# Materialism

Materialism and Materialities

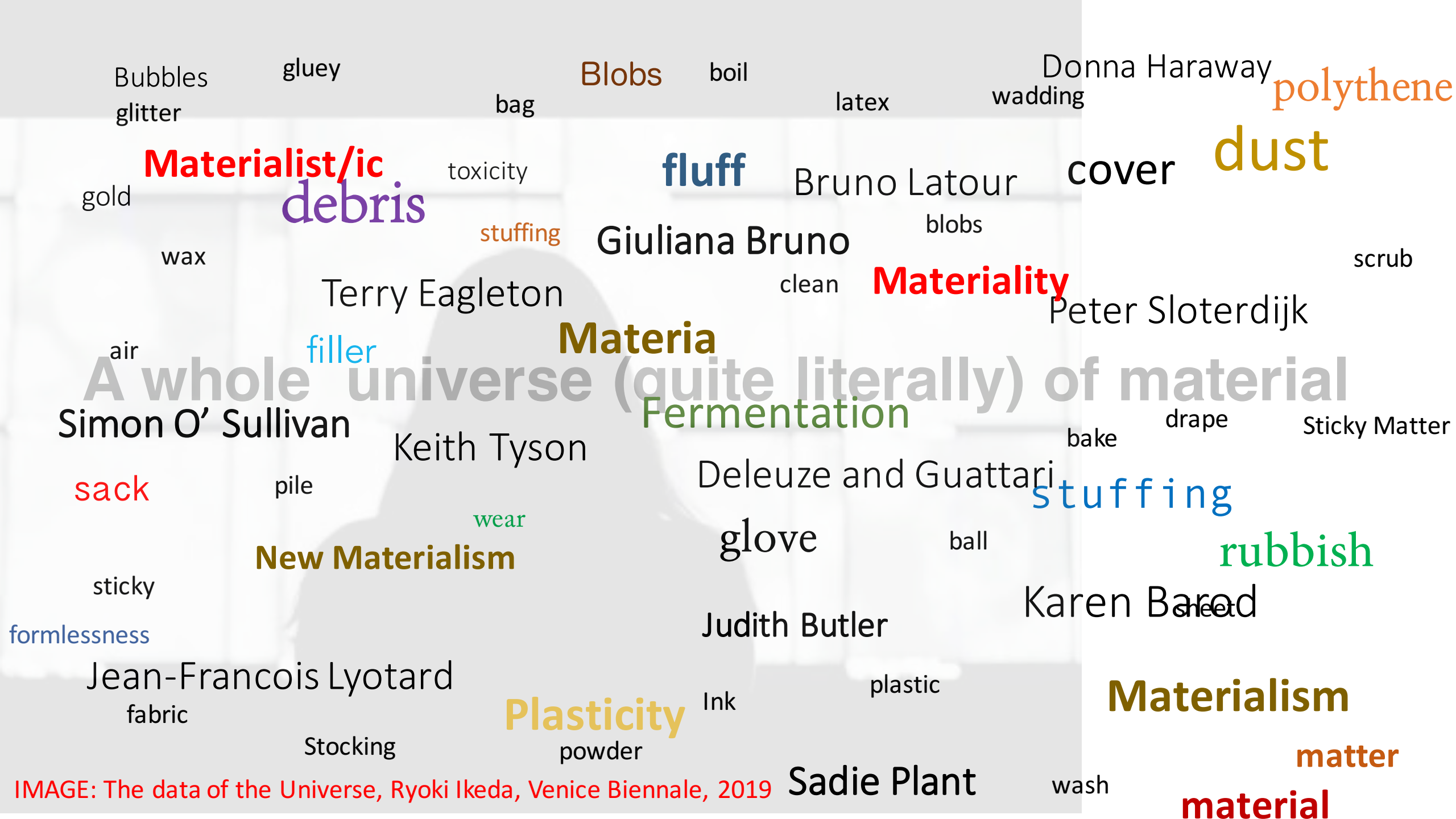



IMAGE: The data of the Universe, Ryoki Ikeda, Venice Biennale, 2019

# The Return of Materialism

The past two decades in contemporary philosophy have been marked by **a turn toward materialism**, taking place after a long period of dominance by **phenomenology, hermeneutics, and the logical analysis of language**. As a result of this turn, the old debate between **idealism and materialism** has become history: it is as if **idealism** has completely vanished and everyone has become a **materialist.** But this debate between **idealism and materialism** has not been abolished, but has merely relocated to within materialism itself. This new debate has, first and foremost**, two materialist philosophies** as its participants**: materialist dialectic and neovitalism (new materliasm).**




School of Athens (158-1511), Raphael

# Idealism vs Materialism

## Idealism

**Idealism** is a philosophy that is credited to **Plato**. The central feature of this philosophy is the assertion that reality is nothing but what is constructed by our mind for us. **Idealism** accords prime importance to human consciousness and makes it clear that it is a make believe world and reality is what our mind makes us believe. To understand the cause and effect relationship between sociological events, the state of mind of the people in the society is the best tool in hand according to idealism. It is the premise of an idealist that the human mind precedes everything else, including matter or materialism, when one starts to think about sociological process and events.

## Materialism

**Lucretius**, was of the view that matter that made up everything in the universe was of prime importance and that matter shaped not just human beings but even their consciousness and thought processes. Materialism can be traced back to as old as 5th century BC when philosophers like **Leucippus and Democritus** believed that everything happened because of necessity, and there was nothing by chance. Even the sensations and emotions of human beings are a result of atoms impinging upon each other. However, even materialists concede that humans have a free will and always seek happiness (which remains the primary goal of all of us).

Materialism — it is the material world that begets the immaterial world

Idealism — it is the immaterial world that begets the material world

# materialism

## English

(wikipedia materialism)

### Noun

- Constant concern over material possessions and wealth; a great or excessive regard for worldly concerns.
- * Buckminster

The irregular fears of a future state had been supplanted by the **materialism** of Epicurus.

- (philosophy) The philosophical belief that nothing exists beyond what is physical.
- (obsolete, rare) Material substances in the aggregate; matter.

### Synonyms

* (philosophy) physicalism * (philosophy) philosophical materialism

### Antonyms

* (philosophy) idealism

# materiality

## English

### Noun

(materialities)

- The quality of being material; having a physical existence.
- (legal) The quality of being of consequence to a legal decision.

### Antonyms

*immateriality *ethereality

**As nouns the difference between materiality and materialism** is that **materiality** is the quality of being material; having a physical existence while **materialism** is constant concern over material possessions and wealth; a great or excessive regard for worldly concerns.

# Materialistic ?

“Advertising has us chasing cars and clothes, working jobs we hate so we can buy shit we don’t need.”

Tyler Durden, Fight Club (1999), Chuck Palahniuk

“It is the preoccupation with possessions, more than anything else, that prevents us from living freely and nobly.”

Bertrand Russell

# Materialism

Materialism is a philosophical view of being (ontology) that says Matter is the fundamental substance of the cosmos, and everything, including consciousness and spirituality, is (a product of this) Matter.

The advance of science has modified notions of what Matter really is. Albert Einstein showed **matter and energy are inter-convertible** with his famous formula e=mc2. Matter, in all its various forms, is energy.

**This is in opposition to the Idealist position** that says a person's **Ideas or Concepts** are the only phenomenon that person can be certain of – the perception of a Material world may be a dream.

When rationalism brought Enlightenment to the West, **Descartes and Kant described the perspective of Idealism**, which sees the material world as a phenomenon of consciousness. But **Spinoza rejected this 'idealist' position, instead describing the cosmos as consisted of only 'one single substance which possesses both the attribute of thought and the attribute of extension. The mind and body … do not belong in different worlds … they are inseparable.'**

There are a variety of outcomes to Materialism as a perspective. In popular use, 'materialist' refers to a person who values material possessions highly, eg compared to environmentalism or spirituality.

**Materialism is also the basis for Empiricism,** the epistemology behind science, which requires that all knowledge must be proved by repeatable observation of the material world, that can be validated by others.

**immanence**

# Dialectic Materliasm

**Karl Marx's the dialectical method developed by Hegel to analyse history from a Materialist perspective.** He argued that material conditions determine human action, human labour modifies the world, accumulation of property defines social relations, leads to the inequalities of capitalism, and to inevitable revolution, when the history of competitive struggle would end and a utopian socialism would dawn.

The Materialist perspective allowed Marx to reject the Idealist notion of a natural order of transcendent spirit, God, monarchy, aristocracy and the class system.

But Materialism does not necessarily lead to socialist utopia. History showed a different outcome, when the Marxist government of the Soviet Union collapsed and many people accepted benevolent free market capitalism (known as neo-liberalism) as the only workable economic system.

## HEGEL

Mind over Matter

idealism materialism

## MARX

Matter over Mind

dialectical materliasm

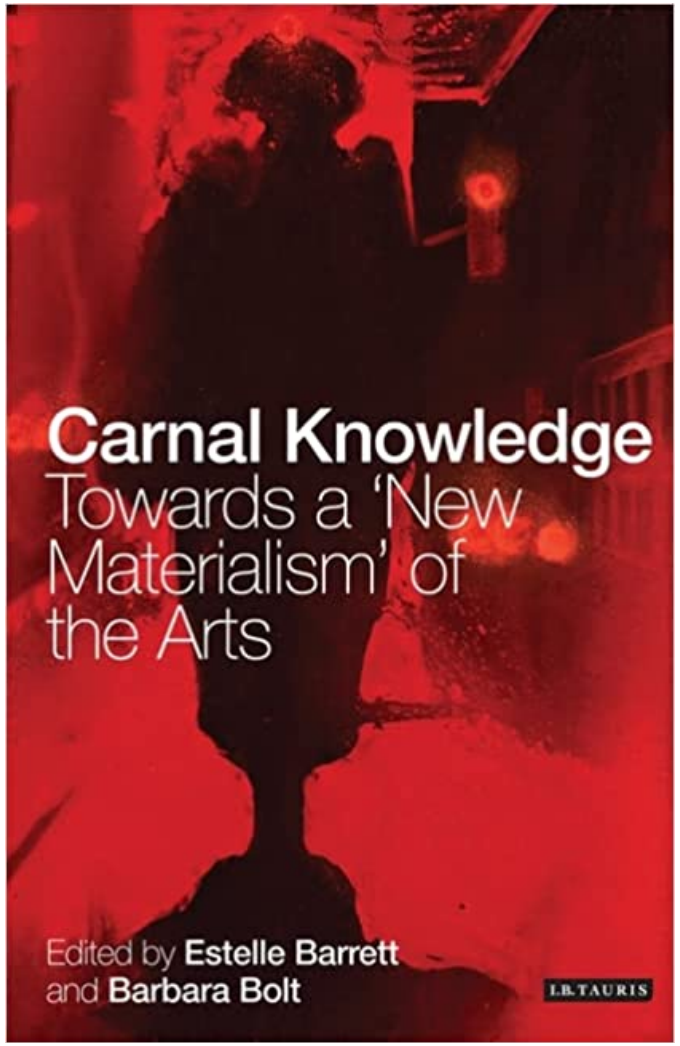
# "truth to materials”

What then are the stakes for **art** in invoking the **material turn**?

In the 1980s and 1990s the influence of cultural theory spread beyond the boundaries of social and political theories and came to infect the arts and **leach "matter" out of art.** However, this influence needs to be understood within the context of the history of **modernism**, its assumptions and the fact that artistic relationship embodies a **materialist dialectic.**

Whilst each artistic form has a unique relation to the matter of things, the humanist view of relationship of matter to form was codified in modernism's notion **"truth to materials".**

The framing of art as a "cultural production". Art like identity was no longer a given, but was produced through social discursive practices. Thus, through the colonization of the arts by cultural theory, arts' very materiality has disappeared into the textual, the linguistic and the discursive. According to this conception, art is constructed in and through language. There is nothing outside of discourse and language is its vehicle.

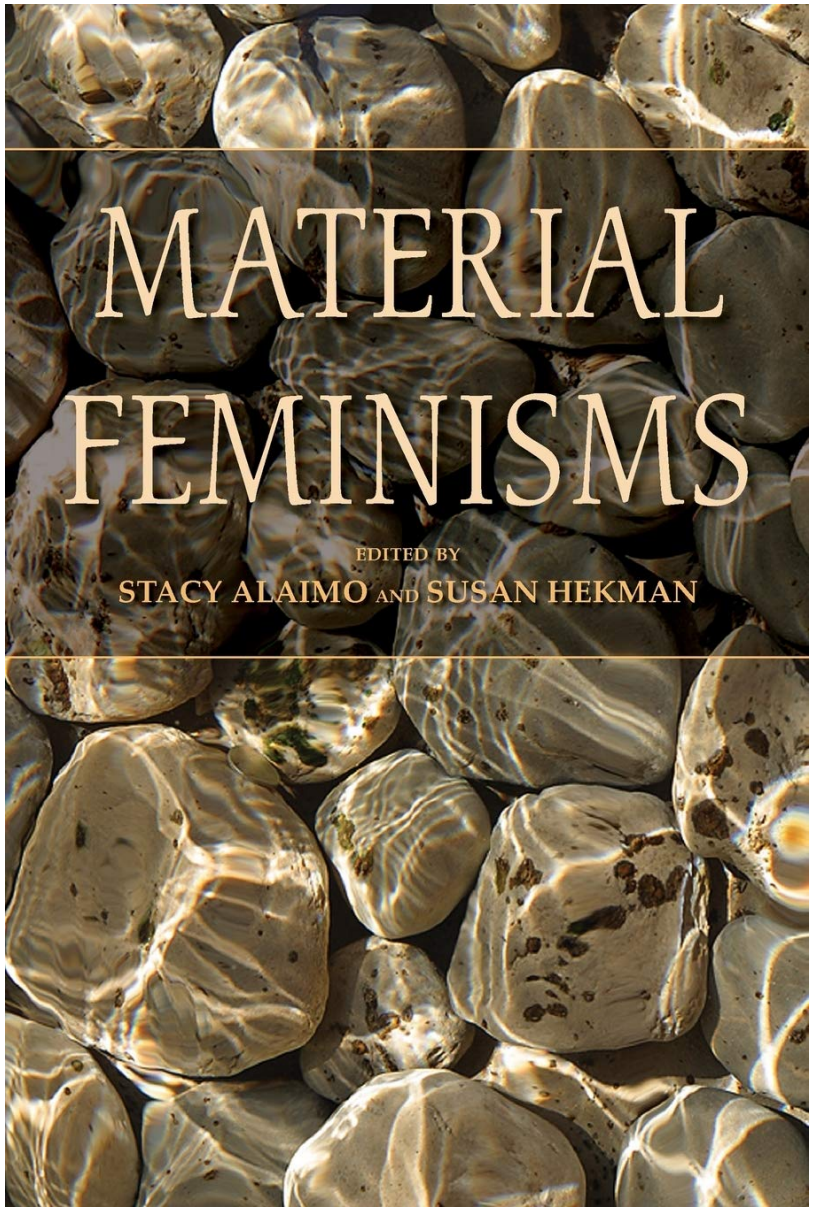



Whilst **materialist feminist theory** has struggled to **disentangle matter from discourses on matter**, it may be argued **that art is a material practice and that materiality of matter lies at the core of creative practice.**

# Material Feminisms

"to bring the material, specifically the materiality of the human body and the natural world, into the forefront of feminist theory and practice" **(Alaimo and Hekman 2008: 1)**

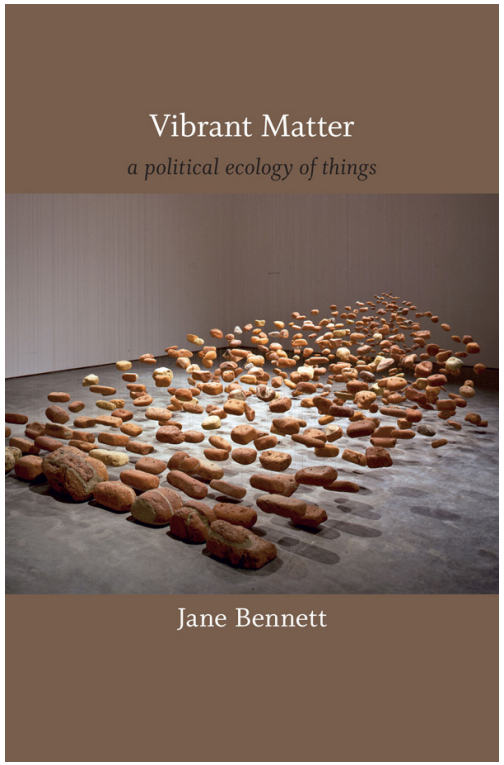
In the humanities and social sciences, particularly in feminist theory, the new materialism involved a reaction against the cultural turn that defined cultural and political theory in the late twentieth century. Exponents of the new materialism argue that where social constructivist theories thrive, matter becomes mute. New materialism aims to return to matter, the vivacity denied by social constructivist theories that posit all social processes and, indeed reality itself, as socially and ideologically constituted



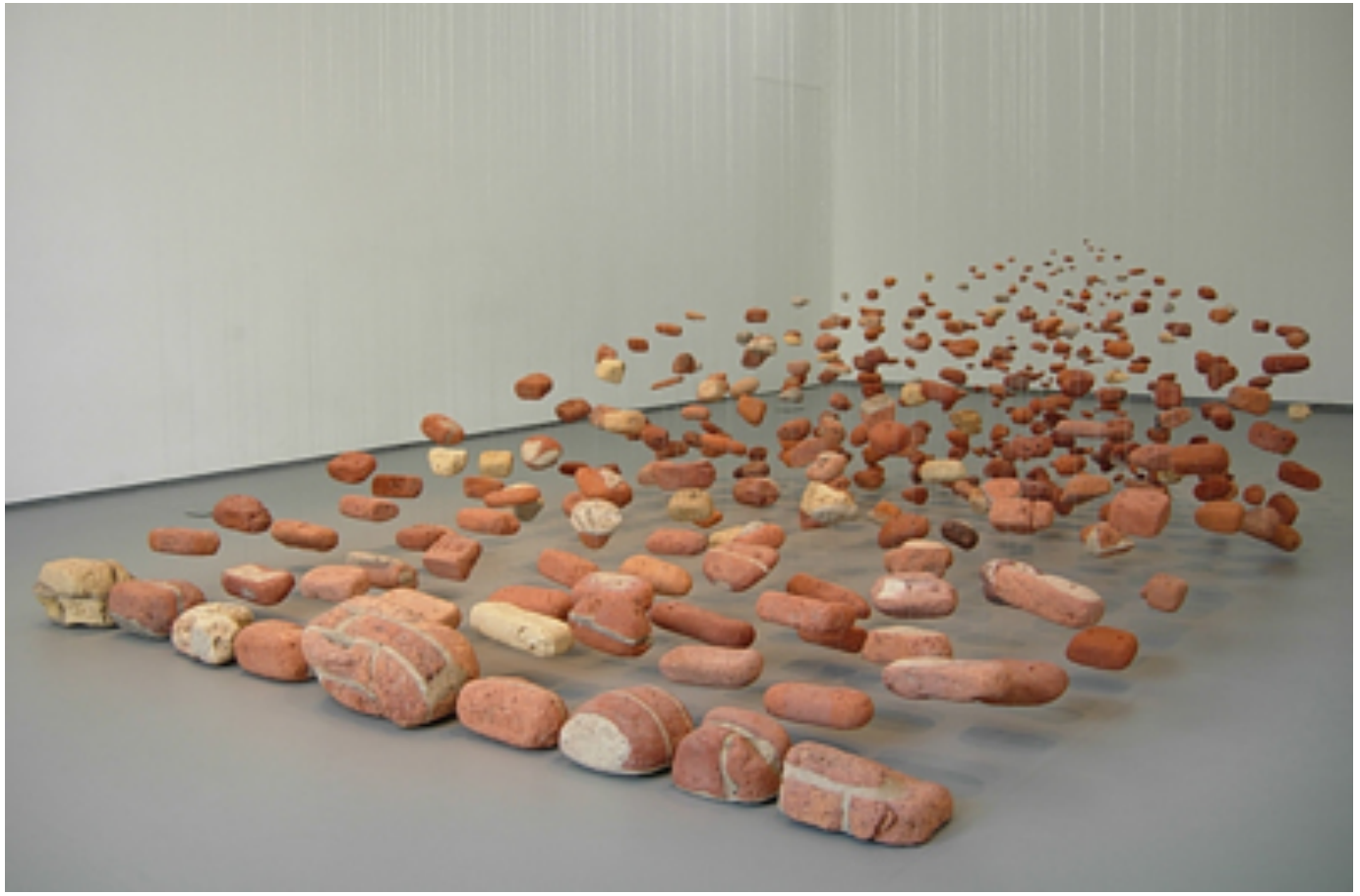
**The "I" of new materialism is no longer the sovereign human subject,** but is conceived of as a material-semiotic actor, an articulation that, according to **Donna Haraway (1991)** encompasses the human and the non-human, the social and physical, and the material and immaterial. **Susan Hekman**, drawing on **Andrew Pickering's notion of the mangle**, proposes that "the 'I' is a mangle composed of multiple elements" **(Hekman 2010: 100).**

This reconfiguration of human/non-human relationships has emerged around a vital materiality where it is not just humans who do things **(Bennett 2010).** In these new configurations the material and the discursive **mingle and mangle.**

# New Materialism




"Vibrant Matter"

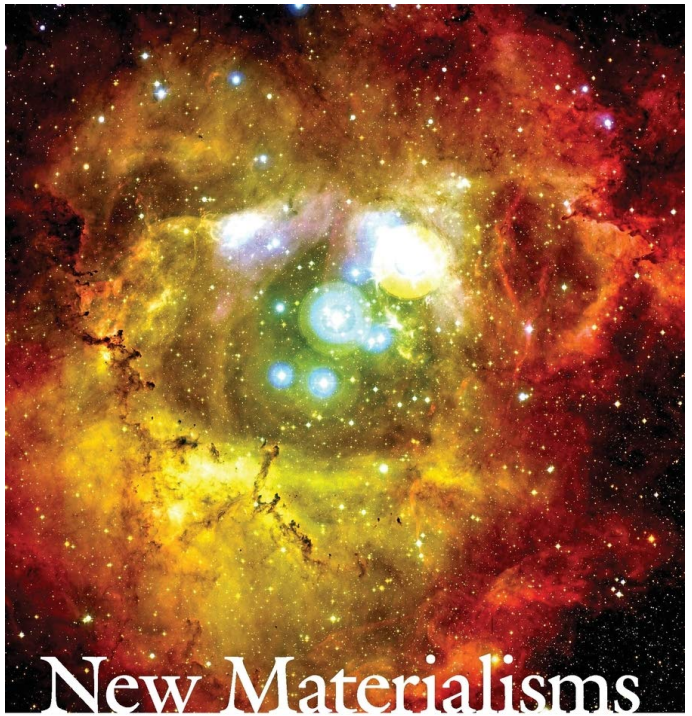


Neither From Nor Towards (1992) – Cornelia Parker

**New Materialism** is an emerging trend in 21st century thought in several fields of inquiry, including philosophy, cultural theory, feminism, science studies, and the visual arts.

*For materiality is always something more than "mere" matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable. In sum, new materialists are rediscovering a materiality that materializes, evincing immanent modes of self-transformation that compel us to think of causation in far more complex terms; to recognize that phenomena are caught in a multitude of interlocking systems and focus and to consider anew the location and nature of capacities for agency.*

Diana Coole and Samantha Frost



## New Materialism




## 'How matter comes to matter'



The increasing prominence of “new materialism” signals a growing cross-disciplinary effort to challenge longstanding assumptions about humans and the non- or other-than- human material world.

The terms **transversal, transversally, and transversality** are repeatedly emphasized in **Rick Dolphijn and Iris Van der Tuin's *New Materialisms: Interviews and Cartographies* (2012)** regarding different aspects.

**In the first place**, this theoretical approach dismantles the **Cartesian dualism of mind and body**. This cultural theory…

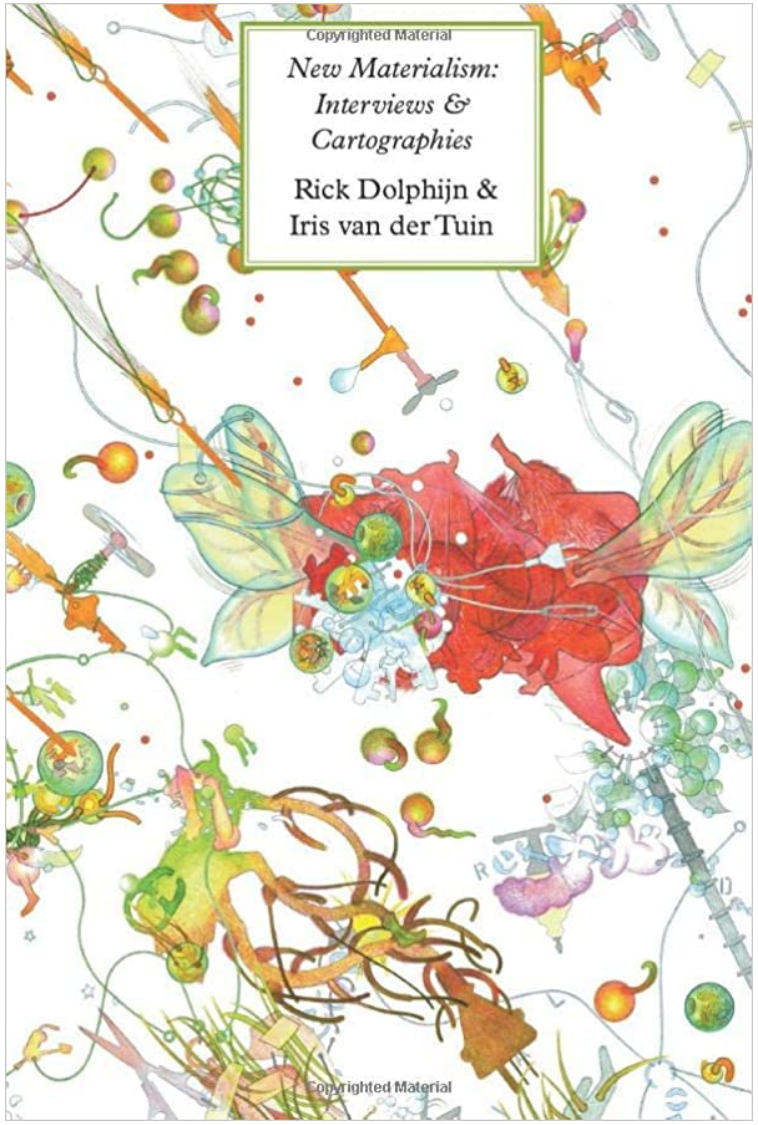
*Does not privilege matter over meaning or culture over nature. It explores a monist perspective, devoid of the dualisms that have dominated the humanities (and sciences) until today, by giving special attention to matter, which has been so neglected by dualist thought. Cartesian dualism, after all, has favored mind.*



The terms **transversal, transversally, and transversality** are repeatedly emphasized in **Rick Dolphijn and Iris Van der Tuin's *New Materialisms: Interviews and Cartographies* (2012)** regarding different aspects.

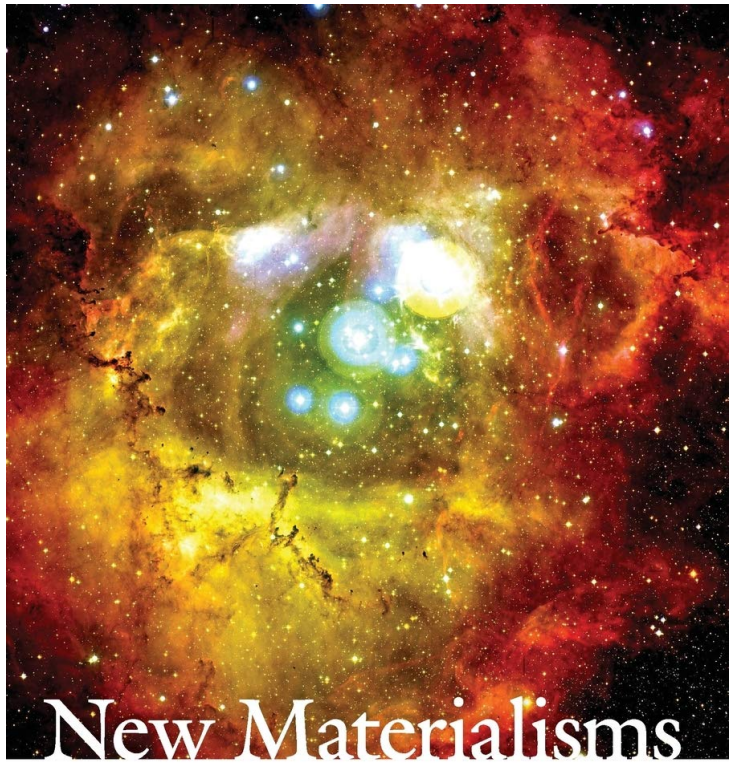
**In second place, the transversality of New Materialism** is also proposed as a "shift" from the…

*Dualist gesture of prioritizing mind over matter, soul over body, and culture over nature that can be found in modernist as well as post-modernist cultural theories. […] In other words: a new materialism is constituted by demonstrating how the canonized relations between the aforementioned terms are in fact the outcomes of "power/knowledge" according to which Truth is an instantiation of a politics or régime, as Michel Foucault (1980) would have it.*



Particularly remarkable **Diana Coole and Samantha Frost'** statements at the core of the theories around the New Materialisms:

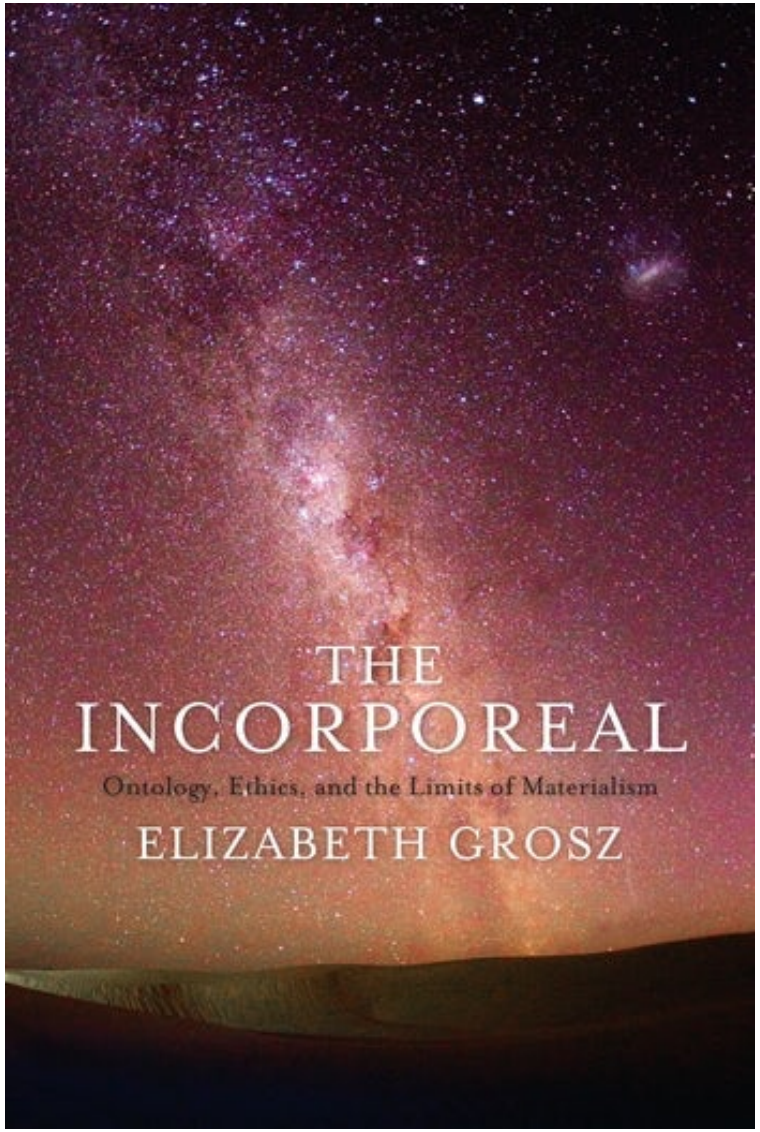
*As critically engaged theorists, we find ourselves compelled to explore the significance of complex issues such as climate change of global capital and population flows, the biotechnological engineering of genetically modified organisms, or the saturation of our intimate and physical lives by digital, wireless, and virtual technologies. From our understanding of the boundary between life and death and our everyday work practices to the way we feed ourselves and recreate or procreate, we are finding our environment materially and conceptually reconstituted in ways that pose profound and unprecedented normative questions. In addressing them we unavoidably find ourselves having to think in new ways about the nature of matter and the matter of nature; about the elements of life, the resilience of the planet, and the distinction of the human.*



# The Incorporeal

Philosophy has inherited a powerful impulse to embrace either dualism or a reductive monism—either a radical separation of mind and body or the reduction of mind to body. But from its origins in the writings of the **Stoics**, the first thoroughgoing materialists, another view has acknowledged that no forms of materialism can be completely self-inclusive—space, time, the void, and sense are the incorporeal conditions of all that is corporeal or material.

In *The Incorporeal* Elizabeth Grosz argues that **the ideal is inherent in the material and the material in the ideal,** and, by tracing its development over time, she makes the case that this same idea reasserts itself in different intellectual contexts. Grosz shows that not only are **idealism and materialism** inextricably linked but that this "belonging together" of the entirety of ideality and the entirety of materiality is not mediated or created by human consciousness. Instead, it is an ontological condition for the development of human consciousness. Grosz draws from Spinoza's material and ideal concept of substance, Nietzsche's *amor fati*, Deleuze and Guattari's plane of immanence…



# Karen Barad
## Meeting the Universe Halfway

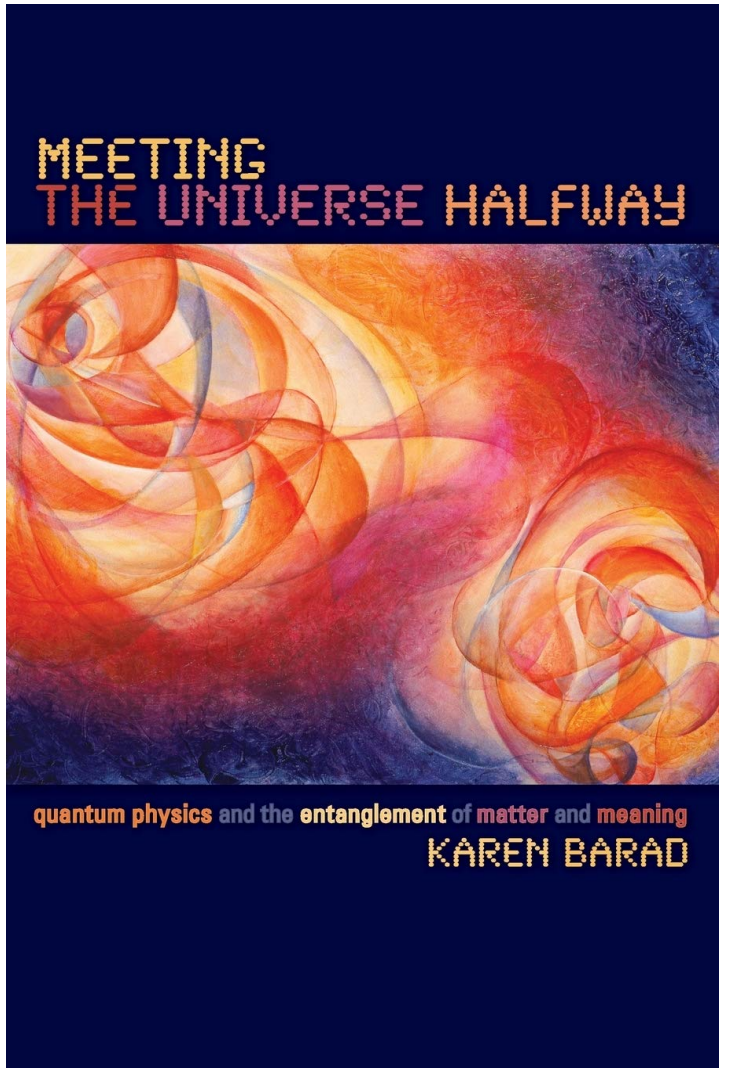
Entanglements that Matter

Diffractions and Differences

**Agential Realism**

“The very nature of materiality is an entanglement…”

“Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers”



# Brittle Star

## the nonhuman turn

emerging philosophies seeking to decentre the human – emphasising the agency of the nonhuman world

The brittlestar is an animal without a brain. It does not suffer the Cartesian doubts of an alleged mind/body split. Knowing is entangled with its mode of being.Brittlestars don't *have* eyes. They *are* eyes.

That is, it is not merely the case that its visual system is embodied. Its very being is a visualizing apparatus. Its morphology – its intertwined skeletal and diffuse nervous systems, its very structure and form – forms a visualizing system.



Brittle Star (ophiura ophiura)

Living in……




……a(n) (i)mmaterial World

# Materiality...

...is one of the most contested concepts in contemporary art and is often sidelined in critical academic writing.

(Petra Lange Berndt, Introduction//How to be complicit with Materials, Materiality, Documents of Contemporary Art, 2015:12)

# Materiality and the body

The classical association of feminity with materiality can be traced to a set of etymologies which link matter with ***mater*** and ***matrix*** (or the womb) and, hence, with a problematic of reproduction.
(Butler: 1993)



Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010) Do not abandon me, 1999

To be material means to materialize, where the principle of that materialization is precisely what ‘matters’ about that body, its very intelligibility. In this sense, to know the significance of something is to know how and why it matters, where ‘to matter’ means at once ’to ‘materialize’ and ‘to mean.

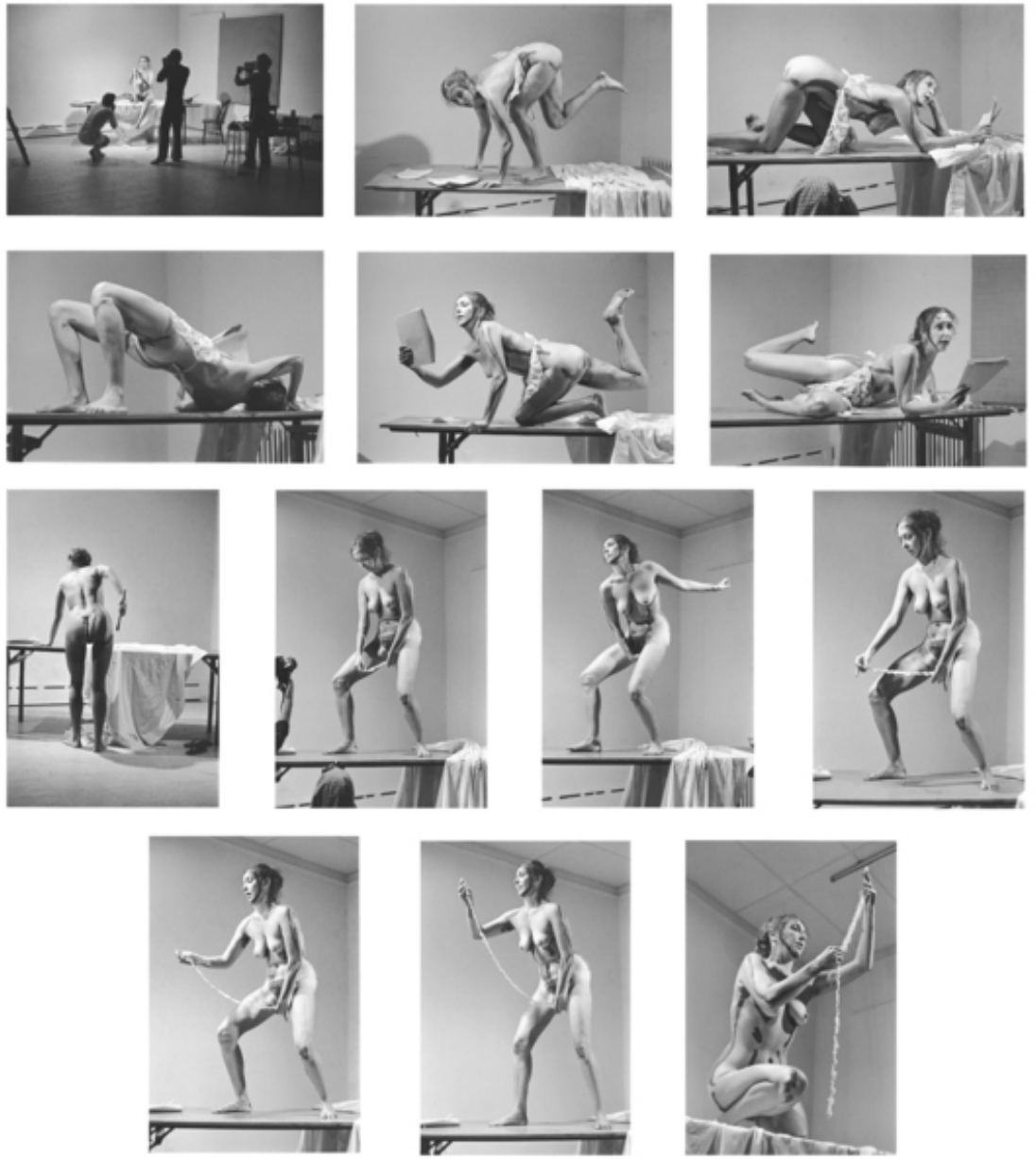
(Judith Butler, Extracts form Bodies that matter, 1993: 121-23 Materilaity)

*Schneemann then slowly extracted a scroll from her vagina and read a text that was a response to criticism from a male artist accusing her of making messy, female work.*

***Carolee Schneemann,*** Interior Scroll, 1975

*Suite of 13 gelatin silver prints on fiber paper, each mounted on museum board, colophon page, in clothbound clamshell case, 149.9 × 121.9 cm*

https://m.theartstory.org/movement/body-art/history-and-concepts/



*Materia* in Latin denotes the stuff out of which things are made, not only the timber for houses and ships but whatever serves as nourishment for infants:nutrients that act as extensions of the mothers body (Butler: 1993)



Sarah Lucas, Self Portrait with fried Eggs, 1996

# Abjection



For **Kristeva**, Abjection “disturbs identity, system, order” (1982:4), “separating out the human from the non-human and the fully constituted subject from the partially formed subject” (Creed 1993:8).

Artists associated with the abject, include Sarah Lucas, Louise Bourgeois and Carolee Schneemann.

**Rudolf Schwarzkogler** (shown left) and **Ttsumi Hijiakata** are two male artists who have also been identified as contributing to **Abject Modernism**. They (and others) use their own bodies as a testing ground to perform painful, violent, sadistic and brutal procedures.

# Body Without Organs

In their co-authored philosophy books ***Anti- Oedipus* (1972)** and ***A Thousand Plateaus*** (1980, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari propose **Antonin Artaud's Body without Organs** as a concept to critique western Enlightenment forms of autonomous subjectivity. (Patricia Pisters: 74, Posthuman Glossary)

When you will have made him a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions
and restored him to his true freedom.

They you will teach him again to dance wrong side out
as in the frenzy of dance halls
and this wrong side out will be his real place.

Antonin Artaud, *To Have Done With the Judgement of God*, 1947



https://www.ochigallery.com/exhibition/body-without-organs/

# Bodies that/with Matter

- Inert Bodies - NAP in Smithsonian Museum Collection Body without organs (Deleuze and Gauttari)
- Abject Bodies – Sarah Lucas, Rudolf Schwarzkogler
- Soft(ish) Bodies – Mari Katayama,
- Louise Bourgeois, Mark Quinn
- Uncanny Bodies – Frida Kahlo and Prosthetics. Judith Clarke _ Spectres, when Fashion Looks back' and The Concise Dictionary of Dress (Images either side).
- Technological bodies –Ghislaine Boddington (body>data>space), Anna Dumitriu, Laura Dekker, Julie Freeman, Kate Genevieve
- Cyber bodies - Kate Cooper, Rachel and Gaga

Frida Kahlo (1907-1954)

# Bodies with Matter

Most fundamentally, metal is a **body without organ's**. Metal elements can be found in all human, animal and inorganic matter. **In its primordial and transformative quality, metal is even the prime conductor of all matter., indicating an immanent power of corporeality in all matter**.

(D&G, 1980:411)(Patricia Pisters, PH Glossary: 75)





Mona Hatoum, Homebound (2000)

http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/i/interview-shelly-goldsmith-textiles-artist/

https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/mona-hatoum-2365/mona-hatoum-studio-visit

For D&G the body without organs is an evolving concept. In *Anti-Oedipus* it is introduced in relation to the body of the 'Schizo' **that resists the habitual organization of the body**. Hence the reference to Artaud, who in all his delirious and artistic expression points out that underneath the traditionally coded body with an assigned place and its role in society, **underneath the organs there is a chaotic, messy world full of intensive potentiality.** Men, woman, children; all have their place in social hierarchy. **Physical labour, bearing children, sitting up straight in class; all have an orderly place for their organs. The (schizoid) body without organs defies the social code and deliberately 'scrambles all the codes'** (D&G 1972: 15)
(Patricia Pisters: 74, Posthuman Glossary)

# The Body as Material - The Addicted Body

*Self* is a self-portrait of the artist, but one that literally uses his body as material since the cast of Quinn's head, immersed in frozen silicone

*Self* is rooted in an incarnational approach which embodies the immaterial in the material.



**Marc Quinn ('Self')** by Marc Quinn
blood (artist's), liquid silicone, stainless steel, glass, perspex and refrigeration equipment, 2006
80 3/4 in. x 25 5/8 in. 25 5/8 in. (2050 mm x 650 mm x 650mm)

# Inert bodies, embryonic forms and textile boulders.



Magdalena Abakanowicz, Embryology, 1978 - 80



Dorothea Tanning, Nue couchee, 1969 -70

# Technological and Textile Bodies





Mari Katayama, (b. 1987), On the way home, 2016

# Between skins and surfaces – human/machine skin/screen

**Cyborg** –The cyborg is the technological or digital manifestation of a rejection for structured boundaries. (Donna Haraway). A cyborg is 'Half Way Between', (Keith Tyson)

**Replicant** - A replicant is a fictional bioengineered being in the 1982 film Blade Runner, and in its 2017 sequel Blade Runner 2049.(wiki)

**Skin jobs** – (in Blade Runner) a derogative term referring to replicants ' a term that carries echoes of both prostitution and slavery, but also refers more literally to the crafting of their skin by designers. (p115)

**Skins** – outfits that bolster a character's capabilities (Fortnite V-Bucks, 2019), in gaming environments such as fortnite (Such as Fully Golden Agent Peely, as my son informs me)



Drawing on his concept of **Gaga Feminism**, the Wild, as Halberstam posits is:
“a word laden with meaning, vocabularies in different directions – away for example from the used up languages of **difference, alterity, subversion and resistance** and towards languages of **unpredictability, breakdown, disorder and shifting forms of signification.**

Lady Gaga creates alter egos, she syns pop and punk sounds and she mixes dance stutters into sonic hiccups to create a spasmodic feminitity that lurches and jurks into action. (Halberstam, J)



Rex Features



Kate Cooper
Infection Drivers, 2018
Video, color, sound. 7 min., 30 sec.
Produced in coll. Theo Cook
Music by Bonaventure

*It's very interesting just getting your hands dirty in finding your own agency within this glossy language, to be able to produce it yourself," she asserts, "When working with this technology, I always feel there's a kind of hacking element to it.*

# The Body as Material - between physical and digital materiality.

Lee Campbell, 2021
During the Covid-19 lockdown
‘our bodies and minds
Were restricted but our creativity was not.



# Cyber Bodies – 'Skin Jobs' In Blade Runner



According to Wintergill and Bartlett,

Much Critical commentary ignores the film [Blade Runners] constant textural juxtaposition: hard surface set against soft surface; structure versus fluidity [....] The relationship between machine and flesh and between cloth and skin[.....] reveals the physical life and pyschology of the characters - both human and replicant.

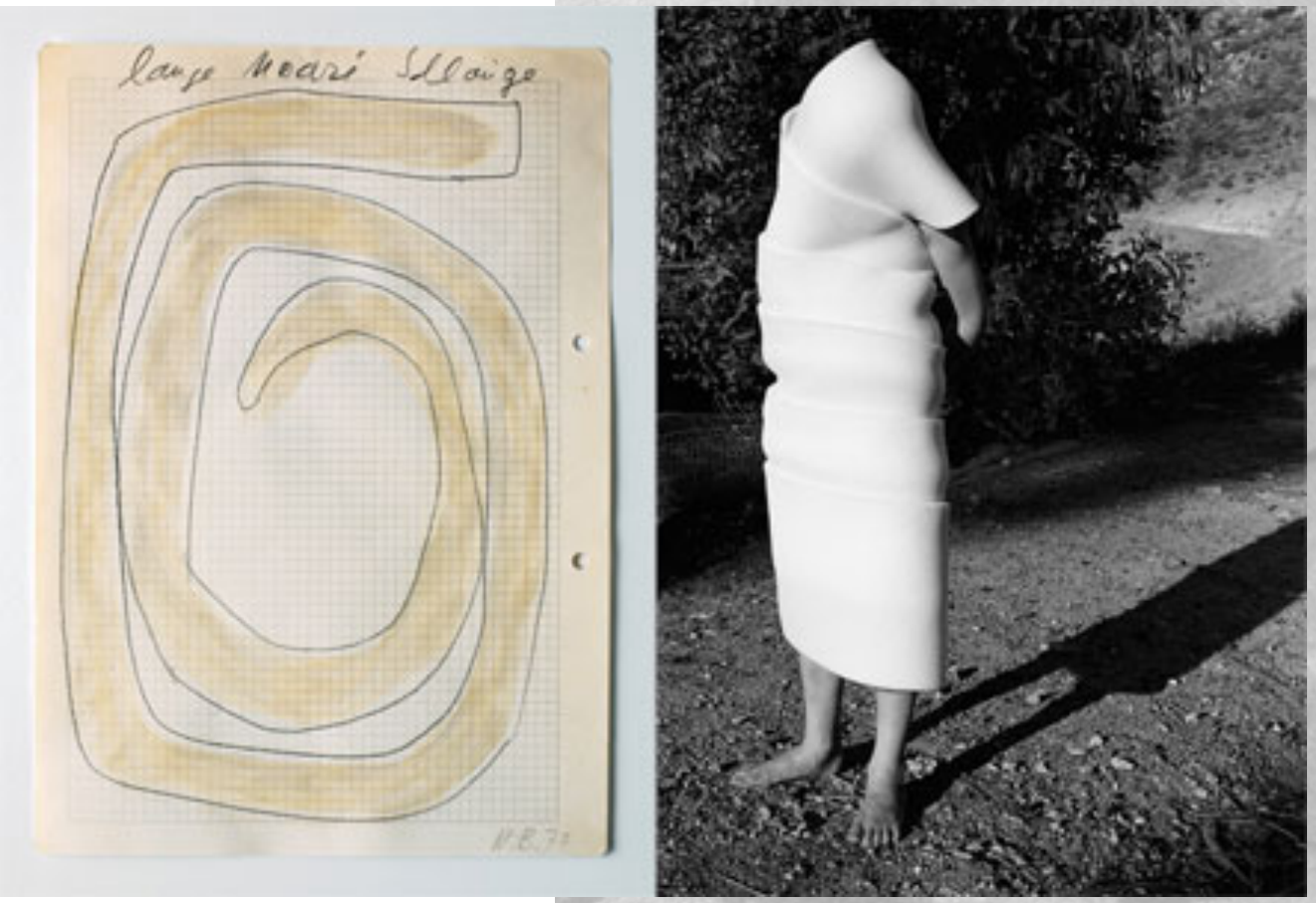
Found in Caroline Wintergill and Savithri Bartlett, Empowering the Replicant: Visual and Haptic Narratives in Blade Runner) p111

Rachel, in Blade Runner, 1982/ 2017

# **Material Transformations -** Skins and Bodyshells

## Liquid to skin like surface

Heidi Bucher (1929- 1993), Post – Minimalism.



**Displayed suspended mid-air, the series of latex Hauträume (Roomskins) are simultaneously monumental and fragile, mimicking the very process by which they are created; the removal of the latex from the architectural space required a great deal of both physical strength and delicate dexterity.**

**(https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/artists/heidi-bucher/biography)**

Beginning in the 1970s, Bucher embalmed clothing in a mixture of latex and mother of pearl, preserving the objects as artifacts of their time and creating a surface that appeared skin-like in both color and texture. Bucher primarily used women's clothing, such as nightdresses and pantyhose, as a critical response to the rigid gender restrictions she had experienced during her childhood and adolescence. By the end of the decade, Bucher began applying her signature latex medium to the surfaces of domestic objects and spaces, aligning women's clothing with these designated "feminine" spaces.



What I would propose[……..] is a return to the notion of matter, not as site or surface, but as a process of materialisation that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface we call matter. (Butler: 1993)







**Louise Bourgeois ,** Image: outside her New York apartment, wearing, Avenza, 1975, **Eva Hesse,** String and latex sculptures, utilised industrial, non –precious cheap materials

# Material

From a critical perspective, the term ‘Material’ decribes not prime matter but **substances that are always subject to change**, be it through handling, interaction with their surroudings or the dynamic life of their chemical reactions. It is therefore a political decision to focus on the materials of art: it means to consider the processes of making and their associated power realtions, to consider the workers - whether thay are in factories , studios or public spaces, whether they are known or anonymous - and their tools and spaces of production.

Lange-Berndt, Petra, “Introduction: How to be complicit with materials”. *Materiality: Documents of contemporary art.* Co-published by Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press. (2015) (12)

# Inert Bodies/ Transferable skins.





Designer Oskar Metsavaht purposes (pirarucu) fish skins from Amazonian rivers and lakes. These are transformed into garments and accessories, as both sustainable textiles and fashion accessories.

Native Alaskan Gut Parka, From the collection at Pitt Rivers, Oxford.

# Plastic Arts

When we think of the **plastic arts** we suppose implicitly, etymologically, that the visual arts do not want this passivity which matter offers to the action of forms. ‘Plastic art’ means first of all plasticity of material, which in turn means that matter doesn’t resist form - that its ductile, malleable, can be put to work at will. In brief, it humbly offers itself to the possibility of being open, worked, carved, put into form.

George Didi_Huberman, The Order of Material: Plasticities, Malaises, Survivals//1999



Rachel Whiteread

Untitled (Amber Double Bed) , 1991 Rubber and high-density foam 119.4 x 137.2 x 104.1 cm







Plastic - Plasticity

Material Masquerade

# Materials in Practice- Claes Oldenburg

## Form and Subject Matter

By translating the medium of sculpture from hard to soft, Oldenburg collapsed solid surfaces into limp, deflated objects that were subject to gravity and chance.



The Ordinary Must Not Be Dull: Claes Oldenburg's Soft Sculptures, Jul 29–Oct 15, 2016, Pulitzer Arts Foundation, MO 63108

Conceptual art for me, means work in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and /or **dematerialized.** Lippard, L, (1969) *found in*, Escape Attempts, Six Tears: The Dematerialization of the art object , ppvii



Robert Morris, untitled, 1969, Felt,
Joseph Beuys, (German, 1921–1986)
Ja Ja Ja Ja Ja, Nee Nee Nee Nee Nee, felt sheets, tape on reel, 1969



# Felt and Felt

Felt has anatomical associations," Morris has said,
"it relates to the body—it's skin like."
Robert Morris, Untitled. 1969

- Felt- Industrial
- Felt- Pre made
- Felt- Industrial
- Felt- Soundproofing
- Felt- Insulation
- Felt- Manufacturing
- Felt- Crafting
- Felt- Roofing

Felting uses the naturally striated, abrasive, scaled or otherwise textured surfaces of vegetable, but especially animal fibre to form a structure of entanglement. Further manipulated with chemical or body liquids, such as sweat and urine, to abrade the fibre surfaces and act as mordant for pigmentation, the natural structures of entanglement are further enfolded into a dense but supple matting.
(Braungart and Mc Donough 2008).
Found in The Handbook of Textile Culture, "Making Known: The Textile Toolbox - Psychoanalysis of Nine Types of Textile thinking, chapter six, pp 79- 120.

**Felt** is **used** in air fresheners, children's bulletin boards, craft kits, holiday costumes and decorations, stamp pads, within appliances, gaskets, as a clothing stiffener or liner, and it can be **used** as a cushion, to provide pads for polishing apparatus, or as a sealant in industrial machinery.

TATE

# Perishable materials - Bugs, virus's, infection…..

From Disintegration to Dust – Deterioration, Entropy and Transformation
Tailor made, Multiples, Doppelganger, Series, One – off, Manufactured, Bespoke, Repeat



**Joseph Beuys** (German, 1921–1986)
(some of) Felt suits, 1970

Bugs, virus's, infection……perishable materials

**And then there was dust…….**
**Labouring the Ethereal**
Leaving traces of history through ephemeral pattern, skill, inheritance…..



**Catherine Bertola, (b. 1976)**
Residue, The Property of Two Gentlemen,
Dust Instillation, The Minories, 2006

Clare Twomey, Consciousness/Conscience, 2015
National Museum Cardiff
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ulweg6uyQqE



***Clay, live, ephemeral, participatory - clay is a knowledge at the core of my work***
***Clare Twomey***

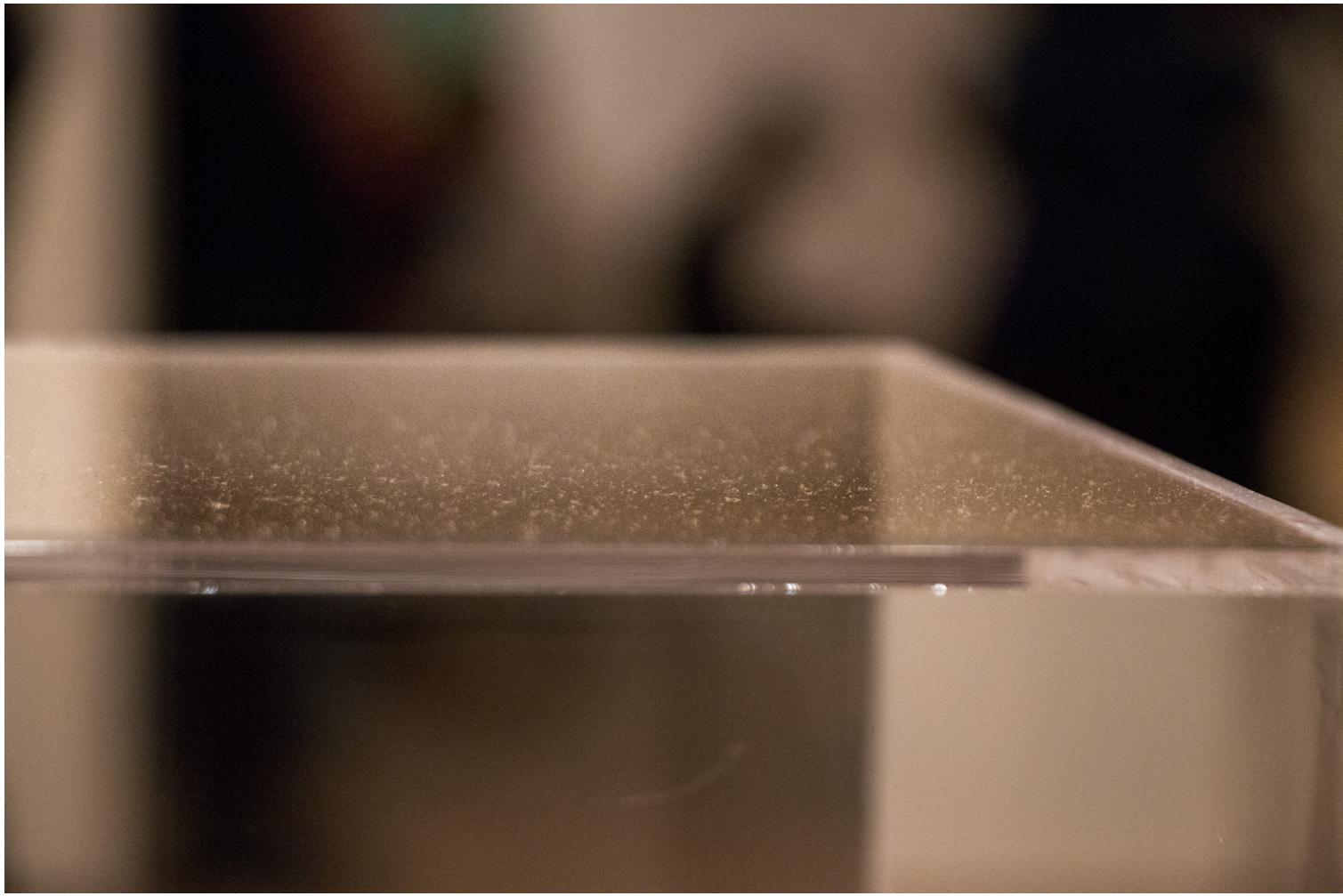
# 'consciousness/conscience'
# clare twomey

national museum wales
amgueddfa cymru

# Ephemeral Materials

Dust consists of material from both inside and outside, from Earth and the cosmos, from places very high and very low—and at the Museum, it's literally an intermingling of different people from around the world.

Noticing particularly dusty spaces in the Museum inspired Katchadourian to interview staff members about this ever-present substance that remains mostly out of sight.



Nina Katchadourian. Dust Gathering
*A Case for Dust*. 2016, MoMA New York

# Dust (after Walter Benjamins Aura)

Dust is what connects the dreams of yesteryear with the touch of nowadays. It is the aftermath of the collapse of illusions, a powdery cloud that arises abruptly and then begins falling on things, gently covering their bright polished surfaces. ..... .....Dust is where faded dreams and touch intersect. where the blue horizon fades to grey. (Celeste Olalquiaga, Dust, 1998, found in RUINS, Whitechapel Art Series. 2011)





Borges Bookcase, as reference point to the bookcase in Interstellar, Christopher Nolan, 2014
**The Library of Babel, Jorge Luis Borges, 1941**

# New (Normal) Materialist Decay Series ( a series of online lectures taking place Autumn 2020)

Decaying matter is an essential component of our built environment. From compost in our gardens, to lichen and fungi in our brick and stone walls and tile roofs, to bacteria on our skin, our environment grows thanks to and along with non-human decay. However, we neglect these non-human agents and, now more than ever, we fear them as they also include viruses and the surfaces where viruses inhabit.



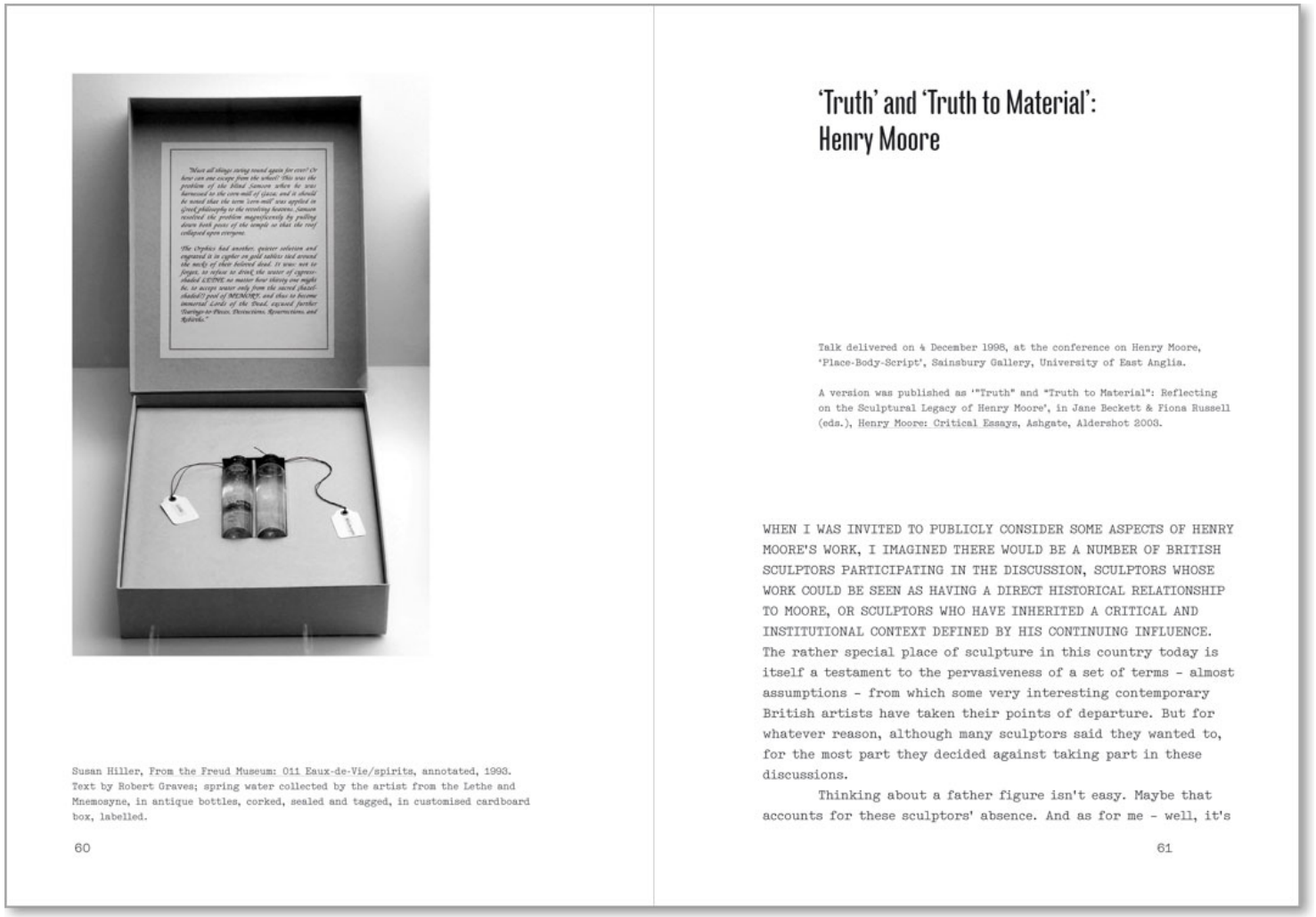

Simon Starling, Island for weeds, 2003



Wolgang Tillmans, Weed, 2014

# Susan Hiller _ Truth to Material

- Art
- (minimalist) Painting
- Anthropology
- Organising group projects
- (verging on) Performance art
- Formal structure
- A Non - Hierarchical organising principal
- Content (around dreams)
- Collecting Stories- discussing experience
- Visual hallucinations
- Sound as phenomena of light



Susan Hiller, From the Freud Museum: 011 Eaux-de-Vie/spirits, annotated, 1993. Text by Robert Graves; spring water collected by the artist from the Lethe and Mnemosyne, in antique bottles, corked, sealed and tagged, in customised cardboard box, labelled.

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'Truth' and 'Truth to Material':
Henry Moore

Talk delivered on 4 December 1998, at the conference on Henry Moore, 'Place-Body-Script', Sainsbury Gallery, University of East Anglia.

A version was published as '"Truth" and "Truth to Material": Reflecting on the Sculptural Legacy of Henry Moore', in Jane Beckett & Fiona Russell (eds.), Henry Moore: Critical Essays, Ashgate, Aldershot 2003.

WHEN I WAS INVITED TO PUBLICLY CONSIDER SOME ASPECTS OF HENRY MOORE'S WORK, I IMAGINED THERE WOULD BE A NUMBER OF BRITISH SCULPTORS PARTICIPATING IN THE DISCUSSION, SCULPTORS WHOSE WORK COULD BE SEEN AS HAVING A DIRECT HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP TO MOORE, OR SCULPTORS WHO HAVE INHERITED A CRITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT DEFINED BY HIS CONTINUING INFLUENCE. The rather special place of sculpture in this country today is itself a testament to the pervasiveness of a set of terms - almost assumptions - from which some very interesting contemporary British artists have taken their points of departure. But for whatever reason, although many sculptors said they wanted to, for the most part they decided against taking part in these discussions.

Thinking about a father figure isn't easy. Maybe that accounts for these sculptors' absence. And as for me - well, it's

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**I don't see a dualism between rational and irrational**, either/or, this or that, black or what….we spend a lot of time dreaming which is beyond resason. Susan Hiller

In 1985, the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard curated a groundbreaking exhibition called Les Immatériaux at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. The exhibition showed how telecommunication technologies were beginning to impact every aspect of life. At the same time, it was a material demonstration of what Lyotard called the post-modern condition

(30 Years After Les Immatériaux: Art, Science and Theory)

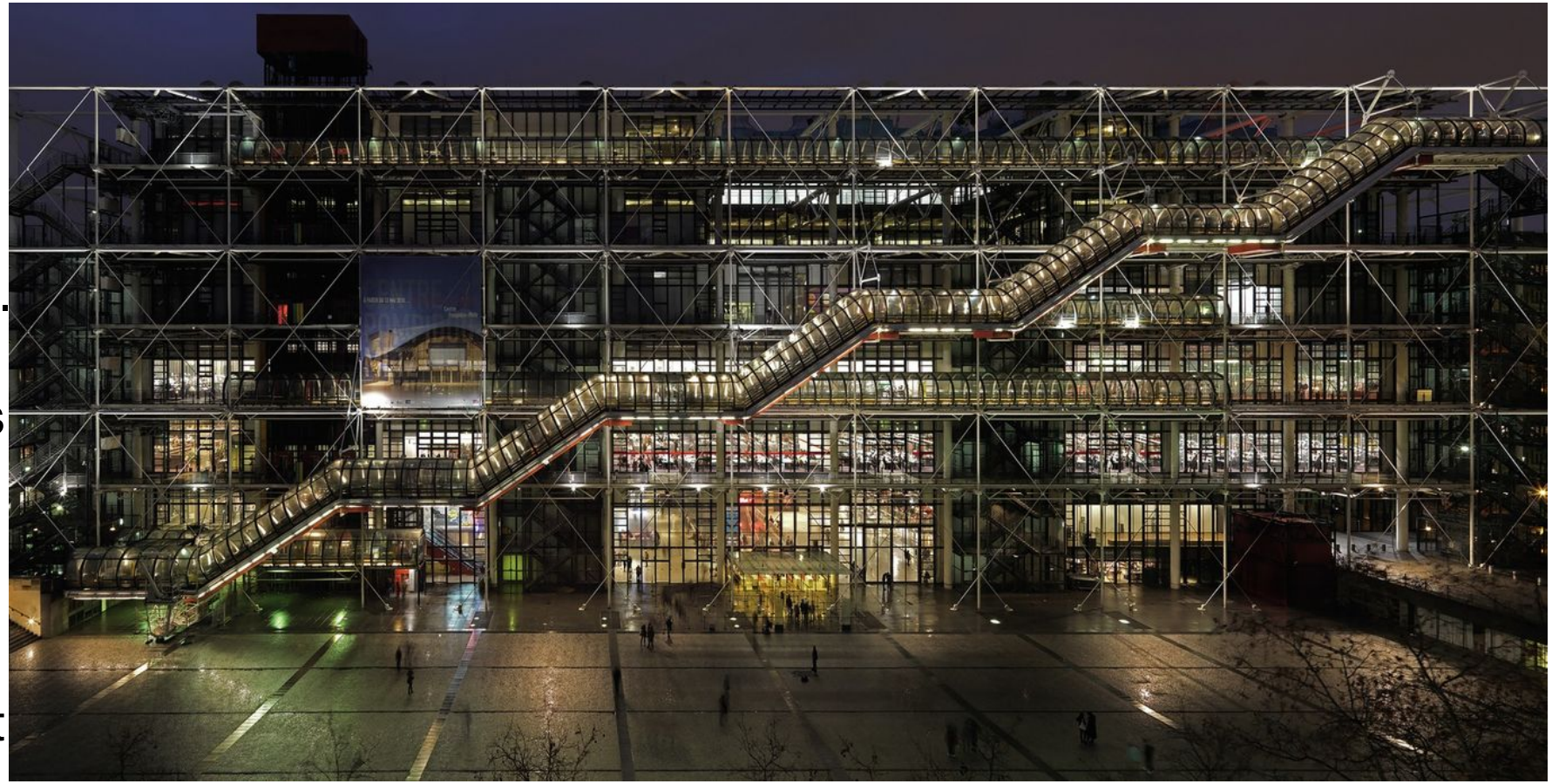


# MATERIALITY V IMMATERIALITY

Jean-Francois Lyotard, **Les Immatériaux: Art, Science and Theory**, Pompidou Centre, Paris, 1985

The ambition of this exhibition entitled “les Immateriaux’ is to make the visitor realize how far this relationship is atered by the existence of “new materials’ . .....They question the idea of Man as a bring who works , who plans and who remembers: the idea of an author. The aim of the exhibtion is to bring this interrigation into the limelight and to interrigate it.

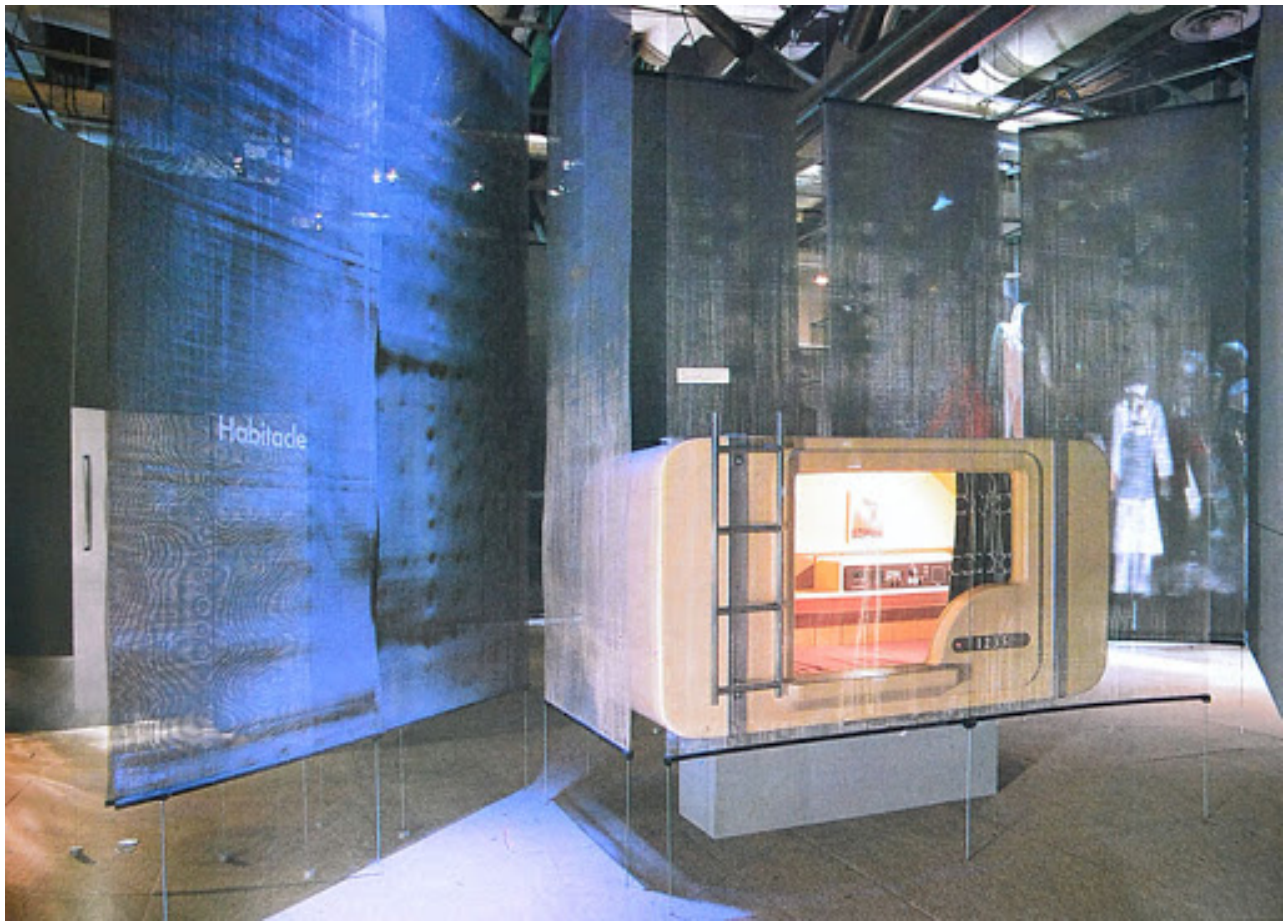
(Jean-Francois Lyotard, Materilaity: 201)



In the tradition of modernity, the relationship between human beings and materials is fixed by the Cartesian programme of mastering and possessing nature. A free will imposes its own.....to articulate what it is possible (a project) and to impose on it what is real(matter).....

**The term "immaterial', which in its contradiction denotes a material which is not matter for a project, is proposed to convey this uncertainty.....**

(Materilaity: 201- 202)




In Lyotard's labyrinthine theatre of the new (post-cinematic) 'condition' of information, **'immateriality' was no longer conceived in terms of freeing concepts or ideas from all materials, but, on the contrary, of shifting the idea of 'materiality' away from that of 'formed matter' (including the 'modernist' distinction between form and content) and towards the 'techno-sciences' and the city.** https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/12/les-immateriaux-or-how-to-construct-the-history-of-exhibitions

Les Immatériaux, with its strange ear-phones supplying the visitor with a theory sound-track and its room of computer consoles came at a particular juncture in critical theory and research, art and philosophy.

This could be viewed as:
an extravagant staging of a peculiar moment in the role of information in the history of aesthetics after so-called ‘modernism’, yet before the ‘contemporary configuration of biennials that was already taking shape in the 1990s, within or against which the question of a new ‘history of exhibition’ now itself arises



In "Les Immatériaux" Lyotard attempted to use all the tools in his arsenal, from the latest technology to the full human sensorium, to query if and how our relationship to the world had fundamentally changed. **For the tangle of conviction and ambivalence found in its gaze into the future, Lyotard’s vision for an exhibition is worth looking back on.** https://www.art-agenda.com/features/235949/les-immatriaux-a-conversation-with-jean-franois-lyotard-and-bernard-blistne

now seem as outmoded as the clunky IBMs (International Business Machines Corporation) he (Lyotard) included, our current interest in new materialisms and attendant critiques of the relations between objects and humans, exhibition histories and their dramaturgies, and a spate of publications theorizing the contemporary all converge.

https://www.art-agenda.com/features/235949/les-immatriaux-a-conversation-with-jean-franois-lyotard-and-bernard-blistne



Nam Paik June

Focusing on this third aspect - ‘consideration’ of materials within the exhibition provides a way to think through Lyotard’s:

CONCEPTION/operation structure - From the root *mat* five terms are chosen:

MATERIAL/ The material is the support of the message.
MATERIEL/The materiel or hardware is what handles the acquisition, transfer, collection of the message.
MATERNITY/Maternity designates the function of the sender of the message.
MATTER/ The matter of the message is its referent (what it is about, as in the French for “table of contents’
MATRIX/The Matrix is the code of the message.

AIM/not to display objects, but to make visible, even palpable (and so ‘present’) a kind of ‘post-industrial’ techno-scientific condition, at once artistic, critical and curatorial.

PURPOSE/ to provide a destabilizing experience of contemporary life via an exhibition

# Materials and Media – Nam Paik June's 'Electric Superhighway'

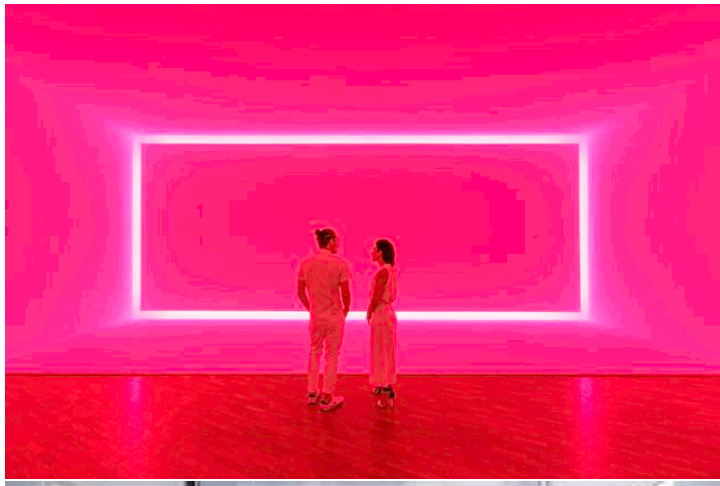





# Exploring IM/Materilaities

Today, almost 100 years on, in the midst of another technological revolution, the creative industries are again preoccupied with the **surface and its dissolution, disintegration or efflorescence, accentuating the surface's function of mediation or passage, rather than that of separation or boundary.**

- Jean-Francois Lyotard, Les Immatériaux: Art, Science and Theory
- Gaston Bachelard s Contribution to poetics and Science as Techno Materiality
- **Nan Paik June's Video Art**
- The (im)materiality of an artistic/technological medium and its potential to create a transgressive surface quality or atmosphere
- **Holly Hendy, New Materiality, Meta – Modernism**
- Sadie Plant (CRC- Cybernetic Research Centre)
- **Bart Hess, Digital Artefact,** Hito Steyerl, **Digital Debri**
- **Ursula K.LE Guin, The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction.**
- **Karon Barod's Entanglements**
- **Lee Bul's, Cyber Feminist Art works**







# Tumbleweed, Entanglements and Matrices – Thinking through (Im)Materialities…….

*We are entangled in many more forces that we can possibly be aware of, and to be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self- contained existence……entanglements are not just with other human beings, but animals, organic and inorganic matter.*

(Barod K. p.6: New Materialism)

