

Corpus Infinitum

Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman

Exhibition 28.04 — 25.09.23



Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman, *Serpent Rain*, single channel colour video installation, 30 min, 2016.

A question has explicitly and implicitly informed our collaboration from the start: what would become of thought if it were guided by the elements? It has informed a series of filmic experiments, which explore what can only be described as a material aesthetics that emerges with blackness, as a guide to our critical engagement with modern thought.

These visual and aural experiments aim at unsettling the metaphysics of linearity and the sensibility it cultivates, which sustain the colonial, racial, and cisheteropatriarchal matrix and the violence and indifference it affords in support of state capital.

How might we introduce this question/ing of the figure at the centre of modern thought, that is, the Subject in all its guises (Man, Human, Humanity, Subjectivity), rehearsing a philosophical theme on the aesthetic stage? What if we were to recall the versions we have previously tried out?

When considering the Human through the Elements (water, air, fire, and earth), in *Serpent Rain* what is implicit is something that our collaboration has foregrounded from the outset. We refer to the questioning of value, which targets how linear time disappears with colonial and racial subjugation, as if all the wealth acquired and accumulated thanks to the expropriation of Indigenous land and slave labour

had vanished. That magical operation cannot be unattached from how we understand value, both in the economic and ethical sense, and from the significance of how difference, which is central to the destination of value (symbolically), has the capacity to completely disappear with it (ethically). This is fully connected to the ways in which expropriation (of energy), extraction (of minerals) and abstraction (the disavowal of matter) correspond to the apparently contradictory juridic, economic and ethic directives of liberal state capital.

The impossibility of attending to how the terms of economic and ethical value are not the abstractions of modern thought, but the means and mechanisms of extraction and abstraction, has everything to do with the task abstraction has carried out for modern thought. A task which has been made possible by linearity, both in its spatial operations (namely, how it allows for the determination of what the line encloses and what it separates), and temporal operations (how it allows for the delimitation of what persists while changing).

When asking what would happen if time were imaged materially (the fossil) instead of immaterially (the numbers on clocks or dates), we move to decentre the abstract line and attend to the matter of value, to that which transforms, transitions and transmutes.

It becomes possible to imagine what happens without the line when we pursue the question of what has happened to the matter from which value was extracted. For this question foregrounds precisely what abstraction as a procedure is applied to. In *4 Waters – Deep Implicancy*, we pursue the question of how to think, that is, of how to *think* without the separating line and the enclosing line. Of how to think without a firm but abstract foundation, a ground to anchor onto, the necessary relationships, which is all that logical thought can do.

Perhaps the most crucial move when thought proceeds without linearity and its abstraction, is to consider the possibility of addressing what exists without having to presuppose relations. Without assuming that everything is or could be treated like a solid, something that occupies space, and cannot as such share its place with something else. This view of matter as solidity is the first thing to go when existing things are not taken as substance (mathematical or logical form-matter) but as instance (physical form-matter), which can take another form as its context (meaning all other things) also is altered. The element of water attains this possibility, as it allows for two things to be thought at the same time: (a), that a thing, anything that exists or can come to exist, is nothing more than a

combination of the very same elements that enter into the composition of everything that exists, including the planet; and (b), of how change both in surrounding conditions and the composition—of each existing thing—leads to change of its physical form. That is, water allows us to think of permanence in differentiation, as in Heraclitus's famous fragment about the river. In doing so, it invites the possibility of thinking of what is similar and what is distinct, without the circumscribing line of separation, and without the line of continuation and similarity. Water inspires thought of existence without abstraction and the violence (the disappearance of matter) that is inherent to this intellectual gesture. With water we can think of existence having, as a point of departure, what permeates: namely, that which is in, in between and all around every existing thing.

Knowledge that attends to water is knowledge of matter, and recalls a sensibility that is not possible through the mediation of an abstract order the mind presumes/imposes on things; it recalls a sensibility that refers to material plenitude (or utter materiality), which mind-body and everything else is part of. That is knowledge that presumes implicity, instead of separability and efficacy.

How might we image this ongoing cooperation between abstraction and extraction that has marked modern existence? How might we call for a political response (as resistance, alternative, or refusal and survivance) without immediately positing (as the locus of production, creation or articulation) an interior thing for whom the deadly cooperation (between abstraction and extraction) is not only the given, but its conditions of possibility as well? Is it possible to conceive of a position of enunciation which is not already what all meaning emerges from and all things return to, when their existence is under consideration?

Without lines of movement, development and dislocation, in *Soot Breath // Corpus Infinitum*, we speculate on how thinking materially opens up lines of interrogation regarding both the relation between the mathematical (logic and scientific), juridic and economic mechanism and process that facilitate capital's mechanisms of extraction (colonial, industrial and global), expropriation and exploitation, and the ethical program supporting it, contingent as it is upon the figuring of humans as humanity (abstract principle) and subjectivity (abstract existence).

When existence is conceived without presupposing such modes of presentation, much becomes possible, including a sensibility for which humans, like everything else, are things of

the world. And, instead of the lethal abstraction and noxious extraction—that is, instead of searching for the efficient (formal or essential) component—such sensibility would attend to radiation, vibration, and transformation. Further, for that sensibility that appreciates matter-energy, the complex manifold does not reduce to linear relations, and something like a point of origin, delivery or departure is no longer needed or prescribed.

Each experiment, and the questions that animated and emerged from it, signal something that can be called an elemental aesthetic. Each does so as it foregrounds echoes, across, through and as spacetime. Encountering what vibrates, what permeates immediately, it recalls existence as movement without dislocation, as re/de/composition, and all that it renders imageable, everything that is imaginable and thinkable.

After experimenting with the elemental for these many years, and exploring its openings beyond the abstractions of modern thought, this is a moment to pause and reflect on our practice. Not as an inward turn, but as an outward reflection. For we know—indeed we stake a claim to—the ways our films echo images, modes and practices of existence that are not informed by and do not re-produce the image of the Human and the notions of *Nature* and *World*

humans presume and produce, as they have prevailed in the last two hundred years or so.

Each film reflects the other; each likewise precedes and follows the other, as well as the ones we have yet to make. You are invited to start from any one of these three films and explore as much as you wish, to spend as much time as you can and want with each archive, along with its corresponding visible, tactile, audible, and imaginable supplements.

Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman

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A project by Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman

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PUBLICATION

[Quaderns portàtils 39. Se avvicina un terremoto.](#)

This digital publication, available for free download, includes three essays by the philosopher Denise Ferreira da Silva and the artist Arjuna Neuman, translated into Spanish. The essays “Reivindicaciones ancestrales” [Ancestral Claims], “La purpurina interior” [Interior Glitter] and “Se avvicina un terremoto” [An Earthquake is Coming] share a common ground of decolonization as the only relevant ethical principle of our time. This principle is reflected in their way of making cinema, for example, turning the eye into something suspect (as the privileged organ due to the assimilation of visual culture), or presenting a critical revision of the use of intertitles.

RELATED ACTIVITIES

Opening Conversation

Thursday 27 April, at 6.30 pm

Opening conversation with Denise Ferreira da Silva, Arjuna Neuman and Elvira Dyangani Ose

Free activity. Advanced registration and more information at macba.cat

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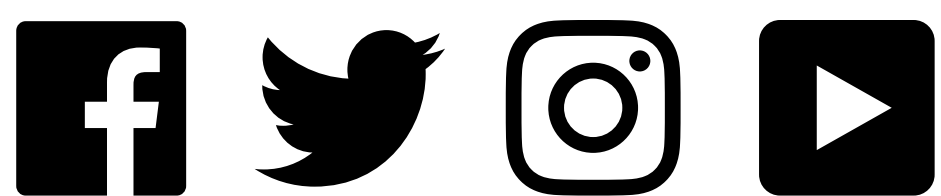
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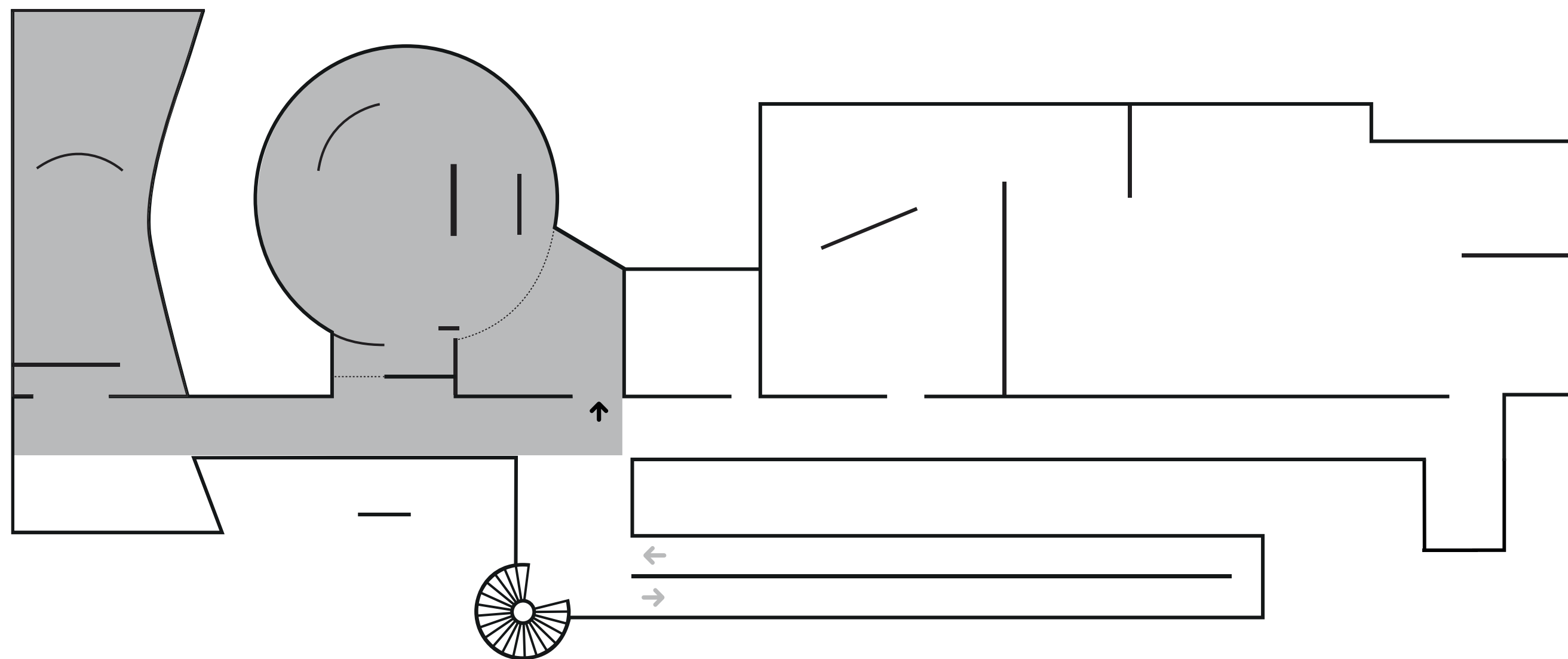


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SITE PLAN

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