Practices of Eco-sensation:
Opening Doors of Perception to the Nonhuman

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Landscapes must be painted with the eyes and not with the prejudices that are in our heads.

– Pablo Picasso

Whether through words, colors, sounds, or stone art is the language of sensations.

– Deleuze and Guattari

Take a lump of sugar: It has a spatial configuration. But if we approach it from that angle, all we will ever grasp are differences in degree between that sugar and any other thing. But it also has a duration, a rhythm of duration, a way of being in time that is at least partially revealed in the process of its dissolving, and that shows how this sugar differs in kind not only from other things, but first and foremost from itself. In this respect, Bergson's famous formulation, "I must wait until the sugar dissolves" has a still broader meaning than is given to it by its context. It signifies that my own duration, such as I live it in the impatience of waiting, for example, serves to reveal other durations that beat to other rhythms that differ in kind from mine. Duration is always the location and the environment of differences in kind; it is even their totality and multiplicity.

– Gilles Deleuze
Introduction

How can art help us to think ecologically? Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, this essay argues that art produces new sets of relations that enable us to map the world beyond human space and to glimpse an image of time, inhabited by multiple nonhuman worlds, sensations and durations. Humanity is constantly transformed through the machines it creates and the human body becomes a different machine every time it encounters the work of art. As perceivers of art we partake in the unlivable forces of the cosmos and become earth bodies by virtue of the new affects and temporal relations that form. Art enframes chaos in order to constitute new planes and extract new affects, which then gain autonomy from its creators and take a life of their own; ecophilosophy responds to these sensory becomings by opening up new spaces for thinking and the creation of concepts.

Perhaps, this passage to the nonhuman can be best conceived in terms of the ways in which philosophy, art and science work together to activate the potential of thinking to transform itself. According to Deleuze and Guattari, thinking is an activity of life, which commences only once thought confronts something other than itself. Here life may be best understood as a power to differ and create, not reducible to what has been actually produced; it is also a play of intensive processes and differential relations between forces that form various beings, assemblages and planes of perceptions and images. None of these relations is determined entirely in advance and what is actualized refers only to a specific expression of that power's potential. Life is a flow of differences and becoming that includes the inorganic world and ceaselessly proliferates new lines of flight and ever more complex forms. As a part of the flux of life thinking becomes one mode of maximization of the virtual within life, which harbors the potential to grasp prehuman forces and differences that precede it and produce it. Whereas science seeks to isolate the properties and functions of actual bodies and states of affairs, philosophy is more interested in what a body can do or become but has not yet done or become. To enter into philosophy, then, means to participate in the invention of a vocabulary-sensorium that maps a virtual realm of relations that a body is capable of. Ecophilosophy, in turn, may be conceived as a set of practices of thinking and sensing by way of concepts that "open lines of flight from an actual order of human bodies" and their habitual modes of perception. Ecophilosophy is an aggregate of concepts that maps the virtual possibilities of another system of "forces, energies and flows that congeal into the more tangible materiality of animals, vegetables, minerals, wind, gravity, tides, sunlight."

One key task of ecophilosophy today is to confront anthropocentrism or all too human-centered ethical thinking, which lies at the root of current practices of ecological destruction. Anthropocentrism refers both to (1) the structure of concepts and beliefs that people are attached to insofar as they consider humans either to "constitute" or to be superior to all other nonhumans, species or ecosystems, or both; and (2) to the related sets of attitudes and practices that lead to the treatment of these ecosystems and beings in ways that gives singular
The wager of this paper is that confronting anthropocentrism requires certain emendations of the dominant images of environmental ethics and politics. On the one hand, environmental ethics should not be limited merely to obligations, duties, concern among humans and what they have at stake. While rich in insights, such images of ethics involve transcendental regulations that tend to inhibit thinking's creativity as they invoke disembodied models of thinking and ethics that are difficult to sustain in the light of contemporary scientific insights. On the other hand, we also need a correlative notion of politics that is not limited to the inquiry of political institutions, policies, and the explicit pronouncements, actions and deliberations among human participants and bodies (i.e., macropolitics). Such a notion of politics takes into account "the body as a site of biocultural dispositions and relay point for political mobilization." It is essential to examine anthropocentrism through a micropolitical lens, a dimension of politics which attends to the myriad processes that shape our political sensibilities, dispositions, and identities.

Micropolitics' focus on concepts and affect (which is understood here as the bodily and emotional impacts, feelings and meanings packed into these concepts) enables us to explore the ways in which certain images -- ranging from humanity to whiteness and the national leader -- are charged with responsive energy and passionate investments. Micropolitics alerts us to how words work on the body and shape our sense of self and being human, how perceptive capacity is shaped and captures what we "see" and "don't see." I am here concerned with the tendency of the human body to fold its perceptions and synthesize experiences around a pre-ordained point of view, with our tendency towards self-recognition as a certain form of bounded life, embodied mind, organism, etc. Rather than questioning how images of the human emerge from within a larger realm of life, we tend to explain life from preformed images treated as transcendental. Anthropocentrism operates through such regimes of stabilization of images that are potentially susceptible to modes of responsiveness and stretching that express our entanglements, biodiversity and the non-coincidence of life with itself.

Thus I seek to advance an eco-ethical strategy which involves micropolitical work on the self: a kind of experiential self-artistry that helps recraft the anthropocentric feelings and attitudes that have become entrenched in the self. This strategy draws on the insights of thinkers such as Spinoza, Deleuze, Bennett and Connolly, all of whom argue that a change in either body or thought is always correlated with some change in the other, even though we cannot specify the exact shape and extent of this change in advance. Connolly terms this school of thought immanent naturalism. An eco-ethical strategy, informed by immanent naturalism, emphasizes not how we ought to live but how we could enrich experience in ways that increase awareness of our embeddedness within a larger system of forces, energies and flows that congeal into the earth's heterogeneous assemblages of bodies; how to enhance the powers of perception in order to sense the coexistence of multiple animal and plant worlds,
governed by different temporal modes and logics of self-maintenance. The strategy involves the invention of techniques that act upon the body/brain network so as to alter future patterns of thought, action and feeling.

This essay examines the potential of art to offer techniques that can help us to think-sense ecologically. Here by "thinking ecologically" I mean: the cultivation of a sensibility to discern the profound interconnectedness of earth's living and non-living creatures and to become more sensitized to how human bodies are entangled with and activated by an assemblage of other bodies and forces; to perceive the coexistence of multiple durations and styles of temporality; to acknowledge the presence of multiple degrees of agency and creativity, distributed along a continuum of human, earth, and other nonhuman forces; to nurture an ability to learn to live in a world of becoming and transformation. To think ecologically is not just to think through certain abstracted and mythic fictions but also means to perceive and relate to other bodies more horizontally and sympathetically. I seek to show how each bodily encounter with the artworks identified in the paper helps to render thinking political in this new practical and ecological sense.

Art can work against the tendencies of the brain to create habitual connections and to synthesize experiences into the human point of view; it takes these tendencies as its object and has the power to disrupt and rework operational images of the human as a habitual mode of perception and being. In the light of insufficiency of narratives and logical argument, art taps into an affective dimension of political life that cannot so easily be subsumed under the rubric of representation or articulated in discourse. It works upon us and our powers to articulate more than it is a mode of articulation. Art offers an indirect mode of political efficacy that has the capacity to produce potent political effects. The experience of modern art, in particular, is directly accessible to larger audiences due to its limited dependency on conceptual pre-knowledge. Art also reveals something about the constitution of time that may otherwise remain imperceptible during the busyness of everyday life; it highlights our inability to know for sure everything we can do or become. In other words, art functions as a mode of bodily intensification whose power lies not first and foremost in the meanings it solicits but in the sensations that it elicits and intensifies. Encounters with the art of Bacon, Smithson, and Serra can be seen as a set of practices of eco-sensation that enable our bodies, always acting conjointly with other bodies, to transform themselves and to evolve through altered perception toward new ecological directions. The aesthetic experience of each of these works is itself less human-centered; it triggers sensory intensifications and side perceptions that subvert the anthropocentric regime of stabilized images with recomposed relations produced by the artworks themselves. Such moments of discontinuity and disruption of the order of perception are profoundly political. They modify the human-bound "partition of the sensible" and open up spaces for participation of the nonhuman in the activities of representation by rendering perceptible what had been previously imperceptible. The aesthetic experience of
the work of art becomes a political act that enables the nonhuman to advene upon us and to invite further reflection and attention to the need to recraft and enrich the internal landscape of our selves.

Part I articulates this notion of art as a mode of bodily intensification. I turn to Elizabeth Grosz who encourages us to consider art’s profound animal lineage and its rootedness in the storage of earthly excess. These animal roots ensure that the possibility of art production and opening up to nonhuman sensations and forces is not confined to the human alone. Art is charged with the creation of new worlds to come and new bodies of people, animals, plants, and things to experience them.

In Part II, I provide concrete examples. I examine works by Francis Bacon, Robert Smithson, and Richard Serra in order to experiment with new philosophical concepts that express the life of nonhuman time and sensation. First, I explore the ways in which Bacon’s paintings function as machines that produce eco-sensations and experiences. Rather than reproducing or inventing forms, his paintings break with figurative references and narratives and produce sensations that more or less directly impact the nervous system. They capture and make visible something of the action of invisible forces (of time, nonorganic life, speed, flight, rhythm, isolation, deformation, and dissipation) on the body: not exactly by making the invisible visible, but by rendering its effects more vivid. Bacon’s practice of sensation takes us close to the "body without organs" (BwO) that lies behind and within the organism, the intensities and forces that drive the becoming-otherwise of the body. His canvases constitute zones of indiscernibility between man and animal, organic and nonorganic life. They draw us toward nonhuman becomings: becoming-animal, becoming-another, becoming-flesh. Next, I show how Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* not only captures the effects of some of these forces rendered sensible by Bacon but also allows us to cultivate presumptive generosity towards styles of temporality not immediately present to us. Smithson’s mobilization of multiple intersecting tiers of duration (some of which are human, and others not) heightens sensitivity to cycles of ecological degradation and regeneration of ecosystems’ life. Finally, as a corollary to Smithson’s discussion, I explore how the works of Richard Serra register or translate into terms that humans can perceive the affectivity of nonhumans. Serra draws attention to the capacity of mundane man-made entities to exceed their status as objects, to produce various effects in human and other bodies, and to possess a form of agency marked by its own histories and trajectories. Collectively, the thing-power of Serra’s and Smithson’s installations enables us to amend and stretch received notions of human agency. The act of human creativity thus becomes only one of many modes of the distributive agency of human-nonhuman assemblages.14

In the conclusion, I tease out some ecophilosophical and political implications of an enhanced perception of multiple force-fields, degrees of agency, and tiers of nonhuman time. I emphasize the need to move back and forth between such practices, informed by a
philosophy of immanent naturalism, and creative experimentation with familiar images of ecophilosophical thought such as those inspired by Kantian philosophy. I enlist the aid of Estonian biologist Uexküll whose concept of "Umwelten" elucidates how the world appears to each organism, according to its own perceptions. From the viewpoint of these "subjective universes," Uexküll may teach us how to intuit the degree to which we belong to others' durations and how to learn to dwell respectfully in them. The cultivation of such receptivity reinforces the art practice of eco-sensation and ensures that, during our next visit to the museum, Bacon's or Serra's works may have their greatest pro-ecological effect.

Art is of the Animal: Sex, Excess, and Artistic Bodies

Art is of the animal. According to Elizabeth Grosz, it is a consequence of excess and the experiments in intensification that have characterized sexual selection on earth. Art is an affective assemblage that exceeds representation, transforms bodily organs and creates new rhythms via a sensory overload of images, song, dance, and color. Art is not a window onto the natural and social worlds. Rather than being a celebrated instance of the evolution of human ingenuity, art is grounded in the superfluousness of nature and its power to render the sensory abundant:

Every morning the Scenopoetes dentirostris, a bird of the Australian rain forests, cuts leaves, makes them fall to the ground, and turns them over so that the paler, internal side contrasts with the earth. In this way it constructs a stage for itself like a ready-made; and directly above, on a creeper or a branch, while fluffing out the feathers beneath its beak to reveal their yellow roots, it sings a complex song made up from its own notes and, at intervals, those of other birds it imitates: it is a complete artist. This is not synesthesia in the flesh but blocs of sensations in the territory – colors, postures, and sounds that sketch out a total work of art.

The bird's courtship and dance take evolutionary developments beyond mere survival into creative expression. Such excessive detours of sexual selection render visible a common imperative shared by art and nature - useless production for the sake of production itself, for the sake of profusion and differentiation. Grosz bases her reflections on Darwin's distinction between natural and sexual selection. She argues that art and music emerged primarily though sexual selection and if they have survived it is precisely because they serve the purposes of intensification and pleasure: "Art is connected to sexual energies and impulses, to a common impulse for more." Grosz's hedonistic conception of art allows us to abandon the anthropocentric bias of the human as the sole producer and perceiver of art. The courtship dance of the bird of paradise, the theatrical struggle of the ruffed grouse and the spectacular coloring of the deep ocean fish are three examples of the body as a spectacle ("a performance of the body at its most splendid and appealing") and the ubiquitous production of art in nature. Art comes from the excess of the body's productive capacities; art is that which is in
excess of need and cannot be directly defined through the useful. Even though at times Grosz implies that animals are artistic (musical) but do not produce art (music), I prefer to read her as saying that many bodies have the capacity to perform art and possess this impulse to intensify experience. For instance, new human rituals and practices may emerge from such willingness to grant birds the capacity to produce music. Rather than going to symphony or the opera, next time the lover of music may venture into the Redwood National forest to attend the performance of the Golden-crowned Kinglet or the Stellar's Jay.

How does art link the unlivable forces of the cosmos to the forces of "artistic" bodies through which sexual selection operates? How does the artwork form a plane of composition so that the material can become expressive and pass into sensation? According to Deleuze and Guattari, art and nature form their own circuits of indiscernibility ("...we no longer know what is art and what nature") where life transforms itself and through which all becomings pass. All art isolates percepts and affects, wrested from the perceptions and affections through which our bodies are organized. The two aspects of sensation, affects and percepts, constitute two nonhuman forces, the human must tap to summon up the unlivable forces of the cosmos in the aid of self-transformation. Matter must be lived not as it is already for us but in its capacity to communicate new sensations to us: "Art is where intensity is most at home, where matter is most attenuated without being nullified: perhaps we can understand matter in art as matter at its most dilated...and where becoming is most directly in force." Only then do we sense how it also exceeds our capacities. Matter becomes expressive once it is liberated from its extension through our regularized experience and has released its virtual potential. Each artist works with a given material made up of energetic traits and singularities and recomposes its incongruent elements in such ways that the work of art can capture these singularities. Art enables us to perceive the world as the effect of the forces of the earth and the forces of vibrant materiality that we cannot live; it offers us a possibility to touch and glimpse into that which is there to be felt and perceived. Affects cross the threshold between the human and nonhuman, forming virtual conditions of possibility for the former to transcend itself:

Affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man, just as percepts – including the town – are nonhuman landscapes of nature. Not a "minute of the world passes," says Cezanne, that we will preserve if we do not "become that minute." We are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contemplating it. Everything is vision, becoming. We become universes. Becoming animal, plant, molecular, becoming zero.

Affects are man's becoming-another, becoming-nonhuman. Affects are passages from the sensibility of being to modalities of sensation. Man turns himself into an artwork and by means of this self-transformation becomes a compound being of sensations, which are not merely to be read or interpreted but intensified into different sensations. For Deleuze and...
Guattari, sensation is a form of excitation that preserves and contracts the vibrations that compose it so that these materials can become expressive and generate cerebral movements and corporeal effects. This is how art transforms past possibilities and materials into new qualities and resources for the future. Sensation, as a monument of vibrations (colors, forms, planes, and voids), forms a plane between chaos and the potential of the body to become otherwise. It is an "incorporeal threshold of emergence, an unpredictable and uncontainable overspilling of forces that exist hitherto only beyond and before the plane of composition, on its other side, that of chaos." It attunes the body to the resonance of the universe as these contracted vibratory waves heighten the receptivity of the body to respond to the unknowable forces of becoming-other of the cosmos.

Body, Painting, and Sensation: Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Meat, Becoming-Intense ...

For many art lovers Francis Bacon's complex experiments with pictorial space are indisputably brilliant. His brilliance lies in the strange engagements his paintings demand of us, so that, as he declared, the "paint comes across directly onto the nervous system." Yet, this engagement can be too spine-chilling and uncanny to embrace fully, for his works are full of contorted bodies, crucifixions, screams of horror, monsters, coupled beastly figures, and running flesh. Positive sympathies with nature are unlikely to emerge from the encounter between the body and his canvases, saturated as they are with the violence of such spectacles. But there is still something about the way he "paints sensations" that may activate circuits of geoaffects that draw us into nonhuman becomings. What if his paintings function as "bodies without organs" that enable us too to partake more poignantly in the vitality of our own germinality? Is it possible that these paintings harness a plurality of invisible forces and zones of indetermination between man and animal, organic and nonorganic life?

My goal is to extract a set of ecophilosophical concepts from the sensible aggregates produced by Bacon's paintings, to present Bacon as a colorist of becomings who captures on canvas the affective encounters of bodies with nonhuman forces that are not immediately perceptible to us. According to Deleuze, all art has a rhythmic variation. The coexistent systolic and diastolic movements of rhythm that traverse Bacon's paintings are composed through the interaction of three pictorial elements that, in Deleuze's view, are key to the reception of his works: the Figure, the contour, and the color field (as a material structure). The Figure refers to a lying down, coupled over or seated human body that is frequently isolated inside a contour by being placed on a bed, on a chair, or in a ring, a circle, a cube or a parallelepiped. The body is thus subjected to a plurality of forces that deform it and contort it: the lust of copulation, the drowsy advance of sleep, the urge to vomit, defecate, cry or scream, the violence of a hiccup. It is here that the contour changes as "it turns into the half-sphere of the washbasin or umbrella, the thickness of the mirror, acting as a deformer; the Figure is contracted or dilated in order to pass through a hole or into the mirror." The contour acts like a membrane, a
threshold that assures the double exchange and communication between the Figure and the color field (material structure): "The Figure is not simply the isolated body, but also the deformed body that escapes from itself … the body must return to the material structure and dissipate into it, thereby passing through or into these prostheses-instruments, which constitute passages and states that are real, physical, and effective, and which are sensations and not imaginings." Each of Bacon’s Figures sustains a precise sensation as the agent of bodily deformations and propels this sensation into the nervous system. Every Figure is already a "coagulated sensation" and implicates within itself an intensive composition of differential relations.

According to Deleuze, the most elementary form of sensation created by Bacon’s paintings is vibration, which is formed by the fundamental rhythms of systolic compression of the color field and diastolic deformation of the Figure. Even this most elementary form is composite: its vibration is attained through a complex experimentation with color. Color "is discovered as the differential relation upon which everything else depends;" as an "invisible pulsation that is more nervous than cerebral," vibration refers to pure, i.e., non-subjective, relations between colors. Hence flows of polychromatic colors commonly dominated by blue and red, the colors of meat, tend to compose the flesh of Bacon’s Figures and provide him with the simplest formula of "coloring sensation." (Figure at a Washbasin 1976) Yet, rather than simply isolated and deformed figures, Bacon often paints coupled or entangled bodies that are sleeping, copulating or interacting as they enter into complex patterns of resonance. Resonance is the form of sensation that puts together multiple sensations and vibrations to produce a new Figure or composite body. The pictorial encounter of Bacon’s bodies leads to the formation of a dissonant duet, a new ontological unit, that exceeds its constitutive elements and affirms the force of time as becoming (center panel of Triptych 1970). With the triptych, finally, the vibrations and patterns of resonance are drawn into a forced movement towards distention and disengagement from the specific figures and bodies. Rhythm acquires an autonomous being and "becomes Figure, according to its own separated directions, the active, the passive, and the attendant…" As the figures are set apart by the background fields of bright, raw color of the three panels, the intensive force of rhythm becomes the Figure itself. This rhythmic Figure is composed through the interplay of the active local rhythms of ascent and amplification, passive rhythms of descent and elimination, and "attendant" rhythms that remain constant as the measure of the variations of intensity of the other two. Thus the order of sensation of the triptych consists in the distribution of these three fundamental rhythms. Its separate panels are brought into relation by the separating and unifying forces of naked light and uniform color that form a luminous plane within which "the Figures look like trapeze artists whose milieu is no longer anything but light and color." (Triptych, Studies of the Human Body 1970 or Triptych 1970)
The three modalities of sensation coexist in Bacon's paintings, which now function as machines that produce effects of vibration, resonance, and forced movement. These effects are always mixed and in variation: the vibrations of the diastole-systole that capture "forces of isolation, deformation and dissipation" enter into complex interactions with the forces of coupling, harnessed by the resonant configuration of bodies, that integrate these forces of isolation, deformation, and dissipation. Both flows enter into new compositions with the forced movement of the triptych that operates with forces of separation and division, which, in turn, integrate coupling as a phenomenon. These invisible forces of systole and diastole, color and light bring to life the "beings of sensation," inhabiting Bacon's paintings. They render sensible another force, the force of time: "There is the force of changing time, through the allotropic variation of bodies ... which involves deformation; and then there is the force of eternal time, the eternity of time, through the unifying-separating that reigns in the triptychs, a pure light." Thus Bacon's paintings can be seen as affective assemblages of forces that express the intersecting durational rhythms of eternal time and time as becoming with the intensive forces that traverse and compose bodies and affect their interactions with other bodies.

The logic of sensation that Deleuze finds in Bacon is not that of the lived body but of the "body without organs." The "lived body" is too assimilated to its intersubjective context to suffice for Deleuze or Bacon. The viewer is implicated in this logic qua the "body without organs." Bacon's canvas becomes a destructured multiplicity of bodies, forces and intensities revealing an affective dimension of becoming, in which the organizing distinctions between man and animal, body and world are troubled and only vectors of matter-energy and circuits of geo-affect are sensed. Bacon's portraits abound in spasmodic deformations and bestial transformations of the human body. The recognizable traits of the human face frequently assume indeterminate shapes and mutant lines of flight. Animal traits now emerge from human forms: sometimes the face is swallowed by a bestial mouth open as wide as possible in a scream (Study after Vélasquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X or Head VI); sometimes the human head is replaced by a quivering bird of prey whose wingspan spirals down the scrubbed area (Triptych 1976); sometimes a man's shadow gains a bat-shaped existence (Triptych May-June 1973). Many of these themes of animalization of the Figure are brought together in Painting (1946), which presents a seated man in a dark formal suit under a half-spherical umbrella in a butcher shop. The cow carcasses suspended in a cruciform behind him bring to light the reality of meat as the crucified victim: "Of course, we are meat, we are potential carcasses. If I go into a butcher shop I always think it’s surprising that I wasn’t there instead of the animal." All that can be seen from the man's head is its lower jaw, thick lower lip and the raw flesh exposed by the removal of its upper lip. The toothy grimace of the facial fragment threatens to swallow it at the same time as the Figure uses the diastolic pull of the umbrella as a nozzle through which the rest of the body wants to pass. The body becomes animal, flesh or meat. Here meat acquires the colors of live flesh:
Bacon thus pursues a very peculiar project as a portrait painter: to dismantle the face to rediscover the head or make it emerge from beneath the face. The deformations which the body undergoes are also the animal traits of the head. This has nothing to do with a correspondence between animal forms and facial forms ... In place of formal correspondences, what Bacon's painting constitutes is a zone of indiscernibility or undecidability between man and animal. Man becomes animal... It is never a combination of forms, but rather the common fact: the common fact of man and animal. Bacon pushes his to the point where even his most isolated Figure is already a coupled Figure; man is coupled with his animal in a latent bullfight. This objective zone of indiscernibility is the entire body, but the body insofar as it is flesh or meat. Of course, the body has bones as well, but bones are only its spatial structure. A distinction is often made between flesh and bone, and even between things related to them. The body is revealed only when it ceases to be supported by the bones, when the flesh ceases to cover the bones, when the two exist for each other, but each on its own terms: the bone as the material structure of the body, the flesh as the bodily material of the Figure.  

In *Painting* (1946) what achieves this pictorial tension between flesh and bone is meat, the common fact of man and animal that assumes the incipient traits of the head. "Every man who suffers is a piece of meat ... a beast, the beast that suffers is a man;" animals become part of humanity at the same time as humanity becomes cattle headed for the slaughterhouse. This mutually transformative process of disorganization of the animal and "butcherization" of the human calls into question the sharpness of the divide that privileges the human over the nonhuman by inducing a passage of sensation between species boundaries. Through Bacon's intensification of the relation between the Figure and color the agony and slaughter of a cow is retained as a zone of exchange between man and animal, in which an element of each passes into the other.

Bacon's ability to induce becoming-animal in the bodies of his viewers depends upon his pictorial experimentation with bodies on canvas. In the process of becoming, Bacon's bodies are defined by fleshy movements and speeds; by the active, passive, and attendant rhythms traversing the canvas; by the capacities of colors and forms to affect the conventional form of a cow or a human, to be affected by forces of systole and diastole, and to enter new figural compositions. Bacon's Figures have multiple modes of affectivity, levels and thresholds. One hardly knows what composes the Figures or their capacities. Faces turn bestial. Cheeks become chops, torsos – knots of flesh and nerve. According to Deleuze, the Figure of flesh is an intensive body of sensation, a body without organs, which "is opposed less to organs that to the organization of organs we call an organism." Whereas the organism refers to a specific organization of determinate organs, the body without organs, as a limit notion, is defined by the emergence and disappearance of provisional organs with indeterminate functions. These
provisional organs of sensation are formed when a wave of the non-anthropocentric element of desire meets the forces acting on the body: "When the wave encounters external forces at a particular level, a sensation appears. An organ will be determined by this encounter, but it is a provisional organ that endures only as long as the passage of the wave and the action of the force, and which will be displaced in order to be posited elsewhere." Every sensation involves a difference of level and what is a mouth at one level becomes an anus at another level, or at the same level upon the encounter with different set of forces. Bacon's toothy grimace or scream that swallows the face, bird of prey that replaces the head or nose that turns into pig's snout (Self-Portrait 1973) all constitute provisional organs and loci of sensation on the body without organs. So the body without organs is "finally defined by the temporary and provisional presence of determinate organs" with indeterminate functions.

The aesthetic experience of this indeterminacy of relations between sensory organs and the act of perception solicits a suggestive awareness of both the migratory flows of sensory feeling and the work of the brain below the level of intellectual awareness to a certain coherence of the body image under new conditions of migration. The compositional dimension of brain/body activities is modified through the infraconscious perception of a body that does not look and function exactly like a familiar human body, a perception that may draw us into the quest to become something more than we usually are. Thus ecophilosophy gains from engaging the potentia of Bacon's paintings as they loosen the power of anthropocentrism over the body and dissolve "anthrpos" into the intensive, material forces that structure it. Each time we encounter one of his canvases we may be prompted to sense how the sublime of "meat" courses through us. Such conjunctions can produce more empathetic sociabilities. What seems to be at stake for Bacon as a painter of becoming is less a matter of the body trying to remain fluid than of forging multiple intersections between the human as conventionally composed and that which both exceeds it and occupies it. Is it possible to think of Bacon's body of work as an ecosystem, a new collective and heterogeneous body that has built-in mechanisms to transcend absorption into an all too anthropocentric order of representation?

Of course, one could object to the proposed reading of Bacon on several grounds: Is there no travelling through a cultural meaning-frame involved when one sees a Bacon canvas? How do you ensure that the encounters with Bacon's work would produce their greatest pro-ecological effects? Why would Bacon's work produce empathy and not revulsion? Don't we need a settled subject from which to absorb these experiences? All of these objections have validity and in the conclusion of the paper I emphasize the need to complement the arts of eco-sensation with other macropolitical experiments and arts of the self that will nurture ecological dispositions. Such complementary practices may make all the difference in terms of which of these sensibilities prevail. However, what is of immediate concern here is that the key claim to direct conveyance of sensation in Bacon is linked to a new understanding of art as a form of territorialization that produces conditions of possibility for new deterritorializations.
Sensation as the action of forces upon the body needs to find contained expression within a canvas-territory to have its greatest impact. The figural (i.e., the becoming of Bacon's Figures) constitutes one such territory, produced by a modulation of color that does violence to the figural and narration. Before Bacon's figures were fully formed as familiar human shapes, he "scrambled their proto-formations using a chance-based technique, like randomly smearing or splattering the paint." Deleuze calls this coloring technique the diagram: "The diagram is thus the operative set of asignifying and nonrepresentative lines and zones, linestrokes and color-patches." Deleuze's claim to direct conveyance does not mean that art does not require previous forms and clichés but that it operates simultaneously on several registers. Art proceeds less through the manipulation of signifying material than through accessing the plane of intensities beneath it. The invisible worlds of Bacon's painting always emerge from within the visible: "one starts with a figurative form, a diagram intervenes and scrambles it, and a form of a completely different nature emerges from the diagram, which is called the Figure." The diagram brings chaos into the figurative in order to propel new order out of chaos.

The human in Bacon is thus understood as a habitual mode of perceiving and being (i.e., a mode of figuration or representation). The goal is not to break radically with the human but to stretch and deform it in order to release and sense invisible forces that act upon the body and constitute it as such. In the process, one becomes aware of the expressiveness of the material and a certain degree of agency of color that is not simply reducible to Bacon's. I seek to draw attention to the altered habit of perception, enacted by the clash between the image of bodies viewers bring to the museum and the weird forms Bacon paints. Bacon's work accentuates the dim perception we sometimes have of something alien, wild and protean within ourselves. Such disrupting experiences and waves of bodily micro-shocks are rendered, then, more available for experience and reflection upon it. The practice of eco-sensation involves a way of seeing: it shifts the gaze from the form of the artwork to the nature of the encounters with other bodies and the new experiences of becoming-intense it brings about.

Smithson's Spiral Jetty: Mapping the Duration-Sensations of the Earth

It took 292 truck hours, two large dump trucks, a tractor, a front loader, and 625 man hours to construct Robert Smithson's monumental earthwork *Spiral Jetty* (1970), located on the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Using black basalt rocks and earth from the site, the artist created a coil 1,500 feet long and 15 feet wide that stretched out counter-clockwise into the translucent red water:
Basalt and earth were scooped from the beach at the beginning of the jetty: the trucks backed up to the outline of the spiral and dumped the material. The form of the work was influenced by the site, which had once been used to mine oil; the spiral shape of the jetty was derived from the local topography as well as relating to a mythic whirlpool at the centre of the lake. The spiral also reflects the circular formation of the salt crystals that coat the rocks. Smithson was initially attracted to the site because of the red colourations of the salt lake. The work was changed by its environment, reflecting Smithson's fascination with entropy, the inevitable transformative forces of nature...The work periodically re-emerges from the lake.51

The experience of the entropic event of Smithson's earthwork seems to be governed by a Baconian practice of duration-sensation. Like Bacon's paintings, the periodically re-emerging jetty enables us to perceive the effects of nonhuman forces of time and the earth that run through life and connect the organic with the nonorganic life of materiality itself. As basalt and earth were scooped to isolate and bound the coil to the contours of the old industrial site, Smithson demarcated a territory, a frame, a growingly discernible object ("Framing is the means by which objects are delimited, qualities unleashed and art made possible"). He made visible systolic forces of isolation.52 The systole, which contracts the salt crystals, basalt, earth and water into the spiral frame, defines the first movement from the lake to the jetty. But there is already a diastole that opposes the first movement. It outlines a series of deformations, flowing from the human impact of industrial development, mining and rapid urbanization to the sediment deformation caused by Smithson's artistic intervention and the powerful lake forces that keep pressing his work to the earth. The spiral slowly uncoils into the elements that compose it and merges with chaos. Thus the second movement is the diastolic deformation that dissipates the earthwork back into the complex material system of the lake from which it was extracted. Smithson's work itself does not exist in a stable form; it is in continual transformation and variation. The jetty is the production of earth-sensations as the expression of forces of isolation, deformation and dissipation.

The systolic and diastolic movements of rhythm harnessed by Smithson's earthwork may also be definable as the coexistence of multiple tiers of human and nonhuman durations. On the one hand, the jetty, whose spiral shape defies linear time, extracts and monumentalizes a particular set of human duration-sensations. There is the time of 625 man hours to construct the earthwork and the time it takes for our bodies to experience it. On the other hand, these human durations are co-mobilized and enter into complex conjunctions with a range of nonhuman, inorganic temporalities. We have seen that with regard to the processes of ongoing relations that organize the site a certain form of geological duration is at play. There is the time of the day, the time of the weather and the changing cycles of the sun and the moon that are all indispensable for the experience of the jetty. As the jetty is slowly merging with forces of the earth it becomes a monument to a future, in which it no longer exists. It actualizes...
a time of dissipation, a diastole of time, in which the past is coextensive with the present and the future. These rhythms of temporal variation of the earthwork sometimes intersect with a solar duration made visible by its periodic re-emergences, this time as a white salt crystal art installation, shaped by prolonged droughts in Utah. Finally, by "collaborating with entropy" and "using the environmental catastrophe to compose new life," Smithson allows us to sense the force of time as becoming, replete with the earth's life force and its power of regeneration in a universe that is temporally open to a certain degree. Thus the Spiral Jetty functions as a form of geophilosophy that allows us to reflect on our temporal relation to the world. When we look at this world, this gigantic BwO, we can sense the powerful nonorganic flows of life that move across and compose the body of the earth. In so sensing we approach earth-bodies that open up towards the unlivable and intensive forces of the earth. What is more, Smithson's art may nurture heightened sensitivity to cycles of ecological degradation and regeneration of ecosystems' life in conjunction with the need to rethink the problematic of human agency. As the boundaries between nature and artifice are dissolved in the experience of the sensation-durations of nonorganic life, it becomes clear that natural and cultural processes both share agency in shaping the earthwork and are both capable of producing art and intensifying sensations. Agency and creativity are now co-articulated and distributed among a multiplicity of human and nonhuman participants: "creative change in the world sometimes arrives through inter-agental concatenations that exceed the previous reach of either party. We participate in creation, more than being masterful agents of it, partly because it surges through us as well as from us and partly because the confluences of forces from which it emerges often exceed the reach of any single party." A notion of distributive agency, that is, a world in which human and nonhuman forces all possess some degree of agency, emerges from an encounter with Smithson's earthwork. This notion highlights the capacity of specific human-nonhuman configurations or assemblages to produce effects that can be traced back entirely neither to the will of human micro-agents nor to the affective power of their nonhuman co-participants.

The Matter of Time: Rhizomatic Encounters with Vital Materiality

Over the past forty years the site-specific sculptures of Richard Serra have emerged as some of the most successful attempts to register the affectivity and vitality of materiality, by which I mean the power of material assemblages to express vitalities in ways that become available to us. Serra, a former steelworker, creates sculptures of lead and steel of such vast proportions that they may take up entire warehouses. In 1969, Serra created One-Ton Prop (House of Cards), a simple cube, composed of four rough lead slabs propped precariously against each other by their own weight like a flimsy house of cards. Ever since, Serra's works have enabled us to move beyond our habitual space-time coordinates. Serra's monumental installation The Matter of Time in the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao deserves special attention. The eight sculptures are made of gigantic plates of towering weatherproof steel, bent and curved, leaning in and out, which carve very private spaces that allow walking into, through and
around each individual piece as well as walking into and through the space engendered by the installation as a whole. The scale, scope, height and weight of the installation are all of unprecedented proportions:

The lightest piece weights 44 tons and the heaviest is 276 tons. They are all more than 4 meters high. Despite their tremendous weight and size, the plates that form the sculptures are not fixed to the floor, but are rather in balance... In these and most of his pieces, Richard Serra has used weathering steel, a type of steel used in the construction of bridges and buildings. When left outdoors its color slowly changes from gray to orange, and after seven or eight years transforms to dark brown. After ten years, all the pieces have a homogeneous, smooth and continuous surface.

This temporal variation of color is one manifestation of the uncanny capacity of Serra's torqued ellipses, spirals and toruses to shift from their status as mere objects to formations that produce tangible transformations. They situate us in a unique material environment, in which weight becomes light and airy as the enormous mass of the steel plates is converted into floating pieces by virtue of being folded in certain ways. The formal linkage of all the works in the installation encourages the viewer to become sensitive to the forces of thing-power emanating from the sculptural field as a self-sustaining ecosystem of steel: "The sculptures are not objects in space ... They impart form to the entire space; they shape the space through axes, trajectories, and passages between their solids and voids ... Diverse equilibriums coexist. Simultaneity matters, not hierarchies."

The eight sculptures collectively generate a conversation each visitor finds herself inevitably drawn into. In fact, the installation is organized in such a way that upon entering the room the viewer simultaneously enters the sculptural space. There are multiple entrances and exits. There is no single path to follow or predetermined succession of views. Without knowing where one is going, each viewer is encouraged to explore different voids and passages. Thus The Matter of Time enables a rhizomatic encounter with vital materiality that is intensified by the rhythm of each viewer's movement. Each time someone walks inside the corridor formed by the two Torqued Ellipses, separated from one another by a gap of two meters, "the walls sometimes tilt towards the inside or the outside, bulging and then receding. The steel plates fold until they reach an extreme tension and they form a skin that wraps the elliptical space. This is a shape that didn't exist previously, neither in architecture or sculpture. This innovative shape makes steel look like an extremely flexible and dynamic material."

The Torqued Ellipses and the Spirals are both entangled in continuous movement and absorb the viewer in their movement. The movement is produced by a spin over on their own axis, which makes each torqued shape turn upwards from its base without changing its radius. Each time one's body moves, the spirals and the ellipses move too. According to Serra, "you get involved with what effect the work has physically on your body as you walk. So, time and movement became really crucial to how I deal with what I deal with, not only sight
and boundary, but how one walks through a piece and what one feels and registers in terms of one's own body in relation to another body." Serra's plates move in such a way that they produce powerful effects and sensations that, in turn, inspire the viewer's body to seek new encounters and make adjustments for the alterations it suffers. The often claustrophobic and sometimes threatening sensations of precarious balance and imminent threat pass into feelings of release upon exiting the passage. The dizzyingly fragmented physical and visual experiences of dislocation flow into and modify the direct, interactive experiences with the coherent language of the sculptures. These are movements of territorialization and deterritorialization, animated by the series of encounters between the affective bodies of the viewer and the material structure. There is an unlimited range of individual experiences, but they all heighten our awareness of the vitality of matter and the conative capacity of bodies to affect and be affected.

One also becomes aware of the multiple linkages between this vitalist logic of the installation and a multi-layered quality of temporality. The duration of the experience of the largest ellipse is different in kind from the temporal experience of walking into and through the Snake. There is also the time of precarious balance that involves "the fragments of the physical and visual memory that remain to re–combine." As these memories melt back into perception, one begins to discern a new image of time that comprises a diversity of durations:

The perceptual or aesthetic, emotional or psychological time of the sculptural experience is quite different from real time. It is nonnarrative, discontinuous, fragmented, decentered, disorienting. The perceptual fragmentation, the multiplicity of views, the discontinuity in the process of viewing contribute to the fact that neither the installation nor the singular form in it can be reduced to one retainable image.

Serra's art not only constitutes a radical break with figurative references and cultivates attentiveness to the vitality of matter, but also produces a set of unique duration-sensations that can be activated only through our bodily encounters with this vitality. His art aims to create new relationships by giving new life to the old industrial materials in a creative act that shuts the door on practical utility and diminishes instrumentality. We begin to nurture presumptive generosity to other styles of temporalities and to experience the relationship between people-materialities and thing-materialities in a more rhizomatic way. I see Serra's art as a step towards a more ecological sensibility but we have to keep in mind that no two people share the same walk through the torqued ellipses. And the question remains: If Serra successfully alerts us to thing-power, does registering of the effects of thing-power always remain only a human act?

Embarking on Journeys to Umwelten Other than Our Own
The practice of eco-sensation reveals that not only each of us has a specific duration but there are also coexisting nonhuman durations, inferior and superior to us. Rather than locating all other durations within our own (e.g., the redwood tree, swarm of cicadas or the granite rock perceived as extended objects within our world), this practice enables us to tap into an open virtual whole of multiple durations (the redwood tree, swarm of cicadas and the granite rock as processes that sense different vibrations, resonances and waves of light, heat and moisture that form other worlds). According to Claire Colebrook, the thought of different durations can have profound implications for politics. We can start looking at other ways of life not as earlier or more "primitive" versions of our own but as different styles of temporality or duration. For instance, land disputes between Australian aborigines and government can be understood as disputes about durations. For the former, identity is constituted through a spiritual affiliation with a sacred earth and history. It is not a history of documents or legal archive but a "dreaming" or body of myths concerning human and animal bodies: "...on the one hand, a time and a people whose memory is given through a virtually present collective memory and land, and on the other hand a time of European culture measured by a "man" who remains the same regardless of locale and for whom land and culture are external items of property... philosophy only begins to think when it encounters these other durations." Thus a more acute awareness of the enfolded nature of time allows us to confront an European periodization of world history and political development, linked to notions of linear progress, evolution of universal reason, etc., that has historically served to rationalize practices such as colonization, conquest, and neoliberal development. Now we can begin to acknowledge the coexistence of multiple modernities and temporalities that enable the recognition of the Other (human or nonhuman) as the Other without subsuming it into the order of the Same or the Human.

In this respect, we also become better equipped to apprehend how our manipulation of the environment brings us up against other unfoldings of time, fluctuations and mutations that alter the speeds of nonhuman durations within our lifetime. Recent examples include glaciers melting at more than double speed; bird and swine flu outbreaks, spreading out from domesticated poultry and pigs; millennia-long accumulation of fossil fuels and their exhaustion over a few centuries of industrial practices; clear-cut logging of old growth redwood forests, many of which were seedlings before the birth of Christ, and so on. These examples raise the question of how to nurture a capacity to intuit durations beyond those of immediate concern and appropriation. How do we recognize and learn to dwell in the durations of others not present to us? Can we cultivate presumptive generosity towards other styles of duration? To what degree do we belong to others' durations? Where does one form of life begin or end, and what about the environment?

Such questions were anticipated by Estonian biologist Jakob von Uexküll, whose research attempted to rethink the world as infinite animal environments (Umwelten) in order to gain better insight into what it means to be an animal. Influenced by Kant's philosophy, Uexküll...
insists that our knowledge of the natural world cannot exceed an irreducible world of experience and "all reality is subjective appearance." Animals are subjects and there are as many worlds as subjects, interwoven in a "web of life that extends in all directions uniting both living and nonliving things into a cohesive design." Each organism constructs its own Umwelt through interpretive work of signs that are important to it while, at the same time, creating signs for others. From this perspective, the task of biology is to discern these "subjective universes" and elucidate how the world appears to each organism, according to its own perceptions and actions.

Uexküll uses the metaphor of a soap bubble encircling every living being within a defined parameter, beyond which certain things are no longer meaningful and significant to it. In Onto-Theologies Brett Buchanan recounts a range of examples, drawn from Uexküll's empirical research on the bubble-like Umwelts of animals. Among them, the life of the tick stands out:

Nearly everything in the external world that surrounds the tick has no significance to it. The moon, weather, birds, noises, leaves, shadows, and so forth do not matter to the tick. They may belong to the Umwelt of other organisms that live in the midst of the tick, but they do not carry any meaning for the tick itself ... What does matter to the tick, however, is the sensory perception of heat and sweat from a warm-blooded animal, on which the female tick feeds, lays its eggs, and dies ... Uexküll recounts how ticks will position themselves in a hanging position on the tip of a tree branch in the anticipation of a mammal passing beneath the branch ... After mating, the blind and deaf tick is first drawn upward by the photoreceptivity of her skin. While the tick hangs on a branch, very little affects it. The tick does not feed itself, shelter itself, or engage in any other activities. It simply waits. And, remarkably, ticks have been noted to hang motionless for up to eighteen years at a time until a precise environmental cue eventually triggers it from its rest. This span of time encompasses nearly the entire life span of the tick, and it does so until the tick senses a specific odor emanating from the butyric acid (sweat) of a mammal ... the tick releases itself from the branch in order to fall onto the hair of the moving mammal ... Once the tick has bored itself in, it sucks the mammal's blood until the warm blood reaches the tick's stomach, at which time a biological response is activated, and the sperm cells that a male has already deposited and are waiting in the female are released to fertilize the awaiting eggs. This reproductive action will not occur if the foregoing sequence of events first takes place.

Many ticks never make it through the full cycle, and those who do, die soon after. Yet, this observation does not diminish the importance of the tick's Umwelt for Uexküll, which appears to him as a living play of signs and interpretations. The mammal ("meaning-carrier") elicits certain "signs" that become significant within the tick's phenomenal world ("meaning-receiver") as they are being actively "interpreted" by the tick; a meaningful relationship is
Moreover, the odor of mammalian sweat that triggers the tick's release from the branch may be of little or no significance to other organisms. Instead, the mammal may be perceived in multiple other ways: "Perhaps the mammal is a dog out for a walk in the woods. Just as the mammal belongs within the Umwelt of the tick, the mammal may equally belong to my own Umwelt, albeit with a different significance. And while the dog may not notice the tick, it may notice a squirrel to chase or a twig to play with." Thus, it becomes evident that the various animal worlds and durations intersect with one another, extending the notion of Umwelt beyond the soap bubble. This time, Uexküll deploys a musical reference to describe how each organism enters into relationships with different aspects of its environment: "We see here [in pairs] the first comprehensive musical laws of nature. All living beings have their origin in a duet ... The harmony of performances is most clearly visible in the colonies of ants and honeybees. Here we have completely independent individuals that keep up the life of the colony through the harmony of the individual performances." Each living being is always already other than itself and composes a "symphony underscored by rhythms and melodies reaching outward for greater accompaniment." Within this plane of nature as a musical score, the mammal emits tones, rhythms and chiming vibrations that complement and interlace with the tick's own.

The music of tick-mammal life brings us back to the multiple force-fields and tiers of nonhuman time, revealed by the practice of eco-sensation. The encounter and temporary overlap of two very different styles of duration leads to the formation of a new duet, of a new ontological unit, that exceeds its constitutive elements and affirms the force of time as becoming. Out of the tick-mammal composite emerges a new tick, ready to serve its eighteen years on the branch. Just like the spider, which has adopted certain tunes from the fly's symphony and constructs its web with a view towards the fly's arrival, the tick demonstrates an "embodied 'anticipatory power' for the 'aboutness'" of its own body and immediate environment. Each animal in question becomes another through its various encounters and compositional relations. Perhaps, this corporeal understanding of otherness refers to a different mode of nonhuman and bodily time ("anticipation-time"), not entirely reducible to intentionality and semiotic interpretation. Finally, it seems pertinent to ask: Do these connections concern "individuals" or "beings" per se? Uexküll's Umwelten involve as much whole organisms (and molar entities) as the complex interplay of inorganic forces such as passive and active affects, temperatures, speeds and slownesses within each individuated soap bubble. The connections are not necessarily between a tick and a mammal, a spider and a fly, but between an olfactory organ and a compound of odor-temperature, a net and a line of flight, one rhythmic wave with another. The tick and the spider are compounds of sensations, activated by arrivals of the mammal and the fly.

Art can capture these flows of affects and connections and enable us to perceive durations and Umwelts not already in tune with our own rhythms. Redwood artwork in the American West, installation art such as Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty and Serra's Torqued Ellipses have
already monumentalized the earth's diverse geography and infinite color intensities. BBC series *Blue Planet: Seas of Life* and *Planet Earth*, Werner Herzog's and Peter Raymont's films continue to trace rare movements of the world and the impossible territories and intimate durations of some of the planet's wildest and most elusive creatures. We move from the perception of a redwood cone falling from a tree, actualized into the tick's release from a branch, to the farmed soil across which a mammal runs, and to the river, into which it leaps to play as it disturbs the river's inhabitants. Then, we travel from the sheets of geological time to the cycles of seasons and ocean tides and immerse into the incessant flow of becoming of the world, whose altered ecologies call for a new generation of artists to come.

The proposed art practice of eco-sensation encourages us to gain practical and bodily insights into the multiple ways in which anthropocentric attitudes and feelings become sedimented into different layers of the body/brain network, to incorporate that knowledge into future ecological thought and action, and to experiment with body/brain interventions that may stretch and distend human-centered patterns of thought, feeling and judgment. Each encounter with the works of Bacon, Smithson, and Serra triggers side perceptions at odds with the dominant drifts of perception and interpretation; it reworks the body's implicit self-image in its ever ready tendency to fall back into a narrow humanism.

Of course, neither the arguments nor the illustrations in this paper prove the truth of this practice. I doubt that such a definitive proof will emerge and as such the practice of eco-sensation is profoundly contestable. Thus it is crucial to emphasize the need to complement these experiments with a range of other macropolitical experiments and arts of the self that nurture ecological dispositions. Such complementary practices—such as interim visualization, meditation, yoga, nature walks and hiking, biking, multi-media strategies, practices of feeling with others (human and nonhuman)—may enhance the efficacy of these art interventions. Nonetheless, as we move back and forth between micro- and macropolitics, between experimentation, observation, and reflection, among creative readings of science, analytical and critical philosophy, we develop better strategies to interrupt the flow of all too human-centered thought and to open windows to creative experimentation.

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**Notes**


In the present study sensation refers to a pre-individual and incipient cognitive plane of intensities and forces that both constitute and act upon the body. Sensation is that which strikes the viewer of a painting before the meaning of the narrative and figurative givens of the canvas is perceived. Deleuze sees art as a mode of bodily intensification of sensations that enables us to tap into the flux of life marked by the coexistence of multiple durations, force-fields and tiers of time. From this perspective, duration is a mode of time that underlies creative becoming, the irreversible flow of differentiation in the universe. Duration is not chronological or successive clock-time time that can be broken into minutes, hours, days, etc. or can be spatialized into linear progression. Duration is an intensive multiplicity in which the alteration of one point or singularity changes the qualitative composition of the durational whole. The notion of duration is not limited to the human estate. One way to conceive of the flow of time is as multiple durations of different speeds and becomings that characterize life as the power to differ and create new folds.


Here I am indebted to both Elizabeth Grosz and Claire Colebrook. Colebrook’s book Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed. (London: Continuum, 2006) has enabled me to think more clearly about this relationship between life, chaos, and thinking in Deleuze’s philosophy.


Connolly, William E. "Experience and Experiment." Daedalus (Summer 2006), 67.

Connolly, "Experience and Experiment," 69; I also borrow the definition of this new eco-ethical strategy from Suzanne Gallant’s work on William Connolly’s political philosophy.

It is naturalistic in refusing to embrace the human as a preordained ordering principle of the world, a principle frequently engendered by some form of dualism or commitment to a supranatural force. It is immanent in "identifying protean forces – forces that can disturb the “actuality” of relatively stable things, beings, processes, systems, etc. These forces, when activated under certain conditions, periodically introduce, say a new species, weather system or human brain/body pattern into the universe.” See Connolly, "Experience and Experiment," 70.

This provisional definition emerged from a range of insights drawn from Bennett’s presentation and from the Fall 2009 seminar “Spinoza and Ecophilosophy,” co-taught by William Connolly and Jane Bennett at Johns Hopkins University.

Panagia poses a radical challenge to narratocracy (i.e., the “privileging of narrative as a genre for the exposition of claims and ideas”) as the prevailing regime of perception in critical political theorizing (12). Panagia makes a compelling case to move beyond the rule of narrative towards recognition of sensation as a key dimension of political life: “…the first political act is also an aesthetic one, a partitioning of sensation that divides the body and its organs of sense perception and assigns to them corresponding capacities for the making of sense.”(9) As an interruption of sense and “experience of unrepresentability,” sensation is indispensable for identifying critical ethico-political moments and occasions for relinquishing our attachments and reconfiguring our ways of perceiving the world. If the aesthetic dimension of authority helps to imprison us in submission, the approaches that seek to sustain discontinuity (by relating the experiences sensation affords) offer new possibilities for suspending authority and transforming the political order. Another high point of Panagia’s text emerges from his insight that “the contemporary subject is a viewing subject” and that contemporary democratic theory needs to engage micropolitical techniques that pluralize our postures of visuality (19). Thus, I want to acknowledge an intellectual debt between my discussion of the practices of eco-sensation that aim to disarticulate and trouble received anthropocentric regimes of perception and Panagia’s account of sensation as a radical democratic moment. The paper shares Panagia’s agenda to stretch and trouble established tendencies by opening new relations. In the case of eco-sensation, the tendencies in the other direction are partly built right into action oriented perception and partly into inordinate drives to human superiority. While I try to remain attentive to the fact that we have preorganized starting points that enable perception, these dispositions are not transcendental in the strong sense, and hence can be modified through new micropolitical strategies such as the strategies proposed in Panagia’s book.

The notions of nonhuman affectivity, thing-power and affective bodies are drawn from Jane Bennett’s book Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010). Bennett theorizes a vibrant materiality that runs alongside and within humans in an attempt to make us more alert to how the stories we tell ourselves about matter shape our identities as humans and political beings. Bennett aims to detach materiality from philosophical figures of inert substance and, along the way, calls into question ontological binaries such as life/matter, human/nonhuman, nature/culture, etc. She argues that things, events and objects produce various (sometimes positive, sometimes harmful) effects in human and other bodies and that they possess a form of political agency marked by its own histories, objects and trajectories. In her view, this thingly, material power requires us to amend received notions of agency, freedom, and politics. One way Bennett seeks to rethink political agency is through the Spinozist model of conative bodies, based on the idea that bodies strive to enhance their power by forming alliances with other bodies. The power of each body to affect other bodies involves a corresponding capacity to be affected. What this tendency of bodies to increase their power in or as heterogeneous assemblages...
suggests for the concept of agency, according to Bennett, is that "the efficacy or effectivity to which that term has traditionally referred becomes distributed across an ontologically heterogeneous field, rather than being a capacity localized in a human body or in a collective produced (only) by human efforts." (Bennett, Vibrant Matter, 23)


18. Grosz, Chaos, Territory, Art, 35, 63.


21. Grosz, Chaos, Territory, Art, 76.


24. Grosz, Chaos, Territory, Art, 74-75.

25. "Sensation is excitation itself, not insofar as it is gradually prolonged and passes into reaction but insofar it is preserved or preserves its vibrations. Sensation contracts the vibrations of the stimulant on a nervous surface or in a cerebral volume: what comes before has not yet disappeared when what follows appears. This is its way of responding to chaos. Sensation itself vibrates because it contacts vibrations. It preserves itself because it preserves vibrations: it is Monument. It resonates because it makes its harmonics resonate." (Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy?, 211).


27. Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy?, 211; Grosz, Chaos, Territory, Art, 80.


www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/francisbacon/

29. Smith, "Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality," 44.

30. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 18, 29.

31. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 32-33.


33. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 61.

34. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 60, 62.

35. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 69.

36. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 69.

37. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 54.


39. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 22.


41. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 22.

42. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 39.

43. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 41,


45. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 42.


49. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 156.


51. Kastner, Land and Environmental Art, 58.

52. Grosz, Chaos, Territory, Art, 17.


67. Buchanan, Onto-Ethologies, 2, 20, 22.

68. Buchanan, Onto-Ethologies, 32.

69. Buchanan, Onto-Ethologies, 2, 22.

70. Buchanan, Onto-Ethologies, 25.

71. Buchanan, Onto-Ethologies, 32.

72. Buchanan, Onto-Ethologies, 25.

73. Quoted in Buchanan, Onto-Ethologies, 26-27.

74. Buchanan, Onto-Ethologies, 28-29.


77. Connolly, "Experience and Experiment," 71.