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Accessories in Algorithmic Gardens

Deborah Ligorio

Opening Thursday 22 January 2015

Until mid-February 2015

For her solo show at Francesca Minini, Deborah Ligorio presents a series of portraits based on the calculation of the individual carbon footprint from a group of friends and friends of friends. Prior to the opening of the show, the gallery will be hosting a workshop from the series [the Eponym]: on lifelogging, nature-culture, and body exercises. As a discursive event some elements from the workshop will remain on display for the show, such as the sequence of short trailers, brief videos of around half a minute or less, that virtually accompany the workshop.

The show explores the dynamic and complex nature of scientific practices; it observes its economies of profit and loss. The profile of a person based on their data is used by IT industry to market customized products. Such portraits are constantly generated by social networks. The show examines and observes the way in which the materiality of our embodiment and the measuring tools we use to observe, understand and describe the world determine our very perception of it.

One example is global warming: we know that it is happening thanks to scientific modeling, yet the perceptible effects are only directly causal. At the same time the very measures we decide to take are themselves the result of a scientific way of looking at things. In order to calculate the CO2 emissions for the works in the exhibition the artist made use of a tool available online. The multiple-choice system results as a boundary-making tool that is in itself formative of a behavioral standard. As it does not take into account important behavioral nuances. It seems clear that this, like other similar tools, is optimized for the life system of the western world. The show places itself in a dialectical negotiation of the boundaries, limits and materiality produced by the tool or apparatus used. The term "Apparatus", according to the theorist Karen Barad, indicates "specific material-discursive practices (they are not merely laboratory setups that embody human concepts and take measurements); apparatuses produce differences that matter. They are boundary-making practices that are formative of matter and meaning, productive of, and part of, the phenomena produced".

Deborah Ligorio, with the series of portraits from the data on carbon emissions, has realized a series of visualizations: small-format canvases, the result of the translation of the data and the observation of quantitative and qualitative aspects of the habits of the subjects portrayed. The canvases mix collages and acrylics on various

materials. These materials used as backdrops are mounted onto looms, and chosen each time to describe the characteristics of the person portrayed. A string wrapped around the canvases corresponds to the amount of travels; the calculation was done over a period of one year.

The interface, or the magnitude that we use to look at the world can also be defined as scale. As the environmental historian Marco Armiero writes, “ [...] the scale we choose to adopt changes the way in which we understand problems and frame solutions. Let’s consider, for instance, certain severe environmental regulations which, applied in rich countries, have simply produced the shift of dangerous productions to poor countries with weaker environmental laws, in what is called ‘environmental dumping’. Likewise, polluting substances which are banned in the North are often still allowed in the global South’.”

The same system of knowledge that uses these separations, at the same time provides the scientific tools with which to visualize the planet as an ecosystem, where all of its parts are interconnected, even though this aspect is widely denied by the policy of only taking care of one’s own garden.

The theorist Timothy Morton states: “Unlike Latour, I do believe that we have “been modern,” and that this has had effects on human and nonhuman beings. [...]

Now we know where it goes. For some time we may have thought that the U-bend in the toilet was a convenient curvature of ontological space that took whatever we flush down it into a totally different dimension called Away, leaving things clean over here. Now we know better: instead of the mythical land Away, we know the waste goes to the Pacific Ocean or the wastewater treatment facility. Knowledge of the hyperobject Earth, and of the hyperobject biosphere, presents us with viscous surfaces from which nothing can be forcibly peeled.”

The show is based on the premise that the same connectivity and the same impossibility of disentangling human and non-human lives, animate and inanimate worlds, the intertwinings of material objects and immaterial data. That same viscosity is indeed what links the infinity of data in this expanse of algorithmic gardens and the materiality of which we become accessories.

Special thanks to: Stefania Galegati, Massimo Grimaldi, Paul Keil, and Caleb Waldorf.

Deborah Ligorio was born in Brindisi and lives in Berlino. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna, at the Brera Academy in Milan, and at the the University 8 in Paris. In 2008 she received the Four-Year Young Art15a Prize of Rome. In 2004 she received the Special Prize – Gai - Italian Studies for PS1 MOMA. And in 2003 she received the Film und Videoproduktion, Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft Forschung und Kultur, Berlin. Among her international residences: 2011 FPAC, Palermo. 2008 Künstlerhäuser Worpswede. 2003 MAK Schindler Artist and Architects in Residence Program, Los Angeles. 1998 OMI International Arts Center, Ghent, New York. 1995 Corso Superiore di Arti Visive, Antonio Ratti Foundation, Como. Her solo shows have included: Kunstverein Amsberg, Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation Torino, Italian Cultural Institute of Berlin, Bürofriedrich Berlino, Signal Malmö. She is represented by Francesca Minini Milano and Sommer & Kohl Berlino. She participated in Manifesta 7, and Sharjah Biennale 8. She has recently published *Survival Kits*, Sternberg Press 2013, with contributions to topics ranging from philosophy, politics, media theory, ecology, activism, feminism, post-human theory, geopolitics, art, and economics. The book takes its title from the project that is still underway. In 2014 she founded the project [the Eponym], a series of transdisciplinary workshops.

