



Fig. 1. Gian Maria Tosatti, *Storia della notte e destino delle comete*, 2022, Italian Pavilion, 59th Venice Biennale, Venice, installation view, courtesy of the artist

Zones of Unknowing, or the Experiencing of Inhuman Encounters

Emiliano Guaraldo

Ahora la sentimos inagotable
como un antiguo vino
y nadie puede contemplarla sin vértigo
y el tiempo la ha cargado de eternidad.
Y pensar que no existiría
sin esos tenués instrumentos, los ojos¹.

Historia de la noche, Jorge Luis Borges (1977)

Environmental Knowledge and Installation Art

From a historical perspective, the relationship between artistic practice and environmental thought has developed through several phases. The 1960s and 1970s represented a significant period of cross-pollination when ecological knowledge began to be popularized in the public sphere. Environmental concerns gained explicit prominence in artistic practice through works like Hans Haacke's *Grass Grows* (1966) and systems ecology approaches², but this engagement had a longer historical genealogy. Nineteenth-century landscape art already reflected a growing recognition that "humans are subject to a natural history", shifting away from purely aesthetic or nationalist concerns toward early forms of ecological awareness³. By the beginning of the 1970s, the integration of technological systems and environmental thinking generated new artistic approaches, particularly through experiments with media ecology. Among other instances both in Europe and the US, developments in systems and media ecology occurred alongside other significant trajectories in environmental

art⁴. Different approaches emerged simultaneously: monumental interventions like Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) and Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* (1969), temporary large-scale installations such as Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Valley Curtain* (1970-72), and minimal traces like Richard Long's walking pieces. By the 1970s, artists began experimenting with land reclamation projects, while the 1980s saw works like Agnes Denes' *Wheatfield: A Confrontation* (1982) directly addressing environmental and economic contradictions. By the 1990s, environmental art entered its third phase, characterized by more explicit engagement with ecological issues through direct commentary on environmental problems, symbolic warnings about environmental degradation, and acts of bearing witness to environmental change⁵.

Installation art and the curation of immersive experiential environments occupy a recognizable position within the broader field of relations between art and ecological thought thanks to their emphasis on direct experience and temporal development rather than static representation. Where other forms might represent space, light, time or material relations through pictorial or sculptural means, or, as recently theorized by James Voorhies, deploying an increasingly complex apparatus of post-sensual aesthetics⁶, immersive installations construct situations that unfold through the visitor's sensory and physical interactions, being these both immediate and long term, thereby establishing a different order of aesthetic encounter altogether. In her groundbreaking work on installation art, Claire Bishop argued that the viewer's relationship to these works is fundamentally connected to processes of *activation* and *decentering*⁷. Since

"viewers are addressed directly by every work of installation art – by sheer virtue of

the fact that these pieces are large enough for us to enter them – our experience is markedly different from that of traditional painting and sculpture. Instead of representing texture, space, light and so on, installation art presents these elements directly for us to experience. This introduces an emphasis on sensory immediacy, on physical participation (the viewer must walk into and around the work), and on a heightened awareness of other visitors who become part of the piece”⁸.

The movement towards direct presentation and physical experience alters how meaning is produced by the encounter with artworks, as these are modes of artistic practice where temporal and spatial experience take precedence over symbolic or representational strategies. Among other things, their methodological features enable forms of situated and embodied encounter with objects of speculation, epistemes, relations, texts introduced and popularized by ecological thought since the 1960s that conventional representational strategies are limited in their addressing. The artwork itself can no longer be considered a discrete object of contemplation, but instead a field of “situations that develop across time, that originate from one’s experience of the works’ environments”⁹. By design, installations create situations where an examination of the work’s structure becomes inseparable from a reflection on the visitor’s own actions¹⁰. These experiential characteristics acquire particular significance in relation to environmental thought, making installation art potentially become

“polyarchic sites of experimentation for living in a damaged world, offering a range of discursive, visual and sensual strategies that are not confined by the regimes of scientific objectivity, political moralism or psychological depression”¹¹.

Indeed, environmental theorists seem to be particularly drawn to the potential of installation space as a tool for positive change and for imagining new forms of eco-political activism. Through its dual function of emplacement and investment¹², these spaces make possible for multiple forms of agency and more-than-human temporalities to coexist and interact.

This essay looks at two recent installation projects: Gian Maria Tosatti’s Italian pavilion at the Venice Biennale, *History of the Night and Destiny of the Comets (Storia della notte e destino delle comete, 2022)* and Pierre Huyghe’s exhibition, *Liminal (2024)* also installed in Venice as a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. By analyzing what Huyghe calls “zones of unknowing”¹³, the essay reflects on how these works create experiential fields where visitors are physically confronted with the conceptual paradoxes and ontological displacements of human categories within planetary times and scales. These spaces make tangible certain conditions that are always present but rarely graspable in everyday life, such as the co-agency of different temporalities, the distributed nature of non-human perception, the persistence of material processes that exceed human temporal frames. The analysis attempts to move away from viewing ecological installation artworks as devices with the function of *visualizing* more-than-human hyperobjects¹⁴, as further potential can be found in their ability of *manifesting zones* where visitors encounter different modes of existence and perception that exceed human understanding. Zones of unknowing do not seek to instruct audiences or mediate a direct exchange of knowledge between artist and viewer; instead, they can also work with darkness, distance, disorientation, and delay. The act of *unknowing* operates as undoing, or unlearning, and as a confrontation with the limits of human mastery

over present and future worlds. Encounters facilitated by emerging technologies of the inhuman that induce states of ontological porosity. Following Tosatti and Huyghe, the essay briefly examines also the zones of unknowing in Gino De Dominicis's work, suggesting that such spaces appeared earlier in art history, albeit motivated by distinct philosophical and historical contingencies. The essay bridges environmental humanities scholarship with art theory and art-historical discourse, focusing on how these spaces function as zones of encounter through bodily presence, while also taking into account their art-historical lineages.

Disanthropy, Prolepsis, and Zones of Unknowing

The works analyzed in this essay instantiate some interrelated temporal and ontological paradoxes that have emerged in environmental discourse, in particular around the Anthropocene thesis. Namely, the imagining of the absence of humans from the planet – or the experiencing of a *world-without-us*, to use the expression introduced by Alan Weisman and Eugene Thacker¹⁵ – the reconstitution of current anthropogenic planetary impacts as future geological evidence, and the act of sensing by non-human witnesses and more-than-human intelligences. While these ideas have been extensively explored in speculative literature, film, and critical theory, recent projects by Gian Maria Tosatti and Pierre Huyghe materialize these paradoxes via immediate corporeal experience¹⁶.

Pierre Huyghe's decades-long research on experiential eco/techno-systems and Gian Maria Tosatti's forensic imaginary of liminal spaces represent different artistic trajectories, but their approaches, nevertheless, seem to converge toward complementary encounters with the inhuman:¹⁷ the spec-

ulation of human absence from the planet, and the emergence of non-human witnessing and intelligences. Where Huyghe explicitly constructs these relations as the core of his medium, Tosatti allows them to surface through theatrical stagings of abandonment, decay, ruination of built environments and infrastructure. In one way or another, their projects seem to make emerge different configurations of what Huyghe has termed as “zones of unknowing”¹⁸: spaces that are defined by strategic indeterminacy and open-ended experiential conditions. The zone, produced, occupied, acted upon, and traversed within by a subject (a collaboration between artist and experiencer) is not really an object confined by physical boundaries, but constitutes, instead, a field where multiple perceptive and material processes intersect without pre-determined resolution. In such zones, the act of witnessing, or being witnessed, become crucial, but witnessing does not translate into knowing. As Huyghe notes, when entering such a situation,

“you become a witnessing component, you become a connecting point within it. The subject and its environment are indissociable, there's no longer any hierarchy between those present, but there are still unstable distinctions”¹⁹.

Activated by the artists' interventions and design, these zones become settings where perceptual disorientation generates encounters with the limits of human cognition and control. These encounters take different forms: from reading and interpreting traces of human absence to speculations on deep time, to participating in the birth of techno-ecological hybrid systems. Within these zones, visitors are confronted with modes of existence and temporal scales that resist immediate anthropocentric and biocentric understanding, ranging

from algorithmic processes to geological transformations, from bacterial communities to industrial decay²⁰.

Despite belonging to distinct categories, installation art and exhibitions share key meaning-bearing properties through their mutual reliance on display and site-responsiveness²¹. The cases analyzed here represent different configurations of this relationship as Tosatti's *History of the Night and Destiny of the Comets* is a single large-scale installation, organized in "acts", while Huyghe's *Liminal*, though formally an exhibition of multiple works, functions as an installation in its totality through its integrated system of environmental responsiveness and visitor interaction. The visitor's movement through the exhibition space triggers various sensing apparatuses, creating a unified experiential environment that exceeds the sum of its individual components²².

As James Voorhies observes in his recent analysis of contemporary art practices, artistic and curatorial production have both increasingly evolved toward what he terms post-sensual aesthetics, where "audiences have both sensual and cognitive encounters with a work dependent on the piece(s) with which they intersect", this mode of production has emerged alongside shifts in audience expectations, who "want to walk away from an exhibition with more knowledge about something than when they entered"²³. However, the works by Tosatti and Huyghe considered in this essay suggest a different, parallel, perhaps complementary trajectory: rather than moving beyond the sensory experience toward primarily research-informed encounters, both artists construct zones that foreground bodily and perceptual engagement precisely as modes of knowing (and unknowing). In Tosatti's work, visitors move through industrial ruins embodying both present experiencers and a future archaeo-geological gaze; in Huyghe's exhibition, as algorithmic

systems respond to environmental conditions, visitors become objects of mechanical observation. These works are activated by the visitor's physical presence within these zones. Walking through them, being sensed by their systems, encountering their spatial and temporal dimensions become inseparable parts of a process of ontological destitution²⁴.

History of the Night and Destiny of the Comets: Gian Maria Tosatti's Italian Pavilion

In 2022, attesting for a surge of interests towards ecological issues within the Italian institutional art scene, the Italian pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale was entirely dedicated, for the first time ever, to a single site-specific installation by Gian Maria Tosatti, a project expressly informed by ecological sensibilities²⁵. An interdisciplinary artist who transitioned from theater scenography and stagecraft towards large environmental and architectural installations²⁶, Tosatti designed a multi-spatial immersive experience that forced visitors to reflect on the state of decay of Italian industrial modernity, and to think about the future of humanity in a permanently damaged planet. Influenced by a canon of literary and theoretical works on the Italian industrial age²⁷, Tosatti's highly curated, sensorial, spatial installation re-purposed narrative and scenic devices from theater and cinema.

The site-specific, temporal installation was structured as a large experiential device organized in two acts. The first one, titled *History of the Night* (fig. 1), had visitors walking through two abandoned industrial sheds, known in Italy as *capannoni industriali*, a type of multi-purpose building that is ubiquitous in industrialized areas around the country. These environments were



Fig. 2. Gian Maria Tosatti, *Storia della notte e destino delle comete*, 2022, Italian Pavilion, 59th Venice Biennale, Venice, installation view, courtesy of the artist

designed and curated to appear as if their human occupants had suddenly vanished, leaving everything else intact, though now rusted, dust-covered, and marked by the passage of time²⁸. “Piles of machines inexorably condemned to technological obsolescence”²⁹ filled the first space: a collection of conveyor belts, presses, metal arms, switchboards and electrical systems, some eerily still powered on³⁰.

A staircase then led visitors from what felt like a backstage area onto an abandoned apartment. This domestic interior had the visitors perform a peculiar act of intrusion into privacy, an “eerie minimal atmosphere”, where petit “bourgeois interiors [...] are violated in their false intimacy by the visitor, who finds himself, almost unconsciously, turned into a voyeur by proxy”³¹. Visitors were suddenly peering into traces of an absent human life, the in-

stallation shifting its mode of witness from industrial archaeology to forensic investigation. Beyond this unsettling domestic pause, another industrial space opened up, but here the temporal logic changed again. Under dim overhead lights, textile machines stood “still there neatly arranged as if the workers who operate them have momentarily gone off for their lunch break”³². These shifts in register, from industrial to domestic, from decay to suspension, composed what the Italian pavilion curator Eugenio Viola described as “scenes from a post-industrial metaphysics that metaphorically retraces the rise and fall of the great Italian industrial dream”³³.

The final industrial shed, titled *Destiny of the Comets* (fig. 2), was occupied by a dark body of water rolling against its walls. Throughout the expanse, signs of urban infrastructure appeared partially submerged by the

water, ghostly remnants of what must have been a city square and road before a cataclysmic flood. The scale of the scene suggested a catastrophic transformation of the urban landscape, where infrastructures of modernity now stood as monuments to its submergence. This apocalyptic vision took one final turn with the appearance of artificial fireflies hovering above the dark waters, a luminous swarm creating a counterpoint to the drowned electric lights below. Their presence signaled the non-human reclamation of a world once dominated by the *anthropos* of the Anthropocene, the species and geo-historical agent the artist and the visitors of the installation are part of, transforming the scene of devastation into an indecisive image caught in between destruction and renewal³⁴.

History of the Night and Destiny of the Comets established a zone of unknowing that extended beyond the physical confines of the Tese delle Vergini, the area of the Arsenale where the Italian pavilion is located³⁵. Though physically bounded by the Arsenale's architecture, the installation suspended the visitors' perception and understanding of time, forcing them to reflect more broadly about the fate of industrial civilization itself. The idea of an Italian industrial era was ambiguously evoked with nostalgic undertones, together with the acknowledgement of the environmental and toxic violence unleashed upon landscapes and living communities in places like Seveso, Casale Monferrato, Taranto, Porto Marghera³⁶. In this way, visitors found themselves in speculative, almost cinematic, replicas of industrial spaces open to multiple interpretations, not reducible to purely historical document nor aesthetic abstraction, neither fully present nor entirely absent; like toxicity, dispersed beyond the physical infrastructure that brought it into the world, now pervasive and ubiquitous. At once, gestational spac-

es of the Italian economic miracle and of socio-ecological violence. The industrial remains existed simultaneously as real historical artifacts, aesthetic objects, sources of oncological emergencies, and fossilized carriers of proleptic warnings from the future, while visitors occupied multiple positions at once (present witness, future investigator, unwitting intruder). As Viola notes, this generated "a reflection on time, in a way that is destructured and brought back to a continuous incoercible present that has the power of memory"³⁷.

The experience of moving through these spaces was fundamentally solitary, a solitude that was intensified by pandemic protocols which required visitors to enter the pavilion one at a time, with enforced distances between them³⁸. The installation became "an authentic multidimensional screen that collects and shows the images generated by each individual visitor, making every visit a quintessentially subjective, unrepeatable, and, therefore, unique experience"³⁹. Individual perception was shaped by the design of movement through the space: the enforced distances between visitors, the dim lighting that isolated each person in their own experiential bubble, the way certain viewpoints could only be occupied by one person at a time. Each individual path through the zone felt rhythmically composed by an internal montage that guided the visitor's senses and cognition, an embodied cinematic unconscious. In his book *Esperienza e realtà* (2021), Tosatti outlines his understanding of art's relationship to reality and experience. The text begins from a basic proposition: artworks operate according to the same laws as physical reality, making them realities on their own terms rather than representations⁴⁰. This leads him to argue that aesthetic experience constitutes genuine experience, with aesthetic phenomena carrying equivalent value to physical phe-

nomena. The text focuses particularly on the relationship between an artwork and its observer, positioning this relationship as art's defining feature: an artwork without an observer becomes meaningless and therefore nonexistent⁴¹. The artwork functions as a mediating element between the viewer and "multiple dimensions of being", enabling the emergence of an "ulterior reality"⁴². In Tosatti's installation, this ulterior reality emerges through a peculiar spatio-temporal situation: while industrial infrastructure remains materially present, human presence has vanished, leaving visitors to navigate through a zone where their own species is simultaneously present (as observers) and absent (as inhabitants), or, in other words, where their absence is the object itself of their observation.

In an influential essay, ecocriticism scholar Greg Garrard introduced the notion of "disanthropy", a recurrent trope in the literature and cinemas of the Anthropocene. Different from misanthropy, which expresses a feeling of hatred for humanity while maintaining human perspective, or simple human absence which might be temporary, disanthropy represents a more radical imagining of permanent human extinction. Garrard traces this mode of thinking to two historical developments: the rise of millennial Christianity and the discovery of geological deep time⁴³. Unlike post-apocalyptic traditions that always preserved at least one human witness, disanthropy imagines complete human elimination. As Garrard notes, disanthropy is also an experience that is aesthetic in nature, as there is "a peculiar beauty in the disanthropic moment"⁴⁴. But this beauty presents a fundamental paradox: it requires human consciousness to imagine its own absolute absence.

This paradox has generated various artistic attempts to represent the unrepresentable. In literature, Garrard mentions how

Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) first explored disanthropy as a formal problem through its central section *Time Passes*, where human deaths become parenthetical mentions while nature slowly reclaims an uninhabited house. However, the written word's dependence on narrative voice makes disanthropic imagination "conspicuously self-contradictory, and probably impossible"⁴⁵. Film seemed to offer new possibilities through the camera's "mechanical indifference"⁴⁶, but even in experimental works like Michael Snow's *La Région Centrale* (1971), where human subjectivity is rigorously excluded with the use of machine-operated cameras, the human perspective remains implicitly present. This leads Garrard to pose a crucial question: "who is the subject 'hailed' by this disanthropic artifact?"⁴⁷. But also, we may add, how to encounter scales and temporalities that exceed human comprehension while remaining bound to human modes of witness?

The concept of "infrastructural prolepsis", recently introduced by Reuben Martens and Pieter Vermeulen, offers a way to understand how imagined futures can actively shape and transform present experience. Prolepsis, in their framework, operates as a specific temporal mode: not a "flash forward" but an "aspirational mode" of the future anterior, where the future imagined remains in continuous dialogue with present conditions rather than representing a complete break or rupture⁴⁸. This temporal dynamic is implied in discussions of the Anthropocene and on planetary futures, where questions of continuity and discontinuity, survival and extinction, constantly intersect. Post-catastrophic imaginaries function as "the dramatization of that which will have been", creating "an etiology of the conditions that are imagined in the future but that are unfolding in the present of this lit-

erature's production and consumption"⁴⁹. The growing awareness of anthropogenic climate change and human extinction has expanded the function of narrative itself becoming a way to confront the possibility of the violent decoupling of humans from their planet. This shift is embodied in the figure of the future reader who provides a perspective from which "the tale of ongoing human error can be narrated with the benefit of hypothetical hindsight"⁵⁰. Such a reader oscillates between two modes: the historian interpreting past failures, and the geologist reading the physical traces of human existence after its extinction in a tension that points to the anxieties and uncertainties surrounding the anticipation of species finitude⁵¹.

Within *History of the Night and Destiny of the Comets*, visitors physically encounter these temporal paradoxes through their movement within space. While maintaining an element of chance in individual experiences, the installation transforms industrial ruins and abandoned infrastructure into proleptic objects: inert witnesses whose narrative potential is activated to be interrogated from an impossible future position⁵². The visitor is forced to operate an ontological split, simultaneously existing as present observer moving through an actually existing space, and as a speculative future investigator examining traces of human absence. This split constitutes Tosatti's specific declination of a zone of unknowing: a staged progression, in which a rudimentary sense of embodied, cinematic montage pushes visitors through industrial spaces where they must reconcile different temporal scales and modes of witness, forensic evidence and materiality, human agency and geological process. Schisms provoked by the encounter between a defunct human world and the inhumanity that persists within its witness. Like particles in quantum superposition, these el-

ements exist simultaneously in multiple states, evidence and ruin, present and future, human trace and geological deposit, their meaning determined through the act of witnessing. Paraphrasing Katheryn Yusoff, the future archaeologist becomes "a material and discursive device to trace a geologic sentience back and forth across this epochal threshold"⁵³, embodying both a "proto-human" fossilized as a product of the future and a surviving witness who must "raise sensible questions about the immortality, immorality of humanity"⁵⁴. Through this staging of temporal indeterminacy, the installation asks the visitor to exist at once as a speculative sentient species in a *future-world-without-us* and as an individual human in a present shaped by the logics of petro-capitalism.

Pierre Huyghe's Liminal

Examining exhibition practices alongside installation art requires acknowledging their shared methodological ground. As Eleen Deprez argues, both installation art and exhibitions rely on similar meaning-bearing properties: the strategic organization of display and an inherent site-responsiveness⁵⁵. Meaning emerges through the arrangement of elements within space, where "the work is more than the sum of its parts"⁵⁶. This becomes manifest in Pierre Huyghe's 2024 exhibition *Liminal* at Punta della Dogana in Venice. Developed with curator Anne Stenne, *Liminal* presented new and existing works of the French artist, attesting for his coherent, decades-long probing of the thresholds between human, non-human, and artificial intelligences. The exhibition continued Huyghe's exploration of zones where different forms of agency and cognition can intersect and interact. In this occasion, however, rather than being limited to a single installation,

the zone was constituted by the whole exhibition, where existing works and commissioned pieces generated new interactions. From the beginning, the curation of the exhibition's environments emphasized the visitor's experience as an intensely sensorial one. Especially in the first section, the spaces were very dark, visitors were told in advance to walk carefully. The floor was slightly covered in what felt like black sand, making every step feel tactile in the dark. Under Huyghe's direction, Punta della Dogana was transformed into an immersive sequence where the artist could "pursue still further his exploration of what he calls the inhuman"⁵⁷. Once the eyes adjusted to the darkness, what emerged was a series of works that, "conceived as perpetually evolving systems", generated a "reflection on our very condition, as this has been formed over the millennia and could yet mutate in the future"⁵⁸.

Huyghe's investigation of non-human consciousness and his questioning of exhibition conventions have gone hand-in-hand over decades through various projects and exhibitions⁵⁹. As Nicolas Bourriaud notes, the artist

"often shows living creatures: bees, dogs, mollusks, bacilli, and formulates the hypothesis of a 'world without humans.' These organisms, by producing forms within the regulated context of his exhibitions, introduce an unpredictable dimension to them"⁶⁰.

On a fundamental level, Bourriaud emphasizes how Huyghe

"upends the conventions that bind the artist and the beholder, human consciousness and its objects", through his stated intention to not "exhibit something to someone, but rather the reverse: *to exhibit someone to something*"⁶¹.

This inversion of the traditional exhibition relationship where human visitors become objects of non-human perception has been a consistent thread throughout Huyghe's practice, but in *Liminal* it achieves a new level of complexity through the integration of artificial intelligence and environmental sensing systems. According to Ursula Ströbele, Huyghe's artistic approach employs systems with partially concealed relationships that form underlying narratives, and his work belongs to a historical lineage that stems from the (eco)systems aesthetics of the 1960s⁶². Though Huyghe has stated he was unfamiliar with Hans Haacke's pioneering biological systems⁶³, his installations nonetheless share conceptual similarities in how they establish relational ontologies by assembling diverse elements within site-specific ecosystems⁶⁴. However, Huyghe diverges from Haacke's explicitly eco-political methodology. Instead, as Ströbele argues, his work is better understood as *eco-fiction* that imagines speculative ecological futures and potential worlds, effectively creating artificial memories of futures yet to come⁶⁵.

Central to the exhibition is *Camata* (fig. 3), a work that radically inverts the perspective on / of the gaze of the Anthropocene. Set in the Atacama Desert, the oldest and driest desert on Earth, used by astronomers as testing ground for studying exoplanets⁶⁶, the video presents a set of machines performing what appears to be an unknown ritual around the unburied skeleton of a young man. The film is presented in a large room at the center of the Punta della Dogana exhibition space and features robotic cameras surveying human bones in the desert landscape, their movements directed by machine learning systems that offer a vision of a future (or is it the present?) where artificial intelligences might examine human remains as we now study pre-historic fossils⁶⁷. The camera's gaze moves



Fig. 3. Pierre Huyghe, *Camata*, video still, 2024, Punta della Dogana – Pinault Collection, Venice, © 2026, ProLitteris, Zurich

around a skeleton partially covered by soil, still bearing traces of decomposed clothing. When the view expands, mechanical arms are shown methodically arranging and re-arranging glass spheres around the human remains, in an endless sequence of configurations, performing what appears to be a mechanized burial ritual for humanity itself⁶⁸. This machinic choreography oscillates “at once as an endless funeral rite, an operating theater, and the learning process and formation of a specific lifeless subjectivity”⁶⁹. The film combines footage captured by the robotic apparatus itself with wider shots showing the machines at work, but its structure is determined by real-time editing processes operating without direct human intervention. Sensors following the visitors throughout the exhibition space continuously influence this editing, generating what the curator describes as “a

self-presentation that endlessly edits itself, without linearity, beginning or end”⁷⁰. This self-editing structure mirrors and extends Huyghe’s inversion of the speculative geological forensic gaze of the Anthropocene: as visitors observe artificial intelligences conducting their study of human remains, they themselves become data points for the exhibition’s sensing systems, with their bodily presence triggering new configurations of the film’s temporal sequence. These images are not proleptically warning us about human futures or narrating a moral tale about extinction, as something that the humans of the present can avoid by enacting certain behaviors or avoiding other ones, but rather what the catalogue calls “a transactional operation between different realities, a passage between a bodiless entity and a lifeless human body”⁷¹. Montage here arises through a different bodily relation com-

pared to Tosatti's, as the installation at the Italian pavilion created narrative through the spatial sequencing that visitors produced on their own as they moved through the space, with no path exactly identical to the others. *Camata*, however, establishes a cybernetic loop where visitors' bodies serve as environmental inputs that affect the machine's editing decisions, while these same bodies simultaneously become spectators to the resulting montage: a recursive relationship where human presence operates as both source material and audience for an algorithmic intelligence that perpetually reconfigures the visual stream along with the experiential conditions through which the encounter with human remains can be witnessed and understood. In this case, machine learning and human unknowing are feeding into the same system.

Unlike Tosatti's forensic performance, here we observe non-human intelligences conducting their own inscrutable witnessing of human civilization reduced to detritus. The work functions as a cyber-physical system where sensors, computational processes, and robotic movements are integrated into continuous feedback loops. A form of non-human witnessing takes the stage as a collection of autonomous processes of knowledge-making⁷². Thinking along Michael Richardson, such non-human modes of witnessing don't aim to banish the human but rather create "a new kind of injunction upon the human – to attend to the nonhuman and to recognize that there is no human without the nonhuman"⁷³. *Camata* materializes this with its self-editing processes and robotic rituals through which both human remains and living bodies become subject to forms of machine perception and analysis that remain deliberately opaque to human interpretation. If in Tosatti's installation the ontological split occurs within the human visitor, who must simultaneously occupy the position

of present observer and ultimate witness of humanity's absence, in *Camata* this split is externalized and subsumed by the exhibition's cyber-physical system. The human subject is not asked to imagine or embody a paradoxical perspective; instead, they become part of a present reality where multiple forms of intelligence and perception already coexist, interact, and autonomously evolve. This represents a fundamental difference in how these two zones of unknowing operate: where Tosatti stages a proleptic experience that still depends on human imagination, Huyghe establishes a system where human perception is just one element among many in a broader system of acts of sensing and knowing, one that proceeds with complete indifference to human comprehension.

Throughout the exhibition, other forms of non-human cognition and perception interact. The work *UUmwelt-Annlee* exemplifies this through what the catalogue describes as a co-production where "human imagination is reconstructed by an inhuman cognition"⁷⁴. The work has several stages: first, a person is connected to a brain-computer interface while imagining Annlee, an imaginary character⁷⁵. The interface captures their neural activity, which is then processed by an artificial intelligence system. This AI attempts to reconstruct the mental images by drawing from a vast database, producing thousands of variant interpretations. Davide Tolfo describes this type of interaction in Huyghe's art as a "biosemiotic environment": a space where biological processes (in this case human brain activity) and symbolic processes (machine interpretation) become inseparable⁷⁶. The output images are "externalized without the subject predetermining the outcome, bypassing all known modes of expression"⁷⁷, their sequences constantly shift in response to environmental conditions in the gallery

space, creating a “network of interdependence” where each element (human brain, AI system, environmental sensors) influences and is influenced by the others⁷⁸.

This interaction between different forms of intelligence and perception takes another direction in the series of aquariums that appear, as the catalogue notes, “like a body diffracted in space”⁷⁹. In *Zoodram 6*, a hermit crab inhabits a replica of Constantin Brâncuși’s *Sleeping Muse* (1910 ca.), while *Cambrian Explosion 19* features anemones along with horseshoe and arrow crabs, species that appeared 540 million years ago and survived mostly unchanged to this day: living fossils whose “instinctual behaviors last beyond the lifespan of each individual and recur as they continue to reproduce”⁸⁰. These works stage encounters between radically different temporal and perceptual worlds. Ancient species whose forms of intelligence and behavior have remained stable for millions of years, fossils immortal in their own way, coexist with human visitors in a shared space, yet without any possibility of translation or dialogue between their modes of existence. As biosemiotic environments, the aquariums show how different forms of agency and cognition intersect without hierarchy: their interconnected nature creates sympoetic spaces where the alteration of any relationship between elements inevitably resonates throughout the entire work⁸¹. The aquariums become zones where multiple temporalities and forms of intelligence coexist, from the recursive instinctual behavior of crabs to the regenerative capacities of starfish, remaining, also in this case, fundamentally opaque to human understanding.

Huyghe’s *Liminal* exhibition gives body to a process of techno-genesis, a conceptualization of technology not as an extension of human ontology, but as possessing its own distinct logics of evolution and adap-

tation⁸². Huyghe seems fascinated by the emergence of perception from the void of a dark, lifeless universe, a technology of self-witnessing, that in his works, evolves from the rudimentary senses of primordial biological systems to the incomprehensible “vision” of machines, artificial intelligences, non-biological forms of existence. If Tosatti’s staging of industrial ruins invited visitors to imagine human absence, its implications and possible causes, Huyghe designs technological and physical systems of perception that actively reflect their own modes of becoming. The robotic cameras and AI systems of *Camata* are not tools of representation within a larger narrative, they are not the future readers identified by Vermeulen, but constitute, instead, what geographer Thomas Keating describes as a “specific mode of existence defined in terms of ontogenesis as ‘coming-into-being’”⁸³. For Huyghe technology is not something that exists to serve or extend human capabilities or human understanding of the cosmos, *Liminal* posits technologies’ “creative capacities of invention and adaptation that do not necessarily join up with the lifeworld of the human”⁸⁴. *Liminal* constitutes a zone of unknowing that operates through technogenesis and not human imagination, by creating systems where technological processes are allowed to evolve according to their own internal rhythms and relationships.

Gino De Dominicis’ experiments with immortality

The ontological destabilizations central to Huyghe’s and Tosatti’s installations resonate with earlier artistic experiments that sought to confront the limits of human perception, albeit originated within radically different philosophical and historical frameworks. Gino De Dominicis’

(1947–1998) *Seconda soluzione di immortalità (L'universo è immobile)*, (*Second Solution of Immortality [The Universe is Still]*) 1972, exhibited briefly at the Venice Biennale before its controversial removal, exemplifies how installation practices have long served as sites for confronting the limits of human perception, even when divorced from contemporary onto-ecological debates. Though De Dominicis's own obsessions of immortality, cosmic time, and death possibly also spoke from a Cold War context of nuclear anxiety and existential crisis, his work shares with the others analyzed in this essay the production of zones where human perception's coherence fractures, so that alternative modes of witnessing can emerge.

At the core of *Seconda soluzione* sat Paolo Rosa, a young man with Down syndrome, alongside three enigmatic objects: a stone, a rubber ball, and a square outlined on the floor⁸⁵. These objects worked through “the enigma of *poiesis*”⁸⁶, as their titles posited latent potentials that demanded viewers relinquish certainty in their senses or perception of causality. Rosa's presence intensified this suspension. Framed by De Dominicis as immortal due to a cognitive “deficit” that alienated him from mortality's symbolic order⁸⁷, Rosa became a “hypersensitive and parallel being”⁸⁸, his gaze inducing a “nonreflective seeing”⁸⁹. Visitors found themselves caught in a recursive loop: observing Rosa as component of the installation while being observed by him in ways that defied interpretation, and that made evident parallel processes of objectification and subjectification simultaneously taking place within the zone created by De Dominicis. This inversion of the gaze, where visitors became objects of an inscrutable witness, disrupted the exhibition space's traditional hierarchies, positioning human consciousness itself as plural, unstable, simultaneous, and irre-

ducible to a single form.

De Dominicis's work inadvertently exposed societal anxieties about difference and normativity, as demonstrated by the scandal that surrounded the artwork⁹⁰. Gabriele Guercio remembers how media outlets sensationalized Rosa's presence, falsely labeling him “blind and deaf” and decrying the installation as a “descent into madness”⁹¹. Critics reduced Rosa to a “mongoloid” spectacle⁹², framing his inclusion as exploitative without recognizing his role as a co-creator of the work's ontological rupture. This backlash stemmed from a refusal to accept Rosa's “unfathomable gaze” as a legitimate mode of witnessing, one that “could not be translated into a knowing”⁹³. The public's discomfort mirrored a broader cultural insistence on “correcting”, erasing, hiding, taming Rosa's difference, whether through medical normalization or aesthetic exclusion. But De Dominicis insisted that Rosa's presence was integral to the work's exploration of immortality, stating in 1995: “I never exhibited a ‘mongoloid’... Paolo Rosa observed the works from his unique internal perspective, opposed to that of the spectators”⁹⁴. The artworks, the visitors' disorientation, and Rosa's own potential for *unknowing* were all constituents of the zone thus produced by De Dominicis.

Seen from today, one of De Dominicis' works from the same era, *Il tempo, lo sbaglio, lo spazio* (1969), *Time, Error, Space* – a sculpture of a human skeleton on roller skates lying on the ground next to its leashed skeleton dog companion – seems to parody techno-utopian progress while evoking nuclear-induced apocalyptic anxieties typical of the times. We can only imagine that for Cold War audiences, similarly to how today we immediately recognize the empty industrial spaces of *Storia della notte* as proleptic and disanthropic, the forensic absurdity of the work might have mirrored fears of sudden erasure, of

humanity vanishing after existing only for a tiny fraction of geological time. The dark humor of the sculpture mocks human civilization's futile attempts to domesticate and comprehend time and space, presenting mortality itself as grotesque parody. Prolepsis is not mobilized here as a warning for a soon to vanish civilization, this fossil is not a relic of mourning. Visitors encounter the lying skeletons circling around the work similarly to how *Camata's* robotic cameras will, decades later, orbit human remains: here the sculpture's inert absurdity refuses to resolve its temporality. Is this a fossil from the future, preserved in a gesture of sardonic humor? A relic of the past, produced by a civilization parallel to the industrial one? Or a present-tense provocation, collapsing time into a single, unanswerable question? Like Tosatti's industrial ruins, the object, once a subject, throws viewers into a temporal paradox. The skeletons *are* prolepsis petrified: an inhuman state where future is stripped of its relation to the present, a human body that cannot be the measure of anything, an instrument of unknowing that denies the viewer the comfort of linear time.

The appearance of these zones of unknowing in De Dominicis's work, emerging from concerns about immortality and cosmic time rather than ecological crisis, suggests something about how installation art confronts the limits of human understanding, or perhaps the reverse: how these limits generate certain artistic strategies. According to Huyghe:

"The relational field operates at a specific level of reality. *Liminal* and *Camata* are wordless, without relation; they are lifeless, inexistent beings... There is a cut, as there are levels of possible worlds, where all presents exist simultaneously and in one thing and overflow it, where there is no more causality"⁹⁵.

The zones described in this essay operate in this wordless space. They dissolve interpretive habits, the need to make things make sense, to find relations, to organize experience into patterns of meaning. These installations ask visitors to inhabit and be inhabited by this overflow, by this zone of ontological excess⁹⁶, while inducing states where the human is made to host the inhuman.

Human sensing becomes just one accident among countless others in the vastness of cosmic and geological time: one brief way among millions of perceiving, or not perceiving, worlds.

Acknowledgment: The author would like to thank Enrico Cesaretti, Federico Luisetti, and Serenella Iovino for the conversations that informed this work; the editors of this issue of “L'uomo nero” for the gracious invitation to contribute; and finally Gian Maria Tosatti, Pierre Huyghe, and the Pinault Collection for kindly providing the images included in this essay.

1. “Now we feel her inexhaustible / as an old wine / and no one can think of her without vertigo, / and time has charged her with eternity. / And to think that night would not exist / without those tenuous instruments, the eyes”. Cf. Jorge Louis Borges, *A History of Night*, “The New York Review”, 25 January 1979, translation by Alastair Reid; see <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1979/01/25/a-history-of-night/> (accessed 19/06/2025).
2. T. J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology*, Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2016, p. 38.
3. Andrea Gaynor and Ian Mclean, *The Limits of Art History: Towards an Ecological History of Landscape Art*, “Landscape Review”, XI (1), 2005, p. 13.
4. John E. Thornes, *A Rough Guide to Environmental Art*, “Annual Review of Environment and Resources”, XXXIII, 2008, p. 399.
5. Ivi, pp. 401-405.
6. See James Voorhies, *Postsensual Aesthetics: On the Logic of the Curatorial*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2023.
7. Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, London, Routledge, 2005, p. 11.
8. *Ibidem*.
9. Elisa Caldarola, Javier Leñador, *On Affective Installation Art*, “Topoi”, XLIII, 2024, p. 701.
10. Elisa Caldarola, *Filosofia dell'arte contemporanea: Installazioni, siti, oggetti*, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2020, p. 58.
11. Heather Davis, *Art in the Anthropocene*, in *Posthuman Glossary*, edited by Rosi Braidotti, Maria Hlavajova, London, Bloomsbury, 2018, pp. 63-66, cited in Serenella Iovino, *The Reverse of the Sublime: Dilemmas (and Resources) of the Anthropocene Garden*, Munich, Rachel Carson Center Perspectives, 2019, p. 6.
12. “To install means both to place and to invest in future possibility”, Serpil Oppermann, *Ecologies of a Storied Planet in the Anthropocene*, Morgantown, West Virginia University Press, 2023, p. 74.
13. Pierre Huyghe, Anne Stenne, *Pierre Huyghe in Conversation with Anne Stenne*, in *Pierre Huyghe - Liminal*, edited by Anne Stenne, Jacqueline Feldmann, Venezia, Marsilio Arte, 2024, p. 4.
14. Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2013. On the

relationship between aesthetic practice and planetary visualizations and their limitations, see Emiliano Guaraldo, *The Anthropocene and the Aesthetics of Planetary Abstraction*, in *On the Interplay of Images. Imaginaries and Imagination in Science Communication*, edited by Andreas Metzner-Szigeth, Olschki, 2022; Allie Wist, *Scales That Embody Us: Smell Artifacts for a Contingent, Idiosyncratic, and Ambiguous Material Anthropocene*, “Holotipus”, 6.

15. See Alan Weisman, *The World without Us*, New York, Picador, 2007; Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet. The Horror of Philosophy Vol. 1*, Winchester; Washington, Zero Books, 2011; Maria Laakso, *The Paradox of Imagining the Post-Human World: Fictional and Factual Rhetorical Strategies in Alan Weisman's The World Without Us*, “Narrative Inquiry”, XXIX (2), 2019, pp. 371-390.
16. Confronting the possibility of human extinction is also not unprecedented, but was, for instance, a fundamental aspect of nuclear war imagination throughout the second half of the 20th century. For connections between the Anthropocene thesis and nuclear war's human extinction, see Rens van Munster, Casper Sylvest, *Nuclear Weapons, Extinction, and the Anthropocene: Reappraising Jonathan Schell*, “Review of International Studies”, XLVII (3), 2021, pp. 294-310.
17. “Inhuman” is used in this text as an attempt to articulate a condition where human subjectivity ceases to be the measure of reality and becomes, itself, a phenomenon to be measured. In this sense, “inhuman” recognizes the drive to transform human presence raw material: instrumentalized, historicized as a geologic trace, interpreted or simply bypassed altogether by other forms of intelligence. This is a displacement that recasts the human as fossil and data. For different genealogies and uses of the term see Jean François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1991; Kathryn Yusoff, *The Inhumanities*, “Annals of the American Association of Geographers”, CXI (3), 2020, pp. 663-676; Reza Negarestani, *The Labour of the Inhuman*, “e-flux Journal”, (52), 2014, pp. 1-9.
18. Pierre Huyghe, Anne Stenne, *Pierre Huyghe in Conversation with Anne Stenne*, cit., p. 4.
19. Ivi, p. 9.
20. In Huyghe's words, the exhibition form also impacts the meaning of previous work: “Something is learned as the exhibition unfolds. In that regard, it's quite similar to previous exhibitions. The past works, they are there because I can somehow, to a certain extent, obviously, change the meaning of the work. What has been could be different. There's a migration of the meaning somehow. Because

they're suddenly surrounded by other works, all of them will change because they are affected by the context in which they are presented. The point was to make the exhibition one experience. To me, this exhibition is really like a birth or a formation of creatures. So there's an attempt to allow a will to emerge that will be a will that is in that exhibition, an inhuman will. This is an attempt." Full interview available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXrtk-6xsWE> (accessed 19/06/2025).

21. Eleen M. Deprez, *Installation Art and Exhibitions: Sharing Ground*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", LXXVIII (3), 2020, p. 349. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12739>.

22. For a discussion on exhibitions as time-based artworks that function as ecosystems, especially in Huyghe's long-standing friend and collaborator, Philippe Parreno, who shares similarities in his practice, see Cristina Baldacci, *Re-Edit, Re-Enact, Remediate: The Exhibition as Time-Based Artwork (Philip Parreno)*, in *Double Trouble. In Exhibiting the Contemporary: Art Fairs and Shows*, edited by Cristina Baldacci, Clarissa Ricci, Angela Vettese, Milano, Scalpendi, 2020, pp. 95-104.

23. James Voorhies, *Postsensual Aesthetics*, cit., p. 11.

24. The way I understand *unknowing*, based on Huyghe's conceptualization, is not "absence of knowledge", but closer to a methodological principle in the sense of a suspension of familiar modes of cognition and perception that allows other forms of relation to emerge.

25. At the previous Venice Art Biennale, in 2017, the Italian pavilion curated by Cecilia Alemani hosted three artistic projects that anticipated the themes of Tosatti's project: a large environmental installation by Giorgio Andreotta Calò, *Senza Titolo (La fine del mondo) / Untitled (the End of the World)*; a video by Adelita Husni-Bey, *The Reading / La Seduta*; and Roberto Cuoghi's sculptural project *Imitatione di Cristo / Imitation of Christ*.

26. Tosatti is influenced by the work of theater experimenter Jerzy Grotowski, among others.

27. Ermanno Rea's *La dismissione* and Pier Paolo Pasolini above all.

28. The eerie feeling of abandonment and ruination evoked another crucial Italian literary work, Guido Morselli's *Dissipatio H.G.*

29. Eugenio Viola, *History of the Night and Destiny of the Comets. An Artwork in Two Acts and a Muted Prologue*, in *Storia della notte e destino delle comete*, edited by Eugenio Viola, Gian Maria Tosatti, Roma, Treccani, 2022, p. 71.

30. The installation combined actual decommissioned industrial machinery with more theatrical elements: some machines were authentic artifacts from abandoned factories, but

their arrangement and the addition of certain effects were part of the installation's design. This labor of staging of industrial ruins resonates with what some critics call "ruin porn", a practice, often rooted in photography, criticized for its "whiff of exploitation" where viewers can witness "destruction on a colossal scale from a safe distance", Siobhan Lyons, *Ruin Porn and the Obsession with Decay*, Cham, Springer, 2018, p. 5. As Dora Apel notes, while such aestheticization of ruins "may be instrumentalised for ideological purposes", it can also "serve as forms of historical witnessing and potential tools for resistance", Dora Apel, *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2015, p. 20, cited in Siobhan Lyons, *op. cit.*, p. 5. Tosatti's installation operates within this ambiguity, both participating in and potentially transforming the long Western tradition of romanticizing decay.

31. Eugenio Viola, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

32. *Ibidem*.

33. *Ibidem*.

34. For a review of the pavilion see Simona La Neve, *La mansuetudine delle lucciole e l'innoffensivo Padiglione Italia di Tosatti*, "machina rivista", June 2022, available at <https://www.machina-deriveapprodi.com/post/la-mansuetudine-delle-lucciole-e-l-inoffensivo-padiglione-italia-di-tosatti> (accessed 19/06/2025).

35. The Tese delle Vergini were originally an industrial warehouse themselves and were used to store fuel. See Claudio Menichelli, *The Recovery of the Arsenal: The Process from 1980 until Today*, in *The Venice Arsenal Between History, Heritage, and Re-use*, London, Routledge, 2022.

36. For ecocritical texts exploring the Italian toxic landscapes see Serenella Iovino, *From Thomas Mann to Porto Marghera: Material Ecocriticism, Literary Interpretation, and Death in Venice*, in *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, edited by Hubert Zapf, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2016, pp. 349-367. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110314595-020>; Id., *Toxic Epiphanies: Dioxin, Power, and Gendered Bodies in Laura Conti's Narratives on Seveso*, in *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism*, edited by Greta Gaard, Simon Estok, Serpil Oppermann, London, Routledge, 2013; Monica Seger, *Thinking through Taranto: Toxic Embodiment, Eco-Catastrophe, and the Power of Narrative, in Italy and the Environmental Humanities*, edited by Serenella Iovino, Enrico Cesaretti, Elena Past, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2018; Id., *Toxic Matters. Narrating Italy's Dioxin*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2022.

37. Eugenio Viola, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

38. This imposed isolation occasionally broke down, particularly in the apartment section, where less linear paths meant visitors could encounter one another, creating unplanned moments of shared witness.
39. Eugenio Viola, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
40. Gian Maria Tosatti, *Esperienza e realtà: teoria e riflessioni sulla quinta dimensione*, Milan, Postmedia, 2021, p. 7.
41. *Ibidem*.
42. Ivi, pp. 8-9. Tosatti elaborates further these ideas through his concept of a *ffth dimension* in art. Drawing parallels with augmented reality technology, he describes how this artistic dimension merges with the four physical dimensions. In this fusion, different orders of phenomena, physical and aesthetic at once, become indistinguishable. He aligns this approach with environmental works by artists like James Turrell, Gregor Schneider, Mike Nelson, and Christoph Büchel, as these artists create perceptual circumstances and performative machines, environments that engage viewers through multiple sensory channels.
43. Greg Garrard, *Worlds Without Us: Some Types of Disanthropy*, "SubStance", XLI (1), 2012, p. 42.
44. Ivi, p. 41.
45. Ivi, p. 43.
46. Ivi, p. 47.
47. Ivi, p. 44.
48. Reuben Martens, Pieter Vermeulen, *Infrastructural Prolepsis: Contemporary American Literature and the Future Anterior*, "Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities", VIII (3), 2021, p. 23.
49. Richard Crownshaw, *Cultural Memory Studies in the Epoch of the Anthropocene*, in *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies*, edited by Lucy Bond, Stef Craps, Pieter Vermeulen, Oxford, Berghahn, 2017, cited in Reuben Martens, Pieter Vermeulen, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
50. Pieter Vermeulen, *Future Readers: Narrating the Human in the Anthropocene*, "Textual Practice", XXXI (5), 2017, p. 872.
51. Ivi, p. 874. While originating in speculative fiction, disanthropy and prolepsis now operate as key conceptual frameworks within Anthropocene discourse, informing, through scenario making practices, also how governmental, policy think tanks, corporate strategists, and scientific institutions project and plan for planetary futures. These modes of temporal imagination have shifted from narrative devices to active elements in how we experience and understand current environmental crises. See for instance Sean Seeger, Daniel Davison-Vecchione, *Setting the Agenda: Social Forecasting in the Speculative Fiction of Rose Macaulay and Sinclair Lewis*, "Vector", (297), 2023, pp. 70-80.
52. Like in Guido Morselli's aforementioned disanthropic masterpiece *Dissipatio H.G.*, "the earth becomes a crime scene with no corpse, but where all the objects of the victim can potentially evoke meaning and stories as well as precious indications of the motives of the crime and the identity of the perpetrators", Emiliano Guaraldo Rodriguez, *Investigating the Extinction Crime Scene: Guido Morselli's Eco-Political Manifesto and the Forensic Gaze of the Anthropocene*, in *Italy and the Ecological Imagination: Ecocritical Theories and Practices*, edited by Damiano Benvegnù, Matteo Gilebbi, Wilmington, Vernon Press, 2022, p. 162.
53. Kathryn Yusoff, *Anthropogenesis: Origins and Endings in the Anthropocene*, "Theory, Culture & Society", XXXIII (2), 2016, p. 4.
54. *Ibidem*.
55. Eleen M. Deprez, *op. cit.*, p. 348.
56. *Ibidem*. According to Deprez, this methodological affinity manifests in works that function simultaneously as installations and exhibitions, such as Marcel Broodthaers' *Musée d'Arts Moderne, Département des Aigles* (1968-1972) or Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* (1992). The overlapping of these spatial practices extends to how exhibitions, like installations, adapt and respond to their sites: exhibition displays are not "simply brought into the space, but 'installed': objects are positioned in a way that acknowledges the space and character of the room, and the experience of the visitor within the room".
57. Bruno Racine, *Preface*, in *Pierre Huyghe - Liminal*, edited by Anne Stenne, Jacqueline Feldmann, Venezia, Marsilio Arte, 2024, p. 2.
58. *Ibidem*.
59. For some examples see Dorothea von Hantelmann, *Thinking the Arrival: Pierre Huyghe's Untitled and the Ontology of the Exhibition*, "OnCurating", XXXIII, 2017; Davide Tolfo, *A Forest of Machines: gli ambienti biosemiotici di Pierre Huyghe*, "Scenari : quadrimestrale di approfondimento culturale", (10), 2019, pp. 9-28.
60. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Inclusions: Aesthetics of the Capitalocene*, London, Sternberg Press, 2022, p. 53.
61. Emphasis mine. *Ibidem*.
62. Ursula Ströbele, 'Silent Spring'. *Ecological Systems and Activism in the Sculptural Arts since the 1960s Four Case Studies: Hans Haacke, Pierre Huyghe, Anne Duk Hee Jordan, Diana Lelonek*, "Journal of Modern Art History, Department Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade", 2022, p. 214.
63. Ivi, p. 217.
64. Ivi, p. 214.

65. Ivi, p. 208.

66. Pierre Huyghe. *Liminal*, (Venezia, Punta Della Dogana March 17-November 24, 2024), curated by Anne Stenne, exhibition brochure, English version, Venezia, Pinault Collection, 2024, p. 13. In the Atacama Desert, NASA also tests its Mars exploration rovers, as it is one of the most Mars-like places on Earth. See <https://www.nasa.gov/universe/atacama-rover-astrobiology-drilling-studies-arads/> (accessed 19/06/2025).

67. Sean Burns, *Inside the Dark Vision of Pierre Huyghe*, "Frieze", (244), April 25, 2024, <https://www.frieze.com/article/pierre-huyghe-liminal-2024-review> (accessed 19/06/2025).

68. Eleanor Heartney, *Pierre Huyghe Takes on AI and Nonhuman Evolution in Venice*, "ARTnews. Com", April 15, 2024, <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/aia-reviews/pierre-huyghe-ai-venice-1234701938/> (accessed 19/06/2025).

69. Pierre Huyghe. *Liminal*, cit., p. 13.

70. *Ibidem*.

71. *Ibidem*.

72. Philip Di Salvo, Michael Richardson, *Nonhuman Witnessing. An Interview with Michael Richardson*, "Unruly Natures", 2025, <https://unrulynatures.ch/Nonhuman-Witnessing> (accessed 19/06/2025).

73. Ivi, n.p.

74. Pierre Huyghe. *Liminal*, cit., p. 17.

75. For more information on Annlee, see <https://www.pinaultcollection.com/en/boursedecommerce/around-annlee> (accessed 19/06/2025). See also Luke Skrebowski, *On Pierre Huyghe's UUmweltanschauung: Art, Ecosystems Aesthetics, and General Ecology*, "Grey Room", (77), Fall 2019, pp. 66-83.

76. Davide Tolfo, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

77. Pierre Huyghe. *Liminal*, cit., p. 17.

78. Ivi, p. 20.

79. Ivi, p. 10.

80. Ivi, p. 12.

81. Davide Tolfo, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

82. Thomas P. Keating, *Techno-Genesis: Reconceptualising Geography's Technology from Ontology to Ontogenesis*, "Progress in Human Geography", XLVIII (1), 2024, pp. 49-65.

83. Ivi, p. 50.

84. Ivi, p. 56.

85. Each artwork was accompanied by its title, respectively *Aspettativa di un casuale movimento molecolare generale in una sola direzione tale da generare un movimento spontaneo del materiale* (*Waiting for a General Random Molecular Movement in a Single Direction to Generate Spontaneous Movement of the Material*); *Palla di gomma (caduta da 2 metri) nell'attimo*

immediatamente precedente il rimbalzo (*Rubber Ball [Fallen from a Height of Two Meters] at the Instant Immediately Prior to its Rebound; Cubo invisibile* (*Invisible Cube*)).

86. Gabriele Guercio, *Repositories of the Unconditional: Gino De Dominicis' "Mirror" and the Work of Art as Model of Immortality*, "Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics", LV-LVI, 2009, p. 313.

87. Alessandro Ferraro, *Anecdotes et histoire d'une vie aliène*, translated by Giuliana Ravviso, "Images Re-vues. Histoire, anthropologie et théorie de l'art", (14), 2017, p. 24.

88. Ivi, p. 10.

89. Gabriele Guercio, *Repositories of the Unconditional*, cit., p. 313.

90. See Gabriele Guercio, *De Dominicis: uno scandalo lungo cinquant'anni*, "Doppiozero", June 8, 2022. <https://www.doppiozero.com/de-dominicis-uno-scandalo-lungo-cinquantanni> (accessed 19/06/2025).

91. *Ibidem*.

92. See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Il mongoloide alla Biennale è il prodotto della sottocultura italiana*, "L'Unità", June 25, 1972.

93. Gabriele Guercio, *Repositories of the Unconditional*, cit., p. 313.

94. Gabriele Guercio, *De Dominicis: uno scandalo lungo cinquant'anni*, cit., n.p.

95. Pierre Huyghe, Anne Stenne, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

96. Marisol De la Cadena, Arturo Escobar, *Notes on Excess: Towards Pluriversal Design*, in *Design for More-Than-Human Futures: Towards Post-Anthropocentric Worlding*, London; New York, Routledge, 2023.



Guaraldo, E. Zones of Unknowing, or the Experiencing of Inhuman Encounters. *L'uomo Nero. Materiali Per Una Storia Delle Arti Della Modernità*, 22(22-24), 429–446.

https://doi.org/10.54103/2974-6620/uon.n22-24_2025_pp429-446

Issue

[Vol. 22 No. 22-24 \(2025\): L'uomo nero green](#)

Section

Monographic Section

License

Copyright © 2025 Emiliano Guaraldo



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).