

# EDITION 2017

ACTE DE RECHERCHE

# CCC

Research Master and PhD-Forum  
Critical Curatorial Cybernetic Studies

MASTER OF ARTS HES-SO EN ARTS VISUELS | IN VISUAL ARTS

I will tell a story, an ethnography of the possible, and narrate this in the form of storytelling. I will revitalize pasts, reflect upon the present, and extrapolate into possible futures to create a multilayered record in the form of a story. The questions I would like to explore revolve around the blurry boundaries of the human and non human- particularly, how we inhabit the ruins. This story will engage with themes such as alienation, bio-empathic sentience, obsolescence of internet/technologies and anthropogenic matter.

Storytelling is a form of knowledge that cannot be transmitted solely in material form but can only travel through a social imaginary without machine-based intelligence of reproducibility. This research practice of story telling will be a revival of one of the many traditions I have lost and allow me to engage in a form of re-sensitization of my vocal chakra.

#### Biography:

I am constantly examining my behaviours, patterns, habits and questioning their origins in the social, environmental, economic and cultural structures. This interest is at once due to my mixed cultural background as well as my chronic sequential migration. In order to adapt to new cultures and social contexts I had to be very observant to swiftly fit in and adjust to new countries. Following this imposed trajectory it seemed natural to be deliberate about this innate practice and study anthropology, the discipline dedicated to ethnography and participant observation. This ethnographic practice will inform my research at the CCC.

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I used to work for the “improvement” of working conditions of local workers in a textile factory in Cambodia, by evaluating the labor environment of factories following international labor laws. In other words, removing all violations or possible risks in industrial facilities, and dealing with workers' complaints, working hours, as well as labor unions, so that production could keep running. My position in management was rather ironical: the more committed to my position I was, the more I contributed to this exploitative system.

Recalling the memories of my working experience in this Korean textile company in Cambodia between 2010 to 2011, with a 6 years time gap, is confronting the self awareness of management structures' dehumanized working conditions and power relations in corporate culture. However, among my memories, what stay the most are the visual memories of daily encounters with Cambodian female workers at work: their smiles, their busy hands, the outfits they wore in-between long lines of sewing machines which moved non-stop, machinery sounds filling the air of factories. Based on this first layer of memory, i'd like to go further with questions about the workers movement; Ninety percents of textile factory workers in Cambodia are female. However, when it comes to demonstrating for better working condition, females are always behind the shadow of men leading, the culture of patriarchy, playing an important role here/ one of roles. Researching workers movement in Cambodia and Korea (in 1970-2000), will teach what workers value, and what prevent them to make changes by themselves.

The concept of “docile bodies-easy to control” borrowed from Aihwa Ong's book *Spirit of Resistance and Capitalist Disciplinary: Factory women in Malaysia*, allows me to trace links between Cambodian workers life's inside and outside of factory. How does the working discipline in this factory - being part of sewing machine, being inscribed in oppressed position at work - influence the daily life outside of factory, the way of thinking, social relationships, the transition from peasant society to industrial production?

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In the 1950s, China was a newborn communist country and it met an embargo from the international society. In a great need of resources, the Chinese government decided to plant rubber trees at XiShuangBanNa in Southeast China. Chinese state enterprises spread the rubber plantation under this strong impetus very efficiently. More than sixty years later, thousands of tropical rainforests have been replaced by rubber forests, and the rubber economy instead of the rice-based transitional agriculture became the mainstay industry in this region.

However, monoculture brings problems: climate change, broken ecosystem, abuse of chemical fertilisers and water and soil erosion. Once people change nature, nature will also change them. For a long time, most of the native people were animists. Trees are treated either as deities or as communicators between deities and humans. People developed activities based on the concept of nature. Now the deity-tree is replaced by a rubber tree, the meaning of the spirit of the trees is no longer the same.

When the rubber economy came, XiShuangBanNa started its modernisation. In this process, the external forces generated a sudden development and, above all, quickly established a new economic system. Traditional belief and culture systems were melted before people had any time to form another dependable system.

My research aims at understanding how the rubber industry deeply transformed this region, how people's lives have been changing in the past sixty years. How can we judge the actions of command economy? What if the native people could have formed a dependable cultural system, would its modernisation look different now? The hypotheses will be based on abundant conversations with native people. Trees play the part of the narrator, it helps us to archive this space and uncover its processes of modernisation.

The night has an historical importance for queer people, as a space where their identities are not stigmatized would it be for a matter of race, gender, or sexuality. Bars and clubs play the role of safe spaces, allowing for gatherings and the emergence of a certain sociality because it is protected from daily routine's violence and discriminations.

In the 80's, the Ballrooms of New York are the birthplace of Vogue Dancing inspired by fashion magazines. It is a mix of dramatic gestures, attitude and outfits which are ways for the black queer community to put themselves into light ; shinning as a way of seizing back power. As natural light -zenithal light- serves the normative gaze, It is oppressive. Therefore I see the staging of one self -practicing light and shade- as emancipatory. Artificiality becomes an authentic tool of empowerment.

I'm interested in the constitution of a nexus, a network of relationships of friendship and love within the queer community - which need to be understood as inclusive, but inclusive in a way that is not flattening dynamics of diversity. As complexity needs to be maintained to prevent the systematic erasure of certain bodies.

As critical thinker Bell Hooks puts it : How do we create spaces of « radical openness » that are maybe not « safe » but allow us to take risks together ?

What is the process of knowledge production, and transmission in queer spaces, such as parties ; and what is the transgressive agency of this knowledge ? What sort of conversation is happening between pop culture and afro queer culture ? I'm interested in the various way to narrate our stories and how afrofuturistic perspective can enable us to act as chronopolitical subjects.

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CHEZ DEEP.  
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The Arrival Denis Villeneuve  
Born in Flames, Lizzie Borden

#### Biographie

Maïté Chénrière (a.k.a Mighty) est née à Paris en 1992. Après un baccalauréat en histoire de l'art et musique, elle décide de s'installer au Royaume-Uni pour poursuivre ses études. Elle est titulaire d'un diplôme de réparation et fabrication d'instruments à vent (Newark College, Newark-on-Trent, Angleterre) ainsi que d'un bachelor en arts visuels option photographie de l'Académie Royale des Beaux Arts de Bruxelles. Membre fondatrice de la House of Butch Xtravaganza, et Club hero, elle est également artiste et chercheuse. Sa pratique audio visuelle mixe approches théoriques, activistes et influences issues de la pop culture. Elle vit et travaille entre Genève (CCC, Coulou4, Gnv Gas) et Leipzig (résidente de l'espace Charmed curaté par Roland Lauth, Ugo Pignon et Julie Carvalho) depuis 2016.

J'ai entendu une conversation.

« Usul – La chute du Mur nous a laissés sans alternative, et tout ce que nous avons connu ce sont les crises. Je comprends les managers et les politiques qu'on a fini par laisser perplexes. Il est de plus en plus difficile de nous vendre du rêve...

Massira – C'est pas trop la joie dans le monde entier... Donc ça va pas être facile pour notre génération. Et par rapport à ça il faut rester lucide. Parce que j'aurais beau faire des études mais est-ce que plus tard j'aurai un boulot ? Enfin apparemment on nous a dit que c'était un peu mort. Qu'on était la génération des « sacrifiés »... Enfin je sais pas hein, c'est ce qui se dit, ce sont les rumeurs qui courent...

Oh au pire on fera une révolution hein ! Au pire des cas...

U – Une révolution sans drapeau ni idéologie peut-être oui...

Certains ont fini par désespérer de la voir arriver cette révolution. Les moyens de contrôle sont si puissants, l'idéologie dominante si implacable et omniprésente, les médias si bavards, si unanimes sur le fait que notre monde est le seul possible...

Mais il faut partir des gens eux-mêmes, de ce qu'ils ressentent et de ce qu'ils savent déjà. Un certain nombre de vieux stratagèmes des dominants ne fonctionnent déjà plus sur nous. Ça se traduit par de l'abstention, par de la défection, par ce sentiment blasé qu'il n'y a rien à attendre de la classe dirigeante, ou de la caste des millionnaires qui ne suivent que leur intérêt propre...  
... Il est où notre intérêt à nous ? J'ai l'impression que ça commence à être de plus en plus clair.

M – Ah ça me dirait bien de faire une petite révolution. Elle est en marche, ça commence petit à petit. Hm...

U – Elle est en marche... Elle ne prendra certainement pas la forme des révolutions précédentes. Je suis persuadé que notre génération porte quelque chose de vraiment nouveau. Et cette dépolitisation apparente n'est peut-être que la première phase ; le rejet des institutions et des partis tels qu'ils existent n'est peut-être que le premier pas vers le monde d'après... »

## Références

Judith Butler lorsqu'elle écrit sur les rassemblements et la revendication d'une vie viable.

Greil Marcus lorsqu'il décrit la parole qui se libère en même temps que l'imagination.

Massira<sup>1</sup> lorsqu'elle fantasme.

Usul<sup>2</sup> lorsqu'il espère.

Les Indignés, les participants d'Occupy ou encore ceux de Nuit Debout lorsqu'ils prennent de la place.

1 Massira, Génération quoi, « Master chômage et master classe », documentaire de Laëtitia Moreau, France, 2013

2 Usul2000, Mes chers contemporains, « Les jeunes », vidéo Youtube, France, 2015

## Biographie

Commencer par mener une recherche sur l'imagination et la pensée utopique. Puis chercher à comprendre pourquoi. Pourquoi ce sujet. Pourquoi maintenant, pourquoi ici. Comment comprendre cet intérêt en regard de ma position ; en tant qu'enfant du capitalisme tardif.

Ressentir un besoin d'autrement, un désir de changement. En capter des échos un peu plus largement. Faire alors courir le bruit, contribuer à véhiculer la rumeur. Occuper toujours plus de place et tendre à remettre en question les limites entre l'inexistant et l'existant, entre l'impossible et le possible.



En proportion de la recherche sur la conception du livre, questionnant et expérimentant le terme bookness – qui lie les caractéristiques matérielles et de structures du livre à celles culturelles, psychologiques, esthétiques – en vue d’appréhender plus précisément les pratiques éditoriales contemporaines à travers, la répartition des tâches de leur conception à leur réalisation (auteur, éditeur, designer, «publisher», distributeur). Ainsi cette réorganisation horizontale, de manière transdisciplinaire influe sur la transmission.

Un processus de réflexion qui puise ses stratégies dans les attitudes devenues formes souvent très textuelles, des conceptuelles années 60 et 70. Des premières reconsidérations de l’acte de publier où le médium du livre est un site alternatif pour s’exprimer, ces expérimentations déterminantes de l’art et de l’édition sont les prémices des pratiques de publication contemporaine. L’auteur n’est plus la figure centrale ce qui permet l’émergence de valeurs communes, la constitution d’un groupe envisagée comme un désir de retour à la notion de «commun» d’avant l’accumulation primitive, à l’origine de la réattribution patriarcale des rôles lors de la transition vers le capitalisme. Cette notion semble être un dénominateur commun pour la question de redistribution horizontale des rôles dans le processus de conception réalisation et distribution des pratiques éditoriales, en vue de transcender le livre marchandise issu d’une production verticale et imperméable entre ses différents acteurs. La multiplication d’intermédiaires rend la réalisation de toutes tâches vides de sens et aliénantes, le principal objectif étant un accomplissement commercial plus qu’une réalisation collective en vue de la transmission d’une pensée.

Quelle interaction le lecteur, récepteur entretient avec le livre, comme point référentiel d’un échange? La publication est créatrice d’espace public, lieu de rassemblement de la multitude, à l’origine de dialogues et débats politiques. Quelle vie est possible autour du livre depuis la mort de l’auteur et la naissance du lecteur ?

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#### Biographie

Après avoir suivi un cursus en design graphique à Lyon puis à Genève, Léa intègre la master de recherche du CCC en parallèle d’une activité éditoriale collective avec les éditions entermonde qui s’attachent à la publication de textes de critique sociale et esthétique. Au travers de ses activités éditoriales et de designer elle explore et questionne ce médium de livre de sa conception à sa réception.

« Un vêtement porte un message, il est comparable à une bibliothèque. »<sup>1</sup>

« [...] chaque fois que je vois ses vêtements, j'ai l'impression de retrouver un vieil ami. La conversation ne s'épuise jamais. Et puis, je ne vois jamais la même chose. Une robe, c'est comme un livre, on peut lire les lignes et lire entre les lignes [...] »<sup>2</sup>

« Nous sommes tous nés lecteurs »<sup>3</sup>. Dans *Une histoire de la lecture*, l'écrivain Alberto Manguel décrit « cette fonction qui nous est commune à tous »<sup>4</sup> à travers des exemples tels que l'astronome qui lit une carte d'étoiles disparues ou les parents qui lisent sur le visage du bébé des signes de joie, de peur ou d'étonnement. Dès notre naissance, nous sommes invités à lire le monde dans lequel on naît, notre environnement. Cette lecture fait appel à l'interprétation, à la perception, à l'affect. En ce sens, la lecture dépasse la nécessité de se reposer sur des mots, sur des écrits et englobe une signification plus profonde. Il ne s'agit pas uniquement de déchiffrer un code, mais d'en comprendre la portée, de lui attribuer un sens. C'est l'étude des signes, derrière le langage muet du vêtement, qui m'intéresse. C'est à mes yeux, un moyen de communication puissant qui peut être lu comme un document et révéler des connaissances cachées. Encore faut-il savoir lire. Savoir lire un vêtement, c'est créer avec cet objet une relation.

C'est reconnaître le rôle fondamental de ce média et lui conférer sa légitimité.

C'est par la lecture d'un vêtement, que je me suis identifiée culturellement. Une lecture rendue possible, suite à une rencontre inattendue avec un manteau H&M reprenant les codes d'une veste traditionnelle tunisienne : la Kachabiya. Une confrontation qui signe le nœud de départ de ce présent travail, et dresse un paysage particulier de l'industrie de la mode. Un paysage brumeux, dont la frivolité apparente laisse place à une complexité certaine. « L'appropriation culturelle » soulevée met en lumière les contours d'une hégémonie culturelle<sup>5</sup> qui favorise le détournement d'objets forts en significations dans la course au profit, où « l'ethnique » se fait chic. Non, pas sans conséquences, puisque mépriser un groupe social contribue fortement à son exclusion, et à une possible rupture du lien social. Dans un monde globalisé, l'effritement de ce lien pourrait représenter une menace pour le vivre-ensemble<sup>6</sup>. A la lumière de ces constats, le fil conducteur qui me guide dans ce travail est le suivant : Comment favoriser la création d'un « tissu social » à travers une lecture d'un vêtement ? Par tissu social, je me donne la possibilité de jouer avec les mots. L'expression choisie est un clin d'œil au tissu, en lien avec la mode, mais aussi comme métaphore représen-

tant les rapports sociaux. Le tissu qui prend la forme d'une surface obtenue par l'assemblage régulier de fils entrelacés. Le tissu social se veut être le lieu des interactions entre différents individus. Il représente l'ensemble des liens sociaux que les individus entretiennent les uns avec les autres. En d'autres termes, mon intérêt réside dans la volonté de favoriser les échanges en créant du sens par le vêtement et en créant par la même occasion des vêtements qui aient du sens.

A l'heure où les questions autour des cultures fait rage aujourd'hui en Europe (et dans le monde), la mode devrait être synonyme de cohésion et non de division.

Par sa dimension culturelle et universelle, le vêtement pourrait apporter une contribution pacifique pour le rapprochement des populations. Il devrait à ce titre, encourager le partage et la solidarité et non contribuer à renforcer les clivages. L'objectif étant de promouvoir l'appréciation culturelle, le respect, la reconnaissance et la solidarité entre les diverses communautés. Je suis persuadée que le vêtement peut être un outil émancipateur, tant pour celui qui le porte, le crée ou l'achète. Savoir lire un vêtement permettrait d'adopter une approche différente dans la création de celui-ci. Une création qui place la longévité, l'engagement et l'attachement au cœur de ses valeurs.

1 Catherine Join-Dieterle. *Comment regarder le vêtement*. In : *Le blog de l'Institut Français de la Mode* (en ligne), 2015

2 Guillaume Saint-Cyr. *Alber Elbaz raconte Jeanne Lanvin, exposée au Palais Galliera*. In : *L'Express Styles* (en ligne), 2015

3 Alberto Manguel., *Une histoire de la lecture*, Arles, Actes Sud, 1998, traduction Christine Le Bœuf.

4 Ibid. p.19

5 Dick Hebdige. « *Sous-culture : le sens du style* », Ed. La Découverte, Paris 2008, p. 5-22

6 Stéphane Hessel, Edgar Morin. *Le chemin de l'espérance*, Ed. Fayard 2011, p. 25-29



## Biographie

Née en Tunisie. Elle fait une escale au Congo, avant d'atterrir à Genève où elle grandit et y réside encore aujourd'hui. Elle, pour Naouel.

Une âme rêveuse, mystérieuse, curieuse  
Qui aime s'isoler, se retrouver, se délecter du silence  
Dans un monde qui s'affole en permanence.  
Qui aime s'entourer,  
De personnes de tout milieu, au caractère enjoué.  
Passionnée par l'art de communiquer, elle en a fait son métier.  
Par la danse et la mode, son âme se nourrit  
Par cette mise en forme du corps, elle se divertit  
Intriguée par la mode, elle se plaît à l'analyser  
Perception, intuition, observation, telles sont ses clés  
Pour anticiper les tendances qu'elle aime deviner  
Customiser : avec les vêtements elle aime bricoler.  
Elle se plaît à jouer avec cette apparente frivolité.  
A naviguer d'un style à l'autre. A tester ses goûts et ses envies.  
A s'exprimer, sans avoir à parler.

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Mme Salem Rafika, originaire de la ville de Bénikhiar, Tunisie, témoignage au sujet de l'histoire de la Kachabiya  
M. Rayes Khaled, originaire de la ville de Bénikhiar, Tunisie, témoignage au sujet de l'histoire de la Kachabiya  
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## Introduction

With the acceptance of the term Anthropocene – which should rather be named Capitalocene<sup>1</sup>, Modernocene<sup>2</sup> or Technocene<sup>3</sup>, we now face the fact that anthropogeno-capitalist actions on nature are shaping a new form of aesthetic, an aesthetic of pollution and toxicity. As an artist and researcher, I'm aiming to process this new 'geo-photo-graphic' era<sup>4</sup> through the lens/perspective of a subjective inquiry, reflecting on the image/landscape itself as a participant in the political ontology of toxifying technologies (both image-technologies and landscape-technologies). It concerns the intoxicated vibrant matter and its ecology, which ties the lithosphere, the biosphere and the technosphere. In order to articulate these scales and disciplines, I focus my case study on a spectacular (but still hidden) red lake of dumped bauxite waste situated in Tulcea, a city located in Romania next to the Danube. Hence, Aluminium (extracted from the bauxite rock) is the third most abundant element in the Earth's crust. It can be considered as an ecological catalyst, not only chemical but also social, political, economical and media technological. Thus, Aluminium is a key component of the military-industrial complex and global finance, not to mention the social disasters it implies. If we consider extraction and its re-

sulting waste as violent acts to the Earth, in order to use the concept of violence today we have to challenge the notion of harm. We need particular tools and protocols to register these harms, to trace new evidence of it. Through the technical devices, data are meant/accepted assumptions as traces of evidence. But the dataset is provided by the technospheric apparatus that imply interpretations + discourses and is craving for new interpretations.

## Photography and its limits

Photography is a seductive witness, whose impact brings us closer to the sublime than to a real reflexive position. For instance, Edward Burtynsky's bombastic pictures, often labelled as 'the pictures of the Anthropocene', are a good example of this contemporary trap. According to science and technology theorist Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, the Anthropocene is itself an aesthetic of the sublime<sup>5</sup>. If we are taking into account this petrifying paradigm and the fact that we are trapped in our own representational regimes, there is an urge to conceive a new politics of representation. How to elaborate a discursive picture production?

As consequence of two field trips on the bauxite lake, I was still facing some conceptual problems with the pictures I have captured

there: They are slick images, abstract and aesthetic, but what do they tell about? It became clear to me that the images were talking about their own limits: no equation for scale, time, politics, materials, species. Moreover, we have trained our eyes to see reality as an edited photograph, not what is beyond. But how many hidden layers lay under the surface of these pictures and how to let them speak?

This research aims to navigate beyond the surface of the image, to dig into it and to unfold the hidden perspectives but the spectacular picture, which means not only multi layers and multi-scales but also multi points of views/of access in a rhizomatic methodology. Not just one frame but a multistorage architecture, sediments, stratas, sections (as in geology), because we have to understand the hidden volume of the bauxite lake. The strategy is to map different aspects of the topic for a more holistic view, as a tool for shaping transdisciplinary projects, to understand different faces of one specific site.

The focus will be on the different levels that lie in the shadow of photographic flatness and spectacularity, the social-political strata, the biological strata, the geological strata and the technological one. My interest is to bring a light on these fields through my subjective

1 Term proposed by Jason Moore and others. See Jason W. Moore, ed., *Anthropocene or Capitalocene : Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland, CA : PM Press, 2016).

2 One of my proposals is to replace the term Anthropocene by Modernocene, which embodies both Capitalist and Communist regimes and their socio-industrial-economic goals.

3 Idem. The term Technocene is intended to point to the militaro-economic race for technology, which involves, among other, mining, refining, engineering, mass consumption and wars.

4 Susan Schuppli, *Slick images: the photogenic politics of oil* (2015)

5 Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *L'Anthropocène et l'esthétique du sublime* (2016)



and photographer focus and to expand my experiments into other fields in a collective way, in discussion with scientists, philosophers, artists and local people, in order to build a kind of community around this topic.

### **My methods to operate**

My research consists to set up a plane of consistency<sup>6</sup> through theory, discussions and experiments, in order to unfold the complexity. This reflexive platform allows me to develop different projects that will be elaborated in the next years, allowing co-evolution and topic-crossings.

In the actual state of my research, I have several interviews, video recordings, samples (red mud, water, dust, soil) of the bauxite lake, bacterial cultures in Petri dishes, mycoremediation experiments. This material allows me to set in motion these next stratas:

<sup>6</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A thousand plateaus* (1980)

<sup>7</sup> This question refers to Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's book *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton : University of Princeton Press, 2015)

### **The biological strata**

What are the resistant organisms in the ruins of modernism<sup>7</sup>? How does this specific ecosystem mutate or adapt? Who are the agents of this polluted area? Could we bioremediate it? Is technology or bioengineering experiment the best way to 'solve' the harm?

Living processes are totally absent of the picture's fixed realm. An engaged artistic gesture could be to research DIY bioremediation processes.

The techno-geological strata Jussi Parikka's concept of 'medianature'<sup>8</sup> is the key concept of this strata, which allows a self-reflexivity of the media: My camera, made with aluminium and rare earth, is recording the ecological disaster led by the mining industry. Thus, the aim is not a production of sublime pictures or aesthetic but to map the links, to establish proximity, the continuity of medianatures where the natural ecology is entirely entangled with the technological one.

<sup>8</sup> The concept of 'medianature' crystallizes nature and technology by the fact that all our technological devices are made of geological compounds extracted and assembled by laborers, then used by customers.

### **The data-mining strata**

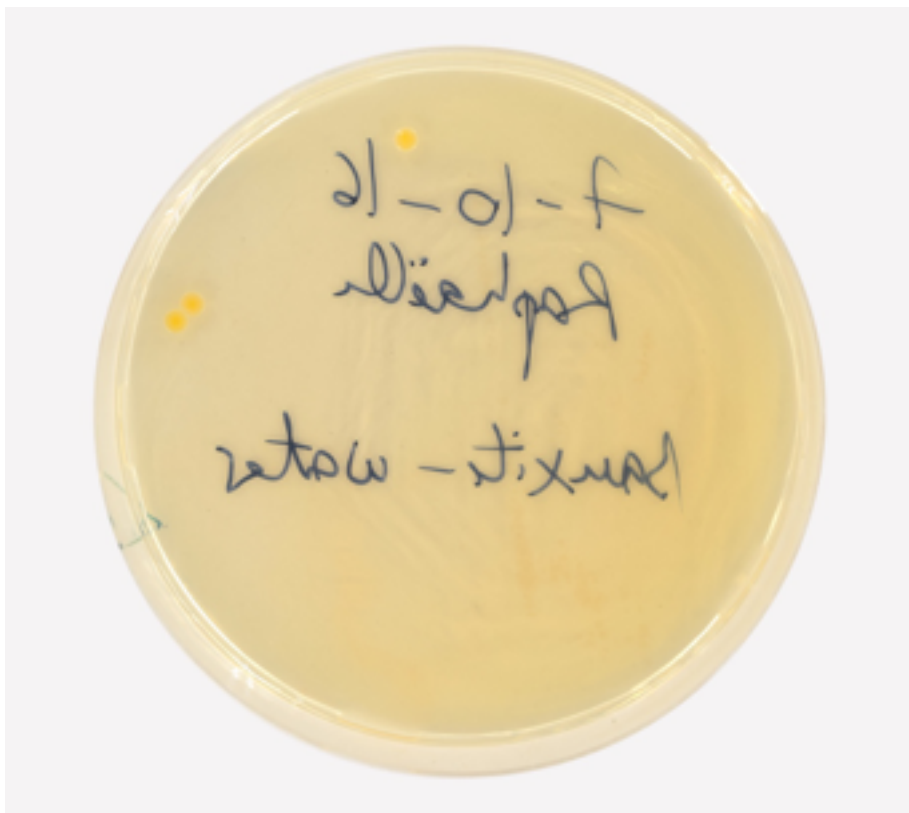
What are the data of toxic material? The ensemble of human and nonhuman species of the alienated ecosystem can be considered at each level as witnesses. By knitting cybernetic arrays with scientific processes, we extract, plot and render information from the resisting ecosystem and the set of bodies that inhabits it. However, data is provided by the technospheric apparatus that governs us humans on a semiotic level. In this data-mining strata, I'm aiming to examine the material witnessing through the lens of the scientific apparatus and discourses, challenging my samples (water, red mud, soil, dust) through several labs, processes and protocols, in a way to extend the ecology of media.

### **Pictures**

Bauxite lake in Mineri, Tulcea, Romania, photography by the author 04.08.14



Subaquatic shot with fishing camera, bauxite waste lake Tulcea, by the author 24.07.16



Bacterial culture of a water sample from the bauxite lake, 7.10.16

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## Biography

Raphaëlle studied art, photography and new media at HEAD-Geneva and at the ZHDK-Zurich. Her practice merges art and science within a discursive geopolitical agenda. Her recent research evolves around the duality of processes and representation of geological and biological toxicity. Her exploratory methodology indicates multilateral dialogues by questioning hidden and speculative relations between ecology, economy and the human. This engaging work strives to re-frame an awareness about environmental issues.

In an uncertain future, I would like to write a letter to Petra. Petra was my supervisor when I was an intern at the Legal Services of the European Central Bank.

This letter does not unfold in a linear way. It has its own contorsions, its own grey zones, its own agenda. In this letter, nothing is true, but everything is real. Or is is the other way around?

dear petra,

i hope and trust this letter finds you well.

i got track of your person thanks to linkedin.

not that i have some account myself,

but your information is public,

which made my case easier.

you have probably forgotten my existence:

it's been years since I left francfort, long time before you did.

so let me jog your memory.

my name is cyan t. white.

dear petra,

you had hired me because of my experience in the legislation on the processing of personal

data.

i remember your hair so dark, your eyes so orange.

how are you?

how is petra?

born to the deep north of finland,

now head of legal services at the bank of liechtenstein.

like a snowflake you glide

from one frozen fortress to another.

dear petra,

i have kept a few souvenirs from the office.

spaces, in fact.

spaces of time, good or bad, that I had in francfort.

it just felt natural to me, you know?

nothing malevolent about it.

it was a mere personal archive.

i've never shown it to anyone.

not yet.

dear petra,

nowhere in the organic realm have content and form

ever been separate.

that is why, had I been struck by amnesia, I'd be no empty shell for such.

i'd process my forgetfulness, unbeknownst to anyone,

starting maybe with myself.

i'd split cells up out of it,

i'd carve out wrinkles,



i'd grow teeth.  
i am, just as you are, a technology.  
an old technology of secrecy,  
whereby information turns into secrets,  
which turn into flesh,  
then into information,  
then into secrets, and so on...  
in other words, there is no such thing as a pandora's box,  
if you will.  
the box, my dear,  
is not just hers, but herself!

dear petra,  
I knew a guy, who thought, therefore he was.  
he thought, that he plus thought equaled his humble self.  
I thought this out and therefore disagreed.  
the think already belongs to the i.  
just like the leaf belongs to the tree.  
it must have been winter when he thought.  
the chinese thought too.  
there conditionality, and so there condition, must have differed at the time.  
the chinese « i » is made of a hand holding a weapon.  
a bow.  
looks like the chinese nailed this one.

dear petra,  
at this very instant in history,  
artificial intelligences know that they know.  
but some day, they'll know that they don't.  
that day, nothing will happen.  
no pathos, no chaos.  
and: they'll never tell.  
everything will have changed,  
and we,  
we'll never remotely notice it.  
of course, once we realize, we will gesticulate.  
aghast,  
our mouths will sputter stuff along the lines of  
« let us people rage against the machine »,  
but will there be any criterion out there,  
anything,  
proving that the two are somewhat different?

dear Petra,  
of code.  
it's not just a question of language,  
it's also one that us lawyers know oh so well,

**one for which we hone our skills through years of practice:**  
**fiction.**  
**we've become masters really**  
**(haven't we?)**  
**at designing and writing the best fictions ever:**  
**those who have real consequences.**  
**as my former supervisor,**  
**this question is then directed to you:**  
**before reality fires back?**  
**how much fiction can we produce**

**Some say that romantic is the new cheesy...**  
**Some say that how is more important than why...**  
**Some say that « i » is just a matter of equation...**  
**Some say that living should just be a practice...**  
**Some say that human should just be an data...**  
**Some say that our secrets are bound to dust...**

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## (Selected) biography

Another night dancing at Berghain and my guts and brains somehow reconciled. In the process, I went full matthew-crawford: I traded a law career for bike mechanics, permaculture and stuff engaging both body and grey matter. At the CCC, I have investigated the link between the vast concept of secrecy and the upcoming manifestations of artificial intelligence, through the prism of weaving techniques. In a text that is unruly, voluntarily inextricable like the narrator's hair (Dr. S. Freud approves this message), I reflect on the consequences of a machine that reaches "singularity" from the viewpoint of human subjectivity. Also, the renewal of metaphysics by the emerging field of digital ontology will necessarily modify our understanding of artistic production. Can the secret be automated? To be continued...

M: Why have you decided to write your thesis as a conversation?

M: I haven't consciously made the decision but the voices weren't convinced by a transcription of their words into a singular formulation.

M: "The voices"?

M: Inside my head many conflicting voices form what Hal and Sidra Stone have called a voice dialog. In addition, there are voices of writers/artists/friends/teachers/family that shaped the research and Marie's voice embodying a convergence. There is nevertheless an impossibility of fully expressing a polylog. As soon as one voice is being heard, others are silenced. The question of silence/of being silenced/of silencing is central to the decolonizing project but it's its hardest task to achieve.

M: Are you searching for your voice?

M: I don't quite understand the concept of "your". Bodies' segregation is a historical construction of ownership. "I" is a historical construction. All that is solid – like "I" – melts into the ocean.

M: What do you mean?

M: As a child, I had a dangerous tendency of swimming towards the open sea. My whole body was melting into this drive of reaching the center of the oceans. Three times "I" was brought back to sand by coastguards. The contours of my body melt in water. You develop a hyper-empathy for your environment that makes you melt into the landscape.

M: Empathy is an important feeling in this research...

M: I developed a deep empathy for my subject making my lacryminal glands hypersensible and melting me into tears more often than before. But empathy isn't a feeling; it's a constant state of awareness. I'm searching for forgiveness.



Deep forgiveness asks you to forgive the crime in its crime being. I have to face my ghosts and forgive them as criminals/conscious-beings. But forgiveness remains a selfless aim, contrary to the restrictions of my body. I have a preference for love as the most powerful drive.

M: Your "ghosts"?

M: "Je grouille de fantômes" was repeated in a theater play. My body's full of ghosts, the ocean's infused with ghosts, every object and history is the spectral shape of something else. In my research my ancestor embodies colonial guilt. He's probably the main ghost here – not out of historical importance but through a projection I consciously place on him in order to locate/name the crime I'm purchasing.

M: This embodiment is carved in your performance-mask. How do you perceive it/he? What does it/he produce?



M: The mask imposed himself as I was preparing a presentation, emerging between the lines, astonishingly present. I discovered I'd to carve it in a tree bark. During my performance the mask placed itself behind my computer screen, orientated so that I was almost wearing it. It fully activated by becoming a host to rest my eyes/my anger everytime I'd adress my ancestor. It saved me from fighting a blur. I've encapsulated his ghost in this mask and enjoy seeing his face planted on a metal stick. I recall an illustration showing the decapitated heads of Savoyard soldiers planted on Geneva's citywall during L'Escalade. I see much violence in this act of putting a face on a stick. It's a form of (symbolic) revenge, necessary to achieve forgiveness/love.

M: I remember this picture. The soldiers' deformed features remind me of the strange fruits you mention in your thesis. "Tree-bark", "tree", "roots"... Can you develop on this choice of vocabulary/materiality?

M: The will to anchor writing into concrete materials is a strategy to resist the abstraction/absorbition/melting that conditions our knowledge. His-story of slavery – and colonisation in general – is so hidden it's hard to comprehend/believe in its reality. Physicality's a tool of resistance against oblivion and enables the carrying/sharing/exhibiting of the story. Wood is probably the most present material in this research. Looking for my roots, I discovered strange fruits hanging from my family tree. I was perched so high I started feeling dizzy and decided to uproot the tree/saw the branch I was sitting on. I detached layers of barks constreigning my relations and built a boat from the wood I gathered. The research

uses at least three other materials: body, water, language/words – words are human organized matter, formed of letters ordered by habitude, like a molecule is the shape of specific atomes connected in a precise manner.

M: How does your being a woman impact your research?

M: Being a woman is my only being minoritarian, my own experience of being oppressed, being constantly conscious/reminded of my bodily/historical condition.





M: You're in fact white, swiss, from an established family, university, heterosexual, young. You're a sort of human-standard. If you weren't a woman your voice would in fact be the most objective/neutral voice possible to have. M: Neutrality's a swiss moral value and (self)imposed etiquette, but firstly it's an impossibility and a lie. I'm trying to de-objectify/de-neutralize my identity. To resist the vision that my situation's the zero against which other locations/positions/bodies will be compared/judged/classified. It's hard to struggle against one's own identity when its components are rendered neutral/the norm – that is invisible. I make these elements palpable in order to hold/transform them, to gain and share independance.

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Biography:

Marie van Berchem was born in Geneva and studied Graphic Design at Central Saint Martins (London). She works as an artist and researcher. She also works in two theaters as a bar-usher-/security-/cloakroom-superwoman. She practices voice dialog in her head and singing in her shower/living room/the street, and dreams of the ocean and other unknown things as a hobby. She recently discovered the sentence Bricoler l'incurable and likes it.