And Another Thing: Nonanthropocentrism and Art

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Preface

The impetus for this catalogue is an art exhibition, *And Another Thing*, which took place in 2011. Its focus concerned nonanthropocentrism, one of the primary tenets shared by various then-emerging philosophies grouped under the mantle of speculative realism.

This volume serves to document that exhibition and to expand on two of its curatorial gambits: to prioritize art historical contexts for contemporary philosophy (rather than the other way around), and to apprehend artworks as historically specific objects of philosophy. This historical orientation distinguishes *And Another Thing* from more recent art world attention to speculative realism; both the early exhibition and this expanded catalogue are intended to highlight that contribution to ongoing interdisciplinary discussions.

The book is organized in three sections. Literally occupying the center of the volume, in section two, is the exhibition itself, represented by plates of its eleven works. Works by emerging and canonical figures lay bare the networks of alliances from which this exhibition builds. As objects in relation, they map a flat ontological field as a discursive terrain for engendering materially embedded conversations.

The works are, appropriately, flanked by their context. In the first section, two long-form essays by the curators offer accounts of the evolution of investigations in nonanthropocentrism and art, spanning eighteenth-century architectural drawing, performance, minimalist sculpture, and contemporary postminimalism. These essays raise the stakes for art and speculative realism. We see how, far from responding to philosophy, artists have figured and prefigured strikingly similar ideas about nonanthropocentrism, mirroring those now embraced as philosophically “new” realist, materialist, and speculatist insights. Moreover, in their deep, media-specific investigations, artists speak with philosophy’s objects on their own terms.

Art offers object lessons to philosophy, too. Concluding the book, and with an eye to projects that lie beyond its pages, the third section includes three short meditations on the relation between nonanthropocentrism and art, and what that relation might portend for future thought. These essays, by Bill Brown, Patricia Ticineto Clough, and Robert Jackson, are in a true sense speculative in that they perceive futuritive potentials for theory arising from nonanthropocentrism’s manifestations in art. As such, they are historically acute objects that themselves mediate interdisciplinary presents.

We hope that the publication of this volume will contribute to exciting exchanges between art and theory yet to come.

—Katherine Behar and Emmy Mikelson