Moving Image and the Museum: Speculative Spaces in 3 Acts

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For the closing of Issue 4 of the Garage Journal, titled 'In and Out of the Museum: New Destinations of the Moving Image,' I thought I would adopt one core methodology common both to the practices of film and of curating: storytelling. All stories have a time, a space, and characters. Following the Rashomon effect[1], each one of the below stories could offer entirely different points on the relationships between the moving image and the museum. Similar to how a soundtrack can set a specific mood in film to heighten the emotional impact of the sights and sounds of a story, place and space can also serve to enhance the impact of characters (artworks) depicted in exhibitions, while characters can help to heighten the effect of events described in writing.

Keywords: contemporary visual art, exhibition space, moving image, museum, speculation

For the aims of the current essay, I use three short stories, each embodied by a main character. They include:
1. The first story, Salomé Lamas' *A Torre* (2015), will reveal the mutual fascination between cinema and contemporary visual art at formal, conceptual, and methodological levels;
2. Then, the second story, Ângela Ferreira's *A Tendency to Forget* (2015) will offer a critical dialogue in which different actors (such as artists, filmmakers, curators, and anthropologists) reflect upon when addressing the social and political concerns;
3. Last is *HAPTIKOS* (2021), by Inês Norton, which visually translates the ways in which audiences are immersed in new relationships and (particip)a(c)tions upon entering the exhibition space(s).

1. *A TORRE* (2015) | Cinema and Visual Arts, From Immersive Storytelling Towards Speculative Futures

Salomé Lamas studied cinema and visual arts but rather than conventionally moving across these two fields, she 'has been attempting to make these languages its own, treading new paths in form and content, challenging the conventional methods of production, modes of exhibition and the
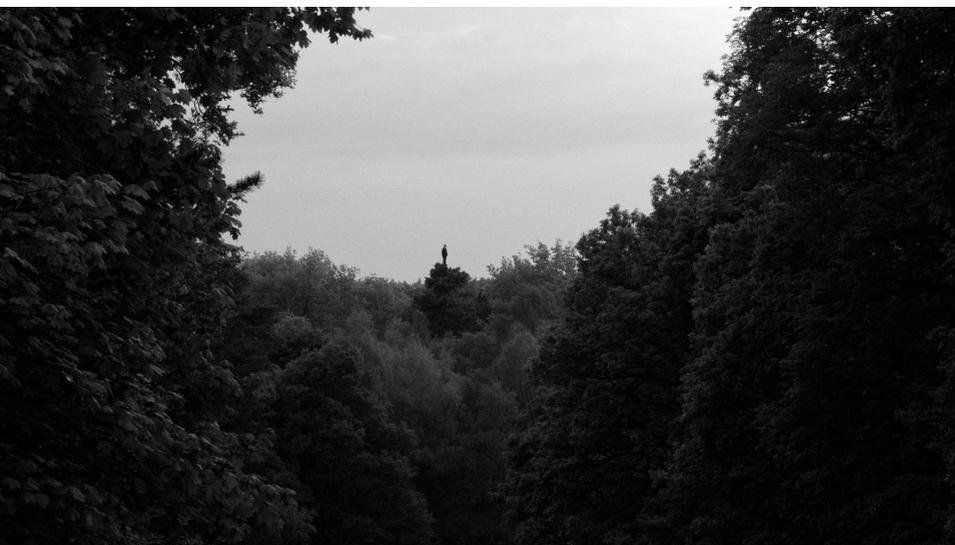
Figures 1-2. Screenshots of Salomé Lamas' *A Torre /The Tower* (2015). HD video, 16:9, black and white, Dolby 5.1 sound, 8 min., Portugal—Germany—Moldova. In collaboration with Christoph Both-Asmus (images courtesy of the artist).

lines between various filmic and artistic forms of aesthetic expression' (Lamas 2021). From a disciplinary viewpoint, Lamas' work combines various methodologies and expressions, which is visible in the ways in which she presents her work, from film, video, publications, and sound installations. At the conceptual level, Lamas has coined her work as critical media practice *parafictions* via storytelling, memory, and history to highlight the traumatically repressed and the historically invisible.

A Torre / The Tower (2015) is an eight-minutes film-installation, shot in Portugal, Germany, and Moldova, in collaboration with Christoph Both-Asmus and first shown at the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves

(Porto, Portugal) within the individual exhibition of Salomé Lamas titled *Parafiction* (2015). Since then, it has been shown in multiple occasions, as an installation in museums and as a film in cinemas. Filmed in black and white, nature is portrayed in its immensity through the dense images of a forest and the sounds of the wind. In this murmur arise piano notes, in a composition carefully prepared by Alvin Singleton, and we see a man walking, lonely, and sinking into the depths of the woods to emerge at the top of a tree in a relationship remindful of *The Ecological Thought*, in which Timothy Morton opens up a reflection to an all-embracing ecological dimension. Defending that ecology is more than global warming, recycling, and solar power and that it moves beyond everyday relationships between humans and nonhumans, *The Ecological Thought* shows how everything—from the human and the nonhuman realms—is interconnected (Morton 2010).

As we start wondering about a possible fiction in *The Tower*, the narration stops. From the enigmatic apparition of the lonely man in the wide nature, the story remains to be told. Narrative is an integral part of our lives as human beings. Narrative theories (in film and curatorial practices as well as in literature, media studies, psychology, or neurology) have shown the roles of narratives on our ways of being in the present, remembering the past, and projecting the future. Scholars such as Mieke Bal, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Tony Bennett have been exploring the different relationships between the making of narratives and the museum. *The Tower* was thought in different presentation formats: as an immersive installation for an exhibition setting; as a projection for an auditorium; and as a film for a screen. While all of the formats are interconnected by the same aim (telling a story) and the same setting (a museum), I will be focusing on the first, the immersive installation. Once we enter the exhibition space, such the video-room of the MAAT in Lisbon where it was shown in 2016, it feels as if we are walking the space of the character of the film (in a cinematic, rather than in a playful / videogame like way). At the MAAT, the film filled the whole wall, from the floor to the seven meters high ceiling while the sound of the wind occupied the space through a sound shower system that made it dramatically real and close to our bodies.

While discursive exhibition spaces are designed as spaces 'that foster negotiation and debate, polarize and politicize space, and invite discussion fraught with contradictory views' (Macalik et al. 2015: 1), immersive exhibitions like the film-installation *The Tower* (aim to) create knowledge in the realm of experience and affect via speculation. As such, the narrative in *The Tower* is open and the film exhibited becomes a firsthand experience to be completed by the audience.

Filmmakers make narration choices assuming that their audiences will watch their films in the order they were constructed (Carmona 2017), whether it is a linear or a non-linear order. While the purpose of narration in film could be to make sure that the spectator perceives and understands the narrative content as referred by David Bordwell (2008), Lamas chose to create a narrative that it is not meant to be completely comprehensible—

or, in other words, the narrative is meant to frustrate the spectator's narrative comprehension. Alike immersive exhibitions, puzzle-like incomprehensible film structures may result in provoking experiences or challenging audiences' natural mind state. Bordwell also refers to Art Cinema narration in its alternate use of *siuzhet*[2] and style in their dominant positions to create ambiguous open-ended narratives and psychologically incoherent or unclear characters.

Salomé Lamas' work uses precisely these structures—the main role of narration is to cue the audience's narrative comprehension and, therefore, there is no apparent narrator in a film narrative sending a message but only a perceiver. As such, Lamas invites us to speculate about the manifold relationships between humans and nature in ways we would probably not have imagined by ourselves in our everyday life. Remindful of Fan Kuan's painting *Travelers Among Mountains and Streams* (c. 1000), *The Tower* goes beyond telling a story or making it comprehensible to provide the spectator with an experience of being confronted with the immensity of nature. Visually combining empty spaces with crowded portions as a visual translation for opposites intertwining with each other, like Fan Kuan, Salomé Lamas organized and presented different aspects of the landscape within a single composition using a shifting viewpoint. The various details placed throughout the image cause the viewer's eyes to move from each minute depiction to the next always from the human and terrestrial world in the mountains.

From near to far, Salomé Lamas has described with detail the solemn grandeur of a majestic landscape. The lonely man in the depths of the woods epitomizes the insignificance of humans compared to nature while leaving room for closing the narrative—what is he doing? What is going to happen with him? The abyss at the foot of the man and the wide nature, we project our sensibilities onto the main character and, as it were, see through his eyes, enter into his experience in a self-identification through another process remindful of Lacan's mirror-stage.

In his essay *The Mirror Stage* (1949), Lacan defines the mirror-stage as a turning point in the growth of the child, from the age of six months and up to the age of eighteen months. It's in that timeframe that the child recognizes his/her own image in a mirror as identification. Before the mirror stage, the child only recognizes him/herself as an integrating part of his/her mother. Upon his/her recognition as a separate entity, he/she enters into the Symbolic Order, coinciding with the world of the laws that compose society, patriarchal authority, and culture. At the moment of the mirror-stage, he/she feels what Lacan has described as narcissistic joy. At the same time, however, and while becoming aware of the loss of the mother, he/she begins to repress the desire to become one with the mother again. The child will continually search for the mother along his/her life in a constant flux between the symbolic (the world of fantasies and images that allow for a self-identification through another) and the imaginary (the social and cultural symbols that allow for the self-articulation—or repression—of feelings) realms (Lacan 1949; Davis 1983).

This mirror-stage is used in psychoanalytic Film and Literary theory to explain how the spectator becomes sutured into the film / text: when the individual watches a film he feels the same jouissance he felt as a child in the mirror phase. This becomes possible when he becomes a spectator in film, especially but not exclusively, in the shot/reverse-angle shot. According to Jean-Pierre Oudart, one of the theorists of suture, the viewer adopts first the point of view of one of the characters in the film, say in a conversation, and then the other character point of view (1977). Thus, in the shot/reverse-shot the spectator becomes both subject and object of the look.

The Tower is not a purely cinematic work, neither a purely art-installation—it wasn't made for a cinema nor for a museum setting only, it was conceptualized for both. This is particularly clear, on the one hand, in the ways in which it 'lures the ego through being an image of its mirror-self, the screen is ready for narcissistic looking, a mirror for mirroring, thus a double of its double' (Metz 1982: 2-4). On the other hand, in its immersive character, it implies a bodily experience that allows for the dramatic understanding of our (tiny) existence in contrast with nature's immensity.

With this *jouissance* and under the current environmental crisis, we are also propelled to think about the effects of humans in nature. There are consequences to our actions. We watch / walk past the trees and the lonely man (is he a character of a not-so-distant future?) venturing into the woods uneasily and, hopefully, while we rejoice with our own individuality, we will speculate about possible futures which designs are of our own responsibility. Such an understanding is, in fact, comparable to the experience of the sublime—it is as striking in its potential for a beautiful world as much as it is petrifying in the ways in which it seems to go beyond us and defy our own existence.

2. *A TENDENCY TO FORGET* (2015) | (Political) Acts of Reading Moving Images

Ângela Ferreira's (Mozambique, 1958) work often finds a departure point in historical episodes bearing ties with modernism in its association with colonialism, its collapse, and its traumas, through installations which combine drawing, photography, film, and sculpture that operates in an expanded field trespassing the domains of architecture and design.

The work *A Tendency to Forget* (2015) is an in-situ installation, firstly shown at the Berardo Museum in Lisbon in the frame of an individual exhibition under the title of this work and is part of Ângela Ferreira's practice-based PhD research. Composed of a large-scale sculpture, a series of photographs, and a film, the work puts the ethnographic practice of Jorge and Margot Dias at center-stage to highlight the hidden political agenda of their fieldwork in Mozambique. The work is an invitation to think about the past, to establish connections between events, characters, and objects and to assemble these into micro-narratives of the colonial past and memory, alternative to the grand narrative disseminated in the wider cultural field.

Figures 3, 4, 5. Ângela Ferreira, *A Tendency to Forget* (2015). Sculpture: (MDF, pine beams, iron), LCD; 180 x 485 x 580 cm / 6 photos: Inkjet print ; 200 x 300 cm / Video: 16:9, colour, sound; 15' loop (images courtesy of the artist).

Upon entering the exhibition space, we are prompted to enter into the sculptural component of the work that houses the film in which the narrative unfolds. Sustained by columns and beams and with a small auditorium in the back, the sculpture is remindful of a building—more specifically, the building of the Portuguese Ministry of the Defense (former Overseas Ministry / Ministério do Ultramar). While the series of the seven photographs that depict the façade of the building of the former Overseas Ministry and the National Museum of Ethnology are placed on the walls of the exhibition room, the film is visible from the highest point of the sculpture turning it into a screening surface while demanding an action—climbing the stairs of the sculpture—from the audience. The photographic series makes evident the relationship between the two buildings depicted implied in their architectural features and in their location, facing each other in Restelo, in Lisbon, which, in turn, translates their scientific and political links, particularly in the tie between its first director, the anthropologist Jorge Dias, and the Estado Novo, a connection that was first presented by Harry West in his *Inverting the Camel's Hump. Jorge Dias, His Wife, Their Interpreter and I* (2004). The way in which the entrance in the sculpture is performed, via a spiral shaped staircase as if coming from the deep of the building, alludes to the intimacy and secrecy of the matter of the reports resulting from the investigation undertaken by the anthropologists. The elevation of the sculpture is also a reminder of how distant the physical space is from the existing discourse. The political component is then evident from the photographs, the formal features of the sculpture, and from the act of entering in it to watch the film, which turns each member of the audience in a voyeur, just like the anthropologists and the responsible people of the Overseas Ministry who commissioned the ethnographic project of Jorge Dias.

Jorge Dias was invited by the Estado Novo to lead the Mission for the Study of Ethnic Minorities, also known as MEMEUP (Missão de Estudos

das Minorias Étnicas do Ultramar Português),[3] a project that operated within the framework of the Center for Political and Social Studies of the Investigations Department of the Ultramar. From the regime's point of view, the aim was to make a survey of the political and social situation in the colonies. Within the duration of the Mission in Northern Mozambique between 1956 and 1961, Jorge Dias, his wife Margot Dias, and Manuel Viegas Guerreiro, wrote a yearly report describing the circumstances of their fieldwork and presenting the results of their observations of a political and social nature. Given the political context of the time (a dictatorship), the reports studying the Makonde people were of very reserved circulation.

Ângela Ferreira's film, screened on the top of the sculpture, crosses Margot Dias' ethnographic films on the rites of the Makonde people with images from the documentary film *Moçambique—no outro lado do tempo (Mozambique—on the other side of time)*, by Beja Filmes. The reading of Jorge Dias' secret reports is played over Margot Dias' footage, confronting the narration of the filmmaker's diary entries with the footage of the commercially produced film documentary portraying the life of the colonizers in Mozambique in a process that puts the observer in the position of the observed—'returning the gaze' (Everett 2001). In other words, the film *A Tendency to Forget* puts the focus on us rather than on the Other(s).

The structure of the film is articulated in a series of female and male voices alternated along the various chapters of the narrative. Two types of archival images and two types of audio registry compose the film. In the first part, a female voice cites the diary of Margot Dias in a description of different moments of her life, ranging from notes on her daily life as a mother to her observations as an ethnographer in Nigeria, South Africa, and Mozambique. Archival images from Mozambique, with glimpses from the urban life of Maputo / Lourenço Marques and Pemba / Porto Amélia in the 1960s and early 1970s (before the Portuguese Carnation Revolution), accompany the female voice. These archival images show a nostalgic viewpoint of the colonial past remindful of the impossibility of letting go of the imperial past (Gilroy 2005). As such, the female voice describing the African is seeing herself, since the ethnographer is one of the persons who could have been portrayed in that context. In this mirror play, full of reflections, the camera is turned to the filmmaker and observes her in turn. In the second audio registry, a male voice reads excerpts from the reports written by Jorge Dias at the end of each mission and under the request of the Overseas Ministry, observing and analyzing the political context of Niassa and its neighboring territories, reports that at the time were confidential but are now available publicly at the Torre do Tombo in Lisbon. The male voice is accompanied by a video recording showing a TV in which the ethnographic films of Margot Dias are being transmitted. This confrontation highlights the duality between the observations of the ethnographer who, in studying the Makondes' rituals, took political conclusions. In this process, A *Tendency to Forget* returns the gaze that the Makondes didn't get to express.

The texts selected in the citations along the film reveal that the contents of Jorge Dias' reports were not exclusively ethnographic, putting the finger on the problematic relationship between a scientific project and the colonial politics. In Ângela Ferreira's film, there is a conscious selection of material—much more than analyzing the protagonists (Jorge and Margot Dias), the work intends to make evident the manifold processes of silencing and of amnesia disseminated in the ways in which Portuguese history is told. On the other hand, it also exposes the lack of ethics and trust implied in the ethnographic missions that analyzed and exposed Makondes' rituals without their permission, as pointed out by anthropologist Harry West in 2004 in a work that has been systematically dismissed in the Portuguese context. This process is remindful of Jean Rouch's first film, *Au Pays des mages Noirs* (1946-47), which resulted from a trip to Africa by Rouch with his friends Jean Sauvy and Pierre Ponty that was financed through the articles sent to the *France Presse*. Produced by Les Actualités françaises and edited with inserts of wild animals and with a voiceover and narration that would transform the gaze of the film and with which Rouch would deny having had any involvement—in fact, his following films progressively diverged from the exoticism and sensationalism (Leprohon 1945).

In her work, and by selecting and editing sensitive archival imagery, Ângela Ferreira moves beyond the usual question 'Who has the right to represent whom?' to ask what to do with images of representation. The artist decided to include the films of Margot Dias but, with this decision, it became clear that an editing process was needed. Besides the selection of sequences and the video montage, Ângela Ferreira adopted the technique usually employed by the media when identities of individuals are to be kept secret, pixelating the faces. Even though the quality of the original material was low enough to make all individuals non-identifiable, the use of this technique became a tool to highlight the problem, reminding us that we are watching images whose premises and contents are questionable.

'The reader brings 'pre-understandings', a set of contexts and beliefs and expectations, to the work' (D'Alleva 2012: 110). These pre-understandings presuppose, however, as Heidegger put it (1927, 1971, 1935), that the reader emerges from and exists in the world and can only know things as being-in-the-world: understanding is rooted in time and rooted in history (cf. D'Alleva 2012). There is, thus, a dynamic hermeneutical relationship between the notions of cultural memory as something silently inscribed onto time and place and brought to life by its sheer materiality and cultural memory as an active discourse constru(ct)ed by active agents such as artists and articulated through the material existence of works of art. Cultural memory (Nora 1989) might then be considered as a process of translation which occurs amongst and amidst these two notions, being in itself a process of hermeneutic decoding of the textualized significations of art and art history. By transcending art-historical boundaries, Ângela

Ferreira brings new insights into the historical grand-narratives of colonial power and gives light to micro-narratives which, in turn, relate to other (sub)types of power, namely gender issues in their relationships with science and history, and identity and institutions.

Having the National Museum of Ethnology (MNE) as one of the spaces in the installation, the artist also reflects upon the power role of museums in society, particularly within the post-colonial discourses. The building of the MNE is portrayed in *A Tendency to Forget* as a symbol of the scientific research conducted by the Portuguese academy without forgetting that Jorge Dias was the force behind its creation and that, naturally, his memories are a fundamental part of the founding of the MNE. Furthermore, the MNE is the institutional guardian of the fieldwork (video and written notes) produced by the researchers, whose publishing rights were given and sold by the authors to the Portuguese government, represented by the MNE. As reminded by Jyoti Mistry and Nkule Mabaso, 'the legacies of racial privilege sedimented in institutional structures [have] not been responsive to the growing urgency for transformation in art institutions and universities: its hiring practices, student recruitment, the curriculum, the recognition of art practices that acknowledge and accommodate different epistemologies and aesthetics' (2021). Accordingly, Hall suggests that museums must define their specificities from the whole that is missing, the acknowledging of the Other, because its real relationship with the Other doesn't function today in dialogue with the paternalistic or the apologetically discourses (2001). In this frame, the existence of ethnological museums is the main focus, due to its collections, in urgent need of proper reading and context, but also due to its discourses linked with the validation of Ethnography and Anthropology. It is precisely in this conceptual space, reminding the current state of the post-colonial discourses in the Portuguese context, that *A Tendency to Forget* tells its stories. The installation draws a non-linear narrative made of various small stories, connections and images inviting for the construction of an alternative history. This process is explored in a methodological approach reminiscent of speculative design: a tool to present visions of potential futures as a means of critique and provocation of such futures (cf. Helgason and Smyth 2020). In this case, by suggesting new ways of looking at the past, the work speculates on the fabrication of memories for a possible future that can (and should) uncover our colonial legacy.

An installation that begins from a reflection on architecture, *A Tendency to Forget* operates as a reminder that 'buildings can be read as political texts' (Ferreira, 2014). The reason why it is incredibly successful lies in the skillful ways in which it moves across and beyond the fields of sculpture, film, sound, photography, architecture, the archive, and the curatorial in an expanded practice. All of the elements that compose the installation—the film, the sculpture and the photographs— are complementary and equally important in telling the usually untold narratives and encouraging the construction of new memories.

3. *Haptikos* (2021) | (Human) Acts of Immersion

A small, dark, and cold space creates an illusion of entering a science fiction film. So could be the description of entering the exhibition space of *Haptikos* (2021), in the Uma Lullik Gallery in Lisbon, an immersive installation by Inês Norton.

Haptikos is composed of a 2'54" video, sound, and two sculptures. In the video we can see a hand covered with a latex medical glove that moves its fingers, reproducing the movements that we make to access the content in our electronic touch devices, such as tablets and smartphones. Pedro Tudela produced the ambient, metallic, and synthetic sound that accompanies the images of the video specifically for the project. Facing the video, we find a box, a tray of water, with a clinical, polished, and aseptic look. The box is an ecosystem inhabited by a set of 3D-printed sculptural white objects reminiscent of both the marine world and the human body, in a limbo between human and non-human. These shapes that resemble corals, mineral formations, bones, fragile and synthetic structures float as if suspended. On the wall, a gigantic black shell made from aluminium houses a small white pearl inside.

The title of the work tells as much of the ideas tackled in the work as the above description of its formal features. The title adopts the Ancient Greek term ἁπτικός (haptikós), from ἅπτω (háptō, 'to touch') + -ικός (-ikós, 'suffix forming an adjective from a noun'), meaning 'concerning the sense of touch.' In the domain of technology, haptics identifies all the technologies that provide the sensation of digital touch feedback, also called haptic feedback. Haptics is a bidirectional technology: it involves both an action (interaction) and a reaction (haptic feedback). While the action is the intention of the user to interact with a haptics-enabled content, the reaction is the haptic feedback that the digital content transmits to the user. As such, interaction and haptic feedback are

equally important (Marks 2000).

Haptikos is composed of a 2′54″ video, sound, and two sculptures. While these are the components that—formally—shape the work, *Haptikos* is not complete without the interaction of the audience with the work and the feedback that the work gives back to the audience via the experience of entering in the icy (a hidden piece pumps out, joule by joule, the room's thermal energy), dark space.

The extent to which the audience is integrated into the *Haptikos* calls into question the distinction between its object and its subject, which in Inês Norton's work is not clearly separated. Alfred Gell defines works of art as the intersection of four different relational elements: artist; recipient; index; and prototype (1998). While for Gell the index is the art object, the prototype is that which is taken from the index through a natural process of inference (Layton 2003). In these terms, the parts—video, sound, and sculptures—of the *Haptikos* constitute the index, which mediates the relations between artist and recipient. Right when we enter the room, the division between the index and the recipient ceases; we become physically and psychically integrated with the work on a performative level: the audience becomes the index. Just as in dance and theatre, 'there is a seamless continuity between modes of artistic action which involve "performance" and those which are mediated via artefacts' (Gell 1998: 58).

During the moments of watching the video and listening to the sound, recipients are one with the index; they are simultaneously both the subject and object of the work. If during these moments recipients are the index, or object, of the work (along with the sculptures, the sound, and the video), then their experience constitutes its prototype: it is their experience of being in the cold room which is the entity naturally taken from the fused physical indexes of the work; that is, their own body inside a cold and dark room. *Haptikos* aspires to activate the viewer, inspiring personal liberation through open-ended and explicitly physical engagement. Art historian Dorothea von Hantelmann succinctly expresses the merging of subject and object in her essay on Carsten Höller's *Test Site* (2006) at Tate Modern, stating that 'the visitor's experience is [...] not just an important part of the work; it is the work and it is the meaning of the work' (2006: 30). This is remindful of Michael Fried's idea that 'the experience of literalist [minimal] art is of an object in a *situation* — one that, virtually by definition, *includes the beholder*' (1998: 53). Adopting Fried's idea of theatricality, experienced from within, in *Haptikos*, the visitor is both the performer *and* the audience.

This relationality is very clear in the ways in which the audiences enter and feel the physical space of *Haptikos*. But how do these relationships influence the ways in which the audiences experience the moving image component of the work? How do they affect the viewer? Being able to choose is crucial in forming one of the bases of the interactivity between artist and recipient mediated by the object, which tells us that to consider *Haptikos* only in terms of the physical experience of entering and feeling the work is a mistake. From first being faced with the work, the recipient makes a choice whether or

not to watch the moving image for its whole (short but cyclical) duration and whether or not to touch the sculptural elements and in doing so is in a position of agency of different levels.

Upon watching the moving hands on the projection, the audience experiences some disorienting moments of adjustment, finding a proper sense of place and scale in their surroundings—the gestures of the hands are as familiar as uncanny in their floating and lonely presence—whereby a degree of agency is restored. These dynamic moments of transition on either side of the experience—being forced into an inhospitable temperature and choosing whether or not to stay the needed time to observe the sculptural elements, watch the video and listen to its sounds—constitute the greatest intrigue of *Haptikos*; the exact moments when agency is abandoned and regained. As we watch the video, we are impelled to another choice—to use or not our own hands and touch the mysterious sculptural elements to get to know more of their actual realm: human or non-human, alive or dead, natural or artificial.

Haptikos was expressly made for its recipients and their experience to encourage a reflection upon the potential relationship between nature and humans remindful of what Natasha Myers has coined as the 'plantropoceno,' in which she puts the plants at the center of a new world (Myers 2016). History tells that humans tend to see them/ourselves as the solution to all of the problems (that they / we have caused). In our contemporary times, nevertheless, the belief that technology can save us all from global warming, without considering the condition of all types of life-forms, is as arrogant as putting the human at center stage (Fuad-Luke 2021: 13). Even though the Anthropocene has made humans aware of the urgency of the climate changes and the risk that we have put our own survival into, along the last millennium, we didn't care too much about the existence of other species probably because we weren't conscious of the relationships and interdependencies between all of the living forms that inhabit the world. It is precisely around these interdependencies that the *Haptikos* revolves.

Having said this, whether visitors to the *Haptikos* can genuinely be seen to act as agents in this way is a big leap of faith. To say they did through the imaginative projection of the artist is, in a sense, a way of confirming the agency of the artist—rather than of the audience—by highlighting her intention to affect a particular visitor experience. As Gell has noted, assigning the role of agent or patient to the audience is a matter of perspective (Gell 1998: 57). Such uncertainty is especially true in relations that stray from the immediacy of the art object that mediates agency (touch the ecosystem with the impact that this will have in it and, consequently, on us) and patientness (watch the video, listen to the sound). Nevertheless, no matter what the choice is-to engage with the work as a video and a sculpture; that is, contemplatively and reflectively; or to apprehend it from a relational perspective, as in Bourriaud's notion of relational aesthetics, the distance between Inês Norton's work and the audience is collapsed, 'the beholder contributes his whole body' (Bourriaud 1998: 59). In fact, in the *Haptikos*, the subject/object distinction is eradicated

through the simple act of entering in the work / room. Experienced from within at all times, the visitor becomes, without a choice of his/her own, both the performer and the audience (Fried 1998: 163-168).

Although the process of entering in the work is one that is—besides the uncomfortable cold—passive for the audience in a sense of physical effort, it is anything but pacifying in terms of their mental and emotional state remindful of Caillois notion of 'a vertigo of moral order,' which he links to 'the desire for disorder and destruction, a drive which is normally repressed' (2006: 78). Watching the odd yet familiar sliding movements of the fingers on the projection onto the wall, listening to the metallic sound and seeing the icy sculptures may not induce moral chaos but it does activate a drive for disorder in the individual by providing a desire and urgency for change of the environment found. Prompting an awareness of our own daily gestures, making our members extensions of technology rather than the opposite, it offers an alternative; one that activates the individual's capacity of self-reflection as well as creative speculation—what would happen if our human gestures would be less aseptic and more human? In this way, *Haptikos* is subversive in its proposal to be adopted as a model for human behavior outside of the art gallery. The potential of doing so affirms the political value of *Haptikos*, not as a fictional utopia but a concrete space that presents a better, more life-affirming way of interacting with the human and non-human parts that make the plural world we live in.

On this basis, it is questionable whether such a microtopia can aspire for the wide-scale transformation of human behavior. Or, adopting Claire Bishop's words if a (relational) work of art simply 'gives up on the idea of transformation in public culture and reduces its scope to the pleasures of a private group of individuals who identify with one another as gallery-goers' (2004: 69). Even though *Haptikos* has not proved, at least up until now, efficacious as a model of change in human behavior and even though its interactive potential is limited to gallery-goers, perhaps, after all, the value of *Haptikos* is in presenting us with a possibility.

As a new representation of Hindu mudras (symbolic or ritual gestures), Inês Norton's hands move to the rhythm of new asanas (body postures), presented here as gestures for meditation that make use of poses that refer to the ways we use technology today. In this choreography of a fictional *neo-Buddhism* that acknowledges contemporaneity, *Haptikos* speculates on a future *post-spirituality* era in which past / present / future; religious / profane; ancient / contemporary; human / non-human live together.

The viewers of *Haptikos* are involved as agents in its formation as its co-creators in the speculation of possible futures. As such, *Haptikos* can be understood as a kind of game taking place between Inês Norton and its visitors; it is a structured interplay between two sides. *Haptikos* lives through collaboration as much as it does through speculation. It is the ways in which it asks for interaction that makes it unique and relevant in a world that is more and more mediated by screens and less by physical actions.

EPILOGUE | Speculating Imaginary Spaces

The idea of narrative—both linear and non-linear; both fully or partially open for completion from the audience—serve as a trope for speculating along the three above described works. The glue that unites narrative and speculation—as much as it does moving image, installation, and the exhibition space(s)—is the construction of a set of possible spaces.

The word speculation has two main different applications: high risk-high gain economic activities such as real estate; and making conjectures without grounded evidence. Artists use the second of these meanings, as an empirical practice. In many respects it reflects the ethos of art practice, the notion of art itself conveys an openness to the possibilities that may come with a dynamic complex world where constraints (like the limitations of materials and technologies) may be viewed as both limiting yet—to some degree—also very much enabling. Speculation—as derived from Alfred North Whitehead's exhortation *Philosophy can exclude nothing* (1966: 2) and taken up to gain prominence of late within the social sciences notably by Isabelle Stengers (2002) —is a notable response, or a set of responses, to phenomena that cannot be held, observed, and acted upon without either the taking of risks or the experiencing of consequences. In other words, while sometimes speculation connotes an activity of anticipation and even exploitation of expectations, it is also adopted under an approach remindful of speculative design, which might be described as a tool to present visions of possible futures as a means of critique of hegemonic narratives and provocation of such futures (Smyth and Helgason 2020).

The threads that run through the aforementioned engagements with the speculative are, on the one hand, a transformed interest in the possibility of extracting from the present certain immanent potentialities that may be capable of opening up a transition into otherwise unlikely realities to be and, on the other hand, through their open-ended format, the uncovering of untold—and, therefore, unknown but existing—narratives. Furthermore, in these examples, speculation works as a particular way of engaging with the dynamic and transformative nature of 'things' in order to explore their situated and contingent characteristics as well as their capacities to affect and be affected.

Much like architectural projects such as *The Continuous Monument* (1969) by the Superstudio[4], which never aspired to be realizable buildings, the focus of the moving images-installations described in this text rested primarily on the effect the stories produced on the viewer. The stories told in the three examples were deliberately ambiguous, left to the imagination of the viewer to make their own assumptions about its meanings and effects. In this way, these stories took place both on a material, lived dimension, but also on the plane of imagination and representation. The work of imagination, as Professor Arjun Appadurai has suggested, is pivotal for conflict to take shape, to produce effects, but also to be understood and dealt with on an everyday level (1996).

Speculating—just as the moving image and the curatorial—is based on imagination, the ability to literally imagine other worlds and alternatives. In *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction,* Keith Oatley writes that '[i]magination gives us entry to abstraction, including mathematics. We gain the ability to conceive alternatives and hence to evaluate. We gain the ability to think of futures and outcomes, skills of planning. The ability to think ethically also becomes a possibility' (2011: 30). Moving images, particularly the ones with both a physically and psychologically immersive character, prompt us to enter in this realm of possible worlds. At best, they create the spaces for completely new narratives and, as such, new ways of perceiving (and constructing) the world we live in.

1. Rashomon effect is a reference to the 1950 Akira Kurosawa film where a sexual encounter and death are witnessed by four characters each with a unique, and dramatically different, view of the same fundamental events.
2. *Siuzhet* is the particular way the story is narrated. Contrary to the order of the fabula, that is strictly chronological, the order of the siuzhet corresponds to the way the events are presented in the narrative by the author (V. Bartalesi, C. Meghini and D. Metilli, 2016). Coined by Russian Formalism, one of the most well-known examples of siuzhet was introduced by Viktor Shklovsky who has described the distinction between *fabula* (story) and *siuzhet* (plot), or, the *events* of the story and the way the story is *told* (Genette, 1979).
3. Portaria 16 159, February 6th 1957.
4. The purely theoretical drawings from *The Continuous Monument* series illustrate Superstudio's conviction that by extending a single piece of architecture over the entire world they could 'put cosmic order on earth.' The white, gridded, monolithic structures span the natural landscape and assert rational order upon it. Superstudio saw this singular unifying act, unlike many modern utopian schemes, as nurturing rather than obliterating the natural world.

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