Elemental Disappearances
Jason BahbakMohaghegh, DejanLukić

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PART II: DEJAN LUJIĆ
Cities are flowing surfaces. We all know that. One inhabits not the city, nor a neighborhood, but the energetic wave itself (so-called urban movement). Still, urbanity is a tiresome term. There is no battle between nature and the city. There is ever only one battle: movement vs. non-movement. For example, illegal immigrants, gangs, the precariously nomadic vs. stroller-pushing corporate inhabitants. These maps show that even this division is artificial though it is constantly implemented. People, goods, forces seep in and out of the city, along lines both visible and invisible. Cities as continually bordering phenomena. Horizontal roots, flowing fibers, extend as a capillary consequence. Orifices emerge only to melt into bright lava. Hence, each image capturing reality can only appear as windswept. A rendition, to render: from the Latin “to give back” but also “to melt down.” The only right thing to do to reality.

Swiss digital illustrator Istvan (“Chaotic Atmospheres”) produces “flowing city maps” of global urban centers.
The engravings are done by scratching the rock, then applying color in order to make silhouettes of moving images, flashing riders on animals we call camels or dromedaries. The image is frozen (that is its nature) but we of course see the movement of this frozen moment. The rock is the most static object; depending on its scale, monumental and permanent. No wonder it is often used for shelter (where the movement rests) or as a final resting place (a tomb). And yet the drawings on these static walls show the kinetic drama unfolding outside: running, transporting, traveling, warring, playing. In fact, the word “dromedary” comes from the Greek root “dromas,” meaning runner. Camel thus equals swiftness. This speed is harnessed and implemented through a number of elements: (a) the animal, (b) the human rider, and (c) the constraining devices such as saddles, reigns, whips, all of which have changed very little since their invention two millennia ago when they were composed together to form that imposing desert-machine-ship we still see today. But besides the functionality of this animal-vessel, with an ascetic metabolism that makes it perfectly suitable for the atmospheric extremes of the desert, we also see adornments, or abstract drawings on the blankets falling across the humps and necks of the animal, protective fabrics veiling the riders, all of which make this arranged animality perfectly immanent to the sphere it occupies (to its beauty and its ruthlessness): the desert. And strangely enough, if we look closely, the rock drawings go beyond the photographs, turning into pixelated images similar to those we see in video games. The hand that drew the lines has not only represented his or her experience; it has also tapped into its elemental particles, those that belong neither to past nor to the future, but to the virtual, to the creation itself.

**REGION**  North Africa  
**CONCEPT**  Movement (swiftness)  
**SUBCONCEPTS**  Drawing, Rock, Silhouette, Animal, Desert  
**DESCRIPTION**  Saharan rock art reveals the importance of the camel in the nomadic cultures of Libya, Algeria, Chad, Niger, and others, as well as the timelessness of the drawing gesture.
There is an enormous history behind these patterns, alluding to a sacred space of creativity in science and religion. The title references the intersections of cultures that passed through the palace and the region: Arab, Berber, Spanish, Jewish. Strictly speaking, intersections are points where two or more diverging lines cross each other’s paths. Hence, a point of intensification. But more importantly, as we swirl around the space illuminated by the crocheted box, we start to hallucinate a bit. We see a box which is empty but which emanates light. Through this emanation, the radiating light, a new surface is created (projected on the walls), and the entire space is filled with intricate patterns. The inside of the box is unfolded to the outside. The innate curiosity we have about a closed box and its contents is thus spectacularly resolved. Here it is just a gift of the new surface. The secret (meandering intersections) is manifested and projected to the outside. A feeling of confidential immensity imposes itself. Expansive infinity envelops us in a closed room through the intricacy of the patterns: a constellation of a universe. The hierarchy between shadow and light collapses, as both are equally important and cannot exist without one another (“Night too is a Sun,” says one philosopher). Finally, in this immensity the walls of the room become canvases, as we the spectators too become canvases, our bodies points of intersection. There is no audience anymore, only meeting points.
The immense water that surrounds it: indifferent. The perfect blueness of the water that competes with the lightness of the sky: indifferent. The stone quarries abandoned (as if the prisoners left for a lunch break and never came back): indifferent. The lighthouses and the bunkers: indifferent. The rocks, one by one, out of which the winding roads proceed, and buildings rise: indifferent. The torture pit: indifferent. All the materiality of sensation that being-here produces, attests to that enormous feeling of indifference created by the former Stately power. Communists, fascists, Habsburgs . . . all different temperaments that laid down their teachings in the manner of absurd pedagogy. And yet tiny wild flowers dot the rugged landscape. Where do they come from? Precisely from this indifference which cannot but also lay down seeds that eventually bloom into their own color, their own elated forms, their own stubborn vulnerability. In due course the rocks will disappear, and the weeds will spread in all directions, and no one (not even an archeologist, or a historian, or a pilgrim) will realize that the wild plants won. The stones and the sea are only the background against which they open their protean power onto the world.

NAKED ISLAND

REGION Eastern Europe/Adriatic
CONCEPT Space
SUBCONCEPTS Water, Stone, Flower
DESCRIPTION Former Communist prison-island slowly fades into an archeological site of the future.
Without doubt, a confrontation occurs when one lays eyes on these installations: a form of a horse carefully crafted yet frozen in development before it is fully actualized; a human body that extends into heavy branches pulling its back toward the ground; a body with missing parts; or else isolated parts (antlers of a deer) piled together. This is the work of a new butcher, one that has certainly learned from the old masters, but then in silent solitude went to invent her own counter-procedure: the flesh (which looks alive) is rendered with wax, a material that does not rot; the bodies are not open through the wounds that announce its death, but rather, each is closed in on itself. Sometimes we do not even see the transition or a surgical scar (there are no seams); all is smooth, curled, curved, coiled. There is no specific wound because the entire body is a wound, closed but not healing, suspended in what it exactly is: a constant mutation of forces that inhabit the flesh and thus form the body. The act of twisting as a gesture of cruelty already. She is a rare and original butcher that does not open up but instead twists, smooths, and transmogrifies so that it is hard to see fleshy deformations. Yet the more one looks the more one sees the beauty: the tactile seduction of the wax, the horse hair and skin, the pillows and the hooks, the marvelous wooden tables and cabinets which surround the bodies simultaneously exposing and protecting them. In the end, nothing but beauty extracted (slowly and brutally) from its own infinity.

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**REGION** Europe

**CONCEPT** Body (fleshiness)

**SUBCONCEPTS** Mutation, Transformation, Vulnerability

**DESCRIPTION** Artist Berlinde De Bruyckere creates sculptures of bodies in vulnerable modulations.
SOUND OF THE SPHERES

We always knew that darkness is palpable, first and foremost from cats and from fairy tales. Perhaps we also always knew that it cannot be fully mute. But what does its sound say, besides that darkness is darkness? Let us proclaim: darkness speaks. Is this not what the very first impulse (of a child) announces before she can articulate anything (fear of darkness)? And further, are not symphonies of great composers the accurate and infinite articulation of this impulse (that darkness is alive)? Does not the sound itself occur in the first place to dispel darkness (lullabies)? Or better yet, to tell us that there is no such thing as darkness, only very low degrees of light . . . True. Infinite space “sings,” that is to say, the spheres sound back at us, wailing, squeaking, vibrating. The cosmos is a dance of high-energy electrons; accelerations in the electromagnetic field which suddenly sound like birds. (This also means that birds can sound like something completely different than themselves.) Indeed, insects and birds: two of the most important groups of animals for the understanding of music. At the heart of their sounds lies darkness that moves. And solarity is therefore heard (with one’s eyes).

REGION
Outer Space

CONCEPT
Movement (soundings)

SUBCONCEPTS
Darkness, Music, Physics

DESCRIPTION
The solar system is populated by sounds that result from various movements of high-energy electrons.
Are these strange contraptions put on one’s head someone else’s eyes? One of them, turning the human head into an engine, touches the core of perception’s physiology: “Light-Pump or Phantom Brain”. These vision machines prove one thing: that human eyes, the organs of perception, are not competent enough. We never fully trust them, even though they are the primary tools of so-called objectivity. The machine-maker builds his devices clunky and awkward on purpose. They are not just extensions, they are burdens, proper crutches of the eye (sometimes on wheels). They do not “enhance” the performance of sight; on the contrary, they “refute” it. And after refutation, a dreamlike state comes into view, unpredictably. The world as we once saw it changes. Is there a more significant revolution? “What is left is right, what is behind is brought forward, what is in the vicinity recedes into distance; the drops of water fall upward, the pit becomes a hill, the blades of grass grow downward, the birds dive into the grass . . . ” All in order to transform reality, to make the delusion apparent, and to create another one. Out of failure, a revelation. Only then come veritable visions: appearances not seen by the naked eye.

VISION MACHINES

Swiss artist Alfons Schilling creates machines that dislocate human perception and thereby create unforeseen visions.
There are paintings that go beyond their frames. In fact, the narrative or form they provide within their borders is only secondary to the supplement (a metaphysical vitamin) that seeps out of it. Of course there is a technique of the master inscribed in the treatment of light and darkness, figures and shapes. But it is the vision which cuts through the image that counts the most. And the vision is always enigmatic; that is to say, it requires deciphering which no specialist knowledge of historical context or technique can reveal. There are some artists that provide a diagnosis of an entire “age” in which they live. Then there are few that go even further by carefully placing nothing short of a new form of life in their seemingly ordinary practice of painting. It is only then that their object (painting) becomes a collection of forces that goes far beyond their respective contexts. One will easily know which works generate this kind of power: in front of them one does not simply reflect, one levitates, now released from physical laws (gravity) just as the painting itself is released from the confines of art (it is now something else). Enchantment means experiencing the miraculous. All sharing of a vision in this respect is self-deception. And yet deception of this kind is intensification of the world; i.e., creation of something against which one can measure oneself. And is there anything more powerful than measuring oneself against the landscape of Hell, from which all sorts of beatitudes emerge?

Hieronymus Bosch’s triptych The Last Judgment (1504–08) stands inconspicuously in the last room on the top floor gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, still emanating its power of attraction not just toward the mind of the curious viewer but also toward his or her body.
The drums have an irrefutable connection to thunder. They both reverberate, or relentlessly vibrate, and in this way extend into space, folding it into its sound. The incessant reverberation is their presence through which they conquer space. One could say that palo drums are tamed thunders, which is the only way that the human body can take them in without exploding. Even with these subdued thunders, the body is already taken to its limits. For it is hard not to move accordingly in the presence of the roaring drums. They are capturing chosen degrees of thundering so as to make them closer to the human heartbeat. The result is the production of the cardiac beat. Repetition turns it into an ecstatic body, transformative for the sole reason that it necessitates stepping outside of oneself. A rare demand in today’s world. A primordial demand since the world started by stepping outside of itself: a thunder and a lightning that opened up the infinite unfolding of the galaxies. Thunders we hear during storms are good reminders of that initial crack through which the flow of life ensued. Most creatures still cower when they hear it, unaware why, unaware of their own sensibility to the cosmic vibration. But it would be wrong to think of palo drums as merely a domesticated force of nature, thunder pacified. Rather, it is a force of nature molecularized into controlled tonality that then permeates the listeners and turns them into dancers (a higher form of listeners). Let us not think of this drumming as an obscure practice. There is a geo-affective thread that connects drums to thunders, all the way to that initial rupture, the coruscating sound of cosmic outpouring. In the beginning there was not light; there was a clang.
POWER OF A CURSE

Who is to say that the snake did not materialize from the interiority of the minister? That it did not curl out as the very modality of his ethnocentric delirium, affirming the world that favors transmutations in which there are no solid forms and where strange animals can transpire out of certain emotions? A world not separated into distinct objects that have nothing in common, but where things are seething, churning, and swelling into inexplicable occurrences; where every negative utterance is therefore an informal curse, a metabolic principle that eats away the unprotected interiority of the person who receives it, no less than, albeit more imperceptibly, it eats the curser himself. This is an ancient problem of health, where sentiments of the society fold into sentiments of the individual, just as the outside folds into the inside, thoroughly following the logic of the fairy tale, the power of which is only seemingly enclosed inside children’s books. In reality, the more it is dismissed the stronger it becomes, because it lives not outside our world, but rather, it is our world (the world as a spell that needs to be broken). Hence a fable at the heart of contemporary politics of the crudest kind.

REGION  West Europe
CONCEPT  Myth (curse)
SUBCONCEPTS  Metabolic Principle, Racism, Politics
DESCRIPTION  Italian right-wing politician and former minister claims he has been cursed (as revenge for his vulgar racist statement) by a sorcerer in Congo.
Some days, when the circumstance calls for it, the human being stops being just a human being. The marvelous takes over. Invoking the marvelous simply means being able to astonish (but astonishing the other is not a simple matter). In the hills of Altiplano, colorful figures appear: the color of their garments differentiates them from the surrounding world of nature. For example: the bright red against the light grey of the fog. We see the opulence of masks and dresses in juxtaposition against the bleakness of rooms, the everyday poverty. But it is only here that the word luxury attains proper value, of excess in austerity, a distinctive splendor, and thus brightness, or light. Do not forget: the witch doctors that wear them and transform into zoomorphic beings are still “doctors.” They heal by opening up the borders, physical and moral, taking one by the hand into the underground tunnels (the mines carved inside the hills). The world becomes paradoxically less differentiated (even though the garments and masks are over-pronounced) and thus horror and excitement ensue. The forbidden is formidable; the deceivers, seductive. These basic formulas are so powerful that even after the objects and the garments are fully removed their humming presence remains.
Dracula has never been more popular, as numerous TV shows and movies attest. Perhaps that means that he is truly dead, now living posthumously not as the aristocratic undead but as a pastime of bored twenty-first century audiences. Journalists are quick to announce that he is a “fictitious character” (they are not fooled, the fact-checkers). In Transylvania his castle is being sold. (Yes, the castle of Vlad Tepes, the legendary prince upon whose exploits the tale has been based.) It currently belongs to the Habsburg family, former rulers of the Habsburg Empire. But let us get our facts straight. Dracula is just a spectacular manifestation of a much older, subterranean force that runs through southeast European tales and the everyday in the 1700s: that of a vampir. It is no coincidence that vampires rose (from the dead) to prominence when the Habsburg empire was at its peak, like a counter-current running from the edge of the empire, spreading disbelief and paranoia. What is more, this vampiric chemistry trickles through centuries, even millennia, both as a political and as an aesthetic force. It always appears as a disturbance at the heart of a “civilization” (Mesopotamian, ancient Greek, Roman, Chinese, etc.). Contamination, proliferation. Is there a more revolutionary tactic for a movement? And yet, the greatest terror does not come from the spilling and sucking of blood but from an internal compulsion, a terrible flaw: arithmomania (obsessive need to count actions or objects in one’s surroundings). One can only hope that new owners of the Bran Castle will also get bit (it is the least they deserve), then close the castle to swarming tourists, and count the bags of spilled peas into eternity. A passionate mania is always better than a passionless spectacle.
If the fairy tale is a re-enchantment of the world, in what kind of dwelling should one live for this to occur? Is enchantment not equally an expression of our inner dispositions (delight), as well as our environment? In fact, our inner disposition can only change, start to “sing” internally, when it perceives the outside in a new way (re-vitalized). Should this not indeed be one of the basic human rights: to live in a revitalized space? Or should it not at least be what we strive for? Interior designers, spectacular clowns of fashion: what damage have they done to the world by ignoring this disposition? Perhaps Goethe thought in precisely these fairy tale terms when he said that architecture is frozen music. He must have been enchanted by the frozen German winters. Yet one has to look into the interior. Stepping inside, there is pure pulsation. Re-enchantment is designed through a paradox: the decomposing façade (of lost innocence) at the center of which emerges a shining new heart (or hearth). What better image for this than the kitchen? Walls darkened by the smoke are suddenly brightened by the smoothness of the perfected cooking surface in the burned belly of the house. Dwelling here, working here, would it not intensify us a little beyond the ordinary, turn us — preternatural?

REGION Switzerland
CONCEPT Space
SUBCONCEPTS Interior Design, The Preternatural, Enchantment
DESCRIPTION Stone oven in the smokehouse patiently awaits its inhabitants.
THE SEA 1, STOWAWAYS

Here they come. The unwanted. Latitudes and longitudes, their lifelines. Here they come: throngs of people hiding in the belly of the ship, sometimes in the lifeboats. But even there, no hope. They are discovered, discarded. They play the oldest game: hide and seek. Or in metaphysical terms: concealing and revealing. Movement to and fro, just like that of the tides, the planets, the lovers. An ancient game and equally eternal. Yet they wager their lives this time. It is said that the Sea is hostile for it swallows thousands each year. Yet the Sea embraces everyone into itself without judgment. It forces immanence. Perhaps this devouring that is beyond good and evil is what scares us most. Do waves and droplets of water have feelings? We don’t know so we choose hostile lands with detention camps on Europe’s shores instead. Perhaps we should learn how to swim better than any generation has ever swam, and swim away from the shores, away from the boats, until we are concealed not behind the ship’s flags, but behind the rumbling waves that turn into a mist, warm and comforting, floating forever. For in today’s age, dreaming only leads to drowning.

REGION  West Africa (Atlantic Ocean)
CONCEPT  Time
SUBCONCEPTS  Illegality, Drowning, Dreaming
DESCRIPTION  Immigrants from Africa try to reach Europe at the price of their own life.
The Sea holds the greatest mystery, which is fortuitously also a great theoretical axiom. As with all great mysteries and theories, the core of it is a paradox: transparency of the impenetrable. Writers and philosophers attracted by the Sea knew this secret and it made them smile. To become like the Sea, translucent and impervious. Could these characteristics also be embodied as virtues? The painter comes even closer to this possibility because he mediates light itself, gradations of surging brightness and dimness. So much so that one cannot differentiate anymore between “himself” and the canvas (a thousand iterations). By extracting the fragment from the Sea, he became the Sea. The only virtuous thing left is for our theory to do the same: surge.
How can a flower contain within itself a tale from a part of the globe other than its natural habitat? Dracula (meaning “little dragon”) is a name that carries the slight sensation of fright. Yet not of an order that would repel us; on the contrary, it is just intense enough to attract our curiosity, which can even turn into obsession. The flower itself looks like a strange attractor, glabrous triangle, ominous, with a pink lip (labellum) that looks more like a tongue. Without doubt, it is waiting for a wasp with even stronger fascination than ours, which will rub itself amorous after being deceived visually, and in this way initiate the process of pollination. The flower carries modalities of insects and of vampires, just as Dracula too carried nonhuman modalities.

**REGION**
Central America

**CONCEPT**
Desire

**SUBCONCEPTS**
Tales, Plants

**DESCRIPTION**
The 118 species of the orchid genus Dracula grow quietly in Ecuador, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Central America in general.
More than anyone else, librarians must feel like the guardians of secrets. Walking constantly amongst closed books, which they can open at will and find something that very few other people know. It is both a thrill and a burden. Then every now and then an exceptional librarian emerges, one that is not only a keeper but also a smuggler. Hiding sixteenth-century manuscripts from the militants; and if he’s found, his hands will be cut off. What possesses him to risk the well-being of his body for old book pages? Is it their age (older than any human)? Is it the (outdated) knowledge? Or some affective power lying dormant in the text and at the same time not part of that text at all. Yes, it is this power, equally ancient and contemporary, that fuels the librarian-smuggler. Even at the risk of death he can’t deny this emanation from the manuscripts. The books themselves now carry the air of the southern Sahara desert, they are deserts themselves, at times unbearably hot, at times freezing, with unexpected oases. Through the desert arrived first the rebels, then the militants, crossing it like the pirates would cross the great seas. Indeed, the desert is the sea. The books simply tell what the desert-sea has seen throughout the ages. No, I change my mind: books are not the same as the desert; they are its fractal eyes.

**DESCRIPTION**
Librarian Abdel Haidara organizes the smuggling of ancient manuscripts from Timbuktu to safety before al-Qaeda–related militants destroy them.
THE SPIDER 1, INSTRUMENTALITY

These creatures not only live their entire lives on the "edge," they actually create it: arachnids. They hunt, copulate, and die on the line, i.e., on a mass of lines which turns into a web. The line is a string and as such it contains musical modalities. It is plucked by the movements of the air, or of another insect which gets caught in the web (with all of its complex multi-lens eyes that cover a radius of 360 degrees, the fly does not see the web), or else of the spider moving (with its eight legs, although blind). Much of its life is spent in waiting, being still on the web, on this giant instrument. The visual beauty of its appearance is proportional to the horror of its functionality (the most sophisticated trap, ruthless). The web is an instrument of capture, a dwelling place, a world of its own. Yet its micro-vibrations sound throughout the universe. . . . It is said that Spinoza (in the seventeenth century) amused himself by observing spiders fight. What is not known: Does his intricate philosophy of immanence actually come from these moments of arachnean observation?
THE SPIDER 2, AUTISTICITY

The spider is inseparable from its web. In fact, the spider's silk is an extension of its body, secreted right from it, a biochemical formation of extreme toughness and ductility. Yet its enigmatic contradiction is its lightness. This is reflected in the name itself: arachnean means "of/or related to the finesse of a spider web." In addition, the word spider comes from the Old English *spithra*, which means "spin." To spin is thus to be spider-like (it is inevitable). Someone said accurately, "The path is never written, it is spun." Indeed, we turn, whirl, get dizzy. From angular momentums of subatomic particles to planetary phases, everything dances according to its own symphony: a self-created chaotic harmony consisting of billions of participants, all different from one another. Difference in repetition, as some philosophers say. All this is visible in lines drawn from the movements of autistic children that Deligny’s extraordinary hand produced. They reveal the beauty of the autistic molecule which hallucinates networks through new types of movement, and perhaps as a result creates new diagrams of relations between things (relations are determined by types of movement).
Is the solitary artist, writer, religious ascetic, child, not closer to a solitary species of spiders than to other humans? She certainly is — at least on the level of affects, the filaments of her temperament that exceed her personal feelings and make her act in a particular way. In the same vein, a little boy says on a talk show, “I love all animals, but for some reason my favorites are cold-blooded ones, the insects.” He knows everything about insects. Louise Bourgeois is an expert on affects, the molecular network of influence. Her large spider installation is a literal manifestation of encompassing feelings of protection (one can hide under it) and durability (it’s almost indestructible). It is an expression of a spider-character (an invitation to embody it). Great storytellers and artists are spinsters (they twist the threads of textiles, clay, paper, feelings, thoughts, words) and nothing else. Endlessly indifferent, endlessly vulnerable, endlessly passionate all at the same time.

**THE SPIDER 3, AFFECTIVITY**

- **REGION**: North America/Europe
- **CONCEPT**: Desire (insect affect)
- **SUBCONCEPTS**: Twisting, Feeling, The Spinster
- **DESCRIPTION**: Artist Louise Bourgeois creates mother-spider installations in different locations of the world.
The earth is a boiling pot with a solid core and liquid outer core rising to 10,800 degrees Fahrenheit. There is a constant interplay of solid turning into liquid, and vice versa. Volcanic explosions give us a glimpse into these combustive layers. Earth as an incendiary device. But its internal combustion is not only geological, it is also political. Human groupings hide micro-volcanos, i.e., landmines, just beneath the surface in order to maim and kill their enemies (another human grouping of a different ethnic or ideological persuasion). There are millions of landmines scattered upon the earth. They wait patiently, unconcerned by the politics above and the circumstances of war or peace. They have only one purpose — explosion; only one feeling — tactile. There have been many attempts to find the best ways to discover them. The most recent one: giant pouched rats (they are too light to set off the explosion). There are now armies of rats reared for this task, the unearthing of the surface. Hence the animal yet again proves closer, more intimate, to the earth than the human. But this is what old deminers always knew; this is why they normally chose animal names for their units and brigades (e.g., the Mongoose). Despite this dramatic interplay of life and death on its surface, the earth just keeps on boiling and boiling.
LAND 2, THE MIGRATING

Migrant: a dangerous occupation. But should it not properly be called a destiny (an inevitable chain of events under certain circumstances)? Moving from one place to another, from one habitat to another. Is this not in fact more natural? Should this not be the desired disposition of all people? By contrast, belonging to a delineated and bordered territory is a theological disposition that designates a particular soil as sacred and only accessible to the chosen ones (those born on it). What an arbitrary criterion. And yet one codified in law and politics. Nevertheless, the highways continue their call for movement, like capillaries leading to open cities. As a counter-act, new fences are built on the land and primordial blockages (walls) regain their status. Bodies jump across or climb over the lines cutting through the image. And yet with awe we look at the birds passing by on their migration route. And few know that even the cells in our skin, which form pigment, migrate. Blood does not equal soil; it equals migration.

REGION Europe
CONCEPT Movement (migration)
SUBCONCEPTS Death, Law, Awe
DESCRIPTION Thousands of migrants are crossing the borders at the edge of the European Union daily.
What can we learn from a writer, or writing itself, about delirium as a condition of living? The Pentagonía cycle (described as the secret history of Cuba): five books, five agonies, five delirious inscriptions of the struggle to stay alive. The agonies of life under dictatorship, under pathological atmospherics, populated with clear but delirious language. Delirium as a medico-political condition, one of peculiar outpouring whose intensity is found on each page. But the page is only a mark of the general outpouring envisioned as resistance to everyday life. Ideological delirium of the state vs. the writer's delirium. Delirium as a furrow in consciousness, a rut, through which the writer forms trails leading to an escape. An aberrant physician that turns delirium into health, constructing a new sense of the world. Just like the image of the multitude of flags in movement that turn into kites, or decompose into elementary particles, the writer's language is one of the falling façade where the revelation of interior corruption creates crumbling folds on its outer surface. The delirium reveals the double life of the inhabitants: publicly they praise the success of the revolution, privately they curse all its manifestations. The writer, an agonized physician, diagnoses social delirium and produces language that escapes the text. Only by becoming a secret can he write about the secret (agony).
Crows served as totemic animals for many native peoples. Totem’s purpose: to bond into oneness. As such, the characteristics of the animal transfer into that of the human, as a metaphysical force of attraction turns into a chemical one. Now an unusual event has occurred: the crows are bringing shiny objects to a little girl who feeds them. From the most ancient times, the gift was an expression of adornment, luxury, something that adds power to the body upon which it is bestowed (a little bit of excess around the neck and arms). That is why they are often precious stones, shells, metals, textiles, things that go onto the body and thus intensify it. However, the greatest gift these crows delivered was not one that beautifies: a severed crab’s leg. Giving a piece of another animal is a reminder of the viscerality of the relationship. This time it is not the crow that is a totem for the humans; rather, it is the little girl herself, for the birds. For crows clearly know their obligation and their bond, which is in fact not just intelligent but religious (from Latin, religare, “to bind”).
We usually see his face frozen, immobile. How can such an expression of disinterest provoke feelings of fear and comfort at the same time? Pharaoh meant “a great house”: i.e., the ruler was an all-encompassing space (a dwelling place) and a territory. Yet in this case he was not only terrestrial; he was obsessed with stars and astrology. According to an ascetic from the ninth century, one transcription on an ancient Egyptian temple reads: “Man is ruled by the stars and does not know it. He who commands the stars does what he wishes.” (It is said that Dante too believed that love can move the Sun and other planets). The greatest planet in our intimate universe is the Sun, of course. Perhaps this is why the prenomen “Ra” was used to designate the ruler’s emergence as the offspring of the Sun. Ra, the god of Sun and Radiance, is depicted with an image of a Sun disk above his head, encircled with a serpent; the pharaoh is depicted with a crown on his head. However, no actual crown has ever been found. Everything else has been unearthed except for the very thing that made the ruler divine. We only see it in drawings, which also serve as writing (hieroglyphs), and where animal, human, divine, and the planetary share the same, barely differentiated plane of immanence.
It is only posthumously that great ideological monuments attain their quiet glory. No wonder contemporary architects are jealous. For a monumental materialization to occur, monumental ideas are necessary. And communist monuments in the former Yugoslavia lacked none. They now stand like archeological artefacts from a long lost civilization. As such, they look equally futuristic, for they were made to glorify an idea alien to most in today’s world: revolution. From being affective manifestations of a traumatic event, they now stand free of any symbolic burden, with a new, yet-undetermined sculptural energy; for nothing simply dissipates, only changes form, just as communism transmuted into nationalism, just as utopias turn into gradations of cynical weariness. So, what kind of beauty is left in the absence of memory?

**REGION**  Eastern Europe  
**CONCEPT**  Myth (monumentality)  
**SUBCONCEPTS**  Sculptures, Ideology, Abandonment  
**DESCRIPTION**  In the 1960s and 1970s, the great political “curator” Josip Broz Tito commissioned monuments throughout the former Yugoslavia to commemorate important World War II sites which attracted masses of people, only now to be largely abandoned.
THE SCULPTURAL 2, DESERT HAND

Has the giant drowned, his hand the very last part left to be submerged? Or is he rising, a part of his hand the very beginning of his ascent from the belly of the earth, from the desert sea? Being in the desert, the scale of the hand changes depending on our proximity to it (it can be tiny or enormous). The open hand, a salute, is undoubtedly non-threatening. It makes us pause. This sense of calm is due to its disposition of receptivity (a recognition of our presence), which all creatures of the globe intuitively understand (even snakes are pacified by the lulling hand of the hypnotist). The great vulnerability of the hand lies in the fact that it allows you to touch it, to even scratch upon it. This is its power too, the mystery of allowing violence against itself. The glorious anatomy of the outside: open hand in the open desert. I decided: it is an image of ascent, the hand is taking off; and it is not any figure attached to it (it is the “hand of the desert”, not “hand in the desert”), but rather the entire barren surface which will pull and wrinkle and rise with it. The desert is its mind and its body: a singular haptic omnipresent exteriority. The face upon which we tread.

REGION  South America  
CONCEPT  Body (vulnerability)  
SUBCONCEPTS  Omnipresence, Calm, Surface  
DESCRIPTION  A sculpture by Mario Irarrazabal, 11 meters tall, stands in the Atacama Desert in Chile.
There is a desert where the soil and drinking water contain high volumes of arsenic. Manifested as orpiment, a bright yellow mineral (used also as artist's pigment), arsenic was always a royal element despite its mortal properties: from the Arabic al-zarnik, “the orpiment,” based on the Persian zar, “gold.” Through veritable unnatural selection the poison becomes enriching. Atacama is not only the name of the desert and the driest point on the planet; it is also the name of a people now extinct (through what chemico-political powers?), dissipated throughout the desert line along the Pacific coast. Arsenic is their revenge: as they disappeared, they turned alchemically into bastardized gold infused in the ground and underground waters. Not human anymore, but now elemental, they conspired against the humans: arsenic is their breath, all that is left in the wake of their disappearance. In light of this, is it a coincidence that a giant hand appeared precisely in the sands of Atacama, rising upward, ushering the arrival of a new creature who inhales (ingests) not oxygen but arsenic, neither human, nor animal, but mineral (an inorganic, metallic, toxic, effervescent substance of pure health)? In a reverse act of creation, it is not divine breath that creates the earth (soil and waters) but a terrestrial mineralogy that creates new arsenic-laced air (condensed golden clouds).
Fairy tales tell us that everyone is hungry. Not everyone, but everything. Human, animal, plant mutate into each other, and the essential characteristic of existence is to devour. This is what frames all the stories, a blueprint onto which the seemingly innocent narrative is laid out. To devour: out of love or hate or desperation or sheer physical need. It is biological as much as it is metaphysical. It is concrete: “I have to eat you,” the mother says to her children. “Bring me her liver so I can eat it,” says another character. In devouring we have both the act of cruelty (dismembering) and the act of highest intimation (engulfing). Devouring leads to transmutation and intensification of the body. In this respect, fairy tales come closest to the essential characteristic of the earth: that in order to proliferate one has to consume the other. As we all know, beautiful yet strange forms grow out of the mud, or out of compost. This is why in the hands of master painters and writers across centuries “The Garden of Earthly Delights” always depicts devourings of all kinds. The brutalist (from Latin “brutus”, meaning “fierce”) principle lies at the core of Life. The degree of fierceness that inhabits children and animals in fairy tales no doubt emerges out of night and madness. This is also why fairy tales eventually condense into lullabies which are meant to lull us into sleep and calm us down, as they take us back into the night (reality pacified). But even in sleep a certain fierceness abides. How else would one dance with the devil?
There is a writer who wrote short stories on scraps of paper with a special type of microscript in pencil that took decades to decipher. He thought it a proper way to write stories which basically continued where the older fairy tales had ended: for what happens to the characters now? This little sliver of a secret requires discovery through humility. For this writer does not advertise his visions; on the contrary, he buries them within a minuscule script. He writes for himself (to make his gift of writing stronger) and for the imaginary characters themselves (to heal them). Indeed, they are all healed (as philosopher Walter Benjamin claimed), and so is he in the process. Convalescence means a reinvigorated desire to act and nothing else. Suffering means the inability to act, a kinetic failure. Stories: carefully crafted lucid hallucinations. And if fairy tales are trying to trick the readers and listeners with their innocence that masks ruthless cruelty, the author here is trying to trick fairy tales themselves, the entire history of them, by hiding his characters who have overcome their pain behind hallucinatory movements of the pencil, into scattered and fragmented stories, zigzagging in all directions, only in the end to disclose that they are all part of the same story: the work of the convalescent. However, for all this to become clear there is a catch: we need to become a little schizophrenic.
THE DROWNING

A liquid gathering. One doesn’t see the bodies anymore, only heads. Even still, acephalic creatures would be more interesting. The contemporary spectacle is alive and it is dead all at the same time. Cement crumbles. The virtues of the leaders are fake and simulated like the reality they govern. Capitalism is an architectural pathology and symptomatology, a bad offering. What binds us then? What binding agent makes us move toward the powerful? As the washed-out clamor of the leaders drowns, the smooth surface of the water remains, reflecting the image of the future, one of new inclinations and enticements.
He who binds understands the habits of his creations. In fact, he provokes them. These beasts have one desire alone: to move. Their energy is of the most supreme kind: kinesis. They rely on the wind, for only through engagement with its erratic swirls do they exist. And unlike all other creatures of the earth, they do not need to eat in order to move. They have no organs. For this reason they seem otherworldly, for they resist the axiom of the earth: that in order to live, one must eat. Furthermore, there is kindness present in the movements of these creatures (made of yellow plastic tubes) that everyone recognizes, which makes it accurate to say that everything which moves lives. Is it possible then, that at the core of the violence that initiates all life lies tenderness?