

# ***The Artifacts of No-Place***

by

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FRONT MATTER



### Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

FRONT MATTER

## Abstract

This thesis assembles within it a glimpse of ‘a life’. It traces a path of disillusion to dissolution in navigating a search for identity in an increasingly globalized world.

Settling into the trajectory carved by posthumanism, the thesis is based in the twenty-first century as a temporal and paradigmatic tipping point. More specifically, it has allowed me to channel the embodied liminality I have felt during this time, as a woman, a digital native, and a perceived other, through a series of devices affixed within the space of the head – *The Artifacts of No-Place*. In disrupting identification and playing with the boundaries of the body, each artifact has lent itself to different performances, different means of liberation, concealment, and spectacle. These performances connect the thesis to a long history in cultural studies, critical theory, and feminism which interrogates the gaze between the subject and object, and grounds an otherwise disembodied speculation on disillusion and dissolution within a process of making.

The following document captures a methodology of serious play undertaken in this thesis. It assembles lengthy fragments of thought that navigate struggles with otherness, home, and difference, adjacent to visual encounters, headline clippings, and embodied narratives. This is done to mirror my understanding of belonging, as it morphed to accept processes of becoming. Building off of Rosi Braidotti’s nomadic subject, Donna Haraway’s cyborg, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s nomad, I play with the boundaries imposed and propagated in society. Mapping a meandering route towards a critical posthuman and nomadic subjectivity.

Scrolling endlessly, scaling rapidly, we dissolve and reform within global movements of information, energy, and ideas.

## Acknowledgements

I am exceptionally grateful that over the course of this thesis I have been surrounded and supported by numerous wonderful people. I am thankful to the community at UWSA for welcoming me with such open arms, in addition to being an invigorating and open environment that has allowed me to both explore and be challenged. This thesis would not be what it is today in any other setting.

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To Dr. Tammy Gaber, my Tammy, I am so thankful to have started my architectural education with you in first year. Your strength, enthusiasm, and rigour have been wonderful sources of light over the past seven years. I am fortunate to have you in my corner as both a mentor and a friend.

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I would also like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Waterloo for their support, which made this project possible. Scholarships from these organizations has allowed for great depth to the research and design components of this thesis, bringing both beyond anything I had initially anticipated when I began.

Many thanks to my family, for always being supportive despite all of the skepticism about how this relates to architecture. Julian, thank you for always being there to cheer me on or cheer me up. Yasi for

the sleepovers, Babi for the encouraging words, and Yanni for the informative YouTube videos. Most importantly, thank you to my mom Petra for being the strongest woman I know. All the support you have provided over the years is not lost on us, we would be nothing without your rapid-fire monologues and your love.

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I would also like to thank everyone that was able to make it out to BRIDGE for Prototype 8.0. Thank you for your curiosity, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to share my work with you.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge that this thesis actually began as a lamp project back in 2016. Consequently, I would like to thank Ana and Chris, my partners in building the first helmet, for being as excited as I to light up a tessellated anteatr head.

Having grown up in Cambridge, I have lived near the Grand River for the majority of my life. Despite this, my understanding of the land and its history was unfortunately quite narrow. Limited to the colonial history of this place as a series of towns which were amalgamated in the 1970's. And yet, before settlement this land was cared for long before colonization. With this, I acknowledge that I have lived and worked on the Haldimand Tract, land granted to the Six Nations (Haudenosaunee) by the British Crown to honour their alliance during the American Revolution. The land promised, extends ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River in its entirety, from its source to its end at Lake Erie. This agreement has not been upheld.

In a country born from and continually perpetuating forms of colonial violence against Indigenous land and bodies it is imperative that we, at a minimum, acknowledge the conflict-ridden history which forms this place. As a settler, I am grateful to those that have taken care of this land for generations before me, and continue to do so to this day.

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## 2018

I dreaded the prospect of the thesis.

Coming out of an undergraduate education which prioritized phenomenology<sup>1</sup> and critical regionalism<sup>2</sup>. I wondered if I would have to make some building which would be emblematic of my cultural identity to be relevant. Is this all that I could (or should?) offer to architectural discourse as a person minoritized from the lens of the Western architectural canon? The prospect made me roll my eyes so hard I feared they would get stuck. But then I had an even worse thought, what would I design? As a child of immigrant parents that fled communism and war from two different countries back in the 80s, I had no country of origin to miss. Much to the disappointment, I'm sure, of all the people that yelled at me from car windows, to tell me to go back to where I came from. The places these people imagined were places that were never home, never places that I could relate to. What I knew best were the

---

**1 Phenomenology might be considered a centring of the human body in design. To which I asked what body?**

**2 Critical regionalism might be considered some postmodern method of generating hybrid buildings by bashing together seemingly oppositional cultures. To which I asked what cultures?**

siding-clad towns of southern Ontario. But a thesis on suburbia, specifically because of its history in privileging certain races, classes, and genders, was equally as disheartening.

So what could I design? I briefly considered a typological study of cultural centres, broad-stroke. But, this quickly turned to fear as I realized that I might end up designing an ambiguous 'cultural' centre to unify all the 'othered' groups of society. The prospect of designing a library, which could be considered a more apolitical public space felt marginally better. I liked books. I liked libraries. Both these theses were noble ideas, yet still I wondered if my thesis would then only revolve around trying to subtly integrate sandblasted motifs onto curtain walls to make glass more culturally specific, or how best to design a door handle that formally hinted at the historic textile industry of 'the site'. Further, what gave me the authority to design either?

So instead I asked: what was home to me?

I found the answer in a mirror.

She closed her eyes and plugged in



**The world went dark.**

SHE CLOSED HER EYES



Figure 1.01 Prototype 1.0



Figure 1.02 Prototype 2.0

SHE CLOSED HER EYES

SHE CLOSED HER EYES



Figure 1.03 Prototype 3.0



**she inhaled**

SHE CLOSED HER EYES

SHE CLOSED HER EYES

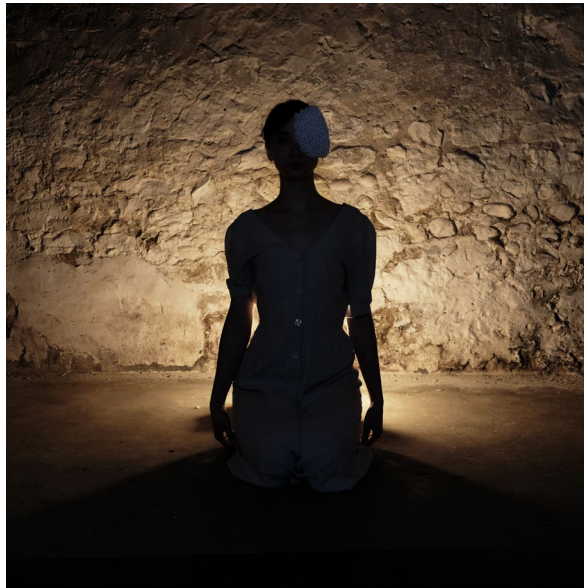


Figure 1.04 Prototype 5.0

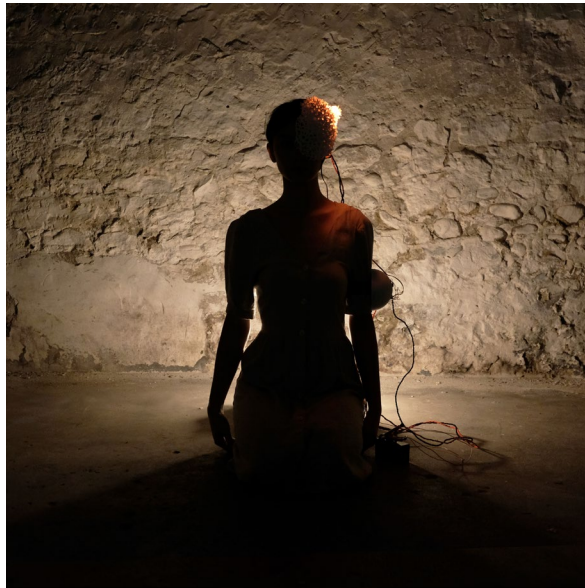


Figure 1.05 Prototype 7.0

SHE CLOSED HER EYES

SHE CLOSED HER EYES

**she exhaled**

Washed up on  
the shore of her  
own judgement,  
the detritus of  
civilization lay with  
her, displaced, broken  
off and smattered:  
disembodied  
heads of marble  
deities, McDonald's  
arches, dead neons,  
driftwood, trinkets.

An open-air museum to worldly dis illusion.

## Woman (n.)

“adult female human”<sup>1</sup>

Synonyms: dainty, delicate, fragile, soft, damsel, second sex, mother, object of desire, wench, flower (as in lotus flower), doll (as in china doll).<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v “woman,” accessed March 16, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> These synonyms are curated by the author

**Other (n.)**

“being not of the same kind”<sup>3</sup>

Synonyms: not-white, not-male, not-pure, outside, different, disparate, separate, unlike, peripheral, exotic.<sup>4</sup>

---

**3 A play on the adjective definition, assigned to a noun; Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v “other,” accessed March 16, 2020.**

**4 These synonyms are curated by the author**

MYANMAR REJECTS UN ACCUSATIONS OF 'GENOCIDE'  
BBC News, August 29, 2018

UK VOTES TO LEAVE EU, DRAMATIC NIGHT DIVIDES NATION  
Anushka Asthana, Ben Quinn & Rowena Mason, *The Guardian*, June 24, 2016

WET'SUWET'EN PIPELINE SUPPORTERS SAY THEIR  
MESSAGE IS NOT BEING HEARD  
Hina Alam, *Global News*, March 1, 2020

TRUMP DEFENDS WHITE-NATIONALIST PROTESTORS  
Rosie Gray, *The Atlantic*, August 15, 2017

PITTSBURGH SYNAGOGUE MASSACRE LEAVES  
11 DEAD, 6 WOUNDED  
Mark Scalforo and Mark Gillispie, *The Mercury News*, October 27, 2018

AS CORONAVIRUS SPREADS, SO DOES XENOPHOBIA AND  
ANTI-ASIAN RACISM  
Suyin Haynes, *TIME*, March 6, 2020

IS DEMOCRACY DYING?  
*The Atlantic*, October, 2018



# To Beginnings

*We are not threatened by error, rather and much worse, we bathe in delirium<sup>5</sup>.*

The other – an outsider – is identified in exercises of power over, in delineations of a boundary between, in distinguishing an ‘us’ and a ‘them’. These fictions, once established and once necessitated by a society, pervasively cycle and feed off of one another; “it is thus that the liar believes in his lies by dint of repeating them.”<sup>6</sup>

Alternately, we bathe in disillusion.

This thesis assembles within it a glimpse of ‘a life’<sup>7</sup>. It traces a path of disillusion to dissolution, in navigating a search for identity in an increasingly globalized world. Simply put, it records a conflicted discarding of fixed personal identity.

The disillusion of identity becomes a yearning for total dissolution.

It is a project of serious play. Exploring a condition of embodied liminality as felt and interpreted by the author – as a woman, a digital native, and a perceived other. Each, vectors in this trajectory of a life. Bound up in all the complexity of these labels which comprise the her of perception, melded with the her undergoing transformation and continual construction.

This book is a musing on her desire for dissolve and reconstitution.

Capturing a multitude of seemingly fragmented threads of thought and movement, they are arranged as an assemblage within the space of the following pages. This book is a vessel for stories of scale, between global and local; stories of home, between body and place; and stories of becoming; between the I and she. The correlated explorations are grounded in the development of a series of artifacts for the head. Serving as interfaces for, and exposing the liminal conditions of, they play with the boundaries of body and identity.

---

**5 Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York : Cambridge, Mass: Zone Books ; Distributed by the MIT Press, 2001), 41. Delirium in this context is noted as “the capacity [of the mind] to move from one idea to another, [doing] so at random, in a delirium that runs throughout the universe, creating fire dragons, winged horses, and monstrous giants.” It is invoked in the context of David Hume’s work.**

**6 Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*, 42.**

**7 A Deleuzian idea elaborated on by Tim Ingold: “In the ever-unfolding life of the humaning human, things are never given once and for all... pass[ing] between milestones, as a river between its banks... it is to place the things we do in the current of the life we undergo.” Tim Ingold, *The Life of Lines* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2015), 143-144.**

**2018**

I find myself starting in a place of frustration.

The books I read speak of neutral bodies.

I do not know what this is.

They speak of an other.

But I can only see myself on the other side of their lens.

Maybe I am reading the wrong books.  
Why are they all written by men. Why  
are so many of them obsessed with the  
flâneur. How do they move about urban  
space without risk of being groped?

They speak of the freedom of play, of  
wandering freely. I briefly wonder if the  
gaze of the men I encounter on the  
street have this in mind, as if my body is  
yet another part of the city to explore.

I am told to make my thesis less political,  
again and again.  
But life, itself, is political.  
Is it too complex?  
Too potentially offensive?  
Too much?

I would have to exist as nobody,  
in a non-place,  
encountering no one,  
with no eyes,  
no ears,  
no heart,  
from which to let the world in; if I aspired  
to write the thesis they are imagining.

SHE REACTED

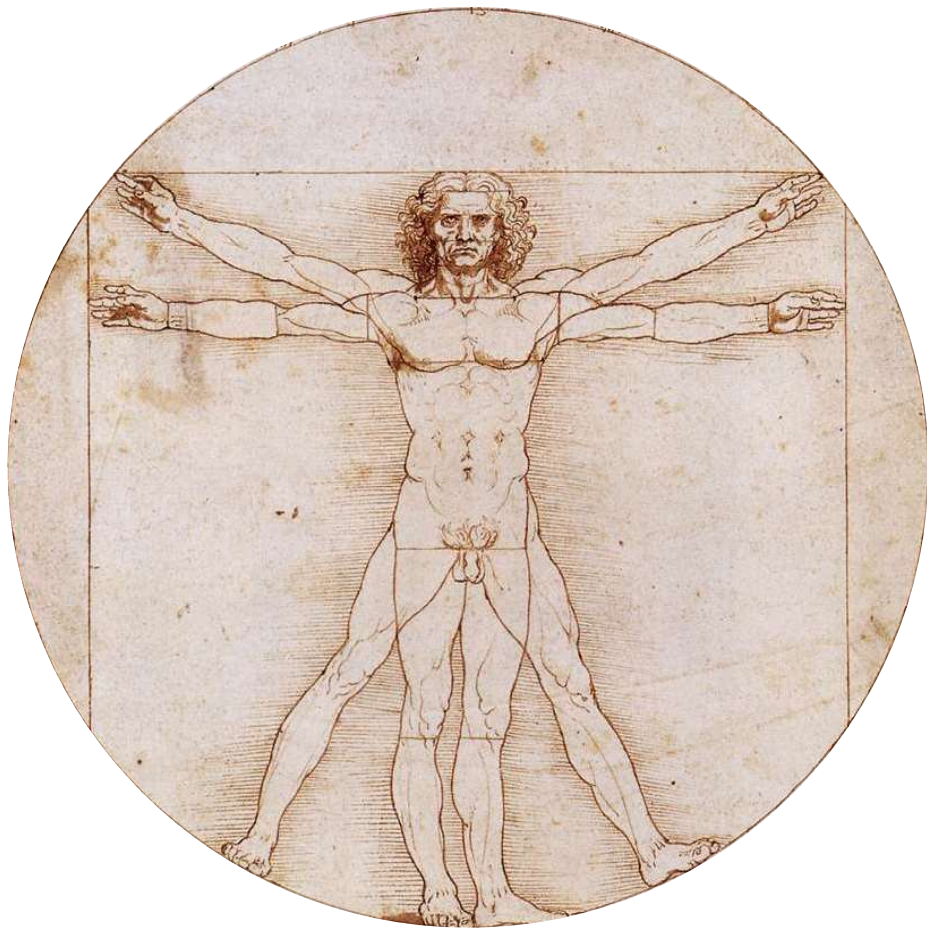


Figure 2.01



Figure 2.02

# To Now

What is human in the twenty-first century?

From increased forest fires to data harvesting; decolonization, internet trolls, mass protests, viral videos, viruses, climate refugees, transnational corporations, twitter, fast fashion, reddit, artificial intelligence. We bow to the all-mighty cat video while marking ourselves safe from acts of terrorism on social media. Scrolling endlessly, scaling rapidly, we dissolve and reform within global movements of information, energy, and ideas.

As the twenty-first century marks the close of its adolescence it is mired in turmoil. Growing tension between 'the global and the local' vindicates the cultural prevalence of 'make \_\_\_\_ great again' rhetoric, prompting either vehement agreement or genuine confusion about this aspirational past-greatness to which we hold our present captive to. A sort of skeptical nostalgia blankets over our imaginings of a future, and an undercurrent of cynicism gathers at its base.

The twenty-first century is thus both a point of departure and steady muse for this thesis and the explorations contained within. It is the future dreamed of for decades, but not far removed from the pains of the past. And this question – what is human – is a broad and labyrinthine one. It is a question which no single thesis may ever aspire to answer, and a question which no one person may ever wholly comprehend. Yet claims to human, or to be more human than 'the rest', mark our histories with scars that will never fully heal. These are the cyclic fictions demarcated by the exteriority of a term such as the 'other', with its implications in building up the glorified myth of a universal human subject.

*Central to this universalistic posture and its binary logic is the notion of 'difference' as pejoration. Subjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour, whereas Otherness is defined as its negative and specular counterpart. In so far as difference spells inferiority, it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as 'others'.<sup>1</sup>*

This version of 'human' is entrenched in declarations of human exceptionalism and is indebted to the humanist human of the Enlightenment (read: reason and consciousness = unique being, man-as-universal-body). A view of 'human' long criticized yet lingering

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**1 Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA, USA: Polity Press, 2013), 15.**

***The way humans inhabit this planet, what they eat, how they behave, what relations they entertain, creates the network of who and what they are: it is not a disembodied network, but (also) a material one, whose agency exceeds the political, social, and biological human realms.***

Francesca Ferrando, "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations," *Existenz* 8, no. 2 (2013): 32.

as a pervasive germ in the continual racism, sexism, exoticism, colonialism, nationalism, and xenophobia present even today, in 2020.<sup>2</sup>

To come at this question in contemporaneity, this thesis aligns with the trajectory posthumanism<sup>3</sup> offers, “seen as a post-exclusivism: an empirical philosophy.”<sup>4</sup> Sparked by the oppressed margins of society, posthumanism finds a base in critical race and feminist theory of the mid to late twentieth century. Yet, its criticality is not bound to history. In asking us to rethink what it means to be ‘human’ and whether or not the aspiration ‘to be human’ is the one we will continue to ascribe to, posthumanism dismantles all claims to universality and essentialism; liberating us from reciting the same hierarchies if we so choose.

The term ‘posthuman’ marks a crucial paradigm shift. It is a shift which has been gathering speed for decades. With the looming climate crisis forming a fitting backdrop for the revival of boundary-war nationalism, most evident in Trumpian “build the wall” sentiments; growing discontentment with international organizations, seen in the splintering off of Britain from the European Union; and the persistent commodification of everything from information to multiculturalism. It has become increasingly clear that the human-centred systems which we believed to be self-regulating<sup>5</sup> – which we devised and fed as the all-knowing, all-seeing humans that ‘we’ are – had boiled over decades ago and is now producing an acrid sort of stench. The acrid sort of stench one might associate with the petroleum industry or apathy.

The quicker we understand ourselves as implicated in a system larger than our-self(s), the quicker we are to understand that our past and future are marked by ongoing processes of migration, intercultural intensities, and blurred identities, then the better our future looks. The posthuman body is one of subversion. This lack of a baseline – bodily and culturally – contributes to a fundamental and exquisite lack of universality. Embracing this difference, without feeling a loss is our next challenge. While we might agree having a place to sit is ideal, the body which yearns for a place to sit might now be altered, itself.

**2 See pages 13, 147, 163.**

**3 Post- in posthumanism is not referencing ‘beyond’-human in a transcendent sense, rather it is a beyond-human-centred, ‘after’-humanist-human. It is distinct from but intersects other discourse such as transhumanism and anti-humanism.**

**4 Francesca Ferrando, “Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms,” 29.**

**5 This term ‘self-regulating’ is taken from N. Katherine Hayles’ book *How We Became Posthuman*, where she presents a cybernetic history of how information lost its body. It is used to analyze the consequences of extrapolating between living systems and machine systems conceptually and linguistically, from homeostasis and feedback loops, to autopoiesis, to emergence. She argues for the need to re-embody our informational systems or run the risk of “being seduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality... human life is embedded in a material world of great complexity, one of which we depend for our continued survival.” Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 1-13.**



***We all have bodies, but not all bodies are equal: some matter more than others; some are, quite frankly, disposable.***

Nina Lykke and Rosi Braidotti, eds., *Between Monsters, Goddesses, and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine, and Cyberspace* (London ; Atlantic Highlands, N.J., USA: Zed Books, 1996), 136.

**2016**

A desperate need for chocolate washed over me and I quickly dug my hand into the half-eaten bag of Maltesers to my left. The trace paper crinkled beneath me as I shifted sideways. On it lay a series of iterations, five to be exact. My project that term. The lights in the studio were off except for the emergency light in front of my desk. Someone had set up a projector on the far wall. The image was a tad blurry but readable, it displayed with such indifference the event of the evening. The election.

Everything smelled of pizza and angst. A sour tone which only worsened as the night wore on. We worked. Ballots were counted. More pizza. The map filled up. Time compressed. Disbelief. There was so much red. The screen was on fire, lit from the divisive kindling haphazardly laid by a caricature. Lit by a yearning for something unedited and 'real'.

We walked home at midnight in a bitter haze.

THRESHOLD 1



Figure 3.01 She Looped



SHE LOOPED

In the twenty-first century

***The society which  
eliminates geographical  
distance reproduces  
distance internally as  
spectacular separation.***

Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle, Reprint* (Detroit, Mich: Black & Red [u.a.], 2010), 167.

# In Bound\*ness

\*-ed, -less

Culture gives a double-edged degree of boundedness to our sense of identity. It allows us to feel as though we<sup>1</sup> belong, and authorizes systems of collation, categorization, and observation. The social dimension of the term 'culture' is defined as "the distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, products, or way of life of a particular nation, society, people, or period"<sup>2</sup>. As an umbrella term it is a paradox. It acquires its specificity in distinguishing boundaries between cultures, while simultaneously encompassing a sharing across the borders intrinsic to it as a manifestation of sociopolitical and socioeconomic processes. To play with this paradox we attach other words, prefixes, and suffixes to it, to make 'culture' relevant to our argument. To hint at its fluidity and to dissolve the boundaries it might typically imply: multiculturalism, cultural pluralism, third culture, cultural diversity. While other amalgams further draw out its boundary-marking function: culture clash, culture shock, cultural loss, cultural differentialism, cultural identity.

Globalization gives a double-edged degree of boundlessness to our sense of identity. "Rising awareness of the world 'becoming smaller' and cultural difference receding"<sup>3</sup> both feeds nationalist agendas while also working to connect and empower border crossing and transcultural or globalized identities. The period of rapid globalization since the twentieth century has inevitably instigated direct resistance with renewed fervor at micro and macro-regional scales: for patriotism and a desire for strong boundaries, to the continual reliance on the definition of identity provided by racial and ethnic segregation. With this, the pervasive language of binaries: global versus local, nature versus civilization, us versus them, which once ruled our understandings of cultural interaction, fails to maintain the relevancy required of it in the twenty-first century. Fetishizing a politics of static difference in our current era is delusional, and while it is impossible to know the definitive trajectory of cultural perception it is best that we begin a process of dismantling our existing misconceptions. Otherwise, we will maintain – uncaring or unaware – a discourse which plays-down its own divisive tendencies. Tendencies which continue to establish and feed toxic ideological power structures within society. From a cultural studies perspective Jan Nederveen Pieterse notes that globalization

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**1 The use of the terms 'we', 'us', and 'our' are used in this thesis cognizant of their universalizing tendencies, here it references the 'we' of the margins. Though this viewpoint is filtered by the perception of the author and her experience with the margins, the 'we' is meant to bring you (the reader) into this experience.**

**2 Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. "culture," accessed March 5, 2020.**

**3 This definition of globalisation aligns itself with the work of Jan Nederveen Pieterse, a global studies scholar and sociologist notable for his work on hybridity. Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalisation and Culture: Global Mélange*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Roman & Littlefield, 2009), 43.**

has changed how we engage with culture in society, summarizing this analysis in three paradigms of cultural understanding (see Figure 3.02).<sup>4</sup>

Two of the paradigms, convergence and differentialism, cultivate apocalyptic notions of globalization as either functions of growing homogenization or as an instigator of boundary wars. This sort of rhetoric carries the prejudices and hierarchies of universalization and civilization<sup>5</sup> into the late twentieth and now twenty-first century, influencing the language which we use to express our sense of identity and place in the context of globalization.

*We have been so trained and indoctrinated to think of culture in territorial packages of assorted 'imagined communities' that to seriously address the windows opened and questions raised by hybridization in effect requires a decolonization of imagination.*<sup>6</sup>

Globalization as hybridity emerges out of the three as a viable function of global mixing, where the boundaries of nation and identity can be necessarily challenged. Here, globalization has the potential to be understood as an accelerated but persistent mixing strategy which opposes structure and acknowledges messy and shifting connections. This view of globalization accepts that "shifting civilizational centers are [only] the front stage of history [occurring] against a backdrop of much older and ongoing intercultural traffic."<sup>7</sup> While an awareness of world history as one of ongoing migration and cultural exchange is liberating, what it empowers is often concealed by what it enables. One such concern is that the conditions of intercultural mixing are often asymmetrical. Hybridization taken without a healthy dose of skepticism thus conceals the danger of naively inverted structures, recycling the colonizing hegemonies they aimed to dismantle. Tied to this, Nederveen Pieterse notes a distinction between an assimilationist hybridity or a destabilizing hybridity<sup>8</sup>. While assimilationist or 'melting pot' mentality enables new forms of cultural imperialism under the guise of hybridity, a more beneficial hybridity would be one that subverts the

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**4** The analysis contained in Pieterse's chapter "Three Paradigms" is summated in the adjacent diagram and has been produced by the author as an interpretation. Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Globalization and Culture: Three Paradigms," in *Globalisation and Culture: Global Mélange*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Roman & Littlefield, 2009).

**5** It is important to note that the term 'civilization' when employed in this thesis is used to elicit its history as a term of enlightenment. As Marshall Sahlins notes, "at the height of European Enlightenment, the French philosophers invented the word 'civilization' to refer to their own society... [what] logically followed was the notion of a progressive series of evolutionary stages beginning in 'savagery' and ending in 'civilization' into which we could fit - and fix - the various non-Western peoples." Marshall Sahlins, "On the Anthropology of Modernity, or, Some Triumphs of Culture over Despondency Theory," ed. Antony Hooper in *Culture and Sustainable Development in the Pacific* (Canberra, Australia: ANU E Press, Asia Pacific Press, 2005), 44-61, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2bj7c.10>.

**6** Pieterse, *Globalisation and Culture: Global Mélange*, 57.

**7** Pieterse, *Globalisation and Culture: Global Mélange*, 27.

**8** Pieterse, *Globalisation and Culture: Global Mélange*, 77-83.



## Cultural Hybridization

'Hybridization'

### Privileges:

- + border crossing
- + observation of context

### Subverts:

- + identity politics
- + claims of authenticity
- + claims of purity

### Conceals:

- + power dynamics
- + asymmetry in mixing

## Cultural Differentialism

'Clash of Civilizations'

### Analogies:

- + billiard ball
- + fault lines
- + human mosaic

### Dimensions:

- + nationalism
- + racism

## Cultural Convergence

'McDonaldization'

### Players:

- + multinational corporations
- + economics

### Rhetoric:

- + 'The West' and 'The Rest'
- + cultural imperialism
- + 'progress', 'assimilation'

IN BOUND\*NESS

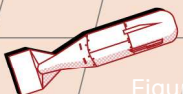
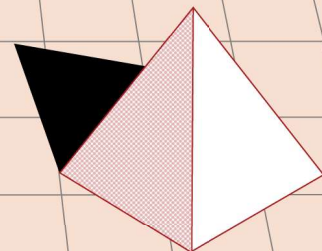
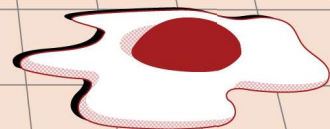
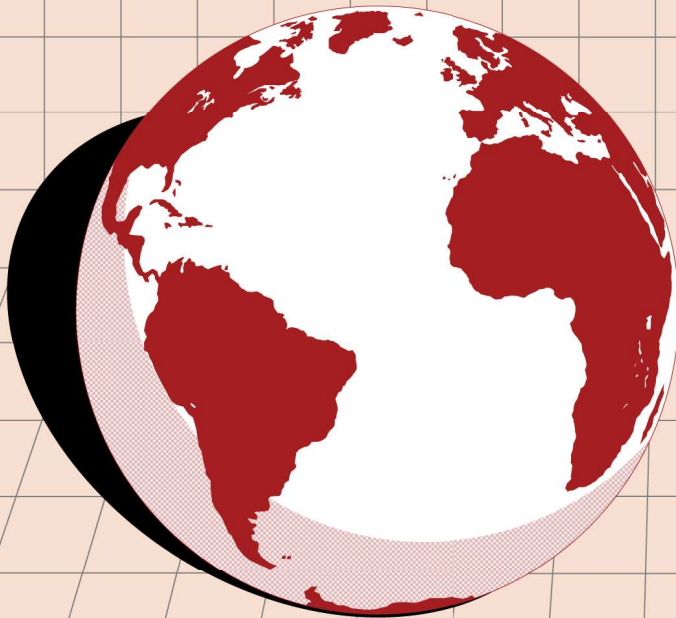


Figure 3.02 Three Paradigms

centre. This sort of destabilizing hybridity, through a decolonization of the imagination, would then cultivate new forms of difference without filtering their legitimacy through a colonialist lens. An aspirational goal. Yet, addressing how this new difference is represented or appreciated as it relates to cultural identity becomes trickier.

Here enters a third paradox, that of 'difference'. While recognizing and empowering claims to difference is necessary, particularly if we understand migration and mixing as a constant in history, is this a declaration imbued with essentialism? In this question there exists two kinds of difference, one considered synonymous with the 'other'<sup>9</sup>, and one which dissolves the subject/other dichotomy<sup>10</sup>. This is a paradox dependent on the origins of the sentiment, and the scale at which it is employed.

In an extension of the postmodern worldview, the desirability of positive difference is sated in pluralism. Cultural relativism, as a particular facet of pluralism, appropriately interrogates universals.<sup>11</sup> These universals, such as truth or beauty, are instead seen in relation to the context of their culture, producing bias but also difference. This is then accepted in the larger society as a tolerance for difference. But, if culture is the basis on which relations are formed, then on what basis is the culture formed? What if the basis on which the culture is formed propagates unhealthy power structures or systems of oppression? We then loop back into the relational difference fed by essentialism and the subject/other dichotomy. Here, we find ourselves cornered by the paradoxical formation of culture and its representation. We can see this visibly produced in postmodern collage culture, which fractures and displaces our perspective in all the right ways. It feels so right to take the images, the symbols, the motifs which haunt us and bash them against each other<sup>12</sup>. It is a deliberate subversion of power, with

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**9** For example: exoticism, fetishism, noted by Homi K Bhabha as an issue of visibility where the colonial gaze generates the identity of the 'other' and uses it as a mirror or marks it as an object of desire. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 66-84.

**10** This form of difference appears liberating as it frees us from the structure of essentialism built from the colonialist perspective. It appears in discourse involving multiplicity and pluralism as heterogeneous means of constructing difference.

**11** Maria Baghramian notes Hegel as a seminal figure in giving "rise to the idea that different histories, rather than the transcendental absolute idea of history, shape[s] human understanding and knowledge in distinct ways." Maria Baghramian and Michael Krausz, "A Brief History of Relativism," in *Relativism: A Contemporary Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, n.d.), 17-18.

**12** Negotiating collage imagery to reproduce heterotopic conditions is a persistent trope science-fiction, exemplified the *Blade Runner* movies because they anchor themselves in relation to time and place. They imagine near-futures instead of alien environments, and their thorough use of cultural iconography is both relatable and recognizable. We love seeing a Mayan pyramid being used as the corporate headquarters for a mega-company that profits from the creation of cyborgs that eventually go through an identity crisis. A fever dream of collage culture, random difference, and late capitalism. It taps into our lamentations for loss of sacred space, in a time where malls are where we search for enlightenment and churches are segmented into spaces for apartments.

a dash of irony. But, the antagonism of the collage is only as powerful as the wholeness implied in the original images. And so, while it is cheeky, and political, and loaded; the collage must first define a priority or attachment to the original images to acquire any meaning at all. The collage, which we might associate with hybridity, is a heterogeneous structure because it is understood as a fragmented whole. This works on the space of the page. It works in art and artistic mediums, and we try to extend it and read it in artifacts and architecture. Yet, we need to address the fact that collage-pluralism reproduces centres. Collage itself is often an image that just juxtaposes wholes to illicit a response. Collage is collaging not mixing. If we really want to completely internalize a lived reality of multiplicity, to counter the assimilationist hybridity Nederveen Pieterse speaks of, then we must fundamentally reconsider representation, aesthetics, and how things layer in lived reality. Particularly, the issue posthumanism finds with this method of representation, for identities and events lived out in the collage – born and entangled within – is that the initial wholeness of the collaged pieces is not ‘whole’ to begin with. And those who exist in this fringe consider, should we even be searching for a wholeness in the first place? Are we bound to a partial existence, one lived out in the margins, fractured, and othered?

## In Exiting

The essentialist loop of relational difference fed by the subject/other dichotomy is also what traps post-colonial discourse. Here the marginalized through the lens of the colonist<sup>13</sup>, in an effort to claim any semblance of wholeness or identity, must either seek to transcend ‘their’ otherness by inverting the power structures which govern ‘them’, or recite their otherness to claim it as ‘their’ own.

In seeking to transcend otherness, the colonized may be accused of mimicry. Noted by Homi K. Bhabha as an ‘almost the same, but not quite’ or a ‘not quite/not white’.<sup>14</sup> It is a contradiction insofar as colonial culture is seen as an aspiration, but at a heightened level unreachable for the colonized. The danger here is that the colonized are not so simply bound by their essence as an inherent ‘other’, instead mimicry introduces a partial presence as the other is surveilled and distinguished as an other nonetheless.

*When Europeans change it is called ‘progress’, but when ‘they’ (the others) change, notably when they adopt some of our ‘progressive’ attributes, it is a loss of their culture, some kind of adulteration.<sup>15</sup>*

**13** Where the origins of the sentiment are still propelled using universalist claims (macro-scale), with application at the level of the sociopolitical and sociocultural (macro-scale).

**14** Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 86-92.

**15** Margaret Jolly, “Specters of Inauthenticity,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 4, no. 1 (1992): 49-72 quoted in Sahlins, “On the Anthropology of Modernity,” 45.

A version of this is recognizable in discourse surrounding cultural convergence, or homogenization. In Nederveen Pieterse's accounts of convergence, he uses the term 'McDonaldization'<sup>16</sup> interchangeably to describe a perception of globalization which prioritizes Western hegemony. McDonalds is seen as instigator of global homogenization through its inescapable presence across the globe. This argument recites a language of hierarchy – that of American dominance – and fails to acknowledge the reciprocal nature of cultural relations.<sup>17</sup> Yet, in a curious inversion of mimicry, McDonalds adopts a strategy of 'glocalization' in contemporaneity. Once only used to define a process of adaptation by corporations in the world marketplace, as a desire to 'look in both directions',<sup>18</sup> it now also indicates a conscious negotiation of the global and local in fields outside of economics<sup>19</sup>. Overall, it continues to be a tactic multinational corporations (i.e McDonalds) use when looking to take their products to the global stage and adapt them to sell in local cultures and markets.<sup>20</sup> Which is how Nederveen Pieterse argues that McDonaldization is, to a certain degree, a facet of destabilizing hybridization.<sup>21</sup> As local customs are adopted to appeal to regional markets they also reciprocally affect the global capitalist structures which are supposed to threaten their existence. This process introduces a degree of irony, when customs and traditions are preserved, retained, or sometimes invented<sup>22</sup> in order to cultivate an identity for a place and for a people for the sake of capitalist expansion and tourism. A sort of commodification of difference, legitimized through the lens of the multinational corporation for the 'other'.<sup>23</sup> This raises the question, are we reclaiming or reinventing cultures for profit or for claims of specificity? To what degree can we say that these

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**16 Pieterse, *Globalisation and Culture: Global M lange*, 51.**

**17 Pieterse, *Globalisation and Culture: Global M lange*, 51-54.**

**18 Ken'ichi Ōmae, *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy*, Rev. ed (New York: Harper Business, 1999).**

**19 Joshua Meyrowitz, 'The Rise of Glocality: New Senses of Place and Identity in the Global Village', in *A Sense of Place: The Global and Local in Mobile Communication*, ed. Krist f Ny ri (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2005), 21-30.**

**20 A great example of this is the McDonalds 'International Menu', which includes such items as the Stroopwafel McFlurry representative of The Netherlands, the Blue Cheese and Bacon burger for France, and the McAloo Tikki burger for India. "Around the World is Now Around The Corner," McDonald's USA, LLC, May 8, 2019, <https://news.mcdonalds.com/stories/our-food-details/worldwide-favorites-menu>).**

**21 Pieterse, *Globalisation and Culture: Global M lange*, 52.**

**22 This borrows Dell Upton's 'invented tradition', as the creation of an 'authentic' version of a culture. A claim for regional specificity where a conscious commodification of ethnicity is channeled through material objects and customs. While this practice is pervasive as a tool which produces spectacle in tourism, a degree of this is taken up in any number of quests for regional or cultural authenticity in design. This is what fuels my skepticism of critical regionalism noted in the prologue. Dell Upton, "Ethnicity, Authenticity, and Invented Traditions," *Historical Archaeology* 30, no. No. 2 (1996): 1-7, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25616452>.**

**23 Now the origins of the sentiment are propelled by multinational corporations for capitalist markets (macro-scale), to appeal to local differences (micro-scale) influencing the individual (micro-scale).**

## 2018

We can make the case for the positivity of an idea like the 'human mosaic'. Where individuals are not forced to assimilate into a higher society, declared by the masses. Individuals may retain their identity, their tradition. We can make claims for our differences and freely practice what we want at our will. This is utopia. Some concept of free will and individual difference form the backbone of this sentiment. The blip of human defiance in our fever-dream dystopias of a homogeneous world. But in truth, the conditions of the world should not be understood as a mosaic. A mosaic is a composition, static and immobile. It should be crushed down to the sand which forms the clay and be continually arranged and rearranged, to attain the accuracy we desire. This is the condition we should be yearning for. Perhaps it is nit-picking. We are only arguing the size of the pieces of difference and the nature to which they are held (or not) together. But it is an important distinction. I do not wish to be a fragment of a terracotta tile glazed blue and chipped in the right corner, I would rather be a grain of sand. This sentiment is not the usual though. There is something about being *one* in a million, rather than one in a *million*, making it hard to argue for this disintegration of the mosaic into sand. On first glance a sandy beach is homogeneous. The waves wash over and wet it in a continuous rhythm, and inconsistencies in fact produce discomfort. Suddenly stepping on a rock is no pleasurable experience. Yet, we are aware when we lie face down, face pressing into the ground, that the sand is in fact an infinite array of tiny granules – all different in size, colour, and shape – tumbling with the pulse of the sea.



cultural practices are actually emblematic of the lived experience of individuals 'within' the culture? Who is 'within' the culture anyways. And then, how much of this construction loops back to influence, at an individual level, processes of identity creation?

Reciting otherness, as the second effort towards a marginal claim to wholeness, falls in line with notions of identity as performative act. This is explored by critical race and gender studies alike, and addresses the relational construction of individual identity to exterior forces.<sup>24</sup> An example of reciting 'otherness' from a cultural perspective, is noted by Homi K. Bhabha through the ambivalence of stereotypes (fetishistic modes of representation) and the issue when they are internalized.

*... the subject finds or recognizes itself through an image which is simultaneously alienating and hence potentially confrontational... it is precisely these two forms of identification that constitute the dominant strategy of colonial power exercised in relation to the stereotype which, as a form of multiple and contradictory belief, gives knowledge of difference and simultaneously disavows or masks it. Like [a] mirror... 'the fullness' of the stereotype - its image as identity - is always threatened by 'lack'.<sup>25</sup>*

This draws attention to the image-based construction of the Other as a depthless idea which constructs the wholeness of the ideal subject. This sentiment is similarly mirrored in Simone de Beauvoir's "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman".<sup>26</sup> Both these examples, mark a slippage in the stability of the term 'identity'. Where the exteriority associated with an identification of- reciprocally influences the fixity of the identity within-. Judith Butler notes this as "the appearance of substance [that] is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and perform in the mode of belief."<sup>27</sup> What is key to note in this statement is two-fold, that the performance is substantiated on belief, and the use of the word 'substance'<sup>28</sup>, relating

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**24 Now the origins of the sentiment are from the individual (micro-scale) as relational to their experience within culture (macro-scale).**

**25 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 77. This excerpt is woven with Bhabha's reading of Lacan's Imaginary, a psychoanalytic take on the Other and therefore referential to the Oedipal. It lathers itself in hierarchy but is used here as an apt descriptor for the double-edged function of the stereotype as a mirror, reflecting an image of identity which is then often taken and internalized.**

**26 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 273.**

**27 Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins Press, 1990), 270.**

**28 The history of substance and essence is a significant philosophical rabbit-hole to fall into. It is noted here to counter its ontological foothold in humanist discourse. Instead of individuation and identity creation as a relational process, a becoming-with, identity is viewed as a given, inherent or natural to a subject or object.**

this act to essentialist conceptions. The danger of performance, and what ties it back to the beginning of this discussion, is that paradox of difference founded on the subject/other. In reciting otherness as a claim and performing it, its repetition affords legitimacy to the belief in otherness as inherent to the substance of the 'Other'. To counter this Butler further states:

*Gender is what is put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly, with anxiety and pleasure, but if this continuous act is mistaken for a natural or linguistic given, power is relinquished to expand the cultural field bodily through subversive performances of various kinds.<sup>29</sup>*

Here emerge two kinds of performance, one which is acknowledged by the performer and one which is viewed as inherent to the performer. It is here that we finally find an exit from the essentialist loop of the subject/object. To dissolve this dichotomy, the image of fixed identity must first be made visible as a construct, be acknowledged as a construct, appropriately criticized, and discarded. While Butler is referencing gender in the quote above, the relationship between performativity and identity seen in this sentiment can be expanded to include most labels and boundaries which limit us.

In acknowledging identity as a construct, the fixed subject bound by it becomes untethered to a mode of being inherent to their nature or their culture.<sup>30</sup> In understanding this distinction, dissolution becomes simple, if culture is fluid then so too must be identity.<sup>31</sup> This is not ground-breaking. In fact, it is perhaps mundane, in the way that constant change is the most mundane. But it seems as though a great many of us have forgotten this. And still, in a world plagued by a long history of eugenics and superiority complexes this argument for a fluid identity should liberate and not be used to conceal or exotify the lived struggle of the Other.

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**29** Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 282.

**30** As a humanist, essentialist subject.

**31** A multiple, nomadic, and immanent sort of life (but more on this later).

***I determine for the thousandth time that I will follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion.***

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (Wisehouse Classics, 2017), 18



0 cm 5 15

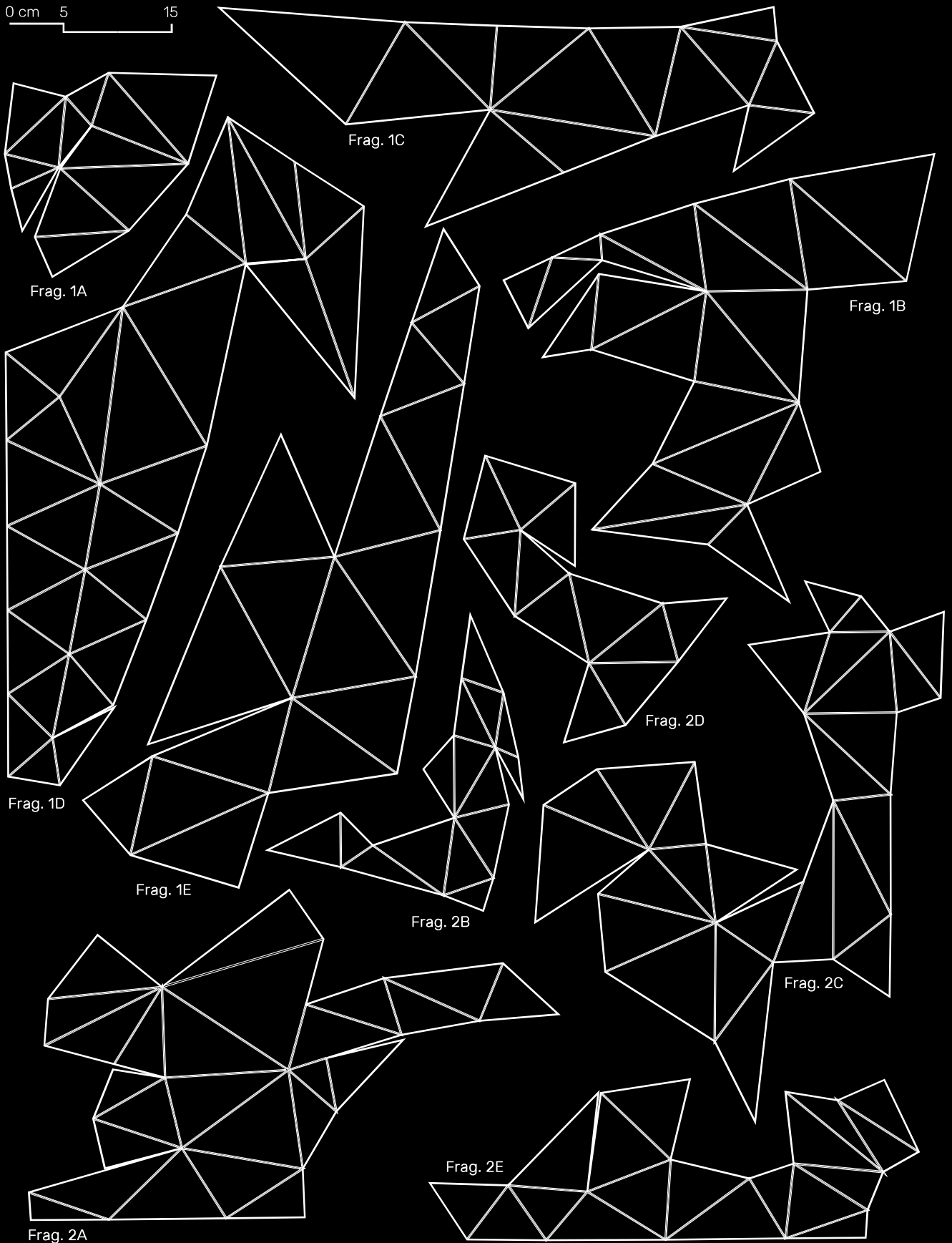


Figure 3.03 Cut File Prototypes 1.0 & 2.0

My body is a boundary  
(or so I am told)

I want nothing more than  
to disappear.

---

**To be seen.**



Figure 4.01 Shibuya Crossing



Figure 4.02 Grid

**The voice of the city  
echoed. Warping air  
into lines. Warping  
earth into grids. The  
grid which framed  
her body and told  
her where to go.  
Told her where she  
belonged and where  
she should be.**



Figure 4.03 Grid

**She was trapped  
above, yearning to  
escape. Escape the  
movement of her  
own making. The  
throng of people,  
the piles of paint,  
the hard surfaces  
of the city under  
her bare feet.**





Figure 4.04 Grid

**Still, she lacked the  
eyes to see herself  
clearly.**



Figure 4.05 Grid

**2003**

The snow crunched below, under the thick boots of my childhood. The ones with the removable liner and lots of ankle space. I walked the same route every day to school: around the baseball diamond, up the hill, past the park, through the forest. And the same route every day to get home.

The baseball diamond sat on the edge of a quarter circle field, the whole of which was edged by a paved path, edged by a line of suburban homes. It had been snowing all night, and the ground was covered with a soft stillness. It was irresistible. I ran directly through the centre of the field, albeit struggling slightly to lift my feet enough to push through the shin-high snow. By the time I had reached the middle, the snow had started again.

I fell backwards slowly, body sinking into the ground. Eyes closed. My lungs drew in the cold air with sharp little gasps. The world was muted, still the hum of the cold snow crept up my back and hands, spreading outwards.

A chilly embrace.

I opened my eyes to an endlessly grey sky. Only the static in my retina animated the clouds. Yet its lack of depth felt all too near. In the stillness of my body the sky freed itself from all its worldly tension. Peeling downwards it blanketed the field with me in it. The weight of the air pushed me deeper into the snow. Deeper into its warmth.

I danced in the grey.



Figure 5.01 She Reflected



In the twenty-first century

***Not all nomads are world travelers; some of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one's habitat.***

Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory, Gender and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 5.



# On Home

Home signifies a place of belonging.

It is often associated with a space exterior to the body, often involves encounters with people we care about, and is often consequently held in high regard in our memories. Thus, home is a relational construct, with belonging as the currency in which it deals in. Implied in it is a sense of inclusivity: membership to a group, settling into a place. From it we discern a sense of safety or comfort from familiarity, which gives the idea of belonging its allure. It is a fleeting feeling though, and the frequency with which anyone truly believes that they completely 'belong' would be a curious thing to examine.

Belonging, in effect, can be considered a sort of desire<sup>1</sup>. This is evident when we describe our sense of belonging in relation to our own quests of individual identity-creation. We seek affirmation, but often turn up empty handed. We can feel placeless or lost; we feel we must search for identity; we might yearn to find identity; we can feel displaced. Yet, in order to feel placeless or lost we must believe that there is a place which would more adequately affirm our existence. In order to have reason to search or find our identity we have to imagine it as something external to our self. In these instances, the affirmation we seek are nuggets of pure truth residing in some distant land. Lands which we will one day have the luxury of travelling to in order to become more ourselves. Because of this, though we might physically occupy a particular space which could be recorded via lines of longitude or latitude or some other recognizable means of orientation at any given point in time, we often do not feel completely tied or connected to this space. This is what manifests as a yearning for home, or more accurately a yearning to belong.

This is the issue that arises when belonging is internalized as desire. Though often unconscious, it will demand manifestation from a means exterior to our body.<sup>2</sup> We desire to occupy a space in which wholeness resides. And while we might progress towards, or have occasional

---

**1 Desire here is used in its psychoanalytic sense, to fulfill a lack perceived by a subject. Caught in a loop the subject seeks attainment of the locus of its desire, yet desire cannot manifest to bestow wholeness in the subject. Lacan notes: "the active edge that splits my desire between a refusal of the signifier and a lack of being, and links my fate to the question of my destiny, this game, in all its inexorable subtlety, is played until the match is called, there where I am not, because I cannot situate myself there." For the sake of the argument, On Home examines home first from its psychoanalytic implications in order to dismantle it. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2001). 126.**

**2 Because desire, in this sense is the one associated with psychoanalysis, it is built on a foundation of exteriority and interiority as fundamental to the construction of the humanist subject, the subject which posthumanism reacts to.**

encounters with these spaces, ultimately total belonging will remain elusive. Perhaps this is all a bit cynical and I am exposing my own feelings of inadequate belonging. A sort of longing for be-ing, so it seems. Still, I cannot help but feel this holds true for more than myself. The project of psychology appears to demand resolve from this trap through a level of authenticity<sup>3</sup>. For racialized people or diasporic groups, a method touted as 'returning to one's roots' is the direction given. Yet while this is often liberating for a great many of us<sup>4</sup> to do, it does not fully quench the longing to belong produced within normative North American society. Particularly, when 'fitting in' is unattainable in the lived experience of one's body.<sup>5</sup>

## On Structure

Similar to the processes of culture, globalization, or difference, an exit from the yearning to belong can be found when its implied fixity is recognized. To buy-in to the allure of this, it is necessary to note how our sense of belonging is presently communicated. If we as subjects<sup>6</sup> continue to identify points of interest as the seat of belonging, then we are perpetually caught between borders of our own making.<sup>7</sup> This is a loop fed by a fixity of place – the so-called 'sedentary'.

Tracing the etymology of a term such as 'culture', a fundamental marker of belonging and identity, illuminates a curious history with an inextricable link to the literal act of settling land. This delineates a fundamental connection to place in our conceptions of culture, and consequently belonging. According to Douglas Harper, *culture* beginning in the mid-fifteenth century is defined as a "tilling the land, [to] prepar[e] the earth for crops", related to the past participle stem of *colere* meaning "to tend, guard; to till, cultivate".<sup>8</sup> This definition is carried into contemporaneity most notably referencing the cultivation of plants or bacteria, but is also tied to its alternative meaning as an

---

**3 Does 'being true to one's self' sound like a familiar enough mantra?**

**4 The 'us' here references racialized people. This is through the lens of author as a racialized person herself, having grown-up in Cambridge, Ontario most of her life.**

**5 Innumerable accounts of this conflict exist. In my own research this has transgressed into research on hyphenated identities, the Asian diaspora, and dealing with microaggressions concerning stereotypes about East Asian women. For anyone interested in this topic I would highly recommend the emerging magazine *Living Hyphen*. For a more clickbait-y and satiric tone I would recommend Kristina Wong's article "I Give up on Trying to Explain Why the Fetishization of Asian Women is Bad" on Huffpost. For something in between the two, and if you consider sci-fi a sort of unfortunate guilty pleasure due to the general machismo and the often eroticized loop of the gynoid, I recommend Trevor Richardson's article "Objectification and Abjection in Ex Machina and Ghost in the Shell" on Medium.**

**6 'Subjects' is used here intentionally to indicate the static nature of these thoughts.**

**7 This has already been noted on page 54: "in order to feel placeless or lost we must believe that there is a place which would more adequately affirm our existence to us".**

**8 Douglas Harper, "culture," Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/culture>.**

“excellence of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training,”<sup>9</sup> a cultivation of the mind. From the definition of *culture* Harper further directs us to the etymology of *colony*, noting a relation to the Latin *colonia* “settled land, farm, landed estate”.<sup>10</sup> Linking it further to the Proto-Indo-European root *kwel-* meaning “revolve, move around; sojourn, dwell” which provides the source of Latin’s *-cola* meaning “inhabitant”, and forms the root for related terms such as: colonial, cultivate, encyclopedia, and palimpsest.<sup>11</sup>

If our negotiations of home are continually constructed through the lens of land settlement and land ownership (read: the sedentary), the invisible borders which mark here-and-there; us-and-them are drawn out and squabbled over. The land belongs to us and therefore we must belong to the land. A destructive form of this can be found in anti-immigration rhetoric where a perception of intrinsic land ownership regards migration as a trespass and the migrants as a ‘them’ to other<sup>12</sup>. A marginally more constructive form of this is in place-making, as an act engaged with securing belonging through the land or outwardly expressing a belonging to the land.<sup>13</sup> Both rest on hierarchies defined by the fixity of place and a particular group’s relation to it.

*The nation state bonds that have exerted such great influence grew out of sedentary experiences, agriculture, urbanism, and then industry as anchors of the national economy. [But] why should identity be centred on the sedentary rather than mobile categories if mobility defines the species as much as settlement does?... Powerful interests are invested in boundaries and borders, affecting the fate of classes, ethnic groups, elites; while borders and boundaries are a function of differentials of power, they are social constructions that are embedded and encoded in cultural claims.*<sup>14</sup>

Macro-scaled civilizational projects, evident in the pervasiveness of the sedentary, construct and reinforce systems of organization, categorization, and control. Going forth we must ask ourselves if this is how best to move forward. Do we continue to tout the language of assimilation, homogenization, and hierarchy or can we now begin a process of dismantlement, subversion, and empowerment?

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**9 Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, s.v. “culture,” accessed March 30, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture>.**

**10 Douglas Harper, “colony,” Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed March 30, 2020, [https://www.etymonline.com/word/colony?ref=etymonline\\_crossreference](https://www.etymonline.com/word/colony?ref=etymonline_crossreference).**

**11 Douglas Harper, “\*kwel-,” Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed March 30, 2020, [https://www.etymonline.com/word/\\*kwel-?ref=etymonline\\_crossreference#etymonline\\_v\\_52609](https://www.etymonline.com/word/*kwel-?ref=etymonline_crossreference#etymonline_v_52609).**

**12 ‘Other’ here is used a verb.**

**13 If this sounds like your sort of thing, I would direct you to the phenomenological quagmire that is ‘genius loci’ in the context of modern architectural theory.**

**14 Pieterse, *Globalisation and Culture*, 144-145.**


# Arborescent

0 cm 1 3

SHE REFLECTED

Arborescent implies a relation to trees: hierarchical, centralized, transcendent, segmented, stratified. From root-to-branch from base-to-tip it builds upon itself, layer upon layer upon layer upon. A Western obsession, the idea of growing from something and towards another, the world organizes itself into hegemonies: rankings of importance, opaque layers. The arborescent designates points and positions, frozen networks evolving in their specificity but grouped together nonetheless. Solid in its form it is directional, pointing towards its transcendence.<sup>15</sup>

**15 The text on this page references the chapter "Introduction: Rhizome" in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.**



***We're tired of trees.  
We should stop  
believing in trees,  
roots, and radicles.  
They've made us  
suffer too much.***

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 15.

Figure 5.02 Arborescent

# Rhizomatic

0 cm 1 3

***The rhizome is an antigenealogy. It is short-term memory, or antimemory. The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots.***

Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21.



Rhizomatic implies a relation to grass: in-between, repetitive, non-hierarchical, multiple, acentred. Lines, enter, exit, and connect as they please. The multiplicity expands and overflows its boundaries again, and again. A rhizome is like the branches of a tree, but only when eyes are closed. Filtered warmth flashing onto the back of an eyelid, streams of dark intersected by light, beating and morphing in passing. The rhizomatic extends as a plane, tangling the world in its mesh and shifting in its infinite horizon. A map. An immanent process.<sup>16</sup>

**16 The text on this page references the chapter "Introduction: Rhizome" in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.**

Figure 5.03 Rhizomatic



The exit mentioned prior, the one which seeks to escape the yearning for belonging, is not necessarily a critique of the wanting of home, nor is it an offense against the sedentary. Reducing either to a value judgement, good or bad, would oversimplify the complexity of these forces. Instead, the goal is to expose the arborescent structures<sup>17</sup> produced within these processes and their influence on identity-creation. Recognizing the destructive forces of these hierarchies confirms the need to embrace the potentials of a fluid identity<sup>18</sup>.

Fluid identity manifests through Deleuzian ontology as the nomadic. It is not strictly a counterpoint to the sedentary, as one might assume. The relationship between the sedentary and the nomadic is easiest understood through examples and an additional Deleuzian set: smooth and striated space (see Figure 5.04). Striated space can be understood as organizational, a desire to measure, where points and lines denote boundaries and borders similar to the function of the sedentary in society.<sup>19</sup> Smooth space instead captures continual movement, the lines become vectors, it cannot be measured because even time is folded in, and it dissolves borders and boundaries similar to the passage of nomads across land.<sup>20</sup> Yet, the mixture of- and movement between- these two spaces is fundamental to their continual presence. “The city is the striated space par excellence; the sea is a smooth space”, both are fundamentally open to the forces of the other.<sup>21</sup> From this exercise we can deduce that the nomad, whose movement embraces the flow of smooth space, does not bestow us with a one-way ticket to complete and utter dissolution. This is not necessarily a call-to-arms to dissolve every structure in society, pack our bags, and begin roaming about the earth in the literal and historical nomadic sense. Instead, it allows us to recognize our compulsions to measure and organize in the sedentary sense, to question the structures which arise from this mode of being, and to open ourselves up to the alternatives afforded by the fluidity of the smooth. A notable departure from our usual habits of control.

Nomadic potential is described in *Nomadic Subjects* by Rosi Braidotti, who channels Deleuze’s nomad directly into posthuman discourse. The full quote from page 55 is as follows: Not all nomads are world travelers; some of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one’s habitat. It is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the literal act of traveling.<sup>22</sup> Boundaries are formed as part of the striation of space, how we choose to mediate them is where we can begin a process of dismantlement. A marked transition from trees to rhizomes.

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**17 The us-and-them distinction informed by belonging, and the borders and boundaries produced by the fixed-place of the sedentary.**

**18 As discussed on page 36.**

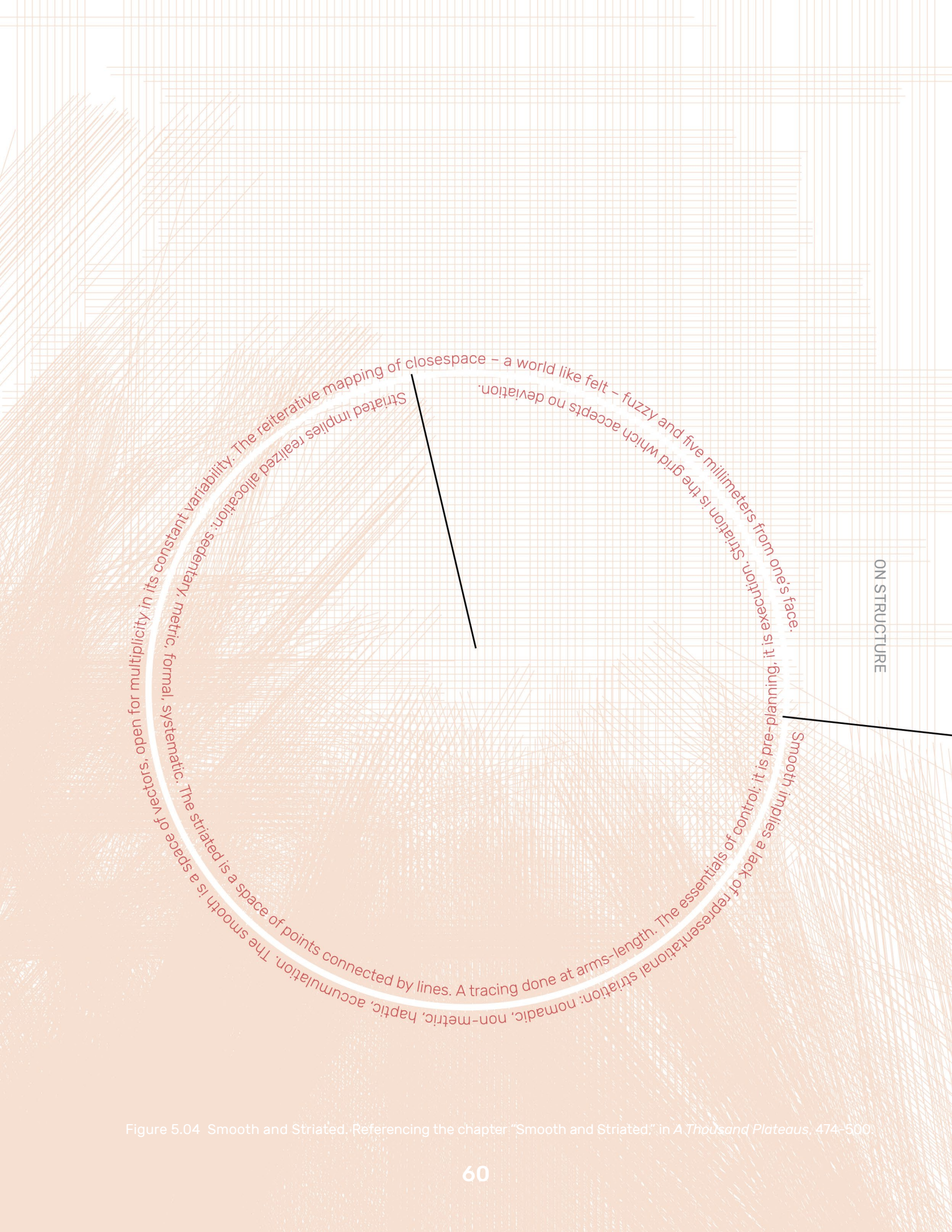
**19 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 474-500.**

**20 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 474-500.**

**21 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 481.**

**22 Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 5.**





Smooth implies a lack of control; it is pre-planned, it is execution. Striation is the grid which accepts no deviation. Striated implies realized allocation: sequential, metric, formal, systematic. The smooth is a space of vectors, open for multiplicity in its constant variability. The reiterative mapping of close space – a world like felt – fuzzy and five millimeters from one's face.

Smooth implies a lack of representational striation: nomadic, non-metric, haptic, accumulation. The smooth is a space of joints connected by lines. A tracing done at arms-length. The essential of control; it is pre-planning.

ON STRUCTURE

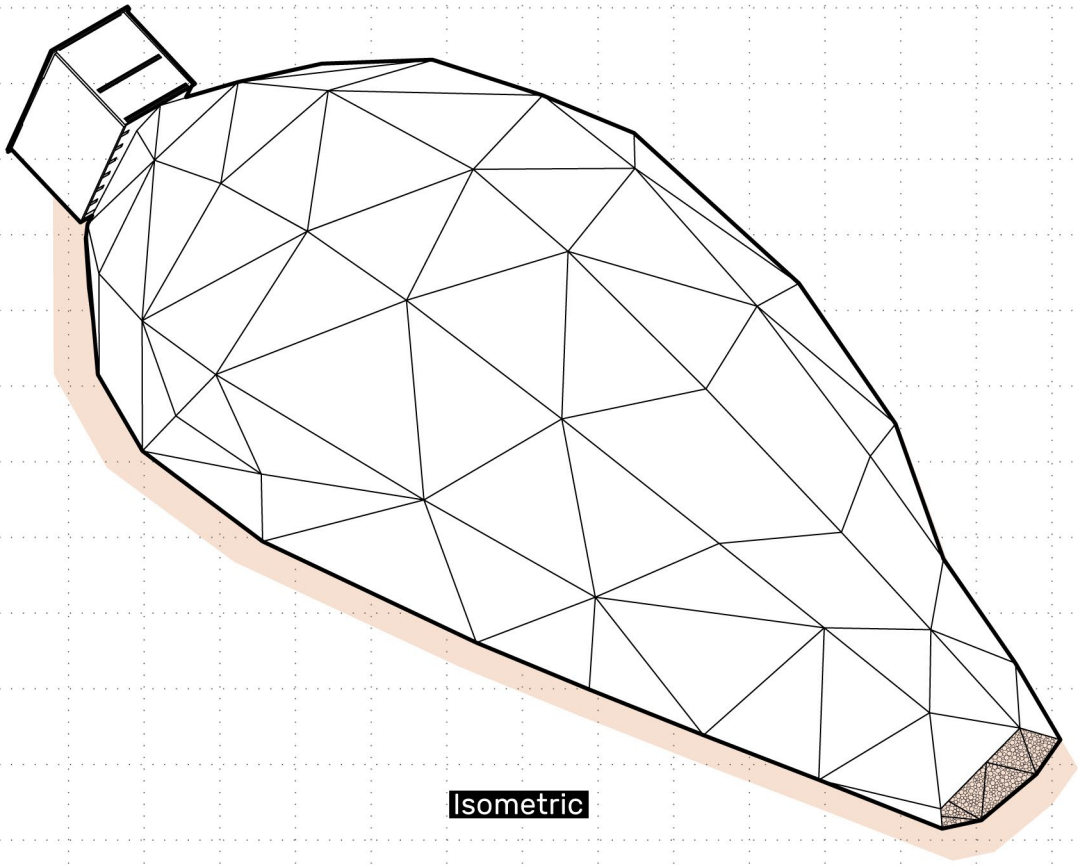
Figure 5.04 Smooth and Striated. Referencing the chapter "Smooth and Striated," in *A Thousand Plateaus*, 474–500.



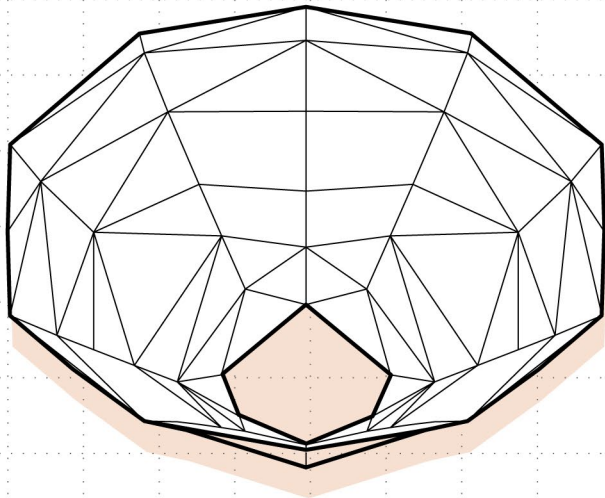
# Prototype 1.0

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SHE REFLECTED



Isometric



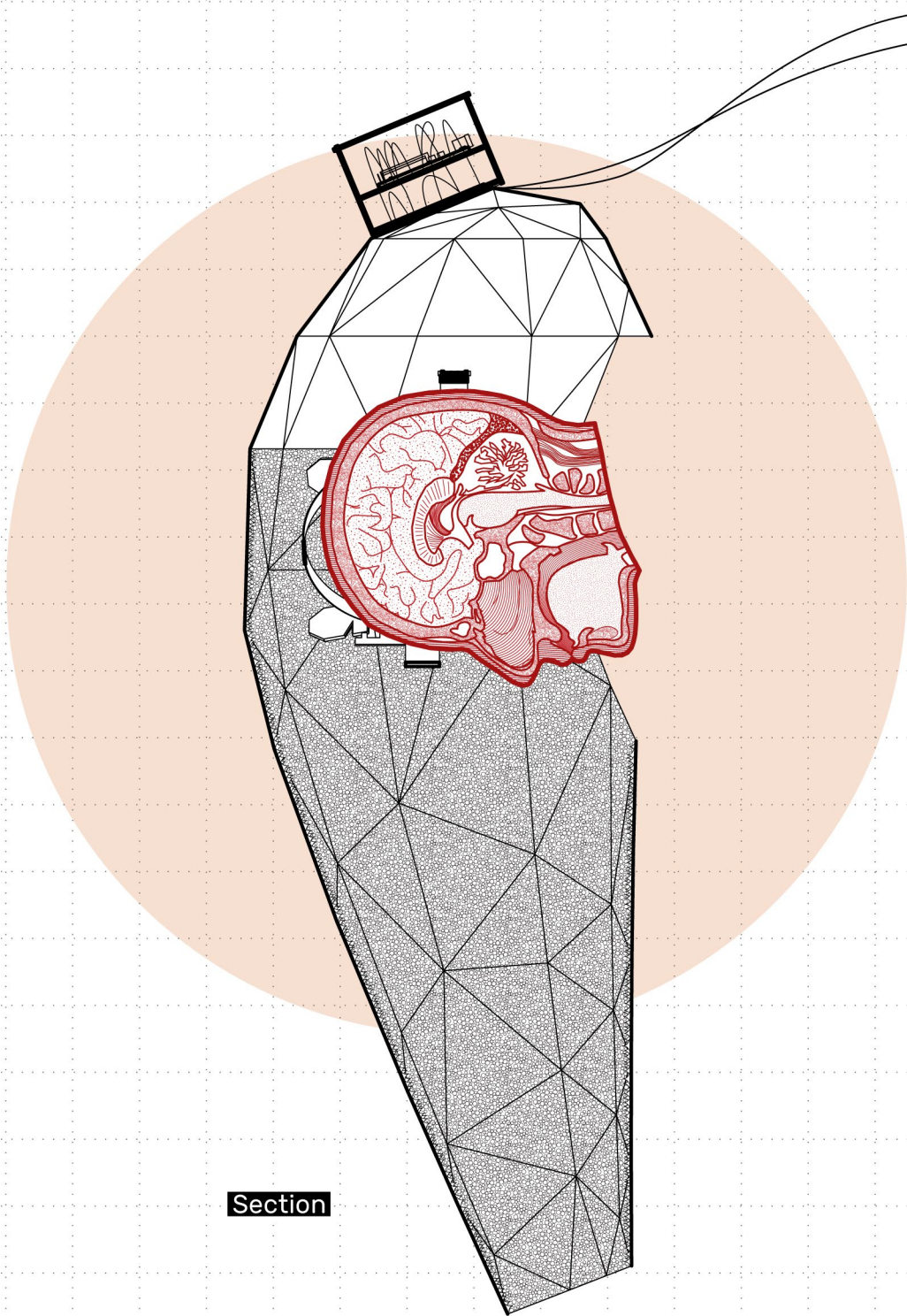
Front

Figure 5.05 Prototype 1.0



# Prototype 1.0

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Section

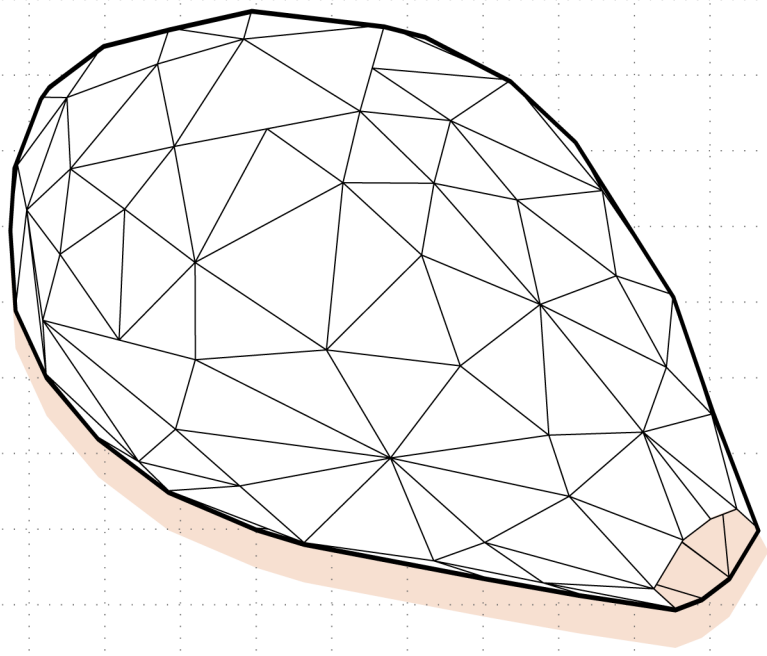
ON BECOMING

Figure 5.06 Prototype 1.0

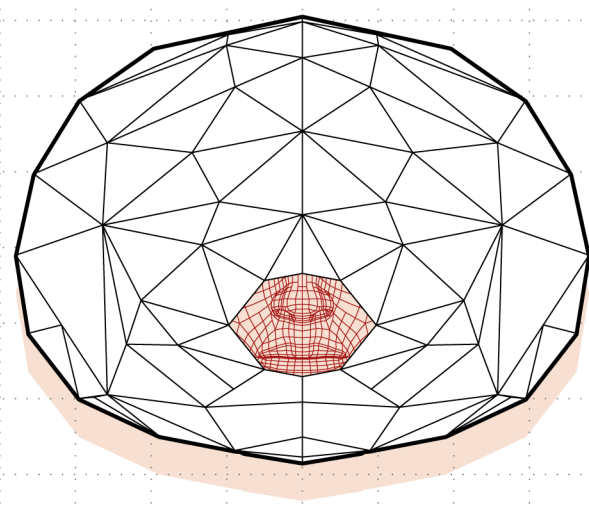
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SHE REFLECTED



Isometric

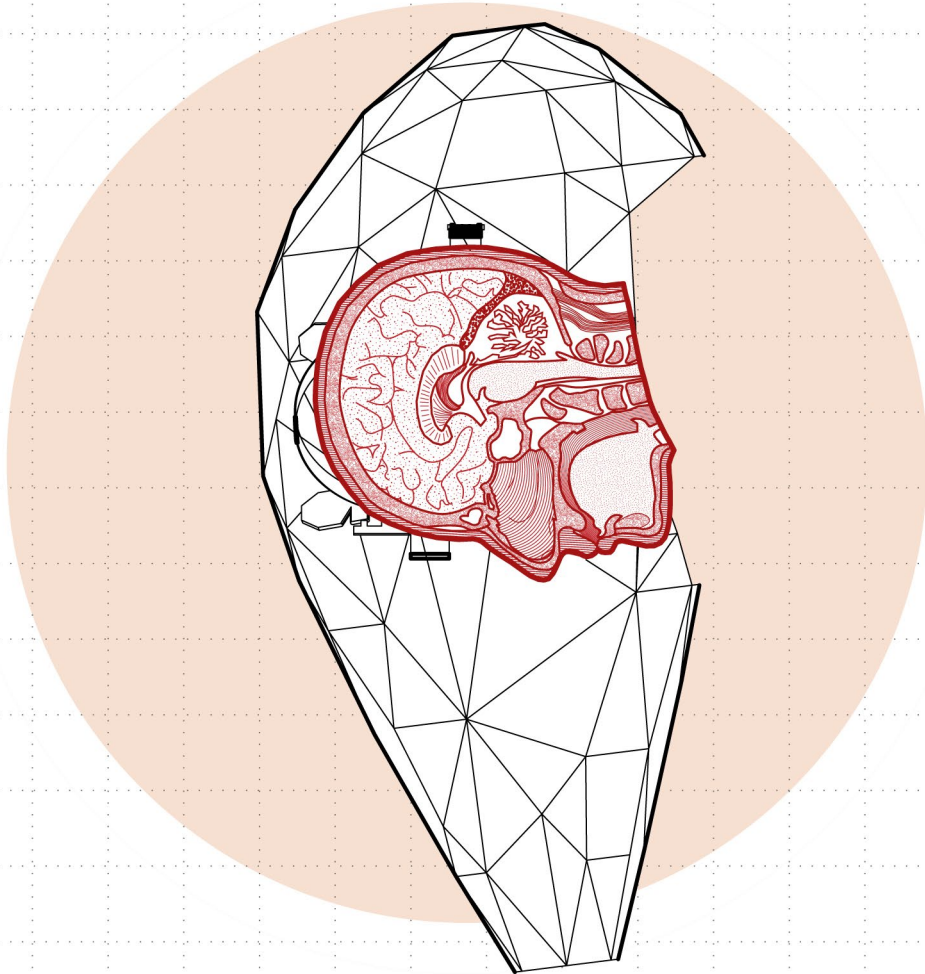


Front

Figure 5.07 Prototype 2.0

# Prototype 2.0

0 cm 5 15



ON BECOMING

Figure 5.08 Prototype 2.0

Section

**2019**

I lie face down. As I always do.

To build a home.

Hardwood with cracks that whisper of  
old worlds.

Cheek pressed to the side.

Palms up knees down. I search for infinity.

Infinity in my frailty, I settle for the edge  
of my diaphragm.

Colloquially, this is called 'planking'.  
My heart pulses outwards.  
Accumulating my life. Collecting  
and discarding it in the darkness.

Under my blanket of skin. Is no small feat.  
It is gloomy. There is a lack of light.  
I can only assume none of my enzymes  
have figured out bioluminescence.

Dots of light float in my vision.  
Static drifts. Swelling in sound.  
Burned edges, like watery toast.  
Sweet smells of coffee and dust rise  
from the floor. A bobby pin stabs me.

It presses into my chest.  
I want to scream, but laugh instead.  
My heart still beats, like a sadistic  
percussionist it plays on.

Under the cover of my sternum.  
I cozy into the cartilage. Does anyone  
else feel compelled to familiarize  
themselves with their organs? It seems  
to be an overlooked piece of infinity, or  
perhaps I'm just searching for stability.

In the infinity of mortality.

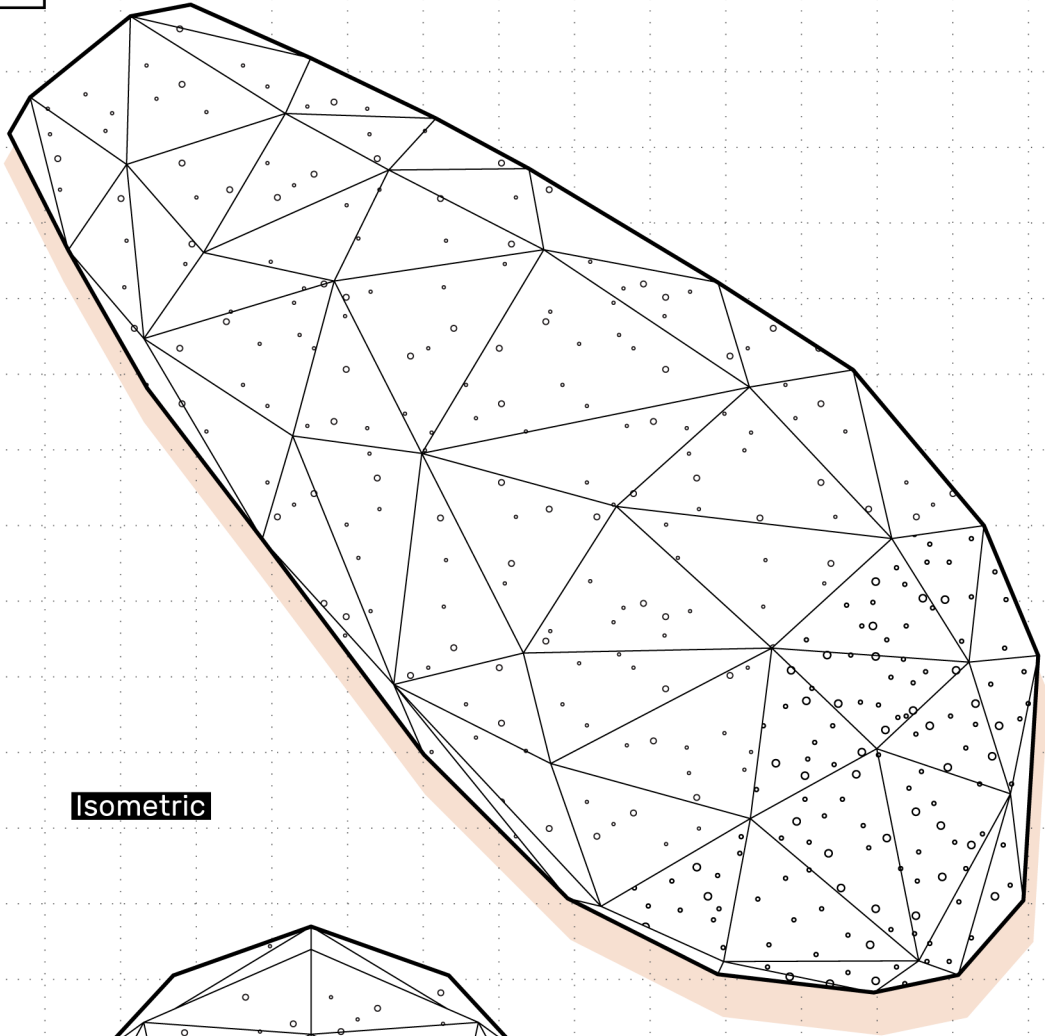


# Prototype 3.0

0 cm 5 15

SHE REFLECTED

Isometric



Front

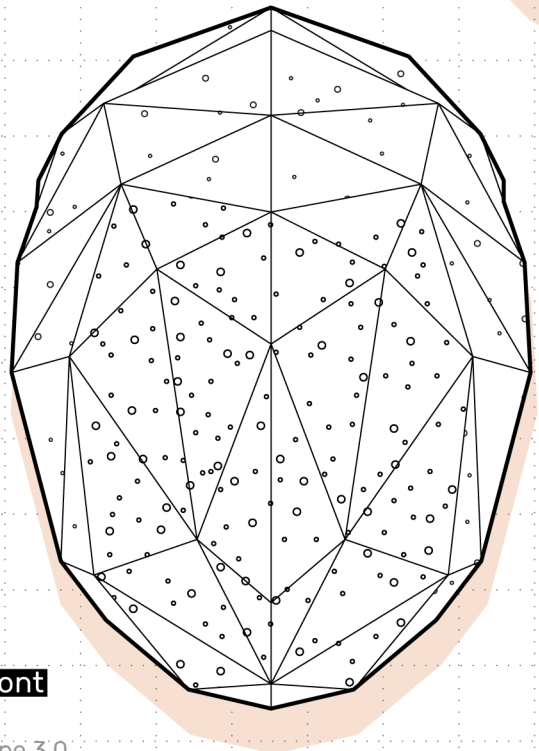
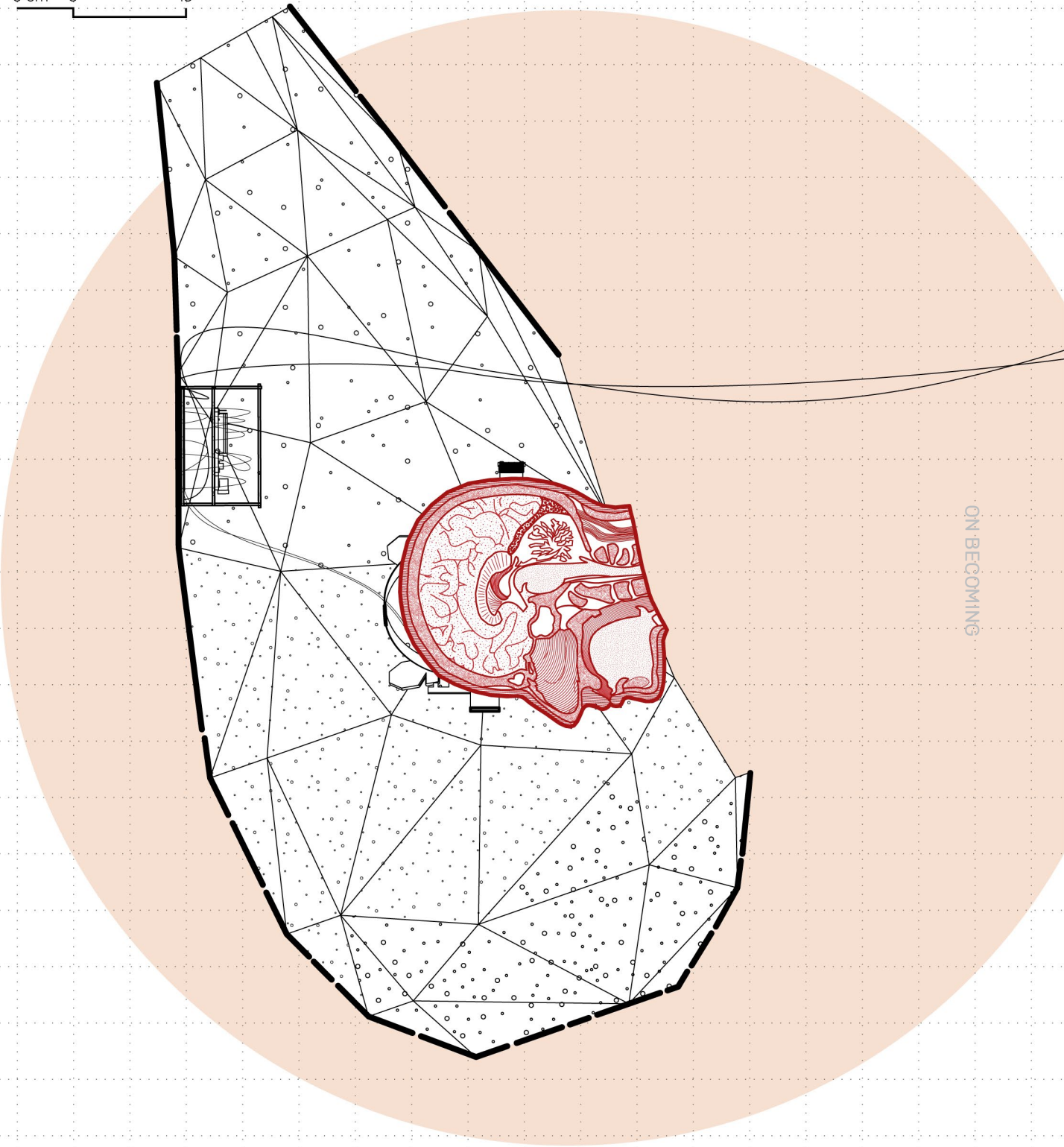


Figure 5.09 Prototype 3.0

# Prototype 3.0

0 cm 5 15



ON BECOMING

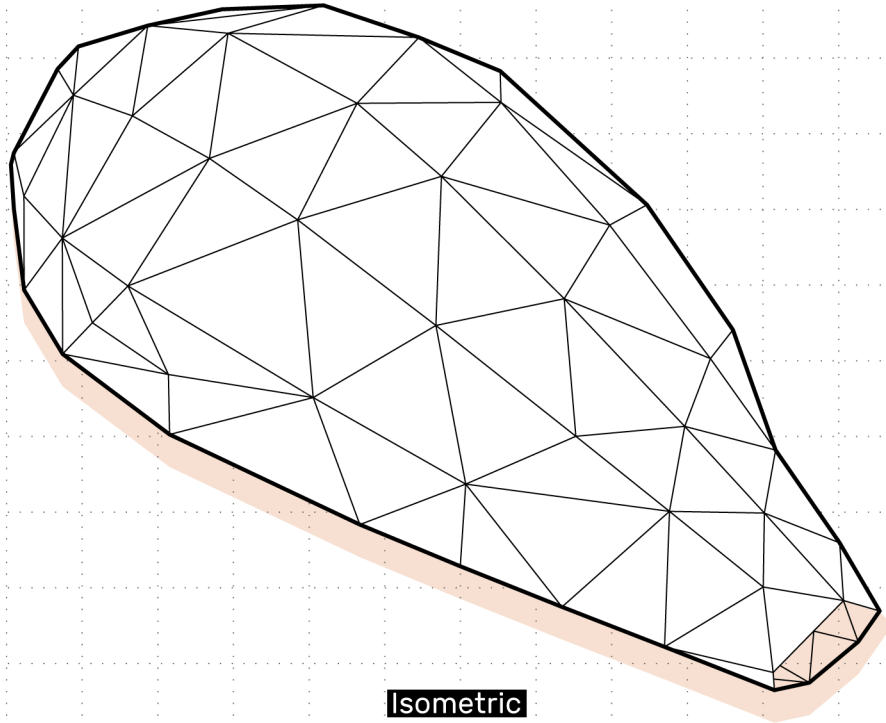
## Section

Figure 5.10 Prototype 3.0

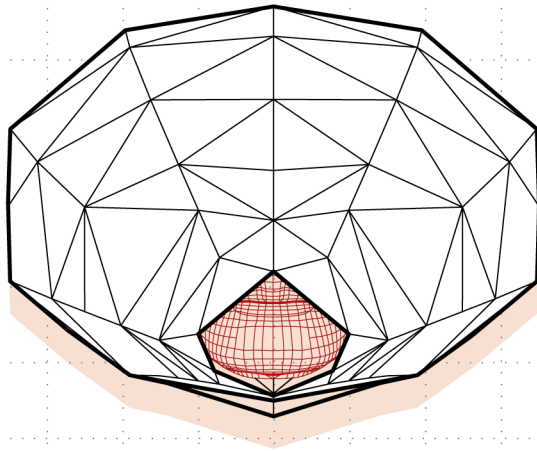
# Prototype 4.0

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SHE REFLECTED



Isometric



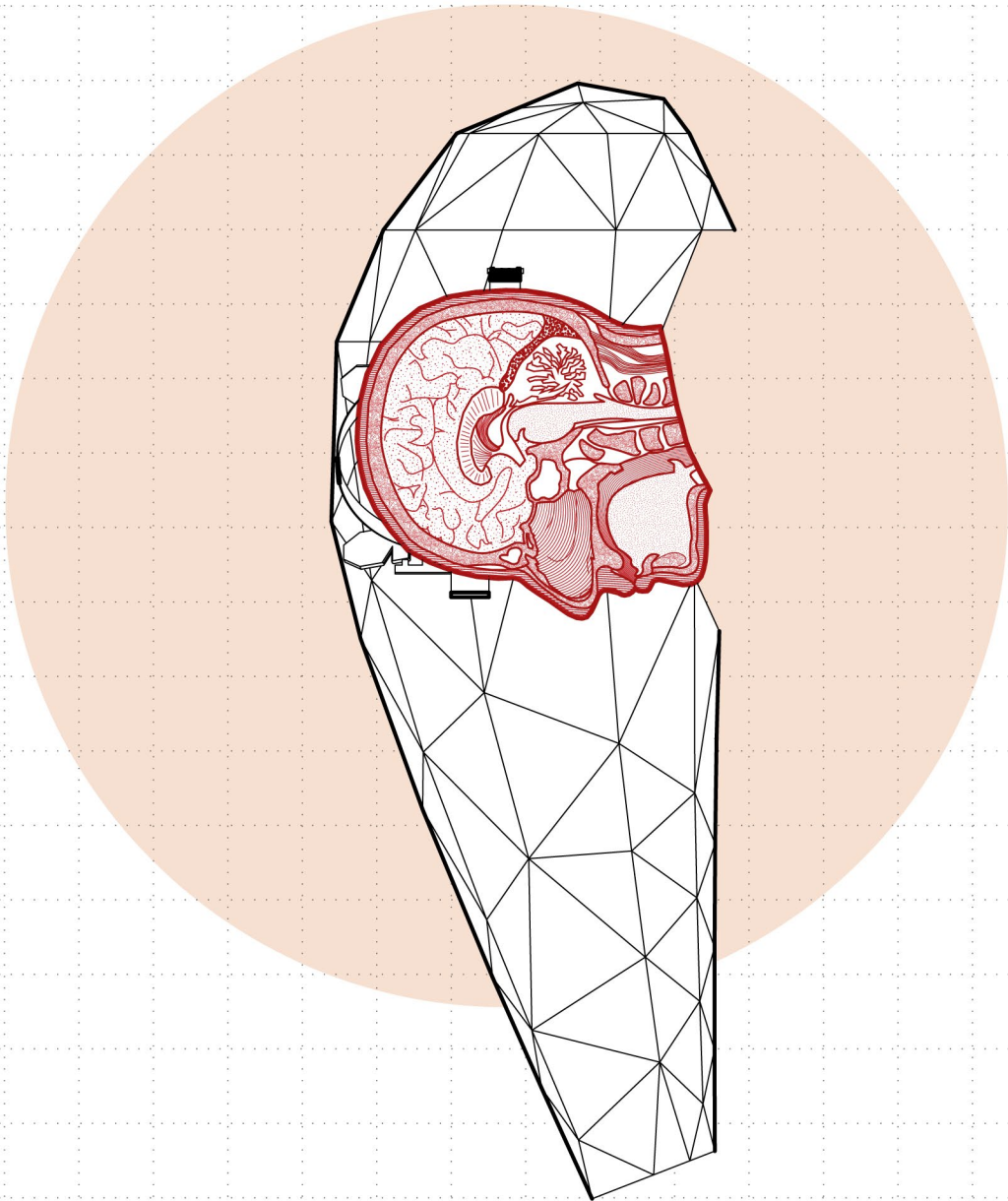
Front

Figure 5.11 Prototype 4.0



# Prototype 4.0

0 cm 5 15



ON BECOMING

Figure 5.12 Prototype 4.0

Section

## On Becoming

If we cannot belong, can we become? From here, we return to scales of association. Where we sit now, the rhizome implies a dissolve, of the structures and limits which comprise the hierarchies of society. The nomadic implies a trajectory, of continual rhythm between the striated and smooth. Both suggest an evolution in identity-creation at the scale of the individual, not in becoming an identity<sup>23</sup> but in the multiplicity afforded by becoming as a process. What this loosely translates to is instead of a belonging to- can we become with-? Rather than belonging to: self, community, culture, place, essence; we become: nomadic, multiplicitous, accentred, rhizomatic, and posthuman.

Becoming is the most direct means to subvert the humanist subject in the context of posthumanism, but also has an exceptionally rich philosophical history<sup>24</sup> in noting the futility of fixity in our complex and continually shifting environment. Related to this trajectory, Braidotti notes two paths in twentieth-century philosophy relevant to the posthuman reevaluation of the humanist human: 'the line of transcendence' and 'the line of immanence'.<sup>25</sup> Both instigate a fundamental rift in the glory of humanist structures, calling out the disillusion that is the subject. Yet, one allows for a more satisfying dissolution intersecting the posthuman, and the other loops in an orbit with scalar implications, intersecting the transhuman.

The line of transcendence still centres the 'human', despite its attempts to question it. It has a base in reciting temporal associations, Daniel Smith notes this as a reliance on the World, God, and the Self, as the "three great forms of identity: the identity of the person as a well-founded agent, the identity of the world as its ambient environment, and the identity of God as the ultimate foundation."<sup>26</sup> In this view, God signifies an objective omniscient being, and the World is the setting

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**23** As promised in Jungian self-actualization, which predicates a me-ness which is more me than the current me, which I should aspire to embody. This is a necessarily humanist take with a base in essentialism. This thesis is not a project in self-actualization in which I am seeking validation and belonging from the world, these are both cyclic fictions. I do not need validation to continue existing, and I do not belong to anyone or anything.

**24** Heraclitus and Nietzsche are frequently referenced in discourse concerning becoming, primary texts for this topic. To avoid another philosophical rabbit-hole I have attempted to focus my thesis efforts in this regard, and rely on secondary sources here.

**25** Rosi Braidotti, "Memoirs of a Posthumanist," Lecture, Tanner Lectures from Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, March 2, 2017.

**26** Daniel Smith uses this to outline Deleuze's critical post-Kantian transcendental field, noting that Deleuze has 'little interest' in God-Self permutations. "The possibility of a transcendental field [in the Deleuzian sense] entails not only the death of God, but also the dissolution of the Self... as well as the destruction of the World. Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze, Kant and the Transcendental Field," in *At the Edges of Thought: Deleuze and Post-Kantian Philosophy*, ed. Craig Lundy and Daniela Voss (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 25-43. The quote is originally from *The Logic of Sense*, and summarizes the existential structure apparent in Pierre Klossowski's novel *The Baphomet*. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), 292.

which the free-agent of the Self engages with. In ordering the chaos there is a base assumption that we are weak and insignificant in relation to the larger totality, under the shadow of a God, or in the workings of the Universe. Here, as a Self we become implicated in the world, as the world, and within the world. Microcosms and macrocosms. Yet, the infinite is only infinite from our perspective within a Self. For the Universe, the World, and the Self are all static and bounded abstractions we have merely labelled for the sake of our communicative purposes. This is the lure of creation myths. *Ex nihilo* or *ex vacuo*.<sup>27</sup> If we were to view ourselves through this lens, the line of transcendence, then we would seek a form of ascension from the frailty of our life. We would rely on the logic of Kant, for universals, facts, and absolutes to give life morality and order.<sup>28</sup> If we trace this path into contemporaneity, the line of transcendence is the base for transhumanism. In seeking to modify the human body through “regenerative medicine to nanotechnology, radical life extension, mind uploading and cryonics,” transhumanism is a yearning to go beyond the finite body.<sup>29</sup> What this sentiment is capturing is a fragment of time in a larger and more fluid totality. An aspiration to be infinite, objective, universal, above-human to influence the human, because we appear finite, subjective, singular, and oh-so human from this lens.

Alternatively, if we allow the rhizome to carry us away, to the extremity of our cognitive dissolve, all the sources from which we once derived meaning from will possibly be carried away as well. This brings us to the line of immanence, encapsulated by Deleuze with two phrases: the plane of immanence, and the virtual and actual. In interrogating these terms, we diverge from the line of transcendence and break open the potentials of becoming.

*The notion of becoming does not simply refer to the fact that the self does not have a static being and is in constant flux. More precisely, it refers to an objective zone of indistinction or indiscernibility that always exists between any two multiplicities... In a bifurcating world, a multiplicity is defined not by its center but by the limits and borders where it enters into relations with other multiplicities and changes nature, transforms itself, follows a line of flight. The self is a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities.*<sup>30</sup>

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**27** Theologically, out of the void or out of nothing. Order from the chaos, or the imposition of order from the chaos? We seek out origins. Jean-Pierre Luminet, “Creation, Chaos, Time: From Myth to Modern Cosmology,” *Cosmology* 24 (2016): 505.

**28** Daniel Smith calls on Salomon Maimon as a reference for Deleuze, who criticizes Kant’s reliance on ‘facts’ – a universal or objective truth – which hold back Kant’s ‘immanent ambitions’. Smith, “Deleuze, Kant, and the Transcendental Field,” 30.

**29** Ferrando, “Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms,” 27.

**30** Daniel W. Smith, “‘A Life of Pure Immanence’: Deleuze’s ‘Critique et Clinique’ Project,” in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, by Gilles Deleuze, trans. Michael A. Greco and Daniel W. Smith (London; New York: Verso, 1998) xxx.



It is key to note that Daniel Smith describes becoming as a zone and not as an indefinite floating, which would be complete and utter dissolution. Here, becoming becomes participatory instead of purely performative; ceaselessly folding instead of a fixed aspiration. Accepting this version of becoming appropriately dismantles the disillusion of fixed identity, so that we may frolic in a dissolution to immanence and not indeterminacy.

Rosi Braidotti summates immanence in illustrating the Deleuzian virtual and actual from the perspective of a life. Where the 'posthuman' present is "both the record of what we are ceasing to be (the actual) and the seed of what we are in the process of becoming (the virtual)".<sup>31</sup> Similar to the flow of striated and smooth space, the actual and the virtual negotiate a fully interwoven and bifurcating presence to one another. From within individual perception the virtual can be illustrated, to a limited degree, as a decision tree where the path you are currently on is the product of every decision you have consciously or unconsciously ever made. This constructs one dimension which you, as the subject of your life, inhabit. Actualizing the virtual. Every other dimension is external to this one, a potentiality never actualized, and is uninhabitable because we move through linear time. Deleuze's perception of the virtual and actual simply notes the bias in this limited three-dimensional view and projects us onto a plane of immanence which contains all dimensions of virtuality and actualization.

*There are no longer any forms or developments of forms; nor are there subjects or the formation of subjects. There is no structure, any more than there is genesis. There are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or at least between elements that are relatively unformed, molecules, and particles of all kinds.*<sup>32</sup>

As an example, immanence does not seek to transcend the notion of subject and object, it instead absorbs them as part of the process. Because it is a process, the subject and object cease to exist in their static and oppositional forms. They are instead, brief actualizations of the forces which compose them. This disrupts the fixity implied in any dichotomy and allows for the exposure of relationality; a continual entering and exiting of encounters with all else. Here, on the plane of immanence, every decision made or never made coexists with all the actualized and potential encounters of all lives to endlessly fold into one another. A life is thus pure immanence, everywhere, in all moments lived encountering, dissolving, and in-between.<sup>33</sup>

---

**31** Braidotti, "Memoirs of a Posthumanist."

**32** Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 266.

**33** Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*, 27-29.

```
// Variables
int PulseSensor = 0;
int LED13 = 13;
int LED11 = 11;
int LED7 = 7;

int Signal;
int Threshold = 550;

// The SetUp
void setup() {
  pinMode(LED13,OUTPUT);
  pinMode(LED11,OUTPUT);
  pinMode (LED7, OUTPUT);
  Serial.begin(9600);
}

// The Main Loop
void loop() {

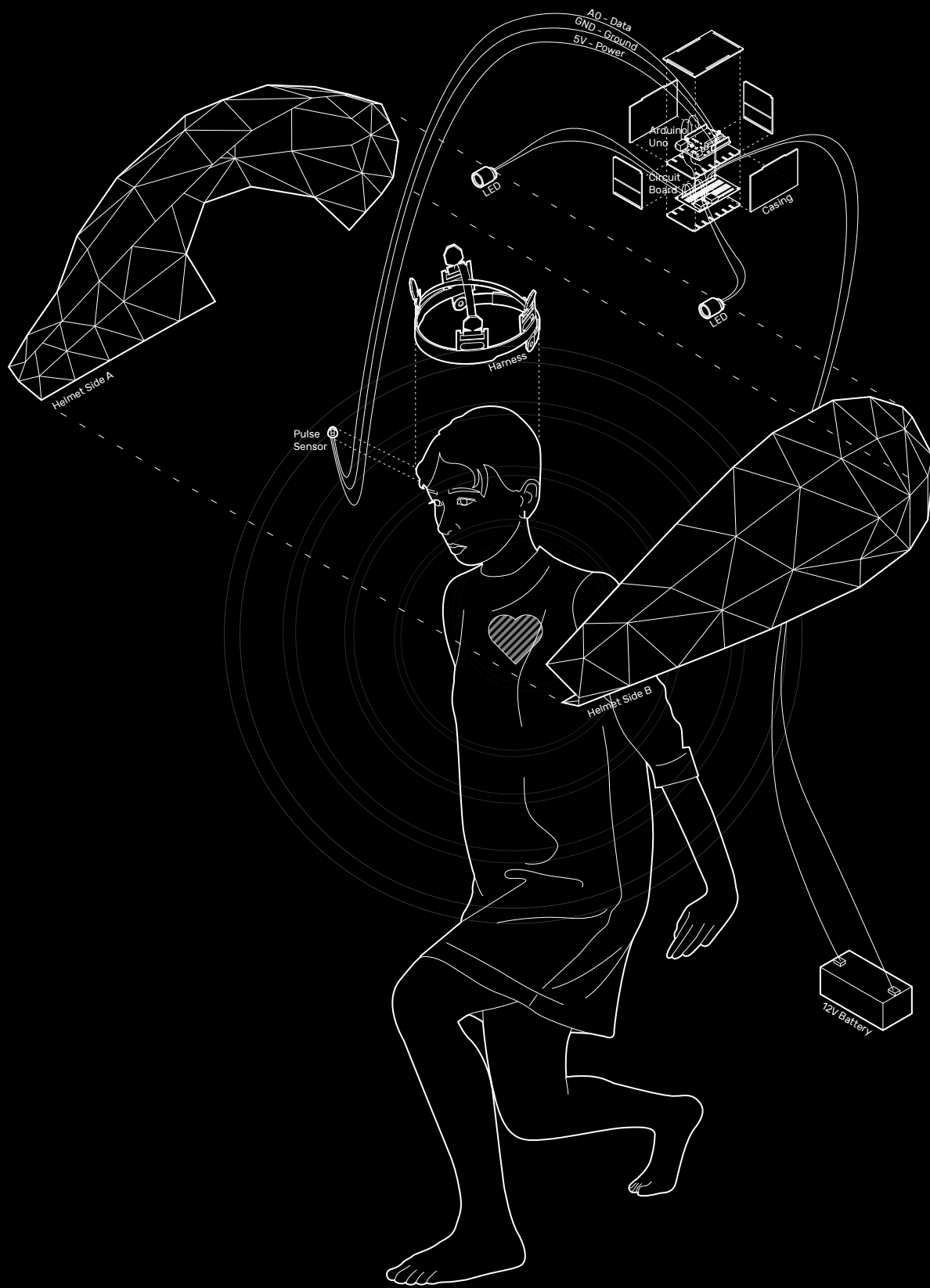
  Signal = analogRead(PulseSensor);
  Serial.println(Signal);

  if(Signal > Threshold){
    digitalWrite(LED13,HIGH);
    digitalWrite(LED11,HIGH);
    digitalWrite (LED7, HIGH);

  } else {
    digitalWrite(LED13,LOW);
    digitalWrite(LED11,LOW);
    digitalWrite (LED7, LOW);
  }

  delay(10);

}
```



ON BECOMING

Figure 5.13 Prototype 1.0 Axonometric

***The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface... [it] enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am.***

Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 24, <https://doi.org/10.2307/464648>.





SHE EXHALED

She

exhaled

SHE EXHALED



Figure 6.01 Sky





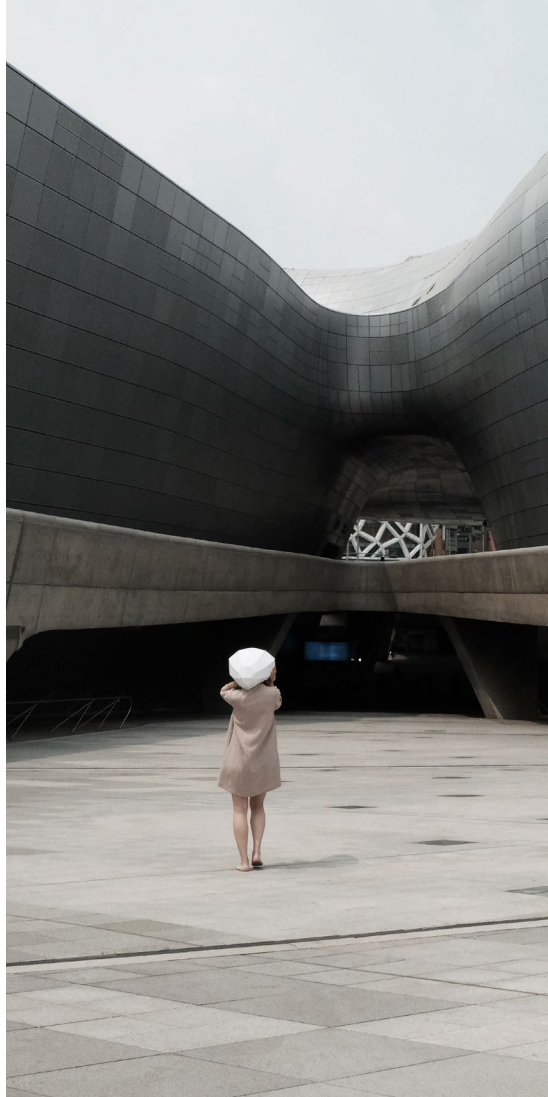


Figure 6.02 Sky

Her head is heavy with the weight of her thoughts.



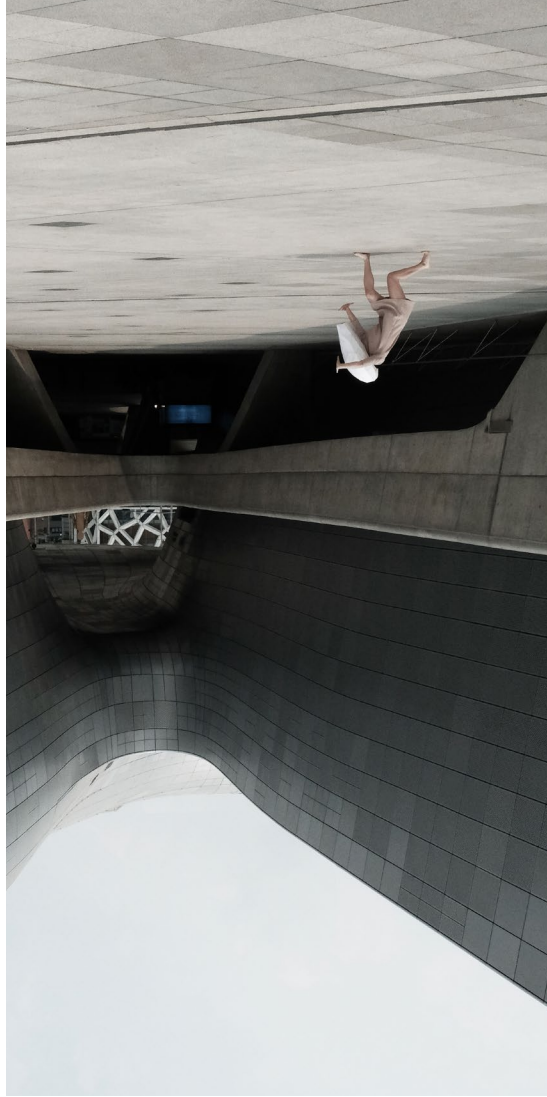


Figure 6.03 Sky

Grasping for balance she reaches  
for ears which do not exist.

SHE EXHALED

SHE EXHALED

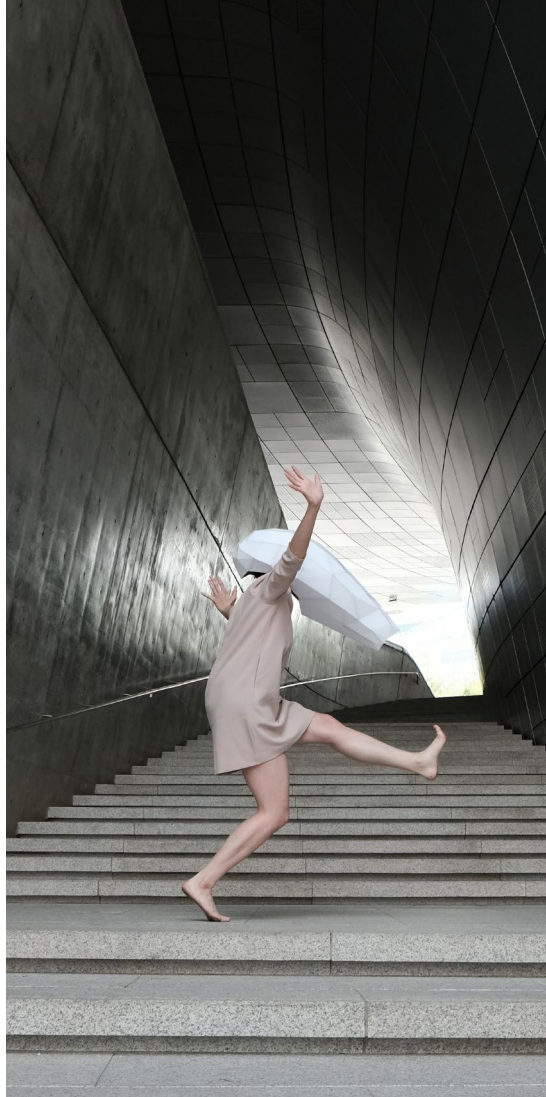


Figure 6.04 Sky

Taking agency in her situation,  
she waves for help.



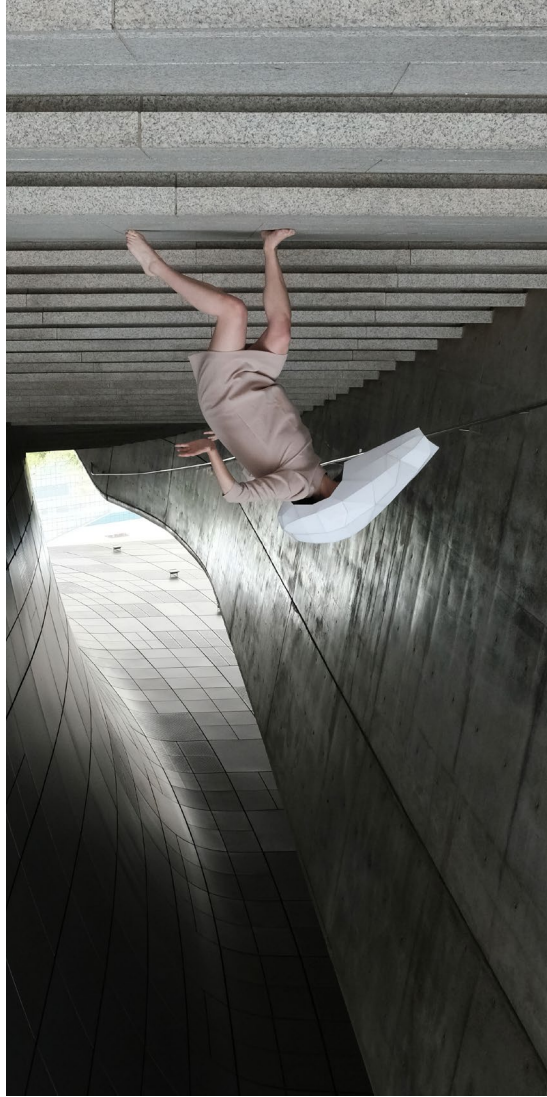


Figure 6.05 Sky

But instead she finds herself hanging precariously in the atmosphere.

SHE EXHALED



Figure 6.06 Sky

Anchored by her head and high on fresh air.

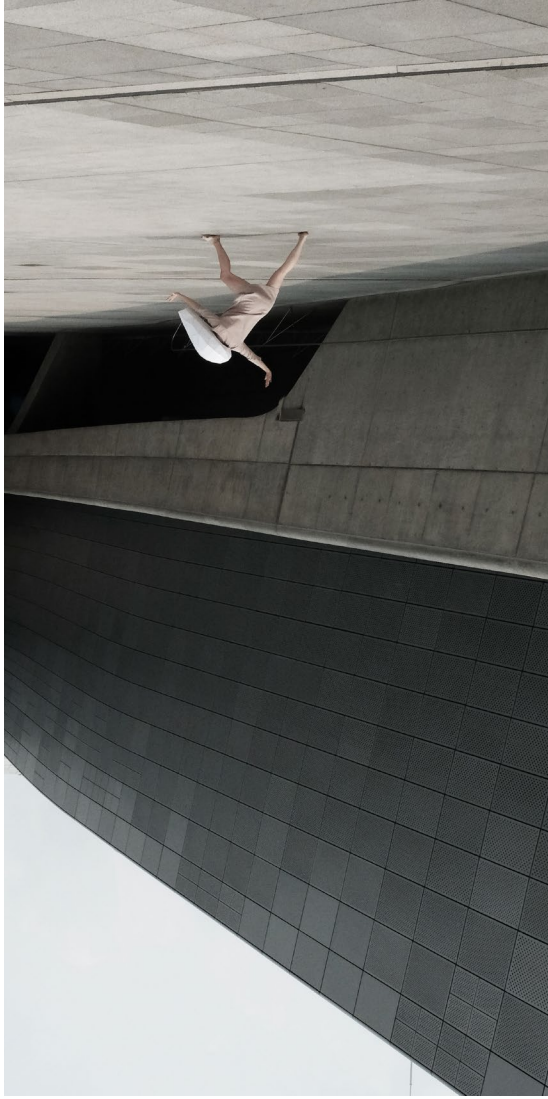


Figure 6.07 Sky

Laughing she swims in  
the folded sky

SHE EXHALED



back grounded

face up

mountain feet

water fingers

THRESHOLD 5

back ground

ears submerged it  
is overwhelmingly  
dark, yet quietly  
the rocks whisper  
and the water hums

**face up**

mountain feet

water fingers

face up

back ground



ears submerged it  
is overwhelmingly  
dark, yet quietly  
the rocks whisper  
and the water hums

mountain feet

here  
in-between  
with the city  
in the distance

its grid,  
its people,  
water fingers

face up

back ground

mountain feet

ears submerged it  
is overwhelmingly  
dark, yet quietly  
the rocks whisper  
and the water hums

dissolve  
in the  
surface tension  
between

here  
in-between  
with the city  
in the distance

the hairs on the  
forearm and the  
cusp of the sea

its grid,  
its people,  
**water fingers**

water fingers

face up

mountain feet

back grounded

ears submerged in the water and mind,  
is overwhelmingly, space in space,  
dark, yet quietly  
the rocks whisper  
and the water hums

dissolve here  
in the in-between  
surface tension with the city  
between in the distance

the hairs on the its grid,  
forearm and the its people,  
cusp of the sea its edges

ears submerged it  
is overwhelmingly  
dark, yet quietly  
the rocks whisper  
and the water hums

face up

mountain feet

water fingers

eyes blurry from the water and mind,  
trace lines in space, space in space,

place in space

for it is much easier to find  
dissolve a grid in a blank space here  
in the than yourself in-between  
surface tension in it with the city  
between in the distance

the hairs on the  
forearm and the  
cusp of the sea

its grid,  
its people,  
its edges

ears submerged it  
is overwhelmingly  
dark, yet quietly  
the rocks whisper  
and the water hums

face up  
here  
in-between  
with the city  
in the distance

its grid,  
its people,  
its edges



eyes blurry from the water and mind,  
trace lines in space, space in space,  
the earth  
place in space  
ripple out  
in greeting for it is much easier to find  
dissolve a grid in a blank space  
in the than yourself the debris  
surface tension in it of our  
between conviction,  
of our  
judgement

the hairs on the  
forearm and the  
cusp of the sea

ears submerged it  
is overwhelmingly  
dark, yet quietly  
the rocks whisper  
and the water hums

here  
in-between  
with the city  
in the distance

dissolve  
in the  
surface tension  
between

its grid,  
its people,  
water's edges

the hairs on the  
forearm and the  
cusp of the sea

eyes blurry from the water and mind,  
trace lines in space, space in space,  
the earth  
**place in space**  
ripple out  
in greeting for it is much easier to find  
a grid in a blank space  
than yourself the debris  
in it of our  
conviction,  
in the detritus of our  
of our judgement  
civilization  
in the fragments  
of ourselves

eyes blurry from the water and mind,  
trace lines in space, space in space,  
dark, yet quietly  
place in space per  
and the water hums

here  
in-between  
with the city  
in the distance

dissolve  
in the  
surface tension  
between

its grid,  
its people,  
its edges

the hairs on the  
forearm and the  
cusp of the sea

the sweet  
sounds of suddenly hazy edges of  
the earth dappled light pierce  
and city through the night sky,  
ripple out wounds in the  
in greeting **for it is much easier to find**  
**a grid in a blank space** in  
**than yourself** the debris  
an in it hing up of our  
in the conviction,  
detritus of our  
of our judgement  
civilization  
in the fragments  
of ourselves

eyes blurry from the water and mind,  
trace lines in space, space in space,

place in space

for it is much easier to find  
dissolve a grid in a blank space here  
in the than yourself in-between  
surface tension in it with the city  
between in the distance

its grid,  
its people,  
its edges

the hairs on the  
forearm and the  
cusp of the sea

the sweet  
sounds of  
the earth  
and city  
ripple out  
in greeting

in the  
detritus  
of our  
civilization

we sink

suddenly hazy edges of  
dappled light pierce  
through the night sky,  
wounds in the

darkness, yet we are  
bleeding, floating in  
the debris

an opening up of our  
conviction,  
of our  
judgement

in the fragments  
of ourselves

Figure 7.01 Inside

the sweetest  
sounds of space, space in space,  
the earth  
and city space  
ripple out

in greeting it is much easier  
to dissolve a grid in a blank space  
than yourself the debris  
of our surface tension in it  
conviction,  
of our  
judgment

the hairs on the  
forearm and the  
cusp of the sea



the  
mountain  
lets us go

the city  
lets us go

in the  
detritus  
of our  
civilization

we sink

suddenly hazy edges of  
dappled light pierce  
through the night sky,  
wounds in the  
darkness,  
bleeding,

an opening up

in the fragments  
of ourselves

Figure 7.01: Inside

the sweetest  
sounds of space, space in space,  
the earth  
and city space  
ripple out  
in greeting it is much easier  
to find a grid in a blank space  
than yourself the debris  
of our in it  
conviction,  
of our  
judgment  
civilization  
of our  
debris  
in the  
attempts  
of ourselves

the  
mountain  
lets us go

the city  
lets us go

suddenly hazy edges of  
dappled light pierce  
through the night sky,  
wounds in the  
darkness,  
bleeding,

an opening up

we sink

Figure 7.01: Inside

the sweet  
sounds of  
the earth  
and city  
ripple out  
in greeting  
for it is  
darkness,  
yet the  
bleeding  
than yourself  
the debris  
an opening  
up of our  
conviction,  
of our  
judgment  
civilization  
of our  
debris  
in the

suddenly hazy edges of  
dappled light pierce  
through the night sky,  
wounds in the  
darkness,  
bleeding  
the debris  
an opening  
up of our  
conviction,  
of our  
judgment

in the fragments  
of ourselves

the  
mountain  
lets us go

the city  
lets us go

we sink

Figure 7.01 Inside

the sweet  
 mountain  
 lets us go  
 and city  
 the city  
 lets us go  
 in the  
 detritus  
 of our  
 civilization  
 we sink

suddenly hazy edges of  
 babbled light pierce  
 through the night sky,  
 wounds in the  
 darkness, yet we are  
 floating in  
 the debris  
 an opening up of our  
 conviction,  
 of our  
 judgment  
 in the fragments  
 of ourselves



Figure 7.01 Inside

the  
mountain  
lets us go  
the city  
lets us go  
bleeding,  
darkness,  
wounds in the  
through the night sky,  
dappled light pierce  
suddenly hazy edges of

an opening up

in the fragments  
of ourselves

in the  
detritus  
of our  
civilization

we sink



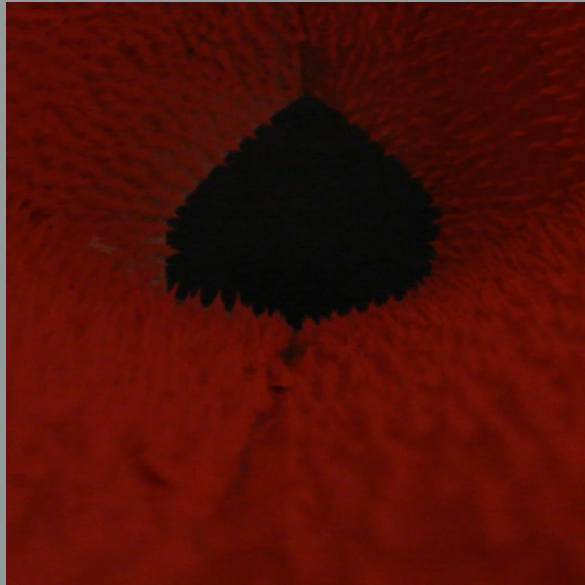


Figure 7.01 Inside



Figure 7.01 Inside





Figure 8.01 Sinking







Figure 8.02 Sinking



old mountain feet so heavy  
pull downwards

toes meet frigid waters below

poking the skin with fragments of  
the city and its leftover edges

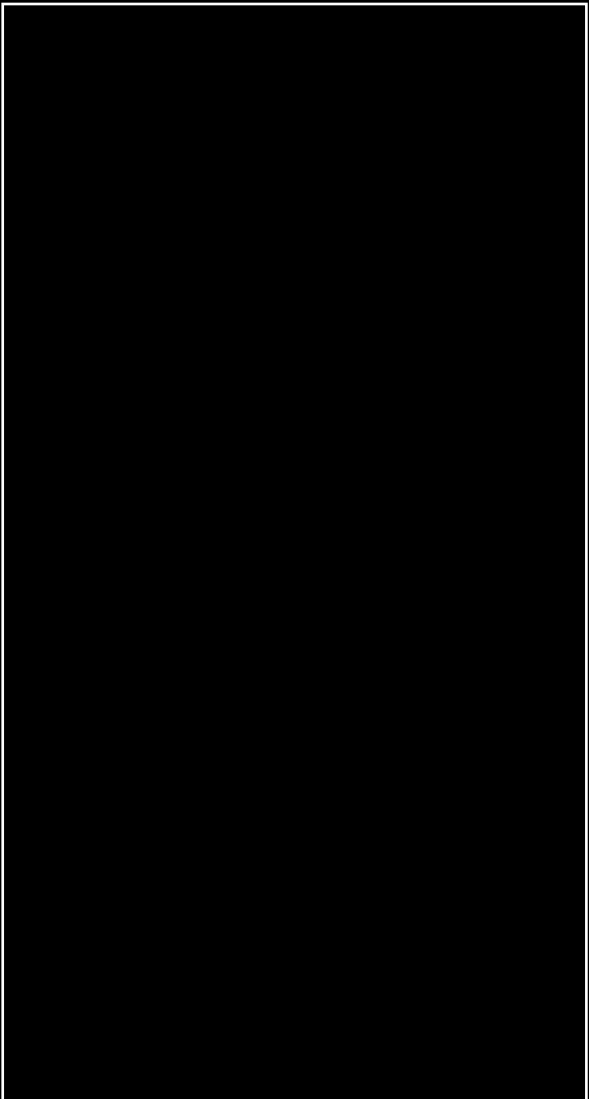
the edges that didn't dissolve  
the edges that rested deeper  
than the surface

above the stars stutter  
flickering off one by one as  
the hips the belly  
the shoulders the neck  
drift downwards into the deep  
becoming the deep

it is quiet here



SHE EXHALED



SHE EXHALED



Figure 8.03 Sinking



Figure 8.04 Sinking

Instinctively eyes close as the  
body ebbs into the body below.

SHE EXHALED

SHE EXHALED



Figure 8.05 Sinking



Figure 8.06 Sinking

Edges of the deep meet edges of we, once sharp  
now dull with the weight of the weightless body.

SHE EXHALED

SHE EXHALED



Figure 8.07 Sinking

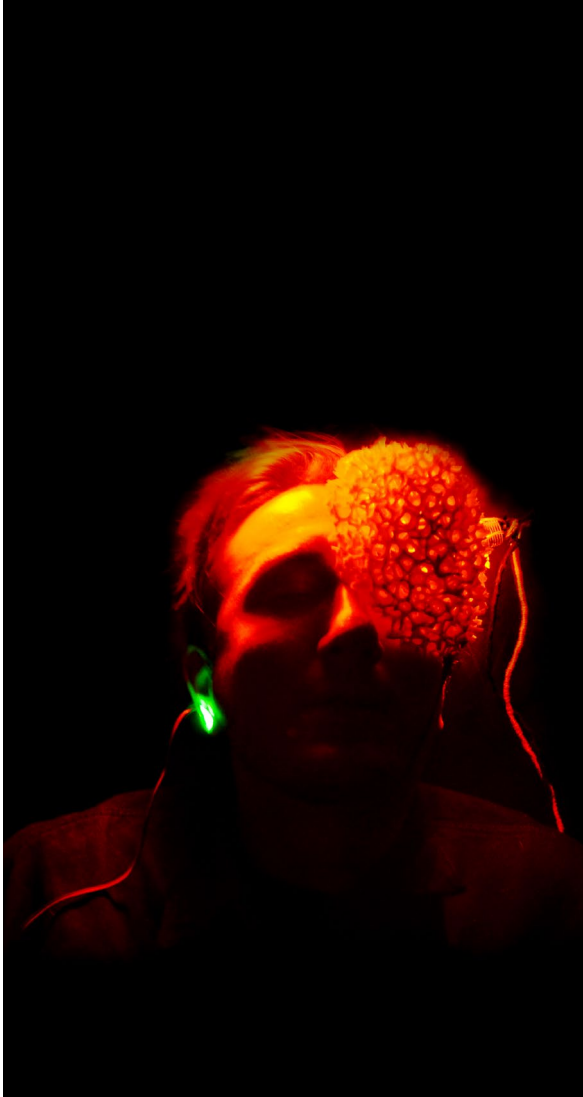


Figure 8.08 Sinking

And we sink, still further  
into known dissolution.

SHE EXHALED

churning  
tumbling

the deeper  
darkness  
pulls us in

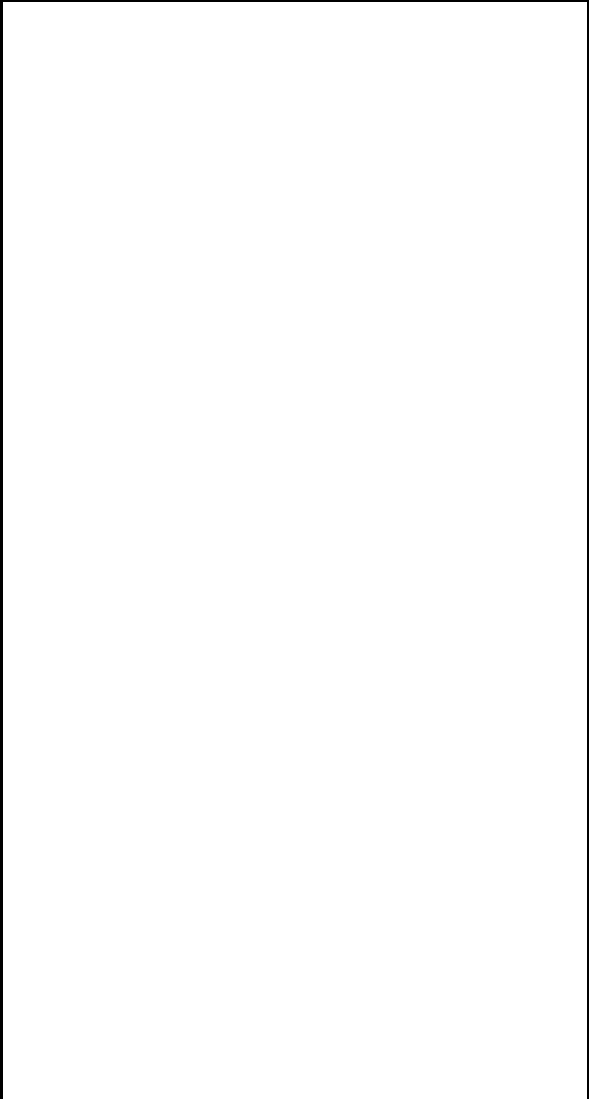
yet the tumble  
is an opening

the opening of the  
clot of the selves  
into a stream  
the stream which is the sea  
the sea which is a plane

which all fade  
into the sinking  
into the pull  
with below



SHE EXHALED



SHE EXHALED



Figure 8.09 Sinking

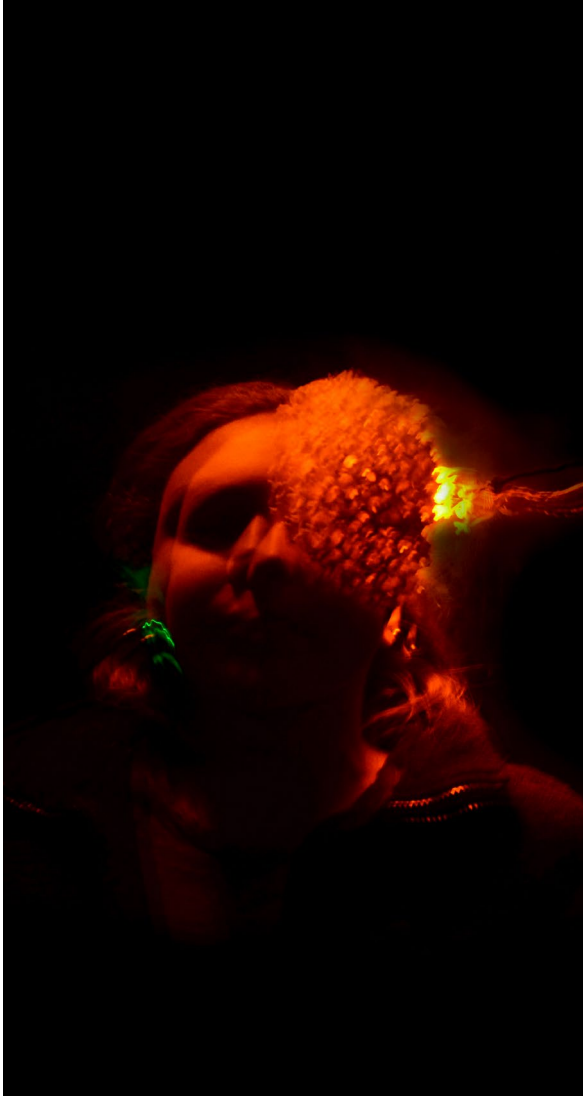


Figure 8.10 Sinking

Are the eyes open or closed?  
Are the eyes even eyes in the dark?

SHE EXHALED

SHE EXHALED



Figure 8.11 Sinking



Figure 8.12 Sinking

We are in-between.  
Here the eye becomes the head.

SHE EXHALED

SHE EXHALED



Figure 8.13 Sinking



Figure 8.14 Sinking

The surface had an edge until it  
folded into itself, within us.

SHE EXHALED

***The inhuman in human beings: that is what the face is from the start. It is by nature a close-up, with its inanimate white surfaces, its shining black holes, its emptiness and boredom... if human beings have a destiny, it is rather to escape the face, to dismantle the face and facializations, to become imperceptible, to become clandestine, not by returning to animality, nor even by returning to the head, but by quite spiritual and special becomings-animal, by strange true becomings that get past the wall and get out of the black holes... freckles dashing toward the horizon, hair carried off by the wind, eyes you traverse instead of seeing yourself in.***

Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 171.



THRESHOLD 6

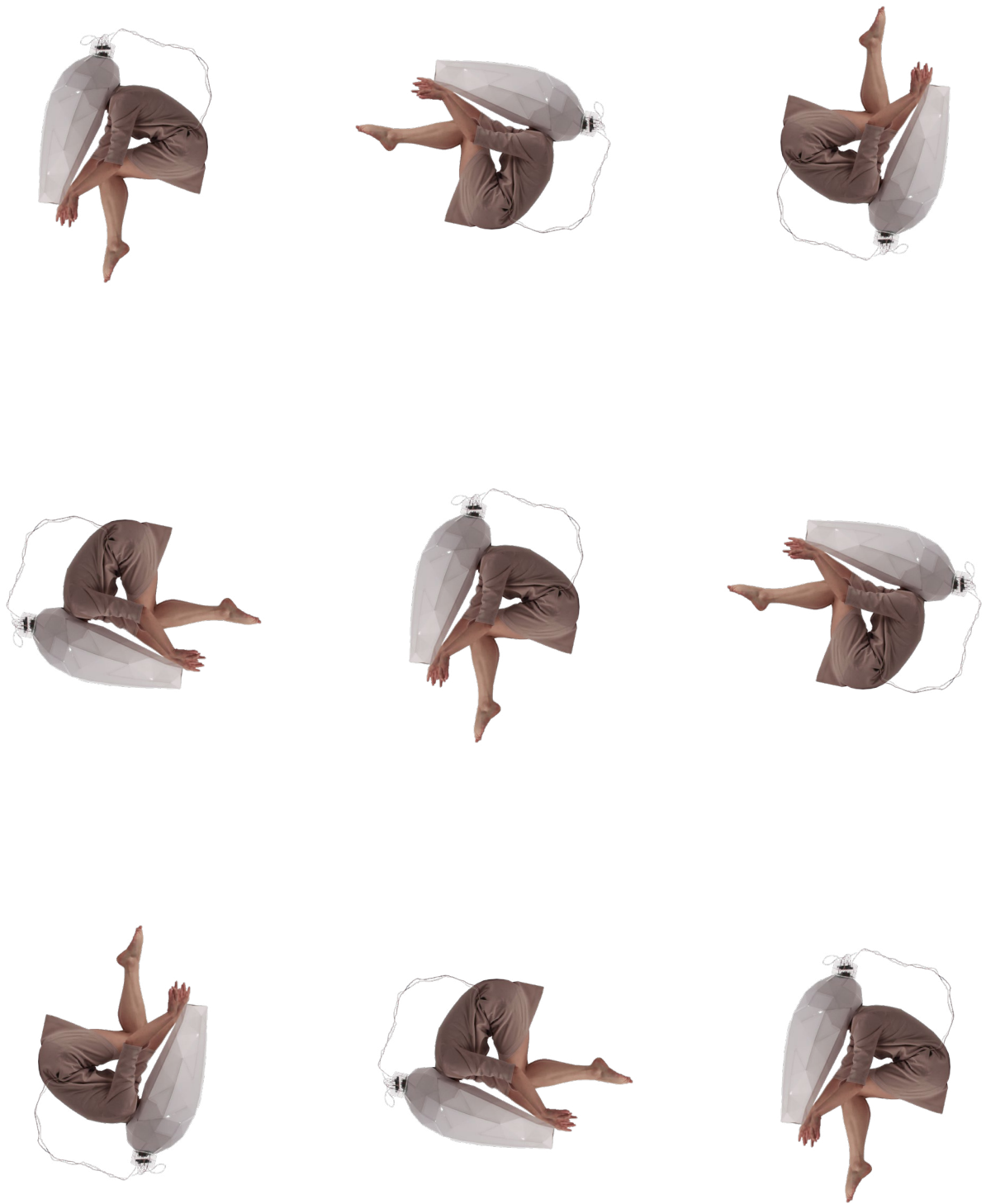
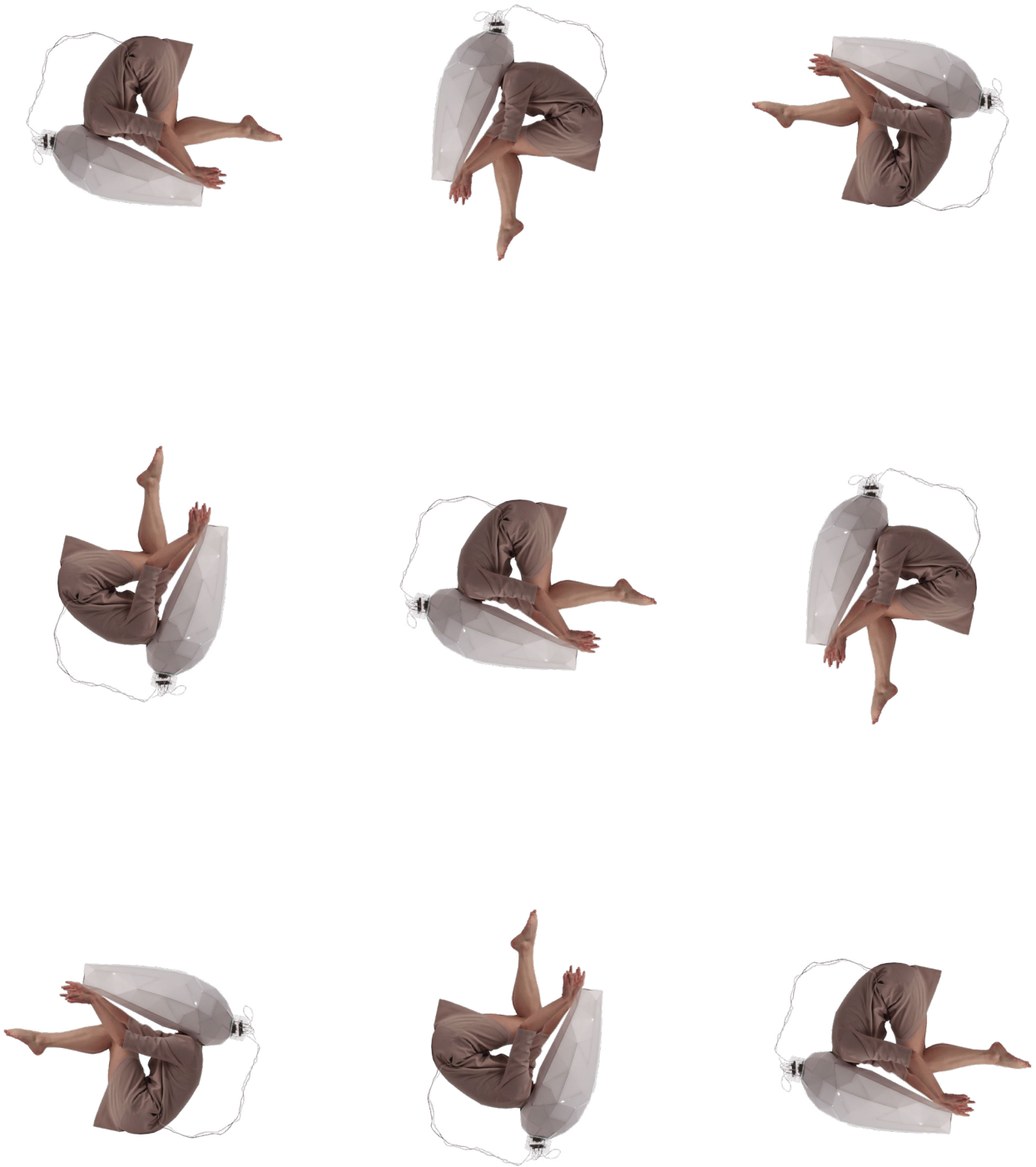


Figure 9.01 She Poked



In the twenty-first century

***We creatures are adrift.  
Launched upon the tides  
of history, we have to cling  
to things, hoping that the  
friction of our contact  
will somehow suffice to  
countervail the currents  
that would otherwise  
sweep us to oblivion.***

Ingold, *The Life of Lines*, 3.

# At Exteriority

The closed body marks a boundary, the limit of the 'I' and a start to the 'rest'. An interior and exterior. Static. Bound. The nomadic subject sways in-between. A perpetual trip atop a double pendulum. Nomads are a vector; thus, the body becomes a space of forces. Entrances and exits.

*...most if not all life-forms can be most economically described as specific combinations of blob and line, and it could be the combination of their respective properties that allows them to flourish. Blobs have volume, mass, density: they give us materials. Lines have none of these. What they have, which blobs do not, is torsion, flexion and vivacity. They give us life.<sup>1</sup>*

It would be too easy to say closed body = blob, nomadic body = line. Life for the nomad is in critically negotiating the limits of the blob by walking a meandering line through it. Again, since boundaries are formed as part of the striation of space how we choose to mediate them is where distinctions can be drawn. Anatomically, the head is a concentration of sensory organs – eyes, ears, nose, mouth – with a skull housing the brain. It is a unique part of the body as a site of persistent modification throughout history and is also the site of continual contradiction within this thesis. Humans, as a bipedal species intent on upright locomotion, define the head as the “top of the body”<sup>2</sup>. Further, managing one’s spatial orientation, as an ability to regulate posture, balance, and a sense of location in relation to a surrounding environment, is partially dependent on organs located in the inner ear.<sup>3</sup> Thus, our perception of the world is, quite literally and significantly, informed by our ‘tops’. This relationality has sociocultural implications, which charge cognitive conceptions about the head. A clear example of this is when ‘head’ linguistically denotes a position of leadership in a hierarchy. This gives both ‘head’ and ‘top’ an abstracted sense of priority. Colloquially, ‘rising to the top’ suggests success not failure. From this, we can gather the importance of the head to both the function of the body, and its elevated status as a point of embodied perception.

---

**1** Ingold, *The Life of Lines*, 4.

**2** The etymology of ‘head’ described by Harper notes the Old English *heafod* meaning “top of the body” and “upper end of a slope”. Douglas Harper, “head,” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/head>

**3** The vestibular apparatus is a collection of organs in the inner ear which mediate balance, “good spatial orientation relies on the effective perception, integration, and interpretation of visual, vestibular, and proprioceptive sensory information. Learning spatial orientation is the ability to learn directions to reach a goal, such as the location of specific resources, or ways to escape from danger.” Susanna Pietropaolo and Wim E. Crusio, “Learning Spatial Orientation,” in *Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning*, ed. Norbert M. Seel (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2012), 1969–71, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1428-6\\_772](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1428-6_772).

# SHOULD WE ALL WEAR MASKS TO SLOW COVID-19? SOME EXPERTS SHIFT ADVICE

Rachel Mendleson, *The Toronto Star*, April 3, 2020

# AFTER MONTHS OF UNREST, HONG KONG INVOKES EMERGENCY POWERS TO BAN FACE MASKS

Time Staff, *TIME*, October 4, 2019

# DRESSING FOR THE SURVEILLANCE AGE

John Seabrook, *The New Yorker*, March 9, 2020

# 3M FACES PRESSURE FROM TRUMP ORDER TO STOP EXPORTING N95 MASKS TO CANADA

Pete Evans, *CBC*, April 3, 2020

# QUEBEC BARS PEOPLE WITH FACE COVERINGS FROM GETTING PUBLIC SERVICES

Madison Park, *CNN*, October 19, 2017

# RCMP ADMITS TO USING CONTROVERSIAL CLEARVIEW AI FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY

Nicole Bogart, *CTV News*, February 27, 2020

The 'head' is a distinct concept from that of the 'face'. Alternately, the 'face' presents to us multiple enticing routes to pursue. While the site-singular is the head, it communicates with the syntax of faces-manifold. Perhaps, an exteriority for the interiority of the body. It can be perceived as a surface most recognizably composed of a pair of eyes, a nose, and a mouth, which also includes pores, stray hair, freckles, and bumps. A surface mapped onto the volume of the head.<sup>4</sup> Outside of one's fingerprints, the appearance of the face is by far the most common means of identification<sup>5</sup> in society, with some exceptions. This quality, as being an expressive and identifiable surface, is what deems the act of covering or transforming the face – political.

*The face is at once the irreparable being-exposed of humans and the very opening in which they hide and stay hidden... the face is the threshold of de-proprietation and of de-identification of all manners and of all qualities – a threshold in which only the latter becomes purely communicable. And only where I find a face do I encounter an exteriority and does an outside happen to me.<sup>6</sup>*

Through various means, the communicability of the face can be disrupted. This disruption marks a power struggle between the interior-exteriority of the individual and the forces of the world surrounding them. While a dualism to be dismantled, the interiority/exteriority of the face best illustrates the struggles of identity in confronting the performative action of identification and the latent act of appearance. In covering the face (your identity) you lose a form of identification. This affords simultaneous anonymity and liberation. But while anonymity can be empowering, it is typically considered disruptive from the position of the state. Anti-mask laws exist in many countries<sup>7</sup> often in the interest of public safety or 'religious neutrality'<sup>8</sup>. This stance equates anonymity with suspicion, bolstered by somewhat legitimate concern; think cliché bank robbers, the KKK, or Anonymous. Extending from the implications of identification, privacy of the individual and surveillance by the state cycle as sources of lively ethical debate.<sup>9</sup> Such concerns about identification, privacy, surveillance, and safety

**4** Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 170.

**5** Recall now, every horrid passport photo you have ever taken.

**6** Giorgio Agamben, "The Face," in *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino, vol. 20, *Theory out of Bounds* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 90–100.

**7** There is a fairly extensive Wikipedia page on this, though I acknowledge the unreliability of this source. "Anti-Mask Law," Wikipedia, last modified on March 18, 2020, accessed April 5, 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-mask\\_law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-mask_law)

**8** 'Religious neutrality' is what the Québec government argued in response to criticism surrounding Bill 62 regarding face coverings and public services.

**9** Avidly explored in dystopian fiction; notably queried in the book 1984 by George Orwell. Just recently our own digital-Orwellian reality was exposed, in the form of Clearview AI. An app used by law enforcement agencies that employed facial recognition technology across online platforms, first reported on in the New York Times.

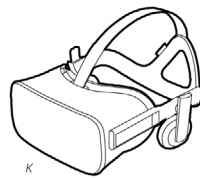
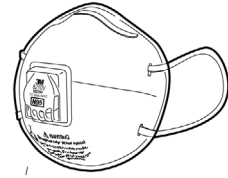
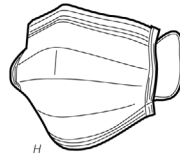


Figure 9.02 Masks



are the exterior forces which regulate the appearance of the face and the space of the head. This regulation demands disruption.

Anonymity can be empowering. A degree of privacy is obtained in being hidden from the gaze<sup>10</sup> of those around you, when the communicability of the face is both disrupted and played with. Quintessentially<sup>11</sup> liminal. A space of and for transition. Liminality, as developed by Victor Turner, builds from the liminal condition of spiritual 'rites of passage' to more broadly consider transitional conditions outside of ritual space.<sup>12</sup>

*The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremon[y].*<sup>13</sup>

Turner's liminality extends into society as an apt descriptor for marginality, intersecting with identity as a performative act and the resultant belonging-nowhere associated with social tribalism. Liminality thus gives a name to the in-between of becoming, and specifically a becoming-else.<sup>14</sup> A becoming-else which is played with in concealing the face. Historically, the space of the head has persisted as a location for identity and rationality, while also a site of narrative, empowerment, and individuality. As an integral element to our transitive lives, our histories are thus littered with curious artifacts that play with the exteriority of the face and the liminal conditions this affords. Masks allow an individual to become visibly hybrid and is a clear means of invoking liminality through a transformation of the face. They tap into our imaginations, transforming the wearer into anything and everything, but also separating the wearer from anything and everything. As a component of ritual and storytelling, masks offer a connection to something 'greater'. A becoming-divine in transforming the face. Or a becoming-animal in becoming-divine. In other instances, the concealment of the face is purely functional, to filter unwanted gases or airborne particles.<sup>15</sup> Though liminality gives a

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**10 This includes the gaze of facial recognition systems, which has already set-off speculation about controlling, managing, and mitigating surveillance and privacy.**

**11 If only we still held belief in the siren song of essentialism.**

**12 The rites of passage, noted by Arnold van Gennep is interpreted by Victor Turner. Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee, Routledge Library Editions - Anthropology and Ethnography (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977) quoted in Victor Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969), 94-113, 125-130.**

**13 Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," 359.**

**14 Liminality is noted because of its alignment with masks in symbolic rites of passage.**

**15 Expanding on this in the digital age, enclosures for the head no longer serve purely ritual purposes. Helmets pull away from the face to allow for sensory enhancements and are often loaded with technology (ex. astronaut or helicopters helmets).**

SHE POKED



Figure 9.03 Sarah Altmejd

name to the feelings of in-between, and this thesis could be read as a sort-of liminal passage, if we aspire to pure immanence then there would be no state from which to start from or end in. No passage denoting an entry aimed towards an arrival, only more entries. The line enters the space of the blob only to produce more lines. Yet still, in a world which continues to struggle with the relentless formation of arborescent structures, looking for ways to play with the boundaries of the body is an accessible technique for nonconformity.

*Red [rouge] and black [with which the eye is painted] represent life, a supernatural and excessive life: its black frame renders the glance more penetrating and individual, and gives the eye a more decisive appearance of a window open upon the infinite; and the rouge which sets fire to the cheek-bone only goes to increase the brightness of the pupil and adds to the face of a beautiful woman the mysterious passion of a priestess.<sup>16</sup>*

Is being swallowed up by the form of the mask empowering because you relinquish individuality? In averting the intrusive gaze are you instead objectified by the gaze of the curious? The anonymity the mask affords, is both a freedom and a lack of identification. But both freedom and its lack hinge on the significance we assign to the face as an expressive surface.<sup>17</sup>

Deleuze notes a distinction between face and faciality where “the face constructs the wall that the signifier needs in order to bounce off of”, and faciality is an accumulation of traits, “an abstract machine that produces faces.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, faces exist everywhere, they are not bound to the site of the head. They do not belong to the body, if engaged in facialization. There are faces in walls, in ceilings, in the dark. Surfaces and holes. The face is a construct and facialization is the means by which we perceive them.<sup>19</sup> It is no longer an exteriority, a surface for the body to inscribe itself on. Nor a threshold, mediating communicability. It becomes all the manners by which a surface and hole produces the effect of identification. “Either the mask assures the head’s belonging to the body... [or] the mask is now the face itself, the abstraction or operation of the face. The inhumanity of the face.”<sup>20</sup> Signification can be read on a surface, and now the face becomes a verb. This is the contradiction apparent in boundaries, exteriority must be recognized in order to be played with.

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**16 Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne, 2nd ed, Art & Letters (London: Phaidon, 1995), 33-34.**

**17 See Figure 9.03 . David Altmejd is a New York-based sculpture artist that “blur[s] distinctions between interior and exterior, surface and structure, representation and abstraction.” His work is used here to confront the face as a surface, though the piece *Sarah Altmejd* is unmistakably more hole than surface.**

**18 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 168.**

**19 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 167-191.**

**20 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 181.**

SHE POKED



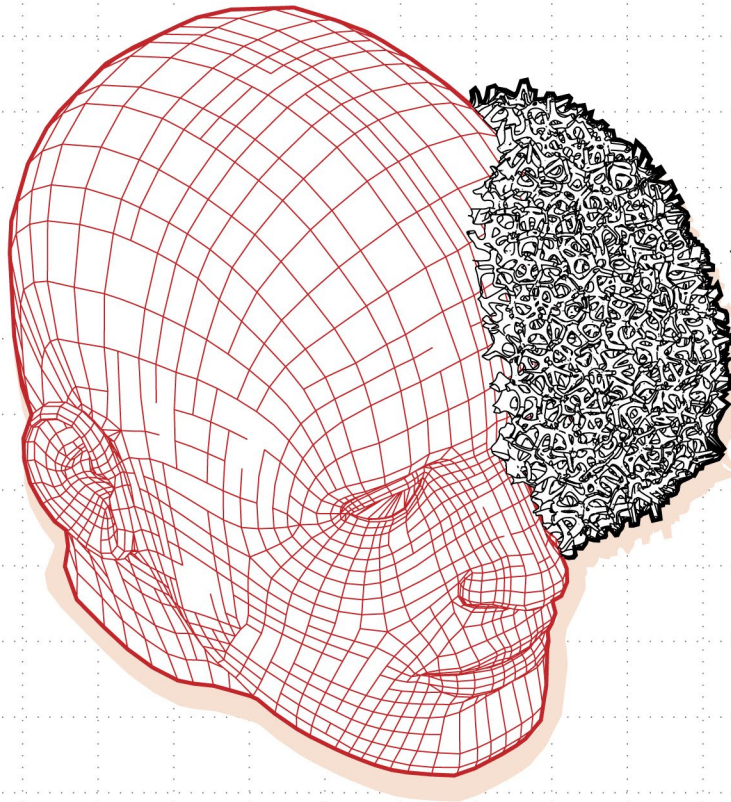
Figure 9.04 Prototype 3.0

**2003**

I first wore my face at seven years old.

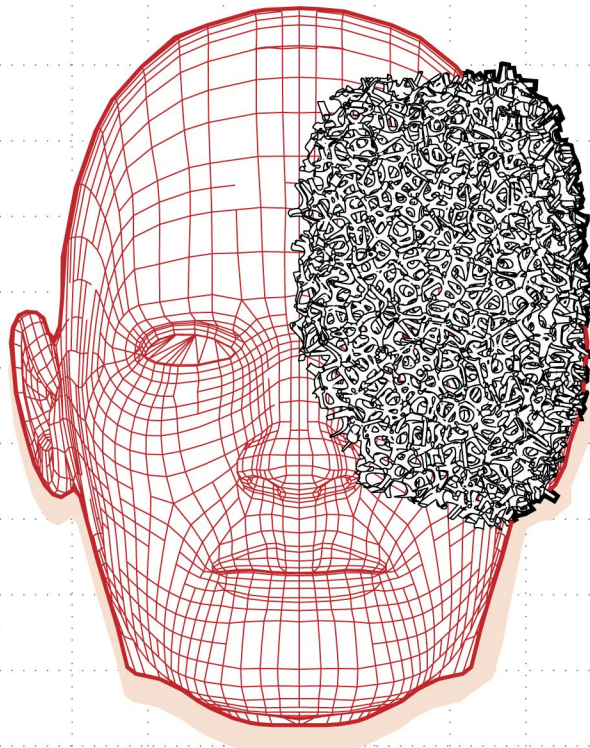
# Prototype 5.0

0 cm 2.5 7.5



Isometric

SHE POKED



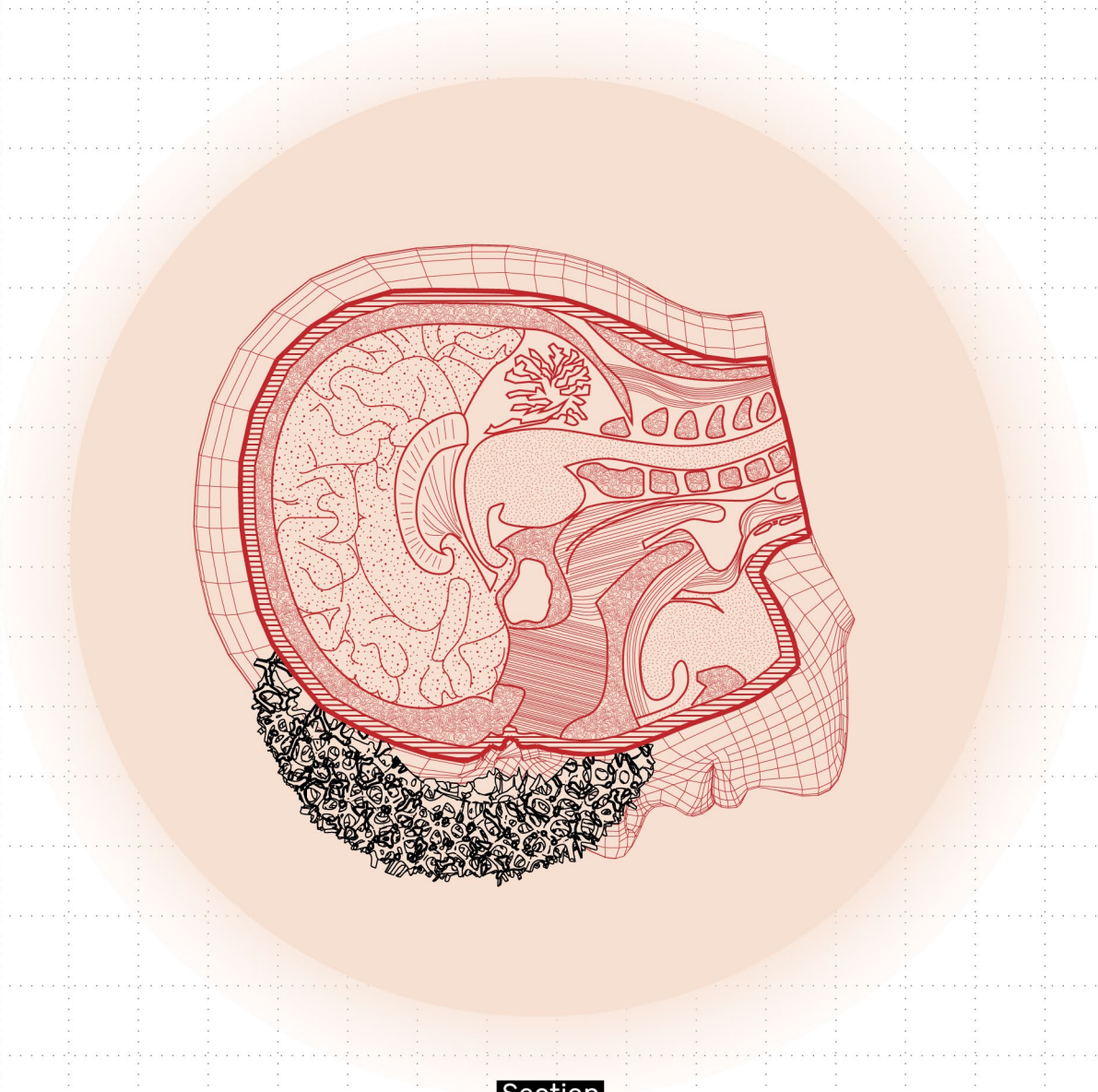
Front

Figure 9.05 Prototype 5.0



# Prototype 5.0

0 cm 2.5 7.5

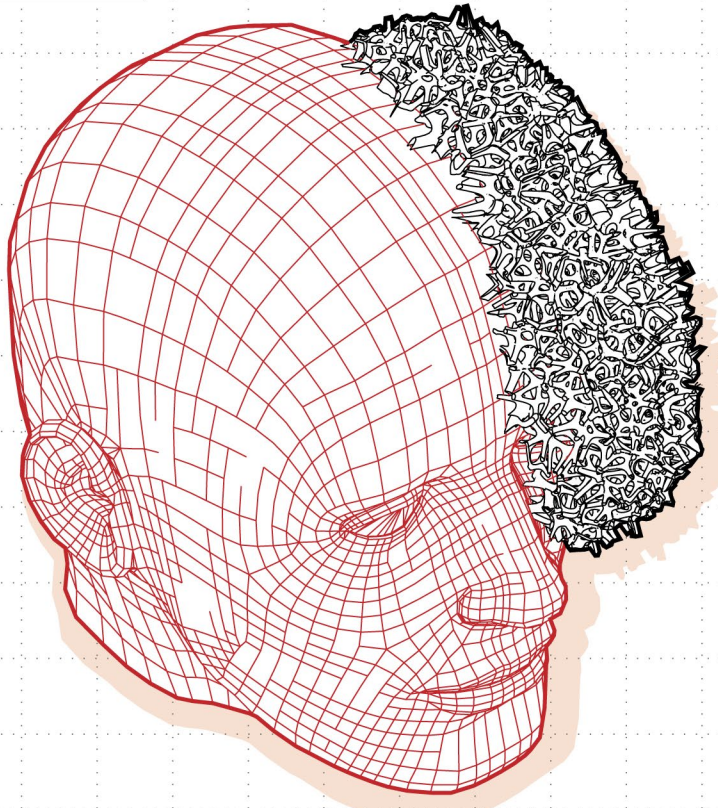


AT EMBODIMENT

Figure 9.06 Prototype 5.0

# Prototype 6.0

0 cm 2.5 7.5



SHE POKED

Isometric

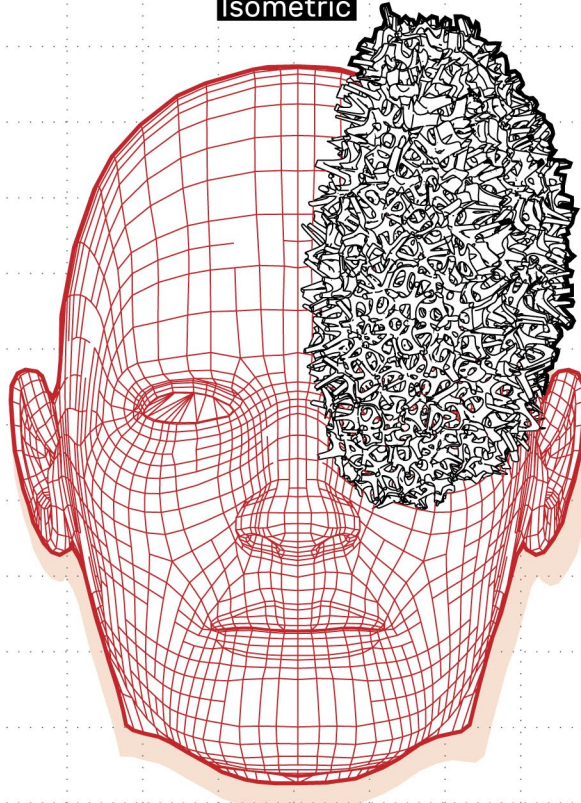


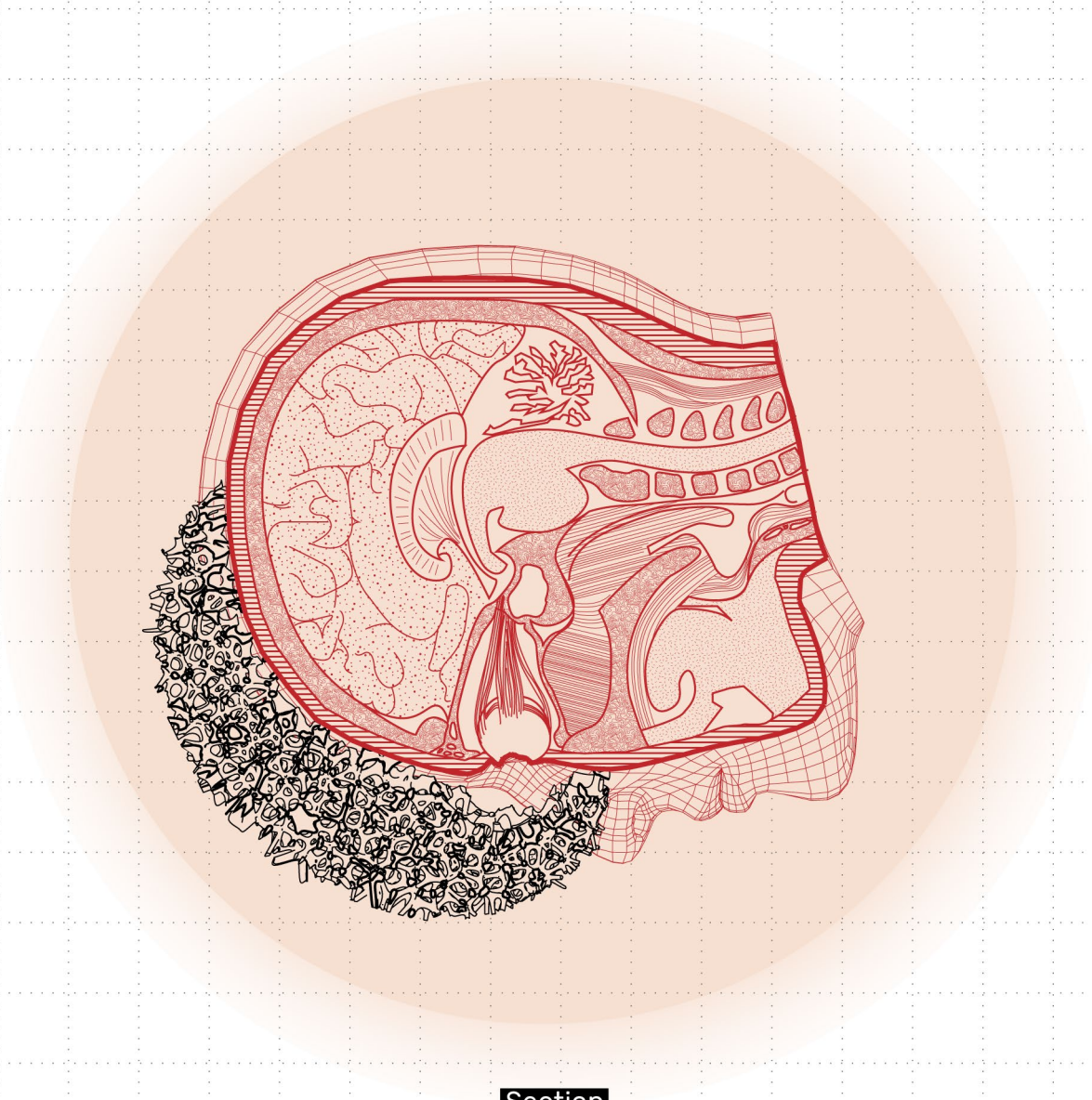
Figure 9.07 Prototype 6.0

Front



# Prototype 6.0

0 cm 2.5 7.5

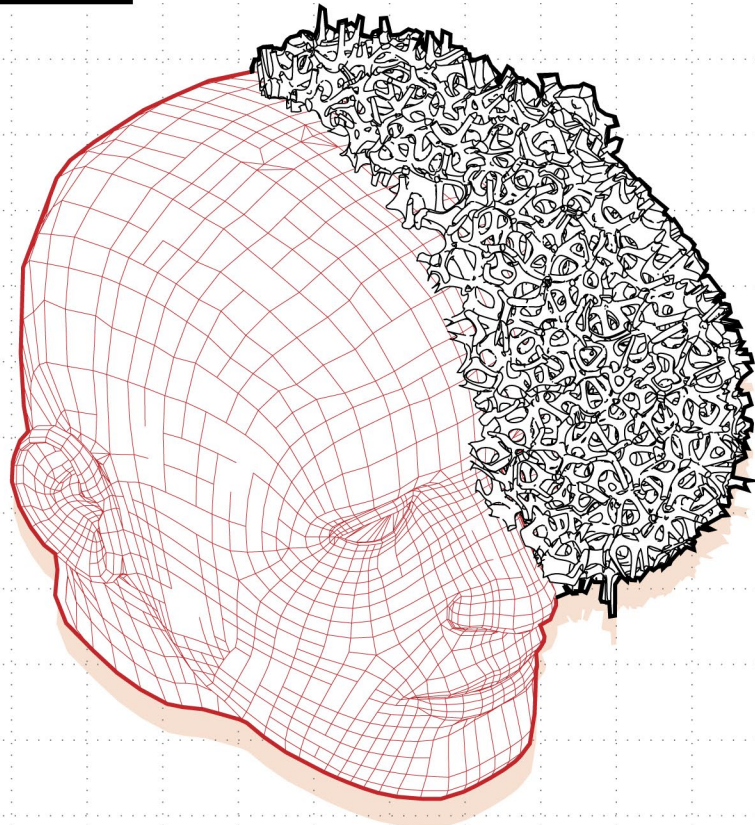


AT EMBODIMENT

Figure 9.08 Prototype 6.0

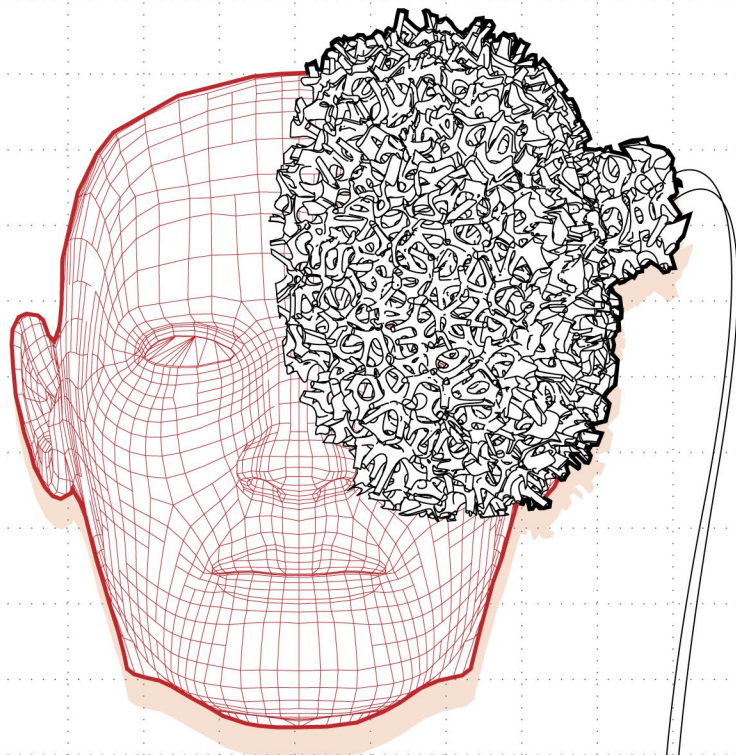
# Prototype 7.0

0 cm 2.5 7.5



Isometric

SHE POKED



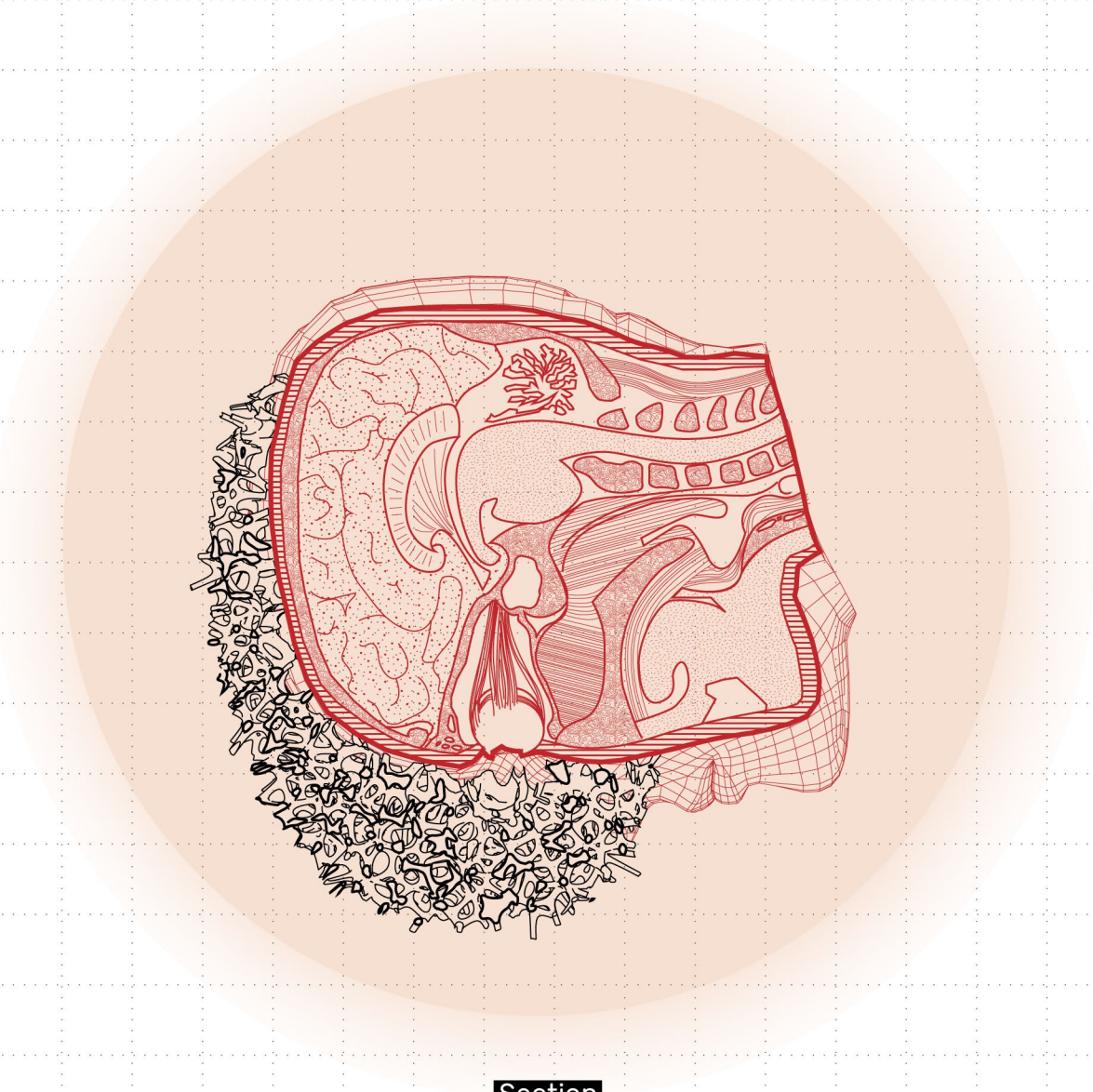
Front

Figure 9.09 Prototype 7.0



# Prototype 7.0

0 cm 2.5 7.5



AT EMBODIMENT

Figure 9.10 Prototype 7.0

## At Embodiment

What is it when individuals describe a feeling of placelessness? Is it, quite simply, caused by the gas stations and malls which propagate their banality in drop-ceiling, open signs, and oaths to capitalism? The diaspora which generates feelings of placelessness through migration and a fracturing of home? Yet, gas stations and malls are places, home can be a place. Then is it the lack of physicality we sense in our digital realities? Placeless in the disembodied internet, unaware of the hidden qualities of our cyberworld: the server rooms, the gold mines, the mess of wires behind the glossy screens? It appears that feelings of placelessness have less to do with actual places, and more to do with our own cognitive conceptions of physicality – a so-called ‘sense of place’.

*The erasure of embodiment is a feature common to both the liberal humanist subject and the cybernetic posthuman. Identified with the rational mind, the liberal subject possessed a body but was not usually represented as being a body. Only because the body is not identified with the self is it possible to claim for the liberal subject its notorious universality... To the extent that the posthuman constructs embodiment as the instantiation of thought/information, it continues [this] liberal tradition [of disembodiment] rather than disrupt[ing] it.<sup>21</sup>*

There is an inescapable schism in the twenty-first century, between the body and the sociopolitical perception of the body, or more specifically lived experience<sup>22</sup> (embodiment) and the abstract conceptions which imply a transcendence of the body (disembodiment).<sup>23</sup> An illusion of disembodiment is perceived when we fracture or over-cognitize our experience of the world. This lack of physicality, as a desire to go beyond the body, is a pit which we continually fall into and disrupts our ‘sense of place’. There is a parallel branch of techno-optimism in contemporaneity which posits the illusion of technology over all-place, information without a body, invisible bits and bytes. As Hayles notes, “it is not for nothing that ‘Beam me up, Scotty,’ has become a cultural icon for the global information society”.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, the ‘mind’ in the Cartesian mind/body dualism is what affords the ‘liberal subject’ its

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**21 Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 4-5.**

**22 ‘Lived experience’ here, references the day-to-day practice of actualized life for any person operating and critically engaging with their embodied experience of society.**

**23 This is also what distinguishes the aspirations for posthumanism (embodiment) and transhumanism (disembodiment). As Ferrando notes transhumanism views the human body as a frame to be transcended using scientific inquiry and biotechnical modification. Though posthumanism shares “a common interest in technology” with transhumanism, the posthuman could be considered intersectional in its ontological approach: “its centres are mutable, nomadic, ephemeral. Its perspectives have to be pluralistic, multilayered, and as comprehensive and inclusive as possible.” Ferrando, “Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Anti-humanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms,” 27-30.**

**24 Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 2.**

universality, as Hayles speaks of. This again, asks us to question the authority of the subject and our subliminal desires for transcendence. A posthuman perspective on the mind/body dualism notes that “consciousness, regarded as the seat of human identity in the Western tradition long before Descartes thought he was mind thinking, [is] an epiphenomenon, [an] evolutionary upstart trying to claim that it [was] the whole show when in actuality it [was] only a minor sideshow.”<sup>25</sup> Simply put, conforming to the belief that our consciousness makes us superior<sup>26</sup> because it allows us to think, is not the direction we are aligning with here. Posthumanism offers us an exit by launching us back into our bodies mid-dissolve. It asks, in embracing the fluidity of the fluid identity, how much can we actually dissolve? How do we dismantle the wholeness of the ‘subject’, without continuing to limit ourselves against its ghost? In the same way that a full embrace of cultural hybridity conceals as much as it enables, dissolving the boundaries of fixed identity can liberate<sup>27</sup>; but manifests its own set of problematics. The issues which require mediation are two-fold, either the goal of dissolution cycles back into an oppressive form of striation, or the smooth proliferates so well that it justifies a near-disembodiment through this dissolution. Simply put, overly optimistic dissolution results in: dissolving-into-hegemonies or dissolving-into-equality.

Dissolving-into-hegemonies identifies a loop back into striation. It is the result of an optimistic dissolution which inadvertently recycles pre-existing structures of oppression, through inversion or recentring. It is a process similar to the efforts of claiming wholeness by reciting otherness.<sup>28</sup> A variant of dissolving-into-hegemonies is noted in critical readings of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*.<sup>29</sup> In seeking to invert the patriarchy through dissolve, the ideal humanist subject (as a white, able-bodied, man) must necessarily be dismantled as well. Implicit even in the title, de Beauvoir’s theory recycles a patriarchal structure by continuing to centre the ‘ideal’ subject.<sup>30</sup> Luce Irigaray notes these limits in de Beauvoir’s work, provoking consideration of “un autre sujet”.<sup>31</sup>

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**25** Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 3.

**26** In the broadest sense this is a humans-are-superior-to-other-animals sentiment, more specifically this stands as a some-humans-are superior-to-others-because-they-are-enlightened sentiment.

**27** In the context of this thesis, it is playing with the communicability of the face.

**28** As discussed on pages 32, 35-36 of this document.

**29** At the time of publication, *The Second Sex* ignited feminist thought. This is why it stands as a dissolution. From Braidotti’s position “it subverted set conventions”, it was a brief foray into smooth space.

**30** This reading of de Beauvoir is not exclusive to me (the author) but is a stance noted by intersectional feminist and posthumanist writers alike, from Judith Butler to Luce Irigaray. Now, it is still referenced as a seminal piece of literature, but many theorists note the dualism embedded in de Beauvoir’s views on gender and sex.

**31** Luce Irigaray and Noah Guynn, “The Question of the Other,” *Yale French Studies: Another Look, Another Woman: Retranslations of French Feminism*, no. No. 87 (1995): 8.

#METOO'S FIRST YEAR ENDS WITH MORE THAN 425 ACCUSED

Riley Griffin, Hannah Recht, Jeff Green, *Bloomberg*, October 5, 2018

CANADIAN INQUIRY INTO MURDERED INDIGENOUS  
WOMEN MAY END EMPTY

Ashifa Kassam, *The Guardian*, August 10, 2017

THE RISING WAVE OF ABORTION RESTRICTIONS IN AMERICA

Nicole Chavez, *CNN*, May 24, 2019

FORD '100%' CERTAIN OF ASSAULT CLAIM;  
KAVANAUGH SAYS 'I AM INNOCENT'

Eric Bradner & MJ Lee, *CNN*, September 28, 2018

WOMEN'S MARCH DITCHING 'PUSSYHATS' BECAUSE THEY  
EXCLUDE TRANS WOMEN

Bradford Richardson, *The Washington Times*, January 11, 2018

HARVEY WEINSTEIN PAID OFF SEXUAL HARASSMENT  
ACCUSERS FOR DECADES

Jodi Kantor & Megan Twohey, *The New York Times*, October 5, 2017

*Instead of saying, "I do not want to be the other of the masculine subject and, in order to avoid being that other, I claim to be his equal," I say, "The question of the other has been poorly formulated in the Western tradition, for the other is always seen as the other of the same, the other of the subject itself, rather than an/other subject (un autre sujet), irreducible to the masculine subject and sharing equivalent dignity."<sup>32</sup>*

Quite simply, we cannot claim liberation from the humanist human if we continue to centre him in our discourse. This leads to yet another trap in dissolving-into-hegemonies which is the allure of inversion. Here, we overthrow the humanist human by placing on a pedestal a different subject, invoking an inverted hierarchy. This is the hazard that Rosi Braidotti knowingly skirts the edge of. She states: "This is the time of women's own becoming. It can be taken away before it could ever be actualized; it could be short-circuited, aborted."<sup>33</sup> Her fears appear to be based in the blurring of sexual difference with the appropriation of femininity, and women's bodies as victims of 'biopower', with one form of this in artificial procreation and surrogate motherhood.<sup>34</sup> Though she is not directly calling for an inverse of the hierarchy here, maintaining a marked claim of sexual difference is difficult to do without preserving some of the original grounds which the masculine-subject is based on. All this leads to a fundamental conflict in a yearning for dissolution and the lived experience of disillusion. Braidotti's take: "how [do] we feminists uphold both the need to assert the sexual specificity of the female subject and the deconstruction of traditional notions of the subject, which are based on a phallogocentric premise?"<sup>35</sup> It requires us to interrogate, in the same way we dismantled the humanist subject, our-selves. Francesca Ferrando notes, that the symbolic body of the woman had two "simplified variables of representation: the primordial body (the mother) and the sexual body (the prostitute)."<sup>36</sup> Perhaps naively I wonder, if the only claims we<sup>37</sup> have over our subjectivity have consistently been represented as either sexual or reproductive, how far do we fall in recycling the 'phallogocentric premise' when we attempt to escape via our reproductive organs? Quite simply, the category of womxn in the twenty-first century can no longer be upheld as exclusionary, in the vague cis-gender sexual specificity Braidotti

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**32** Irigaray and Guynn, *The Question of the Other*, 8.

**33** Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 55.

**34** Braidotti, "Organs Without Bodies," *Nomadic Subjects*, 41-56. Though this book was published in 1994, there has already been significant development regarding gender fluidity, particularly regarding rights of LGBTQIP2SAA people. Braidotti's use of the term 'sexual difference' recalls Irigaray's call-to-action to claim sexual difference, as a criticism of the universality invoked in the gender-blindness of the subject or ego in enlightened or psychoanalytic (male-centric) discourse. Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 13-66.

**35** Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 176.

**36** Ferrando, "The Body," 217

**37** The 'we' here references all self-identified women and womxn.



hints at.<sup>38</sup> Nor, can womxn's aspiration be only to embody a counter to the masculine subject, theoretical or lived, as Irigaray notes with the an/other subject. Then what does the 'category' of womxn become? Must we return to a desire for wholeness to negotiate this?

Dissolving-into-equality, as the second path of an overly optimistic dissolution, sounds positive at first glance. Yet, what this describes is an extremely-smooth condition that eliminates borders to such a degree it can be used to justify disembodiment. In society this inclination is paralleled in arguments for colour-blindness or gender-blindness, where "I don't see race" or "I don't see gender" is accepted as a defense. Here, the ideological falsity of equality – through homogenization – subsumes perceptions of difference. What this ultimately denotes is an "I don't see the injustices caused by race/gender because I don't see race/gender". This confirms the need for intersectionality<sup>39</sup> as a critical undercurrent in academic discussions, to provide an embodied perspective for ideas to be evaluated with and against. It is too easy to claim a positive dissolution of borders if your lived experience is not the continual product of these limits in society. The minefield that is identity politics requires a continual acknowledgement of bias in mitigating the trap of an equalizing-naiveté or continual claims to objectivity. This does not mean that we can no longer aspire to a world which more consciously battles injustice and inequality. We just simply cannot do it blindly.

Though Deleuze's ontological approach of becoming with- as opposed to being, appropriately dissolves the notion of fixity which confines us, feminist writers including Braidotti and Irigaray, criticize some contradictions in his work. Specifically, targeting his use of becoming-woman. Braidotti summarizes it as an ambivalence towards sexual difference which reduces gender to "one variable among many, which can and should be dissolved into a generalized and gender-free becoming."<sup>40</sup> This source of conflict is in the dissolve-into-equality Deleuze's becoming implies, and Irigaray's and Braidotti's refusal to reduce sexual differentiation between the two sexes. Braidotti notes "that this road is a historically dangerous for women" and that "one cannot deconstruct a subjectivity one has never controlled".<sup>41</sup>

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**38** I will note that this is my own interpretation of the chapter "Organs Without Bodies" in Braidotti's *Nomadic Subjects*. In her later work, as can be found in the lecture titled "Memoirs of a Posthumanist", she posits a 'we-are-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-and-the-same' subject which is a more inclusive take.

**39** Intersectionality resists "discourses of naturalization [that] tend to homogenize social categories and to treat all who belong to a particular social category as sharing [specific] natural attributes... differential positionings in terms of class, race, and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, abilities, stage in life cycle and other social divisions, tend to create, in specific historical situations, hierarchies of differential access to a variety of resources – economic, political and cultural." Nira Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13, no. 3 (August 2006): 199, doi:10.1177/1350506806065752.

**40** Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 114-117.

**41** Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 116-117.



Donna Haraway's early work navigates a parallel lane of dissolve to Deleuze, as it critiques Western 'isms' (colonialism, feminism, classism) and classifications through dichotomy; embracing instead fluidity and affinity.<sup>42</sup> Her text entitled *A Cyborg Manifesto* dismantles conceptions of an authentic or pure humanity.<sup>43</sup> This is relevant here for its unapologetic subversion of hierarchy. Her interrogation exists in the cyborg, built up from its associations with science-fiction, militarism, and 'patriarchal capitalism'.<sup>44</sup> She sees it as a "creature in a post-gender world; [that] has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity."<sup>45</sup> This asks us to consider if an escape from the humanist human can only prevail in a post-gender world, as implied in both Haraway and Deleuze. Further, does aspiring to a post-gender world always dissolve-into-equality, meaning that it erases the inequalities present in lived experience?

Though both Haraway and Deleuze occasionally fall into overly optimistic dissolution, they offer compelling grounds for thinking through the posthuman position. Both projects are embodied works. Deleuze's insistence on difference as 'difference in itself' offers immanence as an exit from purely representational difference. The difference Deleuze notes is a different type of difference, it is not an associative difference related to exteriority and the problematic identification of the Other. Nor, does it rely on the statement that everyone is inherently different, as this sentiment falls back into essentialism. Instead, 'difference in itself' for Deleuze composes becoming as a process involving the philosophical lineage of univocity<sup>46</sup> and Nietzsche's eternal return.<sup>47</sup>

*Returning is being, but only the being of becoming. The eternal return does not bring back 'the same', but returning constitutes the only Same of that which becomes. Returning is the becoming-identical of becoming itself. Returning is thus the only identity, but identity as a secondary power; the identity of difference, the identical which belongs to the different, or turns around the different.*<sup>48</sup>

Noted here, is that in order to escape difference as comparative to the same, we must ally with becoming as a process. What this

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**42** Donna Jeanne Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 157.

**43** Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 149-181.

**44** Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 150-151.

**45** Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 150-151.

**46** Deleuze's difference runs through Aristotle, Duns Scotus, Spinoza, and Nietzsche.

**47** Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 30-42.

**48** This is noted in the context of Nietzsche's eternal return. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 41.

SHE POKED



Figure 9.11 *Ex Machina*

promises is that there is some unity in the univocity of a Being who is becoming, which protests confinement to any mode of being. Here, the individuation of a person could be perceived as unified as they undergo a constant becoming through difference. Though, the full unity of this process can never be witnessed, as this would require an objective and omniscient viewpoint. A space exterior to the plane of immanence.<sup>49</sup> As we are embodied within the plane of immanence, difference-in-itself is the closest we will get to a transcendent concept. "Every object, every thing, must see its own identity swallowed up in difference, each being no more than a difference between differences. Difference must be shown differing."<sup>50</sup> Unity in difference propagated in the becoming of a life.

Haraway's cyborg is an embodied manifestation of the promise of fluidity found in liberation from the humanist human. It is steeped in blasphemy as a mediation of embodiment and disembodiment. Composed as "an ironic political myth faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism"<sup>51</sup>, the cyborg is imagined as inhabiting the space between the borders of human and non-human actors. By rethinking old dichotomies, mainly human/machine and human/animal, it revels in the ironic repercussions of blurring and dissolving these boundaries.<sup>52</sup>

*Our bodies, ourselves; bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are no exception. A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end... The machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment.*<sup>53</sup>

In the manifesto, Haraway dissolves fixed identity to such a point that the once monstrous margins of society begin to seem appealing. And yet, the cyborg she argues for has always been us, as we modify our bodies with multivitamins and weaponry. The cyborg is an experiment which embodies the allure of liberation, a perspective to be found in the embodied oppression central to -isms such as feminism and socialism, but is critical of this perspective.<sup>54</sup> Topical in asserting a dissolution of human exceptionalism, the cyborg clearly pokes at the disillusion baked into society and forms a fundamental base for posthumanism. It describes a fictional but felt body which incorporates all the contradictions present in navigating dissolution. The cyborg is a starting point for the decentred and rhizomatic posthuman response.

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**49 Thus, this becoming does not produce unity in a fixed identity it furthers the development of a fluid identity.**

**50 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 56.**

**51 Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 149.**

**52 Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 149-181.**

**53 Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 180.**

**54 Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 149.**

It is here that I would like to share the prologue of N. Katherine Hayles' book *How We Became Posthuman*.

*You are alone in the room, except for two computer terminals flickering in the dim light. You use the terminals to communicate with two entities in another room, whom you cannot see. Relying solely on their responses to your questions, you must decide which is the man, which is the woman. Or, in another version of the famous 'imitation game' proposed by Alan Turing... you use the responses to decide which is the human, which the machine. One of the entities wants to help you guess correctly. His/her/its best strategy, Turing suggested, may be to answer your questions truthfully. The other entity wants to mislead you. He/she/it will try to reproduce through the words that appear on your terminal the characteristics of the other entity. Your job is to pose questions that can distinguish verbal performance from embodied reality. If you cannot tell the intelligent machine from the intelligent human, your failure proves, Turing argued, that machines can think.*

...

*Think of the Turing test as a magic trick. Like all good magic tricks, the test relies on getting you to accept at an early stage assumptions that will determine how you interpret what you see later. The important intervention comes not when you try to determine which is the man, the woman, or the machine. Rather, the important intervention comes much earlier, when the test puts you into a cybernetic circuit that splices your will, desire, and perception into a distributed cognitive system in which represented bodies are joined with enacted bodies through mutating and flexible machine interfaces. As you gaze at the flickering signifiers scrolling down the computer screens, no matter what identifications you assign to the embodied entities that you cannot see, you have already become posthuman.<sup>55</sup>*

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**55** The 'Imitation Game' as found in A.M Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," *Mind*, New Series, 59, no. 236 (October 1950): 433-60. Is described and interpreted by Hayles in her prologue, which I have inserted here. Katherine Hayles, "Prologue," in *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1999), xi-xiv.





SHE INHALED

[ adrift ]





Figure 10.01 Sea

Her body listed left as she countered the currents which threatened to tear her apart.

Falling into the space of her head, she tipped back out into the space of her body.

My body listed left as I  
countered the currents which  
threatened to tear me apart.

Falling into the space of my  
head, I tipped back out into  
the space of my body.

SHE INHALED



Figure 10.02 Sea







Figure 10.03 Sea







Figure 10.04 Sea





The edges of her sank into the soft sand below. It engulfed her.

Inhaling the friction of the seashore and silence.

She couldn't see, but it didn't seem to matter anyways.

The edges of I sank into the  
soft sand below. Engulfed.

Inhaling the friction of the  
seashore and silence.

I couldn't see, but it didn't  
seem to matter anyways.

SHE INHALED



Figure 10.05 Sea



Figure 10.06 Sea



Figure 10.07 Sea



Figure 10.08 Sea

Her body expanded,  
in time with the tide.

Beats echoed through her  
fingertips, marking the earth  
with her presence,

yet to be overridden by the sea.



My body expanded,  
in time with the tide.

Beats echoed through my  
fingertips, marking the earth  
with my presence,

yet to be overridden by the sea.

SHE INHALED



Figure 10.09 Sea







Figure 10.10 Sea



SHE INHALED

She whispered  
her life into the  
endlessly grey sky.

I whispered  
my life into the  
endlessly grey sky.

SHE INHALED





Figure 10.11 Sea





**2018**

The subway car was slightly damp. Standing firm with a slight bend in my knees I prepared myself for the fifteen-minute ride wedged between a grey tote and a sweaty back. I looked down to avoid eye contact, down to the white flecks in the black floor below.

Tugging my bag out from around my hip I lifted the flap and dove in to find a book – *The Ethics of Ambiguity* – a paperback I had picked up in a small bookstore last summer. It had pleasantly yellowed pages and a well-worn feeling. As the car screeched along a curve in the track, I flipped it open. Settled into the paper in black ink the book held nothing back:

“The continuous work of our life is to build death.”<sup>1</sup>

---

**1 Seneca quoted in Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Charles Cotton, ed. William Carew Hazlitt, (London : Reeves and Turner, 1877) quoted in Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, Citadel Publishing Corp., 1948**

THRESHOLD 8

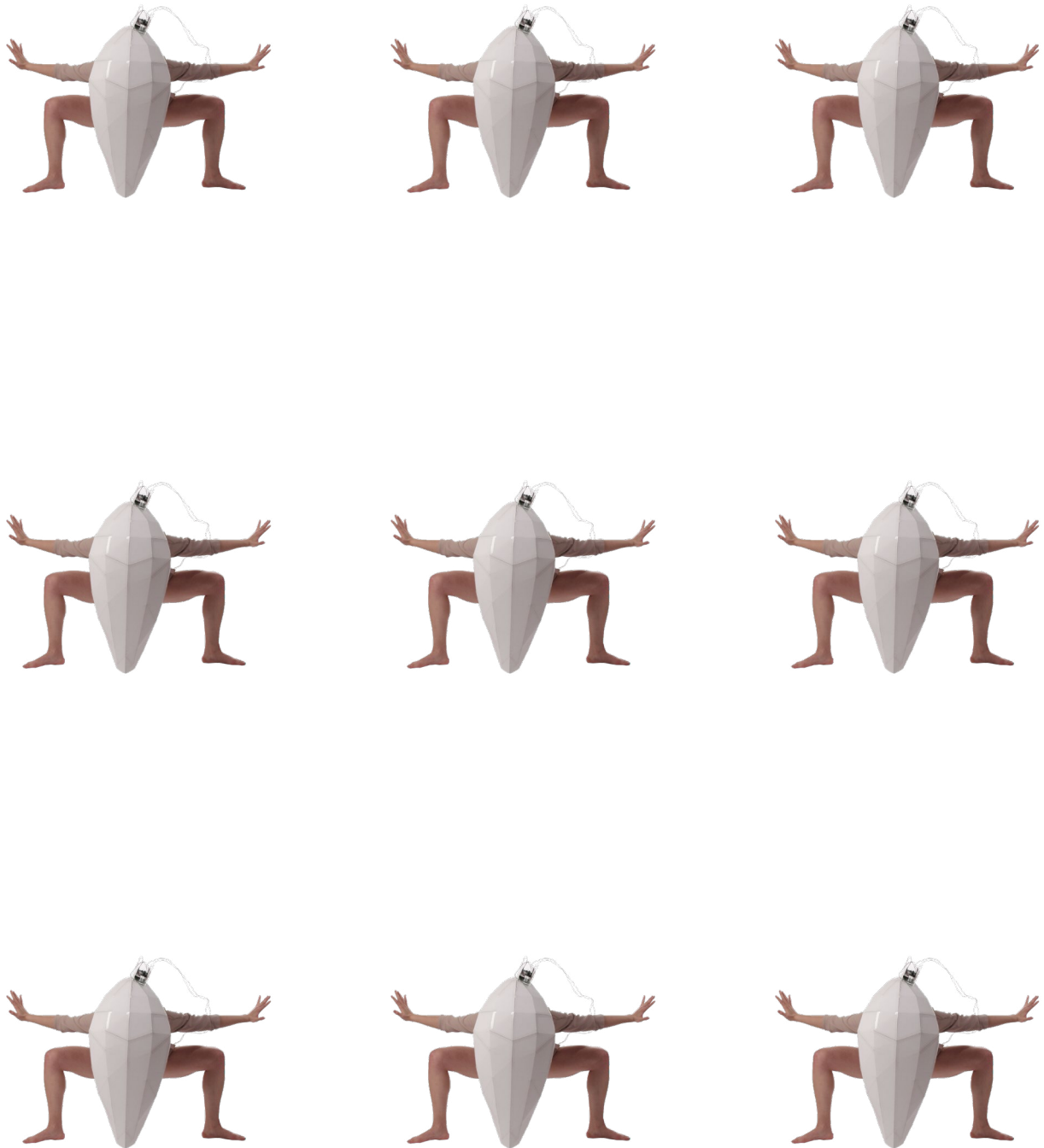


Figure 11.01 She Danced



SHE DANCED

In the twenty-first century

***One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body***

Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 272.

# With Artifacts

In seeking to discard the image of fixed identity we have meandered through multiple paths to dissolve. Dissolving-labels. Dissolving-boundaries. Dissolving-home. Dissolving-structures. Dissolving-exteriority. All this dissolution further disrupts our 'sense of place', if we continue seek it out in the sedentary. Alternately, the trajectory of the nomad navigates dissolution by grounding us in our embodied experience and the performativity of disillusion. Here, we accept that everything is a process. A process of becoming with- actualized through a becoming as-. Though this seems like a fairly anticlimactic thing to arrive at over two hundred pages into a book, if we allow this seed of an idea to grow for a moment, we might imagine the potential latticework of repercussions which reverberate around us. Our lives flipped, folded into pure immanence.

*What we humans truly yearn for is to disappear by merging into this generative flow of becoming, the precondition for which is the loss, disappearance and disruption of the atomized, individual self... thus choosing our own way of disappearing, our way of dying to and as our self. This can be described also as the moment of ascetic dissolution of the subject; the moment of its merging with the web of non-human forces that frame him/her, the cosmos as a whole.<sup>1</sup>*

Though the quote above is a meditation on death<sup>2</sup>, Braidotti projects us into the most outright of dissolutions. Dissolving-self as a merging with the web of all human and non-human forces.<sup>3</sup> This is the extremity of Deleuzian becoming, which we got hints of in Haraway's cyborg. Dissolving the fixed subject into continual difference, a multiplicity. This multiplicity brings with it an understanding of the fluidity and malleability of the borders which confine us. Yet, the world is constructed with stubborn static arborescent structures that make it exceptionally difficult to separate our processes from our performances. As noted before, the allure of dissolution is undeniable and the embodied experience of disillusion cannot be so easily discarded. For those who have lived their lives marginalized by a patriarchal society that continues assert the centrality and wholeness of an ideal-subject; that continues to declare otherness as a border condition to the human, how best do we move forward? There is no simple answer for

---

**1 Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 136.**

**2 While death connotes an end when generally interpreted, the plane of immanence contains both life and death. So death is only yet another encounter to be had between the virtual and actual.**

**3 Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 136.**



this. History has overwhelmingly been written with the male body as the perspective and the aspiration. Where actions done to, and spaces influencing a body, were the body of a man.<sup>4</sup> This, or we sought to transcend the body altogether, imagining an indeterminate dissolution instead of an immanent life. While we have finally reached a point in society where referencing 'a body' is not a definitive equalizer, methods to mitigate this difference are not manifest in a single solution. While we might desire dissolve, contending with the performative labels we are bound by is not easily overcome. Regarding gender, de Beauvoir sought liberation in empowering women as a second sex, Irigaray called for an/other subject equal and distinct to the masculine-subject, Haraway conceives of a post-gender cyborg, and Braidotti manifests a nomadic subjectivity. These approaches each poke at the beast of essentialism in distinct ways and are legitimate as responses correlated to the lived experience of each of the women who constructed them. In returning to the body, as many of these trajectories call for, we run the risk of reconstructing a centred subject in our discourse. There are two ways to mitigate this, we acknowledge the performative nature of our identities, and we move to decentre the human in macro-scale systems thinking, both of which are present in Braidotti's nomad.

Decentring the human allows us – as a species – to become fully implicated in larger systems. Here, we navigate as equal with non-human actors alike, dismantling human exceptionalism in the face of anthropogenic climate change. This decentring exercises a complete dissolution of all hierarchies. There are many versions of this, Braidotti's 'zoe' bisects Haraway's later work involving multi-species<sup>5</sup> becoming. Both, dismantle the elevated status of the human and reimagine it within a posthuman context. To Braidotti, an immanent life is a combination of zoe and bios, non-human and human living matter, flowing to produce a material continuum.<sup>6</sup> She uses this continuum to promote a "new form of materialism, one that develops the notion of corporeal materiality by emphasizing the embodied", investing it into a revised nomadic subjectivity.<sup>7</sup>

*The nomad does not stand for homelessness, or compulsive displacement; it is rather a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity... The nomadic subject, however, is not altogether devoid of unity' his/her mode is one of definite, seasonal patterns of movement through rather fixed routes. It is a cohesion engendered by repetitions, cyclical moves, rhythmic displacement.<sup>8</sup>*

---

**4** See for example Diana I. Agrest, "Architecture from Without: Body, Logic, and Sex," *Assemblage*, no. 7 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1988), 28-41.

**5** See for example *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* or *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* by Donna Haraway.

**6** Braidotti, "Memoirs of a Posthumanist."

**7** Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 3.

**8** Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 22.

This allows her to define a subject that operates in an embodied perspective without assuming an objective disembodied viewpoint.

In acknowledging performance, we can consciously navigate the boundaries constructed in society. Braidotti's nomadic subject "speaks as a woman"; seeking to mediate her own embodied marginalization in society.<sup>9</sup> She builds off of the Deleuzian nomad and Haraway's cyborg project to construct a nuanced and multiplicitous subject. Her own pursuit of wholeness in the wake of partiality. It is an intersectional approach insofar as it indicates a critical subjectivity based on sexual difference<sup>10</sup>, but is engaged with a process of becoming with- that allows for a multitude of lived realities. Braidotti uses the book to trace a cartography of her life, her own 'embodied genealogy'.<sup>11</sup> This process of becoming which is frozen in time, held in the book, is a process which is evident in all actualized forms of material engagement. Simply, the process of making engages the process of becoming, as you experience a becoming with- the forces you encounter.

*An artifact materially expresses the concept it embodies, but the process of its construction is far from passive. A glitch has to be fixed, a material exhibits unexpected properties, an emergent behavior surfaces - any of these challenges can give rise to a new concept, which results in another generation of artifact, which leads to the development of still other concepts.<sup>12</sup>*

Braidotti's nomadic subjectivity and 'new materialism', when embodied in the cartography of her book, as a cultural artifact, is a continuation of the importance of art in Deleuzian ontology. Specifically, the use of art and making which ground processes of becoming in embodiment, but also open up individual perception to the sensations immanence affords.<sup>13</sup> "The aim of art is to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, [and] to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another."<sup>14</sup> The potential of affects and percepts builds from our capacity to be affected as an emotional response within individual perception, but goes beyond just perception by existing as encounters on the immanent plane. Simply, while art and artifacts may actualize a thought and a feeling drawn from individual lived experience, the capacity of art is in radiating the potential for multiplicitous encounters. Here, there is room for interpretation and multiplicity.

---

**9** Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 4.

**10** I remain critical of sexual differentiation to the degree she implies in *Nomadic Subjects*.

**11** Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 6.

**12** Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 15.

**13** Smith, "A Life of Pure Immanence": Deleuze's 'Critique et Clinique' Project," xxix.

**14** Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 167.



Figure 11.02 *Future Day Spa*



Figure 11.03 *Compression Carpet*

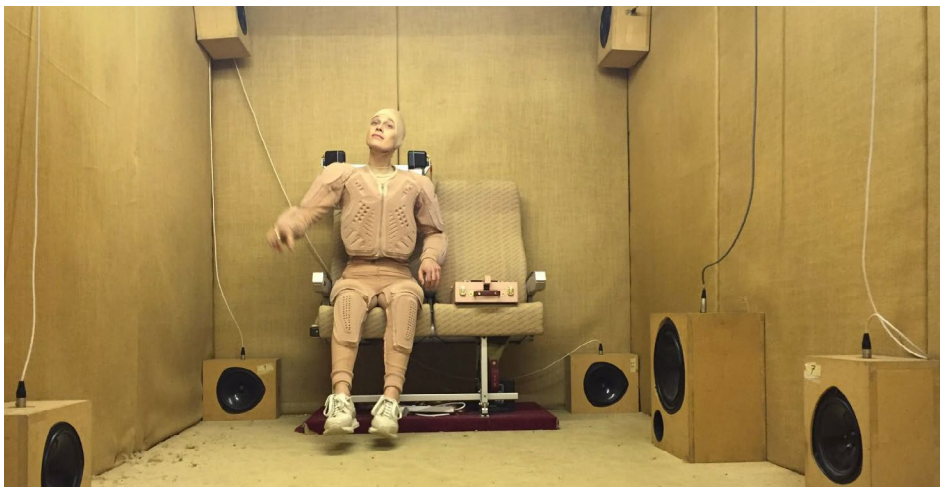


Figure 11.04 *Institute of Isolation*

Over the course of this thesis there have been two artists, Lucy McRae and Emma Portner, whose works have served as precedents for my own. They both negotiate the challenges of exploring what it means to be a woman, in the twenty-first century. Exemplifying what could be considered a nomadic subjectivity, as they map their encounters with the world on the space of their bodies.

Lucy McRae's work is playful but interrogates the future from her own embodied perspective. As a self-proclaimed science fiction artist and body architect, her work "explores the limits of the body, beauty, biotechnology, and the self."<sup>1</sup> Her use of performance, wearable design, and videography speculates on the sociocultural implications of our uncertain technological futures. She creates curious artifacts used within a set and storyline to initiate conversation. These are often performance pieces which she participates in, additional to dancers and actors that bring the scene to life.

All three of the pieces featured adjacent, *Future Day Spa*, *Compression Carpet*, and the *Institute of Isolation* play with the themes of isolation and touch. The first two, feature bed-like structures which compress a participant. The *Future Day Spa* uses a vacuum pressurized sheet to restrict movement while biometric technologies record the physiological changes to the participants body and adjust the 'treatment'.<sup>2</sup> The *Compression Carpet* reflects on a 'crisis of touch' as the result of a lack of physical interaction with other people in a digital world.<sup>3</sup> The bed is a low-tech intervention that slowly closes the cushioned arms as a crank is turned. Though distinct in the technology they use, each of the beds elicit emotional responses from participants that react to the feeling of the compression. Being inside of these artifacts is described akin to a long and 'heavy-duty' hug.<sup>4</sup> The last project, *Institute of Isolation* considers the physiological and mental impacts of long-duration spaceflight.<sup>5</sup> It questions "the role buildings could have on altering human biology on an evolutionary scale" by setting up a fictional institution that trains the human body for extreme isolation.<sup>6</sup> In this project the material palette, colours, textures, and choreography extract a most intimate and embodied experience, while simultaneously swathed in technology and the promise of the future.

---

**1 "About," Lucy McRae, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://www.lucymcrae.net/about>.**

**2 "Future Day Spa," Lucy McRae, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://www.lucymcrae.net/future-day-spa>.**

**3 "Future Survival Kit," Lucy McRae, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://www.lucymcrae.net/future-survival-kit>.**

**4 "Future Survival Kit."**

**5 "Institute of Isolation," Lucy McRae, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://www.lucymcrae.net/institute-of-isolation>.**

**6 "Institute of Isolation."**



Figure 11.05 *Femme Debout* Still 1



Figure 11.06 *Femme Debout* Still 2

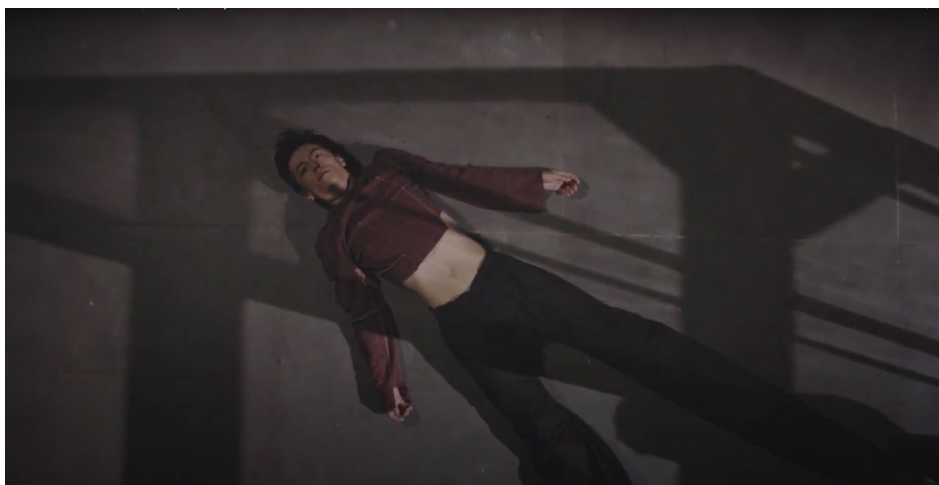


Figure 11.07 *Femme Debout* Still 3



Emma Portner is a dancer and choreographer who uses “dance as an emotional outlet, [to] merge styles, and push the limits of the human body to find unknown shapes and capabilities.”<sup>7</sup> She has a distinctive and experimental way of moving which counters her more formal training, often using muscle isolations or near-contortions to play with the lines her body creates. Her work uses the expressivity of movement to elicit sensation. It is quite different from Lucy McRae’s projects and offers an alternative approach to the body.

The pieces which Portner posts online are typically more informal, but the work adjacent, *Femme Debout* was commissioned by Fondation Beyeler and involves several dancers and a custom set. The work is inspired by Francis Bacon and Alberto Giacometti, but more broadly “reacts to twentieth century and male-created visual art works.”<sup>8</sup> The piece plays with the boundaries and proportions of the body in several ways, in masking, stretching, concealing, and confining. This draws visual parallels to the art she references from the twentieth century and the processes which generated it. But, when combined with a choreography of distorted movements in and around a glass box, the play with boundaries invokes feelings of unease, contempt, and yearning. It is hard to say much more than this about the piece, other than to call attention to the engaging nature of the composition and the wonderfully awkward movements. I found her work to be profoundly moving, and so I will let her speak for herself.

*Bound by a hyper-masculine culture, women have been traditionally kept from taking up space. Historically, male artists have been mostly responsible for how women are seen – that is, as objects that have been shaped to personify a man’s perspective. Consequently, female artists spend much of their already compromised room for work merely refuting false representations. My own experience as a Female Lesbian has been informed by a society contained by aggressive men, and trauma came easily as a by-product of just existing at all.*<sup>9</sup>

While my own experiences differ greatly, I found Portner’s work to be at once relatable. It is much easier to comply with the grids and labels which confine us than continually dispute their existence. Yet, for those of us that are confronted by and dispute these limits on a regular basis, the promise of nomadicism is in choosing what to perform as opposed to being assigned a role. With this, the future is not one that just accounts for the human – broad stroke – it is one which accounts for the nuances wholeheartedly queried in the posthumanist human. The embodiment implicit in lived experience.

---

**7** “Class Descriptions,” Broadway Dance Center, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://www.broadwaydancecenter.com/faculty/emma-portner>.

**8** FondationBeyeler, “Emma Portner: Femme Debout (Acts 1-3),” YouTube video, 14:00, August 17, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPwTp2ZzjNA&t=68s>.

**9** FondationBeyeler, “Emma Portner: Femme Debout (Acts 1-3).”

**2019**

The hostel in Tokyo sat above a cafe. It smelled of coffee and rain. Crouched over I pulled the flatpacked fragments out from the bottom of my suitcase, along with a roll of packing tape. As the sky faded to black I assembled the helmet on the cool concrete floor. Bending along the creases. Checking the shape. Measuring a length of tape. Cutting it. Adhering it to an edge. Carefully folding it over.

Bending. Checking. Measuring. Cutting. Adhering. Folding. Bending. Checking.



Once a few pieces were down I ran the dull edge of my exacto knife lightly over the tape to push out any air bubbles. Slowly the fragments came together. The form arched around my shoulder for support. I held it up.

The hardest part was always joining the two halves together. Sitting down, I held each half pressed against the other with the insides of my knees. I worked blindly as my head and arm could not fit in the opening at once. Carefully I maneuvered each piece of tape into place along the axis.

SHE DANCED

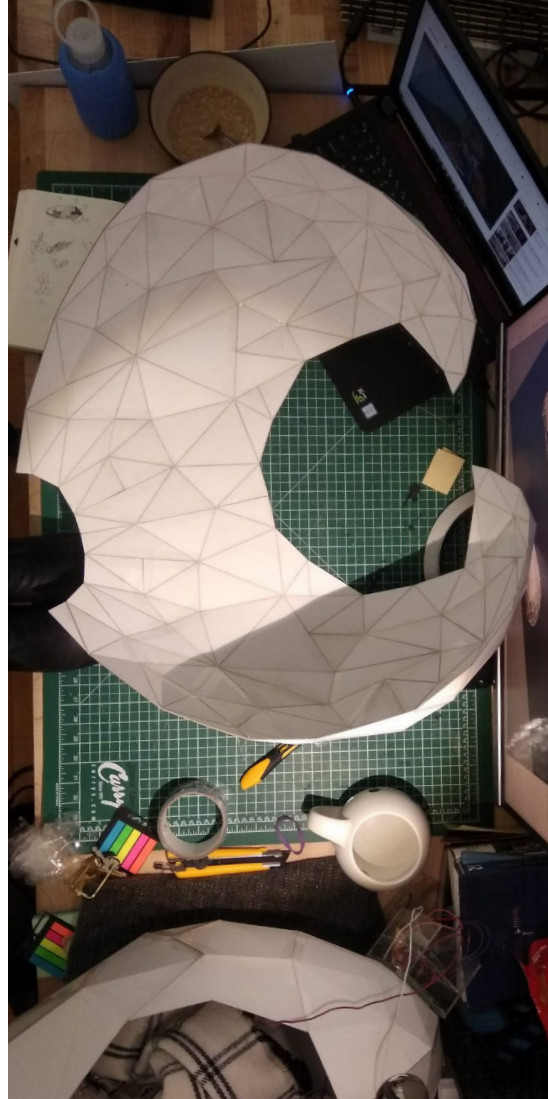


Figure 11.08 Prototype 2.0



Figure 11.09 Prototype 1.0



Figure 11.10 Prototype 8.0

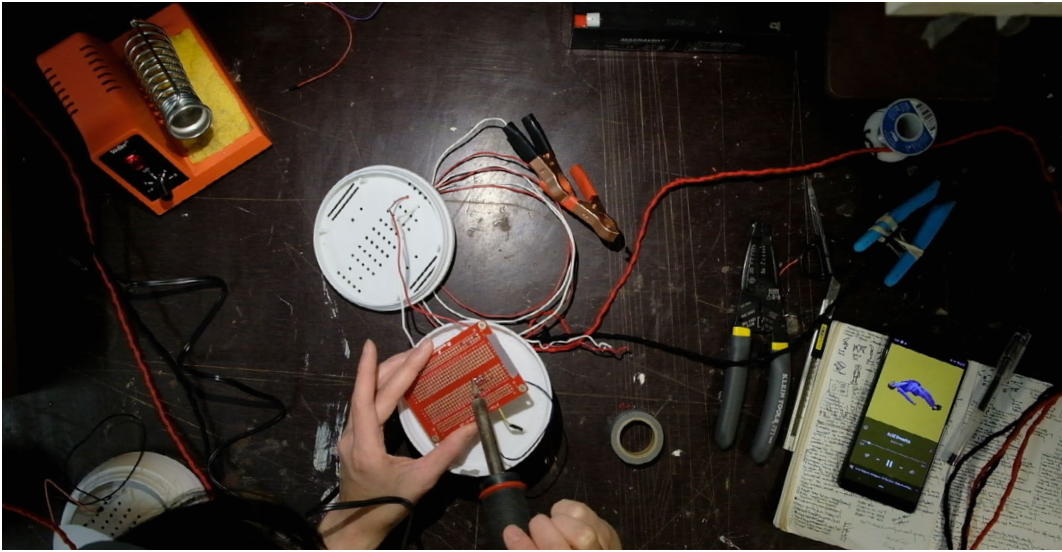


Figure 11.11 Prototype 8.0

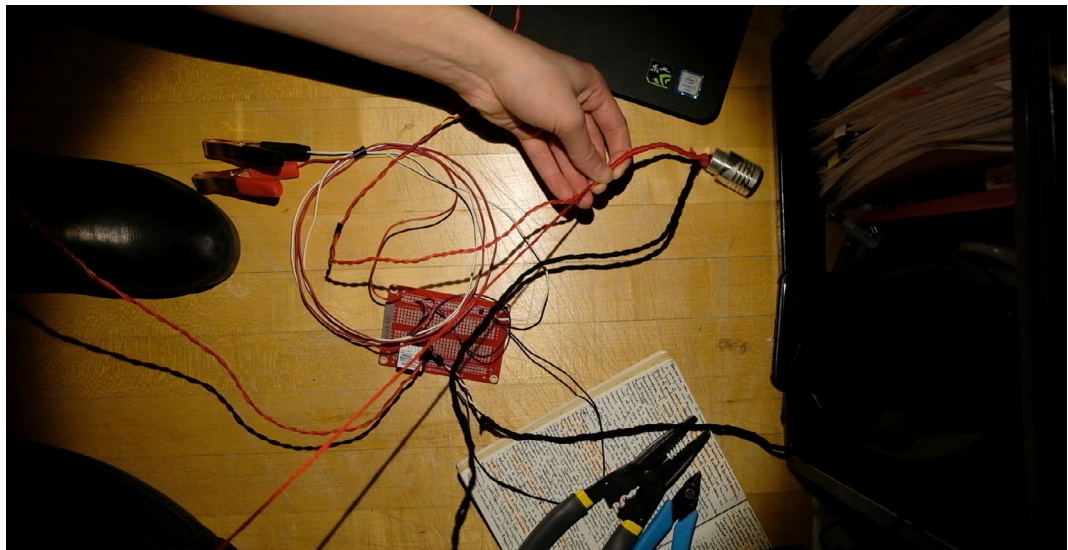


Figure 11.12 Prototype 8.0





Figure 11.13 Prototype 8.0



SHE DANCED

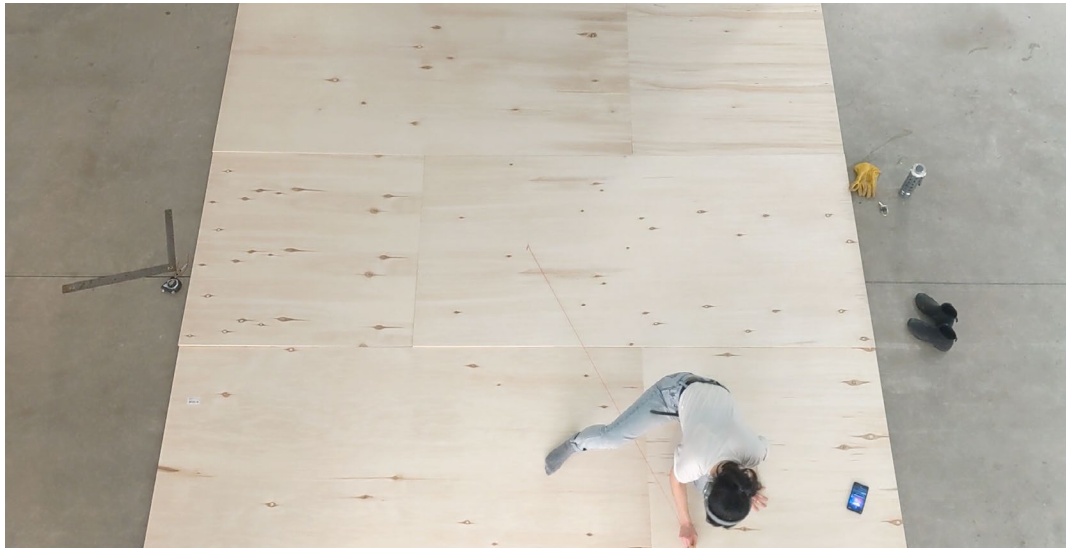


Figure 11.14 Prototype 8.0

**2020**

My fingertips are  
edged with hot glue.

My desk is covered in  
frayed cotton, solder  
bits, and PLA.

The final prototype is  
a platform,  
twelve feet wide  
in diameter.

Sanded.  
Primed.  
Painted black.

A mask as a room,  
a mask for the body.



Figure 11.15 Prototype 8.0 BRIDGE



Figure 11.16 Prototype 8.0 BRIDGE

**no (adv.)**

“not in any degree, not at all.”<sup>10</sup>

“Second element is from Proto-Germanic \*aiwi-, extended form of PIE root \*aiw-.”<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Douglas Harper, “no,” Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed April 15, 2020, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/no>.

<sup>11</sup> Harper, “no.”

**\*aiw-**

“Proto-Indo-European root meaning *vital force, life; long life, eternity.*”<sup>12</sup>

“It is the hypothetical source of/ evidence for its existence is provided by: Sanskrit ayu- “life;” Avestan aiiu “age, life(time);” Greek aiōn “age, vital force; a period of existence, a lifetime, a generation; a long space of time,” in plural, “eternity;” Latin aevum “space of time, eternity.”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Douglas Harper, “\*aiw-,” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, accessed April 15, 2020, [https://www.etymonline.com/word/\\*aiw-](https://www.etymonline.com/word/*aiw-).

<sup>13</sup> Harper, “\*aiw-.”

SHE DANCED



Figure 11.17 No-Place



# No-Place

*Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.<sup>14</sup>*

No-place is imagined not akin to utopia, in the sense of a non-place or even placelessness. But instead, the counter to an All-Place. The sort of All-Place utopia imagined by International Modernism, the kind of All-Place cityscape imagined in our favourite dystopian sci-fis. The no-place imagines the same processes of interconnection without the goal of universality and homogenization.

No-place is placeless in the sense that it can lack physicality (actualization), but not placeless in the sense that it marks an embodied engagement with the world (life). It allows for the resolution of all space as a percept, and engages with the haptic reality of sensation. "The 'I' that is its body is, of necessity, a mode of embodying, and the 'what' that it embodies is possibilities."<sup>15</sup> It does not seek to colonize, to develop, or to collectivize the individual, but regards the nuances of embodied experience as fundamental to the performance of the lived.

No-Place does not reject the idea of place completely, instead it marks out territory in processes of becoming. We are made aware of the disillusion imbued into space and artifacts, the illusions of belonging, of fixed identity, and authenticity. It is instead, the liminality that can be played with. The boundaries which are acknowledged, edged, and discarded. We seek out vectors to become with- and acknowledge the forces which construct the immanent plane.

To put it succinctly, no-place implies the idea of no-fixed-place. A nomadic movement in-between, and a knowledgeable disintegration of any of the static modes of being which emerge in our lived condition. No-place has been my short-hand to describe immanence as perceived from within a life, but it is knowingly a life which is open and in a process of continual construction. Non-linear, rhizomatic, dissolve. It is a paradox insofar as there is no such thing as no-place. Yet, it so aptly describes the experience of embodied liminality within the cyclic fictions of our combined disillusion.

---

<sup>14</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 25.

<sup>15</sup> Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 272.

SHE DANCED



Figure 11.18 No-Place



She opened her eyes

She opened her eyes

[the screen

flickered on]



# Letters of Copyright Permissions

## Figure 9.03

The following is the letter of copyright permission for Figure 9.03 *Sarah Altmejd*, found on page 151.

## Copyright Holder

© Sophie Kitching for Art Observed

BACK MATTER

Usage Rights for an Image: Sarah Altmejd Inbox x



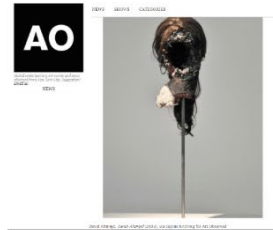
**Jessica Hanzelkova** <jes.hanzelkova@gmail.com>  
to info ▾

8 Apr 2020, 09:54 ☆ ↶ ⋮

Hi!

My name is Jessica Hanzelkova, I am a graduate architecture student currently writing a thesis. I am looking to include this photo of the work "Sarah Altmejd" in my thesis and was wondering about its usage rights. Do I need to acquire permission from Art Observed or from the photographer Sophie Kitching? I am planning on modifying the image (cropping) in my book.

Thank you!  
Jessica



**info rmation**

Hi Jessica, Thank you! I will forward to Sophie and connect you regarding usage. Best of luck with the writing! Dan

8 Apr 2020, 11:34 ☆



**Jessica Hanzelkova**

Hi Dan, Great, thank you so much! Best wishes, Jessica

8 Apr 2020, 11:55 ☆



**Sophie Kitching** <sophie.kitching@gmail.com>  
to info, me ▾

8 Apr 2020, 20:48 ☆ ↶ ⋮

Hi Jessica,

Good luck with your thesis and feel free to use my photo. If you can credit me Sophie Kitching in your photo credits that would be great. Maybe send us a link to your work when it is finished too so we can read it.

All the Best,  
Sophie

Sophie Kitching

[www.sophiekitching.com](http://www.sophiekitching.com)

On Wed 8 Apr 2020 at 11:34, info rmation <[info@artobserved.com](mailto:info@artobserved.com)> wrote:

Hey Sophie it's Dan.  
Please see below for an image use request for a grad student thesis:

Stay safe!  
Dan





**Jessica Hanzelkova**

13 Apr 2020, 09:31 ☆

Hi Sophie, Thanks for the reply and permission to use your photo! Will definitely credit you, and send the link along when it is done. Best wishes, Jessica



**Sophie Kitching**

14 Apr 2020, 11:35 ☆ ↩ ⋮

to me, info ▾

Hello Jessica,

Actually the copyright for that image should be © Sophie Kitching for Art Observed.

Many thanks & good luck!

Sophie

Sophie Kitching

[www.sophiekitching.com](http://www.sophiekitching.com)



## Figure 11.03

The following is the letter of copyright permission for Figure 11.03 *Compression Carpet*, found on page 207.

### Copyright Holder

© Scottie Cameron

Usage Rights for an Image: Compression Carpet Inbox x



**Jessica Hanzelkova** <jes.hanzelkova@gmail.com>

Fri, 24 Apr, 11:08 (6 days ago) ☆ ↩ ⋮

to scottie ▾

Hi Scottie,

My name is Jessica Hanzelkova, I am a graduate architecture student currently writing a thesis. I am looking to include this photo of Lucy McRae's work "Compression Carpet" in my thesis and you are credited as the photographer. With your permission I would like to use the photo. I am planning on modifying the image (cropping) in my book.



If this is okay with you, I would be grateful if you could pass along any information about this photo to be included in the attribution (year, location... etc.)

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,  
Jessica



**Scottie Cameron**

Tue, 28 Apr, 13:08 (2 days ago) ☆ ↩ ⋮

to me ▾

Hey Jesica,

Apologies on being slow on the reply, this isolation life has got me all topsy turvy. That is all good to use the image. Just no creating a No. 1 best seller with this thesis and making millions off the book tour.

Picture was taken 2019, Los Angeles.

Let me know if you need anything else. Trust it all goes well.

Kind regards

Scottie C

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Appendix A

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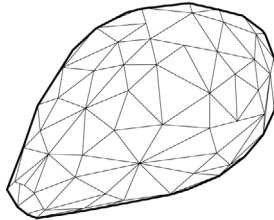
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Design

# Design: Prototype Series

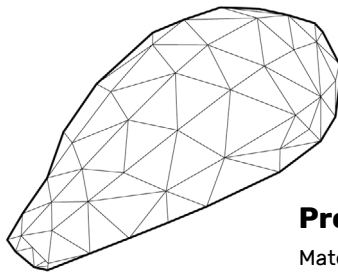
Over the course of the thesis there have been numerous iterations of the masks. From this, seven main prototypes are featured in the pages of this book. The correlated drawings from each of the prototypes can be found on pages 38, 61-64, 67-70, 76, 155-160.

BACK MATTER



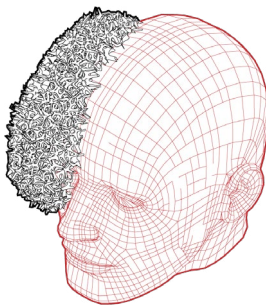
### Prototype 2.0

Material: Museum Board + Tape  
Method: Laser Cutting  
Dimensions: 14" x 24"  
Term: Fall 2018



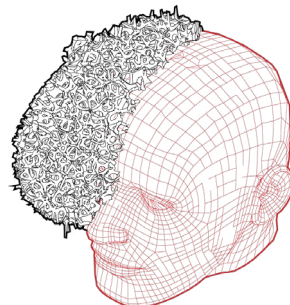
### Prototype 4.0

Material: Museum Board + Tape  
Method: Laser Cutting  
Dimensions: 16" x 28"  
Term: Spring 2019



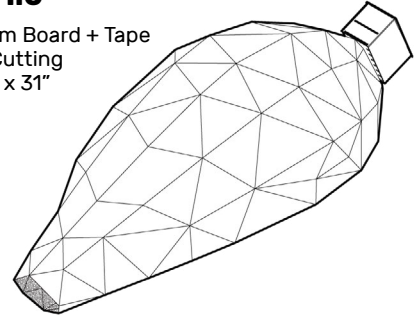
### Prototype 6.0

Material: White PLA (Polyactic Acid)  
Method: 3D Printing  
Dimensions: 2-1/2" x 4-1/2"  
Term: Fall 2019



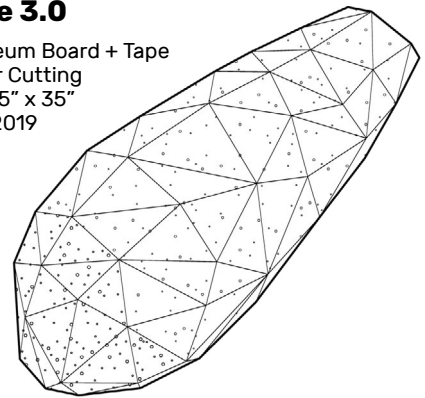
### Prototype 1.0

Material: Museum Board + Tape  
Method: Laser Cutting  
Dimensions: 17" x 31"  
Term: Fall 2018



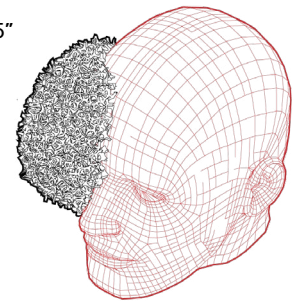
### Prototype 3.0

Material: Museum Board + Tape  
Method: Laser Cutting  
Dimensions: 15" x 35"  
Term: Winter 2019



### Prototype 5.0

Material: White PLA (Polyactic Acid)  
Method: 3D Printing  
Dimensions: 3-1/2" x 5"  
Term: Spring 2019



### Prototype 7.0

Material: White PLA (Polyactic Acid)  
Method: 3D Printing  
Dimensions: 4" x 6"  
Term: Winter 2020

Figure 12.01 Prototype Series

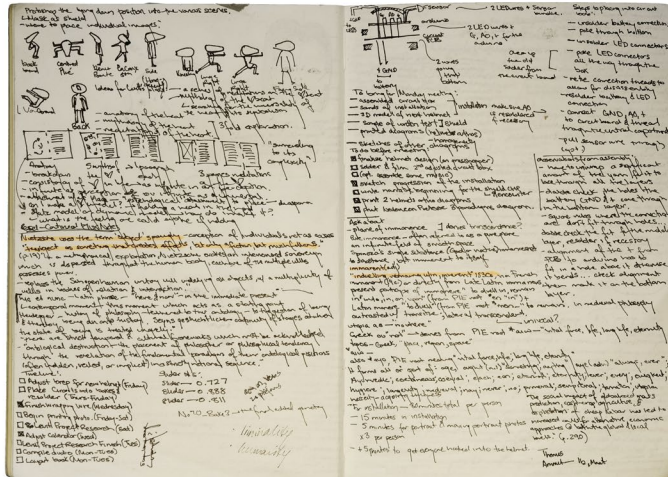


Figure 12.02 Sketchbook

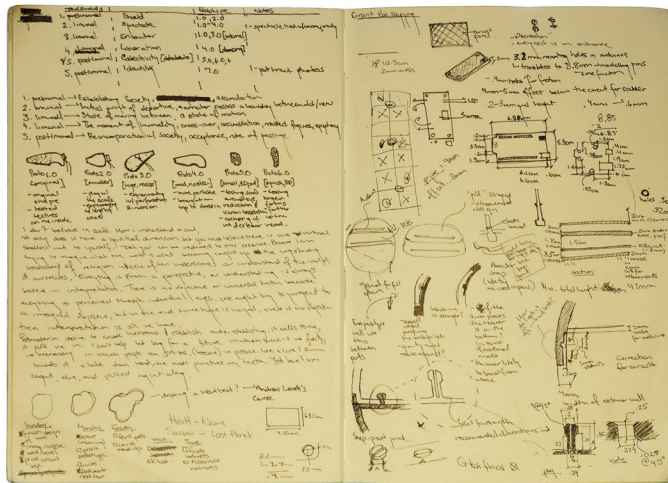


Figure 12.03 Sketchbook

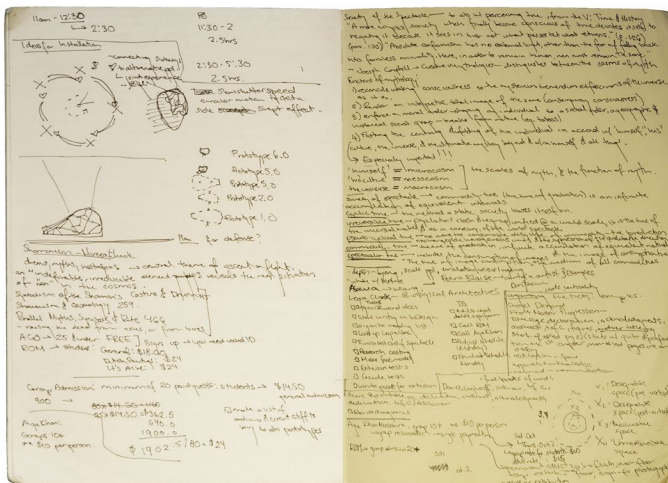


Figure 12.04 Sketchbook

# Design: Grasshopper Definition

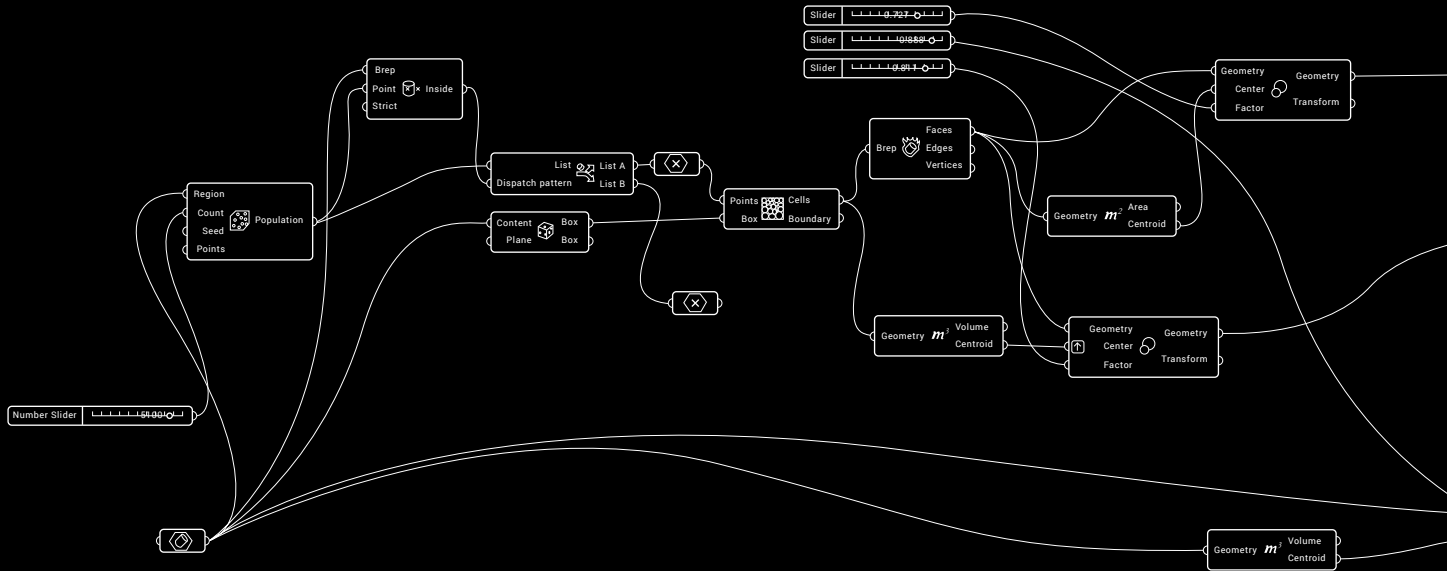


Figure 12.05 Definition

BACK MATTER

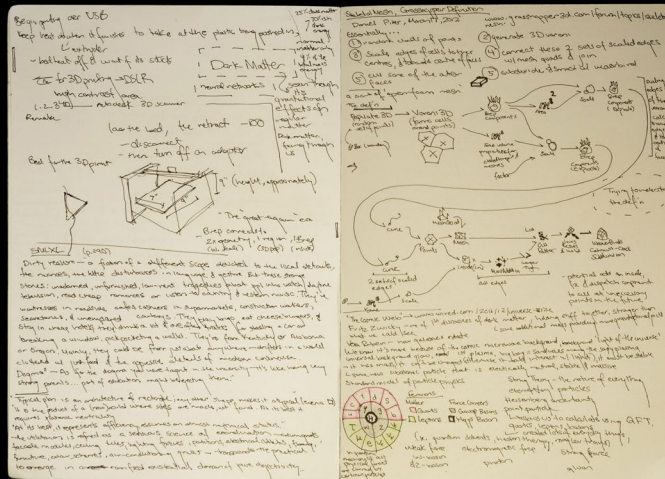


Figure 12.06 Sketchbook

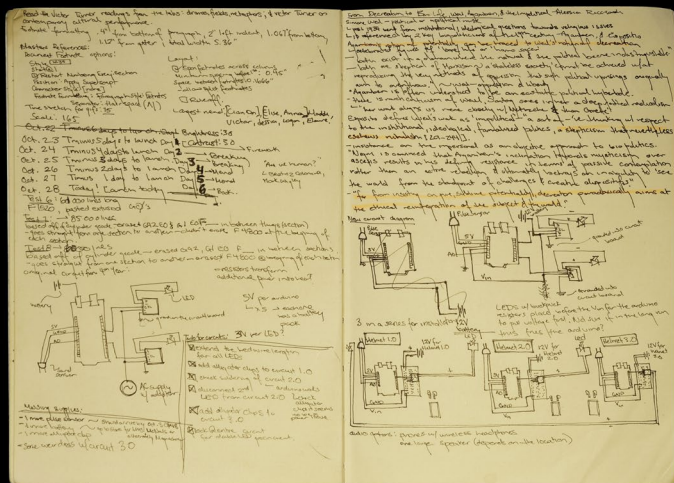
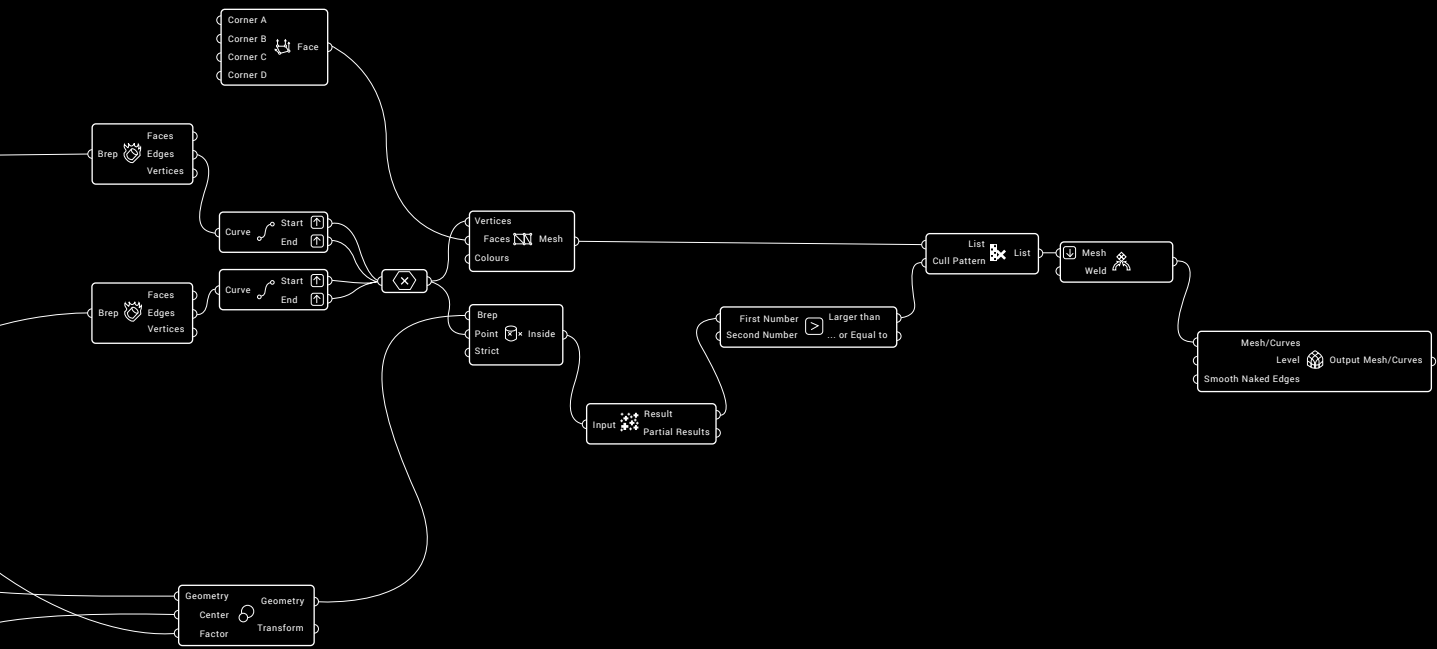


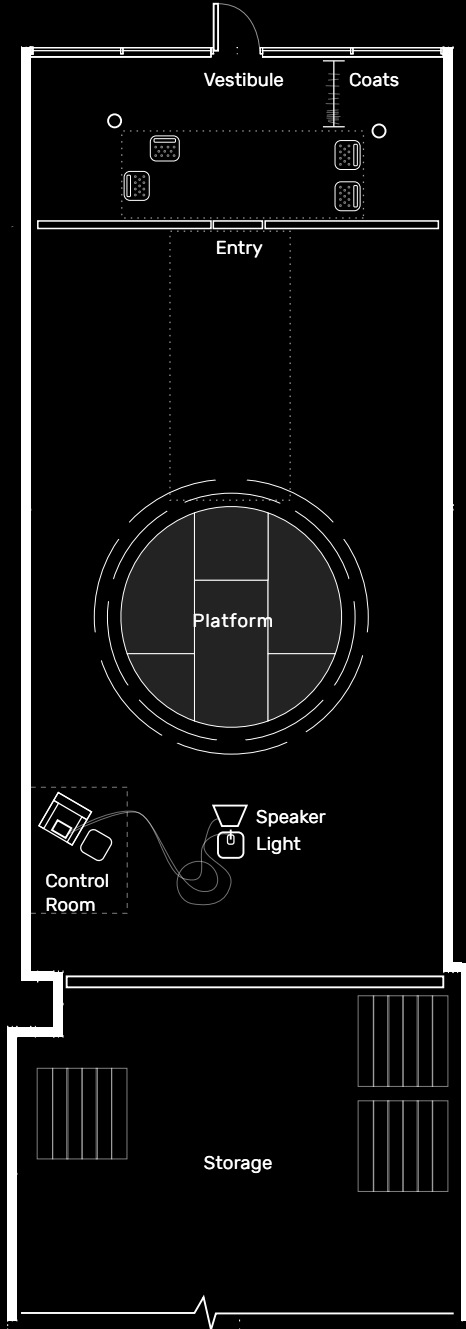
Figure 12.07 Sketchbook

# Design: BRIDGE Plans

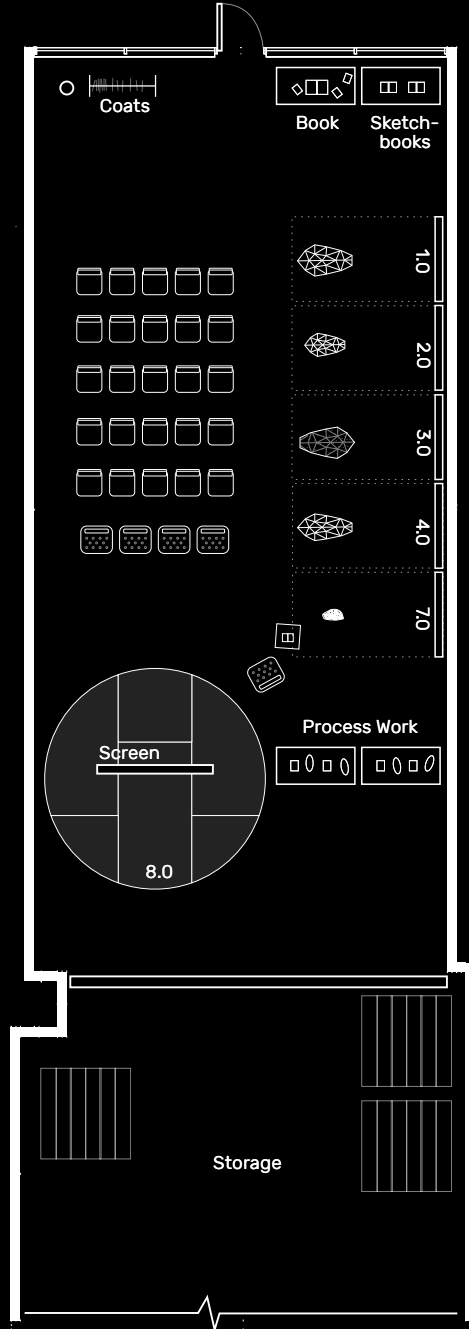
0 cm 125 375



BACK MATTER



Prototype 8.0 Set-Up



Speculative Defense Set-Up

Figure 12.08 BRIDGE Plans







# Design: Framing Plan

0 cm 25 75

N

BACK MATTER

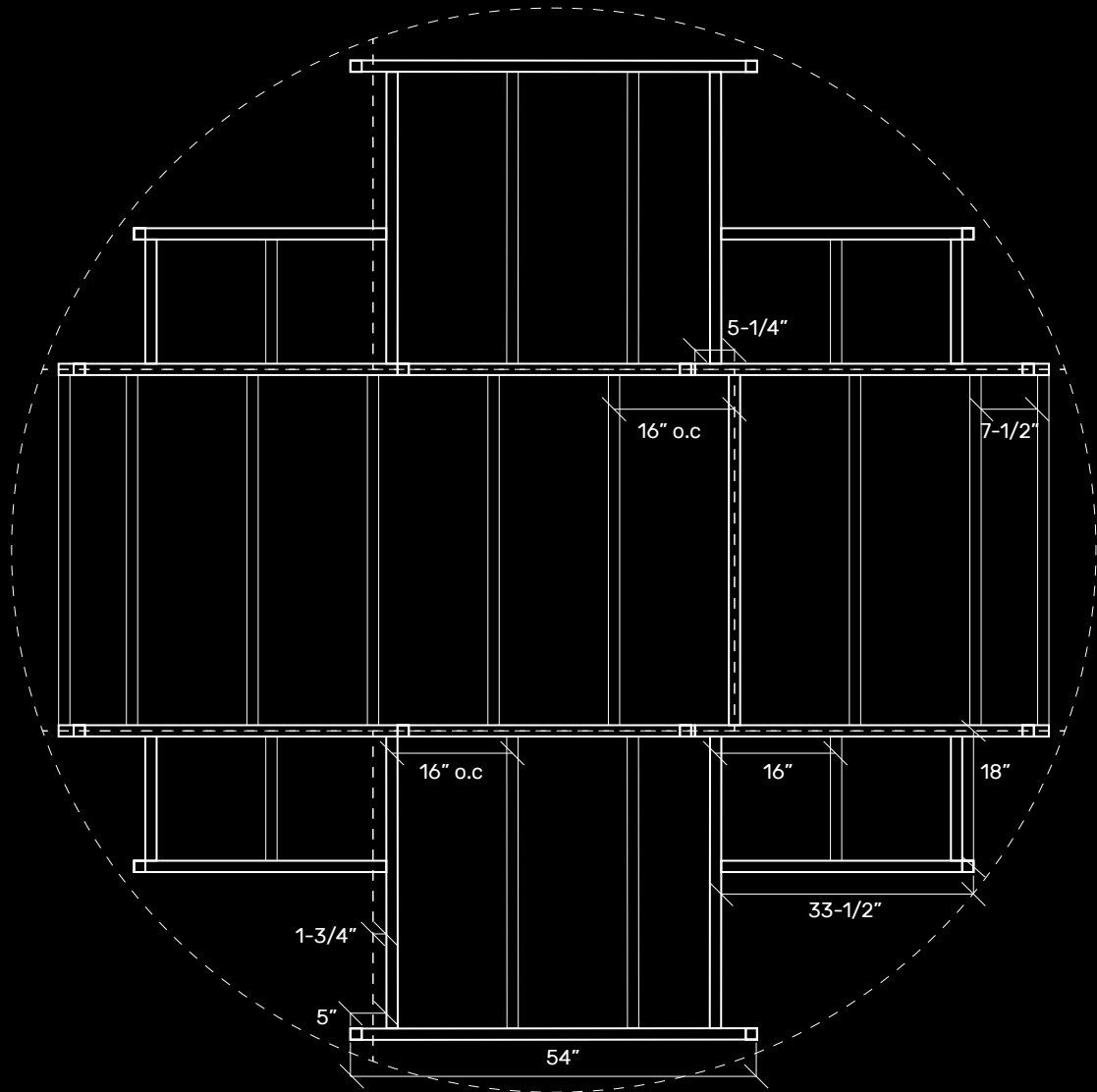


Figure 12.12 Framing Plan



Figure 12.13 Hanging



Figure 12.14 Platform

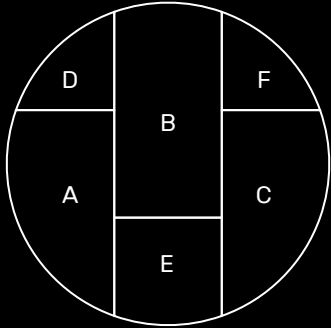


Figure 12.15 Filming

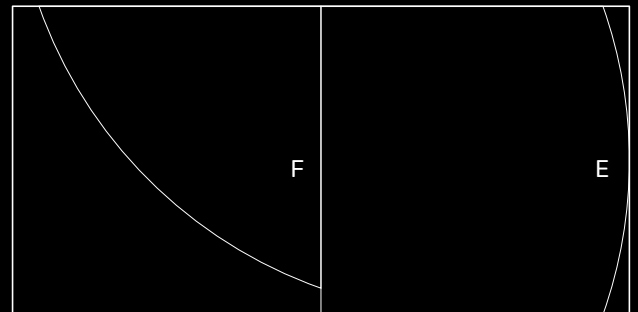
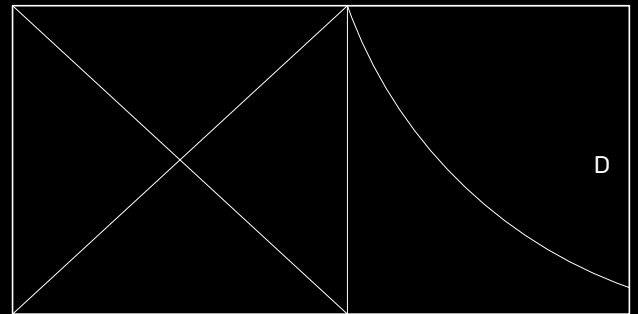
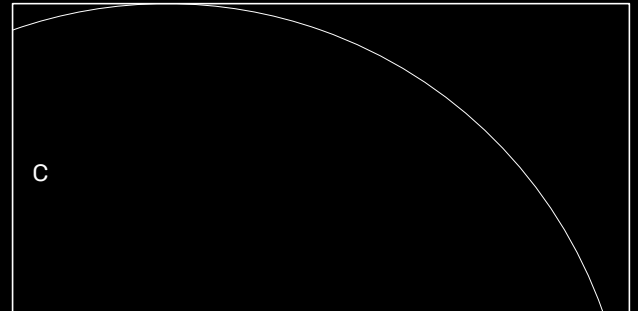
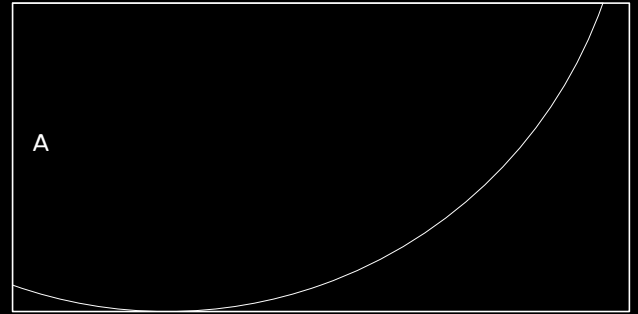
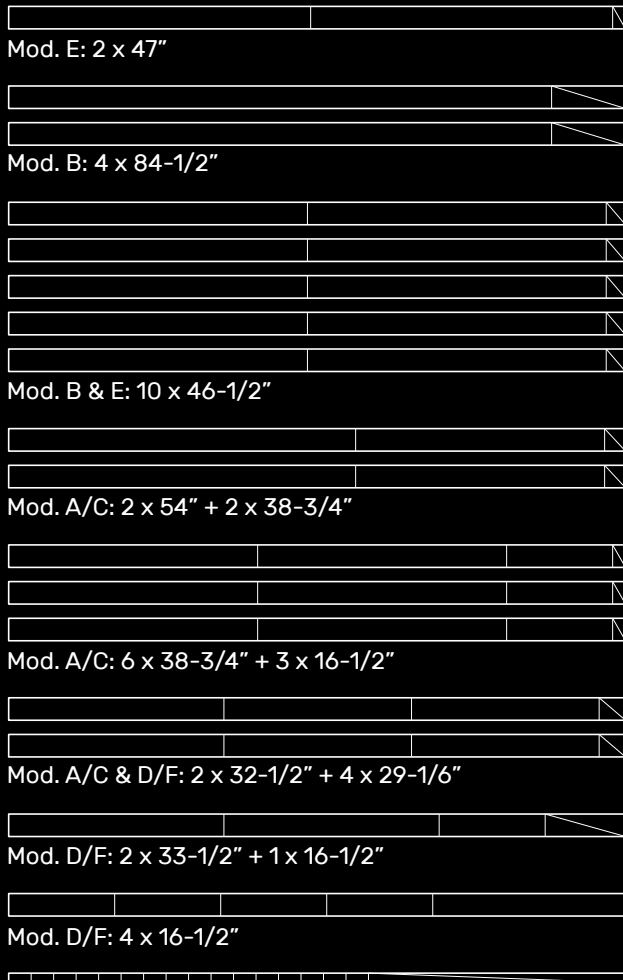
# Design: Material Optimization

0 cm 30 90

Module Plan



BACK MATTER



Aspen Plywood 3/4": Varying Sizes

Figure 12.16 Materials

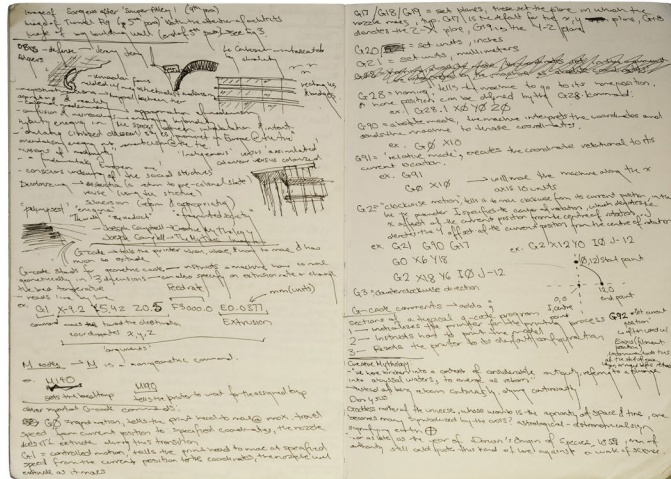


Figure 12.17 Sketchbook

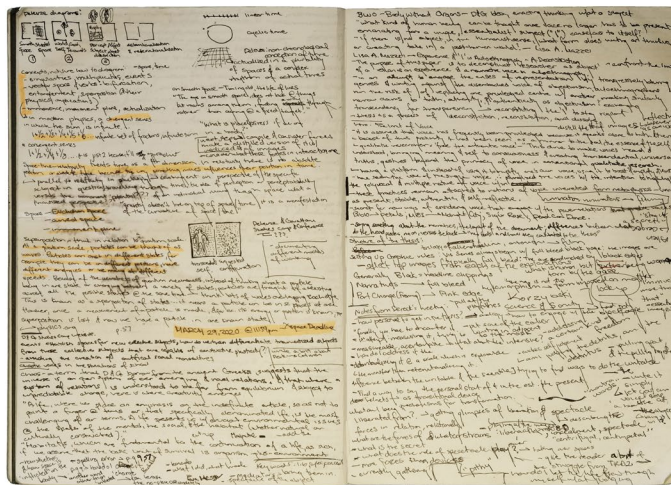


Figure 12.18 Sketchbook

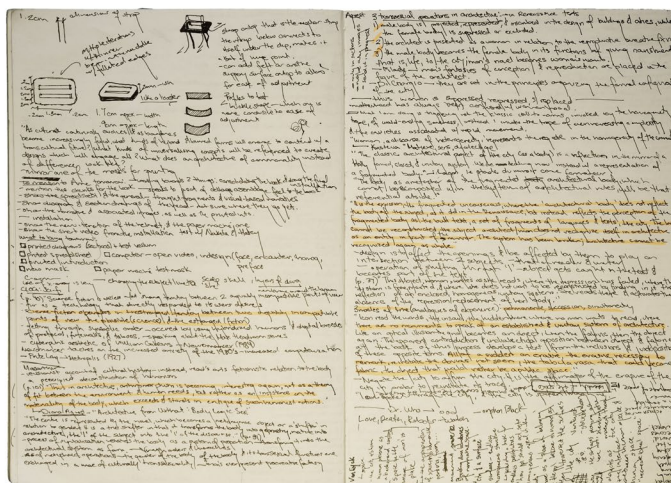
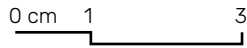


Figure 12.19 Sketchbook

# Design: Graphics



BACK MATTER

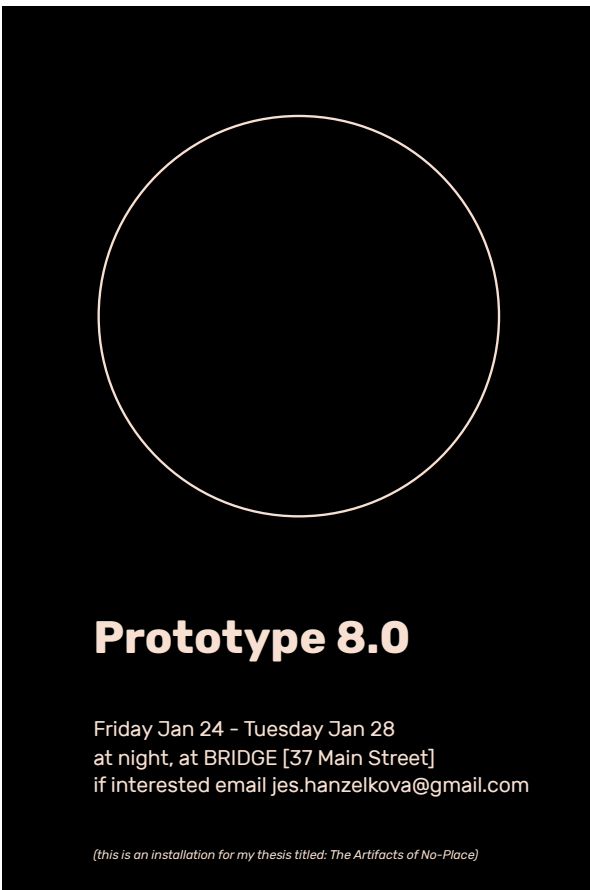


Figure 12.20 Advertising Poster 1

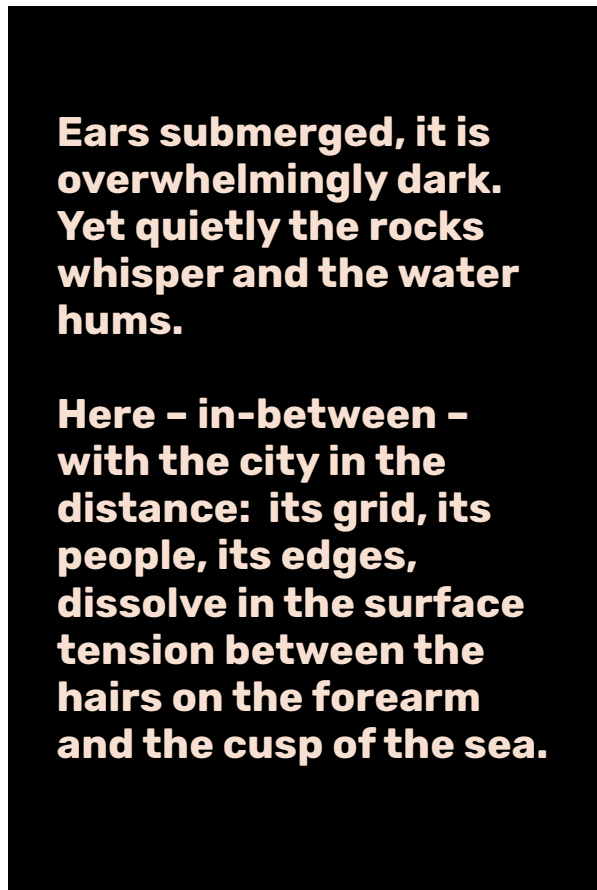


Figure 12.21 Advertising Poster 2



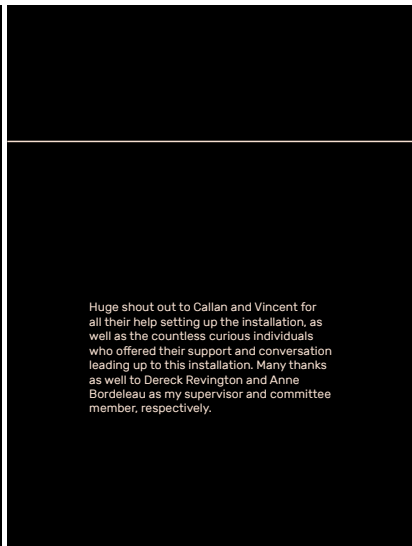
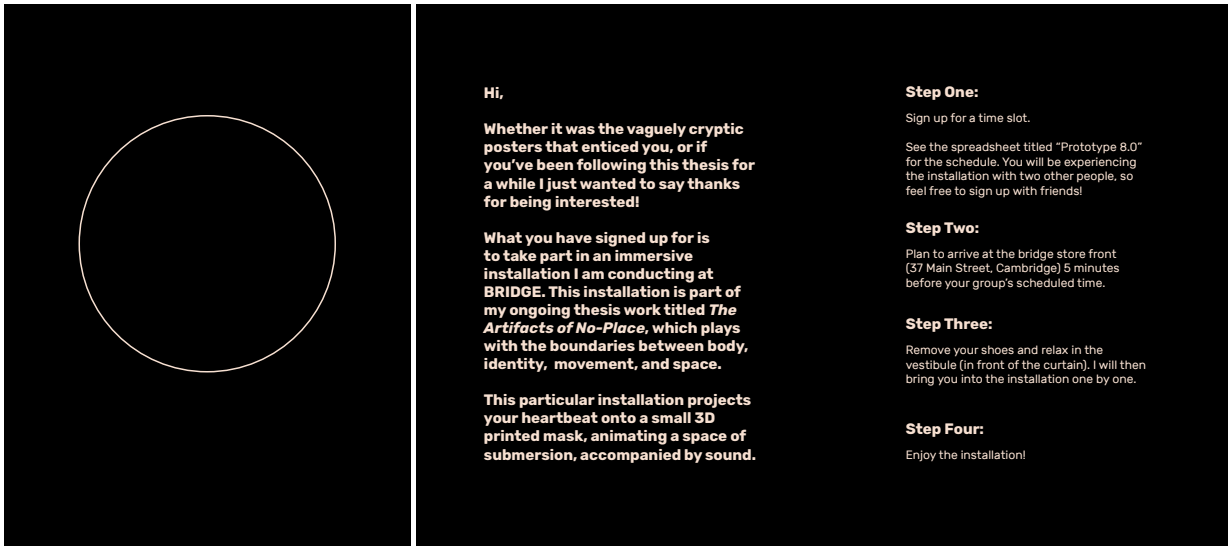


Figure 12.22 Installation Guide Booklet



Figure 12.23 Music Card

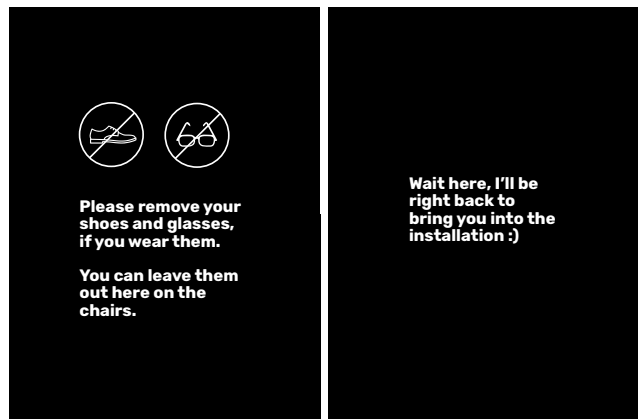


Figure 12.24 Vestibule Signage

Appendix B

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Images

## Images: Portraits

The following pages feature images taken in Prototype 8.0. The installation was on display from Friday January 24 - Wednesday January 29 in the BRIDGE Centre for Architecture + Design in Cambridge. Nineteen sessions were conducted over this period, an average of three people attended each session.

BACK MATTER

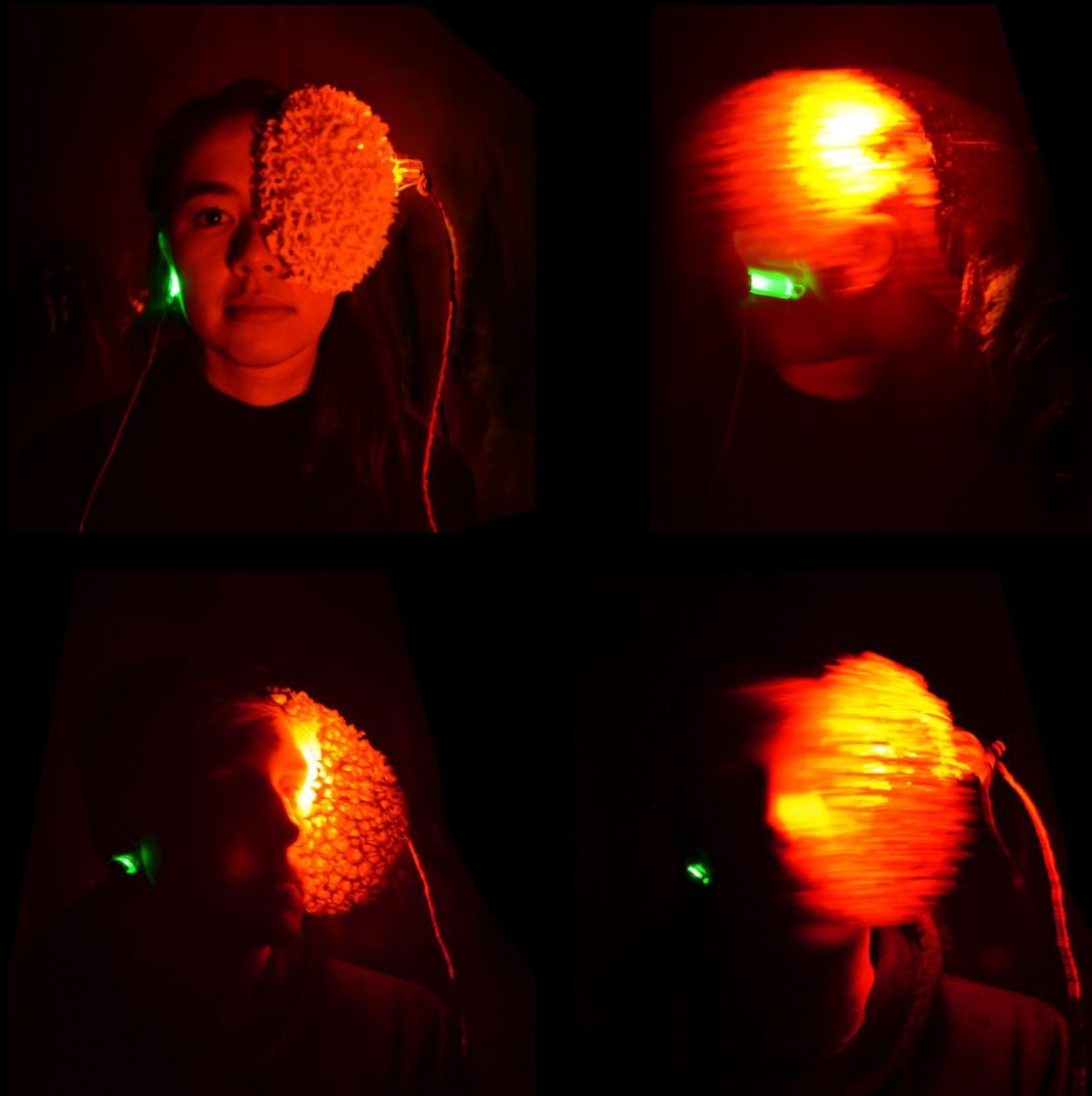


Figure 12.25 Portraits

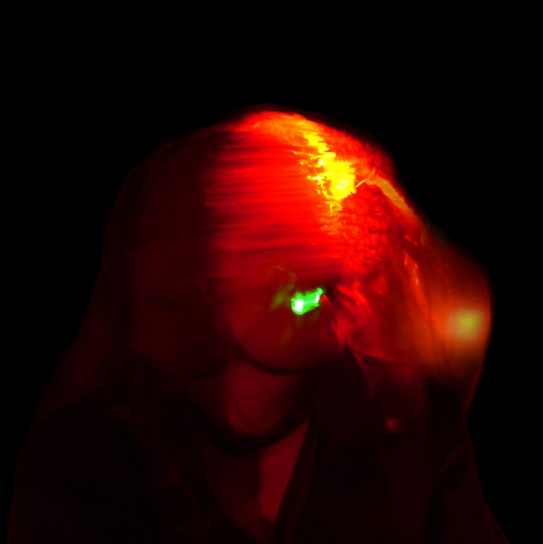


Figure 12.26 Portraits

BACK MATTER



Figure 12.27 Portraits



Figure 12.28 Portraits





Figure 12.29 Portraits



Figure 12.30 Portraits





Figure 12.31 Portraits

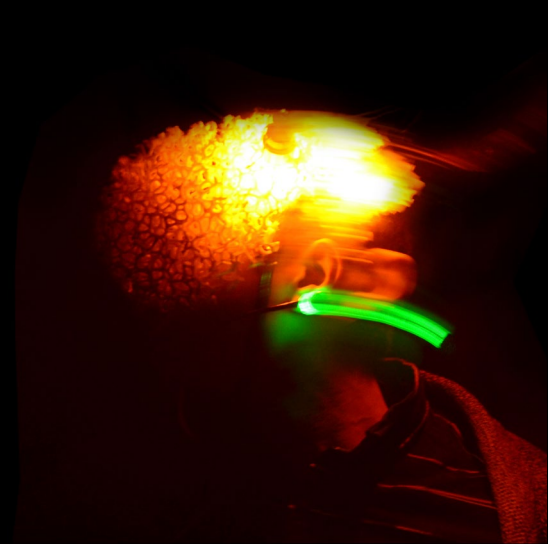
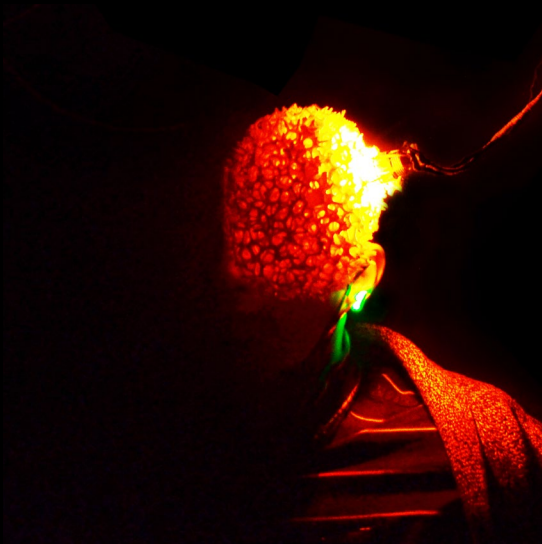
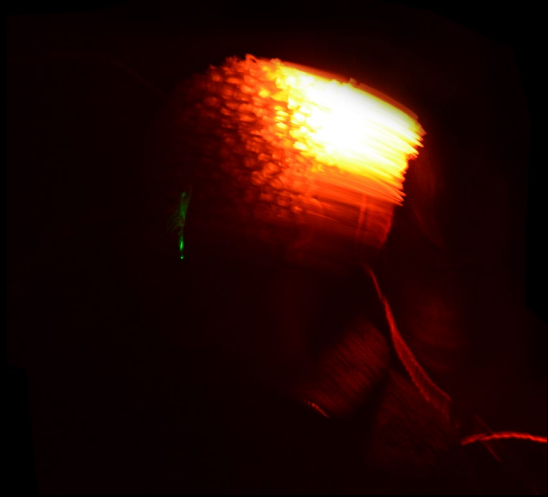


Figure 12.32 Portraits



Figure 12.33 Portraits



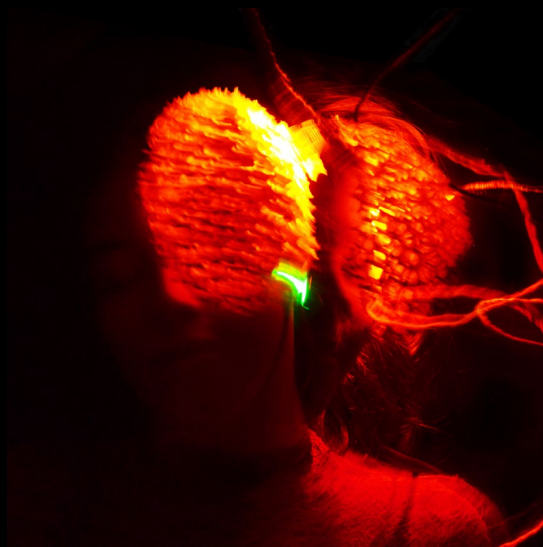


Figure 12.34 Portraits



Figure 12.35 Portraits



Figure 12.36 Prototype 8.0 Test

# Images: Movement Studies

These movement studies conducted at the beginning of the thesis. The initial goal was to choreograph a group dance piece. As the project went on this goal morphed into Prototype 8.0. This was done so that I could share the experience of the masks with more people.

BACK MATTER



Figure 12.37 Movement Studies





Figure 12.38 Movement Studies

# Images: Movement Studies

BACK MATTER



Figure 12.39 Movement Studies



Figure 12.40 Movement Studies



# Images: Grid Study

This study was initially done for an elective. It now loosely carries on as the structure for this book.

BACK MATTER



Figure 12.41 Grid Studies



Figure 12.42 Grid Studies

Appendix C

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Multimedia



Prototypes 1.0 - 8.0

## **Multimedia: Video**

This appendix is a MP4 file titled "The Artifacts of No-Place." It was made by the author. Many of the images contained in this thesis are stills from videos which are compiled in this MP4.

If you have accessed this thesis from a source other than the University of Waterloo, you may not have access to this file. You can access it by searching for this thesis at <http://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca>.



