Isabelle Andriessen

The Mesh—strange strangers between life and non-life, 2015. A serie of sculptures. Metal, plastic, plexiglass, water, PVC tubes, humidifiers, fans, mycelium/mushrooms. 520 x 240 x 210 cm. Isabelle Andriessen

The Mesh—strange strangers between life and non-life, 2015. A serie of sculptures. Metal, plastic, plexiglass, water, PVC tubes, humidifiers, fans, mycelium/mushrooms. Detail. Isabelle Andriessen

You Are the Last Generation that Will Die

"The dead can often be more powerful than the living."—Jacques Derrida[1]

The first vivid memory of my life is that of my father passing away over night due to an accident. As a child of barely five years old, I asked myself: Where do things go to when they're no longer here? How can something once present, something that was physically here, disappear into another space? A space that I cannot enter physically? Ever since, the notion of death has been very close to me and it has been a compelling force at the centre of my artistic research.

The earthiness of death and finitude is rooted in time. Since the Enlightenment there has been no greater sense of disenchantment than in regards to our view of living things. Generally speaking, we understand the things we see in nature and the things around us in a very naturalistic way without invoking anything supernatural. In the words of Boris Groys:

> The soul may have no further life after the death of the body; however, the body certainly lives on after the soul passes away. Here, [one] can definitely speak of a *life after death*, since a corpse is active throughout: after death, it remains active in that it elapses, decays and decomposes. This process of decay is potentially infinite… Even if the vestiges of the corpse can no longer be identified, it doesn't mean the body has disappeared, but simply that its elements—molecules, atoms, etc.—have dispersed throughout the world to such extent that the body has practically become one with the entire world.[2]

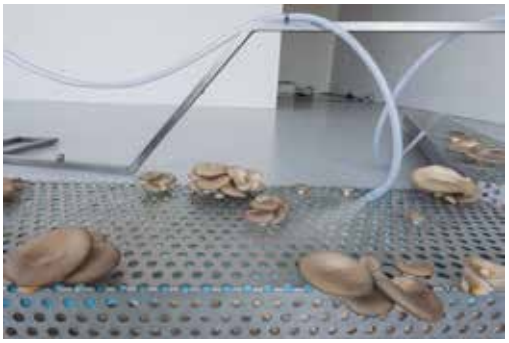
It's a little discouraging that human beings are not the stars of a cosmic drama that has been planned from the beginning. Rather, they are the stars of a concern about life after death. This must have been a preoccupation of human beings from long before there was any writing of history.

It's hard to realise that there might be nothing after death. It's a chilling thought and it requires some form of constellation of realisations. Part of the constellation is just to be able to face this statement without turning to some supernatural comforting. As Steven Weinberg says, "It takes a certain amount of courage and resignation to accept the world as a place where human beings are not that important."[3] This point of view is the foundation of my artistic research. I aim to react to this viewpoint by exploring ways to address an awareness of the passage of time and the way we position ourselves in relation to the vast nature we're part of.

In my installations and sculptures, I apply different techniques and media in order to explore the paradox between the beauty of transformation and the continuous loss inherent within it, both material and perceptual. It is exactly this paradox that keeps me fascinated with my research. A term for this paradox is found in Japanese philosophy and literature: "*mono no aware*," the sad beauty of transience, an awareness of impermanence or the passing of things. The physical experience of the viewer is at stake in my complex installations, which I approach as "parallel environments." I aim to orchestrate time. By employing elements like scent, light, sound, and time, I investigate ways to evoke a highly sensory and bodily experience that contributes to a sense of disorientation. Through the use of perishable materials and natural processes, I draw attention to the impermanent nature of the present in order to draw attention to the now.

In my research I contemplate the paradox between emphasising finitude and the desire for immortality. In this text I will discuss several facets connected to this research. I aim to reflect on what exists between being human and non-human—between living and non-living. This text is a wander through a network of connections that have been in play in my practice up to this point.

As a start, I would like to highlight a moment in European medieval times when time, duration, and finitude were emphasised within the genre of *memento mori*. *Memento mori* is a Latin theory and thematic in art and architecture that means "remember you will die"—death is unavoidable, and comes reaping at random. This genre in art history emphasises the fleeting nature of life and experience in order to remind the viewer of mortality and the notion that one should prepare for the inevitable. From the perspective of the ruling Christian culture, living well and dying well in favour of the last judgment was highly valued. *Memento mori* works later also became known as "vanitas," a genre of still-life painting that became popular towards the sixteenth century. Although vanitas paintings contain a number of explicit symbols of mortality, they also feature symbols em-



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phasising the worthlessness of worldly goods, science, and achievements—depicting that everything is just vanity and discoveries in sciences will not prevent you from dying.

In earlier stages of my artistic research, I investigated ways to communicate the *memento mori* message "remember you will die" from a contemporary viewpoint. I perceive a compelling paradox between the fear of finitude and the longing for immortality. The longing for immortality comes along with a parade of "vampires, zombies, clones, and living machines—the miscellaneous undead—who take pride of place in today's mass culture."[4] In this text, these non-human beings and others will appear in different ways.

I feel the necessity to create a field of discourse around these "side effects" of facing finitude within the art institute—a context where creating becomes an act of prolonging life. How can I orchestrate time, duration, and modes of finitude within the context of art in order to stress the above-addressed subjects?

The Rhizome

Time and duration are major subjects in the theories of Henri Bergson. In this text I will explore some concepts of Bergson in relation to those of Gilles Deleuze, since these were highly influenced by the writings of Bergson. Both figures are important when it comes to framing my philosophical territory.

Bergson notes that the material universe is duration, although when divided and analysed, it presents itself as the other, the opposite of duration. Matter, in spite of its scientific reduction to closed systems operating according to predictable laws, also carries duration and flux; matter is duration at its most enlarged sense. Mind and matter, life and matter, are different degrees of duration, different modes of relaxation or contraction, neither opposed nor continuous and eternally differing duration. Durational force, the force of temporality, is the movement of complication, dispersion, or difference that makes any becoming possible and the world a site of endless becoming. In other words, becoming is a principle of matter itself.

According to Bergson, the real is "understood as durational: it is composed of millions even billions of specific durations, each with its own measure, its own span. Yet each duration can be linked to the other only because each partakes in the whole of duration and carries in it durational flow. This flow is an irresistible orientation forward and an impulse to complexify in this movement."[5] Bergson "shows that there must be an original common impulse which explains the creation of all living species"; this vital impulse he calls "*élan vital*."[6]

Deleuze's attraction to Bergsonism lies in Bergson's undermining of the stability of fixed objects and states; that is, Bergson's "affirmation of the vibratory continuity of the material universe as a whole … in his developing a philosophy of movement and change."[7] According to Elizabeth Groz, "Deleuze seeks a real that is intimately linked to the dynamism of temporality itself."[8] An important notion both philosophers comment on is "multiplicity," a unity that is multiple in itself. Unity is a "multiplicity that varies according to the dimensions considered." In other words, "multiplicities are defined by the outside … according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities." A multiplicity "is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. … When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimension, it necessarily changes in nature as well, undergoing a metamorphosis." It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle from which it grows and which it overspills; it has multiple entryways.[9]

This is one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome, as defined by Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. The rhizome is an acentered, non-hierarchical, non-signifying aborescent model. The rhizome can be explained as a map of "attractions and influences with no specific origin or genesis."[10] The rhizome is "open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, and susceptible to constant modifications."[11] The rhizome is "always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo," and, further, "the planar movement of the rhizome resists chronology and organization, instead favoring a nomadic system of growth and prop-

The Mesh—strange strangers between life and non-life, 2015. A serie of sculptures. Metal, plastic, plexiglass, water, PVC tubes, humidifiers, fans, mycelium/mushrooms. 350 x 180 x 160 cm. Isabelle Andriessen

agation."[12] A rhizome is characterised by "ceaselessly established connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles."[13]

In my artistic research I question the central role that humanity and the human body plays in our constitution of "the world" in relation to our environment. In this text I contemplate different propositions about what it means to be human and non-human, sentient and non-sentient, and living and non-living, in order to extend my view on the uncanny road this configuration takes. The rhizome as an arborescent conception of knowledge appears in this text in alignment with the contemplation that has let me to my graduation project, *The Mesh—strange strangers between life and non-life*.

Orchestrated Time

"As we envisage our fragmented time of presence as spectators, and the sheer impossibility of experiencing the exhibition in its totality, the experience of duration itself renders those who made the exhibition the memory of this elapsed time."
—Pierre Huyghe[14]

How can I challenge the experience of time in the format of an exhibition? In my work I aim to use time as a medium. Bergson's concept of duration and Deleuze and Guattari's of the rhizome enriched my explorations of the notions of time and duration in my work. Since 2010 I have investigated ways to produce work that performs in the here and now, works that are in constant flux or transformation alongside the exhibi-

The Mesh—strange strangers between life and non-life, 2015. A serie of sculptures. Metal, plastic, plexiglass, water, PVC tubes, humidifiers, fans, mycelium / mushrooms. 320 x 180 x 120 cm. Isabelle Andriessen

tion. I aim to confront the viewer with something that is not supposed to last: something that might vanish, collapse, disappear. I aim to place the viewer in the role of witness of a process that will partly be missed. I intend to research ways to direct time and so the way it is experienced. How can I evoke a sense of longing or desire? What is the role of durability and presence according to these short-lived, present, and sometimes even performative works? What is the difference in impact of witnessing a work that has "not yet happened," "is happening," or "just happened"?

During this period of time I created a series of sculptures that depict miniature landscapes made out of everyday materials. Each element in the sculptures was orchestrated to activate different physical and chemical processes. In the first stage of this experimentation, I applied materials that would transform along the line of entropy; materials would melt, decay, and fall apart. I aimed to shed an ironic light on Caspar David Friedrich's landscape paintings and the romantics' intention to depict nature as something unknown, sublime, and mysterious. With *Study on the Entropy of Life* (2010) and *Falling Sky Study* (2010) I intended to merely provoke the romantics' intention and question it by integrating materials like ice, gelatin, foam, water, and ink in such a way so as to depict "postcard-perfect" images of a natural landscape. In doing so, these temporal sculptures formed the romantic perception of the sublime into sloppy miniatures that transformed into self-destructive representations of nature.

In 2011, this line of experimentation shifted, though the ironic approach remained present. Whereas before I would use technological devices that contain qualities of transformation, I now started to look into the capacity of machines to become performers in order to manifest transformation over the course of time. I began to direct these devices to activate certain processes of transformation. In *Phantom Galaxy* (2012), a printer-scanner is set up to simulate a representation of a telescope picture of our galaxy. The installation contains a printer-scanner with aglass box placed on top, in which two balloons float on the current of air coming from the fan. The printer-scanner is run by a computer script that directs the scanner to make a scan every two minutes. Each time, this scan is sent to the Internet in order to be projected large-scale onto a wall in the same space. The speed of the scanner creates a discontinuous, stretched, and morphed image of the continuous movement of the balloons. In doing so, I aim to recreate a flow of images that reminds the viewer of an interstellar nebula.

Thinking through the experience of time in the format of an exhibition is also something that is of major influence in the oeuvre of Pierre Huyghe. Where should the exhibition appear? When should it appear? How can one temporalise space? These are questions that come about in my work as well as in Huyghe's. He researches modes to direct situations in the format of an exhibition in a way I find very successful and inspiring. In 1995, Huyghe founded an artist collective called the Association of Freed Time, which researches the time-based protocol of the exhibition. How can an exhibition grow along and extend in reality? How can an exhibition be performative?[15] The formats of time at play in Huyghe's exhibitions give a sense that "nothing is ever fully obliterated by the passage of time."[16] He aims to question and suspend that moment of production.[17] And he likes to call his audience "witnesses" who experience this temporality, which is accidental and not accidental.[18] The witness is the person who exhibits and is exhibited. This mode of performativity happens, according to Huyghe, when the representation is activated or active. The living, the intensification of what is, its vitality, is at stake here.

A work in which many of these aspects come about is *Untilled*, which he presented at documenta in 2012. For *Untilled*, Huyghe presented a biotope hidden behind a few bushes at the end of the Karlsaue Park, in an offsite place which is normally used to collect plant refuse.[19] On this site one might stumble into Human, the white dog with the pink leg. In the midst of this artificial biotope that appears to be a non-site, a sculpture was installed: "a reclining figure of a woman on a cement block. Instead of a head, however, she has a huge beehive on her shoulders, which lends the entire ensemble something totally surreal." Art critic Achim Drucks continues: "Here … the swarm of bees has a very concrete task to perform. It pollinates the blossoms in the garden, ensuring that the plants procreate."[20]

For *Untilled*, Huyghe selected several highly particular plants, like cannabis, jimson weed, foxglove, and nightshade, which contain substances whose ingestion alters consciousness and breaks down ordinary notions of the self and the world. Linda Norden, who has curated many of Huyghe's exhibitions, tells me that his work was influenced by Jakob von Uexküll's book *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*, which I will go into later in this text.

Huyghe prefers to think about the exhibition as a format existing of a set of time-based protocols and configurations that affect how we think about and perceive things.[21] That is, as it being a set of things that affect each other and yet construct themselves. According to Huyghe, an exhibition is an accidental moment of presentations, an intensification of the present. Most of his exhibitions live on through variations in intensity: "it overflows its frame or its script, and it becomes a series of operations that do not exist solely through its recording."[22] His interest is in the conditions from which situations emerge that exist in co-presence. Something that exists outside of the exhibition, indifferent to light and to whoever experiences it; something that, according to Huyghe, could be called "non-time." Huyghe explains he doesn't understand why we have the experience of duration even though there is a time "in-itself" that exists without us.

Humanimal

I perceive a sense of disconnection to time and environment in my observations of my generation: a generation in which machines have turned into our companion species. To support my point of view, I would like to refer to the Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa. He says that "the dominance of vision has been reinforced in our time by a multitude of technological inventions and the endless multiplication and production of images."[23] I believe that when one's senses become more receptive to our environment and how this environment is interconnected and continuously changing, one becomes closer to an awareness of the present. By employing elements like scent, sound, and light in my sculptures and installations, I aim to go beyond the hegemony of the eye and open up to what I call "parallel environments."

Pallasmaa claims that "the gradually growing hegemony of the eye seems to be parallel with the development of a Western ego-consciousness and the gradually increasing separation of the self and *the world*; vision separates us from the world whereas the other senses unite us with it."[24] He continues: "One becomes detached from an incarnated relation with the environment through the suppression of the other senses, in particular due to the technological extensions of the eye."[25]

This concern influenced me in 2013 and 2014 to produce works in which scent, sound, and light became more prominent elements investigate within the format of an exhibition. For *The Eyes of the Skin* (2014), I built as the main object of the work a light installation that interfered with the architecture of the gallery the work took place in: a landscape experienced through the senses of the perceiver. In doing so, I aimed to distort the sensory experience of the viewer.

In order to become more aware of what constitutes the sensory experience of our environment and its interconnectedness, I believe it is important to have a better understanding of a non-human perception. To get a better sense of the non-human experience of "the world," I turn to the investigations of Jakob von Uexküll. His theories are important to my research because he claims that all living species contain an infinite variety of perceptual worlds, in which animals are uncommunicating and reciprocally exclusive.[26] Uexküll's descriptions can be approached as a variety of examples of the rhizome concept, like Deleuze's reference to the orchid and the wasp.[27] Agamben explains that Uexküll's explorations of the animal environment are contemporary and "express the unreserved abandonment of every anthropocentric perspective in the life sciences and the radical dehumanization of the image of nature." Uexküll's theories strongly influenced Deleuze, "who sought to think the animal and environment in an absolutely non-anthropomorphic and heterogeneous way."[28]

Uexküll's theories disprove the idea that the relation a certain subject has to the things in its environment takes place in the same space and in the same time as those which bind us to the objects in our human world. Agamben notes that Uexküll "shows that such a unitary world does not exist, just as a space and a time that are equal for all living things does not exist." Organisms do not merely receive sense data and nor do they respond automatically to stimuli. Instead they construct and interpret through receptive territory and experience. Uexküll carefully distinguishes "the *Umgebung*, the objective space in which we see a living being moving, from the *Umwelt*, the environment-world that is constituted by a more or less broad series of elements that he calls 'carriers of significance' … or of 'marks' … , which are the only things that interest the animal." Uexküll contends that "in reality, the *Umgebung* is our own *Umwelt*, to which [he] does not attribute any particular privilege and which … can also vary according to the point of view from which we observe it. … Every environment is a closed unity in itself."[29]

Theorist Donna Haraway draws further on these notions of Uexküll, which I aim to put into the light of Timothy Morton in order to challenge the formulation of ecology or nature:

> Human genomes can be found in only about 10 percent of all the cells that occupy the mundane space I call my body; the other 90 percent of the cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such, some of which play in a symphony necessary to my being alive at all, and some of which are hitching a ride and doing the rest of me, of us, no harm. … I love that when "I" die, all these benign and dangerous symbionts will take over and use whatever is left of "my" body, if only for a while, since "we" are necessary to one another in real time.[30]

How can I contemplate the central role that humanity and the human body plays in our constitution of "the world" in relation to our environment? I think an ecological approach to modes of thinking complicates traditional distinctions between appearance and reality, between ontology and epistemology, and between the empirical and the transcendental. Haraway states that "a human being is first of all an embodied being, and the complexities of this embodiment means that human awareness unfolds in ways very different from those of intelligence embodied in cybernetic machines."[31] Haraway invites us to see the human as just another knot in the worldwide web of interspecies dependencies, as always already in-formed by organic and technological nonhumans. According to Haraway, our intra-actions at many scales of space-time need to be rethought. She suggests that instead of aiming for categorisation and ways of relating, one should see that "all that is, is the fruit of becoming with."[32] In my recent practice I have been aiming to apply the notions of Uexküll and Haraway in order to create a work that contemplates new ways of formulating and

understanding ecology. Like Katherine N. Hayles, I wonder "what kind of environments will be created by the expanding power and sophistication of intelligent machines."[33] Will this power actually derive from technological singularity or bacteria and organisms? In an attempt to find answers to this question, I will go deeper into the notion of "hyperobjects."

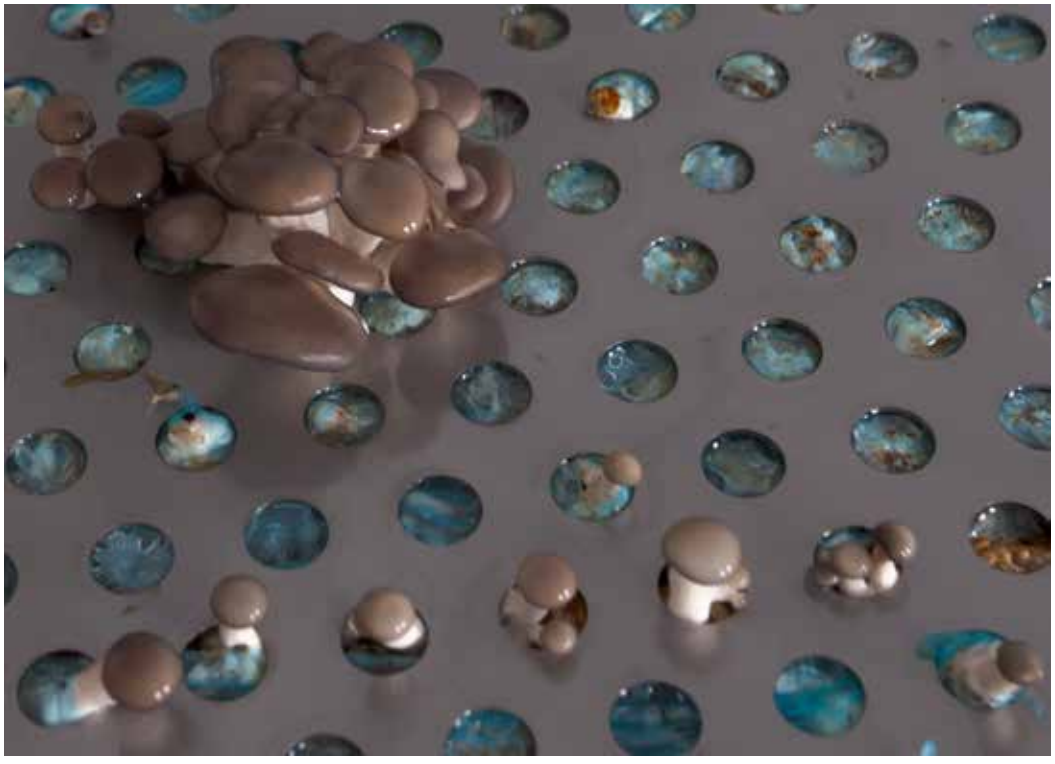
Hyperobjects

"Our entering into what scientists call the 'Anthropocene' challenges Karl Marx's concept of the 'ghost dance,' and makes it more complex: today, human beings are involved in a new 'ghost dance' not only with industry, but also with our environment and our atmosphere, with animals, domestic technology, bacteria or plants."

—Nicolas Bourriaud[34]

We live in an era marked by the strong impact of human activities upon the atmospheric and geological evolution of planet Earth. In 2016, a group of scientists will come to the conclusion of whether this impact is changing the constitution of the planet so much that the current epoch should get another name: the Anthropocene.[35] Everywhere, humans lose ground against technostructure and the algorithms of profit. As founders of this new epoch we leave traces (land, architecture, materials, satellites) behind, which will last incredibly longer than humanity will. I believe that the sphere of interhuman relations cannot be conceived any longer without its environmental and technological sides.

I propose that our *cosmopolitical* and ecological history is a history full of ghosts that are neither light nor dark, present nor absent, visible nor



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invisible. Ghostly apparitions are weird and uncanny. One cannot neatly categorise having experienced a ghost, since it is both real and unreal, actual and possible, living and non-living, being and non-being. Learning to live is to learn to live with ghosts. These ghost call for our attention and demand our respect as well as a compelling discussion of what constitutes them. The writings of Morton help me to understand what these ghosts are in the context of the Anthropocene. The deeper I get into my artistic research, the more I realise how the elements constituting ecology are interdependent. I'm fascinated by the fact that being a human being means seemingly being driven to grasp the vastness of the world we live in, in order to make sense of it, to overcome mortality, and perhaps even to become immortal, like zombies moving on the arrow of the Anthropocene.

Morton claims that "the notion that we are living 'in' a world—one that we can call Nature—no longer applies in any meaningful sense, except as nostalgia or in the temporarily useful local language of pleas and petitions. … the world as such—not just a specific idea of world but *world* in its entirety—has evaporated. Or rather, we are realising that we never had it in the first place."[36]

His writings on "hyperobjects" have provided me with a closer understanding of how in contemporary times this "ghost-dance" is choreographed ontologically. Morton explains it by using the term "hyperobjects." "The *world*," he says, "is more or less a container in which objectified things float or stand. … World as the background of events is an objectification of a hyperobject: the biosphere, climate, evolution, and capitalism."[37] One could say that this resonates with the rhizome, though Morton's reaction to this seemingly apparent relation is somewhat ambivalent. In DIS magazine, he says that it's merely "Deleuzian materialists" who link his theories with the rhizome, while he claims they "have their differences." As a reaction to this relation, he goes on to talk about Deleuze's concept of the smooth: "things are so granular, like you're up against the surface of the painting or whatever and you're so close to something that you can't grip it with your conceptual mind; it doesn't mean that everything is completely opaque." Morton thinks Deleuze's reality principle is overrated, and that it doesn't really exist. And so, "imposing it or getting used to it is not that great, because it's ontologically violent as well as politically funny."[38] If so, then at least one can say that Morton's hyperobjects can function as an extension or another plateau of the rhizome.

Hyperobjects seem massively distributed in time and space in a peculiar way, of which global warming is one of the more comprehensive examples he discusses. Hyperobjects are systems that you can't see or touch; they are real, they have an effect on our world. Even though they are real, they are inaccessible. And yet we can think them. They force us into an intimacy with our own death, because they are toxic; with others, because everyone is affected by them; and with our future. They are sinister phenomena like earthquakes and tsunamis. Hyperobjects are beyond the human, but they aren't infinite or abstract. They are just really, really big and of a scale and consequence beyond human understanding. According to Morton's theory, hyperobjects remove human beings from the centre of the world. And remove us more and more from what we have understood to be nature until now. Our concept of nature and environment needs a certain distance to exist and make sense. This distance is disappearing, as we are more and more affected by the cloud of effects that the hyperobject emits, as we gather more and more knowledge and data about them.[39]

THE MESH—strange strangers between life and non-life

> "The Interdependence Theorem:
> Axiom 1. Things are only what they are in relation to other things
> Axiom 2. Things derive from other things
>
> 1. Life forms constitute a mesh that is infinite and beyond concept—unthinkable as such.
> 2. Tracing the origins of life to a moment prior to life will result in paradoxes.
> 3. Drawing distinctions between life and non-life is strictly impossible, yet unavoidable.
> 4. Differentiating between one species and another is never absolute.
> 5. There is no 'outside' of the system of life forms.
> 6. The Interdependence Theorem is part of the system of interdependence and thus subject to deconstruction!
> 7. Since we cannot know in advance what the effect of the system will be, all life forms are theorizable as *strange strangers*.
>
> —Timothy Morton[40]

The title of my graduation work, *The Mesh—strange strangers between life and non-life*, is based on the use of the concept of "the mesh" by Morton in his book *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (2013), as well as many other books and lectures. A mesh is the threads and the holes between the threads, consisting of "relationships between criss-crossing strands … and gaps between the strands." Mesh functions as a potent metaphor for "the strange interconnectedness of things, an interconnectedness that does not allow for perfect, lossless transmission of information, but is instead full of gaps and absences." Morton further states that "when an object is born it is instantly enmeshed into a relationship with other objects in the mesh."[41]

How can I meditate on this imprint that human activities leave on planet Earth without judgment or any didactical standpoint? When working towards my graduation project, I found myself asking

how to reposition nature as we think it, along the force of the Anthropocene. I imagined an abandoned landscape made of materials that cannot be degraded, like plastics and metal, from which mushrooms would grow.

The Mesh consist of a series of sculptures that contain mycelium, from which mushrooms grow through plastic and metal, accompanied by structures that support a carefully constructed humidification system that creates a moist atmosphere. Through different material interactions, these sculptures are in process. The work transforms over the duration of the exhibition. The mushrooms grow slowly: a development that cannot be witnessed in one visit. Other interactions are invisible, like the spreading of spores.

During my research into mushrooms, I stumbled upon the provoking but fascinating lectures of Terence McKenna, a self-taught psychonaut, lecturer, and author. His speaks about mushrooms in relation to the question of extraterrestrial penetration of the human world and in his attempt to assign mushrooms as potential aliens or extraterrestrial life forms. According to McKenna, the mushrooms bear looking at from this viewpoint for two reasons. He explains: "One physical argument is that some mushrooms contain psilocybin, a connection of molecules that are unknown be found in any other organism in nature on this planet."[42] This notion goes against the logic of nature, where through evolution genetics are passed on. Secondly, he claims that the spore is "one of the most electron-dense organic material known," making it as strong as metal. It is a fact that mushroom spores happen to travel outside of our planetary atmosphere and they happen to survive the environment of outer space.[43]

I aim to emphasise the contrast between the alien and uncanny artificial yet organic mushroom and industrial and plastic materials. One of the most fascinating aspects of the mushroom is its uncanny texture: like that of cold, dead skin. Their nature is that they live off of dead matter by growing a dense rhizomatic network of neuron transmitters, called mycelium, that digests this material. How can I approach the mushroom as an intelligent material through the medium of sculpture? Through a predirected exhibition in which there is a sense of absence (of the human body) and the uncanny. In this context, I would like to define the uncanny as something uncomfortable or *unheimlich* that appears to be strangely familiar and familiarly strange. In this project, I research the encounter with the uncanny when the seemingly rigid boundaries between life and non-life, sentient and non-sentient, and organic and inorganic become confused. In doing so, I aim to emphasise a contract between the human body, mushrooms, and systems. I contemplate the interconnectedness that is involved in the Anthropocene, the dissolving boundaries between machines of production and consumption, and our finite biological nature in order to communicate my view on the uncanny road this evolution is taking.

The alien might as well be so alien, one might not recognise it as such.

1 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (London: Routledge Classics, 2006), 60.
2 Boris Groys, "The Immortal Bodies," *Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 53/54 (Spring–Autumn, 2008), 346. Emphasis in the original.
3 Steven Weinberg, "Van de Schoonheid en de Troost (aflevering 6)," YouTube video, 1:13:25, posted by vpro.nl, July 21 2014, https://youtu.be/x9Jqgxh6D2s.
4 Groys, "The Immortal Bodies," 346.
5 Elizabeth Groz, "Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming," *parallax* 11, no. 2 (2005): 11, http://projectlamar.com/media/Grosz-Bergson-Deleuze-and-the-Becoming-of-Unbecoming.pdf.
6 "Henri Bergson: Creative Evolution," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, last revised May 8, 2012, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bergson/
7 Groz, "Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming," 10.
8 Ibid., 11.
9 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 8 and 21.

10 "Rhizome (philosophy)," *Wikipedia*, last modified March 15, 2015, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhizome_(philosophy).
11 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 12.
12 "Rhizome (philosophy)," *Wikipedia*.
13 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 7.
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