressed into a narrative logic of beginning, middle, and ending. Instead there is the rise in the value of big data or transactional data gathered as a by-product of institutional transactions that are far outstripping the privilege, as well as the utility, of large-scale social science research but also the soft narrative approaches of the social sciences and the humanities too. Trauma no longer only is a matter of seeking voice for what cannot be said, a privacy that now has had no end of publicity. Trauma has become ubiquitous; it has gone viral, beyond human containment, beyond national containment, beyond environmental containment. Trauma no longer is distinctly symptomology or problematic of what has gone wrong with you and me. Instead trauma is infection in matter's rhythms with wild reverberations, inciting a new view of media and mediation.

Such a view of media technology, derived from thinking of matter as lively or in motion, is different than thinking of media as offering culturally produced forms of consciousness or unconsciousness, ideologically inflected, hailing us as subjects—from subjects of the nation to the subjects of a globalized risk in a financialization of everyday life. Although these forms of subjectivity have been and remain critically suggestive, they usually have presumed the opposition of matter to culture, matter to life, matter to nature, and therefore have supported a philosophical assumption of the fall from nature into technology like the fall in Eden from innocence into sin, so a dialectic restoration, if not a secular salvation, usually has informed media criticism. But media technology now has induced another thought of mediation, whereby mediation is immanent to a rhythmic, vibrant, or vibrating matter such that media is better understood as modulation of what is already in motion, and whereby subjectivity (not only human subjectivity) is first and foremost affectivity or a capacity for entanglement with a sensibility of rhythm, vibration, and oscillation.

It is in this light that Jussi Parikka defines media as "contractions of forces of the world into specific resonating milieus,"[7] or into "ecologies of sensation," to use Amit Rai's term.[8] Media is understood to accelerate or decelerate, intensify or deintensify matter's own rhythms, allowing for transitioning between temporal dimensions or speeds, not least the speeds of calculation. Steve Goodman writes of an ontology of vibration, and Parikka concludes: "We do not so much *have* media as we *are* media and *of* media."[9] So, for theorists like Goodman, Rai, and Parikka, mediation is modulation of affective forces of human perception and sensation but also perception and sensation above, below, or other than that of the human, at all scales of matter.

In this view, media is extended to various platforms—organic, inorganic, chemical, and neurochemical, not only bringing into crisis the boundary between life and matter, but also proposing that the distinction between analog and digital media be rethought. There is a move to deprivilege the analog against which the digital often is thought to be simultaneously exact and reductive—and if engaged with liveliness, engaged to reduce it exactly. The new media theorists I have drawn on refuse to privilege the analog. Instead they rethink the digital in terms of nonphenomenological speeds of calculation; they appreciate the "numerical dimensions of the virtual" and "the rhythmic oscillations that vibrate the microsonic and the molecular turbulence these generate." Giving them insight into "the potential for mutation immanent to the numerical code itself."[10] This is a perception of code as operating by entangling with the affective condition of each and every thing's singular existence. And thus, the analog is taken to refer to a thing's or an object's network of ramifying

traces propagated virtually without end.[11] While an object is part of such a network, it also stands apart from such a network as well.

Digital media thus conceived is both of an infraempiricism reaching to what is below or before human conception and cognition and of a metaphysical realism, speculating on what has agency without us, or is of a world that is neither for us nor against us, as Eugene Thacker has put it.[12] This is the trauma that now faces us: what is to be the human response to a world that is neither for us nor against us, the world digital media has brought to our attention by modulating what is below or before our consciousness and cognition? The ontological turn is a first appreciation of a need for philosophy to rethink causality in a world of forces immanent to matter.

Start again, the philosophers are saying.
Start again with no presumed correlations
between human and world, being and thinking.
Start again on a groundless ground.
Start again with an aesthetic causality:
the attraction and repulsion of forces immanent
to matter, forcing open new paths for creative practices
seeking to regain a power for living artfully and
for a lively art.

No matter what differences among the philosophers who have recently turned to ontology in order to rethink the vitality of matter and the liveliness of the object, all have agreed to the relevancy of aesthetics. Aesthetics is seen as a way to approach the object recognizing its agency or its being affective without these being correlated to human cognition or consciousness. At the same time, this is not merely to return the object to a naive empiricism or scientistic positivism. For philosophers engaged with speculative realism or object-oriented ontologies, like Morton, Graham Harman, Ian Bogost, and Jane Bennett—as well as for those influenced more by the process-oriented philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Alfred North Whitehead, like Brian Massumi, Elizabeth Grosz, Luciana Parisi, and Steven Shaviro—a return to ontology has brought with it a return to the aesthetic. This return both registers and responds to the current transmission of trauma, the trauma of the technological development of digital media. The return to the aesthetic both registers and responds to this trauma in that it trumps other forms of causality, those other forms that have given humans a sense of control over life, over matter, over each other.

The aesthetic to which there has been a return is that of the beautiful rather than that of the sublime. The return to the aesthetic is not about the experience of the overwhelming disjunction between imagination and understanding that, as Kant would propose, only becomes an experience of the sublime in the conscious recognition of the failure of human comprehension. The aesthetic of the beautiful instead refers to a responsiveness, a force of repulsion or attraction, that is without the guide of reason, concept, consciousness, or cognition. For Richard Moran, drawing on Kant and the post-Kantian history of aesthetics, this responsiveness suggests "that what is regarded as beautiful is not experienced as a passive thing or as something that merely produces an effect in us but rather as inviting or requiring something from us, a response that may be owed to it . . . , as if the beautiful thing had an independent life of its own."[13] Not surprisingly, then, Shaviro finds the aesthetic of the beautiful resonant with an object-oriented ontology in that the aesthetic of the beautiful meets the way objects "cannot be cognized, or subordinated to concepts; and also insofar as they cannot be utilized, or normatively regulated, or defined according to rules."[14] The aesthetic of the beautiful involves "feeling an object for its own sake," beyond those aspects of it that can be understood or used. This, however, is not about the recognition of conceptualization or cognition failing or being limited; rather, it is about an ontology that proposes that objects can feel and be felt by each other; they can affect and be affected by each other. This is how objects connect to each other and how in doing so are slightly or massively changed, caused to become different things.[15]

What is being claimed is that "the aesthetic dimension is the causal dimension," as Morton puts it.[16] Harman too argues that "aesthetics is first philosophy," and as such, "causality is alluring."[17] Shaviro goes along with Harman in arguing that "it is only aesthetically, beyond understanding and will, that I can appreciate the *actus* of the thing being what it is, in what Harman calls 'the sheer sincerity of existence.'"[18] And what the thing is or why the object is alluring is in the object's differing from itself. It is in this sense that Morton argues: "Beauty works itself 'in' to the already existing rift between an object and that same object" and "causality happens because this dance of nonidentity is taking place on the ontological inside of an object,"[19] from which the forces of repulsion or attraction radiate and are a "lure to feeling," as Whitehead puts it.

To be clear, then, this turn to aesthetics is not about aestheticization, that is, the imposition of rules of taste; it is about an ontological turn to affective matter and lively objects, necessitating the philosophical stipulation of causality as allurement occurring

between all real things, which though singular and inaccessible to cognition or conceptualization are nonetheless sensually open to being affected and affective. All in all, this means that we are approaching the aesthetic as causal and the media as affective modulation just when the calculative speeds of digital technologies can produce qualitative changes in the sensual and real qualities of matter.

And thus, there is a new sense of the traumatic and its transmission. Morton concludes that if the aesthetic dimension, "its nontemporality and nonlocality, is not in some beyond but right here, in your face," right where the object is, "then nothing is going to tell us categorically what counts as real and what counts as unreal."[20] Aesthetic causality points to what constitutes the trauma of digital technology: "It strips the world bare of the illusion that it isn't an illusion or that illusion is just a surface on noncontradictory unified real."[21]

With the ontological turn, the real of trauma is no longer a matter of a noncontradictory real to be found in an excavation of the past; it is an intensivity of microtemporal modulations and multimodal expression of the rhythms and vibrations of all things, things that matter. This makes criticism a matter of art, a critical method that itself secretes ontological domains, a critical method that necessarily is performative and engaged in experimental practices of allurement. With the expansion of trauma and aesthetics, we may well be "exiting the era in which cool, ironic, critical distance is the signature of the intellectual," and instead, the intellectual's signature might be "mimetic involvement, high-strung emotion, and fascinated sincerity with the world."[22] In this expansion of aesthetics, art becomes ubiquitous but, for that, even more important. *And Another Thing*—with its concern both for the historical traditions of art that have been critically engaging the privilege of the human on behalf of the object and for its focus on current philosophical trends—is just the kind of exhibition we need for these times.

1. Marshall McLuhan and Lewis H. Lapham, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge: MIT Digital Press, 1994), 43.

2. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (London: Continuum, 2009).

3. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 9.

4. Timothy Morton, "Objects in the Mirror are Closer Than They Appear," in "Another Phenomenology: Exploring the Sensuous Earth," special issue, ed. Tom Sparrow and Bobby George, *Singularum* 1 (2012). There is much to say about the difference between the ontologies being elaborated that suggest the end of materialism and those that suggest a new materialism. For one, there is a difference in arguing that matter is in motion or that objects are in motion. Some philosophers argue that there is nothing else but objects and while objects are dynamic, the dynamism does not come from elsewhere, from matter, for example. Here I cannot develop these differences that now are being argued among philosophers, but I can suggest that matter here also might be taken as an object ontologically speaking, and, to be clear, subjects and bodies, as well as machines, dogs, cats, clouds, and the angels that sit upon clouds are all considered objects of one sort or another in the ontological turn.

5. Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, eds., *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Patricia Ticineto Clough, Greg Goldberg, Rachel Schiff, Aaron Weeks, and Craig Willse, "Notes Towards a Theory of Affect-Itself," *Ephemera* 7, no. 1 (April 2007): 60–77.

6. Luciana Parisi, "Nanoarchitectures: The Synthetic Design of Extensions and Thoughts," in *Digital Cultures and the Politics of Emotion*, ed. Athina Karatzogianni and Adi Kuntsman (Hamshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 33–51.

7. Jussi Parikka, *Insect Media: An Archaeology of Animals and Technology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xiv.

8. Amit Rai, "Race Racing: Four Theses on Race and Intensity," *Women Studies Quarterly* 40 (Spring/Summer 2012): 64–75.

9. Parikka, *Insect Media*, xxvii.

10. Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect and the Ecology of Fear* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 122.

11. Steven Shaviro, "The Universe of Things" (paper presented at "Objected Oriented Ontology, A Symposium," Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, April 23, 2010).

12. Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet, Horror of Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Zer0 Books, 2011).

13. Richard Moran, "Kant, Proust, and the Appeal of Beauty," *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 298–329.

14. Shaviro, "The Universe of Things."

15. Shaviro, "The Universe of Things."

16. Timothy Morton, "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry," *New Literary History* 43 (Spring 2012): 206.

17. Graham Harman, "On Vicarious Causation," *Collapse II: Speculative Realism* (March 2007): 221.

18. Shaviro, "The Universe of Things." Shaviro is quoting Harman (Graham Harman, *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* [Chicago and LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 2005], 135). Although there is agreement between Harman and Shaviro, there also is disagreement. Shaviro has discussed this disagreement by contrasting the metaphysics of Harman and Whitehead. Shaviro prefers Whitehead as a matter of taste, or aesthetics, as he puts it (Steven Shaviro, "The Actual Volcano: Whitehead, Harman, and the Problem of Relations," in *The Speculative Turn*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman [Melbourne: re.press, 2011], 289). Shaviro further suggests that Harman is concerned more with the sublime than Whitehead, who prefers the beautiful. Shaviro suggests that this links Harman's notion of allure to the sublime, easily making Harman fall into the modernist tradition (Shaviro, "The Actual Volcano," 288–90). In a response to Shaviro, Harman makes the point I have made above that the sublime is a human experience, as is clear in Kant, while Harman's notion of allure is not about the human experience of cognitive limitation but about the ontology of objects, including but not privileging the human (Graham Harman, "Response to Shaviro," in *The Speculative Turn*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 302–3). There is much more to say about the difference and similarities among Whitehead, Harman, and Shaviro that I cannot take up here. What I am suggesting here is that the contrast between Shaviro's and Harman's thinking is entangled with the development of digital technology and the further development of that technology may give weight to one of their philosophies over the other.

19. Morton, "Objects in the Mirror."

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Graham Harman, "Maximum McLuhan" (paper presented at McLuhan's Philosophy of Media, Brussels Centennial Conference, Brussels, October 2011). In Yoni Van Den Eede, Joke Bauwens, Joke Beyl, Marc Van den Bossche, and Karl Verstrynge, eds., *Proceedings of 'McLuhan's Philosophy of Media' – Centennial Conference / Contact Forum, 26–28 October 2011* (Brussels: Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts, forthcoming).

SONY

Acknowledgments

The exhibition *And Another Thing* and this publication, which extends its scope and reach, are results of the unstinting generosity and aid of many individuals. Producing a volume around *And Another Thing* was first suggested by Eileen Joy of punctum books and would have been impossible without her patient support and encouragement. We are extraordinarily grateful to Bill Brown, Patricia Ticineto Clough, and Robert Jackson for their essays that lend depth and perspective to this catalog, and extend its insights and incitements beyond the exhibition alone. Patricia deserves special thanks for her guidance throughout this extended project.

This catalog owes a great debt to Tim Laun, its designer, whose skillful eye and editorial judgment was essential in realizing this publication. Many thanks are due to Lisa Delgado, its copy editor, for bringing her keen acumen and germane clarity to shaping and fine-tuning its development. The James Gallery provided excellent photographic documentation of the exhibition appearing in these pages.

The exhibition *And Another Thing,* and the lectures and panels surrounding the exhibition, would never have come to fruition without the immeasurable support of the James Gallery, and The CUNY Graduate Center's Center for the Humanities and its executive director Aoibheann Sweeney. We are especially grateful to Katherine Carl, the James Gallery curator and deputy director of the Center for the Humanities, who was an enthusiastic collaborator and coconspirator from the project's inception. We are also deeply obliged to Jennifer Wilkinson, the exhibitions coordinator, for her energetic efforts and organizational expertise, as well as to the entire superb team of installers and staff at the James Gallery.

It was greatly rewarding to work with such inspiring and often provocative artists, many of whom have made powerful and lasting contributions to contemporary art and criticism. We are grateful to have included works by Carl Andre, Laura Carton, Valie Export, Regina José Galindo, Tom Kotik, Mary Lucking, Bruce Nauman, Grit Ruhland, Anthony Titus, Ruslan Trusewych, and Zimoun. The kind cooperation of Laura Blereau, former director of Bitforms Gallery, NYC; Anthony Allen, associate director at Paula Cooper Gallery, NYC; Ida Pisani and Fabrizia Endrizzi at Prometeo Gallery, Milan, Italy; and Video Data Bank, Chicago, made it possible to bring many of the valuable and compelling works to the exhibition.

We were honored to work with the many scholars and researchers who enriched the exhibition through public programs and discussions. We are thankful for their insights and efforts in bringing together a remarkable group of individuals. Patricia, leading the Life of Things seminar, formed a panel in which Graham Harman, Jane Bennett, and Levi Bryant discussed their unique approaches to speculative realism, as well as a lecture on objects and epigenetics by Hannah Landecker. Victoria Pitts-Taylor, leading the NeuroCultures seminar, brought together Suzanne Anker and Adrienne Klein to discuss contemporary art and neuroscience. Carin Kuoni, director and curator at the Vera List Center for Arts and Politics at the New School, was a generous and kindred collaborator; we thank her for cosponsoring a panel discussion on the politics of objects between Noortje Marres, Shannon Mattern, and David Turnbull. We were further thrilled to share in a lecture by Bernard Stiegler with discussant Kyoo Lee, which took place in the exhibition's midst. These related programs were essential components of *And Another Thing*, and they factored in the direction of this catalog by exploring the concepts and discursive tangles among contemporary art, speculative realism, and object-oriented ontology.

Lastly, many friends and colleagues supported our process in realizing this project; we are grateful to them all, with a special thanks to Katy Siegel.

—Katherine Behar and Emmy Mikelson

CONTRIBUTORS

Katherine Behar is a performance and new media artist. She is assistant professor of new media arts at Baruch College, The City University of New York.

Bill Brown is Karla Scherer Distinguished Service Professor in American Culture at the University of Chicago and is coeditor of *Critical Inquiry*.

Patricia Ticineto Clough is professor of sociology and women's studies at The CUNY Graduate Center and Queens College of The City University of New York and is a general editor of *Lateral*.

Robert Jackson is an art critic and writer in the UK. He is a PhD student at Lancaster University.

Emmy Mikelson is a Brooklyn-based artist. She currently teaches in the Fine and Performing Arts Department at Baruch College, The City University of New York.

And Another Thing was exhibited at the James Gallery at the Center for the Humanities at The CUNY Graduate Center and was made possible, in part, by support from Bitforms Gallery, Paula Cooper Gallery, Prometeo Gallery, and the Video Data Bank.

Designer: Tim Laun
Copy Editor: Lisa Delgado
All installation photographs by Max Yawney, 2011. Courtesy of The James Gallery.
Published by punctum books

And Another Thing: Nonanthropocentrism and Art
Behar, Katherine; Mikelson, Emmy

punctum books, 2016
ISBN: 9780692652664

https://punctumbooks.com/titles/and-another-thing/

https://www.doi.org/10.21983/P3.0144.1.00