

## ***A Fictional Actuality***

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## Detailed information of the artistic component

### *as rhizomes whisper*

The artistic component of the MFA thesis project includes the mixed-media installation; *as rhizomes whisper*. This installation consists of a collection of sculptural forms, audio -through micro speakers and stereo- and moving image -mouths and flesh presented on tv-screens-, all connected together with both functional and an esthetic choice of wires. The written component of the MFA thesis project focusses, throughout the three chapters, on theories and concepts that have been very crucial for the entire artistic process and realization of the artistic component *as rhizomes whisper*.

The mixed-media installation was completed and exhibited during the Kuvan Kevät Masters graduation show. Which took place at the Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki, displayed on the second floor in the public space. The date of the opening lasted from the 5th of May until the 4th of June in the year 2023.

The work consists of three sculptural forms sculpted out of styrofoam dressed with layers of aluminum, polyester resin, epoxy resin and fiberglass. The four tv-screens show moving images of recordings of flesh and mouths -with an estimated time of two minutes circling in a continuous loop. Audio was presented through micro speakers inside sculptures together with a soundscape played on a stereo-speaker at the edge of the installation area. Colored purple and pink filters were mounted on spotlights positioned on the ceiling and focussed on the sculptures in the installation.

The techniques used for the realization of the installation consisted of the cutting of styrofoam with the hotwire technique. Also the unconventional use of resin in combination with fiberglass is a self-invented technique. It is utilized by , instead of piling layers with a brush or roller, the fiberglass is made soaking wet beforehand and then added to the sculptures as a wet curtain. This resulted in a space between the epoxy/polyester hardened fiberglass fleece and the solid sculpture. The moving images of flesh and mouths are created through utilizing two types of cameras such as SLR and an endoscope camera. The use of purple and pink colored filters mounted on the spotlights above the installation were used to let the aluminum surface of the sculpture glow, as they reflected all the light that was present in the space.

The work consist of a variety of materials such as; Polyester resin, epoxy resin, rubber resin, colorant for resins, a variety of different types of fiberglass, styrofoam, aluminum tape, polyurethane glue, pigmented water, tubes, LED-screens, micro-speakers, stereo-speaker, media-players and purple/pink filtered spotlights.

The total area of the installation is estimated at 600 x 700 cm.

## Visual description of the artistic component

The two largest sculptures have an ombre color transition from a darker magenta to a more clear color. The color forms a second layer over a shimmering, silver base layer. The sculptures seem to glow as the purple and pink colored light reflects on the aluminum surfaces. Both are higher from the ground, around 1 to 1,5 meters. They are not massive, you can see through the negative shapes. There is another sculpture made with similar materials, but smaller than the others. The sculptures are connected to each other and to a pillar in the scape with dark magenta and lighter pink cables, they come in two different materials. In between the cables there are smaller sculptures, they are more flat and very close to the ground, as if old skins of the fleece have fallen off from the forms onto the ground. As each residue form is constructed with different material, they are transparent, from two out of three of these sculptures comes a faint sound that sounds like human whispering. Some of the cables go to four screens that are scattered between the sculptures. They depict different body parts, two that are obviously a mouth and the others that abstractions of flesh and insides of the mouth. The video's are looping. The last part of the installation is a soundscape that has differences in intensity of volume. The sounds are abstract and seem electronically altered.

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## Summary

'*as rhizomes whisper*' is the mixed-media installation that was exhibited during the Kuvan Kevät Masters graduation show of 2023 on the second floor of the Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki. The work consists of several sculptures, moving image displayed on tv-screens, tubes, filtered light and audio. With elements of science fiction, experiments in playing with affecting the audience -flesh, material and sounds of whispers- and hybrid sculptures -mechanical merging with the organic- the totality of the installation aims to propose the human as a biological-machine. The totality of the work aims to reveal the inner factory and machinery behind the human body and the psych and assumes human nature to be almost similar with the liveliness and nature of machines that transition energy and information from one place to another. As the mental mechanisms are in a constant state of flux, it produces, transitions, absorbs, interrupts and chases its desires in a never ending cycle. The work has derived from such 'humans as biological-machines' concepts where the 'ego' or 'self' is believed to be a construct, a collection of affirmed images, an identity that is heavily subjected, affected, driven or even manipulated by its social-political and digital environment.

Following both the conceptual and artistic outcome of this work, A Fictional Actuality investigates the origin of the 'hybrid' between humans and machines, and as well science fiction and social reality. Upon a closer investigation of the idea of the hybrid, we can recognise the proposal of marrying two opposites rather than worshipping the traditional duality, this allows opposites to exist in a togetherness rather than an exclusion. The research then follows into an inquiry towards science fiction, both investigated for its critical role towards society and as well its symbiotic relationship with technological development and human desire. Science fiction does not only reside in comics, magazines and movies, as it seems it has also impacted and influenced artists and therefore the world of contemporary art.

In the *second chapter* the meaning and understanding of 'machines' are further explored and introduced as a concept that could include all objects and organisms in the universe, even art could function as a machine. Which precedes a reading of today's world as an environment where all these 'biological-machines' stand in relationship to one another, creating flow. The finalization of this chapter proposes 'desire' to be the main driver and force of all these metaphorical machines, whereby several theories are addressed that consider or handle desire differently.

The *third chapter* takes the story further by focussing on hazardous environments and new technological power-structures that tent to influence the biological-machines, which combines ideas and concepts from the first two chapters as it relates both to the domination and repression of flows within societies and the predictions -through dystopian imagined worlds in science fiction- on the future. I will conclude by proposing the links between the three chapters, my artistic practice and the mixed-media installation as rhizomes whisper.

*-Please note that the content of these chapters are part of my ongoing research, interests and personal view upon my experience of reality. It can therefore be read as an intensified and sometimes exaggerated way of writing. They need to be read, not as conclusions, rather open endings and possible viewpoints to be further explored both theoretically and artistically.-*

## When juxtapositions become hybrids

*Vrom vroooooom vrom vroooooom vrom vro vrom vrom  
leeeej, vramm - ieeeeej - vrammm - ieeeej - repeat  
Flowwwwws -interruption- floooooows - interruption... pause  
turning... turning...turning...and transition..... ieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeej*

*suddenly ... more flows... more flows and channels... more channels and flows...flows and transitions....transitions and flows...flows...flows... interruption...a long pause*  
*Energy, interruption, energy, interruption, energy - cooling down*  
*warmth...spinning...transforming... pause*  
*heat... circling... reproducing... pause*  
*explosions... rotations...reforming... pause*  
*eruptions...forces...machinery...*  
*a machine driving another machine*  
*machines driving other machines*  
*Forces driving other forces*  
*Forces interrupting other forces*  
*Forces driven by steam*  
*Steam driven by water*  
*Water driven by metal*  
*Metal driven by fire*  
*Fire driven by fiction*  
*Fiction driven by reality*  
*reality driven flows*  
*flows driven by lust*  
*Lust driven by dopamine*  
*Dopamine driven cells*  
*Cells driven by flesh*  
*Flesh driven by desire*  
*Desire driven by nature*  
*Nature driven by desire*

As I look out of the window of my apartment, I look down at the streets. Cars, electric city bikes, scooters, electric steps, chaotically rush by. People walking the streets focussed on the devices in their hand, plugged into their ears, strapped around their wrists. As I look up, a drone flies beyond my window; filming the streets. A plane far above it seems to have set its destination towards the other end of the world. And, because it is still early in the morning, I see light dots flickering as if they were stars. Its slow movement, however, hints at the possibility of it being a satellite hovering through the thermosphere. Radio Signals, wifi, bluetooth - they move as if they were light, connecting the world together, from device to device, to other devices.

The world is moving at a fast pace with machines driving other machines, machines driven by a multitude of micro-machines, micro-machines driven by invisible energetic and radio signal-like forces. Floating around space, penetrating walls and barriers, crawling where no man ever has.

But what is a machine and what is their role within society? Or, what is the meaning of the word machine? And does that meaning change over time? Do machines just come into existence by themselves? What drives their existence, other than being driven by steam, water, electricity, gasoline? And how do machines relate to science fiction? Where did science fiction start and what is the role of science fiction in society? What is the reason for both their existence?

For such answers we have to think back towards a time of industrial mechanization and revolution.<sup>1</sup> The time when very real and large machines of metal set both a metaphorical and actual chain in motion. One I believe to be still in motion today. A chain of production driven by the goal to replace and mimic what perhaps was before only human effort and muscle, now driven by themselves through water and steam. A clear motive for their existence; for such metal machines, in contrast to humans, produce without interruption of emotion, exhaustion and almost without error - as long as nutrition is provided. At the time, such large metal machines started to have their first memory, allowing them to have roles in mathematics, navigation, banking and engineering. Machines do not exist for their own gain. In such a zeitgeist, the role of machines was efficiency and prosperity, for a certain class of people. Machines within the times of industrial revolution were present and they made their presence known - at first mostly within factories, but not long after also within the household and public space. And with such presence they simultaneously acted as a prophecy of what machines and technology could bring to the future. As a result, new clockwork and entertainment, like creeping baby dolls and illusionary automated chess-playing machines, filled the streets.<sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> -And as machines started to become more alive with their daily presence, even the imitation of human movement through machines had found its development in imitating artificial body parts for the injured that had lost a hand through accidents in factories or limbs in times of war.<sup>4</sup> It appears that the merge of machines with humans is not only a characteristic of contemporary times. However, the meaning of the word machine in industrial times must have been somewhat different, for 'machine' referred probably to those large scale machines residing in factories, or public transport like trains and boats and early

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<sup>1</sup> The industrial revolution refers to a period also known as 'the first industrial revolution' that started around the mid-1700's in England and lasted until somewhere between 1820 and 1840. Haradhan Kumar Mohajan, "The First Industrial Revolution: Creation of a New Global Human Era," *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 5, no.4. (2019).

<sup>2</sup> George Pemberton Clarke, *Natural Creeping Baby Doll*, 1871, Patent Model, 17.1 x 9.2 x 27.9 cm, National Museum of American History, Washington DC., [https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah\\_856663](https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_856663).

<sup>3</sup> *The Adventures of Ajeeb : the wonderful chess automaton*, (Wilmington: Deltje & Cutting, 1885).

<sup>4</sup> Silvia Ursula Raschke, "Limb Prostheses: Industry 1.0 to 4.0: Perspectives on Technological Advances in Prosthetic Care," *Frontiers in Rehabilitation Sciences*, no. 3 (March 2022).

alienating mechanical appearances within the public sphere. It also inescapably meant, however, the loss and replacement of human labor while there was a rise of hazardous working environments.<sup>5 6</sup> Nonetheless, it seems people started to think of futures where men and machines would coexist within a machine-driven world, as our reality is living proof that those imagined futures over the years slowly started to become somewhat a reality.

Now, in contemporary society, the growing proximity of man and machine goes further than the fusion of a phone to one's hand. For the meaning of 'machine' and its presence is unthinkable to erase in society and the world. A recognizable example probably, is how in contemporary medicine machines and artificiality are being utilized. We can merge bodies and machines, connecting them through cables, allowing machines to - temporarily - take over bodily functions. We can breathe through lungs made of pumps, our blood can be pumped through plastic tubes by hydraulic systems that exist outside of our bodies. We can supplement shortages - vitamins, blood cells, oxygen, hormones or bacteria are inserted in our bodies through pills and needles. Reproduction can be both controlled by anti-conception or facilitated by IVF, metal or plastics printed by 3D printing machines are inserted and mounted in flesh and diseases anticipated through thorough examination - announced, taking away as many unknowing factors as possible, and if possible even cured or avoided by preventative medicine.

Also in war, men have been fused or even replaced by machines. It can be said that war has become a 'cyborg orgy'.<sup>7</sup> With the purchase price being lower than the average student's rent, micro drones get an uncanny aura of availability.<sup>8</sup> With the power of being quite invisible to the human eye at heights, they more easily fly over enemy lines, spying on and attacking tanks and civilians. The use of machines in war is not characteristic to contemporary time, guns and canons already have a long history. However, certain machines now allow for a 'safe' distance for the operators of those machines to the battlefield, and in some cases men are even rendered redundant through the utilization of codes and algorithms to control the machines. Machines have become their eyes and ears. The traditional use of human flesh, that is today still very present in contemporary war on the battlefield, will perhaps in the future be no more than a political theater which will be completely replaced by sololily androids and remote killer machines.

The above described instances illustrate how machines are rapidly becoming a vital part of our lives. Our hospitals are full of couplings between mechanism

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<sup>5</sup> Jeehee Min et al., "The Fourth Industrial Revolution and Its Impact on Occupational Health and Safety, Worker's Compensation and Labor Conditions," *Safety and Health at Work* 10, no. 4 (December 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Elias Beck, "Working Conditions in the Industrial Revolution," History Crunch, March 25, 2022. <https://www.historycrunch.com/working-conditions-in-the-industrial-revolution.html#/>

<sup>7</sup> Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Marcus, "Combat drones: We are in a new era of warfare - here's why" *BBC News*, February 4, 2022

and biological matter, certain people relying their lives on the machines next to them, keeping them alive.<sup>9</sup> In war where men and machines fuse more together as an extension of their remote practice of force and power. Whereas in the social realm we become more and more dependent on smart devices like smartphones, smartwatches, smart computers. They become an extension of us, and with each development they seem to replace one of our own tasks, making our own memory lazier with its ability to calculate, or just be bored redundant - no need to remember how to find out what 7x8 is when your smartphone, smartwatch, smart computer, can tell you in the blink of an eye. But the current co-existence of men and their machinery is not nearly enough progress. ***For we always desire more.***

Machine and human are merching; becoming hybrids.<sup>10</sup> In contemporary Western society, there is no way we can unthink ourselves from our couplings with machines.<sup>11</sup> We integrated and embedded them as a vital part of our societal system and of human life. Our thirst for the progression of technology has taken us to a stage where we cannot erase the machinery and the digital. We cannot maneuver ourselves between places without our smartphone - since the access on public transport and identification happens mostly through applications. Our economy and financial data is stored and transitioned mostly digital. Some even desire to integrate smart chips inside their bodies, a fusion that finally allows them to be truly in sync with their device.<sup>12</sup> Technology is marketed as making life and everyday-obstacles easier, but because of it we also get very dependent on it. We depend on them in order to stay alive, socially connected, in some cases for reproduction, as defending mechanisms, for navigation and, maybe even to controle and understand the concept of humans. The world has become both on micro- and macroscale interconnected with machines. Developments in technology - agricultural, political, geographical, artificial, financial, spacetravel etc. - expand and transform perhaps faster than ever before. In the name of science men appear to desire to control nature itself for there is a race in understanding its building blocks, its microscopic secrets. Earth has become a spectacle for competition over resources and technological development in chips and smart machinery. There seems to be no way back or the possibility to even pause the fastness of power development, for other societies and industries will outsmart the other: *there must be a large chip center as well in Germany before the west becomes too dependent on its trade for future microscopic chips.*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Haraway, Cyborg Manifesto, 4

<sup>10</sup> Haraway, Cyborg Manifesto, 4 - Citation - "*By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs.*"

<sup>11</sup> Haraway, Cyborg Manifesto, 4

<sup>12</sup> James FitzGerald, "Neuralink: Elon Musk's brain chip firm wins US approval for human study", *BBC*, bbc news health 65717487, (May 2023)

<sup>13</sup> Euronews with AFP, "Germany wants to end Europe's semiconductor dependence on Asia. Is it up to the challenge?" *Euronews*, May 24, 2023

Now to come back to the question; what drives the machines to manifest in such a seemingly never-ending and forced chain of technical development? A desire for efficiency for example, erasing human error on the work floor and other domains vital for the functioning of society. A desire for more prosperity, or perhaps a desire for more profit or power. However, machines driven by human desire itself feel to me as being shallow and superficial reasoning and simply not enough of a reasoning at all. I would therefore like to propose a third element that critically examines the production process of this chain. Because how do we come towards our designs of machines, how do we come up with spaceships that we so desperately desire in order to travel to the moon and planets beyond ours. Before our desire sets the manufacturing of building machines in motion there is a process within that desire that I would propose as a vital part in this chain of motion. I think it is our capability of imagination, of fiction, or more specifically *science fiction*. It is a human capability to imagine fictional worlds with fictional machines that perhaps do not yet exist. And in light of our capability of imagination, creating fiction or creativity, it is my suggestion that the domain of science fiction in particular is the third important driver of machines. Desire driving science fiction, and science fiction driving machines, in an endless motion of repetition.

Fiction and imagining other worlds is not something that started in the times of industrial revolution. Humanity already proposed fiction and imagining other worlds through for example art, religion, storytelling, fairy tales, myths and mythical creatures for as long as human existence itself - fiction and imagination as a vital part of human experience and its characteristics. Even in times before the industrial revolution certain fictitious stories already imagined traveling to outer space and finding other civilizations on the moon and the sun that were imagined to be places of peace without hunger or diseases.<sup>14</sup> However, the impact of the industrial revolution made people imagine other worlds and futures that drew from the rise of technology within society resulting in thinking of hybrids between men and machines and later even robots.<sup>15</sup> Early science fiction eventually found its way in adventure stories in the form of drawings and textual stories on paper. Mechanical horses or robots that looked like both men and clockwork devices, were to be found in these early science fiction narratives.<sup>16</sup> For some, these new imagined worlds were too bold; novels were criticized to be too radical to be published, while containing stories of dystopian societies and vehicles that very much sound like our vehicles and technological

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<sup>14</sup> Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Magic Realism". Encyclopaedia Britannica, August 21, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/art/magic-realism>

<sup>15</sup> The word 'robot' came to life in the 1920's as it appeared for the first time in a play in the Czech Republic by K. Čapek's named R.U.R. 'Rossum's Universal Robots', meaning 'forced labor'.

The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, "Robot" *Oxford Reference*, [https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100425123#:~:text=The%20term%20\(from%20Czech%20robot%20,Universal%20Robots'%20](https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100425123#:~:text=The%20term%20(from%20Czech%20robot%20,Universal%20Robots'%20)

<sup>16</sup> Lyman Frank Baum, *Tik-Tok of Oz*, (Chicago: Reilly & Britton, 1914).

reality today.<sup>17</sup> <sup>18</sup> Besides entertainment, science fiction imagines and questions worlds where developments in science and technology impacts the human and their world in relation to the worlds beyond, which differentiates it as a genre from for example genres like fantasy-fiction or horror.<sup>19</sup> With the desire for a new imaginative prosperous machine future also fear and critique were imagined and expressed by for example writers and artists.<sup>20</sup> Early 19th century science fiction, therefore, acted not only as an utopia for future technological worlds but also in communicating potential hazardous predictions and critique on the new industrial era. Machines at that time made the difference in class structure, replacing professions, craft and human expertise through automation. These artists were anticipating a potential negative effect of the ongoing technological developments and were expressing their critique towards this new foreseen future. Artists expressed how besides helping human skill and functioning as a tool, machines could fully replace human craft, skill, jobs and perhaps in the future, even human thinking. Machines in their works were imagined to be dangerous and in time could possibly gain a consciousness that would be similar to the human one. Their work pointed at the risk of the continued development of machines and where it could lead to; *machines resulting in the successors of men.*<sup>21</sup>

*William Morris* (b.1834, Walthamstow) is a great example of an artist that had critique on capitalism and was through his work driven by his rage against the rise of the industrial mechanization of craft. With a love for the middle ages and a dream of culture that is in harmony with nature, he praised the traditional way of utilizing craft by the hands of not machines, but men. By his interest and craft of repetition, symmetry and simplification -by looking at Islamic culture and western sources- he showed that certain mass production can be beautiful. It resulted in the creations of both useful and beautiful products, fonts, books, patterns for carpets and wall hangings. And as a marxist admirer he wanted the worker to be fulfilled with its craft -in comparison to capitalist ideals of workers in factories who only do a very small act in a much larger process of craft, resulting in perhaps unfulfilling work.<sup>22</sup> In the book of William Morris *News from Nowhere*, a soft science fiction and utopian narrative is envisioned with drawings and textual stories. However, in the possibility of realizing such utopia, the book remains partly utopian for it is proclaimed to be a book "...with *practical social critiques and suggestions from which our civilization could undoubtedly profit. It is also an impossible book, depicting an idealized society that is almost*

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<sup>17</sup> Bruce Sterling, "The 19th and early 20th centuries," Britannica, August 4, 2023.

<https://www.britannica.com/art/science-fiction/Mass-markets-and-juvenile-science-fiction>

<sup>18</sup> Britannica, "Magic realism."

<sup>19</sup> Britannica, "Magic realism."

<sup>20</sup> Hazal Kazancı, "Science Fiction as a Tool for Social Commentary," Arcadia, April 2, 2023.

<https://www.byarcadia.org/post/science-fiction-genre-as-a-cultural-apparatus>

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Butler, "Erewhon, or: Over the Range" *Smithsonian Libraries*, (1872)

<https://library.si.edu/exhibition/fantastic-worlds/rise-of-the-machines>

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Jones, "William Morris: a Victorian socialist dreaming of a life in symmetry," *The Guardian*, (March 2016).

*certainly not achievable for the human race as we know it,”*<sup>23</sup> emphasizing the difficulties of aligning an artist's critique with current and future realities, while still allowing a beneficial role of his art within retrospective society.

In the beginning of the 20th century science fiction in America was mostly focussed on a young audience. However, after the events of war and scientific explorations in developments in nuclear energy, atomic bombs and space travel, science fiction started to spread from the United States throughout the world. Becoming more than just a literary genre. An explosion of books, films, series, games, comics, magazines, art, toys and collectable objects emerged that were mostly geared towards entertainment under the heading of what is now known as ‘science fiction’.<sup>24</sup> As sci-fi expanded and spreaded over time parallel with the chain of technological development, there emerged numerous subcategories.<sup>25</sup> Besides science fiction acting as entertainment and a desire of imagining alternative worlds, it addressed many ethical questions and fears related to issues in social, gender, race, colonial histories, philosophical, bio-politics, geographical and political matters. A great example of underlining critique on race, slavery and colonial histories is the science fictional genre and cultural aesthetic ‘Afrofuturism’. Originating from African-American science fiction and recurring today in mostly literature, music and contemporary art.<sup>26</sup> Reimagining both the future, modern technocultural narratives and scientific endeavors from a Black perspective, Afrofuturism is deeply entwined with the African-American experience.<sup>27</sup> In 2021 at the Helsinki Biennial I witnessed such an Afrofuturistic work with the dystopian short film ‘*Pumzi*’ -meaning “breath” in Swahili- by the artist Wanuri Kahiu (b.1980, Kenya).<sup>28</sup> The work shows an Afrofuturistic-sci-fi imagined future that takes place in the Maitu community of East-Africa 35 years after the Third World War, and poses the question “*What kind of world would we inhabit if we had to buy the air we breathe?*”<sup>29</sup>

Science fiction is often embedded with elements that were crucial to the conditions of the reality and zeitgeist in which it is made - war, race, class- and power structures, poor and rich and colonial histories often seem to have

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<sup>23</sup> Arwen Spicer, “Toward sustainable change: the legacy of William Morris, George Bernard Shaw, and H.G. Wells in the ecological discourse of contemporary science fiction”, (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2005), 42.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Science fiction’ was first mentioned as ‘scientifiction’, in a series of magazines by American publisher Hugo Gernsback.

Hugo Gernsback, “The magazine of Scientifiction” *Amazing Stories*, Vol.1, April, 1926. [https://eyeofmidas.com/scifi/Gernsback\\_Scientifiction.pdf](https://eyeofmidas.com/scifi/Gernsback_Scientifiction.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Britannica, “Magic realism.”

<sup>26</sup> Tate Modern, “Art Term; Afrofuturism” Tate, Accessed September 9, 2023. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/afrofuturism>

<sup>27</sup> Steven W Thrasher, “Afrofuturism: reimagining science and the future from a black perspective” *The Guardian*, December 7, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/dec/07/afrofuturism-black-identity-future-science-techology>

<sup>28</sup> Wanuri Kahiu, *Pumzi*, 2009, short film of 21 minutes, Produced by Simon Hansen, Steven Markovitz, Amira Quinlan, Hannah Slezacek. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPD-mvR6C-M>

<sup>29</sup> Helsinki Biennaali, “Wanuri Kahiu,” Helsinki Biennaali, accessed on September 3, 2023. <https://helsinkibiennaali.fi/en/artist/wanuri-kahiu/>

infiltrated the imagined future worldings. Science fiction then and now has a crucial role in reflecting upon society through fiction to create an awareness or consciousness and it has given us numerous examples of what the future might bring us, often as a warning for possible future predictions and the raise in new ethical questions. To name a few science fictional scenarios: will our desire for luxury and technology result in making the human lazier or dumber, for the brain is not used to doing all the work.<sup>30</sup> Or will we be plugged into a smart chair where we sync ourselves with our robotic-avatar in order to walk to earth safely, controlling the avatar with our biological body safely from our homes while our own biological body gets fat and unfit.<sup>31</sup> Or will artificial intelligence outsmart us when it grows beyond our human capabilities? Will our desire to retrieve our lost ones from their death result in uploading our consciousness to the internet? Resulting in an unstoppable artificial consciousness that, through the internet, inherits a collective intelligence. A force that does not sleep and cannot be erased, and in time will mimic all atoms of life - water, plants, soil, flesh, cells made out of microscopic machinery.<sup>32</sup> Or will artificial intelligence be an exact mimic of men, through integrating actual feelings, pain and autonomous desires - questioning if in time, we need to treat artificial intelligence with empathy.<sup>33</sup> Or will we be dominated by machines and our biological bodies merely used as power batteries in order for the machines to stay alive? Human bodies seem to consist of a lot of energy. As long as you let them stay alive you can drain energy from them. Humans will be put into a simulation that mimics a society of New York within the 90's. The humans need to think they are just living their horrible lives and not realize that they are living an illusion within the simulation.<sup>34</sup> And what about the artworld and contemporary art? How long will the rise of artificial artistry take in order for machines to take over artistic labor? -which is not even an example of a science fiction movie but an actual real physical gallery that recently opened its doors selling AI made work.<sup>35</sup>

Contemporary art is full of artists with elements of science fiction, cyborgs and, sometimes, critique embedded in their work on their experience of their current dogmatic systems of society. An example of sculptures with elements of cyborgs embedded is the Dutch artist *Isabelle Andriessen* (b.1986, Haarlem) with her cyborg-like sculptures in combination with electricity, cooling liquids and fluid chemical experimentation, making the sculptures alive by a continuous

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<sup>30</sup> Wall-e, directed by Andrew Stanton, (United States, Walt Disney studios, 2008)

<sup>31</sup> Surrogates, directed by Jonathan Mostow, (United States: Walt Disney studios, 2009)

<sup>32</sup> *Transcendence*, directed by Wally Pfister (United States/Canada, Warner Bros. pictures, 2014), Netflix

<sup>33</sup> Another life, directed by Aaron Martin and composed by Trevor Morris (United States, Halfire Entertainment, 2019), Netflix. - Citation - William (AI) : *"And what makes you so sure that you're not just a biological machine? That all of your feelings aren't just bits of hormonal software programmed by nature over millennia to ensure your reproduction? To guarantee you behave in predetermined ways? Have you ever considered the possibility that the only difference between you and I are the origins of our coding?"*

<sup>34</sup> The Matrix, directed by Lana Wachowski and Lilly Wachowski, (United States: Warner Bros, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Art AI, "Art AI is the world's largest gallery of AI generated art", <https://www.artaigallery.com/pages/about-art-ai>

chemical process of sweating.<sup>36</sup> Also, a few years ago I witnessed the collection of 5 large-scale kinetic immersive installations of *Yunchul Kim* (b.1970, South Korea) as part of the solo exhibition 'Gyre' presented in the Korean Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale, curated by *Young-Chul Lee*.<sup>37</sup> I was overwhelmed, as it took me to an alternative sci-fi universe with the presence of hundreds, maybe even thousands of real mechanisms and liquids all coded and coupled together. And I recently got to know the artist *Joey Holder* (b. 1986, London, UK) during an artist talk and studio visit. Her interest in revealing the unknown, non-human species, conspiracy theories and utilizing research expresses itself in the creation of immersive and multimedia installations that often include moving image, sculptures and the smart integration of full scale wall-stickers and colored filtered light that make the experience of her works immersive.<sup>38</sup> Such artists utilize not only aesthetic elements that remind us of machinery or future imagination but in the conceptualisation of their work there is also a looming presence of science fiction. An example of evident critique that is embedded in art that relates to me to science fiction is the work 'SlaveCity' by the Dutch artist *Joep van Lieshout* (b.1963, Ravenstein). Criticizing capitalism and its rationalization over human comfort here is utilized in a way of extreme dystopian design for a fictive society. By inviting the viewer into an alternative world where such ideals of rationalization went extreme. *SlaveCity* is a series of numerous designs of drawn out plans, not fictional but realistic calculations, and scale models for a city where all 200.000 imagined slaves are supposed to work in a call-center. Everyone sleeps and poops in the same room without any amount of personal private space, the poop and pee as well as deceived body's are reproduced into the daily food for the slaves -everything is rationalized and designed to erase human comfort and turn it into the capitalistic desire of more profit.<sup>39</sup>

"... the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion".<sup>40</sup> Just as science fiction has expanded and spreaded over time the boundaries and distinction between science fiction and contemporary social reality and its merge with technology seems to fade. Sci-fi scenarios in literature, comics and films can predict a quite accurate description of the fictional future, a future that becomes very real today. I wonder if the prediction itself was very well imagined in the past or that the creators on the technological side of the development were inspired and influenced by the actual domain of science fiction and their technological imaginary worlds. "... extrapolative science fiction demonstrates a plausible continuity between the present and the envisioned future by showing that that future grows directly out of the ideas and

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<sup>36</sup> De Pont, "Isabelle Andriessen; DORM", De Pont, September 18, 2021, <https://depont.nl/tentoonstelling/isabelle-andriessen>

<sup>37</sup> Yunchul Kim, *Gyre*, 2022, five kinetic immersive installations interacting with each other, curated by Young-Chul Lee, solo show in the Korean Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale, Italy.

<sup>38</sup> Joey Holder, "About", Joey Holder, Accessed on September 13, 2023. <https://www.joeyholder.com/about>

<sup>39</sup> Niek Hendrix, "De Pont, Joep van Lieshout/atelier van Lieshout, Slave City", *Lost-Painters*, September 19, 2016.

<https://www.lost-painters.nl/de-pont-joep-van-lieshoutatelier-van-lieshout-slave-city/>

<sup>40</sup> Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto*, 6

inventions of the present..."<sup>41</sup> The question is then, does science fiction come after or before certain developments, or both? Does science fiction and our capability of imagining alternative worlds set technological developments in motion? Can we actually see the world and its reality without looking through the filter of a collective knowledge of science fiction? Besides the world and logic of engineering to solve complex designs of machines, it is my suspicion that the broad domain of science fiction functions as one of the main three actors in the chain of desire driving science fiction, and science fiction driving machines. Science fiction then could be seen as an echo of our collective imagination from the past to the future, putting our technological present in motion. Our capability of fiction and social reality working together into a symbiotic relationship, for they cannot live without the other. Science fiction and social reality slowly become hybrids, just like the distinction between humans and machines is fading.

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<sup>41</sup> Spicer, "Toward sustainable change," 56.

## Biological machines

We can now take the story further into the concept and meaning of machines driven by human desire and science fiction. Even further than actual physical machines of metal, micro chips and invisible machinery of data. The becoming of machines aimed to function in mimicry; taking over human labor, energy and an approach to fix human error. However, machines and science fiction have also secretly been functioning as a mirror, a conceptual reflection. A mirror now not aiming towards society, but towards ourselves, the human species. Studies on understanding the self, the human species and its behavior have been going on for a long period of time through era's of, among other, studies in philosophy, anthropology, art, theology, the exploration and understanding of the human body through studies of the subconscious mind within the domain of psychoanalysis. Numerous artists, especially after the rise of psychoanalysis in the 20th century have been driven by their interest in the human and its psych. A good contemporary example is in the work of *Tony Oursler*, and in particular the works that were part of his exhibition '*Black Box*' at Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. The life-sized video sculptures feel life-like through their simulation of human psychological characteristics. Through an obvious inquiry to the human mind, *Oursler* also shares this exploration of the mind and spirit with his audience while gazing upon subject matter like popular culture and the ambiguity of modern technology through aesthetic choices and the manipulation of images.<sup>42</sup> It seems we have been trying to grasp the essence of ourselves, our species, how and why we behave as we do within the spectacle of the world that surrounds us. Would it be a coincidence that now or at the end of the 20th century - in the midst of the digital age - it is suggested that "*everything is a machine*" ?<sup>43</sup>

The meaning of the machine here is multiplied. Humans do not only create machines, humans are machines themselves. "It is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, it eats. it shits and fucks... Machines-real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections. An organ-machine is plugged into an energy-source-machine: the one produces a flow that the other interrupts. The breast is a machine that produces milk, and the mouth is a machine coupled to it."<sup>44</sup> It is a metaphor of humans acting as machines which I would continue to call *biological-machines* -as a reference to the desire-machines of *Gilles Deleuze* and *Félix Guattari*.<sup>45</sup> They are entities or units functioning within a political environment that create actuality - or in other

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<sup>42</sup> "Black Box", Tony Oursler, Januari 23, 2021, <https://tonyoursler.com/black-box>

<sup>43</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Translated from the French by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 12.

<sup>44</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 11

<sup>45</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 11

words: the state of reality.<sup>46</sup> Biological-machines are entities that seek connection with other entities, for they lose their identity when not connected with others, a very relational connection.<sup>47</sup> The body itself is a biological machine consisting of multiple smaller organ-machines.<sup>48</sup> No pieces of metal and oil, but cells, bones, hormones, tendons, muscle, fleece, bacteria, flesh, DNA. Organ-machines are restricted to their own little divisions, strictly framed in their tasks: the gut-machine stores, breaks down and digests food. The lung-machine filters and absorbs oxygen and transitions it to the cells, it allows for the mouth-machine to communicate and smell with its connection to the mind- and language-machine. The heart-machine is a pump that transitions the blood flow running through a network of tubes coupled onto the totality of the body-machine. Another organ-machine filters toxins from the machine's food supply coming from the stomach-machine that is connected back again to the gut-machine. All organ-machines work perfectly together in order for the body as a machine to function. A biological-machine consumes nutrition to gain energy in order to function as a machine.

“A mouth; probably the most interesting hole in the world.”<sup>49</sup> For the mouth is also a machine with a variety of mysterious functions. It acts as a consumer of nutrients and matter, a port for transitioning energy to the organ-machines. The mouth-machine also acts inwards as the mouth-machinery seems to talk and whisper very vividly within the individual's metaphysical realm of the psych. Addressing the inner-individual sometimes with I, you or even we.<sup>50</sup> Those inner mouths are always conditioned, as they seem to absorb and copy their surroundings. “People bear memories of being the mother's and father's object in ego structure.”<sup>51</sup> Then, through the inner mouths, desire is channeled towards the physical mouth-machine through communication software that is programmed and developed over time with the process of a continuous absorption of words. Language, on its own terms, is also a machine used and produced by the mouth-machine in motion. Language in this production process is carried through vehicles of letters and words. All these vehicles carry and conceal their own meanings.<sup>52</sup> Meanings that seem to shift and transform over time in their use, or in their intensity and impact.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Stephen West, “Episode #127 ... Gilles Deleuze pt.3 - "Anti-Oedipus". *Philosophize This!*. Podcast audio, 6th of February, 2019. <https://www.podglist.com/philosophize-this/episode-127-gilles-deleuze-pt-3-anti-oedipus/index.html>

<sup>47</sup> West, "Anti-Oedipus"

<sup>48</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 11

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Swinkels, in an interview for the publication of the exhibition UIT ZICHT. Directed and curated by Julia Fidder and Myriam Gras, July 2023.

<sup>50</sup> Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object; Psychoanalysis of the unthought known; Intrasubjective space and the relation to the self as object*, (Abingdon: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2018), 24.

<sup>51</sup> Bollas, *The self as object*, 23.

<sup>52</sup> Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "semiotics." Encyclopedia Britannica, September 7, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/science/semiotics>.

<sup>53</sup> Dr Karen Parham, “Deleuze & Guattari's Friendly Concepts”, *Philosophynow*, (2021). [https://philosophynow.org/issues/144/Deleuze\\_and\\_Guattaris\\_Friendly\\_Concepts](https://philosophynow.org/issues/144/Deleuze_and_Guattaris_Friendly_Concepts)  
- Citation - “This is due to their belief that language, like everything else, is constantly evolving, so words don't have fixed meanings.”

The mind, coherently connected to all the other organ-machines, also acts as a machine. And it suspiciously seems to imitate the function and identity of a radiofrequency or a computer's internet browser, concealing data of images and words saved on clouds and memory sticks. Concealing -both with personal and collective libraries- knowledge that is structured by algorithms, behavioral codings -and perhaps also suppressed or socially forbidden sections of a library, as the layers of the mind-machine run very deep. Everything in the biological-machine is in constant motion. It never sleeps and is always in production. Consciously and subconsciously, the mind stores and utilizes information through triggers, according to its needs. The concept of cryptomnesia is like a bug in the oiled machine of the mind, or maybe just a plug-in providing a surplus of sorts.<sup>54</sup> It is to remember an idea but to forget the messenger. Resulting in thinking that the idea's origin starts with the creator, the illusion of an 'original' idea. The human mind, a fragile instrument, is subjected to thousands of daily data and information, retaining almost all messages in their lives but often forgetting their source. Think of images, smells, symphonies, concepts, desires, impulses, intentions, affections - all believed to be absorbed and stored deep within the mind and to come back to the surface when triggered, infiltrating within all types of creation and believed to be originals. The artist is believed to make the most use out of this cryptomnesia mechanism.<sup>55</sup>

Machines, machines, machines. *Everything is a machine*. Could my leather shoe act as a machine, my pencil, or the keys to my front door perhaps? Yes, for in this multifaceted definition of machine, however, it needs to be used. A unit in motion becomes considerably inactive or unproductive without the coupling with other biological-machines.<sup>56</sup> Bicycles, cars, tools, chairs and phones - as machines, only inherit their identity through how they are being used. 'Identity' is seen here as in an endless state of becoming, never static, always reforming and evolving. Just as an individual machine has no fixed identity, a revolutionary movement, society, even a religious-machine -all have no fixed identity, they are always in motion. All past collections of events, activities and ideologies combined blending with the present, driven by the future.<sup>57</sup> Depending on how machines are used, not their intended function but their utilization, determines their identity. A tablet used as a cutting surface in the kitchen inherits an identity of a cutting board, an empty swimming pool used as a skateboard ramp inherits an identity of a skating area and a hamburger used in a throwing food fight becomes ammunition.<sup>58</sup> Meaning that the identity of cities, individuals, objects, etc, similarly is never static, always evolving.

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<sup>54</sup> Tjeu van den Berk. "kunst leeft vanuit verborgen herinneringen". In T. v. Berk, *Eigenzinnig kunstzinnig, de visie van Carl Gustav Jung op kunst*, (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2005), 69.

<sup>55</sup> Van den Berk. "kunst leeft," 69.

<sup>56</sup> West, "Anti-Oedipus"

<sup>57</sup> West, "Anti-Oedipus"

<sup>58</sup> West, "Anti-Oedipus"

Art as a machine inherits its identity through function as well. The function of 'art', in general or as a concept, however has, throughout history, been heavily debated upon. In the scope of the reasoning of art as a machine, a case-study might provide us with a more precise insight. An example of an artwork as a machine could be the urinoir of *Marcel Duchamp*. The idea of the ready made at large plays with this idea of inheriting identity through the utilization of an object rather than its intended 'meaning'. *Duchamp* altered the identity of the machine of the urinoir through flipping and signing the thing and then sending it off to a competition to enter it - the 'machine' was then no longer a machine to dispose the body of urine, it now was merged with the function and identity of 'art' by *Duchamp*.<sup>59</sup> And the machinery of this work is still in motion today, as its representational identity is spread through the world with images and literature in books, online archives, educational powerpoints, etc. In an era of social media, art and its machinery spreads itself very quickly.

Also in a more abstract or hidden manner, art, in a hopeful case, sets in motion all other thinkable machinery, both biological-machines and static machinery through transportation over the world into different exhibition spaces, utilizing both transportation-machines but also curator-machines and other museum workers in order to be shown to the audience, or consumer-machines, where it might provoke feelings, affects and thoughts. Perhaps the more force an artwork embody's, the more it impacts all the other biological-machines surrounding it, then it functions as a very powerful metaphorical machine.

The only difference then with the metal machines would be that the biological-machines have no fixed goal or purpose, allowing their desires, their function and with it their identity to fluctuate more easily.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, machines of metal are, still, dominated by biological machines, for they determine their function and tasks. But what then drives the biological machines to wish to stay in motion - if not driven by oil, steam, electricity or gasoline? Since a machine of metal is actually driven by the motives of the biological-machines. It, not yet, has a motive or aspiration to be driven on its own. Biological-machines of course also need their nutritions -proteins, carbs, hydration, vitamins. It is nutrition that keeps the biological-machine sustained with energy. Just like machines of metal need their nutritions to keep their flow going. The question is more, what drives the biological machine to wish to continue to stay in motion, what is their motive to continue to produce? Most important of all the processes the biological-machine needs to be driven by a driving force, an inner will to keep their flow going. There is a line of studies and thinkers who proposed thoughts on this inner driving force. Are biological-machines driven by an inner force of *will to life* perhaps?<sup>61</sup> But if one would even risk their lives for the gain of power, would it not rather be a *will to*

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<sup>59</sup> Marian Cousijn, "Marcel Duchamp and the art of exhibition making," *Relief* 10, no. 1 (2016): 146.

<sup>60</sup> West, "Anti-Oedipus"

<sup>61</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation, translated from German by E.F.J.Payne* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 275.

<https://archive.org/details/the-world-as-will-and-representation/mode/2up>

power?<sup>62</sup> Or would all biological-machines be driven by an irrational inner *desire for pleasure or libido* that is subjected by an Oedipal framework of the 'daddy-mommy-me' triangle?<sup>63</sup> Such conceptual forces of desire have been considered to be the driving force behind our behavior, choice, and I guess, also behind artistic production.

Traditional studies have tried to define such forces of desire as a process that channels towards *production or acquisition*. A *production* side of this view upon desire would suggest that - I am thinking in terms of artistic production - the desire-machinery itself would consciously know that a truly desirable object can only be created by something external, something beyond the individual.<sup>64</sup> "The memory of this early object relation manifests itself in the person's search for an object (a person, place, event, ideology) that promises to transform the self."<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, this does not prevent us from creating our own desired objects and imagining the external casualties in it.<sup>66</sup> As if in artistic production artists fool themselves to believe their creation is created by sources that are at play outside us, creating our own illusions within the desire-machinery to turn towards something we created ourselves. In many traditions, such as Sigmund Freud's, the *acquisition* side of desire is seen as desiring an object that is lacking, usually something that cannot easily be obtained. According to him, desire is dependent on the essence of lack and is said to reside deep within the human unconscious, the psych. And within this process it produces the *fantasized* object - a second reality, a psychic reality.<sup>67</sup> The fantasized object is seen here as a mysterious theatrical type of machinery that seems to have a lot in common with the machinery of nightly dreams. Desire functioning as the ultimate driver of our capability of fantasy. And in its turn fantasy drives the lack-based desire, creating an infinite motion of pursuing fantasy's. "...at the same time it intensifies the lack by making it absolute: an "an "incurable insufficiency of being," an "inability-to-be that is life itself."<sup>68</sup> <sup>69</sup> The famous and traditional Oedipus complex, consists of a framework of analysis that builds on the interpretation of nightly dreams, the unconscious mind and the unconscious desire for the parent of the other sex - desiring the one and having rivalry with the other.<sup>70</sup> This framework and lack-based approach of desire is believed to be fully rooted not only in psychoanalysis, but also within capitalistic societies and

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<sup>62</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common, (New York: The Modern Library: Random House, digitized:2006), 123.  
<https://ia803405.us.archive.org/32/items/thus-spoke-zarathustra/Thus%20spoke%20Zarathustra.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 67.

<sup>64</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 38.

<sup>65</sup> Bollas, *The transformational object*, 4.

'Objects' in psychoanalytic object relation theory refers not only to a pursuit of physical 'things', but also considers objects to be part of the psychic reality.

<sup>66</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 38.

<sup>67</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 38.

<sup>68</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 39.

<sup>69</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 38.

<sup>70</sup> Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Oedipus Complex", Encyclopaedia Britannica, July 03, 2023 - citation- : " *Sigmund Freud introduced the concept in his Interpretation of Dreams (1899). The term derives from the Theban hero Oedipus of Greek legend, who unknowingly slew his father and married his mother; ...*".

environments, especially within unspoken values and norms. It is believed that both are forcing us to suppress our desire, we have to contain it.<sup>71</sup> Desire then, is seen as a negative force, an internal intuitive beast within the individual that needs to be kept in its cage guarded by the rational voice within ourselves. For humans believe to be distinctive from animals. And it is hard to escape such a suppressed system, for Oedipus is everywhere.<sup>72</sup>

In their practice, *Mire Lee (b.1988, Korea)* is concerned with notions of sexuality and desire. While the artist seems to use machinery in the hardware sense, the sculptures are seemingly alive though being an apparent hybrid of machine and intestines. The pink coloured flesh-like sculptures wrap around the cold metal structure in their work *Carriers*.<sup>73</sup> Following their investigations towards 'vorarephilia', a fetish of being swallowed or swallowing another alive, we see how the unrestrained pursuit of desire finds its shape in Lee's sculptures while having an uncanny or almost dystopian aura around them.<sup>74</sup> In Lee's practice, we see how desire is associated with a negative annotation as she delves into the potential harmful sides of excessive desire-pursuing.

However, desire can also be approached differently. The French philosopher *Gilles Deleuze* and psychoanalyst *Félix Guattari* offer us a counter approach that will turn the tables on our traditional view towards desire. For desire does not occur when something lacks, instead it can be considered as a positive force of production.<sup>75</sup> A positive way of looking at desire considers desire as perhaps the most vital part of all biological nature. It is the main driver of all life in the universe. Humans, but also animals, plants, cells, bacteria - all thinkable biological species - are being driven by desire. Desire in this view is considered not to be residing deep within the individual's psyche acting as a machine distinctive from all other machines. No, desire here is seen as the bridge between all possible and thinkable machinery. An energy source that activates all thinkable machinery acting as the energetic coupling between them.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps a source of energy that resides also between the artist and their creation, a field of energy that seems to work as a powerful magnet. Desire is to be considered as the ultimate driving force that sets all biological-machines, movements, revolutions, societies and the world in motion, for it is a productive and positive force that creates flow, a lifelong path of becoming, always in motion, instead of being. It is rooted throughout all behavior, will and choices in

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<sup>71</sup> Parham, "Against Control"

<sup>72</sup> Michel Foucault, "Schizoanalysis and Collectivity" in *Anti-Oedipus*, eds. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Translated from the French by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 7.

- Citation - "*Oedipus is belief injected into the unconscious, it is what gives us faith as it robs us of power, it is what teaches us to desire our own repression. Everybody has been oedipalized and neuroticized at home, at school, at work.*"

<sup>73</sup> Mire Lee, *Carriers*, 2020, Silicone, pvc hoses, peristaltic pump, pigmented glycerine, laser-cut metal plates, used formworks and other mixed media, dimension variable, long sculpture's body height approx. 230 cm, <http://mirelee.com/en/works/carriers>

<sup>74</sup> Madeline Weisburg, "Mire Lee", La Bienale, <https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2022/milk-dreams/mire-lee>

<sup>75</sup> West, "Anti-Oedipus"

<sup>76</sup> West, "Anti-Oedipus" (14.38)

life. A force believed and proposed to always be flowing freely, and it needs to be freed instead of something we should be suppressing.<sup>77</sup> “Deleuze and Guattari encourage us to escape psychic and social oppression that tells us who we are and how we should behave. Instead, we need to be creative, let desire run wild as a schizophrenic would, and make unusual connections in our thoughts. As soon as we stop doing this, desire is captured, and full creativity is lost.”<sup>78</sup>

And through this free flowing positive force of desire, individuals, collectives, society's, movements, revolutions are all flowing - like lakes and rivers of water. Rivers crashing into other rivers, rivers being overrun by seas, and seas being overrun by oceans. This approach towards the meaning of machines is very fluid, as it refers to entities flowing in motion, as they have the desire to connect with other machines. Forming a collective of machines - like sub-groups, political movements, religious movements or even revolutions.<sup>79</sup> All individuals in such large scale collective machines act each as a vital smaller mechanism while also being a dynamic machine of its own. Here, power comes into play. Think of the example of an individual with a powerful leading position in such a political machine. It uses the enormous force of that political-machine on another individual without a political, or any kind of collective machine. The political-machine is then being used for that leader's own personal desire.<sup>80</sup> In the case of political and revolutionary machines, it is often the desire to change a socio-political environment. The machine then acts as a chain of forces, motions and flows in the form of meetings, speeches, commercials, readings, prides, raids, protests, tv- talks, social media and propaganda. Often in combination with utilizing symbol-machines such as stickers, t-shirts, logos, wristbands.<sup>81</sup> Symbol-machines often carry and conceal more forces than one are embedded with a collection of identities, they carry the force of such a collective machine in them, they embody it. They are very active vessels that create affect, and therefore movement. And the more force and identity they are holding, the more they set the state of reality in motion. Or how I would like to see it - the nowness in which all flows of machines in the spectacle of the world continuously unfold. Where past and future is but part of the imaginary, the fictive, that are actors and drivers that set the flow in the present in motion.

And some biological-machines create more flow than others.<sup>82</sup> There are biological-machines that are believed to receive more flow than some that are responsible for creating this flow of machinery. There are some that reside more on the controlling side of flow -the news and media, politicians, large scale company directors- in comparison to others that are more dominated and subjected by those creators that are responsible for that flow. They reside more on the receiving side. For example, being retired and sitting on a couch in their

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<sup>77</sup> Parham, “Against Control”

<sup>78</sup> Parham, “Against Control”

<sup>79</sup> West, "Anti-Oedipus"

<sup>80</sup> Parham, “Against Control”

<sup>81</sup> West, "Anti-Oedipus"

<sup>82</sup> Doreen Massey, “A Global Sense of Place” *Marxism Today*, June, 1991, 26.

hotel room while staring at the news on television -is considered acting mainly as a receiver.<sup>83</sup> But also within the art world the artists that feel the desire to take matters into their own hands within the artworld, creating large scale exhibitions, Biennials, Art-companies -under the name of one artist- or even museums.<sup>84</sup> Perhaps some have the desire to lead or be more on the controlling side of flow in comparison to other artists that perhaps await their chance to be chosen to participate in a group exhibition. Nonetheless, smaller gestures can sometimes have a greater impact.

It is the dynamic nature of the biological and revolutionary-machines that makes it too complex to completely analyze or grasp. Not to be analyzed through a static model or theoretical framework. As flow echoes throughout space, driving other forces, conflicting and crashing with other forces, creating new forces that set other forces in motion. We could definitely say it works in 'mysterious' ways as all the movement of these forces could feel to be the doing of divine powers. But perhaps it is even better to call all the traffic of flows and forces that are at work in that nowness to be working in *rhizomatic* ways.<sup>85</sup> For all this machinery has no clear beginning and no clear end. It is interrelated and is partly driven forth because of this interrelatedness.

To come back to the traditional way of looking at desire -*be it a will to life, will to power, sexual lack-based desire in production or acquisition*- it seems to always begin with desire itself and perhaps there is a truth in all of them as this does not exclude the idea of desire creating fantasized objects -as I think artistic production is full of them. It only refers to that desire is not only creating fantasized objects, as desire is elevated towards the driver of all life. It feels to me like it's suggested we have to become and move through the world like animals again. Making humans part again of the animal domain as all our behavior is considered to be driven by this animalistic force of free flowing desire.<sup>86</sup> But I cannot help but wonder what this, as beautiful as it sounds, ideology means in relation to ethics. Those suppressions appear to refer to society and its unspoken norms, clothing rules, 'daddy-mommy-me' family situations, the *how and when* of the use of certain language, what beauty ideal

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<sup>83</sup> Massey, "Sense of Place", 26. - Citation -

"... some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it."... "Or - a different case again - there are those who are simply on the receiving end of time-space-compression. The pensioner in a bed-sit in any inner city in this country, eating British working class-style fish and chips from a Chinese take-away, watching a US film on a Japanese television; and not daring to go out after dark."

<sup>84</sup>This is a reference to a friend of a friend named Geert Kollau who decided that he did not want to only create art in the spectrum of the artworld. He desired to create a museum, under the name of MOYA, Museum of Young Art, in Oosterhout, the Netherlands.

<sup>85</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A thousand plateaus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia; introduction Rhizomes*, Translated by Brian Massumi (Londen: University of Minnesota Press), 25. - Citation - "A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and. . . and. . . and. . ." This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be." Where are you going?"

<sup>86</sup>Foucault, "Schizoanalysis", 9.

is preferred and what ideals to pursue in life. And sometimes I feel that it is good to suppress desire by surveillancing it with rational thoughts, especially if it could hurt or damage others. Sometimes chasing my desire results in the opposite, regretting my action and idealizing what I already had. And I guess it is true that I have learned to love my own suppression, sometimes. It sometimes feels very empowering, it gives me the feeling of control over myself, when I can say no to my desire, as if it were an inner enthusiastic dog that is pulled back by its leash. Perhaps a healthy balance is required, not to choose one over the other, between the rational and the irrational flows of free flowing desire? -also within artistic practice. An example of a powerful method I use to erase those daily critic-voices that block my artistic desires in the creative flow of artistic production is with a tool called 'the morning-pages'.<sup>87</sup> Every morning, right after waking up, I write three full pages of free flowing thoughts. Thoughts that often contain a lot of negativity, disbelief and irrational self-critique. It results in breaking blockages, less critical thinking and rationalizing and more working on instinct and letting my artistic flow emerge before me. Nonetheless, also a rational voice is needed, sometimes. As it is highly important to reflect every now and then. To stand in hippocratic terms 'still' is a way of deciding where to let the flow of the river spread next. Never at the same time but separate. Artistic production as a continuous motion of zooming in and out.

Desire, for me, remains a force always to be questioned again, and again. As it is complex to grasp when something is my own desire and when I strongly have the feeling that it is someone else's doing, perhaps accidentally copying other people's desires or being driven by surroundings and environments.

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<sup>87</sup> Julia Cameron, *The Artist's Way*; ochtendpagina's, translated by Gerdie Brongers (Zeist: Christofoor, 2002), 25.

## Contemporary zombies and hazardous environments

Before I dive into concepts of unprecedented hazards and contemporary zombies, I want to quickly delve into a roman/science fiction story that is believed to be famous for its dystopian predictions for the future. Written in 1949, after the events of World War II, *1984* by *George Orwell* The book tells a predictive story of a totalitarian society in the year 1984, who mastered manipulating and brainwashing its citizens. History books have been destroyed and rewritten - World War II erased from the past. Television screens - or 'telescreens' - all contain a camera and voice recording equipment and are a mandatory device within each household - in order to be surveillanced 24/7. The so called 'thoughtpolice' spies through these devices, which are present within all households and on every thinkable work floor. They monitor every single citizen on their psychological behavior by analyzing body language, facial expressions, listening to the pitch of their voice, the use of words within sentences, tracking their path from home to work, checking their participation in rallies and their degree of hate against the enemies of the government.<sup>88</sup> 'Thinking' differently is considered the highest violation and treason against the government. One cannot trust their thoughts because it could result in being kidnapped and tortured physically and psychologically. A society brainwashed by fear. You can trust no one for they might be working in secret for the thoughtpolice. No room for conspiracy, expressing frustration or critique against the state, for everyone is always being surveillanced - as the famous slogan of the book goes: "Big Brother is watching you".<sup>89</sup>

*1984* forms an example of science fiction where a prediction and fear for future societies and their use of power through technology is expressed. Why then could we ask, did *Orwell* have the desire to create or imagine such a society that is so deeply rooted in fear and aversion? Now, this dystopian prediction is very extreme and one could say his prediction on how technology and political power in the future are forged together into a hybrid of a totalitarian society machine was wrong. However, it is in some way becoming very accurate within the spectacle of our technological contemporary reality. Although, it is perhaps not "Big Brother is watching you", but rather "Big markets are watching you".<sup>90</sup>

I walk through the city. Billboards, digital advertisements, odors, sound, comfortable temperatures and symbols of brands - all adjusted perfectly into luring me to their desirable products. I am a desire- and biological-machine. And over the years it feels this does not happen only when walking the city streets. It happens when I use devices like my phone. A phone that advocates to help me search for information, help me navigate to where I want to go, allows me to

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<sup>88</sup> George Orwell, *1984*, (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2005).

<sup>89</sup> Orwell, *1984*

<sup>90</sup> Orwell, *1984*

communicate with who I desire to communicate with. However, everytime I seem to use those functions, I get distracted. After half an hour of scrolling through social media feeds and web pages I forgot what I was searching for. My phone has become a public space while still acting as if it were a private one. Within this so-called private space markets continuously attempt to lure me with their products and services through the use of advertisements that suddenly popup after I discussed a certain topic or product, carefully crafted and curated according to my desires, or clickbait for their must-read-news articles and unwanted emails after visiting their website once. Why do I suddenly want all these products that seem to have magically enchanted me? My ego is picturing idealistic scenarios of a self that is wearing those desirable products and thinking: "this could be me." I wonder if these desires I have daily are truly my own or if they are internally projected.

"Desire is captured; it is coded and territorialised."<sup>91</sup> And it is these capitalistic environments that are believed to, on a daily basis, territorialize my desire.<sup>92</sup> Their desire for profit spreads and suppresses its territory over mine, "[d]esire can never be truly liberated in such a system."<sup>93</sup> And as they channel desire through their smart advertisements and luring strategies - that seem to conceal varieties of and encourage socially preferred norms - they suppress my own flow of desire.<sup>94</sup> Perhaps, if my desire would run freely without such environments I would not desire so much as when being an individual living within such a capitalist territory. Where there was no desire towards their product before, there is now. It is creating illusionary desires that makes me think: "this is what I truly need." Withholding or maybe even forgetting what I actually wanted by overwriting my desire with their illusionary norms and smart advertising enchantments. My desire is mimicked, and I copy the desire that others seem to desire.<sup>95</sup> "Ski holidays are a great example of mimicked desire," said my brother-in-law once. Perhaps Christmas is also the work of the capitalist-machine, while it finds its roots in religion, the capitalist-machine eagerly appropriated the holiday, territorializing it, pushing out new products and trends in the preceding months so we can start early with consuming, buying,

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<sup>91</sup> Parham, "Against Control"

<sup>92</sup> Parham, "Against Control" - Citation - "*'Territorialisation' is Deleuze's and Guattari's word for the process whereby an assemblage represses desire by claiming it, and perhaps labeling it, in order to use it for its own benefit. The most obvious cases of territorialisation are when animals or humans domesticate an environment. Equally, a musician might territorialise notes to create a tune. Territorialisation is not necessarily a bad thing, except when it stifles desire.*"

<sup>93</sup> Parham, "Against Control"

<sup>94</sup> Parham, "Against Control" - Citation - "*For twentieth-century French philosophers there are two standard mechanisms that manipulate and/or suppress desire: capitalism and psychoanalysis. Capitalism channels desire, through advertising and controlling supply, rather than letting it flow freely. Psychoanalysis forces the conscious mind to control the seat of desire – the unconscious. The desires in the unconscious then might express themselves through myths rather than through real things – the myth of Oedipus being a notorious example.*"

<sup>95</sup> Bogumił Strączek, "René Girard's concept of mimetic desire, scapegoat mechanism and biblical demystification" *Researchgate*, nr.4 (December 2014). - Citation - "*Girard shows how the mimetic desire is directed toward the effacement of differences between rival (undifferentiation). The mimetic conflict turns antagonists into doubles. The mediator who previously encouraged the subject to imitate him suddenly becomes a rival and an obstacle. At the heart of mimetic rivalry there is a double imperative then: the demand of the mediator is the command, 'imitate me', but this message is coupled with a warning, 'do not imitate me'.*"

spending our money through generated desire. And while Christianity knows a decreased amount of followers, Christmas is still widely celebrated through the adaptation of the celebration by individuals and families that are apart from the holiday not religious, and maybe even adapted the holiday with an alternative motif than a religious one. I feel there is a pressure in society to follow the same aspirations as those believed to not have been liberated by such a system; having a well paid job, being successful in our career, afford a large house, have kids, pursuing fashionable brands and trends, renew your Iphone with every new coming edition as it gets slower because updates are only for those with the newest of the newest or buy that semi-electric car that can easily reach 300 km/per hour within ten seconds.

Is pursuing a wealthy life the new ideal?

It is an ideal of supposed liberation.

There is no chance to not be absorbed by commercials and advertisements when walking through the city or when using a device. The mind: a powerful but sensitive instrument that absorbs everything within its path, easily manipulated and deluded, especially when not being aware of such hazardous environments. As capitalism appears to be a free system it re-territorialized society again in secret, as its mechanics and machinery lurks underground and is often unconsciously at work.<sup>96</sup> That is exactly what makes it so hazardous, as capitalistic environments are machines that, by channeling desire through advertisements and controlling supply, are purely driven by their desire for profit.<sup>97</sup> Such machines consist of thousands of other machines like the logos of brands - the symbole-machines - that have their own mysterious force of power. It is copy behavior which I would like to call, 'artificial desire'. True unaware followers of this artificial desire remind me a lot of the behavior of zombies in myths and apocalyptic science fiction narratives, steadfastly following their desire, not for brains but for consumption of different matter. Perhaps our future is already here, and we are living a myth known as the era of the *contemporary zombie*.<sup>98</sup> If so, how would that mythical story begin, and how would it end?

Although one-on-one psychoanalysis still exists, mostly within literature, It seems that the study of the psych, meaning the functioning of the unconscious,

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<sup>96</sup> West, "Anti-Oedipus"

<sup>97</sup> Bollas, *The Transformational Object*, 5. - Citation - "We know that the advertising world makes its living on the trace of this object: the advertised product usually promises to alter the subject's external environment and hence change internal mood."

<sup>98</sup> The myth of contemporary zombies could refer to a state of being in the behavior of humans driven by artificial desire, automated and in pursuit of consumerism. A mode of behavior that is automated by artificial desires, being lured into commerce and mindlessly adopting concealed norms and values. Contemporary zombies differ perhaps from the concept of other zombies. They do not desire human flesh, although some are very driven to eat flesh from the supermarket, only because of their desire for the concept of meat. I think people can also have only certain aspects of contemporary zombies -I am very sure I have them too- and some have fully embodied it. Restless, only looking on their phone scrolling artificial desire after artificial desire. Although, there is a difference with the traditional approach to zombies and contemporary zombies, for they seem to act as if they behave in the swarm, but are driven by the ideal of individualism.

desire and behavior of the human being, has shifted its focus over the years from psychiatric mental health into capitalistic aspirations.<sup>99</sup> Seeping into the market of pharmaceuticals and medication and further meandering into the world of business, marketing strategies, consumer predictions and even political elections; All by collecting data gained from using devices.<sup>100</sup> Devices act not only on behalf of my longing desire as it stands in service of not only me but of many. "Modern machines are quintessentially microelectronic devices: they are everywhere and they are invisible."<sup>101</sup> For, behind the daily use of devices are smart invisible machines at work, analyzing our behavior. It gathers information which is analyzed by machine intelligence, a sort of artificial intelligence - I refer to them as the invisible machines.<sup>102</sup> It happens when scrolling through social platforms, downloading free applications, while visiting websites - when giving the cookies consent or allowing the access to use my camera, voice recorder, location. And the more I am willing to share the more it seems to know where I am, geographically speaking, how long I wait to push on a button, what route I walk from home to work and the goal of my morning run, my political aspirations, my financial situation, my sexual preferences, my true aspirations in life, what products I desire the most, what news triggers me in order for me to click on the article, what I had for breakfast yesterday.<sup>103</sup>

"Surveillance capitalism unilaterally claims human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data."<sup>104</sup> But it is not the invisible machinery itself that are the proposed puppet-masters, for they are controlled by the so-called surveillance capitalists. And as they attempt to acquire and analyze my personal data - my voice, my characteristics, facial expressions, financial expenses through banking, social activity, my emotions - the data is largely sold to a large market of other interested buyers, the supposed third parties.<sup>105</sup> Here my free raw behavior has become their desired product, I have become their product. With that product they do not only envision the prediction of my behavior in order to adjust their markets, they even desire to control it, control me.<sup>106</sup> "It revives Karl Marx's old image of capitalism as a vampire that feeds on labor, but with an unexpected turn. Instead of labor, surveillance capitalism feeds on every aspect of every human's experience."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Margreet Vermeulen, "Psychoanalyse 2.0: De tijd dat analytici alles relateren aan Freud is voorbij." *De Volkskrant*, February 2017. <https://www.volkskrant.nl/wetenschap/psychoanalyse-2-0-de-tijd-dat-analytici-alles-relateren-aan-freud-is-voorbij~b03e2311/>

<sup>100</sup> Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism; The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*, (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2019).

<sup>101</sup> Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto*, 12

<sup>102</sup> Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism*, 8 - Citation - "Although some of these data are applied to product or service improvement, the rest are declared as a proprietary behavioral surplus, fed into advanced manufacturing processes known as "machine intelligence," and fabricated into prediction products that anticipate what you will do now, soon, and later."

<sup>103</sup> Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism*, 8

<sup>104</sup> Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism*, 8

<sup>105</sup> Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism*, 8

<sup>106</sup> Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism*, 7

<sup>107</sup> Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism*, 9

Knowledge is power here as my digital personal file is filled with more and more data - the more someone knows what drives me the more one has power over me, especially when deliberately left unaware of it. So the puppet masters are growing stronger and more powerful with every acquired collection of data. And the unawareness of the data 'provider' is considered the puppet-masters most valuable trick, named '*the unprecedented*'. "When we encounter something unprecedented, we automatically interpret it through the lenses of familiar categories, thereby rendering invisible precisely that which is unprecedented... A tragic illustration is the encounter between indigenous people and the first Spanish conquerors. When the Tainos of the pre-Columbian Caribbean islands first laid eyes on the sweating, bearded Spanish soldiers trudging across the sand in their brocade and armor, how could they possibly have recognized the meaning and portent of that moment? Unable to imagine their own destruction, they reckoned that those strange creatures were gods and welcomed them with intricate rituals of hospitality."<sup>108</sup>

*Let them take my data, what harm can it bring me?  
I have nothing special to hide,  
I'm not a celebrity or royalty.  
Let them record my voice, my face, my emotions...  
Let them trigger me into buying their pretty things*

-Is what a possible contemporary zombie might say when explaining the collection of data.-

Letting markets create artificial lures and desires is not directly physically harmful. It is possible that some are less easily manipulated in comparison to others that are more vulnerable to such forces. However, this collection and utilization of personal data reaches deeper than commercial aspirations. As it seems we are so much self-centered and focussed on individualism in this era that we stop to think what such personal data can do with domination and influence over the collective. In terms of the endless flow of contemporary zombies, the more data there is of individual behavior, the more knowledge you gain on the behavior of the collective. "it's creepy Carol ... the amount of information you can get on people, people just give it to you!"<sup>109</sup>

The artist Dries Depoorter reminded me of this when I walked into his exhibition *Backend* at MU artspace in Eindhoven, the Netherlands.<sup>110</sup> Everybody who signed themselves as 'present' on the Facebook exhibition invitation was, with

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<sup>108</sup> Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism*, 12

<sup>109</sup> *The Great Hack*, 19:06, quote from Carole Cadwalladr; Journalist for The Guardian, directed by Karim Amer and Jehane Noujaim. (United States: The Others) Aired on January 6, 2019, on Netflix,

[https://www.netflix.com/watch/80117542?trackId=14170286&tctx=2%2C0%2C593e5f74-7c7f-49a9-b703-de3b8ce2e8e1-29114957%2CNES\\_A78C8EC2F2575B32A92C863B7D1553-B9F225DDE3A711-3F0E4E5631\\_p\\_1696233421403%2CNES\\_A78C8EC2F2575B32A92C863B7D1553\\_p\\_1696233421403%2C%2C%2C80117542%2CVideo%3A80117542%2CminiDpPlayButton](https://www.netflix.com/watch/80117542?trackId=14170286&tctx=2%2C0%2C593e5f74-7c7f-49a9-b703-de3b8ce2e8e1-29114957%2CNES_A78C8EC2F2575B32A92C863B7D1553-B9F225DDE3A711-3F0E4E5631_p_1696233421403%2CNES_A78C8EC2F2575B32A92C863B7D1553_p_1696233421403%2C%2C%2C80117542%2CVideo%3A80117542%2CminiDpPlayButton)

<sup>110</sup> Dries Depoorter, *Backend*, 2018, solo show in MU artspace in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. <https://www.mu.nl/nl/exhibitions/back-end-dries-depoorter>

their profile picture, displayed on a big screen in the exhibition space. But also through his use of public accessible cameras for works like *Jaywalking* or *The Follower* he creates a voyeurist feeling. In both works, we are presented with the direct images that were captured by open cameras. It is through Depoorters use of AI in *The Follower* that he creates a frightening feeling in me, as he puts the image that was published by the subject of the picture on their public Instagram account to an open accessible camera, where we can then see some type of 'making of' that was never intentionally authored by the instagram user of the picture.<sup>111</sup>

Not only social or commercial behavior is gathered and analyzed, also political behavior. There are companies that collect such collective, large scale data to predict your political aspirations, including your preferred vote for a possible upcoming election.<sup>112</sup> They gather the data from popular social platforms - like Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram. "It's incorrect to call Cambridge Analytica a purely sort of data science company or an algorithm company. You know, it is a **full-service propaganda machine**... We would not just be targeting you as a voter, we would be targeting you as a personality."<sup>113</sup>

We have entered an era where new hazardous and invisible power-structures are at play. Such full-service propaganda machines have been hired over the past decade by politicians and political parties all over the world. It is using the enormous amount of dataflows of biological-machines and collective-machines by planting seeds in the personal digital environment that can grow into artificial forces, steering desires. It is the ultimate creation of butterfly effects. Smart and small gestures on an immense amount of people in order to influence the flow of the contemporary zombie, a weapon to change the behavior of the masses. An example is to determine where 'undecided voters' reside and why they are still struggling with their vote for the upcoming elections.<sup>114</sup> Those undecided voters are identified, information is gathered and then unknowingly targeted through their social platforms profile by exposing them to the 'right' political content that steers their vote towards the desired angle.<sup>115</sup>

Truth here is out of question; truth is relative.

Besides news, media and political articles also racial and religious data is detected, targeted and used to change behavior. As certain racial groups have different norms than others it can be used as a vital tactic to create artificial and staged political hypes, fashions and movements. An example in one of the interviews in the documentary *The Great Hack*, portrays one of many strategies of 'Cambridge Analytica' that uses racial profiling. As they described one of their strategies in for example Trinidad; as they were hired by the Indian party in

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<sup>111</sup> Dries Depoorter, "The Follower", September 12, 2022. <https://driesdepoorter.be/>

<sup>112</sup> *The Great Hack*

<sup>113</sup> *The Great Hack*, 19:49, quote by Christopher Wylie - Former Cambridge Analytica employee who helped build the company.

<sup>114</sup> *The Great Hack*

<sup>115</sup> *The Great Hack*

Trinidad they targeted the youth by creating an artificial movement that encourages people, the youth, to stop voting as an act against voting and politics, called 'the Do So Campaign'. Banners, stickers, dance-choreography, campaigns, logos, etc. that represented the movement against voting were utilized to set the artificial movement in motion. The political parties in Trinidad consist almost only of two main parties; the blacks and the Indians, as they describe it themselves. And as Cambridge Analytica suspected; The blacks did not vote in solidarity to the movement, but the Indians were expected to listen to their parents, that's their culture, and voted anyway.<sup>116</sup> Besides Trinidad, It has been done already in Malaysia, Lithuania, Romania, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, the Brexit campaign and the Trump elections. Staging political movements or fashions which change the behavior of people during elections. "We are a behavior change agency. The holy grail of communication is when you can start to change behavior".<sup>117</sup> And in an election you often only need that extra 6 percent of votes in order to win.<sup>118</sup>

"We are not alone in falling prey to the technology illusion. It is an enduring theme of social thought, as old as the Trojan horse. Despite this, each generation stumbles into the quicksand of forgetting that technology is an expression of other interest."<sup>119</sup> We have arrived in an era where new powers are at play. Technological developments emerge in the form of invisible machines. And danger that is invisible or indirect can be considered the most hazardous. As propaganda machines, surveillance capitalists and their invisible smart machinery use technological development for their growth of power and profit, the narrative of mythical creatures like the contemporary zombie will live on. As I envision the contemporary zombie to refer to a specific mode of behavior, mostly driven by the ideal of individualism, I think a first step could be that: "[w]e must die as egos and be born again in the swarm, not separate and self-hypnotized but individual and related."<sup>120</sup> We are part of a bigger whole. Interrelated. We can not unthink ourselves from our couplings, both internally and externally, with other (biological) machines. As we are products of our surroundings, part of the multiplicities of flows and machines, subjected to other people's interest, we have to both become part of the collective and at the same time be critical individuals. Mindlessly following the collective is just as harmful, as is considering yourself unrelated to all the flows and rhizomes in the world. Perhaps a way out of the myth and captivity of artificial automation - like that of the *contemporary zombie* - is to strive to become a multifold, a hybrid: a cyborg. - *Cyborgs live in a world without gender, a world beyond the maze of traditional dualism and juxtapositions in which we have structured the logic of our bodies and ourselves, it is a creature of both fiction and social reality, a hybrid of machine and organism. A cyborg is both utopian and without innocence.*<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> *The Great Hack*, 53.16

<sup>117</sup> *The Great Hack*, 53.16

<sup>118</sup> *The Great Hack*, 53.16

<sup>119</sup> Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism*, 16

<sup>120</sup> Henri Miller "Introduction" in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari, 1.

<sup>121</sup> Donna Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto*, 4

## Concluding words

Now, to come back to artistic production, and in particular the work *as rhizomes whisper*. The previous chapters - *When juxtapositions become Hybrids*, *Biological machines*, *Contemporary Zombies and Hazardous environments* - all conceal elements which formed the basis for my current artistic practise and for the work *as rhizomes whisper*, displayed during the Kuvan Kevät Master graduation show of 2023.

First, I desire to start with describing a glimpse into the entirety of the process that led to the realization of the work. As I am very interested in the instrument that is the human psych, how it behaves, and how I can listen to my automated thoughts as an observer. Are those thoughts and desires my own, or are they constructed and mimicked from my parents, relatives, society? My work derives from personal aspirations as I often personally feel that I am completely overwhelmed and lived by my surroundings, especially in an overstimulating technological era, sometimes experiencing as if it were fiction. Fiction, therefore, is an important element and method in my artistic practice to pursue my interest in topics such as psychological automation, behavior, manipulation and suppression.

Before starting my MFA I was in the middle of a series of work that developed over a span of three years (2018-2021). My work consisted of drawings, paper cut-outs, sculptures and recorded sleep deprivation experiments projected on objects.<sup>122 123124</sup> My interest in behavioral structures was fed by an earlier existing inquiry towards symbolism and psychoanalysis. The artistic practice of the American artist Matt Mullican (b.1951, California) was for a long period of time a big inspiration. Especially in creating your own epistemology with symbols, frameworks and using the self as material. And simultaneously the theoretical behind my work was focused on structuralism and psychoanalysis like the Freudian and Jungian theories combined with Christopher Bollas' ideas on transformational objects. This series of work all emerged from such research, where research is considered to be just as fictional as science fiction, as it is the creation of concepts and viewing the world through imagined models, concepts and frameworks. Psychoanalytic theory for me often reads as if a new species has just been found on another planet and is analyzed as to why and how they behave and maneuver through space and time. In my work I designed symmetric symbols, patterns and systems where I abstracted paternal-behavior into abstracted and simplified forms. The symbols were formed through theory

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<sup>122</sup> [**Image 1**] Lennart Creutzburg, *Playing with the illusion of the own omnipotence*, moving image projected on bed and mattress, Graduation show at Rozenstraat, Tilburg, The Netherlands photo made by Lennart Creutzburg, May 1, 2019

<sup>123</sup> [**Image 2**] Lennart Creutzburg, Filmstill of the projection of: *Playing with the illusion of the own omnipotence*

<sup>124</sup> [**Image 3**] Lennart Creutzburg, *object of transformation 2*, sculpture consisting of concrete and mixed-media, photo made by Lennart Creutzburg, July 1, 2019

and own lived experience into symbolic geometrical forms that each refer to patterns and dominant processes within human behavior. Forms that are influenced by looking at electricity poles and mysterious grain circles that some believe to be created by aliens. The use of myself as material, or subject, was already very evident in my practice; I analyzed my psych and put myself into sleep deprivation-experiments where I would lock myself in my studio for days while recording.<sup>125</sup>

The starting point of my already existing practice was an inquiry into the mentioned 'symbol-machines', where I used psychoanalytic theories and psychological experiments to formulate and design these symbols. As my practice developed, my interest in systems, the human mind and machines developed with it, but into a sculptural form. The desire towards (re)integrating the sculptural in my practice was my motivation for pursuing my Masters in Fine Arts, with the aim to create a sculptural process that derives from my symbolic design series, but is also a body of work on its own.<sup>126</sup>

*Nina Wakeford* (UK) (artist and sociologist) was a guest teacher in 2022 at the Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki. During a one on one studio visit she sparked a thinking process in me that made it develop towards where it is standing today by posing the following question: *"Your work seems to speak a lot about 'thinking about thinking', it is research, logic, very rational. Now the question is; how could you use that same framework, but then with feeling, irrational. How does it feel to be completely lived and overwhelmed by your surroundings, to be mind controlled? Could you make art through that?"* For me, this was one of those crucial moments where the sculptural process shifted and started to detach itself from the more rational symbolic body of work. Pursuing a new series of work, through form and adding other elements, that sparks feeling and affect at the viewer, instead of research and rational thinking.

As I searched for feeling and affect, I desired to find elements that could be implemented into the form of sculptures. Just as in the previous symbolic body of work, I was very interested in elements and machinery that enable the movement of energy, electricity. So I started gathering images - by taking photos and studying the form and shapes of electricity poles, satellite dishes, radio stations and power plants - that I converted into the forms of my sculptures, like disks, poles, and wires. Not sculpted into perfection, but rough and sketched to allow a more personal aesthetic instead of an artificial one. However, the forms still communicated as if they referred to technological matter instead of referring to bodily and human psychological interpretations. That's when I began to implement recordings of body, mouths and flesh. An element deemed very important to steer the interpretation of the viewer towards more human and the biological. At the same time I was reading about rhizomes

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<sup>125</sup> [Image 4] Lennart Creutzburg, *Blueprint of the one molded by enslavement*, graphite on paper, photo taken by Lennart Creutzburg, October 19, 2020

<sup>126</sup> [Image 5] Lennart Creutzburg, *Let me out of the cave, please*. Curated by Julia Fidder, a collection of paper cut-outs, wooden sculpture and moving image presented on a pillow, photo made by Lennart Creutzburg, February 25, 2022.

and flows of machines connecting themselves fluently with others. It is when I started to look at how plants and mushrooms grow in the form of rhizomes. Forms started to flow and shape automatically, a very intuitive way of sculpting combined with forms that were planned ahead.

Through learning about ways to create three dimensional objects I found the material styrofoam, or XPS, extruded polystyrene foam. If you conceal the surface with aluminum tape it is also possible to create layers of the styrofoam sculpture with resins that are too chemical and harmful for the foam, for example polyester resin in combination with fiberglass. The aluminum surface of the sculptures interact very well with their environment for it interacts with the light within the space, allowing the sculptures to seemingly radiate light themselves. Playing with light and the aluminum surface of the sculptures became an interesting element to make them more alive. The outer layer of the sculptures was then created by making the fiberglass first wet and hanging it as a curtain to dry over the sculpture. The unconventional way of using polyester resin and epoxy resin was a choice to imitate the looks of fleece and membranes, though from a closer look it is revealed to have a very plastic look. The 'skins' of my sculptures are made in a way that they affect the viewer, the spiky hairs can be experienced as grim, or cute, or life-like, they might provoke the desire to touch them, and for some it creates the affect of 'don't touch' for they know that the polyester needles can be very sharp.<sup>127 128</sup>

The integration of using affects in the work *as rhizomes whisper* was also the intention behind the video recordings of my body and inner flesh. Through the recording and visualization of my own biological-machine, my inner factory, it might affect the audience by causing feelings of unpleasantness or disgustment, an extra layer to make the viewer realize that the body is not just the vain skin as it conceals a factory of organs, flesh, cells, muscle, fleece. It also points at the possibility for art to become a hazardous environment in itself. By choosing the form of an installation, the audience is surrounded, in this case by sculptures, screens displaying video's of flesh and skin, tubes with liquids or gummy-like textures, the whole could be felt as uncanny and alienating or even horrifying. Causing to affect the visitors, as biological-machines, that are perceiving the work. This aspect of adding elements of affect is definitely something I tend to explore further, both theoretically and artistically.

As the work *as rhizomes whisper* emerged, it started to inherit elements of science fiction. The artists mentioned throughout the three chapters have, among other artists, influenced me a lot in thinking about material, light, moving image, audio, and the domain of sculpture in combination with installation. The immersive multimedia installations of *Joey Holder* made me consider playing with light and colored filters. It made me realize that I desire to create sculptural

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<sup>127</sup> [Image 6] Lennart Creutzburg, *as rhizomes whisper*, resin, mixed-media installation; sculpture with a variety of materials, cables, sound, moving image on LCD screens, photo made by Lennart Creutzburg, June 13, 2023

<sup>128</sup> [Image 7] Lennart Creutzburg, *as rhizomes whisper*.

installations, exploring the space between the two domains. The work '*Papaver Pollution*' -that was part of the duo exhibition UIT ZICHT- is a good example of how I would like to continue to explore the sculptural in combination with small spacial inventions, like colored filters on all light sources -windows, lights.<sup>129 130</sup>

<sup>131</sup>For I feel this new sculptural body of work that continues from *as rhizomes whisper* requires to inherit its own environment, the work seen as a conditioned environment itself. However during the entirety of the artistic and written process I discovered differences in my artistic practise and that of others as well. The kinetic installations of *Yunchul Kim* made me question if I desire to create kinetic sculptures. Should the work consist of a variety of real machines or would I rather let the elements in the work function on the mental level? I chose the latter because I often feel that my imagination is blocked in the domain of kinetic art that already maneuvers on its own. Although I do desire to have some gestures in the work to act like real machines with for example the integration of moving image or sound integrated into the work. And, in comparison to the flesh and organ-esthetics of the sculptures of *Mire Lee* that feel to me to refer to the hardware of the biological-machine, I see my sculptural body of work and the work *as rhizomes whisper* specifically in the software sense, the coding behind the physical, the metaphysical. Simultaneously their approach towards desire, as a negative source of energy, is different in the way that I see desire often as something good, to be listened to, not to be suppressed. Although, as explained in the third chapter, it is easily territorialised, suppressed and dominated by other forces of power. My artistic practice is fully driven by desires -desires of healthy obsessions and escapisms, fleeing into fictive worlds.

Additionally, I desired for the work to not only reveal a hidden world behind the physical, for I wanted the work to be embedded with a critique towards such hazardous environments as described in the third chapter *Contemporary Zombies and Hazardous environments*. My way of working is not by expressing direct protest, nor do I perceive myself as being an activist in this particular matter. With my work I rather express an indirect way of criticism, a de-tour by revealing alternative fictional worlds that have been affected and conditioned by such manipulative environments. Just as science fiction often simply reveals an alternative dystopian world that subtly criticizes the 'real' world.

*as rhizomes whisper* became a mixed-media installation revealing a hidden realm beyond the physical, made physical. A world where machines, the biological and science fiction merge and become hybrids. This specific work, as part of an extended body of future hybrid sculptures to come, I believe to be rooted within the metaphysical realm of the psych. The software behind the

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<sup>129</sup> *UIT ZICHT*, curated by J.Fidder and M.Gras, duo show in artspace Kunstpodium-T in Tilburg, the Netherlands, and online, <https://kunstpodium-t.com/event/uit-zicht/>

<sup>130</sup> [image 8] Lennart Creutzburg, *Papaver Pollution*, 2023, sculptural installation; moving image inside sculpture consisting of styrofoam, aluminum/gold/copper leaves, epoxy resin, fiberglass, screen (telephone), pink color filters on windows and TL-light, an estimated area of 300 x 400 x 500 cm. Kunstpodium-T, Tilburg, the Netherlands. <https://lennartcreutzburg.nl/papaver-pollution>

<sup>131</sup> [image 9] Lennart Creutzburg, *Papaver Pollution*

biological hardware that is conditioned, nurtured and perhaps manipulated. A realm where the structures and codings of the physical are concealed. Inner mouths as machines are vividly talking and whispering, through screens and micro-speakers - a soundscape that acts as the movement of energy and desire production as it is lurking throughout its own environment.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> [image 10] Lennart Creutzburg, *as rhizomes whisper*.

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## List of Images



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

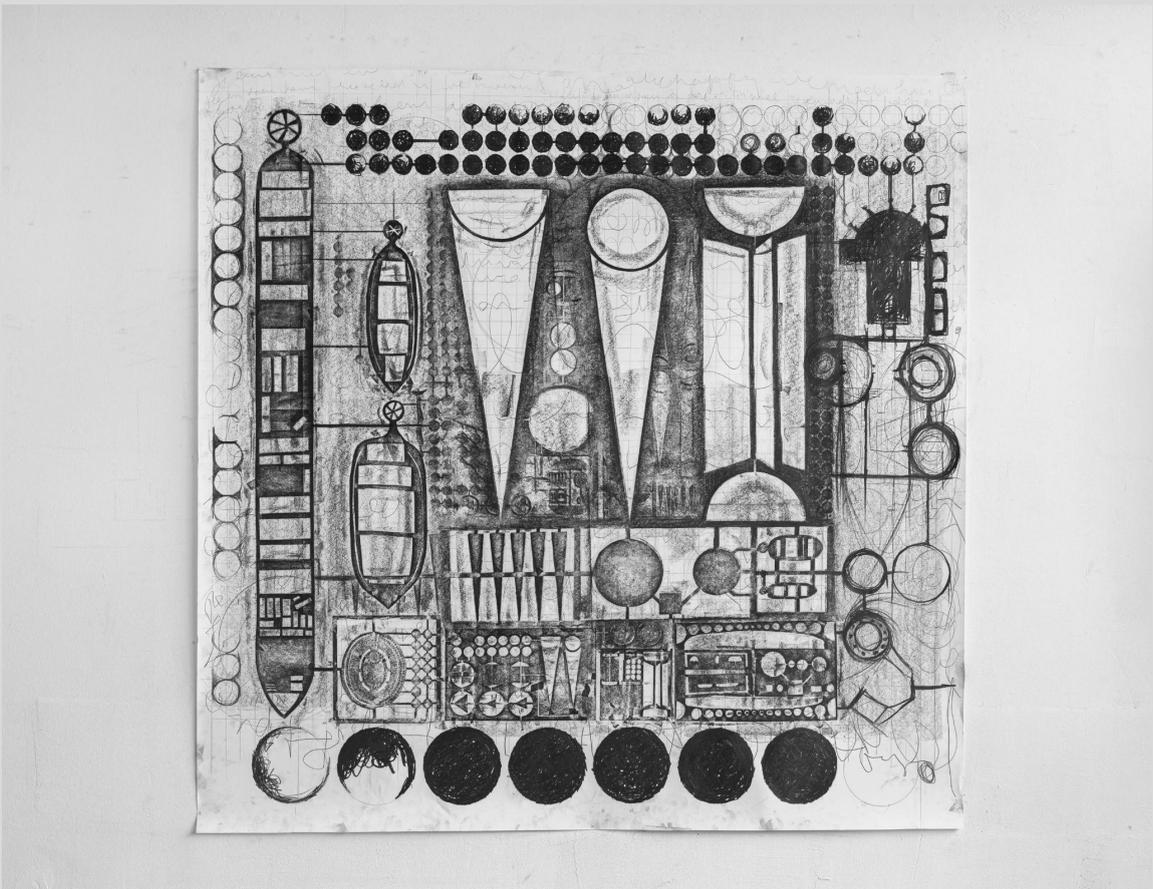


Image 4



Image 5

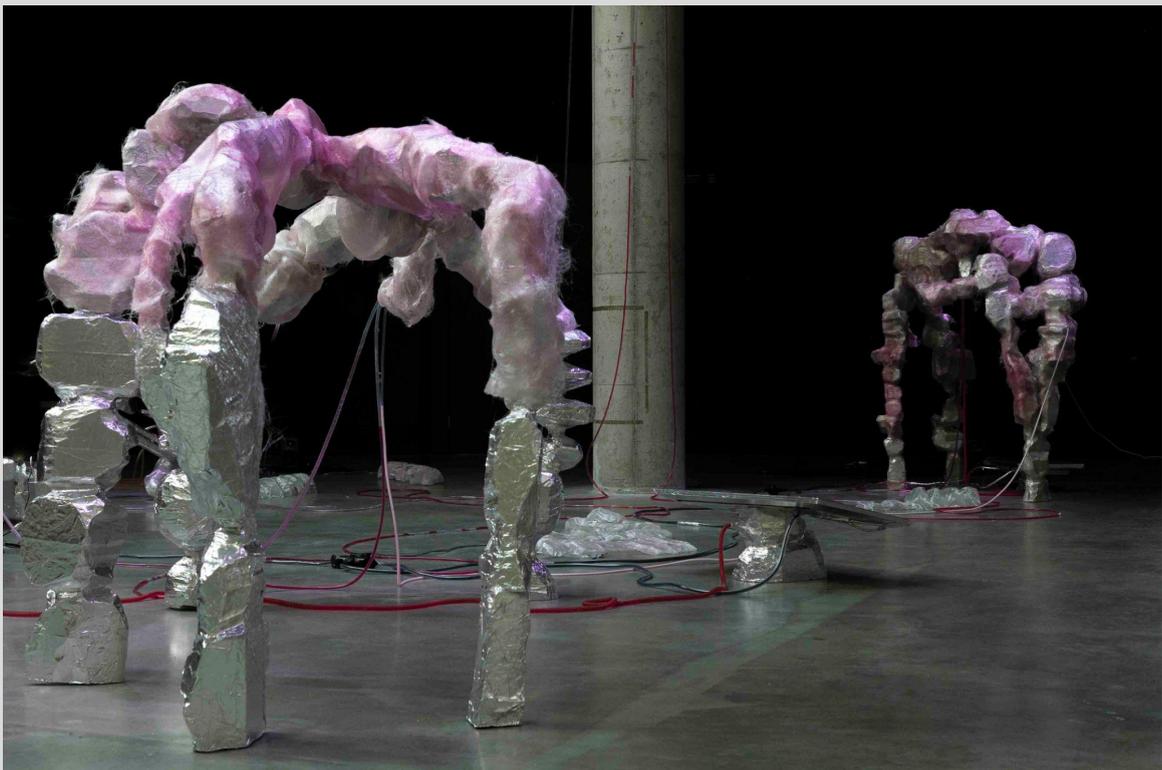


Image 6



Image 7



Image 8

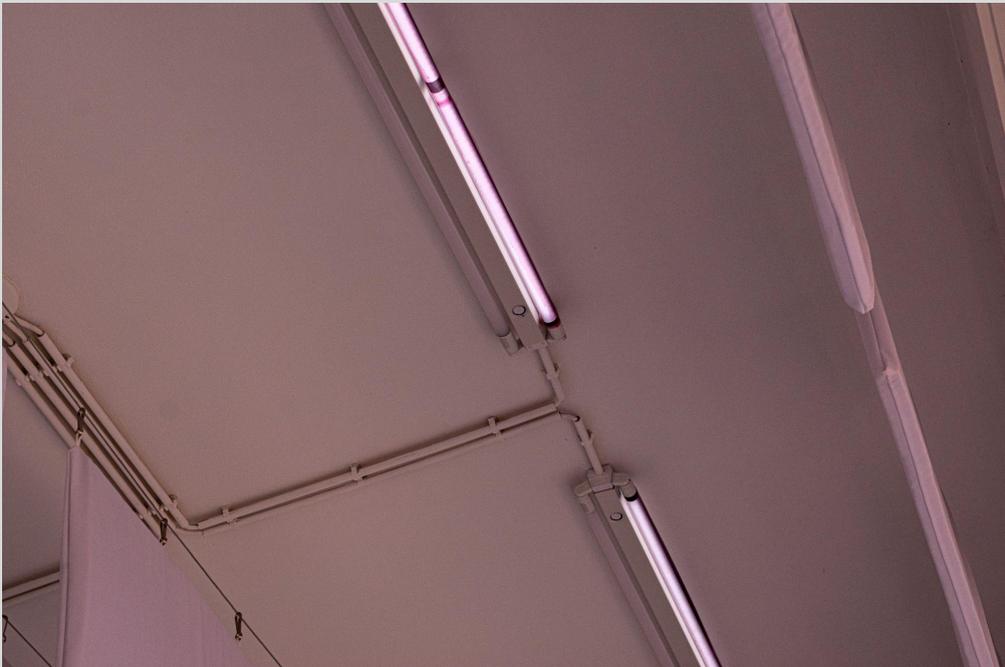


Image 9

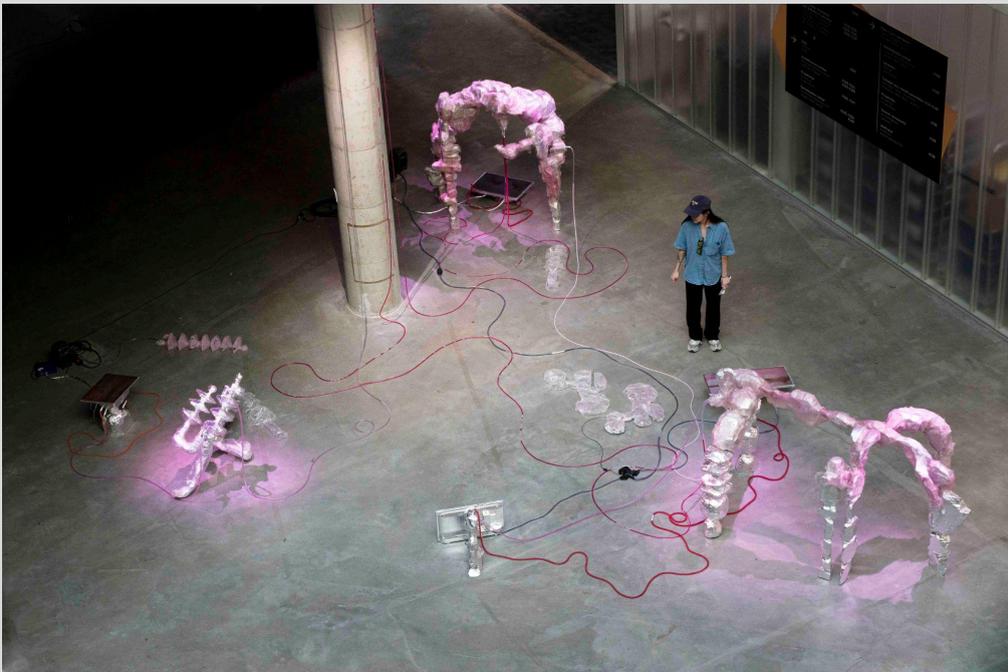


Image 10