

In 2015, biologist and feminist theorist Donna Haraway declared: “No species, not even our own – that arrogant species that pretends to be good individuals in so-called modern Western scripts – acts alone.” Almost ten years have passed and your text still seems so current to us, given the awareness it explains about the joint action that governs human and non-human relationships on Earth.

Haraway argues, roughly speaking, that we must establish kinship relationships between beings of different species, thus creating cooperation networks that connect humans, plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, etc. Beings have ways of transforming the Planet that can be shared, learned and exchanged.

In this aspect, we can think that human technology – our set of techniques, skills, methods and processes used to transform reality – can be combined with other individuals' ways of doing things, in a collaborative effort that aims to benefit everyone. This initiative, common among different beings, could be better understood by us, if we distanced ourselves from the predatory idea of total domination of our “relatives”.

In this exhibition, JP Accacio addresses the collaborations – or lack thereof – between humans and plants, thus constructing a dystopian scenario for the former in the face of the renewing potential for survival of the latter. Thus, computer and electronic equipment carcasses are incorporated by plants, in a “take” (tomada in Portuguese) of nature over reality.

The obsolescence cycle of these devices is responsible for their own decadence; therefore, plants only take possession of what is, in principle, abandoned and inert. In this encounter between beings, we glimpse poetic moments in which the term “vegetative”, commonly used to designate that which is not aware of itself, is turned inside out, indicating the intelligence that seems to exist in the consistent, albeit immobile, existence of plants.

Between cemetery-gardens and columns, the artist articulates his forest-metamorphosis vision with photos, sculptures, objects and site-specifics arranged with plants and electronic skeletons that, together, silently take over the white cube, emulating the obstinate way of remaining of our green relatives. In this invasion, the artist is half-people, half-plant - an [ANIMALVEGETAL](#) – learning, recognizing and repeating the procedures of his “similar”.

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## WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT IT ALL

By doing TOMADA, Jp Accacio declares his affinity towards the idea of a “vegetal intelligence”. Yes, Jp endorses the thinking that there are many good reasons to imitate the vegetal realm. Or, the need to look for other references, less technocratic. Or so, that nature can be seen as a better reference (more assertive, more noble and sophisticated) for the systems that surround us.

The premises of these current statements began to hang in speculation, converging works and (more or less) scientific assumptions. Until I found myself in a dialogue that came disconnected from the initial conversations and became more imaginary, established with internal voices, with thoughts that wander through the networks, with doubts that surround us, with systems that ‘obsolesce’ around us.

In other words, TOMADA is a set of experiments that invite us to deepen this discussion, based on common references, between text and works, in the midst of intertwined, crossed experiences.

We need to talk about all of this. Yes, even if something seems out of place.

*\_ Ah, but even you, so skeptical and always so keen at newer technologies?*

No, it's not for convenience. It is out of urgency, out of collective need. There are more than confluences in common when so many of us start talking about the forest, mycelium, ancestry, being-nature, Kopenawa-Krenak, dreams, rites, Gaya, cosmogony.

*\_ What does technology have to do with all this? What about this kind of discourse that mixes such different subjects and fields?*

It already is. We are inoculated by many contagious variants. We are ‘planted’ by many species. We are hijacked by watching machines, technologies of many wars, pervasive systems and incessant processes of data collection. And it all fails. It all ends in error. It all becomes obsolete. Obsolescences are inoculated into us, are planted in our lives through our own consumption.

The relationship between belonging, participation and consumption happens between one technology to another, between social construction and capital. Nestor Canclini speaks of this, of how “they have expanded the notion of citizenship by incorporating consumption practices into its exercise” (2008). Exactly through the new communication technologies, which we, you, all of us, use.

So look, there is a “planted” consumption. There is mineralized life just inside communication devices. There is nature in technique, there is technique in nature. The realms do interchange. There are lives imprinted in the rocks. There are lives subtracted from minerals.

*\_ But is there a vegetal technology? It doesn't seem plausible. And if so, wouldn't it become obsolete, like all technology?*

Who are we here to say so clearly, but yes, everything around us gets sick or obsolesces. Or weakens, or transforms, or is lost. Or becomes precarious. That's right. Between the vegetal and the technological, as well as between the economic, the social, the digital and the informational, there are more than metaphors. Even if obsolescence is not programmed, as in the industrial age, even if there is no conspiracy or bad management, the defect comes, the corrosion happens: the alloys break, the crystal cracks, the electrolytic leaks, the circuitry oxidizes, the program doesn't turn on, the functionality disappears, the system becomes corrupted. The error happens, the error repeats itself. The interference is within. Civilization will make its discontents and this seems to prevail.

For civilization... oh, not even civilization is a sustainable definition. Wasn't it the so-called civilization that waged endless wars against the so-called barbarians, the so-called uncivilized, “with the goal of transforming them into civilized”? For perhaps in this way, they allowed them to join “the club of humanity” (Krenak, 2019). There are new frontiers, there are atypical ways of inhabiting time and space.”

*\_ All of this is speculation, unproductive jugglery, an approximation of theories that do not fit together, just as a plant cannot grow from an integrated circuit board.*

Perhaps. But we must admit speculations of a creative nature. Many ponder the slow and unhurried cognition of vegetative beings, the understanding of nature as an organization and reference for hitherto improbable fields. About how biomimicry permeates so many other practices and ventures into technocentric areas. About how, for example, the complexity of stigmergy-based communication reveals an intelligence we hadn't acknowledged in the plant world. An understanding that goes beyond biological and classificatory knowledge (Mancuso, 2019). And what about hybrid networks like mycelium, a kind of “natural internet” formed by entangled filaments that connect plants to fungal networks, helping “connect” different plants in the same soil over square kilometers. These are interfaces between realms; they are forms of hybrid, expanded intelligence.

In the reflections involving technologies and transversal intelligences, we are in good company when we doubt, for example, the “denaturalizing” condition of technology. Donna Haraway proposed a long time ago to understand nature as something that is “simultaneously fiction and real fact” (1992). It’s a thought that removes the machine as the active builder of “natural scientific objects” and establishes nature as “the place destined for the reconstruction of public culture” (Haraway, 1992). These are discursive constructions, yes, but the author herself emphasizes that, unlike other scientific bodies, the natural ones are not an ideological construction.

A little machine, a little nature, a little human, a little vegetal, a little drug, a little salad, a little sun, a little shade, a little people, a little monster, a little Deckard (the first almost replicant human), a little Rachael (the last almost human replicant), thus they will invent another kind of love<sup>2</sup>. Beyond Ulysses and Penelopes: a love not so excessively human. “Decontaminated assemblages from the addiction to reducing the desire for the world to an object-person or a person-object” (Rolnik, 1988). This way we would save ourselves.

*\_ Would science, or this type of science, be a fiction? Would it be like asserting the existence of a vegetal technology, an improbable scientific-philosophical argument?*

We were saying that the imaginative nature of science is more than fiction, at least in its philosophical complexity. “Imagination is more important than knowledge, because knowledge is limited, whereas imagination encompasses the whole world” (citation reference intentionally omitted). The clash between the human and the machine has yielded fabulation, a broad journey encompassing literature, philosophy, geology, biology, astronomy, engineering, and art. Scientific imagination helped understand Newton’s apple, revealed photography, sophisticated cinema, brought about automatons, Bartolomeu de Gusmão’s flying machine, Ada Lovelace’s analytical engine, Wilhem Pfeffer’s bio-physiological animations, Einstein’s relativity, Asimov’s laws, Turing’s test, Philip K. Dick’s electric sheep, Galvani’s bioelectromagnetism, Paik’s TV Garden, Eduardo Kac’s Alba the rabbit, Garnet Hertz’s mechatronic frogs, Jonah Brucker-Cohen’s Alerting Infrastructure, Cronenberg’s Videodrome and eXistenZ games, Stelarc’s prosthetics, Zaven Paré’s robots, Theo Jansen’s kinetic sculptures... (examples to be continued). To contemplate a human-plant, a creature-machine, or a machine-plant? These anomalies and inappropriateness are welcome in borderlands, impure as the realm of art is. But we must persist in adding hybridity to art and these untimely thoughts, as a condition beyond what Serres desired, “ambiguous, delicate, ineffable, irrational, and different from the patterns of rationality” (Serres, 1993). It’s also about hybridity in origins, references, horizons, everyday life, in ways of doing and seeing, genuinely plural.

*\_ Oops, there’s an ideological discourse there, I notice an identity agenda between the lines. What’s the need for politically correct statements in this context?*

So, see our social bankruptcy, feel the tragedy that involves everyone. We live in new conflicts embedded in our old paradoxes: the sense of building to destroy, what is born dead, the fossil as a twin of the fetus. Again, “here everything seems as if it was still under construction and is already in ruins”, in Caetano’s verses, where and when nothing continues, everything is out of order, and thus still echoes today Levi-Strauss’s lament for our bankruptcy, for the greed of our leaders, in the name of a cunning progress, in a promised future eternally deferred.

In the climate of influences, beyond the influences of the climate, measured by the meteorology of atmospheres, by factors called natural, today, we die by the determination of capital. By the Capitalocene.

We need other models. We need to stop stagnating in the face of the morbid symptoms that traverse our lives. We need to give birth to a new power<sup>3</sup>. Would there be any “correct” destruction?

*\_ And these strange artworks? Does anyone want them, who buys them? Curators and museums don’t seem interested in addressing the technical problems or technological obsolescence of an artwork. Are they willing to confront the vegetal fragility, the responsibility of caring for a life?*

In some of these artworks, we see the improbable taking shape: we witness plants emerging from the carcasses of communication equipment. They are discarded items, broken, obsolete devices. The plants are lives that sprout from very little, they are intrepid, brave, and resilient forms that take over plastic, integrated circuit boards, and mineral components. As Giselle Beiguelman provocatively puts it, “every weed is a rebellious being” in her exhibition “Botannica Tirannica”<sup>4</sup>. What resists displays life. Because conditions are increasingly challenging and rely on technologies that both help and hinder life. In this sense, the mixture of the electronic and the vegetal evokes improbabilities but highlights what is alive “by nature.”

But any medium that survives holds languages, holds knowledge. A medium that dies leaves language without a place. And mediums, technologies, and media age and die. They produce electronic waste that is extremely challenging to eliminate, posing a threat to what remains alive. The environmental issue, it’s that subject from the beginning that we need to talk about, not just the accredited, the seasoned, those who already speak, the specialized, the deserving, but everyone, every one, and all.

Trees live for decades, centuries, millennia. The Cypress of Abarkuh in Iran is estimated to be 5,000 years old. The responsibility for life... well, responsibility for life today seems like a great irresponsibility, practiced by those who kick up a fuss to avoid having responsibilities imposed on them.

### Lucas Bambozzi, July 2022

1. Stigmergy is a typical technique of systems without centralized control, which uses changes in the environment as a tool for communication. Typical examples of stigmergy can be observed in nature in the case of ants or termites, which, driven by chemical traces of pheromones, perform very complex tasks.

2. Reference to Blade Runner in “Uma nova suavidade?” (A New Softness?), a text by Suely Rolnik in the book written with Guattari: “Micropolíticas – Cartografias do Desejo”. Available at <https://www.pucsp.br/nucleodesubjetividade/Textos/SUELY/Novasuavidade.pdf>

3. Quote by Antonio Gramsci: “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born.”

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4. Solo exhibition at the Sao Paulo Jewish Museum, from May 28 to September 18, 2022.

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Lucas Bambozzi is an artist and new media researcher, producing installations, single-channel videos, and interactive projects. His works have been exhibited in solo and group shows in over 45 countries, hosted by organizations such as MoMA in the USA, ZKM, Frankfurter Kunstverein, and ISEA-Ruhr in Germany, Laboral and Arco's Expanded Box in Spain, HTTP Gallery in London, Havana Biennale in Cuba, ŠKUC gallery in Slovenia, Share Festival in Italy, WRO Media Art Biennale in Poland, Centre Georges Pompidou in France, ZERO1 Biennial in the USA, Bienal de Artes Mediales in Chile, and many others in Brazil, including the São Paulo Biennale, Videobrasil, It's All True Festival, Festival do Rio BR, FILE, and ON-OFF. He is one of the founders of the arte.mov Festival (2006-2012), the exhibition Multitude (2014), Labmovel (Honorary Mention Ars Electronica 2013), and the AVXLab Festival (2018-2021). He holds an MPhil in Philosophy of Computing from the University of Plymouth and a PhD in Science from FAUUSP. Among his latest works is the film *Lavra* (2021), released in cinemas in 2022, and the solo exhibition *Solastalgia* (2023) at MAC USP. He holds a PhD in Sciences from FAUUSP and teaches at FAAP in São Paulo.

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