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THE PINK ARCHE. THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF THE POSTHUMAN REALITY IN THE ANTHROPOCENE AND SUPERFLEX'S „PINK ELEMENTS" AS A POSSIBLE REPRESENTATION OF IT

ABSTRACT: This article will argue the suitability of the *Pink Elements* (2019) by SUPERFLEX for representing the elementary particles of our posthuman reality, intended from a cultural perspective. Firstly, it will address the ‚bit', deemed by some as the current arche, revealing its limits in the light of the Niche Construction Theory applied to humans. Then, I will try to demonstrate that the relational dimension corresponds to reality as we perceive it after postmodernity. Therefore, I will analyse the dynamics of the human-environment relationship in the geological era called ‚Anthropocene' by comparing Merleau-Ponty's perception and Morton's hyperobjects. Finally, I will give some examples of recent artworks reflecting this relationship, synthesisable as a ‚recording of a non-deciphered text', among which the *Pink Elements* will stand out as bricks capable of representing the ultimate substance of reality as the posthuman culture shows it to us.

KEYWORDS: arche, posthumanism, Anthropocene, hyperobjects, environment

Introduction

„That of which all things consist, from which they first come and into which on their destruction they are ultimately resolved, of which the essence persists although modified by its affections" (Aristotle 1933: vol. 1.983b). This is Aristotle's definition of the concept of arche as it was understood by the pre-Socratic philosophers of the Ionian School. Notoriously, each of them sought the prime principle underlying everything real, and most of them traced it to a single substance capable of giving form to all others, be it water (Thales), air (Anaximenes), fire (Heraclitus), or an undefined entity called ‚Apeiron' (Anaximander). In this article, the word 'arche' will be used in reference to a single substance that underlies and constitutes all reality. It must be made clear, however, that it is absolutely not my intention to propose a new metaphysics of any sort. The one adopted in this article is merely a particular perspective to investigate

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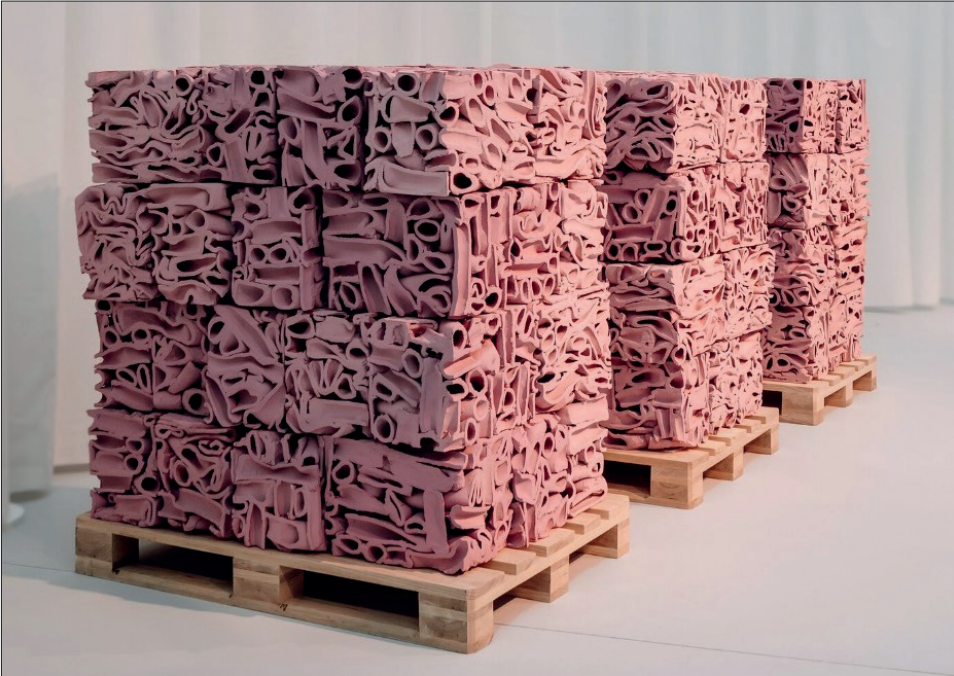
Pink Elements by SUPERFLEX. Installed at MAAT – Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, Lisbon. Photo: Francisco Nogueira

current cultural dynamics. The ‚posthuman arche' is thus not to be intended as the ultimate nature of matter as posthuman vision and agency have unveiled it or modified it, but as they display it and make it appear to us. Similarly, ‚posthuman reality' refers to reality from the perspective of posthuman thought.

With this established, this article aims to argue how a specific work of art can be read as a possible artistic representation of this arche. The artwork I am talking about is *Pink Elements* by SUPERFLEX (2019), a Danish collective that deepens, among the main themes of its works, the issue of the possibility of interspecific coexistence in a non-human-centred world. The artwork concerning this article consists of a number of bricks that can be useful not only for human architecture but also as ‚houses' for aquatic species, thanks to their porosity and their pink colour, which „is scientifically known to propagate coral polyp growth" (SUPERFLEX n.d.).

In particular, the first part of this paper will be devoted to analysing a ‚first principle' already proposed as the arche of the current reality: the bit. A mention of the recent concept of ‚Infosphere' will allow us to draw a parallel with the dichotomy tool-‚Technosphere'. Then, by referring to the evolutionary theories applied to the human body and its *techné*, we will detect the limits of this digital ‚ultimate particle', at least from a posthuman point of view. In the second half of this article, therefore, we will focus on finding a viable alternative to the bit. We will analyse the cultural and aesthetical

tendencies that have followed postmodernity, in order to argue the correspondence of today's reality and its relational aspect. Then, I will explore the fundamental relationship between man and the environment after the geological turn of the ‚Anthropocene' by comparing Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea of perception and Timothy Morton's ‚hyper-objects'. In the conclusions, after having reviewed some contemporary artworks that can resonate with the argued relationship, we will observe the similarity between the elementary particles of our posthuman reality and the *Pink Elements* mentioned above.

Chapter I: A digital arche

Searching for new archai suitable for the rising of a digital world, many philosophers found its ‚first principle' in the concept of ‚bit'. As Longo (2020) recounts, these thinkers used to argue that reality is ‚information' and that their elementary units coincide, so that the bits have to be considered the ultimate parcels of reality. In his book *The Fourth Revolution* (2014), Luciano Floridi attributed this fundamental shift to our Information and Communications Technologies, which are „modifying the very nature of, and hence what we mean by, reality, by transforming it into an infosphere" (Floridi 2014: 40). According to Giuseppe Longo and Andrea Vaccaro, we can speak of a sort of „Bit Bang" as the origin of our world, both in its digital and analogical aspects (Longo 2020: 27). From this first beginning, mathematician and computer scientist Gregory Chaitin believes that Nature has created everything that exists in a programming language (Longo 2020: 39), and Stephen Wolfram supported this idea through his notorious ‚cellular automata' (in particular, his ‚Rule 30'), which manages to link a very simple algorithm to a highly complex result. This latter can arise from a series of automatic steps, thus allowing digital philosophers to easily connect the Turing Machine to the evolutionary process (Longo 2020: 43-44), whereas Chaitin's theory would have required posit a programming demiurge (Longo 2020: 39). Even so, this overlapping of Wolfram's and Darwin's theory raises new questions concerning the medial nature of digital technologies.

Firstly, however, we should focus on the advantages of living in a world conceived as a digital one. We can understand them by reading *Languages of Art* by Nelson Goodman (1968), according to which, „[t]he real virtues of digital instruments are those of notational systems: definiteness and repeatability of readings" (Goodman 1968: 161). In his book, the use of what he calls a „notational system" is what allows a copy of a book (or a new performance of a symphony) to be a „correct copy". In contrast, in the case of a „Rembrandt's painting" (to recall his example), we would use the word „forgery". In painting, „none of the pictorial properties […] is distinguished as constitutive; no such feature can be dismissed as contingent, and no deviation as insignificant". In the case of literature, instead, „[a]ll that matters is what may be called *sameness of spelling*: exact correspondence as sequences of letters, spaces, and punctuation marks"

(Goodman 1968: 115-116). According to the American philosopher, this also applies to music, since the *fundamental properties* of a concert are those marked on the score to be performed by musicians. Therefore, as far as the precision of our instruments provides us with the ‚constitutive properties' of reality, we could claim to hold absolute power over it, being capable of reproducing it in our computers in all its essential aspects. However, as posthuman philosopher Roberto Marchesini notices in his book *Tecnosfera* (2017), even if the technological progress of the last decades has made us closer than ever to this target, we cannot think of this power to be one-sided.

Unpredictable evolutionary processes

According to Marchesini (2017), technologies have constantly evolved as any other phylogenetic process, but this aspect has become increasingly clear during the last century and a half. On the one hand, neither Turing nor von Neumann could imagine what would have become a computer after a few decades; on the other, our device's set does not resemble a toolbox, in which every element is juxtaposed with other ones. Since the end of the XX century, in fact, we cannot refer to our instruments as separate tools anymore, but only as parts of what Marchesini calls ‚Technosphere'. Here, changes in technologies occur in ecological and systemic terms so that new developments in one instrument produce ripple effects on the other ones, as it happens among species evolving in the same niche. According to him, digital devices are, of course, the leading causes of this fundamental shift because they are interchangeable with each other, thereby creating a unitary, continuous ‚habitat'. Moreover, not only do they evolve unpredictably (Marchesini 2017: 126), but technology also becomes what Floridi calls „Third-order Technology", namely the one in which the in-between technologies relate „technologies-as-users to other technologies-as-prompters, in a technology-technology-technology scheme" (Floridi 2014: 29). According to him, we are now being excluded from the loop, as mere consumers of our technologies. This ‚Technosphere' starts developing exponentially along with ‚Infosphere', since informational and computational devices „are among the greatest sources of further data, which in turn require, or simply make possible, more ICTs". Hence, Floridi argues, „we have entered *the age of the zettabyte*" (Floridi 2014: 13), in which „ICTs consume most of their MIPS [Million Instructions per Second] to talk to each other, collaborate, and coordinate efforts" (Floridi 2014: 10).

Nevertheless, the autonomy of ICTs does not imply the lack of any influence on our lives. Instead, quoting Floridi, „[w]ith interfaces becoming progressively less visible, the threshold between here (*analogue*, carbon-based, offline) and there (*digital*, silicon-based, online) is fast becoming blurred". Significantly, he proceeds by saying: „To adapt Horace's famous phrase, ‚the captive infosphere is conquering its victor'" (Floridi 2014: 43), thus underlining the overturning of Goodman's perspective about

what means to handle something ‚digital'. Furthermore, Floridi analyses the need for semantic machines such as we are, which could work alongside ICTs to connect more closely the analogue world to the digital one, and thereby „transform it into an ICT-friendly place" (Floridi 2014: 146). As Emanuele Severino argued throughout his book *Il destino della tecnica* (1988), in fact, the supreme purpose of technology is the infinite growth of its power, and the fulfilment of this goal requires not only an ever-growing memory but also an increasingly improved organisation of it. It is pivotal to notice that all this does not happen only on a large scale, far from our lives and everyday devices, and that each one of them belongs to the whole Infosphere and Technosphere and shares these aspects with them. In this regard, Floridi refers to the example of ‚folksonomy', namely the result of classification through social tagging, such as the hashtags added to a photograph posted online. That clearly illustrates how ICTs are modifying us by „promoting an informational interpretation of every aspect of our world and our lives in it" (Floridi 2014: 43).

Marchesini (2017) agrees with Floridi's analysis, noticing an epistemological shift induced by the spread of new technologies; still, he focuses on *techne* as an evolutionary force for humans. Thereby, while talking about the differences between digital natives and older people, he underlines the changes in neurobiological networks, since our body is where *techne* acts by changing the relationships among the organs, the evolutionary differentials, the performative trials, in short, its internal organisational structure. Despite the success of the myth of Prometheus, according to which technology is something we use to overcome our needs, we can find the influence of our tools on the human body since the first chipped flint. This latter *revealed itself* suitable for replacing human teeth in some of their tasks, thus leading to a rearrangement of our skull. According to Marchesini, in fact, there is an epiphanic aspect in every techno-poiesis, meaning that a new tool (or a change in an already existing one) is not a passive remedy to a specific need we want to satisfy. Instead, it opens new, unexpected spaces for us to live, act, and experience.

The ‚Niche Construction Theory'

As I have already said, Marchesini reveals that some epiphanic moments in human history has changed how our species has inhabited its world from that moment on. According to him, in fact, the Technosphere *in fieri* is nothing but a niche construction (Marchesini 2017: 93). In evolutionary biology, a Niche Construction Theory perspective „places emphasis on the capacity of organisms to modify natural selection in their environment and thereby act as co-directors of their own, and other species', evolution". That does not mean that the standard evolutionary theory ignores birds' nests and spiders' webs, but that it deems them only as „extended phenotypes", i.e. „consequences of prior selection, not as a cause of evolutionary change" (Laland & O'Brien 2010:

303-304). The NCT, on the contrary, underlines how „instances of niche construction that are neither deliberate nor obviously beneficial to the constructor", such as, over several generations, the impact of earthworms' borrowing activities on soil chemistry can nevertheless direct their evolution (Laland, Odling-Smee & Feldman 2005: 39).

Since „humans are enormously potent niche constructors", maybe the most powerful ones (Laland & O'Brien 2010: 306-307), we should adopt this perspective while considering the human evolutionary processes described above. Biologist Laland and anthropologist O'Brian agree with posthuman theories that what they call „human cultural niche construction" is „the dominant form of evolutionary adaptation for our species" because natural selection is typically slower than cultural processes (Laland & O'Brien 2010: 307). Moreover, this approach is helpful to introduce the human-induced changes in climate conditions as a synthesis of the previous pages of this paper. According to them, whereas human society can overcome a hostile environment triggered by climate change through new technologies, their development, conversely, has a substantial impact on our ,habitat', and so on. The loop of the human-induced environmental change, therefore, can synthesise the ambiguity of technology, which is both a means for humans' agency to understand and modify the world and an Otherness that evolves independently and that is always, unpredictably, changing them.

The ambiguity of informatics and technology in the NCT framework

The Niche Construction Theory tried to defy the critics about the incompatibility of Darwin's theories and human predictive behaviour. Alex Mesoudi (2008) notices how criticisms of the theory of Darwinian cultural evolution argue that, „whereas biological evolution is blind and undirected, cultural change is directed or guided by human actors who possess the capacity for foresight". The English Professor of Cultural Evolution tackles this problem by distinguishing two senses of ,teleological'. He explains that „the cultural change is teleological not in the sense of *clairvoyance* […], but rather in the sense that culture is directed by human agents who possess *foresight*", which can be defined as "the non-supernatural ability to predict future events on the basis of reasoning or extrapolation from past events" (Mesoudi 2008: 245). According to him, „biological evolution exhibits what we may call ,biological foresight', in the form of adaptive *mutation* and *behavioural* [emphasis added] smart variants" (Mesoudi 2008: 248), therefore on a level that is both technological (in a way) and informational. As Laland, Odling-Smee, and Feldman state, in fact,

> [B]ehavioural ,decisions' are non-random because they are partly controlled by *semantic information*, derived from a multitude of sources including naturally selected genes, epigenetic processes, immune systems, central nervous systems and, *as in humans* [emphasis added], cultural processes (Laland, Odling-Smee & Feldman 2005: 49).

This parallel is also true for the technical side of humans, whose far-sightedness, according to Marchesini, can easily hypothesise the effects of a particular technology in its field of use, especially in the short term (Marchesini 2017: 126). However, as Mesoudi (2008) points out,

> episodic foresight still does not equate to clairvoyance, because there is no guarantee that the future simulation will be accurate. In fact, mental time travel is likely to be an extremely complex and demanding task – you must simulate not only the physical aspects of a possible future scenario (one of many), but also simulate your future self, and how your future self would interact with that future scenario using possibly different beliefs, desires and knowledge to your current beliefs, desires and knowledge (Mesoudi 2008: 251).

In other words, from this point of view, every bit is a future zettabyte, and every tool is already part of a larger Technosphere, in which the human subject is *immersed*, instead of holding it.

To conclude, an NCT approach to human informatics and technology reveals the essential relationship between the two sides of each one of them, especially in a human-induced climate change scenario. Bits and tools, namely their smallest particles, represent our understanding of the world and our controlled impact on it. However, they do not adequately consider the unforeseeable influence of the modified environment on humans. From a posthuman perspective, the feedback effect does not occur only in the case of an enormous number of bits and devices intertwined, but rather it is visible in every single element since it always (already) belongs to an Infosphere or a Technosphere. Therefore, none of the two terms can satisfactorily illustrate the posthuman approach to reality through an epistemological or pragmatic medium.

Chapter II: A receptive arche

In the previous pages of this paper, the discussion moved around two extremes, i.e. the small tool and the Technosphere (or the bit and the Infosphere). In the dynamics of their relationship, we saw the dialectical solution to their contrast, but not the area of interest in which to find a possible ‚substance' which comprehends both of them. As we have seen, individually, or even together (but, still, separated), these extremes cannot fulfil this role. In the second part of this article, therefore, I will try to understand the fundamental dynamics that constitute the in-between place of the human and nonhuman *relationship* from a posthuman perspective. This is the only way to get closer to the arche of today's reality (at least the cultural one), due to the ontological importance given to the relational aspect of reality from the moment in which postmodernity first started to fade away, together with the „globalizing sureness" of its negative tenets (Morton 2013: 15). As Floridi explains, in fact, the postmodern criticism of any narrative was just another narrative (Floridi 2014: 218).

One of the philosophers that marked the new course of contemporary thought was Jean-Luc Nancy, who notoriously wrote a book titled *Being Singular Plural* (1996). According to its introduction, this latter „does not disguise its ambition of redoing the whole of ‚first philosophy' by giving the ‚singular plural' of Being as its foundation" (Nancy 2000: XV). Assuming the postulate whereby „[e]xistence *is with*: otherwise nothing exists", he states that „Being cannot *be* anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the *with* and as the *with* of this singularly plural coexistence" (Nancy 2000: 3-4). Two years later, in 1998, *Relational Aesthetics* by Nicolas Bourriaud re-formulated these concepts in aesthetical terms while describing the artistic panorama of the times. According to him, the disappearance of the „Messianistic utopias" of modernity is no more seen as the „condemnation" Lyotard's writings had previously announced. Rather than sighing for the lost dreams, artworks present themselves as „ways of living and models of action *within the existing real*" (Bourriaud 2002: 13-14), and this artistic form (just like all the other, according to Bourriaud) „only assumes its texture (and only acquires a real existence) when it introduces human interactions" (Bourriaud 2002: 22).

Over the following years, various tastes and artistic trends have confirmed this focus on the in-between space, as well as on the medium that makes it possible while influencing it. Three examples of this medium are the concepts of ‚collection', through which a subject provides the world with an order; of ‚Camp mask', behind which some people reveal to the world some of their traits (by exasperating them); and of ‚game', where an individual and reality meet each other in a third narrative. As Elio Grazioli (2012) writes, collecting corresponds to a current feeling and way to think, as its strong presence in the arts suggests. Today we oppose homogenisation and stand in defence of individuality by creating what Donna Kornhaber describes as „a newly arranged version of our material reality, remade and renewed according to a radical new logic" (Kornhaber 2017: 17). Fabio Cleto (2013), instead, makes a parallel between the taste of the early 2000s and Camp aesthetics, whereby a mask mediates one's connection with the other by conveying some of their traits and thereby both hiding and revealing the individual. Finally, Peppino Ortoleva (2012) notes how ‚gamification' has extended in the last decades, involving our existence in its entirety. As a metaphorical framework based on an ‚as if', in fact, this playful approach has become essential to interact in our everyday life with objects that we are no longer able to understand.

A posthuman perspective on the Anthropocene

Since the mid-1990s (Wamberg & Rosendahl 2016: 150), the emergence of the post-human theory has also raised the question of the current relationship between human and non-human entities. In the following pages, I will try to understand whether one of the three models mentioned above is suitable to describe the dynamics that char-

acterise this in-between space or if another model is needed. The importance of this problem has been stressed by the interdisciplinary debate on the so-called ‚Anthropocene’, whose „symbolic beginning“ corresponds to the start of our century, when an important article by Eugene F. Stoermer and Paul J. Crutzen was published (Bińczyk 2019: 3). This debate is fuelled by scientific evidence about the impact of humanity on the environment and our powerlessness in the face of the current climatic crisis (Bińczyk 2019: 6-7). More significantly, the geological viewpoint in the term ‚Anthropo*cene*’, instead of positing the existence of a certain relationship between the two sides, focuses on the magnitude of their difference. On the one hand, Dipesh Chakrabarty notes that „[t]he narrative of world history has now collided (in our thoughts) with the much longer-term geological history of the planet“ (Chakrabarty 2018: 23); on the other, Jane Bennett writes about a „midrange speed of human endeavour“ that now has to deal with „the apersonal geologic“ temporality, namely a „bi-modal time of either a breakneck and explosively transformative speed (lightning, earthquake, wildfire) or an implacably slow, deep time (sedimentation, erosion, radioactive decay)“ (Bennett 2013: 244-245). Either way, it is now clear that humankind and ‚our’ planet possess two different, incomparable rhythms and forces, none of which appears to depend on the other one. However, according to Chakrabarty (2018), the great part of the discussions about the Anthropocene tend to ignore the geological time, privileging instead a perspective more aligned with the human world history. Yet, by making us consider the „‚excess’ carbon dioxide in the atmosphere“ as an „‚excess’ only on the scale of human concerns“ (Chakrabarty 2018: 32), this is precisely the perspective that downsizes the human power and supports a posthuman perspective on this issue.

Hyperobjects in light of Merleau-Ponty’s perception

Merleau-Ponty’s study of the concept of ‚perception’, to which he devoted (among others) his book *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), provides us with a model of the contact between men and their environment which does not follow any *construction* of meaning, since „the unity of the thing in perception is not constructed through association, but rather“ it is „the *condition* [emphasis added] of association“ (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 94). In fact, we can describe „the perceptual phenomenon as a primary opening up to an object“ whose „essential function […] is to establish or to inaugurate knowledge“. According to Merleau-Ponty, „one impression can never, *by itself*, be associated with another impression“ (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 94), and „[m]y body has its world, or understands its world without having to go through ‚representations,’ or without being subordinated to a ‚symbolic’ or ‚objectifying function’“ (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 203). Shortly said, „perception is precisely this act that creates, all at once, out of the constellation of givens, the sense that ties them together. Perception does not merely discover the sense *they have*, but rather, sees to it *that they have a sense*“ (Merleau-Pon-

ty 2013: 112) through an immediate, „*immanent signification*" (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 123). Therefore, taking perception as a reference point will allow us to detect the signs of a ‚transcendental signification' possibly built on the immanent one by the awareness of the Anthropocene. Otherwise, if also in the posthuman perspective there is no previous semantic medium at all, we could find in which respects and to what extent another creation of meaning ‚all at once' differs from the perceptive one.

In 2013, Timothy Morton wrote a book named after what he calls ‚*Hyperobjects*', the term he uses „to refer to things that are massively distributed in time and space *relative to humans* [emphasis added]", such as „the biosphere, of the Solar System" (Morton 2013: 12). Since they are „time-stretched to such a vast extent that they become almost impossible to hold in mind" (Morton 2013: 62), this concept is suitable to describe Anthropocene from the point of view of our interest, hence my decision to study the human-hyperobject relationship through the prism of Merleau-Ponty's analysis of perception. That will lead to a better understanding of what it means to look at the Anthropocene from a posthuman viewpoint.

Both perception and hyperobjects defy what Morton defines as the „maxim of modernity", i.e. „Anything you can do, I can do meta", namely „I can *see around* [emphasis added] mere objects" (Morton 2013: 141) (as in ‚*meta*physics', to be clear). In other words, „hyperobjects end the possibility of transcendental leaps ‚outside' physical reality" and, thereby, „the possibility of a metalanguage that could account for things while remaining uncontaminated by them" (Morton 2013: 12-13). According to Morton, „[h]umans are forced to confront with *phenomenological sincerity* [emphasis added], the truth that ‚there is no metalanguage'" (Morton 2013: 147), so that now we feel this ‚slogan' „more deeply than its inventors", namely the postmodernist thinkers (Morton 2013: 15). Similarly, according to Merleau-Ponty, our perception of things does „not begin by knowing the perspectival appearances of thing; it is not *mediated* [emphasis added] by our senses, our sensation, or out perspectives; we go straight to the thing". To quote his example, when a subject „who lives *among things* [emphasis added]" sees a dice, „he does not perceive projections or even profiles of the die;" rather, all the appearances „emanate from a central *Würfelhaftigkeit* [cubeness]". In fact, „[b]efore all else, the thing *is* in its evidentness" (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 375-376). Taking all this into account, we are already able to understand that both the human-hyperobject and the perceptive relationships are not based on external storytelling (as in the case of a game), on a semantic filter conceived by the subject (a collector) to organise the world, or on a medium (the Camp mask) the Other was given to manage its gaze on me.

Now remains to understand the differences between these two cases of immediate relationship. Merleau-Ponty (2013) states that, when I perceive (in general terms), I „settle into my surroundings as an ensemble of *manipulanda*". According to him, perception engages one's body as the power to a determinate action of which they know in advance the field and scope, while involving one's surroundings as the set of possible points where to apply this power. This way, whereas the „subject's intentions

are immediately reflected in the perceptual field: they polarize it, put their stamp on it, or finally, effortlessly give birth there to a wave of significations" (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 196), the surroundings always *propose* to them „a certain manner of being in the world" (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 270). In this open situation (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 488), the subject could take up this proposal and thereby „relate […] to an external being" by „slipping into the form of existence" it suggests, regardless of the extent of their adherence to it (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 271).

When we deal with hyperobjects, instead, these roles become reversed, and the action is in the non-human hands. In the Anthropocene world, we do not carry around „the zone of our possible operations, and the scope of our life" (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 149), but rather we find ourselves „in a shifting set of zones emitted by specific objects" (Morton 2013: 137). According to Timothy Morton, „[n]o longer are my intimate impressions ‚personal' in the sense that they are ‚merely mine' or ‚subjective only': they are footprints of hyperobjects, distorted as they always must be by the entity in which *they make their mark*—that is, me" (Morton 2013: 16). We have become the ones who receive the ‚stamp' of the other, and our „receptivity" (Morton 2013: 186) influences the appearance of an hyperobject ‚only' because human experience is „lower dimensional than it" (Morton 2013: 147), thus impeding the hyperobject to unfold all its characters at once. Therefore, in the Anthropocene, human beings (mind and body intertwined) have become the ‚photographic plate' on which hyperobjects project *local and momentary* indexical signs behind which they disappear. For example, I can feel this relationship when „global warming burns the skin on the back of my neck, making me itch with physical discomfort and inner anxiety" (Morton 2013: 34). This also applies to humanity as such, since the effects of global warming impress themselves in all the geological stratum named ‚Anthropocene' (Morton 2013: 102), namely the „thin layer of radioactive materials" or of „carbon from coal-fired industries" respectively deposited worldwide since 1945 and 1784 (Morton 2013: 15).

Moreover, it is important to stress that our „equipment (our ears, the top of my head, a weather vane)" (Morton 2013: 79) is lower-dimensional than the hyperobject also in terms of its limits in time and space. „Global warming is not a function of our measuring devices", since „like all hyperobjects, is nonlocal: it's massively distributed in time and space. What does this mean? It means that my experience of the weather in the *hic et nunc* is a false immediacy". Climate change, in fact, „is an object of which many things are distributed pieces" (Morton 2013: 53), from the bushfires in Australia to the melting glaciers in the Alps. Similarly, yet in reversed roles, the „existential rhythm" proposed by a perception field does not only ‚resonate' with *some* aspects of the subject *and not others*, but, going further, it cannot even ‚measure' them, according to Merleau-Ponty (2013). In fact, thanks to my freedom, or at least to the complexity and variability of my behaviour, every specific „situation is open, which implies both that it calls forth privileged modes of resolution and that it, by itself, lacks the power to procure any of them" (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 488).

Conclusions

„Three cheers for the so-called end of the world, then, since this moment is the begin-
ning of history, the end of the human dream that reality is significant for them alone"
(Morton 2013: 106), writes Morton. Through a posthuman perspective on the Anthro-
pocene, in fact, we feel to have crossed the threshold of an age in which non-human
entities impress their mark on human supports in a language different from ours. As we
saw, in fact, hyperobjects' nonlocality and distribution over time, along with the lack of
a metalanguage or any intelligible medium to rely on, prevent us from understanding
the signs carved on our personal or global skin. Therefore, they never reveal to us what
is behind their appearance. From our perspective (as humans), this results in what can
be summarised as a ‚recording of a non-deciphered text'.

Many recent artworks may recall these dynamics by exposing human supports
to the natural agents they were prepared to be receptive to, without claiming further
control over this process or translating their signs into an understandable language.
Since none of the following examples presents living nature, I must specify that this
‚recording' does not exclude it, provided that it plays the role of ‚human support', of
‚receptive reagent', or of ‚undecipherable text'. Instead, these artists adopted as recep-
tive supports artistic media such as the canvas used for *Buried Painting (Champagne)*
(2012-2014) by Davide Balula. The Portuguese artist employs the technique (made
explicit by the title) in many of his recent artworks, leaving the soil to transform his
canvases, „triggering different reactions each time" (GAMeC 2021b). *Contingency
(Pinecones and Driftwoods)* (2014) by Dove Bradshaw, instead, consists of a linen
fabric treated with reactive materials, such as liver, silver, and sulphur, which the art-
ist has exposed to a snowstorm (GAMeC 2021b). Furthermore, a huge photographic
paper, exposed for a long time to the imperceptible light and air of a dark room, has
been used to realise *Greifba 43* (2015) by Wolfgang Tillmans, whose „resulting image
makes one think of the sun, of a body seen from the inside, of an abstract painting or
perhaps of X-rays" (GAMeC 2021a). More recently, Olafur Eliasson produced many
watercolours by placing „pieces of ancient glacial ice that were fished from the sea off
the coast of Greenland" „on a sheet of thick paper atop thin washes of colour" or traces
of ink. In these artworks, not only an artistic support couples with a natural action (the
ice melting) but also two different temporalities meet: „the days it took to produce it
and the millennia it took the glacier to form" (Olafur, n.d.).

In all these cases, however, the ‚recording' aspect responsible for the mediation
between the human world and the environment is inextricably combined with the unde-
cipherable text (or image) resulting, thereby exhausting its possibility of use. Moreover,
none of the mentioned works of art suggests us to assemble it with similar others; hence
their unsuitability to represent an arche that composes everything real. This critique
does not apply if we consider the artwork *Pink Elements* by SUPERFLEX. This work

of art manages to preserve intact its usability as a receptive medium, since it separates the receptive support and the footprint of the environment, which is expected in the future. It will occur, in fact, when the rising oceans will eventually submerge these bricks and they will „be repurposed by marine creatures" (SUPERFLEX, n.d.), namely by the ‚mark' of the environmental change. Finally, being designed as a building block, the *Pink Elements* can be considered an adequate representation of the ultimate substance that composes the relationship between humanity (or a singular human) and the world ‚during' the Anthropocene. Always staying within the limits of the cultural perspective adopted in this article, this corresponds to saying that it can be thought of as a possible artistic representation of the arche that constitutes our posthuman reality, since relationship coincides with reality from a ‚post-postmodern' point of view.

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