If I gave you a structure,
would you take it from me willingly?

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Sophie Spekle

The things that t r a n s c e n d and are transparent (and not), the grey area in which they sit. Fluidly moving from one space to the next, like water. Shall I be the stone that stays steadily u n m o v i n g , or shall I be the waves that crash against it, c o l l a p s e , flow, and i n d i f f e r e n t l y take on another form.

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Introduction

This essay consists of the result of an attempt to find the parallel between my artistic practice and some of the theoretical research executed over roughly the past year. Research into contemporary art-related theories have heavily influenced my artistic practice and vice versa. I have been able to dabble into theories concerning our relationship to objects and spaces, and especially how technological advancements have influenced this relationship. This research has led me, among other things, to delve into the Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), to think about quite subliminal effects caused by our use of online spaces and (new) technologies, and ultimately helped me to find a new -ism.

‘Translocationism’ is a term that has not yet been defined, but in this essay I will try to explain this new term that has sprouted from my practice by leading you through an interplay of abstract ideas and hopefully some clearer, visual ones. The structure of this essay is built up from the different states or levels of things. I find these states are necessary to define a thing: the MATERIAL that builds the OBJECT which holds as a VESSEL and how this relates to a SPACE surrounding it (and is at the same time built by it). The ‘translocatory’ properties are determined by the reaction of a (human) body to the vessel. To establish the meaning of ‘translocationism’ we will also need to get into the interrelations of time, space and the body. Since this idea of translocationism is quite abstract, we will get into it gradually. But first off, instead of seeing all these states as one following the other, I would like to propose a structure to keep in mind while reading this essay:
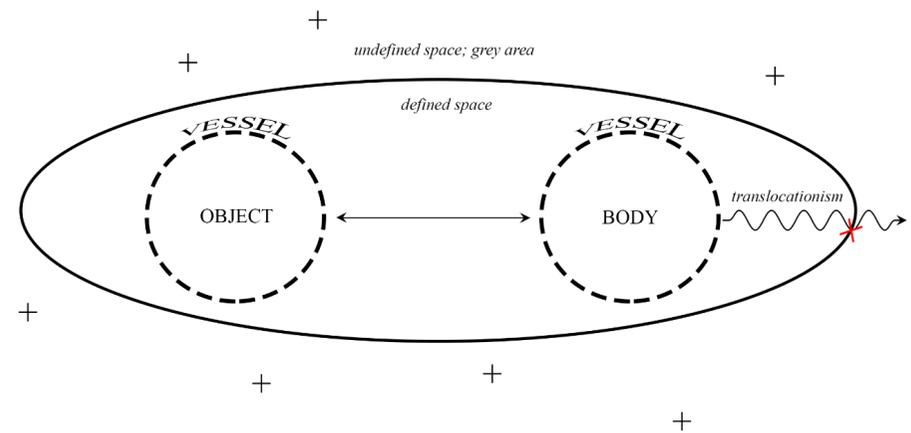
The structure of this essay

In the image above you see a somewhat dry mapping of two vessels, namely an object as a vessel and a body as a vessel. Both are made up of material, both physical entities. (Concerning the material: it is not only made up of what we see with our eyes or what we can touch. As it could be made up of plastic, wood, flesh, water, honey, concrete, etc., but the vessel might also hold sound, smell, light, and possibly emit 'things' we as humans cannot sense at all. We relate to whatever these 'things' may be nonetheless.) The reason I call these objects/bodies vessels is because in that way we can understand that they are 'holders' of things (Objects/bodies shouldn't merely be viewed as flesh and bone with functionality. They are emotional bodies and thought-bodies and tactile bodies.) They go through a history of being used, not being used. That history is contained as memory in the vessel. Furthermore, the object as a vessel and the human body as a vessel exist next to each other. They give to and take from one another, forming a relation that may cause the body to travel (not physically, but immaterially) from the defined space, into the undefined space. So the undefined space or, in other words, the grey area is maybe not so much in-between things here but more outside of things. We could see the 'X' in the mapping above as a moment of disconnect between the stillness of the human body and the immaterial quality of the mind travelling into this grey area. Ultimately we might experience this as a very sensory moment, or maybe even subliminal. Even though the body has been somewhat static, it feels as though it has travelled through space and time.

I would like to refer to this travel or 'translocation' as subtle alienation in a sensory space: a scene in which everything seems to be going pleasantly fine, but all of a sudden, due to realisation of a subtle, absurd moment/happening/object, time stands still and you start to feel alienated and then the question arises 'where is my body in this situation?'. Somehow something doesn't make complete sense. What are you doing here? It feels like soft violence. The fan that continues to rattle quietly even though everyone has already left. Or the dripping of rain in a loose hanging pipe. Or the object that actually seems quite out of place in this scenery. Its absurdity grows more and more on you the longer you watch it. You're on the verge of becoming delirious – not a bad feeling. But you just keep hanging there. It repeats and repeats and repeats. The bed, the covers, the sheets, the bed, the covers, the sheets, the bed, the covers, the sheets, the pillow, the bed, the covers, the sheets.

This discomfort felt is similar to what happens in artist Anne Hardy's installations. "Hardy usually sets to work in the following way: she begins with a mapping process, going in search of places and pieces of land that in some way are situated somewhere 'in between'. Places that have been forgotten and no longer have a clear function, which she calls 'pockets of wild space'. This is where she collects materials, sounds and stories; building blocks for her new urban narratives."[1] These places are public scenes, in which (performative) objects seem to have been placed seemingly strategic to form a 'mise-en-scène'. Anne Hardy's method of collecting and simultaneously making, runs close to home.

Method of working

I am often looking for a way to connect my own experiences to a bigger all-encompassing concept within society (which may be connected to philosophy, psychology, politics, ecology, technology, and so on). The way I work therefore, is constantly switching between a micro and macro way of working. On the one hand, I let myself be intuitive when I am in the role of playing with a new material that I've found or when the composition of a space has caught my eye; nothing is planned out at first. Then through spending time with this seemingly ambiguous 'thing' or space, a personal experience attaches to it and gives it the poetic energy it needs to start to live or become sentient. Afterwards it goes through a stage of representation; where the representation of the thing will ultimately find a context to be placed in. I also pay attention to gathering texts at any time. These texts appear in a few different forms: either a coincidental combination of words that seem to instantly click, an absurd quote from someone else or a recollection of a dream. So, from these different levels/layers of (not-) thinking the method of how I work is shaped. This doesn't necessarily mean that these layers always come in this specific order. Switching between scales and from a micro to a macro perspective at any time is part of the process as well.

context more and more (they are 'humanized'). When we see data we don't see that it's built up of varying repetitions of 1s and 0s. We have shaped the 1s and 0s to become perceivable and natural. For example, nowadays we can experience a completely digital computer animation as a sentient being. We might recognize ourselves in its pores, realistic clumsiness and the way it moves through a space. Therefore we connect with the emotions it portrays as though it were an actual sentient being. Exactly this happens in Kate Coopers work, which was recently on show for the Stedelijk Museum during the 'Freedom of Movement' exhibition. The animated human walks around in a clean, white space while wearing a transparent plastic suit. As she walks, air is being pressed into the suit forcing it to expand. Watching the animated person struggle with her steady pace more and more stimulates our own body to react accordingly. Take an extra sharp breath or shake a limb to make sure you're not tied down like her.

Material

My interest in materials and objects has mostly derived from the way humans interact with them. Especially the way we discard them with ease (in that case; their transience), the ways a humanmade object contains faults (errors or faults in constructions allow the vulnerability of objects to show) and how 'things' that can mostly be seen as synthetic grow into a human

Object/body

I've become fascinated by the idea of post-anthropocentrism; humans have become aware of the influence they have on the earth. We used to be the central point from which everything derives, but we are noticing more and more that we, as humans, form a relationship with objects just as much as objects form relationships with us and each other and with the space they exist in. Everything would more than likely keep relating to each other, if you would take humans out of the equation. A shift in hierarchy takes place between all things:

...a moment as much as a body as much as nothing as much as sensitivity human as much as honey as much

as an object as much as a rock as as much as an idea as much as a as wind as much as anything...

Tied into this idea of post-anthropocentrism is the inescapable fact that humans have linked all knowledge to a collective 'human' perspective, and now, since humans are no more the centre of everything, it seems we need to scratch the idea that our perspective is truth. But, in this confusing time of 'post-truthness', I believe we have the ability to create grand new irregular structures. Within the artworld this may mean an accumulation of everything and nothing, causing an overspill of information. Where do we stand if everything is equally as important as everything else?

Tactility

Imagine an airbed, carefully placed on a forest floor of twigs, leaves and earth. To not puncture the bed a thick piece of cloth is placed in between it and the forest floor. Hours and hours on end, limbs of bodies push into the bed just barely leaving a trace. Fingertips wave up and down through the air tracing the branches of the trees surrounding the bed. But then, at one point, the moment passes and the airbed is placed against a tree waiting to be used again or to be discarded of its air and packed up.

It moves me whenever people use a kind of tender tactility to interact with things. The way they move around it, or securing it or delicately placing it somewhere else (or not delicately; by throwing and pushing and possibly destroying). Any type of action used on material shows the interaction between the body and the object. It's like a dance with and around the objects, or maybe theatre even.

The existence and growth of non-things, as Vilém Flusser[3] calls them, has caused humanity to undergo the build-up of physical things surrounding them that are now clearly becoming discarded. Many physical things have become useless due to them being taken over by information. Data, codes, and networks (etc.) are digital and therefor immaterial and have started to replace the stuff modernity ushered would bring our lives fulfilment. So how then do we move around and interact with information? There's no hard physical labour there, still a dance, but maybe just with the fingertips and a movement of the mind.

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Actor

In reaction to the embodiment of material and its levelling with the human body, I tried to grasp this idea of the object as an 'actor' in one of my work presentations. Objects played a role on the 'stage'. The ambiguous in-between-states of objects were elevated and you step foot into a scene that seems to have been 'left behind', a moment in time: the play has happened or has yet to start. The objects, in other words the actors, have sometimes been made from my hand, are sometimes a remnant of a mould that were to serve something else, sometimes they are pre-existing materials attached to the space (such as a tube or an outlet). The 'objects as actors' have a life that can be lead through our own narrative, but also lead lives that we cannot perceive. We can research the material of the object, its functions, the way it acts (for example through another object or through interaction of humans), but the question is, if that is what will define the object in its totality. Some things we may never be able to understand.

The presentation consisted of a constructed space, in which actors were illuminated by theatre lights and sometimes positioned themselves diagonally on the grid (a green coloured floor grid). It became a landscape in which yellow notes reacted to the situation of the actors at that moment or to a situation they had been in or still had to become. Therein I tried to play with the idea of non-linear time. We can venture to a different period in time, just like we would when looking at an old photograph. It's instantaneous. When viewing the 'video text' (on the iPad) we can choose after every blink of the screen, to shift to another moment. The system of the text (I, II, III, IV, etc.) tells us that the order of reading is of importance, but we find out soon enough there is no clear narrative within the text. Just as in dreams, apparently detached fragments follow one another. What happens in between those fragments in (or outside of) the grey area? That's where the ambiguous, elusive intermediate forms lay. We can try to analyse (e.g. by using language) how this intermediate state

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functions, but there should also be room for that which cannot be indicated (the 'nothing'). I aimed to capture the absurdity of this elusive space in the yellow text notes (and the perspective from which they were written) and through the roles I administered to the objects, of which some were accidental sculptures/ready-mades.

The addition of audio to these kind of landscapes of objects will be a necessary one. Encapsulating a very 'human' noise into an object has been my initial idea. So far, the small ceramic speaker I made has been humming in a monotone way and just slightly breathing. It also decided to let flow the waterworks one day and philosophized about its existential dread of merely being a lump of gorgonzola. I would like to experiment more with audio in a playful way to better understand the object as a vessel (and what it holds). It reminds me of a work by Bruce Nauman where he captures sound by pouring a radio into a block of concrete; utterly calmly violent, yet protective of the action. Somehow he contains the sound, which is a transient material, in a vessel. It becomes a mass of information, even though the information doesn't present itself as sound but by its story or history.

Audio also plays a major role in Ed Atkins work. He uses noises, textures and combinations of words in his videos, that on the one hand alleviate me from my body and at the same time make me very conscious of it. Ticks, chewing loudly, repeating words over and over again. His videos are layered from combinations of CGI footage and stock images to create worlds for his emotionally charged, often isolated, characters in eerie landscapes. The audio especially grasps me; it's far away and then close, you hear a cough, a tinkle of a spoon falling into a glass, then silence, a sudden bleep from a computer program starting up. This hyperawareness is at times replaced with a sense of displacement or unease; just like when you think

about that wisdom tooth extraction you once had and you remember noises that travelled through the jawbone up to your ear.

Vessel

It has become clear to me that the transience of 'things' (in this case; anything that has the possibility of being transient) has started to play quite a big role around me. I can see that somehow my practice has partly grown into some kind of protective state (coating one material with another material, wrapping it, fastening one to the other or encapsulating audio into an object). You could say it is the gesture of protecting something; memories, a body... I find there is beauty in the transient, the malfunction, the mishap because it counteracts the thought of things seeming unattainable or ungraspable. It seems to me now, that on the one hand I want things to be human, to be relatable and on the other hand I want them to be indescribable, ambiguous or maybe, godly (godly – in the sense of being out of reach) even.

There are many things programmed to seem as though they function naturally and they seamlessly become a part of our reality. The coincidence of a 'fault in the system' (fault seems like a harsh word because I don't want to portray it in a negative way) instantly humanizes the thing. The reason this feels human to me, is because I've recently come to experience the transience of my own body and of other people's bodies. The way people go about their bodies transience now compared to in the past, has changed a lot because of technology progressing rapidly. Especially

since we're able to get closer and closer into the smallest puzzle pieces of our body. We're not so far away even from changing our DNA to expand life.[2]

The other night, I found myself desperately searching for my old hometowns on Google Earth, just to have a small glimpse of satisfied nostalgia. This seems like such an odd way to relive old memories because google earth distorts the tangible reality of what I knew there. But this is exactly how my memories feel: fragmented and fictional. The overlapping of 360 views in Google Earth causes splits and fragmentation of images because separate images are built to make a whole. Scrolling over the 'maps' of locations I've lived and recognizing 'that one playground we always used to go' or 'that bridge we always used to drive across', seems distant yet clear. Often it feels as though there is no proof of me ever having been there, even though technically there is. I can't travel there on a whim and I'm not so sure I want to, because I've nurtured all these memories overtime and I'm afraid they might shatter if I visit the reality.

Body/object

An information overload seeps into our daily lives. How do we comprehend with this oversaturation of images/knowledge that is at our disposal at any given moment? A time in which 'hyper-realness' can be in some way related to 'surrealness' that originated in the 20s of the past century. Dadaism and surreal art arose through anti-rationality. Following the first world war (1914-1918); a calling for escapism by incorporating 'dream states' (according to Freud's dreamwork). The past years we've had a sudden realisation of the nthropocene, in which human handling has

obvious consequences for our climate and atmosphere. People are asked to actively pursue an individual 'bettering' of our daily lives, but no clear solution is given. With awareness of our situation growing constantly greater, a certain hopelessness translates into an escapist route. We cope by feeding off of the satisfaction a different reality delivers. Our bodies reset to the in-between phase of suggested hyper-realness and a body that is from birth made of flesh and bone. We receive a new perception of existence of our bodies, our minds, the spaces we move around in, the information and data we receive and give.

What if it is so easy to translocate ourselves, that we won't need our physical bodies to move around. Is our body even important anymore? The body stays still and the mind races. In Homo Deus, A Brief History of Tomorrow, Yuval Harari explains the speculative technology of human minds being uploaded onto memory sticks and moved to Mars to keep the human race alive in case of the plausibility of the human race going extinct. A sort of future matrix, where we don't need our physical bodies to stay 'here'. Posthumanism explains this idea of objects functioning more and more as extensions of our bodies ⟩⟩⟩ to them becoming our bodies. We have somehow already become a humanity+; with bodily enhancements such as pacemakers allowing our hearts to keep pumping and medicine keeping us from becoming sick. We give to and take from the body. In this way also allowing a shift in our attitude towards our bodies. Bodies take on the role of objects and objects take on the role of bodies.

Oops, I seem to have dislocated

my body...
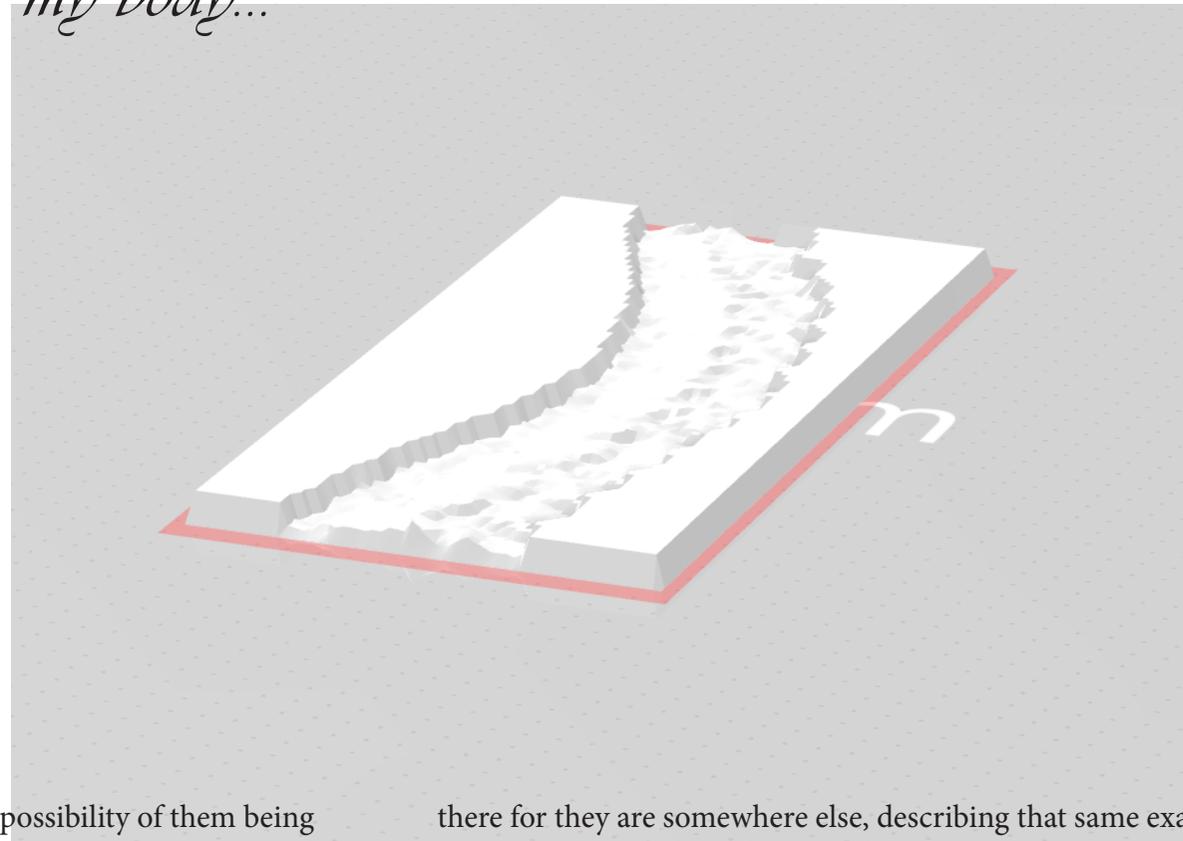
A person is there in-life, but someone states a non-possibility of them being there for they are somewhere else, describing that same exact person physically being in the room with them in real-time.

Translocationism

Throughout the past few elements of the structure of this essay I've mentioned movement or stillness of the body/mind in relation to the growth of 'non-things' a few times. These immaterial things entail for example data, the enormous accumulation of images and other information we are in contact with at any time of the day. Translocationism encompasses a shift in this 'act' of movement, even though it may not actually be so much of an act at all. Translocationism is derived from the word translocation. Which, if we look translocation up in the dictionary, has several definitions relating to biology.

/ˈtransləʊ(ʊ)keɪt,trɑːns-,-nz-/
verb

TECHNICAL
move from one place to another.
"translocating rhinos to other reserves"

PHYSIOLOGY•BIOCHEMISTRY
transport (a dissolved substance) within an organism, especially in the phloem of a plant, or actively across a cell membrane.
"acidic and basic residues are translocated across the membrane"

GENETICS
move (a portion of a chromosome) to a new position on the same or another chromosome.
"chromosomes become lost, duplicated, or translocated with a high frequency"

Translocation may refer to:
- Chromosomal translocation, a chromosome abnormality caused by rearrangement of parts
- Robertsonian translocation, a chromosomal rearrangement in pairs 13, 14, 15, 21, and 22
- Nonreciprocal translocation, transfer of genes from one chromosome to another
- PEP group translocation, a method used by bacteria for sugar uptake
- Twin-arginine translocation pathway, a protein export pathway found in plants, bacteria, and archaea
- Translocation (botany), transport of nutrients through phloem or xylem
- Protein translocation, also called protein targeting, a process in protein biosynthesis
- Species translocation, movement of a species, by people, from one area to another

Nearly all of the definitions are movements in microscale: chromosomal changes, a protein export pathway and a transport of nutrients, among others. I quite like that because they refer to movement within the body, which has a lot of impact but isn't necessarily perceivable with the naked eye. Seeing as the art world is in tune with the body relating to technology at the moment (we could call it a trend), it seemed logical to transform translocation into an -ism.

/ˈɪz(ə)m/
noun

INFORMAL•DEROGATORY
a distinctive practice, system, or philosophy, typically a political ideology or an artistic movement.
"he loathed isms and any form of dogma"

/ˈɪz(ə)m/

Displacement, dysfunction, disintegration

So, to be more specific, translocationism is the bodily displacement felt when the body is still/unmoving/staying in one place in reality, but through technological systems the body feels to be somewhere else and/or functions in a different time. The relation of the present/now-space and linear time functions differently, because of the changes it has undergone through technological advancements. The parallel simulation to reality configured through the accumulation of billions of images and endless information (which is always at our dispense) guarantees the movement of a human through time and space differently to when certain technological advancements were not yet in use.

Where is my spine?

Uh!

The disconnect (or over-connection?!) to the physical body is inherent to translocation. The dysfunction of the human body (e.g. ticks, bad muscles, gnawing at cuticles, hair fall-out, eczema, weird speech patterns) become more apparent through technology that works too well. If technology is able to adopt the job of the body so well, and maybe even better than, then why do we need the body at all? If it becomes a vessel for the mind, do we need the vessel at all if technology (a computer, a cyborg, etc.) can become the vessel? Homo Deus is the idea of man/humans becoming god through technology; it is in our nature to grow and overcome problematic situations. Humans do this through building religious narratives, political systems, and so on. Technology may well be the next step in overcoming the cons of how humans live now; the body is seen as a con, because it has faults, because it disintegrates.

Stage of spatiality

The idea of non-linear time in relation to the 'stage'-esque placement of objects has been a returning theme in my work. It offers a way to map movement or non-movement through time and space according to translocatory properties. Now, to distinguish a space I have decided to use a backdrop as the spatial element in my work. The backdrop in itself has some interesting qualities. It's history goes back to photography, but also film, where painted backdrops helped filmmakers transform soundstages into landscapes they weren't able to film in due to complications of these landscapes being unreachable or unpredictable climate-wise. They functioned as a simulation to an unobtainable (at that time) reality, the space existed somewhere else. For this reason the backdrop can be a suitable space for fragmented pieces of bodily elements to perform being things and possibly intertwine with the immaterial, the non-things. So far, the backdrop consists of a collage of spaces that only exist in the technological realm of things (the spaces are print-screens of surveillance footage from open networks); but by showing it as a photo print it is taken back into a non-digital now-space.

This play of being in immaterial and material spaces, switching between things and non-things and the ability to step in at any time, is the basis of the work. But most importantly the way translocationism, in other words, our movement, changes due to the digital. Vilém Flusser says the following about the role of material things being adopted by the immaterial holding of information: "…these non-things are ephemeral and eternal at the same time. They are not to hand, and yet they are handy: They are memorable. (…) As this situation is impossible to grab hold of, nothing in it is capable of being grasped, and nothing can be handled. In it, the hand – grasping and productive act of handling – has become redundant."[3] I would like to say rather that our movement differs from before, instead of calling the act of handling redundant.

Non-conclusion

If I gave you a structure, would you take it from me willingly? It's hard to see what is truthful and what is not. Since all things change and thus, transform into something new: all may exist and may not exist at the same time. We move through structured spaces, in which we cannot decide. We might make our own choices but what if we can't even tell what has been structured for us. We function and function and function on many levels, but what if we just did to do and transformed to transform and moved to move.

The elliptical structure shown at the beginning has a defined space that consists of all structures that are imposed on us from the moment we are born to when we pass. (May they be social, political or otherwise.) Our bodies are orchestrated to fulfil whatever needs to be done. The functionality of everything that exists is in service of the structures that we have built. Can we break these structures down in protest, piece by piece? Can we break through the 'logical' structures of things, the hierarchy of humans over non-humans within society? And in that way, creating space for allowing the usefulness of useless things to interact and transform and move.

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