

Sofia Lemos **In your 2010 essay 'Clandestine Happiness. What do We Mean by Artistic Research?', you reference quantum physicist Anton Zeilinger's claim that we need to undertake a thorough reconstruction of reality. In response, you suggest that we should allow for new forms of connectivity between different categories of reality to emerge. Inasmuch as you describe the role of the artist as cosmogonic (i.e., 'cosmos-generating'), how do you see artistic research being capable of connecting the many worlds within a multiversal reality?**

Chus Martínez In reflecting on different formulations of what we call reality, I was interested in making the case that there is a force of knowledge in artworks themselves. If we were to take the words of philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend, art, like science, does not move *towards* something but *away* from something. This not having a goal but rather a motivation that activates speculative forces in the making is what I understand by research.

SL **At the end of the 19th century, physicists asserted the reality of invisible worlds. Irish physicist Edmund Fournier d'Albe argued that the recent discoveries in radioactivity and atomic structure implied the existence of an unseen ethereal universe continuous with ours. What parameters can artistic production and curatorial research introduce for creating dialogues with others worlds?**

CM In 1988, philosopher Vilém Flusser visited the Ars Electronica festival in Osnabrück, Germany, where he gave an interview in which he tells how words simply cannot describe the world any more. Flusser explains how the alphabet was a radical invention that not only provided a code to describe reality, but also serves as the genesis of our notion of 'historical time'. The line of the text and the timeline are analogous, and over centuries the logic of reading became the logic of a sequence of events. He goes on to say that we are in a revolution of thinking and communication, since neither text nor image alone can sufficiently describe reality. This reality, or time, so to speak, needs a language that measures as well as maps; describes as well as depicts. There is no single language, discipline, or realm of knowledge that alone can handle the task of dealing with the world. Information technologies, he notes, have tried for years to produce synthetic codes that help us do this though. In accordance with Flusser, I would say that one of the main traits of art is to unveil the nature and develop the capacity to grasp this 'new' time, which I would describe as a multiplication of synthetic realities. It's in this sense

Ludwig Wittgenstein famously asserted that the limits of our language are the limits of our world. One way to interpret this is to figure each language as a world unto itself. Sofia Lemos spoke with Chus Martínez about speaking transversal languages and reading new realities.

WHAT ABOUT DRAWING?

# worlds within

IGNORANCE  
IS BIAS!

that I see 'ignorance', particularly with regards to the relationship between the known and the unknown, as a primordial substance of art.

re·al·i·ty  
spec·u·la·tive  
di·a·logues  
ig·no·rance  
rep·re·sen·ta·tion

**SL Your curatorial work often deals with choreographic notions of research: reverberation and rhythm as movements that propagate other ways of signifying seemingly disparate things. What is the role of models and research methods within your practice?**

**CM** The notion of energy plays a very important role in my way of working, but it's a non-conscious idea of energy, like the type that makes a plant grow or our stomach digest. I think we need to expand the ways we think about exhibiting and producing art so that a new thinking, but also a more complex notion of experience can become possible. This preoccupation of mine is why I've been investing in terms such as 'innocence', 'procrastination', 'metabolic force', 'ignorance' or the 'organ thinking'... I connect this way of studying the future of curating with a different approach to gender, technology and social space in general.

**SL In your investigation into Argentinian artist Federico Manuel Peralta Ramos's understanding of what is inside and outside of consciousness and creation, I get the sense that you're putting forward a slippage from work to life as part of the artistic process. Humor, absentmindedness, idiocy, stupidity, etc., can they have a role in research today?**

**CM** You know apparently, the architect Louis Kahn once posed the question to a brick of what form it wanted to take. He used to tell his students:

"If you are ever stuck for inspiration, ask your materials for advice. You say to a brick, 'What do you want, brick?' And brick says to you, 'I like an arch.' And you say to brick, 'Look, I want one, too, but arches are expensive and I can use a concrete lintel.' And then you say: 'What do you think of that, brick?' Brick says: 'I like an arch.'"<sup>1</sup>

For the sake of pedagogy, Kahn turned his materials into an eloquent substance and performed some sort of animistic, ventriloquist theatre. But Kahn's introduction of the brick's desire into the dialogue between the maker, the architect, and the material also constitutes a critique of the Aristotle's paradigmatic theory of hylomorphism, which describes each body and object as a combination of form and matter. We could enter numerous digressions about what exactly Aristotle meant, but to cut the story short, hylomorphism is the base of our most accepted understanding of unity. This simple division between form and matter contains our inherited model of individuation. Gilles Deleuze was captivated by the medieval problem of what makes an individual an individual, and how an individual can be distinguished from other individuals. His aim was to produce a concept of difference that would no longer be bound to the primacy of identity or representation. For Aristotle, matter was a substance in search of a form, and form was not whatever form but an intrinsic feature that can be inscribed or even re-inscribed in matter. But Deleuze was committed to the thesis that identity is just a product, and representation just an effect. In *Difference and Repetition* he argues that

in post-Darwinist biology, for instance, the individual precedes the species.<sup>2</sup> Deleuze stresses that we need a dynamic conception of individuation. In other words, we need a concept of individuation that relies on a continuous process and not on an intrinsic feature of an individual. One way to do this is through humor: if one starts with addressing a brick, one may (hopefully) end up with something completely different.

SL **Lately you've been referring to what you call the 'Metabolic Era'.<sup>3</sup> Beyond ingestion, or being engulfed in, you propose a radical, slow-moving and long-term process of assimilation in modes or practices that cater to, to quote Irit Rogoff: "how we might know what we don't yet know how to know."<sup>4</sup> What does it mean for institutional practice to embrace metabolism?**

CM I will allow myself to quote French Renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne on the 'life' of the male sexual member to try and answer the question:

"How often do the involuntary movements of our features reveal what we are secretly thinking and betray us to those about us! The same cause that governs this member, without our knowing it governs the heart, the lungs, and the pulse, the sight of a charming object imperceptibly spreading within us the flame of a feverish emotion. Are these the only muscles and veins that swell and subside without the consent, not only of our will, but even of our thoughts? ... How much more justifiably can we brand [our will] with rebellion and sedition, on account of its constant irregularities and disobedience! Does it not often desire, to our obvious disadvantage, what we forbid it to? Does it let itself be guided, either, by the conclusions of our reason?"<sup>5</sup>

Let me appeal to your sense of humor to pair this movement with my idea of a metabolic era that is starting to come to life. Metabolism implies metamorphosis. 'Metamorphosis' implies fluidity, liminality, and processes of change. As a scientific term, it characterizes the abrupt biological development of a species after hatching or birth. This idea of an in-between space or state of growth, transition, and transformation has captured the imagination of philosophers, poets, and writers throughout history. In rejecting essentialist fixed identity categories, feminist scholars too have sought to understand how gender intersects with other identities, paying attention to how these are performed in and through gendered bodies.

SL **In this new era, drugs, diets and nouvelle cuisine, have a common denominator: they address the subject from within. Let's talk about the genital sense that the three purport: (re-)production. Could we say that 'swallowing' your research is another form of addressing the dichotomy of the inner from the outer? How can we disfranchise this idea from late capitalism's notions of labor and productivity?**

CM Well! How nicely you put it! I never thought about eating research, but I would definitely say that the white cube metaphor will eventually turn into a stomach-like container: more active on the one hand, and less transparent or 'clear' on the other. Not that I think that the process will stop there, but I feel that we are in a transitional time where images of neutrality and space are being replaced by others, closer to organs and dreamlike forms of life rather than to urban scenarios and expectations.

1 Nathaniel Kahn, *My Architect: A Son's Journey*. DVD, 2003.

2 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (Columbia University Press, 1995).

3 'The Metabolic Museum with Chus Martínez', Het Nieuwe Instituut, 14 January 2016.

At: <https://goo.gl/peFtrb> (accessed 16 April 2016).

4 Irit Rogoff, 'Turning'. In: Paul

O'Neill, Mick Wilson (eds.), *Curating and the Educational Turn*. (London: Open Editions, 2010), pp. 37.

5 Michel de Montaigne, *Essays* (1580), pp. 42–44.