presentation of a mean-time index—

"The card index marks the conquest of three-dimensional writing, and so presents an astonishing counterpoint to the three-dimensionality of script in its original form as rune or knot notation. (And today the book is already, as the present mode of scholarly production demonstrates, an outdated mediation between two different filing systems. For everything that matters is to be found in the card box of the researcher who wrote it, and the scholar studying it assimilates it into his own card index.)"

(Walter Benjamin, SW1, p. 456)



The diary master: a diplomat's wife. Photogravure by the author based on photography by Finn's photo, Brooklyn 1963, USA

In the late spring (2022) I started organising an index of research-topics and key-references acquired during the C19 *pandemic*, from my post as a professor of theory and writing at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO). The organisation of the *leaflet-index* features a compositional work, blurring the boundary between *academic* and *artistic* research. The design-parameters for the index are set by the format, the typography, the images and the performance. All of them *specific*.

As a social anthropologist working with designers in the art-field, the notion of doing research with (as an anthropologist) and research through (as an employee at an art-school with dedicated time for 'artistic research') begs for a different set of categories than scientific vs. artistic. Asking whether a certain standard of research in both senses is possible to combine, is not a simple yes/no question. It needs to be revealed through the work of marking and making; work of the hands.

For reasons explained in further detail below, the emergent topic of the index was a query on surfaces—or, screens—through the intermediary of a surface: the leaflet. Of course, the understanding of a surface as **a**) a palimpsest [the text aspect] and **b**) a superposition or détournement [the pictorial aspect] are both well-known. The palimpsest has been a model of intertextuality in literary theory for quite a while¹. Superposition has a history from Situationism on (Bourriaud, 2000).

The query running through the leaflet index, however, is concerned with the surface as such: that is, the surface as an illusion on par with perspective—the illusion of presence, within hand's reach, of

¹ Dillon, Sarah. (2007). The palimpsest: literature, criticism, theory. Bloomsbury academic.

remote items [i.e., items that are precisely removed from view and are out of hands' reach]. It is a topic raised by Georges Didi-Huberman from the vantage point of mark-making, based on analyses of Claudio Parmiggiani and Giuseppe Penone's works in smoke-print and sculpture respectively².

However, the specific errand of the query in the *leaflet index* is not locked to the analysis of specific art-works, but runs across a more generic domain that may be subsumed as broadly *cartographic*: that is, the aspect of surfaces that are *non-sites* (Robert Smithson) but nevertheless *spot on*. That is, an aspect of depth in surfaces (*thirdness*) that is neither locked to specific works nor to specific sites, but with a potential of hatching new sensorial and investigative repertoires in both.

There are many possible theoretical entrances to the topic—if our aim is to prompt queries within the experiential range [whether we are producers, receivers or conveyors of art]—of which the two principal ones are phenomenological and semiotic. For instance, when working with a deadline or an exhibition-date, work in process moves towards a *remote* end: however, at a certain point, a leap of faith has to be made, as the work is seen and gathered from the *proxemics* of the target-area *).

The only evidence we may have for the possibility of such a leap, is that we do it all the time. But, perhaps it is a child of necessity, we may also overlook it as an heuristic design. If seen from the vantage point of research, however, the turn to a *synoptic* view—in the target area—cannot be overlooked. Indeed, it may be crucial in establishing a viable critique of the discursive short-circuitry of the panopticon (Foucault). It is no small matter, but yet needs to be established on firm and humble ground.

An recent example of this in a course for first year MA students—Theory 2, Theory
Development—the class was asked to develop research portfolios to document their process during the 10-week course, with a target area in view where they were to submit an essay and a poster, besides the research portfolio itself. In preparation for the presentation of the research portfolios in class, they were asked to develop an overview, to summarise their work in the form of a map.



This exercise in 'extended cartography' the students had to place themselves in their own shoes as presenters before an audience: the MA1 class. The session took place in a learning theatre in which *viewing education* is an emergent outcome, for both the students and the teachers. A point in case for a learning arena in which research, mediation and teaching become integrated. This session took place on the backdrop of a long-tailed pandemic, Bruno Latour's body-cartographic musings.

² Didi-Huberman, Georges. (2001). Génie du non-lieu: air, poussière, empreinte, hantise. Minuit.

THE BODY-CARTOGRAPHIC SURFACE

"The art of the twentieth century is an art of *montage* (the succession of images) and *détourage* (the superimposition of images)"

Bourriaud, Nicolas. (2000, p.42). Postproduction. Lucas & Sternberg

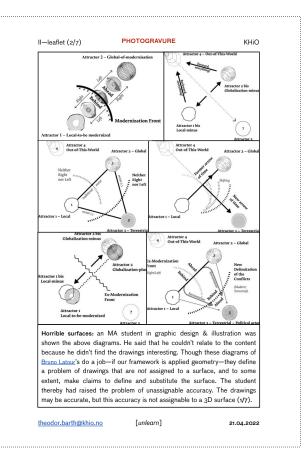
Body-cartography³ is here meant a turn of a certain type, that may be found in the *transition* from ritual *preparations* to ritual *performance*, such as the *Seder* ritual (Passover). The preparations is a race with time—not unlike deadlines in general—in which the home where the celebration will take place, is to be thoroughly cleansed from ferments. The deadline approaching—a leap of faith: whatever can be done has been done. The unfound ferments are then declared null and void.

At this point, a *change* in the sense of space occurs: the target-area is no longer lying ahead—as the receding horizon of an apparently endless toil—but we are standing in the *middle* of it: then starts a ritual performance, which is about *leaving*. Leaving duress and endless burden. Celebrating the freedom and leisure of considering toil and enslavement in hindsight. This carefully designed rear view, arguably features a turn in *perspective*, which does not lie in optical illusion but the *surface*.

A time-perspectival superposition of *struggle* and *hindsight*. In a text and on a table. Looking back being as much a part of the work as the preparations: the work of *reception*—to which we devote but meagre attention—as a specific mode, different from the work of *production*. It is with the *intuition* that any kind of overview is receptive, in this sense, that the cartographic surface is finely sculpted by "time-grooves". Readable in a performative mode that may launch a new pursuit at any moment.

The sequenced surface of a drawing—for instance—is likely productive of other sequences, along the same vein as Deleuze's analysis of Alice in Wonderland (1969). The logic of sense, where sensing and making sense reside in logical strings of a certain kind4: whether conceived in the terms of Ingold's lines (2007) or in the sense that our bodies too can somehow contained by such deep surfaces—Bruno Latour's invitation to redraw a terrestrial map, and his fable of Gregor Samza.

A curved space—or, deep surface—would appear to be the only way to populate planet earth if tethered to a terrestrial vantage point: in his cartographic proposition, Bruno Latour pictures humanity living within the thin strip of a *living artefact* extending ~3km of breathable air above and ~3km of symbiotic rock (with e.g. bacteria) below. By the scale of the 510.100.000km² earth surface, the area where we explore depths and



³ Bodycartography is a notion referred to dance as somatic practice (cf, Olive Bieringa and Otto Ramstad).

⁴ Fuller, Matthew & Weizman, Eyal. (2021). *Investigative aesthetics*. Verso.

heights is but thin varnish thick in comparison.

Essentially the surface is a transposition⁵ of *human condition*. Nevertheless, it appears that we cannot simply imagine this space—at which a clever attempt at acquiring it is made in *Down to earth* (Latour, 2018)—it has to be learned through an experience of constraints: such is Latour's scope in *After lockdown* (2021). Here, he elaborates the cartographic, in terms of what the body may have learned, during the pandemic: moving and living when our *habitat* was changed by the lockdown.

The habitat has changed, he writes—involving Kafka's *Metamorphosis* in what he calls a philosophical fable—in the sense of our living-in-the-world on terms where what is inside (interiors) and outside (the big open) have become implicated and entangled in such ways that they are *not really* separate. Reality becomes *layered* rather than structured and lined by borders. Borders may exist, but are nowhere readable in a univocal way. Human has metamorphosed into post-human⁶.

Hence the simile to Gregor Samza who has become physically altered into a huge insect-like creature: a beetle, a crustacean or crab. Monstrous we are, to be sure, both in the eyes of familiars and our own. A guarded secret, of sorts, revealed at odd moments—in unpredictable fits of anger or new tastes. Above all, moving differently: proceeding by sideways movements in a layered reality, in which the *separation* between nature and culture, of yore, *no longer* exists. Not convincingly.

When Latour ties this change to the lockdown and the long tail of the pandemic, it is at a certain risk. The environmental sensitivities developed during the lockdown—featuring UN reports on climate-damage and the broader questions of sustainability in a world affected by a multiplication of crises—may be lived in denial, as the pandemic is over. The world we are returning to has changed, after two years of seclusion: we are not going back to work by the simple turn of a power-switch.

The protocols that made the world tick—especially in the area of transportation, logistics and public services—has built up a huge *lag*. And this is likely a material we have to work with in years to come. The phenomenal world—of which Latour is making a case in point—therefore might deserve a broader elaboration, and be seated in questions of method, which have already been simmering for quite some time. Pointing, in the first rank, to an ethnographic level of reference.

E.g. Arnd Schneider's book *Expended visions:* a new anthropology of the moving image (2021). Though parts of the book relates to motion pictures, it is not primarily concerned with sequences of images, in the sense of montage, but with highjacking (détournement): or, the technical level of it, which Nicolas Bourriaud (2000) conceived as *détourage*. A movement across frames in which pictorial elements are robbed of their background, to appear somewhere else reconfigured/recomposed.

The book is rich in photo-prints and contains an array of different examples to scope this trope of layered surfaces, that do not draw on optical illusion as much as on *fiction*: it involves a particular kind of staging—whether it is designed or spontaneous—by which he *unity* of time, place and agency is disrupted; time and place are multiplied, agency is dislocated but entangled in such a way that the viewer cannot know whether, or the extent to which, s/he is implicated, or not.

⁵ Barth, Theodor. (2019). Review of Michael Schwab (ed.), *Transpositions. Aesthetico-Epistemic Operators in Artistic Research.* https://doi.org/10.22501/jarnet.0020

⁶ Braidotti, Rosi. (2013). The Posthuman. Polity press.

Classic no. 1915 (Youngsoek Oh, 2010) is one example. Here an image is moving from one picture frame to another: from a video frame projected on the wall, to a picture frame showing elements of the first frame in an exhibition space. The shoes, table and items disposed on it are the same. But the paintings, poster and artist are gone. Inside the video-projection there is a third frame: a mirror that possibly holds key to the superposition of the two other frames (and their entanglement).

We do not know whether the model (painter Egon Schiele) has just left, or is about to arrive. For this reason there is no sequencing of the two picture frames on a time-line (as in montage). What is obtained—in exchange of this indeterminacy/ uncertainty—is that by untying from the timeline, a mirror is established between the two frames: in the case of Yonsoek Oh's piece, a concrete mirror added as a *third* frame (and collapsed within the same surface, which is the photo-print in display).



The example not only features layers within a surface, theorised by Bruno Latour (above), but also provides us with a *cartographic end*, to which the *odd couple* artist-and-anthropologist may give some *edge*. Since what appears by a methodological superposition of artist-and-anthropologist—here, taken as *co-learners*—jointly yield a particular kind of co-generative research, from which they may reap different harvests taken away on the lopsided escape-routes that make up the relationship.

If artistic research is conceived as research *though* art-practices—through art-work, in the sense of both artistic process and artistic outcome—then another kind of *participatory* research, can be conceived as research *with* art-practices: which is a kind of research that anthropologists can do (of which Arnd Schneider himself is clearly an example), but also the growing research based on Tim Ingold's invitation to know by *making*⁷: an invitation extended to a broader scope of education.

Educated an anthropologist, I have entered the early steps of apprenticeship of *photogravure*⁸. The title of the ensuing first print-edition is *The diary-master*. She left 71 diaries to me from her life as a diplomat's wife. The photogravure process—owing to the time-consuming detail of the technique and the work of time—yields a *sensorial* wealth, where the diaries are trimmed by a day-to-day *protocol*. A method expanded reading with the effect of making the senses receptive to the material.

It is a method also used on experimental archaeology⁹. And in Ingold's making is not only productive but features what has been proposed earlier as the work of reception, for which he not only claims a

⁷ Ingold, Tim. (2015). *Making: anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. Routledge.

⁸ I am learning with Enrique Guadarrama Solis under Prof. Jan Pettersson's supervision.

⁹ Gheorghiu, Dragos & Barth, Theodor. (2019). Artistic practices and archaeological research. Archaeopress.

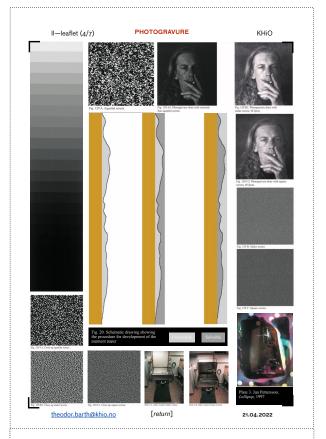
relevance in archaeology and anthropology but also, on an equal footing, in art and architecture. Doing research with and through both provide alternatives to research on art (i.e., what Sarat Maharaj has called art-research); and feature a sub-category of what Ingold calls con-commoning¹⁰.

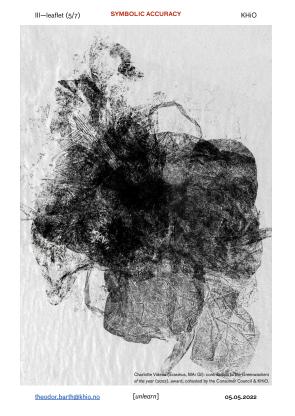
That is, learning to live and work with *sustainable difference*—as a broader notion—as the key and fabric of *learning together*. The possibility of taking interest in the *other*, without the effect of colonising the other. Avoiding emulation, substitution and erasure as the main trope of what we understand and practice as *representation*. The artist-anthropologist relation is taken on here as a *litmus*-test of a number of other relations: the colonised and the coloniser... the colonised *colonised* as a coloniser.

An antidote to taking interest as *taking* may therefore be needed. And this antidote is *inter alia* an expanded and critically reconsidered notion of *reference*: that is, reference as distinct from representation. Hence the contraption of the moving image (*détourage*) could—if used as model—yield a experimentarium of references that are developed according to a certain syntax: both in the sense of extending e.g. the APA-style to referencing¹¹, but also the terms of <u>usership</u>.

That is, a clarification of how references are set: rather than flagging a reading, keeping track of references as marks that come in *sideways* and pose tracking-challenge because—on that account—they are *margin-notes* on the beaten track of the *main* trail. In this sense, references spin off from *moving* and add a sense of the journey (and its findings). It is a sense of theory that Thompson¹² rethought in terms of the Ancient Greek sense of *theoria*: the solitary journey to the *other*, hosted by a *commons*.

Alongside the meandering query, an avalanche of findings. This adjacency is what is claimed and held





¹⁰ Ingold, Tim. (2022). Keynote at *Reclaiming sustainability? A conversation on education and our environmental futures*. Oslo School of Environmental Humanities.

¹¹ Barth, Theodor. (2022). "Wheeling" environmental humanities— Educating designers in excess of what designers do. Lunchtime discussions. March 9th, Oslo School of Environmental Humanities. University of Oslo.

¹² Thompson, Chris. (2011). Felt—Fluxus, Joseph Beuys and the Dalai Lama. University of Minnesota Press.

by a practice of referencing that does not take as takes interest, but rather in the form of a yield that is shared. It cannot be claimed as long as it comes in sideways, as different kind of series: where the narrative of journeying is a *sequence*, the findings accumulate as a *con-sequence*. The same idea as the relation between text and context. But expanded to what is seen, heard, sensed.

the mean-time index-

"Similar connections are examined in Bjørn Blikstad's work on on Tilman Riemenschneider's woodparent sculpture of Mary Magdalen in Münnerstadt. Except that this example does not lend itself to any known representation in our time (cf, historical provincialism [...]). We are left with the detail. And for this reason, Blikstad's own work stands as a critique of time-local representation."

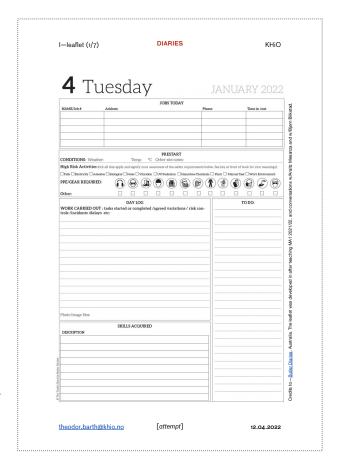
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Meantime index—Leaflet IV (4/7)

The <u>mean-time index</u> presented here is a proposition to this effect: that is, to re-effect *referencing* as an alternative to representation (with the dual optics evoked by Walter Benjamin in the epigraph). For one, the index points to an archive of flyer-sheets produced in sets during the pandemic (49 sets of 6), made and published on <u>KHiO's knowledge data-base</u>. At the same time the index takes the leap to a cartographic take on on the journey: process embodied from the position of *arrival*.

This pandemic archive was initiated as a diary of an internal journey during the lockdown: not a private diary but one that kept track of time by the means of work, as an hourglass of educational labour in a state of exception (Agamben, 2005) prone to forgetfulness: an attempt to resist a post-pandemic erasure of the lockdown, and its further denial by representations that would substitute the experience from the period with an hindsight emulation of it: resist the effects of isolation, and post-amnesia.

The archive came in the wake of 22 weekly zoommeetings devoted to diary-practices with two former MA students in design: Martin Asbjørnsen and Katarina Caspersen. The interest with *deep surfaces* came of that process, as well as ulterior experiences of remote research and zoomconferencing¹⁴. What came out of this period was a sense of the iPAD as a deep surface that could be *docked*, *tangled* and *superposed* to other surfaces. Before the stereoscopic interceptions of *space*.



¹³ Blikstad, Bjørn. (2022). *Peacock Cabinet. Mary Magdalene From Feathers To Fur To Flesh: Painting a woodparent cabinet red.* KHiO.

¹⁴ The chief experience of remote-research and -conferencing was at two occasions with the National Library's dpt. of conservation and media, in connection with the seminar series 112 (named after the Norwegian Constitution's environmental paragraph). One devoted to the visual analysis of a collection of drawings: a <u>geological travelogue</u> (1820), the other an extrapolation of this analysis unto an attempt of understanding images on a backdrop of <u>geological time</u>.

From this work the possibility of reflecting matters of care in terms of thinking with, dissenting within and thinking for—in terms selected by Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, location 372)—can eschew the evident dangers of representation inherent in this proposition: the possibility of a practice and understanding of referencing that includes the gap, as part of the life amongst entities brought together in difference. Which is the sense attached to Benjamin's reflections on the index here.

Let us not forget that Walter Benjamin's entries in the envelopes of his *Arcades project*, were all of the form and syntax fleshed out in the epigraph. Indexing, as it were, the *archive* of the Bibliothèque Nationale *and* the *city* of Paris in two different optics that never would correspond completely, and instead feature the gap that makes détourage a *particular* exception to montage, but likely a particularly *important* one. Because it features the toil of *anamnesia*: remembrances and its cares.

In Susan Buck Morss' study of the 'arcades project'—the *Dialectical image* (1991)—she cuts the mooring to the idea that the envelopes collected by Georges Bataille to edit this book, would have ultimately led to the kinds of comprehensive concentrates that we see in Benjamin's other works—where writing is *alloyed* to image, as minutely polished mirror—but instead considered the arcades project as a work that was as complete as it would ever get: that is, in its own right.

This is the gist of why the index is proposed as form of publication here. And also the precisation of the index in mean time: between *remote-* and *proximal* time. Since perhaps the greatest gain from staying with a *troubled surface—* as has been attempted here—is the gain of depth in time, rather than in space (or, lumpish territories): *timescapes*. This is also why the index is developed on the backdrop of Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*: a notion of the *panel* as the penultimate *deep surface*.

If anything has been achieved at the end of the present query, the sense in which the *deep surface* is else than a projected representation of spatiotemporal relations, it is a vehicle of reference to the fact least obvious to us: that we are *not* over it, nor on it, but somehow *in* it. There is a depth to the surface because it is *immersive*. The illusion of the surface—which is on par with perspective—is the vehicle of timescapes that can be marked. A fictional depth that will be marked by the real.

Bruno Latour tails his epistemology of the terrestrial (2018) with a post-pandemic ontology (2021). It is an exercise beyond mentation and locked to changes in terrestrial conditions, which unavoidably includes human beings. Psychological turmoil—even psychosis in Aby Warburg's case history—is then no longer explained by domestic violence and personal shortcomings, but rather appear to be part of the *work* of change. In Aby Warburg's work with



Mnemosyne this is particularly evident¹⁵.

Index description—the leaflets are sized A5, two sided. Recto: image element. Verso: 9 paragraphs of 5 lines each. Font: Bau 9pt. The leaflets come in series of 7. The leaflets are annotated with a keyword for each series, the date the insert, and phase descriptor. There are correspondingly 7 phases: 1/7) attempt; 2/7) try again; 3/7) do something else; 4/7) return; 5/7) unlearn; 6/7) crossover; 7/7) datum. The leaflet-index is stipulated for 7 series. That is, 7 x 7 leaflets¹⁶.

*

*) The semiotic dimension is a bit technical. If we extend the definition of a mirror to operate between terms that in a relation such that they arrive at the same spot through different itineraries and techno-operational means, then the resulting category of sign will mirror two synecdoches: 1) synecdoche 1 is created from a sample of the process; 2) synecdoche 2 is created from a sample from the target area. Together they form a metalepsis by which the superposition of contents also leads to their entanglement and their intra-action (affective changes in subject-object relationship).

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"I use this term to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today. Eventually I will use the term to reconsider the models of community that many of us rely on in teaching and theorizing and that are under challenge today."

Mary Louise Pratt (1999, p.519)

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¹⁵ Cf, Barth, Theodor. (2022). <u>#14/1 Lineup</u>. Artistic Research Week. KHiO

¹⁶ Precedent: the *flyer*-archive. The flyer archive is defined, explained and applied in Pettersson, Jan. (2017). *Printmaking in the expanded field—A pocketbook for the future*. KHiO.

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