
**BEFORE
THE BEGINNING
AND AFTER
THE END**

GOSHIKA MACUGA

AN ATLAS

MARIO MAINETTI



Before the Beginning and After the End brings together, analyzes and represents the work of Goshka Macuga from her early projects up to her exhibition "To the Son of Man Who Ate the Scroll" at Fondazione Prada in Milan.

The title of the book reflects the effort expended by Macuga in the conception and creation of a work of the same name in which a series of scrolls illustrates the history of the universe and mankind as it has been thought, recounted and understood by human beings.

Similarly, this publication presents her activities in the form of a scientific manual that comprises documentary images, project descriptions, categorized lists, diagrams and statistics of the themes of her works and their reciprocal influence.

The aim of this atlas is to accompany the reader in the discovery of Goshka Macuga's oeuvre going beyond the functional but reductive definitions of artist-curator, research project versus artistic creation, solo and group exhibition, and of exhibition catalogue.

In conceiving this book, together with the artist and designers from 2x4, we have used words to relate facts and created illustrations to communicate ideas, contexts and relations that existed before the start (or which remained after the end) of each of the artist's research projects.

The result is a visual survey of an artistic practice based on curiosity, detailed study, and multidisciplinary taken to the extreme in both her research and artistic production. Macuga's working method is scientific but above all incorporates intuition, as well as the knowledge that there may be other versions of reality, explanations and solutions to those known or those she proposes in her projects. A taste for real or supposed alternatives to history and modernity faces up to, yet shies away from, categories such as geographic belonging and gender, makes fun of the separation between science and religion, ignores the division between personal and public, and devours every form of construction and conservation of knowledge, with the ultimate aim of transforming it all into a work of art.

It is a serious and entertaining body of work that in both reality and this publication takes on aspects of a collage, like those of an entire exhibition, and which always—disregarding the medium used, the importance of the context or the influence that the project may have had in the artist's career, or in her appreciation from the public and critics—has at its core an interweaving of ideas, conversations and unknown or unexpected persons. Macuga places herself at the center of these combinations, to make them manifest, amplify their voices, and reveal their existence and essence.

Macuga's practice is the same: she collaborates with other artists, curates with other curators, identifies herself with the institutions that host her shows to share their history and collections, discusses with her friends, and involves scientists, anthropologists, literati and other experts in her way of thinking, to create a system of opinions and understanding that forms the primary structure for the production of every project.

In both method and execution, Goshka Macuga's work seems the product of a collective of which she is a part; she selects the cultural themes and forms of her show, producing a result that in this book has been disassembled into its essential parts—the description of her projects, images of the works, lists of exhibitions, reference texts and illustrations, portraits of people involved—and then reassembled in graphical schema and conceptual diagrams that reveal the interconnection, overlaying, affinities and relative weight that Macuga has included in her weaving of the parts, as well as the cyclical return of several themes and the repetition of operating strategies and visual aspects.

Presented in chronological sequence, the projects are suited to transversal theme-based interpretation—Appropriation, Archival research, Artist collaboration, Context specificity, Environments, Exhibition curating, Exhibition design, Performance and Moving images—by means of which it is possible to read the development of the artist's interests and imagine new relational chains and intellectual connections that, throughout the book, become apparent following a different navigation path.

When themes and relations reappear and become insistent, a more personal system emerges through the intellectual structure and formal gestures, in which it is possible to discern a poetics formed by the artist's passion for humanity, and where her relations with individuals are transformed into an interest in the group. Real and imaginary collaborations, real or ideal loves, and personal histories forcefully inserted in the telling of a story that has ignored those histories can all be found in this publication and exemplify the condition of us all.

The image of an artist who is a collector of information and the motor of shared initiatives is overlaid by that of the humanist who sieves through the past and present in search of universal answers. Goshka Macuga has hidden those answers but they can be discovered in her works, they appear in her tribute to her artist colleagues, and emerge in the words of an android with a friendly though ancient face.

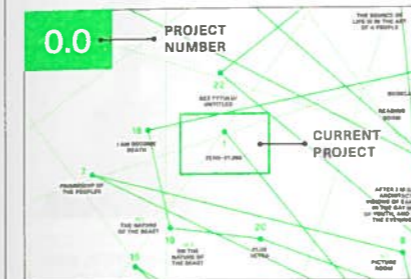
ATLAS STRUCTURE AND NAVIGATION

This book presents the projects executed by Goshka Macuga between 1993 and 2016. They are organized in 27 sections and shown on the "Association Maps. Projects and Themes" (PP. 14–15) that displays the progression of the artist's activity through 10 of the most significant themes in her research.











Each project is marked by progressive numbers and introduced by a detail of the "Association Maps. Projects and Themes" that locates it in Macuga's artistic career. The title of the project—or projects if there are several in the section—is followed by the year it was first presented to the public, and a text edited by Goshka Macuga's studio, produced by collaboration between Stella Bottai and Jessica Harrington. Each text is accompanied by a selective bibliography, a list of artists who contributed to the project, and a list of the people, subjects and objects that were important to conception of the project.

Specific icons link the project with the themes presented in the association map, and page references enable a thematic navigation within the atlas that is an alternative to the chronological sequence. A series of maps at the end of the book summarizes the recurring appearances of project themes.

ASSOCIATION MAP DETAIL



THEMES

-  APPROPRIATION
-  ARCHIVAL RESEARCH
-  COLLABORATION
-  CONTEXT-SPECIFIC
-  CURATING
-  ENVIRONMENTS
-  EXHIBITION DESIGN
-  MOVING IMAGES
-  PERFORMANCE
-  POLITICS

THEME NAVIGATION

-  THEME ICON
-  P. 00 → NEXT PROJECT
-  ← P. 00 PREVIOUS PROJECT

LINKED PROJECTS

Several projects are linked with other projects by subject or medium (MAP PP. 276–277). When the correlated projects are presented in another section, a reference is given within each; otherwise they are shown in the dedicated "Related Project" box (FOLLOWING PAGE).

LINKED PROJECT



PROJECTS

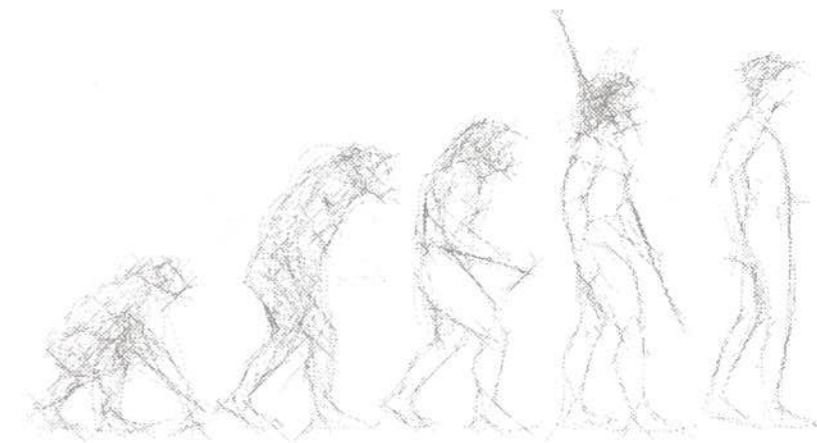
In addition to the descriptive texts, the 27 projects and the related subsections are complemented by: a series of boxes comprising a list of exhibitions and the works shown; the images that document the project; the content-generated lists of the artists, works, sources and documents that structure the project itself. A diagram illustrates relationships within the project, the artist's partnerships and inspirations, and the territorial or conceptual dimension of the research. Each project section closes with one or more double-page plates.

- 1 Zero–27,396 P.16
- 2 Show Me the Money P.20
- 3 Cave | A Mountain and a Valley | Rock | Iceberg | Waterfall P.26
- 4 Zoobox | Birds Eye View | Tree P.42
- 5 Bookcase | Reading Room | Library Table | After "In Our Time: Covers for a Small Library After the Life for the Most Part by R.B. Kitaj" P.48
- 6 Cabin | House | Althamer's Tree | Salon | Homeless Furniture P.56
- 7 Friendship of the Peoples P.62
- 8 Picture Room | After J.M. Gandy's Architectural Visions of Early Fancy, in the Gay Morning of Youth, and Dreams in the Evening of Life | Sky Study | The Soane Marriage P.66
- 9 Kabinett der Abstrakten (After El Lissitzky) | Arkhitectony – After K. Malevich | Drawings After K. Malevich (1922) P.78
- 10 The Source of Life Is in the Art of a People P.88
- 11 Spiegelgasse / Cabaret Voltaire and Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International by v. Lenin, Zürich 1916 P.96
- 12 Untitled (After Pinot Gallizio) P.100
- 13 The Past Is a Foreign Country: They Do Things Differently There P.104
- 14 Sleep of Ulro | Mula sem Cabeça (Homage to Marcel Broodthaers) P.112
- 15 Objects in Relation | Haus der Frau P.128
- 16 When Was Modernism? P.138
- 17 Gottessegen P.146
- 18 I Am Become Death P.150
- 19 The Nature of the Beast | On the Nature of the Beast P.158
- 20 Plus Ultra P.172
- 21 It Broke from Within P.176
- 22 Bez Tytulu/Untitled P.184
- 23 Of What Is, That It Is; Of What Is Not, That Is Not P.190
- 24 Death of Marxism, Women of All Lands Unite P.200
- 25 Preparatory Notes P.204
- 26 The Alien Inside Me P.214
- 27 To the Son of Man Who Ate the Scroll | Before the Beginning and After the End | International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation | Al la filo de la homo kiu manĝis la skribrolaĵon P.218

TEXTS

Certain projects are complemented by essays and articles, some of which were commissioned for this book, so as to provide a context for and further details about the project themes. In the event a text was previously published, it has been included in the selected bibliography and marked with the symbol [T]. Quotations by the artist and documents related to the project are also included.

- 1 Elena Filipovic ON GOSHK MACUGA'S IRRATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY P.12
- 2 Michael Wilson IT & SHOW ME THE MONEY 3 P.20
- 3 Elena Filipovic WHEN EXHIBITIONS BECOME FORM: ON THE HISTORY OF THE ARTIST AS CURATOR P.32
- 4 Lucy Steeds GOSHK MACUGA, PICTURE ROOM, 2003 P.72
- 5 Christopher Jordan THE SOURCE OF ART IS IN THE LIFE OF A PEOPLE. THE CRANE FLOOR: WALTER CRANE AND THE SOUTH LONDON GALLERY P.89
- 6 Rudolf Schmitz ROAMING AFAR AND PROSAIC AMBLINGS; THE PAST AND ART, ACCORDING TO GOSHK MACUGA P.106
- 7 Sally O'Reilly INTRODUCTION TO "GOSHK MACUGA: SLEEP OF ULRO," EXHIBITION CATALOGUE P.116
- 8 R. Siva Kumar RAMKINKAR BAIJ AND MODERNISM'S DUAL COMMITMENTS P.141
- 9 Aby Warburg A LECTURE ON SERPENT RITUAL P.153
- 10 Pablo Lafuente A PICTURE THAT MOVES: GOSHK MACUGA'S GUERNICA P.160
- 11 Grant Watson TAPESTRY: PICTURES OF THE MODERN WORLD P.179
- 12 Goshka Macuga HALF-TRUTH P.194
- 13 Lawrence M. Krauss THE END P.220
- 14 Ariane Koek WHERE THE TRUTH LIES: ART, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND THE MODERN PROMETHEUS P.225
- 15 Michael Taussig HOMELESS TIME P.241
- 16 Rosi Braidotti "WE" ARE IN THIS TOGETHER. POSTHUMAN TIMES AND AFFIRMATIVE ETHICS P.255
- 17 Karolo Darvino LA ORIGINO DE SPECIOJ P.269
- 18 Dieter Roelstraete DOWN P.282



RELATED PROJECTS

The "Related Projects" boxes feature projects that are correlated with the project in question. The box contains images, the title of each project, a short description and a short list of exhibitions each project has been shown in.

- 1 MINIATURES P.27
- 2 EARLY WORKS P.45
- 3 AFTER ANDY WARHOL P.48
- 4 THE CALL OF THE WILD P.48
- 5 CABINET FOR THE ARCHIVE OF THE FOKSAL GALLERY P.80
- 6 MIRRORS P.85
- 7 STUDY FOR A PORTRAIT OF LORD BYRON P.88
- 8 POSTERS P.88
- 9 SUITE 10 P.96
- 10 EARLY WORKS P.97
- 11 SELF-PORTRAITS WITH MASKS P.97
- 12 THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI P.112
- 13 COLLAGES P.128
- 14 AUDIO RECORDINGS P.131
- 15 NON-CONSENSUAL ACT (IN PROGRESS) P.191
- 16 THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN P.201
- 17 WORKS FROM PREPARATORY NOTES P.204

RELATED PROJECT



SUITE 10

A reproduction of an exhibition catalogue from 1966, becomes the conceptual vehicle for this work in which Macuga makes an insert which gives instructions and a space to collect artists' signatures, placing the collector in the role of a fan and referencing the iconic painting by Francis Picabia, *L'œil cacodylate* (1921).

EXHIBITIONS | WORKS

"Space Is the Place," a collaborative exhibition with Dadadandy, Ritter/Zamet, London, UK, November 29, 2006– January 10, 2007 [G] | *Suite 10*, 2006 ▲1

RELATED PEOPLE, OBJECTS, SOURCES

Boxes with such headings as "Featured Artists," "Featured Artworks," "Featured Sources" etc., contain lists generated by the projects and help the reader understand the relations between the lists and the related diagrams, maps and architectonic drawings.

FEATURED ARTWORKS

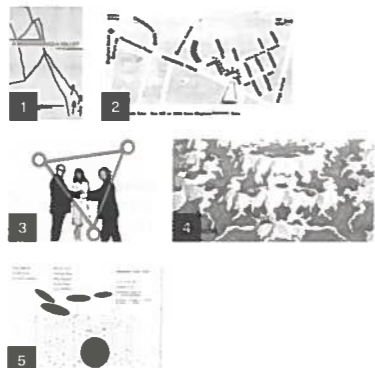
ARKHITECTONY – AFTER K. MALEVICH, 2003
Jacqui Chanarin, *Gymnast*, 2003
Daiz Mahlate, *Clay figure*, 1994
Ben Parsons, *Head*, undated

ARKHITECTONY II – AFTER K. MALEVICH, 2005
Kazimir Malevich, *Suprematist tea set*, 1923
Sculpture of a bird, undated

EXHIBITIONS AND WORKS

The "Exhibitions | Works" boxes present exhibitions at which the projects have been shown, and feature images of the invitations, the list of solo [S] and group [G] exhibitions, and the works by Goshka Macuga shown. The symbol ▲ connects the exhibitions to their relative invitation.

EXHIBITIONS | WORKS



"A Mountain and a Valley," Cubitt Gallery, London, UK, April 12, 1999 [S] ▲1 | *A Mountain and a Valley*, 1999
"Cave," Sali Gia, London, UK, October 9–November 7, 1999 [S] ▲2 | *Cave*, 1999 (with Matthew Leahy)
"Cave," Kunstakuten, Stockholm, Sweden, October 13–November 18, 2000 [S] | *Cave*, 2000 (with Matthew Leahy)
"3 in 1 Curatorial Mutiny," Part 4, Nylon, London, UK, March 22–April 29, 2001 [G] ▲3 | *Iceberg*, 2001

RELATED DOCUMENTS

The title "Related Documents" designates quotations from Goshka Macuga and documents relating to the projects. Each is followed by the source from which it was taken and the relevant date, when known. An index of Related Documents is given at the end of the book.

RELATED DOCUMENT

My first visit to Minneapolis coincided both with the Tea Party protest outside the Capitol and the volcano eruption in Iceland. The eruption was powerful enough to stop flights to and from Europe and as a consequence my stay in Minneapolis was extended for another week. This gave me more time for my research. I was aware that the Tea Party protests were going to take place in the US on that day and I decided to stay in Minneapolis. I went outside the State Capitol building and saw people protesting against taxes, government freedom, and socialism. I have followed the Tea Party movement from the beginning. Artists in general are interested in freedom of expression and my observations of the Tea Party are in part motivated by their claim to a certain kind of "freedom." However, I'm not sure if their idea of freedom extends to representing and defending the freedom of "others"—notably social groups who might not follow what the Tea Party itself stands for.

[GOSHKA MACUGA, ARTIST ARCHIVE, 2011]

RELATED DOCUMENT

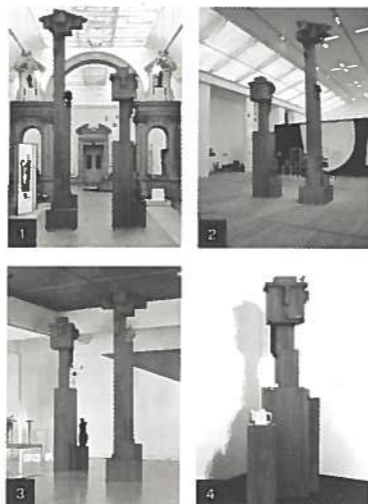
Dear friend Drouin,
Thank you very much for your kind letter ...
Our purpose is the universal understanding between free and experimental artists or anyone who loves poetry—You are a poet—and therefore my friend. So I speak to my friend Drouin—to whom I will clarify my ideas on the Anti-world ...

IPINOT GALLIZIO, "LETTER TO DROUIN, DECEMBER 8, 1958," IN PINOT GALLIZIO, *IL LABORATORIO DELLA SCRITTURA/ THE LABORATORY OF WRITING (MILAN: EDIZIONI CHARTA, 2005)*

IMAGES

Images shown in each project include installation views and reproductions of individual works by Goshka Macuga featured either in the "Images" box or in the double-page plates. Other images provide documentary material in the diagrams. Images are connected by numbers and letters with their related captions and the photocredits at the end of the book.

IMAGES



1–2 ARKHITECTONY – AFTER K. MALEVICH, 2003. Nottingham Castle, Nottingham, UK, 2006
3 ARKHITECTONY – AFTER K. MALEVICH, 2003. Mead Gallery, Coventry, UK, 2004
4 ARKHITECTONY II – AFTER K. MALEVICH, 2005. Barbican Art Gallery, London, UK, 2008

HALFTONE IMAGES

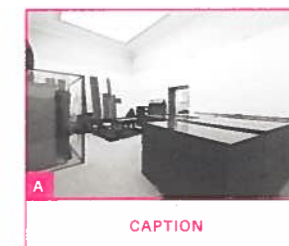
Halftone, silhouetted images provide a secondary level of illustrations. These images are a selection of details of Macuga's projects, always featured within the same section where complete images appear; therefore detail images share the same caption and photocredits with their reference illustration.



DIAGRAMS, MAPS, ICONOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Diagrams, geographic maps, architectonic drawings and patterns are used to illustrate the conceptual structure of each project and the organization of the relations, whether real or imaginary, that have contributed to its creation or resulted from it. The maps represent the geographic and chronological coordinates that intersect and overlay—through three different colors—places, stories, people, works, architectures, and artistic, political and cultural movements, with the aim of illustrating the context in which the artist's practice has developed. Lines, points and numbers are superimposed on the layout of this atlas to create a network of connections and an alternative way of reading supported by design in the organization of the contents.

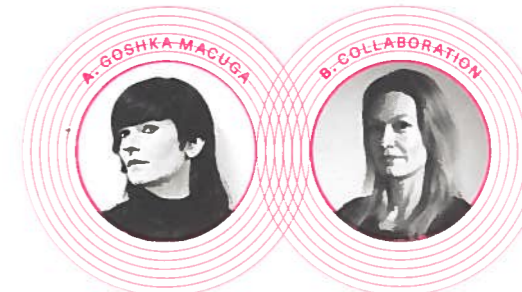
REFERENCE ARTWORKS



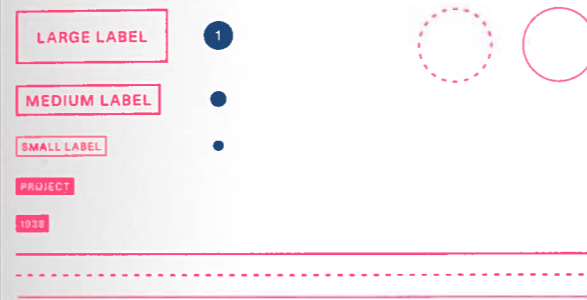
PEOPLE | PORTRAITS



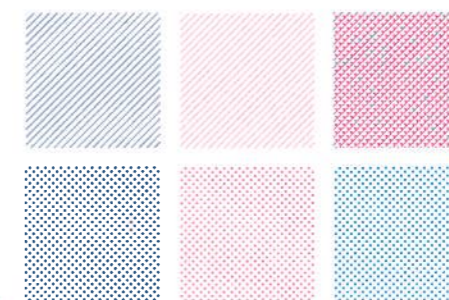
INFLUENCES | COLLABORATIONS



ARROWS AND LABELS



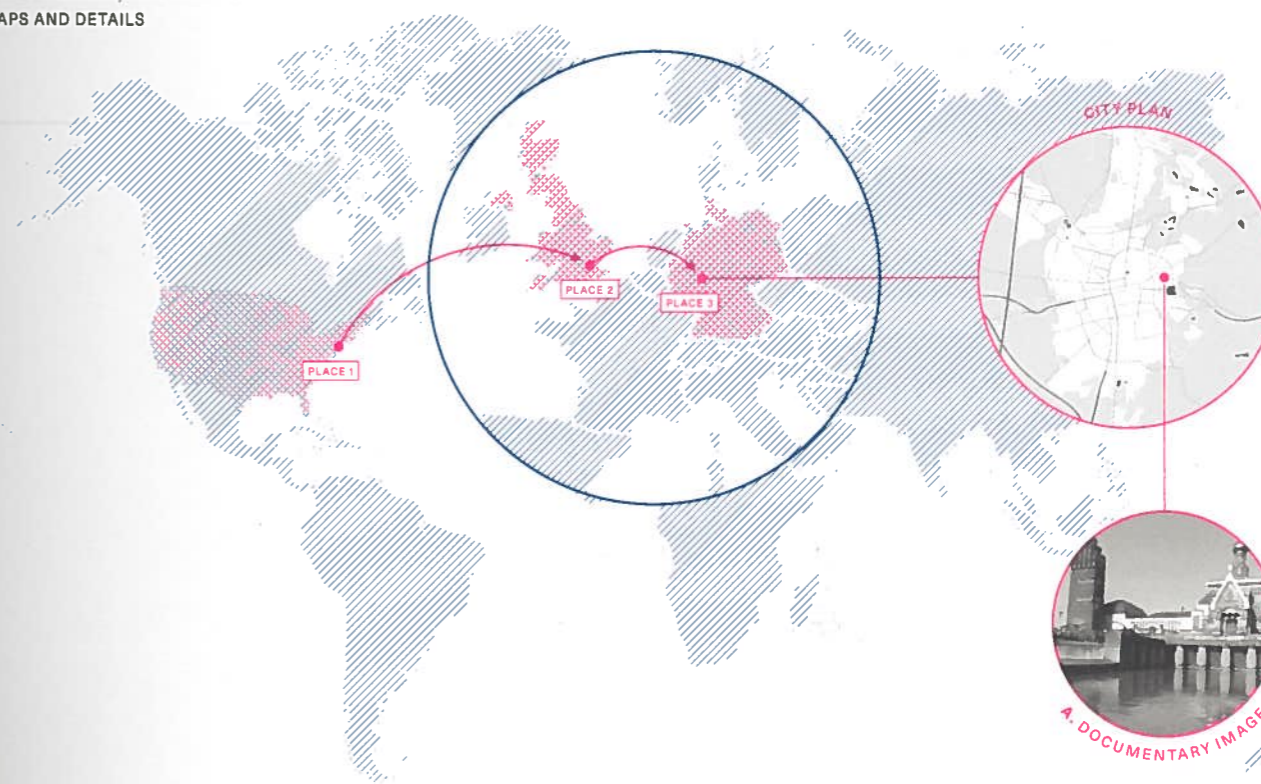
PATTERNS

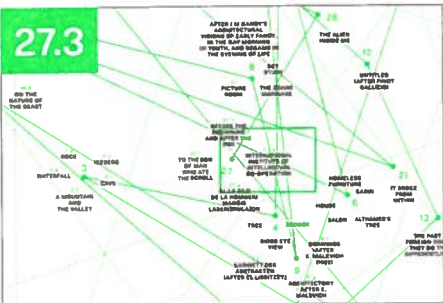


KEYS



MAPS AND DETAILS





INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INTELLECTUAL CO-OPERATION

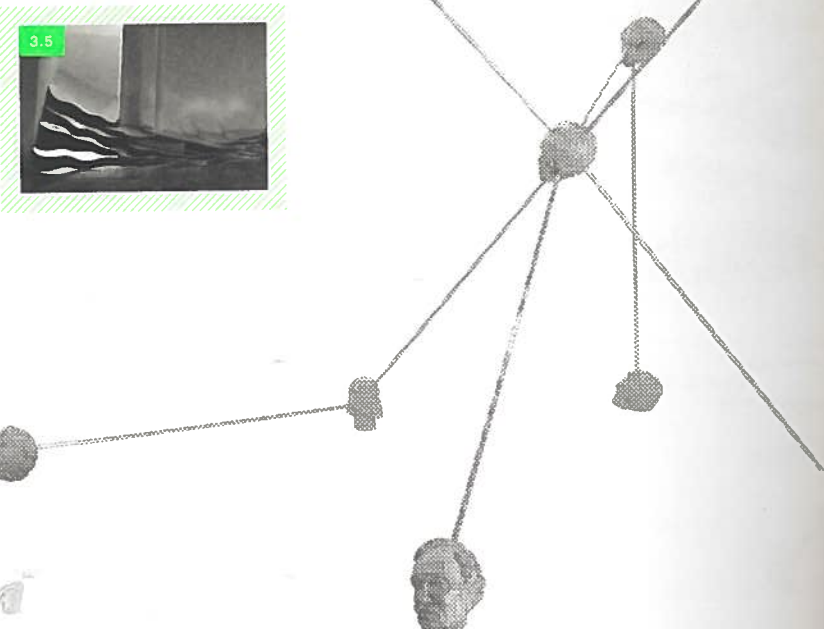
2016

In a letter written in 1932, Albert Einstein invited Sigmund Freud to a frank exchange of views on the destructive nature of humankind. The scientist was at the time a leading member of the organization known as International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, founded in 1926 as an advisory body for the League of Nations, which aimed to promote intellectual exchange between international scientists, researchers, teachers, artists and other cultural figures.

Inspired by the hypothetical proposal of a network of thinkers signified by the correspondence between Freud and Einstein, Macuga conceived a large-scale sculptural work for the three spaces of the Cisterna, using the title *International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation* in reference to the possibility of actualizing this group of significant figures. 73 bronze heads represent 61 historical and contemporary figures, including Einstein, Freud, Martin Luther King, Karl Marx, Mary Shelley, and Aaron Swartz, among others. They are grouped into twelve, individually-titled compositions reminiscent of large molecular structures, connected sequentially according to subject matters such as "Memory," "Beginning," "Human destructiveness," "End of Man," "Transhumanism," "End of History," and "End of Time."

Making reference to the art of rhetoric, the sculptures are based on an idea of intellectual exchange via the writing of conversations and speeches as a tool in forming opinions and in generating, memorizing and communicating knowledge. Over a long period of research, Macuga selected letters and texts related to historical and contemporary figures commenting on various ideas of endings or transitional periods of human civilization.

Both factual and fictional associations form the connections between the heads—thinkers of different historical periods and geographical and cultural backgrounds, whose ideas reflect on the complexities of human nature and its histories—and meet in Macuga's *International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation* to make this work a gesture towards an imaginary realization of the original organization's intents.

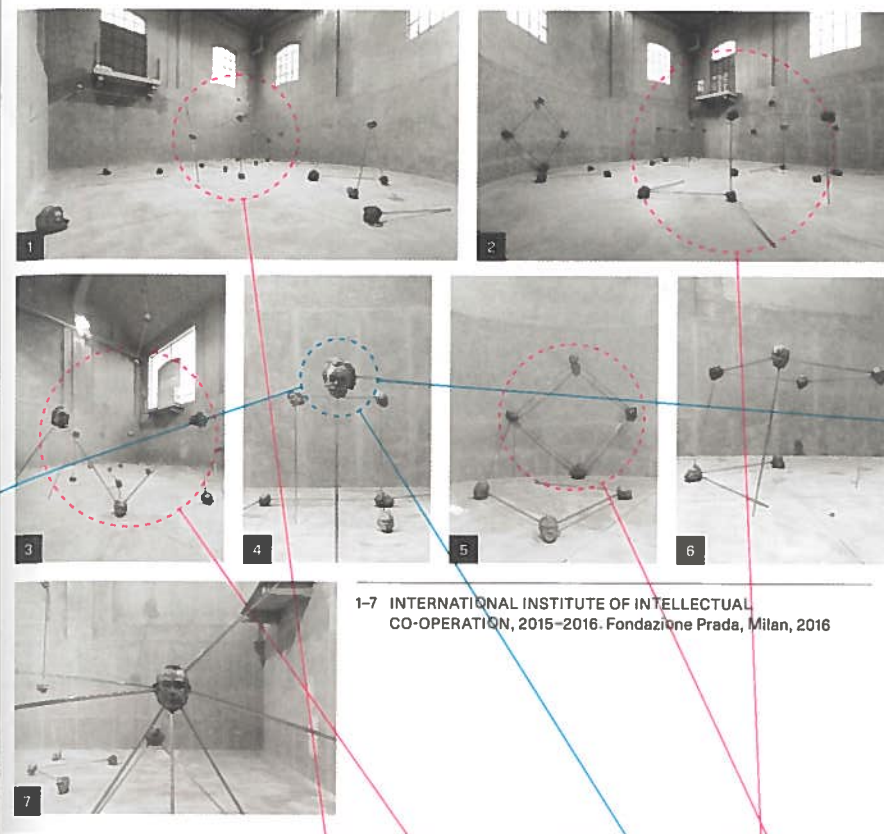


SOURCE LETTERS

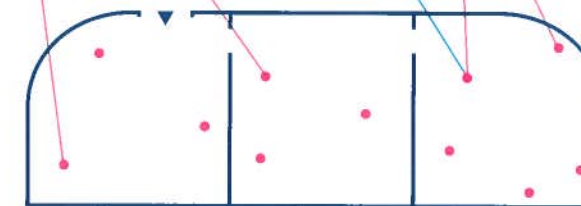
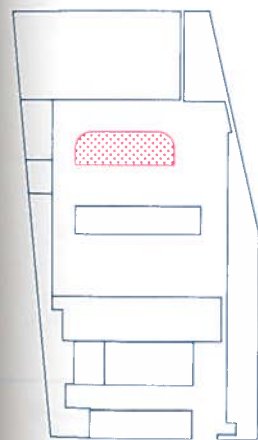
Marshall Applewhite, *Last Chance to Advance Beyond Human*, 1994
 Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, IV century B.C.
 Aristotle, *On Memory and Reminiscence*, 350 B.C.
 Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, 350 B.C.
 Saint Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine: Book X*, 397–400 AD
 Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, 1620
 Alain Badiou and Jean-Luc Nancy, *An open Letter from Alain Badiou to Jean-Luc Nancy / What the Arab Peoples Signify to Us*, 2011
 Ronald Bailey reply to Francis Fukuyama, *Transhumanism the Most Dangerous Idea?*, 2004
 Julian Barbour, "The View from Nowhen (Interview)," in *Collapse, The Copernican Imperative*, 2009
 Madame Blavatsky, *Laya-the Zero Point*, 1888
 Nick Bostrom, *A History of Transhumanist Thought*, 2005
 Nick Bostrom, *Letter from Utopia*, 2008
 Ray Bradbury, *August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains*, 1950
 Noam Chomsky debates with Oe Kenzaburo, *An Exchange on Current Affairs*, 2002
 Noam Chomsky, *The End of History?*, 2014
 Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, 2005
 Jared Diamond, *The Third Chimpanzee: The Evolution and Future of the Human Animal*, 1991
 Albert Einstein and Michele Besso, *Correspondence*, 1903–1955
 Albert Einstein and Rabindranath Tagore, *On the Nature of Reality*, 1931
 Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud, *Why War?*, 1933
 Albert Einstein, letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt about the possible construction of nuclear bombs, 1939
 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 1966
 Sigmund Freud, *General Psychological Theory, Chapter III*, 1925
 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 1992
 Francis Fukuyama, "Transhumanism: The Most dangerous idea," 2004
 Yuri Gagarin, goodbye letter, 1961
 Saadia Gaon, *The Book of the Beliefs and Convictions*, 2008
 Mikhail Gorbachev, answers to questions during Press Conference concluding his visit to Germany in Bonn, 1989
 Donna Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto*, 1991
 Stephen Hawking, *The Beginning of Time*, 1996
 Heaven's Gate, *Away Team Returns to Level Above Human in Distant Space*, 1997
 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Letter to Friedrich Niethammer*, 1816

Hesychius and Saint Augustine, correspondence concerning the end of the world, V century A.D.
 Julian Huxley, *Transhumanism*, 1957
 Jim Jones, Jonestown speech, 1978
 Carl Jung and Wolfgang Pauli, *Atom and Archetype: The Pauli/Jung Letters*, 1932–1958
 Ray Kurzweil's foreword to John von Neumann's *The Computer and the Brain*, 1958
 Paul Kurtzen, *Have We Entered the Anthropocene?*, 2010
 Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is near: When Humans Transcend Biology*, 2006
 Ray Kurzweil, *What the Future Will Bring*, 2005
 Maurice Leenhardt, *Do kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World*, 1979
 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, letter to Nicolas Remond, January 10, 1714
 Exchange of papers between Gottfried W. Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, 1715–1716
 Vladimir Lenin, *Notes of a Publicist*, 1922
 Andrei Linde, *A Balloon Producing Balloons, Producing Balloons: A Big Fractal*, 2012
 H. P. Lovecraft, *The Call of Cthulhu*, 1926
 Lucian of Samosata, *Dialogues of the Dead*, II century A.D.
 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained to Children: Correspondence 1982–1985*, 1992
 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848
 Isaac Newton, *Certain Philosophical Questions*, c. 1664
 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1883–1891
 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, 1486
 Plato, *Theaetetus*, 369 B.C.
 Paolo Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory*, 2000
 Carlo Rovelli, "Anaximander's Legacy," in *Collapse V: The Copernican Imperative*, 2009
 Carlo Rovelli in *What Is Your Dangerous Idea?*, 2006
 Carlo Rovelli, *The First Scientist: Anaximander and His Legacy*, 2011
 Sir Martin Ryle and Sir Fred Hoyle's correspondence on the steady universe theory
 Jasper Scioppius, letter concerning the death of Giordano Bruno, XVII century
 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 1818
 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein draft Notebook*, 1816
 Edward Snowden, letter to the German government, 2013
 Joe Stack's manifesto, 2010
 Aaron Swartz, *Guerrilla Open Access Manifesto*, 2008
 Aaron Swartz on Victory to Save Open Internet, Fight Online Censors, 2013
 Nadezhda Tolokonnikova of Pussy Riot's prison letters to Slavoj Žižek, 2013
 Alan Turing, *On computable numbers*, 1936–1937
 Paul Virilio, *The Administration of Fear*, 2010
 Aby Warburg, *A Lecture on Serpent Ritual*, 1939
 Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 1966
 Slavoj Žižek, *Cynicism as a Form of Ideology*, 1989

IMAGES



1-7 INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INTELLECTUAL CO-OPERATION, 2015-2016. Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2016



FEATURED PEOPLE

Anaximander	Julian Huxley
Saint Augustine	Jim Jones
Francis Bacon	Carl Jung
Alain Badiou	Kanak man (Melanesian)
Ronald Bailey	Oe Kenzaburo
Julian Barbour	Ibn Khaldun
Madame Blavatsky	Ray Kurzweil
Nick Bostrom	Gottfried W. Leibniz
Jared Diamond	Andrei Linde
Giordano Bruno	Ramon Llull
Noam Chomsky	H.P. Lovecraft
Nicolaus Copernicus	Ada Lovelace
Paul Crutzen	Martin Luther King
Charles Darwin	Jean-François Lyotard
Olympe de Gouges	Karl Marx
Jared Diamond	Isaac Newton
Albert Einstein	Friedrich Nietzsche
Robert Fludd	Wolfgang Pauli
Michel Foucault	Pussy Riot
Frankenstein's Monster	Carlo Rovelli
Sigmund Freud	Martin Ryle
Francis Fukuyama	Mary Shelley
Yuri Gagarin	Edward Snowden
Mikhail Gorbachev	Socrates
Guerrilla Girls	Joe Stack
Donna Haraway	Aaron Swartz
Stephen Hawking	Rabindranath Tagore
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel	Alan Turing
Fred Hoyle	Aby Warburg
	Slavoj Žižek

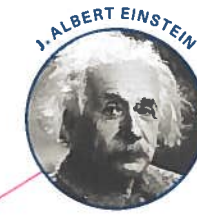
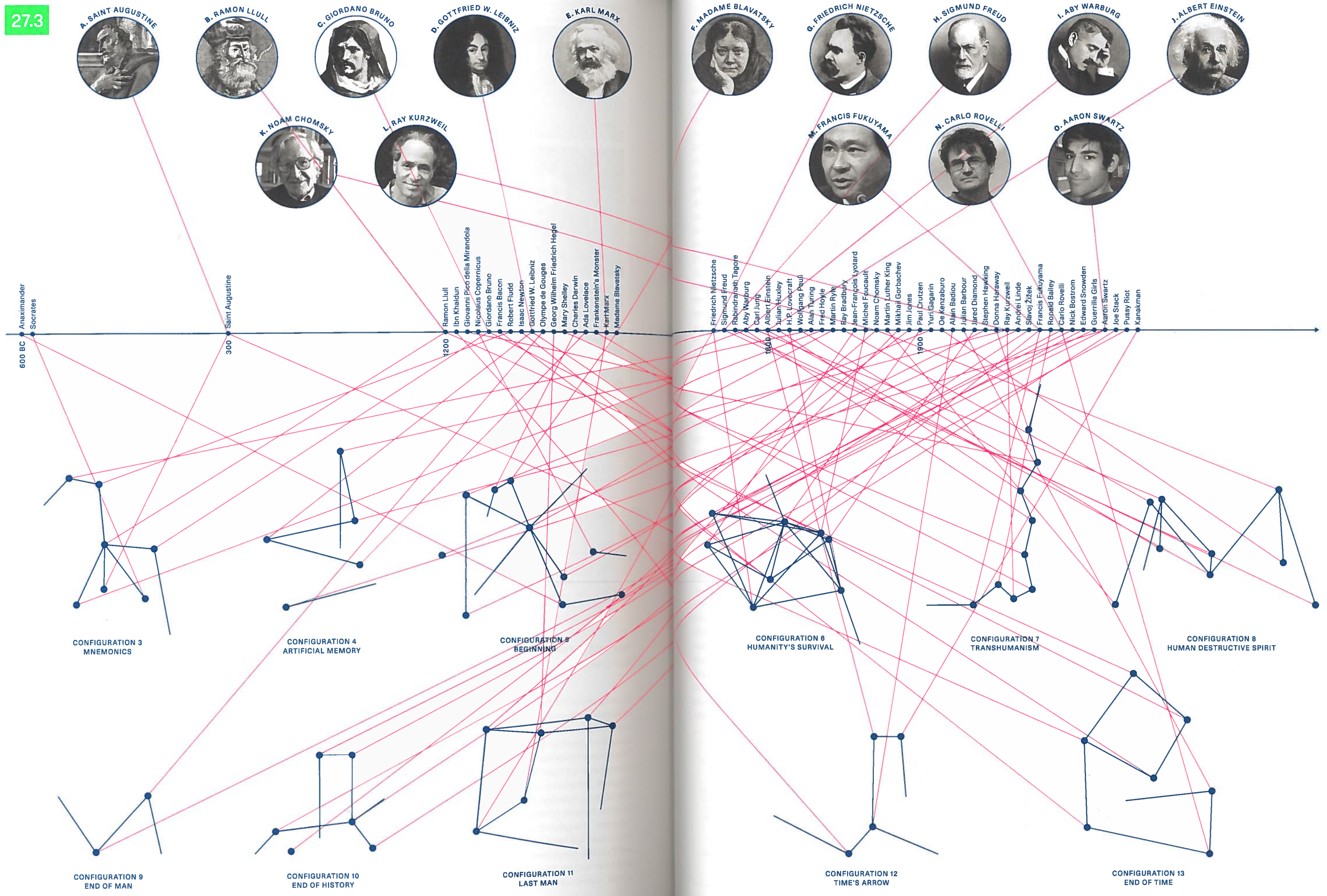
"WE" ARE IN THIS TOGETHER. POSTHUMAN TIMES AND AFFIRMATIVE ETHICS

Rosi Braidotti

Anxiety about the future may not be new for us, the inhabitants of advanced technological societies, but it sure keeps on shifting. All sense of security as to where we are going and that sinking feeling about the future has been with us at least since the Manhattan project. The nuclear predicament, decried and deplored by Einstein himself, among others, forged both the terminology and the imaginary of what the punk generation later labeled "no future." In the context of Cold War politics, however, the idea of a nuclear holocaust was mitigated by other factors, notably the—admittedly delusional—idea that the "winners" of an atomic war might actually survive its side effects. The enormous amounts spent on constructing nuclear shelters alone testify to this misplaced hope. The annihilation of the enemy was first and foremost on the agenda of the nuclear era, whereas concerns about "extinction" were confined to detractors of the atom bomb.

It is surprising how little scholarship has been produced about the long-term social and cultural consequences of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear attacks, which the Western allied forces were fully responsible for. In some ways, it is as if they never happened. In the context of the Cold War, open criticism of the West and stated mistrust about the lethal consequences of unbridled technological development were hardly encouraged and seldom funded by Western research institutions. The victory over Nazism first and Communism later was the paramount concern, both in social and academic life. Thus, though fear about the future was integral to the nuclear era, the emphasis was firmly kept on the future of democratic regimes. So the future was still on the horizon, albeit in a very precarious and endangered form.

[CONTINUE ON P.258]



600 BC Anaximander Socrates

300 Saint Augustine

1200 Ramon Llull
 Ibn Khaldun
 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola
 Nicolaus Copernicus
 Giordano Bruno
 Francis Bacon
 Robert Fludd
 Isaac Newton
 Gottfried W. Leibniz
 Olympe de Gouges
 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
 Mary Shelley
 Charles Darwin
 Ada Lovelace
 Frankenstein's Monster
 Karl Marx
 Madame Blavatsky

1800 Friedrich Nietzsche
 Sigmund Freud
 Rabindranath Tagore
 Aby Warburg
 Carl Jung
 Albert Einstein
 Julian Huxley
 H.P. Lovecraft
 Wolfgang Pauli
 Alan Turing
 Fred Hoyle
 Martin Ryle
 Ray Bradbury
 Jean-François Lyotard
 Michel Foucault
 Noam Chomsky
 Martin Luther King
 Mikhail Gorbachev
 Jim Jones
 Paul Cullen
 Yuri Gagarin
 Oe Kenzaburo
 Alain Badiou
 Julian Barbour
 Jared Diamond
 Stephen Hawking
 Donna Hpraway
 Ray Kurzweil
 Anyel Lindé
 Slavoj Žižek
 Francis Fukuyama
 Rupert Bailey
 Carlo Rovelli
 Nick Bostrom
 Edward Snowden
 Guerrilla Girls
 Aaron Swartz
 Joe Stack
 Pussy Riot
 Kanakman

CONFIGURATION 3 MNEMONICS

CONFIGURATION 4 ARTIFICIAL MEMORY

CONFIGURATION 5 BEGINNING

CONFIGURATION 6 HUMANITY'S SURVIVAL

CONFIGURATION 7 TRANSHUMANISM

CONFIGURATION 8 HUMAN DESTRUCTIVE SPIRIT

CONFIGURATION 9 END OF MAN

CONFIGURATION 10 END OF HISTORY

CONFIGURATION 11 LAST MAN

CONFIGURATION 12 TIME'S ARROW

CONFIGURATION 13 END OF TIME

There is no precedent, therefore, and no immediate term of comparison for the degree and kind of concern about extinction that is circulating in contemporary culture. "Thanatos-politics," as Foucault brilliantly called it,¹ has taken center-stage. The literature of anxiety about the future of both our species and of our humanist culture is by now an established genre, as shown by the quantity of recent scholarship on the environmental crisis, climate change and the threat of extinction of our and other species. Equally telling are the concerned statements of leading political and social thinkers like Habermas,² Fukuyama,³ Sloterdijk,⁴ Derrida with Borradori⁵ and Nussbaum⁶ on the topic of species survival and human extinction. Both the literature of disaster—in science fiction and the media—and film productions about the pending catastrophe are fast-growing genres that appeal to millions of spectators. In different ways, "we" seem struck by moral and cognitive panic at the prospect of certain devastation, blaming our advanced technologies for this dead-end situation. The specter of global extinction is very much on the agenda of both individuals and institutions, in spite of the counter-claims of climate change deniers and the fossil fuels lobby that supports them.

This state of public alarm and shared concern signals a serious change in public opinion. It also marks the rise of planetary awareness of our chances of survival in the Anthropocene era.⁷ Contrary to the well-worn tropes of Cold War rhetoric, it is now understood that there cannot and will not be any winner in the current ecological crisis. Consequently "we" are in *this* particular predicament together. The subject in question here—"we"—is humanity as a whole. Furthermore, there is another significant difference between the nuclear and the present situation, which touches on the issue of agency. In the case of the atom bomb, somebody would need to push a button somewhere to trigger the catastrophe. In the Anthropocene, on the other hand, we are likely to reach the point of non-reversible climate change without a single gesture required. The only kind of human intervention that could have affected the situation was the thorough and global application of the Kyoto protocol, but that stage is by now almost behind us. There seems nothing left for humans to do, therefore, other than damage containment and a lot of critical and creative thinking about how to overcome unsustainable scenarios.

Notice however how, just in the course of the previous paragraph and without a specific intent on my part, a new generic category of "humans" has been composed in the crucible of the fear of extinction. "Humanity" is posited as a unitary category and an object of intense debate, just as it emerges as a threatened or endangered category.⁸ In other words, a panhuman sense of vulnerability is forging a negative or reactive sort of cosmopolitan interconnection.⁹ This expresses both intense anxiety about the future of our species and the desire to reconstruct or hold onto "humanity" against all odds. Although it is not clear who exactly are the panhuman "we" who are supposed to be in *this* predicament together, its hasty reformulation has a soothing effect. But what is at stake here and why are "we" in need of solace?

A CHANGE OF CRITICAL CLIMATE

The issue at stake is a change of paradigm about our self-representation as a culturally mediated species, which I call the posthuman predicament.¹⁰ This turning point is produced by the convergence of two related but irreducible events. On the one hand the disenchantment with the project of Western humanism and on the other the rise of anti-anthropocentrism. Anti-humanism—triggered and fueled since the 1970s by feminist, postcolonial and antiracist movements, as well as by the critical French philosophies of post-structuralism¹¹—focuses on the critique of the European humanist ideal of "Man" as the allegedly universal representative of the human. Anti-anthropocentrism, on the other hand, emerges from the peace, anti-nuclear and ecological movements of the same era, and criticizes the rule of "Anthropos," rejecting species hierarchy for the benefit of trans-species and trans-national ecological justice.

In my reading, the posthuman predicament marks the emergence of a new type of discourse that is not merely the culmination of these two strands of thought, but a qualitative leap in a new and more complex direction. Different factors have contributed to bringing about this change of perspective: some historical or contextual, others more conceptual. They combine in shifting the relationship between humans and their technologies and alter global human interaction. Let me explore these converging phenomena and reflect on their implications for our shared sense of a sustainable future.

Bio-genetic and visual mediation is the heart of the matter. The technologically mediated structure of our system is built on the convergence between different and previously differentiated branches of technology, notably biotechnologies, nanotechnologies, neural sciences and information technologies. They are often referred to as the four horsemen of the posthuman apocalypse, as they focus on gathering, storing and retrieving essential codes about all living matter. Our science and technology have become sophisticated enough to transpose such codes into databanks of bio-genetic, neural and mediatic information about individuals, as the success of Facebook demonstrates at a banal level, and entire species, as shown by the controversial debate on genetically modified organisms. In other words, what constitute capital value today are the informational codes of "Life itself."¹²

These practices reduce bodies—including embodied individuals of all species—to their informational substrate in terms of energy resources, or vital capacities and dispositions, thereby leveling out other categorical differences. The political analyses of differences have been perfected by feminist and post-colonial theories over the last thirty years in terms of hierarchical processes of sexualization, racialization and naturalization. They result in entangled and intersectional practices of marginalization of women and LBGTs, indigenous people, animals and plants.¹³ These categorical divides, and the hierarchical order which used to structure them, are currently being dislocated and reorganized in bio-genetic capitalism, according to an information-based continuum that cuts across not only individuals, but also organisms and species. The focus is no longer on bound identities and constituted selves—of the sexualized,

racialized or naturalized kind—but rather on the accumulation of information itself, its immanent vital qualities and self-organizing capacity. "Data-mining" involves practices that aim at profiling different types or characteristics—both human and non-human—and highlighting them as risk categories, or as strategic targets for capital investment. These practices however neither abolish nor resolve the political and social tensions linked to the old processes of marginalization, and in many ways even exacerbate them. This is stressed by Vandana Shiva's work on bio-piracy,¹⁴ Rob Nixon's analysis of the environmentalism of the poor,¹⁵ and by my own reflections on the posthuman political economy.¹⁶

Patricia Clough provides an impressive list of the concrete techniques employed by "cognitive capitalism"¹⁷ to test and monitor the capacities of affective or "bio-mediated" bodies: DNA testing, brain fingerprinting, neural imaging, body-heat detection and iris or hand recognition. All these are also immediately operationalized as surveillance techniques both in civil society and in the war on terror. What this means is that the "virtual" character of technologically mediated relations today is not ethereal but materially grounded—think of the problem of "digital rubbish" for instance¹⁸—and hence embodied and embedded in often brutal power relations. Parikka,¹⁹ for instance, writes about the necessity of studying the geology of media, tracing the computer components back to the minerals that compose them and, through them, tracking down the digital proletariat whose underpaid labor in global mining districts constructs the information society.

The capitalization of living matter produces a new political economy, which Melinda Cooper calls "Life as surplus."²⁰ It introduces discursive and material political techniques of population control of a very different order from the administration of demographics, which preoccupied Foucault's work on bio-political governmentality.²¹ Today, we are undertaking "risk analyses" not only of entire social and national systems, but also of whole sections of the population in the world's risk society.²² In other words, the political economy of bio-genetic capitalism turns *Life/zoe*—that is to say human and non-human material—into a commodity for trade and profit by combining scientific and economic control. This context produces a paradoxical and rather opportunistic form of post-anthropocentrism on the part of market forces which happily trade on all living matter and not only on human organisms. What the contemporary economy is financially investing in is the informational power of living matter itself, be it human or non-human.

Little wonder therefore that "we" humans are desperately seeking solace, considering that the generic figure of the anthropocentric human—"we"—is in trouble and that *this* is a serious matter. Donna Haraway puts it as follows: "our authenticity is warranted by a database for the human genome. The molecular database is held in an informational database as legally branded intellectual property in a national laboratory with the mandate to make the text publicly available for the progress of science and the advancement of industry. This is Man, the taxonomic type become Man the brand."²³ Massumi refers to this phenomenon

as "Ex-Man": a genetic matrix embedded in the materiality of the human,²⁴ and as such undergoing significant mutations: "species integrity is lost in a bio-chemical mode expressing the mutability of human matter" (*ibid.*). Karen Barad coins the term "posthumanist performativity" to define new human/non-human interaction.²⁵ Contemporary technologically mediated cultures have already displaced the centrality of Anthropos in favor of data-mining across a more molecular, cellular and species-broad spectrum. Welcome to the posthuman condition!

PERVERSE TEMPORALITIES

There are other concrete, embodied and embedded factors, however, that also contribute to complicate our relationship with a common humanity and a shared vision of the future. The first is the self-destructive temporality of the process of consumeristic commodification, defined as a structural feature of advanced economies. As Massumi pointed out,²⁶ the commodity circulates like an eternal (never-dead) object of desire within our economic system. It is a spectral entity that contracts the space-time continuum, as it simultaneously embodies the promise of enjoyment and enacts its perennial deferral. This deferred fulfillment, that is to say the simultaneous arousal and frustration of consumer desire, means that the commodity embodies and plays with futurity as the promise of fulfillment-to-come. It follows that commodities become co-extensive with the inner space of subjectivity, as well as with the outer space of the market and social relations.

If we add to this insight the fast turnover of available commodities and the acceleration and overlapping of desires they induce in our being, we end up in a state of constant jet lag. As consumers we are always over-stimulated, but also structurally behind the times, and getting synchronized with the present is a real challenge. In Marxist terminology this used to be called "alienation." A clear example of this perverse logic that condemns us never to be up-to-date is the succession of gadgets and "next generation" technological commodities that become obsolete at a staggering speed. The same logic of titillation that withholds fulfillment lies at the heart of contemporary popular culture. Under the cover of "Holly-world" and "info-tainment," the media networks keep us waiting for the next sequel or prequel or installment of *Game of Thrones*, or any new cultural product, conceptualized in a non-linear manner as "series." Being kept hanging on is not only addictive, it is also intrinsically frustrating: by not providing fulfillment or release, it induces dependency without taking responsibility for it.

At the emotional level, this vicious cycle of presence-absence of fulfillment, which is the logic of commodity fetishism, produces a manic-depressive cycle of expectation and frustration, euphoria and paranoia. In my nomadic language,²⁷ it induces negative passions, such as resentment, frustration, lack and envy. I would express this negativity in terms of the theft of the present, that is to say: the suspension of active desire in favor of the addictive pursuit of commodified goods. It results in the simultaneity of internally

¹ Michel Foucault, "The Political Technology of Individuals," in *Power: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954–1984*, vol. 3 (New York: The New Press, 1994).

² Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003).

³ Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future. Consequences of the Biotechnological Revolution* (London: Profile Books, 2002).

⁴ Peter Sloterdijk, *Error From*

the Air, translated by Amy Patton (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009).

⁵ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁶ Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice. Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁷ In 2002, Nobel Prize winning

chemist Paul Crutzen coined the term "Anthropocene" to describe our current geological era. This term stresses both the technologically mediated power acquired by our species and its potentially lethal consequences for the geological sustainability of our planet as a whole.

⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2009, pp. 197–222.

⁹ Ulrich Beck, "Living in

the World Risk Society: A Hobhouse Memorial Public Lecture given on Wednesday 15 February 2006 at the London School of Economics," in *Economy and Society*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2006, pp. 329–345.

¹⁰ Rosi Braidotti, "The Inhuman: Life beyond Death" in *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2013).

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon Books,

1970); Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), and *Id., A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), and *This Sex Which Is Not One*

(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

¹² Nikolas Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

¹³ Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2006).

¹⁴ Vandana Shiva, *Biopiracy. The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge* (Boston: South End Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

University Press, 2011).

¹⁶ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Yann Moulier-Boutang, *Cognitive Capitalism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012).

¹⁸ Jennifer Gabrys, *Digital Rubbish: A Natural History of Electronics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011).

¹⁹ Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

²⁰ Melinda Cooper, *Life as Surplus. Biotechnology & Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).

²¹ Michel Foucault, *Birth of Bio-Politics. Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–79* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

²² Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999).

²³ Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.*

FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 74.

²⁴ Brian Massumi, "Requiem for Our Prospective Dead! (Toward a Participatory Critique of Capitalist Power)," in Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Jon Heller (eds.), *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 40–64.

²⁵ Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," in *Signs*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2003.

²⁶ Brian Massumi, "Requiem for Our Prospective Dead! (Toward a Participatory Critique of Capitalist Power)," *op. cit.*

²⁷ Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses. Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2002), and *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*, *op. cit.*

contradictory social effects, best exemplified in well-known culturally enforced injunctions: "Shop till you drop, but don't get into debt!"; "Have food available 24/7 but stay thin!"; "Just do it! But there are no jobs to do!"

This is the logic of the double-bind and, from this angle, advanced capitalism looks like a system that promotes feminism without women, racism without races, natural laws without nature, reproduction without sex, sexuality without genders, multiculturalism without ending racism, economic growth without development, and cash flow without money. Late capitalism also produces fat-free ice creams and alcohol-free beer next to genetically modified health food, companion species alongside computer viruses, new animal and human immunity breakdowns and deficiencies, and the increased longevity of those who inhabit the advanced world. Welcome to capitalism as schizophrenia!²⁸

To translate this into a temporal mode: commodity saturation of our social space steals the present away from us: it deprives us of time, while offering all sorts of technological gadgets that actually promise to save us time. It is a system that both arouses and arrests the flows of desire, reducing our relational capacities by narrowing them down to consumerism. It sacrifices qualitative relations through quantitative build-ups of the acquired commodities.²⁹

The same conclusion can be reached from an environmentalist perspective, which condemns this political economy as unsustainable, driven by all-consuming entropic energy. A greedy "future eater,"³⁰ such a system is devoid of the capacity for critical self-reflection about its own conditions of survival. It actually erodes its own foundations and threatens the future, cultivating internally contradictory goals. It promises—but also withholds—material and personal fulfillment while generating persistent anxiety about the future. This reiterates the entropic and self-destructive element of a system that does not hesitate to expose and endanger the very sources of its wealth and power that previous socio-economic systems kept hidden or protected.³¹

It is against these negative affects and perverse temporalities that I want to posit an ethics of affirmative becoming as the antidote that empowers desires capable of mobilizing the subject out of the sedentary gravitational pull of addictive consumption. This, however, requires a qualitative leap.

TRANSFIGURES FUTURES

Let us confront again the strident contradictions I have been struggling with so far. On the one hand I have postulated a posthuman condition that challenges the limitations of the humanist project and displaces its anthropocentrism. On the other hand, I have commented on the emergence of an embattled but united pan-humanity, created out of fear and anxiety about its chances of surviving the current anthropocenic crisis. I then went on to sketch a brief cartography of some of the salient features of the political economy of advanced or "cognitive" capitalism. Firstly, I stressed its high degree of technological mediation, which results in informational data-mining of all species and not only the human, that is to say an instrumental or opportunistic form of post-anthropocentrism. Secondly, I explored the perverse temporality of commodity fetishism, which both evokes and erodes the possibility of a fulfilling future by suspending the enjoyment of the present.

The next step of my argument is that these contradictions are structural, which means that they are generative and not only negative. They play a constitutive role in contemporary debates about futurity and extinction and also contain resources for the creation of affirmative scenarios. I do not think that the dialectical method of dualistic opposition is the best way to approach contradictions of this magnitude. What I advocate instead, following Deleuze and Guattari, is the turn to a Spinozist monistic ontology, which allows for a nature-culture continuum and species equality within the same intelligent and self-organizing matter.³² The qualitative leap consists in disengaging such a continuum from the profit principle of "Life as surplus," linking it instead to sustainability. This allows us to think—in a secular and critical manner—of "life" as a generative power, both human and non-human and of human subjects as embodied and embedded, relational and affective, non-unitary social entities. Nomadic, yet grounded; multiple, yet relationally tied to others; complex, yet accountable to an ethics of solidarity and generous co-existence.³³ By recasting subjectivity in this direction, the task of critical thinking changes accordingly.

Spinoza is one of the few philosophers that, alongside reason, gives a prominent role to the imagination. Contemporary neo-Spinozists like Deleuze and Guattari also emphasize the importance of conceptual creativity, as opposed to mere criticism. In my work, critique and creativity need each other and constitute a new post-human alliance. There is no doubt that artists and scholars today have to join forces and combine their know-how in order to shape the public perception of the issues involved in the Anthropocene. This joint project will hopefully refocus both our practices and our collective imaginary towards affirmative values. The task ahead is daunting, as it involves a change of critical culture. We need to address key political but also epistemological, ethical and aesthetic questions: how to devise adequate alternatives to the dominant figuration of the human subject as steeped in Western humanism and anthropocentrism? How can we foster our shared ability to design visions for the future? How does one invent new structures of thought? Where does conceptual change start from? What are the conditions that can bring it about? Is the model of scientific rationality a suitable frame of reference to express the new subjectivity? Is the model of artistic creativity any better? How does it act upon the social imaginary? Will *mythos* or *logos* prove to be a better ally in the big leap across the posthuman threshold?

Critique alone cannot take on the scale and the intensity of these issues. New ethical values, new ways of caring for both human and non-human nomadic or transversal subjects are needed to cope with the global civilization we have entered and which encompasses all the Earth and all beyond it in our immediate cosmic space.³⁴ Mediation being at the core of our global existence, we need to honor this complex global bond and rise to the challenge of being enhanced technologically. We need cultural representations, be it myths, narratives or worldviews that are adequate to the new posthuman civilization we inhabit. We also need political analyses that do justice to the insidious persistence of structural marginalized differences, the necro-political governmentality,³⁵ the internal and external flows of migration and labor mobility,³⁶ and the multiple forms of expulsion that mark the global economy.³⁷

This project requires visionary power or prophetic energy. The call for more vision is emerging from many quarters in critical theory and cultural studies. Cornell West, for instance, defends prophetic criticism as the most effective way of addressing contemporary challenges.³⁸ Prophetic criticism does not stop at the critical side of the matter, but rather moves towards issues of ethical evaluation and practical action. It is both crisis-centered and ethically charged. Hardt & Negri also relay the call for more conceptual creativity in order to confront the challenges of the new global power relations.³⁹ They stress the importance of the powers of the imagination and of visionary insights in sustaining both creative and political practice. Feminists have a long and rich genealogy in terms of pleading for increased visionary insight and for a double-edged vision, equally critical and creative.⁴⁰ Donna Haraway⁴¹ also exemplifies epistemological and political respect for feminist spirituality, a dimension where creativity is unimaginable without some visionary fuel.

Prophetic or visionary minds are thinkers of the future. The future as an active object of desire injects affirmative force into the present, so that yearning for sustainable futures helps us construct a livable present. The future propels us forth, in affirmative modes of creative becoming, so that we can draw from it the strength and motivation to be active in the here and now of a present that is charged with contradictions. This is a non-entropic model of energy-flow and hence of transferral of creative desire, which Nietzsche first introduced into our thinking. It is not a leap of faith, but an active transposition, the eternal return of positive affirmation,⁴² a transformation at the in-depth level, a change of culture akin to a genetic mutation: viroid life⁴³ acting at the ethical level. It is in some ways an evolutionary move, but not in a narrow Darwinian sense and not in a hierarchical model.⁴⁴ It rather moves towards the construction of possible and hence sustainable futures by enforcing notions such as intra-species and intra-generational justice.

What is affirmed in affirmative ethics is the generative power of Life as *zoe*, or the multiplicity of human and non-human lives. "Life" in you does not bear your name; it is only a time-share. This is a further reason for subtracting it from the political economy of the profit motive. Those—artists and thinkers—who go through life pursuing the desire for affirmative transformations may be more mortal or vulnerable than most because they live more intensely. They need creative accelerations, bursts of energy, and those sudden and at times violent rushes of intuition. They need to jolt out of set habits insofar as they are passionately committed to writing the pre-history of a sustainable future, that is to say: to activate the present. This is the productive side of affirmation: a desire to go on becoming, to affect multiple modes of relation so as to establish complex and heterogeneous ecologies of belonging.⁴⁵ Relations, interactions and negotiations constitute our world as one world, in its monistic immanence, though they are neither homogeneous nor unitary formations, but rather internally complex and multi-layered events.⁴⁶

To be up to this kind of multi-relational intensity entails great trust in our materially embedded and embodied connection to all that lives. This is love for the world not as an abstract universal or theological transcendental, but as materialist radical immanence. It produces grounded concerns for the multitude of "anybody" (*homo tantum*) that compose the human community. As such, it frames a materialist horizon of sustainability and hence social horizons

of hope. Hope opens up affirmative spaces for active desires that emancipate us from negativity, anxiety and uncertainty, to help us dream forward. The social pursuit and collective sharing of hope is—for Spinozist thinkers—an end in itself, in that it intensifies one's ethical involvement in expressing life as the passionate desire to endure, *potentia, conatus* or becoming. Hope as a political praxis works to create the conditions we must leave for posterity to build a more sustainable world than we found in the first place. Given that by definition posterity can never pay us back, sustainable ethics is the ultimate affirmative gesture.

Such a sense of ethical urgency however does not warrant hasty reconstructions of "Humanity" and an unquestioned consensus about something we may call "the human." I would argue instead for the need to keep tracking the changing perceptions and multiple new formations of the "human" in the globalized, technologically mediated and ethnically diverse world we inhabit. Paying attention to the many different politics of location—and the perpetuation of the classical axes of negative difference (sexualization, racialization, naturalization), we need to assess how they affect the social construction of common visions today. Class, race, gender and sexual orientations, age and able-bodiedness are more than ever significant markers of human "normality." They are key factors in framing the notion of and policing access to something we may call humanity. Instead of taking a flight into an abstract idea of a "new" pan-humanity, bonded in shared vulnerability or anxiety about survival and extinction, therefore, I want to plea for affirmative politics grounded on immanent inter-connections, trans-species and transnational justice.

"We"—the dwellers of *this* planet at this point in time—are confronted by a number of painful contradictions: an electronically linked pan-humanity which however is more fragmented than ever and split by convulsive internal fractures, economic disparities, xenophobic fears and violence. Humanity is re-created as a negative category, held together by shared vulnerability and the specter of extinction, but also struck down by environmental devastation, by new and old epidemics, in endless "new" wars that innovate ways of killing, in the proliferation of migrations and exodus, detention camps and refugee centers. The staggering inequalities engendered by the global economy make for violence and insurrection; the appeals for new forms of cosmopolitan relations or a global *ethos*⁴⁷ are often answered by necro-political acts of violence, destruction and assassination, not only by the official enemies of the West—Muslim extremists—but also by homegrown killers, which in Europe are the likes of Anders Behring Breivik.⁴⁸ What we need therefore is embedded and embodied, relational and affective cartographies of the new power relations that are emerging from the current geopolitical and post-anthropocentric world order.

Yet, considering the global reach of the posthuman problems we are facing today, in the era of the "Anthropocene," it is nonetheless the case that "we" are indeed in *this* crisis together. Such awareness must not however obscure or flatten out the power differentials that sustain the collective subject ("we") and its endeavor (*this*). Laboring towards a non-unitary posthuman subject, "we" need to acknowledge that there may well be multiple and potentially contradictory projects at stake in the complex re-compositions of "the human" right now: many complex and contested ways of becoming-world together.

²⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, op. cit., and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, op. cit.

³⁰ Tim Flannery, *The Future Eaters* (Sydney: Reed New Holland, 1994).

³² Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*, op. cit.

³⁵ Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," in *Public Culture*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2003, pp. 11–40.

³⁷ Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions—Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

³¹ Eugene Holland, *Nomad Citizenship* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

³³ *Ibid.* and *Id.*, *Nomadic Theory: the Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

³⁶ Sandro Mezzadra, Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or the Multiplication of Labor* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

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COLOPHON

"TO THE SON OF MAN
WHO ATE THE SCROLL"

FONDAZIONE PRADA,
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