

BOUN
DLESS
OBJE
CTS

ANA LEONOR MADEIRA RODRIGUES
ERICA SECCOMBE
KATHY HIGH
RENATA ROSADO
MARTA DE MENEZES
ANDRÉ SIER
NIKOLAUS GANSTERER
ANA REWAKOWICZ
JENNIFER ROBERTSON
MAREK WASILEWSKI
IZABELLA GUSTOWSKA
PIOTR BOSACKI

Índice [Contents]

05

Tempo de objetos

José Alberto Ferreira

07

Boundless Objects [Objetos sem Limites]:

Conhecer a trama do mundo através das práticas artísticas

Monika Bakke

11

Boundless Objects

Exposição [Exhibition]

83

English version - texts

87

Biografias [Biographies]

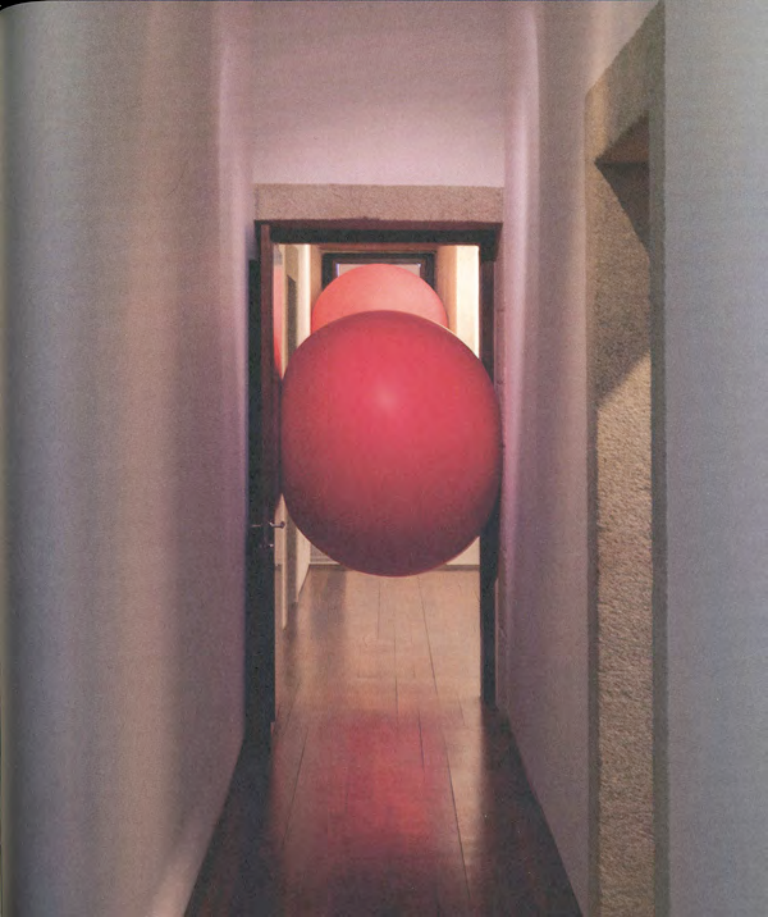
ANA REWAKOWICZ

***The Occupants*, 2002/2019**

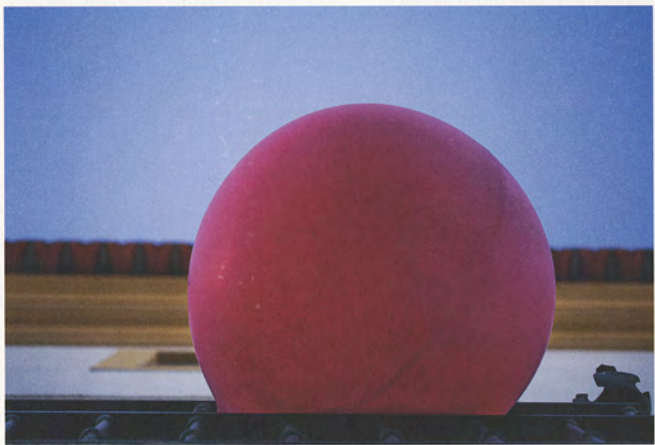
Instalação: balões-sonda (meteorológicos) [Installation: sounding (weather) balloons]

A instalação *The Occupants* procura investigar a experiência desorientadora da identidade e da pertença ao confrontar pessoas com balões-sonda residentes no espaço expositivo que outrora foi o Palácio da Inquisição. Flexíveis e amorfos, como zonas de presença sem forma, os balões apoderam-se das portas, de um aposento e de uma janela, ocupando-os parcial ou completamente. Esta intrusão evoca metaforicamente a presença de um corpo estranho, de uma existência diferente que questiona a nossa busca da reivindicação da verdade de um lugar, e uma identificação a ele associada.

The Occupants installation pursues the investigation into the disorienting experience of identity and belonging by confronting people with sounding-balloons residing in the exhibition space that once was the Inquisition Palace. Flexible and formless, like shapeless zones of presence, the balloons take possession of doors, a room and a window, occupying them partially or completely. This intrusion metaphorically evokes the presence of a foreign body, a different existence that questions our position in seeking claim to the truth of a place and an identification associated with it.









Time for Objects

José Alberto Ferreira

Eugénio de Almeida Foundation Centre for Art and Culture Art director

The concept of object has been conquering a significant amount of relevance in the theoretical constellation that mark the beginning of the 21st century, conveying the major thematic lines and the great political, social and cultural questions of this time. In effect, the concept of object, placed in the center of ontological and philosophical concerns, acquired in recent years a critical depth capable of precisely shaping the trends of life and creation. Monika Bakke, Associate Professor of the Philosophy department of the Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland, has intensively explored this territory. Both in her writing and in her curatorial practice, Monika Bakke addresses the issues present in the dichotomy of living/nonliving, human/nonhuman, virtual/material. She dedicates special attention to the crosses in-between art and science, with particular emphasis on the post-humanist, trans-species and gender perspectives.

Beyond the exhaustive critical scrutiny to which these problematics have been subjected to, and are reflected in the extensive international literature available – to which the curator has made significant contributions (for example with *Bio-transfigurations. Art and Aesthetics of Posthumanism*, 2010; or *The Life of Air. Dwelling, Communicating, Manipulating*, 2011, among others) –, the contemporary artistic creation has been placing within its horizon interrogations about these new ecologies of thought where you question both the centrality of western notions of self and the notion of the self as it equates with its condition of agent (not considering the objects but the action inscribed in them), or relating to the debate over the planet and the anthropocene, giving them a renewed centrality. Strictly speaking, it is about the deepening through creation of the philosophical, aesthetic and social questions central to our time.

Welcoming to the Centre of Art and Culture of the Fundação Eugénio de Almeida the *Boundless Objects* exhibit is to inscribe these dimensions and questioning into a programing with which we wish to engage with the world and be able to question it, taking to every individual visitor, in-between the ludic and the instructional, art and science, though and creation, the critical interrogations that these objects make apparent. *Boundless*.

Boundless Objects:

Knowing the entangled world through art practices

Monika Bakke

Curator

The infinity of objects is among the most mundane experiences. Yet, objects viewed as flows of matter and energy become boundless as unlimited manifestations of various forces allowing for the most unique outcomes. Although objects are everywhere – emerging and disintegrating with different speeds – their complex networks and endless entanglements are not easy to trace. The key question then is not really what they are but how they become?

Objects are never complete, stable or inert, and they only emerge in relation within specific human and nonhuman contexts. They do not possess predetermined identities but they transform and transmute, briefly becoming others as well as ourselves. "Electrons, molecules, brittle stars, jellyfish, coral reefs, dogs, rocks, icebergs, plants, asteroids, snowflakes, and bees" – suggests philosopher Karen Barad – "stray from all calculable paths, making leaps here and there, or rather, making here and there from leaps, shifting familiarly patterned practices, testing the waters of what might yet be/have been/could still have been."¹ Objects, both alive and nonliving, are actually materialized forces, connections, relationships, exchanges, transformations, and flows. They are boundless because "the primary ontological units are not "things" but phenomena – dynamic topological reconfigurings/ entanglements/ relationalities/(re)articulations of the world."²

Situated at the intersection of art, philosophy, science and technology the exhibition *Boundless Objects* aims to bring together contemporary art practices which offer inquiries into different contexts and dynamics in which objects emerge and transmute. Such dynamics include practices of storytelling, self-monitoring, materialized interpretations of data, corporeal intimacy, tactility and merging as well as laboratory based technological interventions into biological structures. Some of these dynamics evoke not only curiosity and excitement but also anxiety and resistance. As there is no privileged position for knowledge production, the exhibition is a presentation of art-based research. Artists, like other researchers, are not standing outside of the world; they belong to it because "practices of knowing and being", as Barad claims, "are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming."³ Artists, however, develop their own specific methodologies to analyze and

1. Karen Barad, «On Touching. The Inhuman That Therefore I Am», *Differences*, Vol. 23, No. 3, p. 207-8.

2. Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2007, p. 141.

3. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, p. 195.

present problems; only some of them work with scientists or in the professional or DIY labs. The importance of art-based research rests in its unique ability to engage realms of knowledge inaccessible for nonexperts and present them through artistic creative practices.

The exhibition *Boundless Objects* is an answer to the growing need in the arts and humanities to reconsider the human position and agency vis-à-vis nonhumans such as organic and inorganic entities. One way of doing it involves re-calibrating human perspective, which requires both zooming out and zooming in. The first case – zooming out – involves recalibrating our own scale, the scale of the individual human and our species, to the geological planetary scale which brings a better understanding of discursive-material entanglements within the contemporary world of rapid acceleration and environmental crisis. Both objects and subjects are immersed and enmeshed in the anxiety driven world, which is captured in Izabella Gustowska's video entitled *The Poison*. This work alludes to a liquid, unruly substance possessing a force which brings various kinds of damage, especially material and mental, both on the individual and the social level. This is manifested by flooding which might suggest the anxiety related to climate change. The video captures various phenomena of dissolving world which evoke an omnipresent premonition that the time is *out of joint*. These apocalyptic tones emerge in art and humanities in the context of the growing awareness of the anthropogenic environmental impact, yet the word of caution comes from Jane Bennett who advocates vitality of matter itself. 'The image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter,' she claims, 'feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption.'⁴ Ana Rawakowicz's work *The Occupants* consisting of weather balloons inserted in the gallery's corridors and windows demonstrates the opposite. The objects fight back and their agency is apparent. This intervention literally deters a flow of visitors and induces an alternative route through the gallery space. But they also attract attention and signal a sense of urgency.

Zooming in, on the other hand, brings into the human visibility worlds populated by unfamiliar objects and strange shapes. One example might be an alien looking life form of a garden slater *Porcellio Scaber* which appears in Erica Seccombe's video entitled *(Beautiful) Monster*. The other two videos *Out of Season* and *Metamorphosis* play with both scales and opacity of animal and plant bodies capturing them undergoing major transformations. Transparency of these living bodies is achieved with the aid of powerful technologies allowing strange encounters and enabling the viewers to visually access material transformations which, although common, are actually totally unavailable to the naked eye. And yet, Ana Leonor Madeira Rodrigues's approach to the re-calibration and bringing into view the microscopic realm is totally different as she emphasizes the use of imagination rather than any technological tools. Her encounters with the bacteria *Caulerpa* are not technologically mediated and imply some form of direct interspecies communication which was initiated by 'a self-created bacteriological accident'. This very event, as the artist reports, turned out to be an unpredictable game-changer in the perception of the relations with nonhuman life. Zooming in may also allow us to return to our-selves in a gesture of rearticulating a self-portrait with the methods of biotechnologies. Marta De Menezes created a *Proteic Portrait* which is actually constructed on a molecular level with the very building blocks of life – proteins. This allows to turn to the self as other, a mutant but at the same time express the mutable and mutual genealogy of all life. The work offers a kind of laboratory ethnography which allows the public a glimpse into an environment of scientific practices.

Another way of looking into interconnectivity and flows of matter across objects and places, supporting the desire to overcome the traditional attitudes to agency, is to critically inquire into the distinction between the biologic and geologic. This task requires a move beyond life – not only towards death but also towards nonlife – in a gesture of a radical openness towards the mineral. Actually, all organic objects, be they (human) animal, plant, fungal or bacterial bodies, reach deeply into the mineral realm through material exchange and through ancestry extending to the first life forms. It is only in this extended context of life–death–nonlife entanglement that Kathy High's work *Becoming A Plant: Resurrection Project* can be fully appreciated. The mineral soil is where death mobilizes the dynamics of decomposition and self-organization enabling trans-corporality. But the transformation from an animal body to a plant body includes mineral components as well. Living beings, as Donna Haraway puts it, are creatures of the mud and 'to become one is always to become with many'⁵ some of which are mineral species or other nonlife entities. Another way of linking the biologic processes with the geologic processes in an intriguing way is offered by Renata Rosado's work *Fern*, displaying a connection between a female body, crystal, and a plant body shape. The growth of intricate crystal structures on a microscope slide, forming fern-like shapes from saliva, is a manifestation of a complex bodily function of fertility. The work reveals a relation between a hormonal composition of a body fluid and a self-organizing crystalline structure.

Crystallization is ubiquitous and mineral objects, rocks and stones, are everywhere, yet they are overshadowed by robust life which has been given prominence in the context of the Western thought, especially over the last couple of decades. Lithic, however, as anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli writes, although belongs to the nonlife, it 'has the power to self-organize or not, to become Life or not.'⁶ Nowadays we actually need a reconsideration of nonlife in the web of flows of matter and energy in a corporeal, planetary and cosmic contexts. Hence it seems necessary to start viewing minerals/rocks as partners

4. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010, p. ix.

5. Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*, Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 4.

6. Elizabeth Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2016 (kindle edition).

in life (or in the process of living) rather than as total alterity. But to rediscover the material connections between us-life forms and minerals is to get in touch with them in terms of lithic intimacy. Marek Wasilewski's triptych entitled *Stones* tries to make sense of rock-life togetherness through touch. As Barad suggests, "in a breathtakingly intimate sense, touching, sensing, is what matter does, or rather what matter is; matter is condensations of response-ability. Touching is a matter of response."⁷ Jennifer Robertson's textile works entitled: *Crystal Imperfections as Agents of Deformation, Tetrahedra in Olivine, and Tectonic Lineations* are also based on mutuality and response. Weaving a crystalline-like structure also operates as a grid-based system of horizontals and verticals. Experimenting with mineral fibers Robertson however allows for production of unpredictable three-dimensional shapes as the cloth acquires specific elasticity and bounce. Yet the lithic intimacy manifests itself also in a desire to follow minerals in their atomic structure which can put us in touch with minerals of other planets, moons and crystal rains produced by star births.

Current interest in ecologies embracing both living and nonliving objects comes with the realization that change and agency can no longer just be associated with life alone. Matter, Barad writes, "is not a fixed essence; rather, matter is substance in its intra-active becoming – not a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency."⁸ Animated matter – although neither dead, nor alive in a biological sense – is in the center of attention of Piotr Bosacki's work *Acetone*. The work discloses various of layers of motion, some of which are linked to the physical processes of dissolution in acetone of a plastic object resembling an oil pumpjack. Acetone is an organic compound which occurs naturally in plants, forest fires, volcanic gases but also it can be manufactured and is found in car exhaust and landfills. It has the capacity to dissolve various substances and evaporates easily – it is an unruly substance, it changes from one phase to another and moves quickly across spaces and objects. André Sier also works with phase transitions: from the virtual to the material or from the material to the virtual and then again to the material. His works *Universal Automata, Binary Sculptures, and Biological Sculptures* are cases of such dynamics. These 3D printed objects come into existence through translation and materialization of data coming from various sources, for example gathered from living organisms such as plants. Similarly, Nikolaus Gansterer's work is situated on the intersection of material and virtual realm, but the virtual here stands for the realm of the imaginary. The installation *Objects Yet to Become* encourages micro-performances conducted by the members of the audience themselves either in the gallery space, or whenever they chose to do so, following the instructions on the cards offered. Yet, because "agency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurations of the world,"⁹ the objects which might yet to come as results of these actions, will never come alone, as discreet and individual entities in the world but always as the world.

The exhibition leads the audience through a series of (re)articulations in which bodies of animals become bodies of trees, liquids become crystals, human body becomes a set of data, seed becomes a plant, maggot becomes a fly, virtual objects make a transition into a material world with help of 3D printers; solid objects dissolve, disintegrate or become flexible; they might intrude in the space and haunt us, warn us, or perhaps just do their own thing regardless of our wishes or expectations. The art works presented in the exhibition were inspired by the current philosophical interest in matter viewed as active and capable of self-organization, supporting the idea that change and agency can no longer be associated just with human activity and even with life alone. Hence the art works should not be treated as human made representations only or reflections of processes or forms but rather as actual material-discursive practices – materializations of forces and processes resulting in objects. Such works follow a diffractive rather than reflective method allowing for a multiplicity of phenomena to come into existence. Diffraction happens when a wave hits an obstacle as water flowing down the stream hits stones. The diffractive method, as Barad proposes, is a tool supporting production of differences which will impact the way we are in the world. The exhibition evokes relations and entanglements which, in a diffractive mode, will have a chance to set a series of differences in ways the viewers perceive the processes of becoming in the world and of the world. Boundless objects are phenomena always coming into existence as materializations of relationships.

7. Barad, «On Touching...», p. 215.

8. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, p. 183.

9. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, p. 141.

**CONSELHO DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

† Francisco José Senra Coelho
Ana Maria Costa Freitas
José António Morais Palos
Henrique Manuel Fusco Granadeiro
Fernando Nunes Canha da Silva

**SECRETÁRIA GERAL
GENERAL SECRETARY**

Maria do Céu Ramos

**DIRETOR ARTÍSTICO
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

José Alberto Ferreira

**CATÁLOGO
CATALOG**

© 2019 Fundação Eugénio de Almeida
© Os autores dos textos

**COORDENAÇÃO EDITORIAL
EDITORIAL COORDINATION**

José Alberto Ferreira

TEXTOS

TEXTS

José Alberto Ferreira
Monika Bakke

TRADUÇÃO E REVISÃO

TRANSLATION AND PROOF-READING

Michael W. Lewis, ESE English
Diana Cabral
Equipa FEA

DESIGN

Wello

CRÉDITOS FOTOGRÁFICOS

PHOTO CREDITS

©FEA – Francisco Pereira Gomes

ISBN

ISBN 978-972-8854-88-1

DEPÓSITO LEGAL

LEGAL DEPOSIT

465 326/19

1.ª EDIÇÃO

1ST EDITION

2019

EXEMPLARES

COPIES

300

PRÉ-IMPRESSÃO, IMPRESSÃO E ACABAMENTO

PREPRESS, PRINTING AND BINDING

Gráfica Maiadouro

EXPOSIÇÃO EXHIBITION

**CURADORIA
CURATOR**
Monika Bakke

**PRODUÇÃO
PRODUCTION**
João Pedro Mateus
Maria José Barril
Sofia Colaço

**MONTAGEM / AUDIOVISUAL / ILUMINAÇÃO
INSTALLATION / LIGHTS**
Pedro Serrano

DESIGN
Wello

**TRADUÇÃO E REVISÃO
TRANSLATION AND PROOF-READING**
Michael W. Lewis, ESE ENGLISH
Equipa FEA

**PRODUÇÃO GRÁFICA
PRINTING**
Aos Papéis

LETTERING
DAC Publicidade

**APOIO TÉCNICO E ADMINISTRATIVO
TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE
SUPPORT**
Elisabete Murta
Fátima Murteira

**MANUTENÇÃO
MAINTENANCE**
Gracinda Moço

**COMUNICAÇÃO
COMMUNICATION**
Cândida Santos Silva

**PROGRAMA EDUCATIVO
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**
João Pedro Mateus
Maria Andreza Sousa
Marisa Guimarães

**TRANSPORTE
TRANSPORT**
RNTRANS

**SEGUROS
INSURANCE**
HISCOX Innovarisk

**AGRADECIMENTOS
THANKS TO**
Aos artistas pela cedência das obras.
To the artists for the loans.

**AGRADECIMENTOS ESPECIAIS
SPECIAL THANKS TO**
Equipa de Voluntariado Cultural
da Fundação Eugénio de Almeida.
The Cultural Volunteers from
Eugénio de Almeida Foundation.

**EXPOSIÇÃO PRODUZIDA POR
EXHIBITION PRODUCED BY**
Centro de Arte e Cultura
da Fundação Eugénio de Almeida