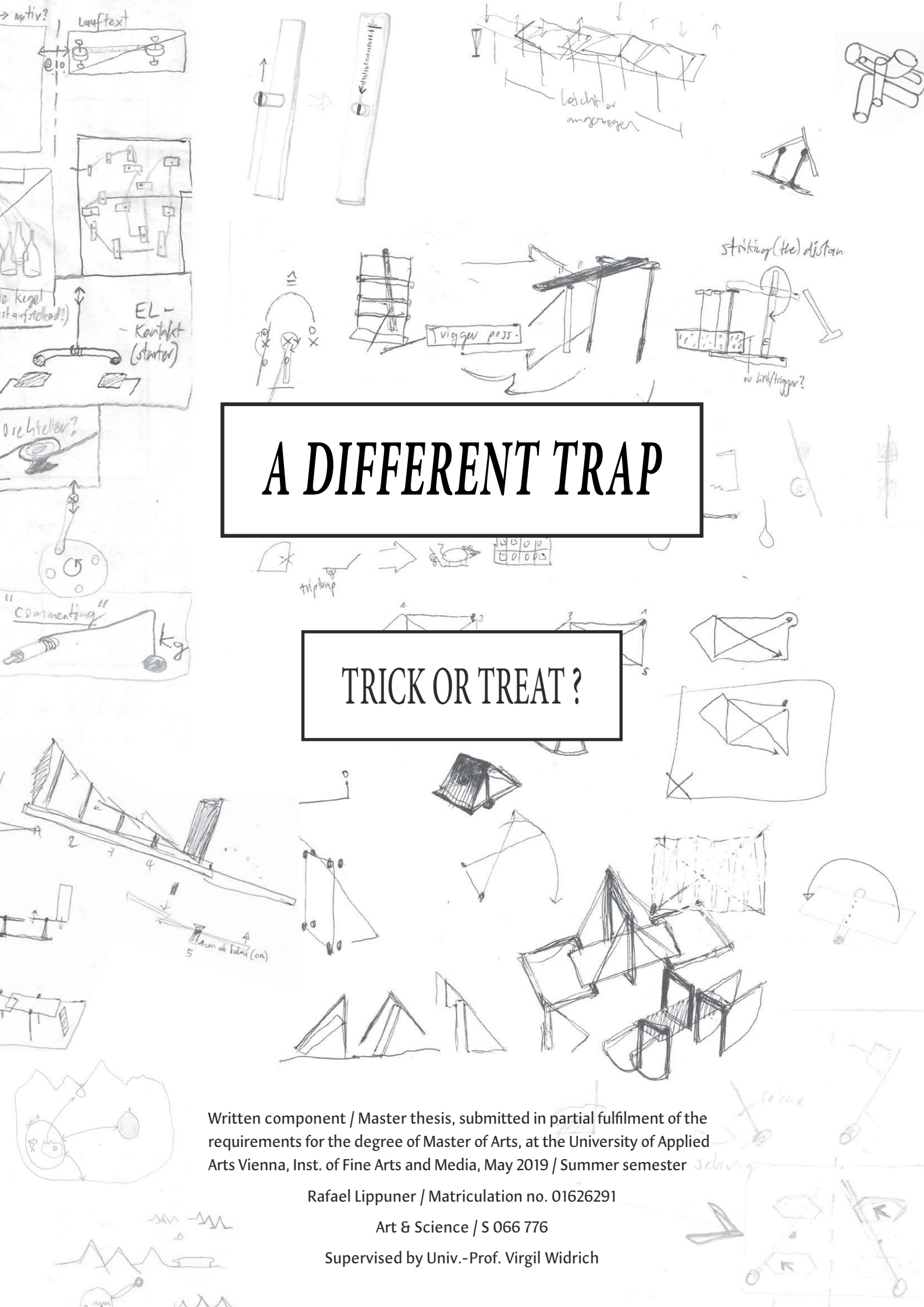




A DIFFERENT TRAP

TRICK OR TREAT?

Written component / Master thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Inst. of Fine Arts and Media, May 2019 / Summer semester

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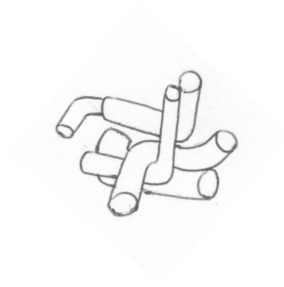
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A DIFFERENT TRAP – TRICK OR TREAT?



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Abstract

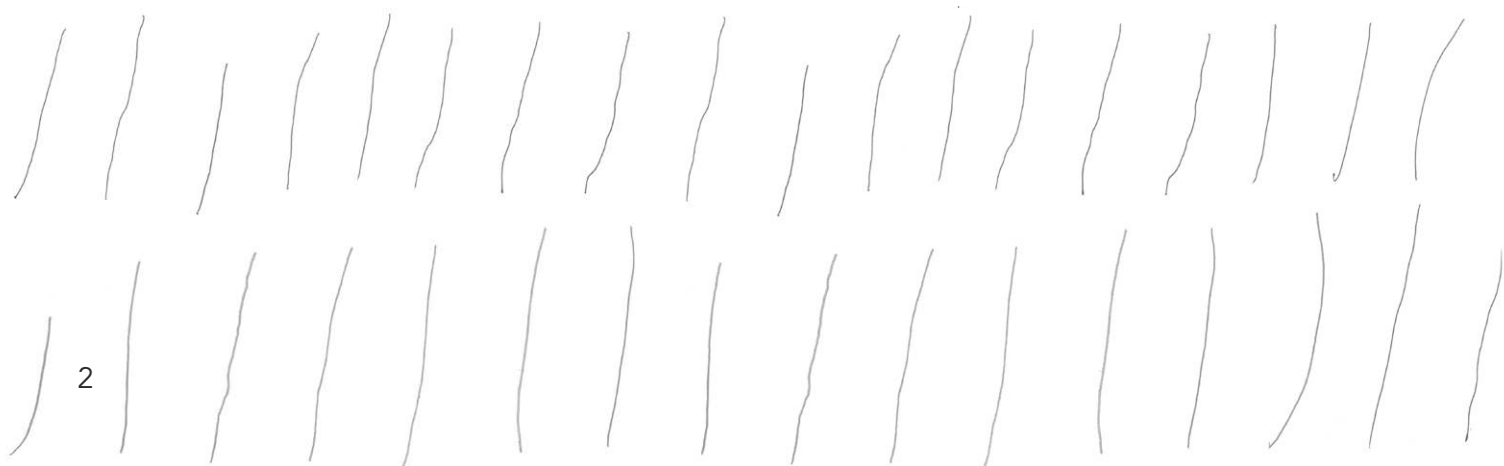
Trapping is an archaic operation that goes beyond catching other beings. Coming up with a convenient trap requires careful observation of the environment and behaviour of its inhabitants. These methods carried on to a variety of practices and engrained in our culture and in the view of ourselves – a rather gloomy view. Trapping is depicted as a tool to outsmart others and prevail in our bloody quest for survival.

I oppose a 'good trap' as a model to reconfigure how we think of it and to question the hierarchic and moral tendencies involved. The research follows fundamental aspects of trapping, its evolution, methodology and how it is applied in different contexts. Subsequently, our interactive practices and relations to environments and artifacts are investigated, leading to the question what trapping can be in art.

The trap I think of is a socio-technical apparatus which cares about the trapped. It is a tactile spider which traps in a playful way to break the monotony of daily routines and its web links different objects, places and attitudes to involve the people.

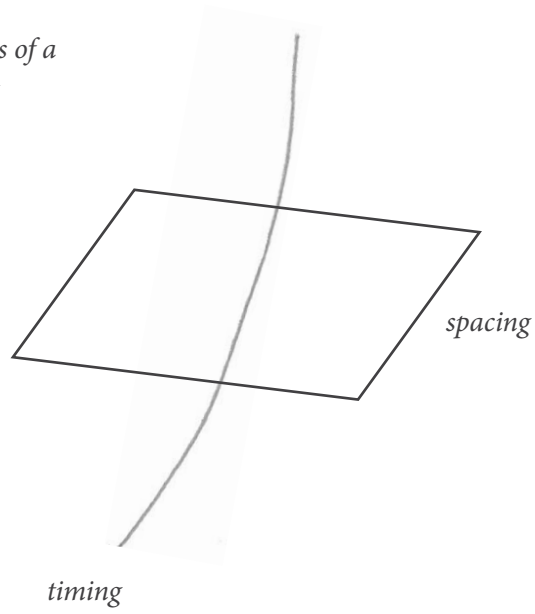
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INTRODUCTION

*the fruits of a
moment*





1.1 WHAT'S TRAPPING ON?

Over the course of a year, I have been working on various setups of 'traps'. These can be summarised as installations which create sudden, surprising moments and situations. With simple methods, kinetic impulses and movements of the people around are intervened and linked to other positions and objects near by.

The works consist of a variety of objects and mechanisms in regard to site-specific characteristics. Objects as well as materials are either modified parts of the surroundings, or compile into an environment. More importantly, the observers can move around the installation and participate, either by directly operating the 'trap' or by unintentionally triggering it.

Using similar strategies as in trapping, the works are an attempt to recover some of the lost magic within the world of daily routines and to recreate the suspense of encountering something for the first time.

A happy accident

The incident that led to this approach and the ensuing works happened rather inadvertently: It was during springtime in the studios, when everybody is in a good mood and there is generally more activity by the students. Wake-up time. A pair of branches, tubes and bars were leaning against a wall in our room as I was experimenting with different setups for an air pipe. When all of a sudden a colleague entered, one thing literally led to another.

img. I

tripping over trapping

*Trap I (work in progress, progress in work),
installative intervention, videostill, 2018*

The crashing sounds startled both of us, and in little shock, my unlucky friend began to burst out apologies. Nobody was hurt, but the anxiety of having destroyed things of value kicked in. In this moment, the potential state of the materials scattered around in the room created an interesting uncertainty.

I continued to install similar interventions around our studios, experimenting with the creation of a *tableau* and tracking movements. As other students became aware of my practice and started to reply to it, the works seemingly coined themselves as *traps*. It made sense at the time to describe these kind of triggered events as such, if only due to the lack of a better term. After a while I started to realise that this denotation is full of promising contradictions which imply further questions.

First, a trap can be described as a ‘contrivance for catching unawares, a device or enclosure designed to catch and retain animals.’¹

From the get-go it seems as if a fixed hierarchy is attached to the device. Operation and production belong to one, dominant side – trapping is executed by trappers to serve their purpose – the beings on the other side are trapped against their will. This purpose can vary from capturing, caging, tranquillising, restraining, injuring, killing, repelling, measuring, tricking, fooling, monitoring to relocating individuals. Many of these examples relate to ideas of bare survival, of excelling the competition. Trapping is our crafty and occasionally gruesome way of playing with nature. Its device, the trap speaks of our ethics and is a manifestation of the archaic practices,

representing the gloomy picture of ‘human nature’: Formed by the elementary struggle of evolution (Darwin) and the *selfish gene* (Dawkins), humankind seems dominated by the underlying instinct of self-preservation. In constant war with the environment, other species and ourselves, we are urged by the desire of power in the sense of Thomas Hobbes. ‘The miserable consequences of this drive and the competing “desire of ease and sensual delight” and “fear of death” lead us to establish and obey.’²

1.2 PROPOSITION

As the purposes of trapping seem entangled with our hierarchic tendencies and survival instincts, I want to oppose a ‘good trap’ as a model to reconfigure how we think about trapping. A different outlook opens up questions about its meaning and to what it actually relates to. The objective of this research is to challenge the idea of our hegemonic ambitions and to suggest another view on ourselves.

Starting with the methodology of trapping, I look at what trapping implies and what it can be in different contexts such as the sciences and the arts, in regard of my own practice.

The trap I think of is a socio-technical apparatus which cares about the trapped rather than profit or violating the integrity of a being. It is a tactile spider which traps in a playful way to bring attention to our relations with the surroundings, to seduce and involve the people, and to help falling in love again.

1. compared transl. Merriam and Oxford < <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trap> > and < <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/trap> > [both accessed 2 December 2018]
2. Robert Evans, ‘Green Leviathan? (...)’ (2007), US National Library of Medicine, < <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2585453/> > [accessed 22 March 2019]

Uncertainties about the observer

- *What brings you here?*
- *Are you a collaborator?*
- *From where do you enter the space?*
- *Have you received a compliment lately?*
- *What is your expertise?*
- *Are you an investor?*
- *Do you look at the world with big eyes?*
- *Are you afraid of spiders?*
- *Are you easily shaken?*
- *Are you willing to play?*
- *Would you rather watch sports?*
- *Do you live at a place with a garden?*
- *How much time can you take off?*
- *Are you part of an invasive species?*

TRAPPING ()



no orders, no sacrifice

2.1 COURSE OF ACTION

contextlessness

To define a different kind of trap it is necessary to have a blueprint of what the overall process alludes to. Apart from its context and purpose, it is important to understand that a larger operation is always implied. In order for certain circumstances and situations to occur, several basic preconditions must be fulfilled. I argue that it is therefore significant to include those steps into the picture, as essential parts of the undertaking.

Trapping involves a series of events, actions and reactions which resemble a learning curve with upcoming goals. In this procedure, the trap usually serves as the device to accomplish said goals, referring to a climactic moment towards the end of the endeavour. Putting the relevant preconditions and the steps in between in sequence allows the configuration of a *dramaturgy* of trapping:

(1) **Encounter:** At least two parties or entities must be involved, and they must discover each other. Likely they share the same environment or live close to each other. Without specifying who or what the actors are, curiosity should be present at this stage. The present situation is full of possibilities and slowly, awareness of 'the other' starts to take shape.

(2) **Interacting:** After encountering another unknown and mysterious creature, the temptation to explore is high. Behaviour, attitude and character of the other want to be tested. Relations form within interaction, but remain dynamic. Without a foundation of trust this is of course risky and thus, mutual learning starts off rather cautious.

(3) **Observation / experimentation:** When the basic relations are set, the path to a deeper understanding of the other opens up. What

are the needs, motivations, instincts, preferences, skills of the other? How does it behave, perceive and make choices?

The simplest way to achieve this is by monitoring the other being in its natural habitat. A more elaborate method is to alter the surroundings (e.g. with food traces, selective testing etc.) and check the resulting behaviour from this. If successful, the gained expertise enables to read the other: Its tracks, marks or scent can be separated, its behaviour can be assumed. Observation can obviously be quite one-sided and is in this way reminiscent of familiar epistemic practices. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as long as the intent of the research is toward a more balanced relation or to the benefit of both sides.

(4) **The irresistible setup:** The compiled experience is put to work to produce results, by construing or plotting a setup to trap the other. I have already listed some of the nasty outcomes this can generate (see introduction paragraph), let us instead look at the considerations and qualities of a trap.

In general, the deceit has to be convincing; the location should appear trustworthy and its placement unsuspecting. Traces need to be covered, including smell and other remnants. The right type of bait is very helpful (if this happens to be another being, the ecological impact is much bigger), but it can also be fake, a puppet or effects such as illusions.

Ideally, a trap can reset itself to work several times without service on-site. Its mechanism should be very sensitive, but stable enough to not get triggered by minor influences or other creatures, hence the saying: 'It is important to know what to trap, but it is equally important to know what *not* to trap.'³

3. William Fitzwater, 'Trapping – The oldest profession' (1970), in *Proceedings of the 4th vertebrate pest conference*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, p. 106

4. see Julian Jaynes, *The origin of consciousness in the breakdown of the bicameral mind* (1976), p. 219-221

2.2 SUBSTANTIAL FEATURES

Before looking at specific examples, it is a good occasion to highlight a few important elements and relations from the examined process to ask about their nature and what alternatives may look like in the context of a different trap.

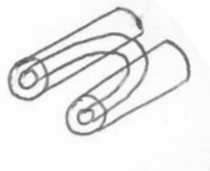


Catch (purpose)

The catch can be viewed as the most distinct function or defining moment of a trap. In common use it refers to the mechanical process of snapping shut which happens in the blink of an eye and usually catches one move, one gesture. The function is irreversible and highlights the purpose and morals of the trapper, bringing the process close to a finish. Its impact can rapidly change the destiny of the involved beings.

Alternative:

To not catch others against their will would be the antithesis of this. How? For instance by prolonging the effect and slowing down the catching so that the 'trapped' has time to react and reflect or does not even notice it. Something else, maybe an innocent bystander could be retained for a certain period of time to indirectly 'catch the eye' of the observer. Catching should be first and foremost about attention instead of the possession or ruling over others.



Prediction (behaviour)

Behaviour and customs are observed or provoked. Recording or taking note presents a way to create statistical data. A method integrated in ethology, but also common in social sciences or economics. Such understanding allows to make predictions and can for this reason present a huge advantage when considering the design and placement of a trap.

Alternative:

Applying the knowledge about others is usually a form of control, but it can also increase the feeling of empathy and evoke solidarity as similarities become recognisable. Predictability should not be used to carry out supremacy, instead as a tool to build trust. Trust that what could happen is going to happen and we already consented to it. On the flip side, if a reaction differs from (statistical) expectation, the surprise is even bigger and more refreshing. Paradoxically, the beauty of prediction shines brightest in aberration and irregularity.



Deception (mentality)

The deceit, a fraud, hoax or illusion, simulates a situation to trick the other. Involved parties are role-playing, appearing with false identities and fake attitudes. It might take place in a fake-environment as well. All those 'unreal' elements camouflage and hide the purpose of the operation.

One could argue that this dramatic form of art is deeply implemented in our culture and existence. The psychologist Julian Jaynes suspects a strong connection between the ability to deceive and the evolution of consciousness, as both mental functions presume an 'inner mind space' one can reflect upon the self and act as it.⁴

Alternative:

The playful elements present in imitation and mimicry should be emphasised on, but instead of fooling others, this skill should be used more often for interactions in 'what if' scenarios to enhance empathic thinking. The distinction between fake or real (especially by brands) is less important as it is not an objective category. In regard to objects and environments, the question should be about their emergence and what they represent, independently from the intentions of others.

2.3 TRAPPING EVOLUTION

With the basic process layed out, we continue to look at the practice of trapping and how it is used over time to specify the background.

In an article proceeding the vertebrate pest conference in 1970, William Fitzwater calls trapping ‘the oldest profession’, pointing out that before the very first cave dweller could ever pay a couple of skins for pleasure, an animal had to be trapped first ...

I guess this statement was made to create some buzz for the topic, but more intriguingly, he claims that trapping also predates hunting and agriculture.⁵ This is controversial as these skills most likely evolved together, depending on the availability of resources in early human settlements. But how old is trapping really? One of the earlier references is by Taoist philosopher Zhuangzi around the 4th century before our time: ‘Have you observed the wildcat? It crouches concealed and waits for its prey – then it springs left or right, heedless of heights and chasms. And yet wildcats spring our traps and die in our nets.’⁶ Older evidence is based on excavation findings, for instance the mammoth pit of Dolní Věstonice (CZ), reconstructed and described by Osborn: ‘Herds of mammoths were intercepted on their frequent routes, then guided through narrowed paths to pits, where humans awaited and threw stone chunks at them.’⁷

The combination of different skills was facilitating survival in extended territory. At this very early stage, hunting and trapping were most likely combined and inseparable methods. It must have been due to the development of more sophisticated tools – weapons for hunting and mechanisms for traps – that both procedures gained their specific reputation as independent crafts.

Even though the differentiation to hunting is unclear and insignificant, the argument punctuates how trapping is widely interpreted as a core feature practised by early humankind and is depicted to be a cornerstone in the coming of this one, particularly insidious species.

In the advent of larger settlements, traps had to satisfy new demands. Installing them on-site in the animals’ habitat for hunting reasons was no longer the sole purpose. Instead, their mechanisms had to become transportable to be applicable in civilised and domestic areas. Design and production of these devices presume an evolved know-how of mechanisms and a combination of skills and ingenuity. In the process, new crafts were established and reinforced. A later example, illustrated in the painting on the next page, goes to show how not a hunter but a carpenter is manufacturing a mousetrap in the typical style at the time.

Despite admitting that the results are a bit arbitrary due to overlapping parameters, Fitzwater goes on to classify trap designs. The previously mentioned pits, as well as pitfalls and any kind of trap that makes use of physical conditions on-site, are summarised as ‘improvised traps’. For the record, the other categories include ‘snares and nets’, ‘cages’, ‘spring traps’ and ‘glues.’ (Fitzwater, 1970) Many classic structures turned into ordinary ‘trap-on-a-board’ types and are obtainable almost everywhere. These are mostly utilised to get rid of parasites or other unwanted animals, e.g. rodents (mice, rats, squirrel, marten, etc.) and insects (wasps, flies, ants, slugs, etc.). If you grew up in a rural area, chances are that you have set such a trap before. Larger cities often use chemical traps to control their population of rats or pigeons – an

5. William Fitzwater, ‘Trapping – The oldest profession’ (1970), University of Nebraska-Lincoln, p. 102
 6. Zhuangzi, *The inner chapters*, ed. and transl. by Robert Eno (2010), p. 11-12
 7. Henry Osborn, ‘The romance of the woolly mammoth’, in *Natural History* (1930), No. 30.3, p. 240-241
 8. William Fitzwater, ‘Trapping – The oldest profession’ (1970), University of Nebraska-Lincoln, p. 101

img. II

*St. Joseph the carpenter working
on a mousetrap*
*Right panel detail view of Mérode
altar, Master of Flémalle, 1427–32*



administered form of trapping. Most mechanisms used today appear to be more 'humane', but on the other hand, the catch-and-kill approach has not changed at all.

It does seem a bit odd that the basic mechanisms did not evolve that much since the first primitive traps. Other than the introduction of steel and some electromagnetic functions, there is little progress. Back then, Fitzwater went so far as to state that trapping animals 'remains a challenge that modern technology has yet failed to meet.'⁸

The simple answer here is that there was never a big need for it, at least in the industrialised nations. Cattle breeding and agriculture proved to be far more efficient in terms of food production, and made trapping obsolete for the majority of people. But there are still parts of the world where animal trapping is done commercially for meat, fur and other remains, in combination with hunting. Fishing is the

most influential and widespread hybrid, but apart from that, trapping methods appear to have faded a bit into obscurity.

Of course that is not the entire story. I argue that Fitzwater did not look at the right places before he made that statement. Trapping did undergo modernisation, it was just not centred around 'capturing wildlife' anymore. Specifically the methods and techniques of tracking, catching, deceiving and killing underwent big changes – unfortunately many of those were directed at ourselves.

Danger zone

It is not the aim of this work to bring attention to combat and warfare, but this context is too significant to be left out. An abundance of anti-personnel traps, specifically land mines, are still out there at borders and in areas of civil war. Every year, thousands of people are injured and the mined areas can not be accessed or used. Needless to say, this way of



trapping is an act of terror and a violation of human rights, while also endangering wild life at the same time.⁹

Although the *Ottawa convention* prohibits their production and distribution since 1999, it does not help that army giants such as Russia, China and the U.S. never signed the treaty.¹⁰ Events such as World War II, the conflicts after the breakdown of Yugoslavia and the guerrilla tactics used in Vietnam all produced horrific examples of booby traps and variations to spread fear among enemies. This is one way of seeing the development and technological progression in trapping, but fortunately it is not the most distinct or interesting one.

Competitive shift

Departing from the abyss, I want to bring up a connection that I find symptomatic for a shift in our understanding of competition. This does not imply that the paradigm of 'survival of the fittest' has changed already or that we are more peaceful today, by any means. It does however illustrate that other fields have become more *strategised*.

Master Sun-Tzu advises:

'The way of war is
A way of deception.

When able,
Feign inability;

When deploying troops,
Appear not to be.

When near,
Appear far;

When far,
Appear near.

Lure with bait;
Strike with chaos.'¹¹

Deception, given some dedication to it, is used here for military conflict. The army or battalion acts in a similar way to the body, which can move or play in order to appear differently. The quoted lines derive from the chapter 'making of plans' in *The art of war* by the Chinese philosopher and military strategist Sun-Tzu (spelled Sunzi in new Pinyin). The scrolls, written approximately between the 7th and 5th century before our time and later compiled into a book, quickly gained status as a benchmark for strategies in combat.

Beyond China, its poetry on warfare influenced business tactics and seminars around the world. The fact that ancient attitudes are being sought-after by elite managers, sports coaches, politicians, etc. today is astonishing. Decision-making as described in the book follows a pragmatic logic: Do what is strategically best and most likely to persist, not necessarily what is morally right. It guides you to be rather sneaky than stubborn, but at least Sun-Tzu would advise to avoid unnecessary combat. The trope that objective and quantifiable thinking is more sustainable recurs and matches a certain romanticisation of efficiency in our competitive culture.

The correlation between generals leading their army to war and a management guiding the company into 'corporate warfare' indicates how the battlefields have changed or at least expanded. Implementing *The art of war* in the western society suggests an interesting, but ominous bridge that connects combat strategies to modern day forms of capitalistic competition and iterations of traps.

A dose of today

What a cheap offer! But wait, this is most likely bait, strategically placed to lure in customers which are then trapped and tricked into spending more on other fabulous products. Welcome to the survival of the supermarkets. Even more obtrusive, 'clickbait' is used in digital advertisement to promise lots of

excitement and quality, more than the actual product provides. Probably the oldest application of this marketing strategy is known as 'sex sells'. Essential to most love traps, 'honey traps' and marriage swindle is faked affection, but if you happen to meet a 'trap', you might talk to a crossdressing person with the intention to fool you (this use of the term originates in Japanese anime, presumably without any homophobic intention).¹²

Drug addiction is like being trapped, especially with class A drugs. The availability of those is restricted to certain locations, making it even harder to escape from the dealer's lair which therefor earns the label 'trap'. This rather poor setting inspired hip hop and electronic dance music styles of the same name.

'Boom, this paragraph jumps out like a quote of utter importance. It might be the case, but maybe not. Questions about its possible status [...] as a placeholder arise. No one can be sure, and herby lies the beauty of a trap — when its outcome is vague.'

Most of these prominent examples play their game by using strategies based on seduction or deception. If we insist on the feature of 'catching other species', this scope of trapping has evolved as well, with the most notable shift being that of prey and prize. I argue that the traits and methods of catching found a new home in the context of science. Instead of creatures, the challenges which relate to trapping are to catch (or better extract) information as evidence. Camera traps document and prove the occurrence of wolves or bears, for instance, not too far from a detector catching

certain particles to (dis-)prove a theory of physics. In genetic research, some functions that interfere with DNA are described as such, like *exon trapping* or *antigen trapping*.¹³

Brief summary

A few things can be kept hold of: Successful or prescient trapping spans a lengthier process and concludes in either a mechanical capturing or an act of deception, in which one side is acting more intentionally compared to the unwillingly trapped. These core features seem consistent and appear everywhere in nature. Most plants (not only carnivorous ones such as the Venus flytrap) lure insects with their colourfulness, cobwebs are essentially glue traps and more humanoid, female Chimpanzees are known to present in sexual posture to a male only to pick away his bananas when the prandial interest is thus distracted.¹⁴

This investigation has used historic evidence to outline the evolution of trapping and how it is depicted. We further examined what elements the overall methodology consists of and how the terms 'trap' and 'trapping' are adapted in modern contexts. Verbal renewals happened mostly due to technological and social progression and illustrate a shift of battlefields.

The next step is to have a closer look at the relations between different beings – without specifically referring to them as trapper and trapped. How are they formed, what are the possibilities when different skills and desires meet and interact? Subsequently, the role of the medium and the institution also have to be considered as parts of the setup.

-
9. estimat. 65 countries and regions mined (e.g. Angola, Egypt, Bosnia, Serbia, Ukraine, Laos, Israel, Turkey, etc.), see 'Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor', NGO (2016) < www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2016/landmine-monitor-2016/contamination-and-clearance.aspx > [accessed 2 February 2019]
 10. Arms Control Association, Washington D.C. (1999) < www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/ottawa > [acs. 2 Feb 2019]
 11. Sun-Tzu, *The art of war* (2014), chapter 'making of plans', p. 7
 12. see entries in *Urban dictionary* (2018) < www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Trap > [acs. 1 Feb 2019]
 13. Hansen G.M. et al., 'Large-scale gene trapping in C57BL/6N mouse embryonic stem cells' (2008) < <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2556270> > [accessed 15 January 2019]
 14. Julian Jaynes, *The origin of consciousness in the breakdown of the bicameral mind* (1976), p. 219

Relations to consider

- *Currents are shaped by fluctuations*
- *Environments are shaped by living*
- *Beings are shaped by gravity*
- *Springs are shaped by rainfall*
- *Love is shaped by urgency*
- *Valleys are shaped by mountains*
- *Expectation is shaped by knowledge*
- *Magic is shaped by expectation*

IN A RELATIONSHIP



mountain, solved

3.1 INTERACTIVE TENDENCIES

the 'act' in interactivity

As I developed my trapping practice by setting up installations in public space, at the shared flat where I reside or in exhibitions, some questions surfaced and kept recurring, which have preoccupied me ever since. These questions touch upon the interactive field that this type of work opens up, stretching out over the possible relations that can form and can be informed by observing and / or participating.

Are traps interactive? Considering the practices examined earlier, trapping as an overall process surely includes interactive properties, but what about the device itself? This also relates to scientific methods and how interactive a research, a tool or a detector can be. The term of interactivity represents a bit a hot potato, in that whilst an absolute answer seems out of reach, things tend to be more or less interactive depending on the part of the process. Nonetheless, I seek to dissect this feature further in order to form an individual approach at some point during my work with trapping.

Definition

Following the etymological origin ('among, between' and 'putting in motion')¹⁵, *interactivity* is best described as the entirety of practices effecting the involved entities; the entities being any kind of being, species, artifact or program. This includes communication in a common language (although conversations can be so well-rehearsed that they are often better described by cultural habits). But much like speaking and understanding, interaction does consist of an intangible translation process and incorporates the use of a medium. There is a back and forth which may be more impulsive or stagnant as a mutual learning curve forms, until a functional equilibrium is established.

In the recent past, the term interactivity has been closely tied to technological development and thus morphed quite a bit. Innovations first led to *interactivity* being primarily used to describe communication between human and computing software, before the notion expanded once again with socio-technical developments. Through the rise of bots, sims and A.I., the line between human and non-human (as in generated content, e.g.) started to blur. This poses new challenges and confusions concerning human-machine relations and questions of mediality and authorship.

The first instability

A good place to exercise or express a critique is the realm of 'consumer electronics', where the trend of *interactive media* caught fire. Alongside the technological progress over the past decades, the term has frequently been used to advertise new products, such as mobile gadgets, online platforms (chatrooms, 'social media'), virtual reality, control and display units ('interfaces', motion control), integrated computers in everyday-objects, video games ('interactive media'), etc. The overuse of reference has made *interactivity* transcend its impetus, but also depart from it.

'To be interactive we can not be seen as passive consumers. The focus and the correct context for interactivity must be its instability and uncertainty.' (Fuery, 2009)

Whilst I cannot be sure with regards to the extent of 'instability', I do agree with the above statement – it takes effort, and the involvement is supposed to be more active than reactive. Selling it as a built-in feature or guaranteed part of the technology is a development that Fuery depicts as the main flaw in the current cultural determination of interactivity. The relationship and consequences of production should not be glossed over.¹⁶

15. composed from latin: 'inter' and 'actionem', see < www.etymonline.com/word/interaction > [acs. 2 March 2019]

16. see Kelli Fuery, *New media: Culture and image* (2009), paragraph 'so what is interactivity', p. 33-35



In the museum:

- *Is this chair actually solid?*
- *Am I allowed to touch or move it?*
- *Is there a sign somewhere?*
- *Is there anything else to sit on?*
- *Is there a panel discussion to listen to?*
- *If I sit and fall it can't be art, right?*

img. III

*Chair (from the early traps series),
object, mixed media, 2019*

How can interactions between people and artifacts reach or inform the production? How can artifacts create 'pure' interactions, as free of the intentions by its producers as possible? Is a framework necessary to guide the relation between user and producer?

Summing up the mess in a comprehensible way is the divergence between creation (*with what* one interacts) and application (*how* one interacts). This relation matters, with regards to how 'unstable' or interactive things can get.

To construe a trap that is different, its propensities must be understood. So back to the question, does a trap qualify as an interactive device? A mechanism that aims to trick, capture or harm another being can not possibly be interactive! But the fact that it may violate the free will or is controlled and produced by the trapper are not the primary reasons. In reference to Fuery, traps can not be interactive because the possible outcomes are predetermined. A different trap thus should have loose ends and ideally makes the trapped equal to the trapper – a device that spreads the uncertainty to both sides.

The object in the picture above and the questionnaire point to an important factor in the field of arts: Indeed, interactive experiences are usually guided or instructed.

Things are covered in a sublime sphere, by the implicated value and their position. Physical interaction is not allowed unless it is communicated. Even the chair is not on a pedestal or appears particularly noble; it could be a collectible, it could break. This draws back to the first 'trap' incident when someone entered the studio and things fell all over the place.

I hold onto the notion that neither a fixed hierarchy nor trust is integral in an object. Instead, the interactive properties are transmitted by the overall situation which in this case is influenced by the institutional framework. And it must be. Guidance in a place of information and meta-information is substantial to achieve or enhance the intended effects. At the same time, from a standpoint of creating uncertainty, the role of the location in regard to what usually happens there or what is supposed to happen is intriguing as well.

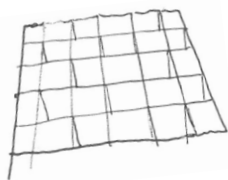
The place to see

Institutions are a special case when it comes to interactivity. Beyond the geophysical location, they set the rules of the game and provide credibility to whatever is represented – they are essentially a ‘safe space’ with its own agenda. Housing their respective paradigm, institutions are the attempt to provide the *perfect* conditions for research and observation.

..
O

Through standardisation and displacement of nature, the idea is to limit background noise in order to accentuate the relations which are inherent in the matter, and to make the experience reproducible. This describes the conditions of a laboratory, but it is very similar to O’Doherty referring to the art space as ‘substracting all cues that interfere with the fact that the presented things are art’.¹⁷

What I want to point out is how institutes in general use reduction to create focus and build trust. The objective is singled out, and possibly, the subject too. All following interactions happen on that premise. Abstraction can help to intensify the empirical value, which makes sense in art, but what about the natural sciences? When experiments depart from the field work to neutralise external influences and define a strict path of action, the results are not only predetermined and less interactive, but also seem contrary to ‘the nature’ of nature, which must be understood as a symbiotic entity throughout (in the sense of Lovelock’s *gaia hypothesis*).



3.2 THE LIVING APPARATUS

Instead of dissecting the world to understand its ways of working, it has to be acknowledged that some of the ‘magic’ of nature happens through interactions and mutual influence among all of its entities.

Such a process is described by Vinciane Despret as *anthropo-zoo-genesis*, when about a century ago a team of experts of different fields met in Berlin. Their goal was to investigate Hans, an extraordinary four-year-old who seemed capable of understanding several languages and solving mathematical tasks by tapping the correct amounts with its hoof. Yes, Hans was a horse.

After a variety of tests it turned out that Hans’ skills were not in fact mathematical, but even more interesting: The interrogation only produced correct results when Hans could see the person posing the question (the body, not necessarily the face). Undeniably, Hans was not just a bright horse but very talented in reading body language. He sensed it when a person wanted him to tap until the tension in the questioner released or changed. This was expressed in micro-movements, movements that are so minor that humans can not notice them by eye. As astonishing as it is, the game did not work equally well with everybody. Hans generally came up with the correct solution when questioned by some people, but paired with others his answers were wrong or inconclusive. A clear indication that it was not only Hans ‘producing an answer’, but the interrogator as well by making recognisable micro-movements. In fact, the responses of the horse would get more accurate the more practice it had with a particular questioner.

This is an interesting example of a learning curve between different species that expands the scope of interactivity. Over time, the relation between horse and human deepened and their shared practices into a new entity or ‘living apparatus’. (Despret, 2004)

How does this work? To configure one entity that consists of several beings, their sensoric and motoric systems must respond to each other so their sensitivities can bond. Hans’ talent to read visual clues is complemented by the non-verbal communication skills of the interrogator. Horses are generally good ‘muscle readers’ as other examples of this pairing show: In horse-racing, the movements of the

rider devolve to the horse et vice versa. The tandem or 'device' they form is operated by their mutually trained senses.¹⁸

I sympathise with Despret's ideas, which as far as I understood postulate a world of togetherness and allow to see the constellations in a 'living apparatus' as possible, new kinships. Beneficial relations between species propose a different way of looking at humankind and nature, namely with a tendency for inclusion and adaption. This view differs from the notion of 'human nature' which claims an own, secluded portion in the world and makes us strangers to the rest of the world.

Sharing, collaborating, involving – all point to the notion that 'becoming' instead of 'selecting' might be the true principle of evolution.

Mediality

Although the isopraxis in the given example happens purely between horse and human, it seems reasonable to extend the approach of inclusion to the media in use. Specialised tools serve as docking units to render or translate informations more coherently, and can be thought of as an extension of the combined senses and competencies.

But even if a medium enhances the effect (or affect), should it be considered part of the 'living apparatus'? Gilbert Simondon treats the role of the technical objects in our culture, and although he sees us to be in a split relationship, acting and functioning among the technical objects simultaneously as operator and creator, humanity must be present inside the technology. Not only do the technical objects host many of our 'cultural projections' such as utopian fears and hopes, but they also underwent a process of individualisation. Technology as an evolution of inventions connects our minds to the matter. Simondon advocates that we acknowledge the collaboration of human-

kind, machines and nature instead of seeing them as opposed to one another.¹⁹

This is an extremely simplified version of his argument, but it serves as a reminder that technological objects, devices, gadgets and media are more than isolated things or 'soulless tools'. Such objects were once adaptations of nature's mechanisms and are now extensions of it – therefore they should become a part of a 'living apparatus' in the future, not by functionally serving or complementing it but rather as an own entity or even species.

A linguistic example of affiliating the media to the metaphorical body is illustrated by the investigation of Karin Knorr-Cetina into laboratory cultures. In interviews with physicists and employees from institutes of high energy physics, the machines are repeatedly attributed with behavior and conditions of physiological beings. A detector 'sees, responds and performs, is slowly ageing'. If the results are not satisfying, it can be 'confused, sick, act up or blind'. Indeed, the function of a detector such as *ATLAS* at *CERN* resembles the function of our eye and retina. It tracks movement of particles through a series of cascaded transformations, and outputs electric values. The detector is construed as an 'ultimate seeing device', an entity that interacts with particles and particles interact with it.²⁰

Quantum physics may be a special case here as the attempt to measure highly inconceivable particles of matter requires a massive collaborative effort between humans and machines. Together with astronomy, these networks are currently the pinnacle of our 'catching' methods and also represent the extreme case in regard to the extension of our senses: As the information outlet gets overwhelmingly large ('big data'), we are unable to process it without algorithms. Then the data, originally tasked to transport and store information, decides.

17. Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the white cube, Ideology of the gallery space* (1976), p. 14

18. see Vinciane Despret, 'The body we care for', in *Body and society* (2004), p. 112-115

19. transl. from Gilbert Simondon, *Die Existenzweise technischer Objekte* (2012), p. 10-13

20. see Karin Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic cultures* (1999), ch. 5, 'From machines to organisms: (...)', p. 114-116

3.3 ECOLOGY OF TRAPPING

planet zoo

The intent for this chapter was to look at interactive relations, how far they go and how balance is established within them. Centred around Despret's 'living apparatus', I ended up finding and including more elements that should be considered.

Different species, media, technical objects, tools as well as the surroundings – each is a factor in regard to the interactive prospects and by that, an essential part of the configuration of such an apparatus, as described.

Perhaps the bottom line is to recognise the importance of interactive relations and give them the significance to evolve (as a part of evolution or not). In addition to proposing new entities and connections, this could be a vital function of art.

Compiling these complex relations I inevitably landed in the field of ecology²¹ and part of the reason is because I first revisited the old-fashioned approach of animal trapping: Observing animals happens always in situ, in their natural environment. From this standpoint, the behaviour and acting of any creature relate to the present situation and are interwoven with the location, the season and other beings. Such an understanding is very useful in trapping, more so than singling out a specific instinct and pattern or producing a 'fact' in a laboratory. The experimental setup, the trap, is finally planted into the same environment.

I argue that to a trapper, the characteristics of said environment do not really matter as long as its properties and the resulting behaviour can be put to use. From the forests, deserts, jungles of suburbia to the artificial non-places of a white cube – through the lens of trapping, these are primarily given places where certain creatures and interactions are to be expected. Every surrounding is filled with small, invisible decisions to make and paths to follow by its inhabitants, and those decisions can be studied, predicted and recreated to great effect.

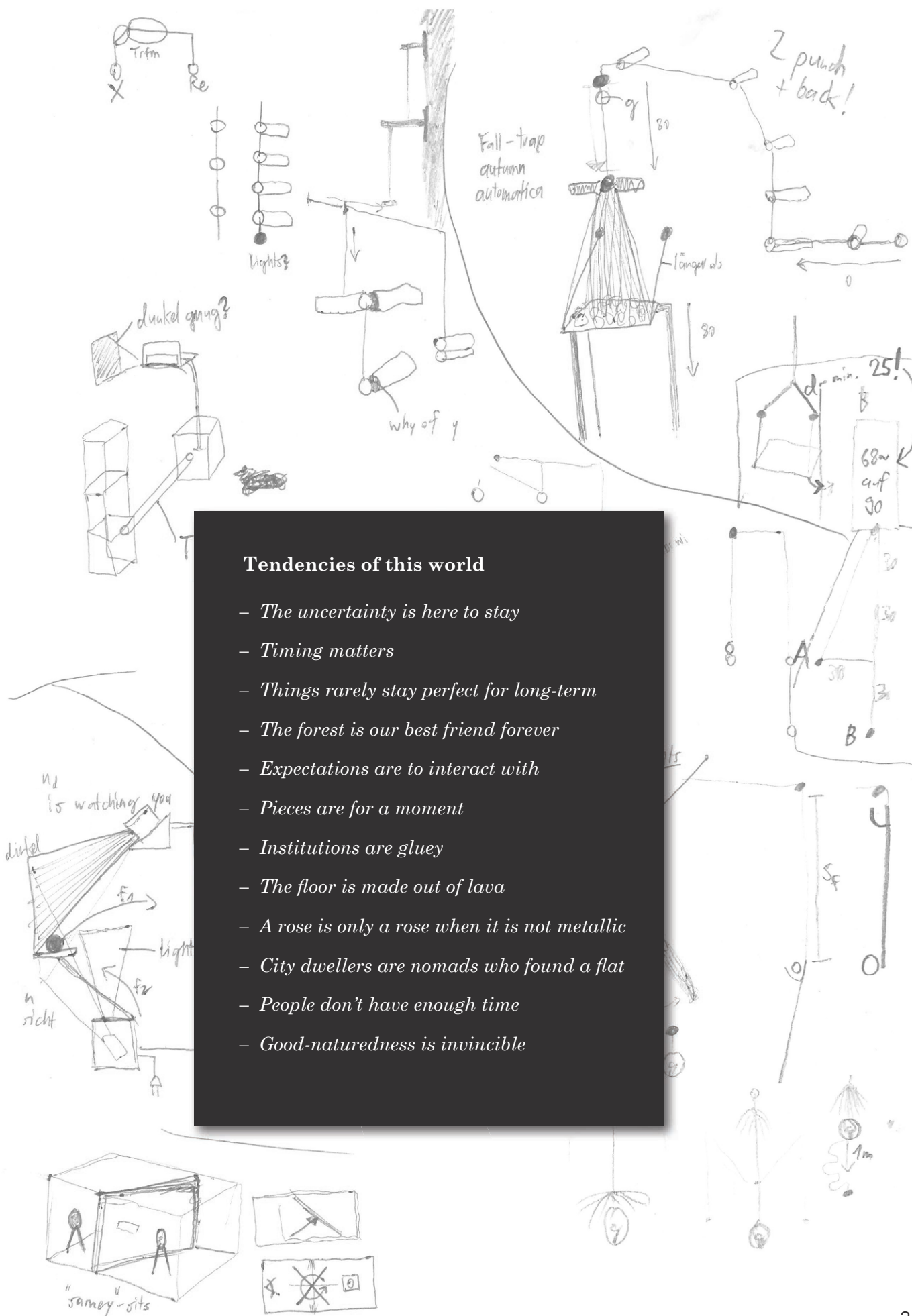
This approach or epistemic method is what I see as the 'ecology of trapping'. Knowledge that derives from it can be used for survival, scientific purposes or in a different way as I would suggest. The purpose is deliberately left blank here to focus on the observation of environments, which is by itself independent from fixed goals or needs.

Seeing living beings and environments only in relation to each other instead of separating them is close to Despret's philosophy of science. From a practical position, thinking of a different trap with this ecological approach feels liberating as well. It allows me to include today's plethora of things, from trashy to flashy raw materials or slick pieces of art, regardless if they are representations or have other functions – as long as they belong to the surroundings or make sense in the respective situation, anything goes.

21. **A comment on ecology:**

While working on this chapter my impression grew stronger that *ecology* is facing similar challenges which occurred to me, starting with the definition of nature. Which kind of nature should be explored and informed? Should nature be de-humanised, and if yes, to what degree? What should 'real nature' include and what not? Technology as a descendant or an extension of natural mechanisms? The species that we breed and modify? What about the environments which we change, produce or preserve?

It comes down to ideological questions about our existence and relation to nature. Many things can be considered or left out, presenting vastly different scenarios in terms of understanding the environment. Maybe it is just me, but the perspective of ecology as well as the moral aspects behind ecological or green thinking seem quite indeterminated at this point.



Tendencies of this world

- The uncertainty is here to stay
- Timing matters
- Things rarely stay perfect for long-term
- The forest is our best friend forever
- Expectations are to interact with
- Pieces are for a moment
- Institutions are gluey
- The floor is made out of lava
- A rose is only a rose when it is not metallic
- City dwellers are nomads who found a flat
- People don't have enough time
- Good-naturedness is invincible



4

PIECES FOR A MOMENT



the finite sausage

4.1 PIECE AND TOOL

In previous installations of the trapping series, I experimented with different methods – both in regard of kinetic connections as well as the application of objects. Gradually, my approach shifted from using more self-created, ‘expressive’ objects towards reusing found objects and materials. Aesthetically or functionally modified, these objects most often turned into a resetting of a *mise en place*.

The questions these objects represent as part of an apparatus or within a trap setting feel dynamic as ever. How actively do they interact? How subtle are they communicated? Are they obvious, or fake?

I do feel comfortable to state the following: The objects are generally well-meaning towards the ‘trapped’ or the audience, but that does not mean they are not troubled. In one way or another, they should invite and inherit a level of trust or expectation. Installing them primarily as ‘bait’ is not the solution.

The genuine question is one of tension. Inner tension of the re-produced artifact, and outer tension in relation to both the intention of the trap as well as the mechanism to which it is (physically) connected. The object has always been two things in this work: A piece of art and simultaneously, a means to an end. This is a relationship which I aim to shape and define more clearly, as the coincidence of both inner and outer tensions is an intriguing element to trapping, especially in the context of art.

Art context

When people think of traps in the context of art there seem to be a few common traits. Before you continue reading – what comes to your mind when you think of trapping in art, and trapping as art?

Many references I receive point to the trap as some kind of a hoax, predominantly referring to British artist Damien Hirst and how ‘he

knew that the sharks in the formaldehyde-filled tanks would dissolve at some point’ or how he bypassed his collectors and put his works directly up for auction. The most elaborate of his hoaxes is his faked documentary *Treasures from the wreck of the unbelievable* about his (also faked) exhibition at the Biennale di Venezia. Whatever you think of his methods and art, the ‘traps’ seem to play, taunt or outsmart the art market. The controversy lies in touching the borders to forging, but in a different way than a Wolfgang Beltracchi who possesses a craft and pretends to be a deceased artist. Hirst’s fakes are more about staging a (well-funded, well-orchestrated) fantasy.

Although the strategies used here are not far-off from trapping (in the sense of tricking, deceiving and baiting), both artists seem to use them with the aim of personal gain just a touch too much, at least for my taste. They might trap market players, but they are not trapping *as* art. In regards to the ‘lying’ I see it mainly as a stylistic device, as in art in general. To deal with the impossible, tricks, exaggerations and superficial fakes are widely approved. The beauty is magic, and the magic is beauty. As Picasso pointed out: ‘Art is a lie that makes you comprehend reality (...). The artist needs to know how to convince others from the truthfulness of his or her lies.’²²

The second, often-mentioned direction in regard to my work is of mechanical nature. ‘Funny-poetic and nonsensical machine’, rooting in Dadaistic ideas. I generally side with the humorous approach of these devices. Rube-Goldberg machines, Jean Tinguely and Fischli-Weiss’ *Lauf der Dinge* also offer good positions from which to understand how my approach differs. Questions about the role of the object resurface because these machines and the materials they are composed of are either kinetic sculptures, or somehow turned into a picture (through fabrication or by documentation). I have examined the creation of pictures in trapping, too and it makes sense to use it as a complementary aspect, but ideally it happens in real-time instead of before or after.

4.2 OBJECTIVITY

As the 'usual suspects' of artistic trapping context do not satisfy me entirely, I want to shift the view to some other ideas and vital aspects: Participative art and happenings, which both present interesting ways in approaching and inviting the audience to take part.

During the 1970s, several artists and groups directed their efforts towards the objectification of the creative process, and in doing so, subtracted the expressive and arbitrary nature from the artistic experiment.

A specific movement referred to as 'art as visual research' carried this out in several styles, spanning optical illusions and geometric patterns in kinetic and op art, visual effects according to Gestalt psychology and similar phenomena. The movement became influential for participatory, cybernetic and interactive art upon the arrival of new technologies.

Artist and curator Armin Medosch explores exhibitions as sites of research, and the role of the artist as 'visual researcher' based on *New Tendencies*, a loose network and exposition series based in Zagreb from 1961–73.²³

The attention towards visual aspects by those artists and groups surrounding it was rooted in the functional connection between the brain, eye and our perception. Tickling, or disconcerting the retina was a valid method to stimulate thinking and find 'perceptual in-between-spaces'. In addition, structure was widely thought of as the (new) ordering principle, linking micro-biological processes with artistic experiments and computing, restoring beauty, and extended to social behavior and human relations.

Oddly enough, the visual-objective approach turned out to develop many practical impacts:

'The notion of art as visual research made it necessary to establish a direct and specific relation between work and viewer. The work could not contain any subjective expression of the artist, as it would contaminate the purity of the experiment. [...] This led to the development of participatory works which unfolded in a dynamic relationship [...] and resulted in a redefinition of authorship.' (Medosch, 2011) Such works were based on empirical research and thus inter-subjective – everybody could operate or carry them out by rules of play. Viewers were urged to move and interact, which was intrinsic to evoke indeterminate situations. The political aim of participation was to make viewers reconsider their established views of reality. A socially progressive, formal-abstract art.²⁴

To counter the apathy of a passive consumer society with notions of indeterminacy and instability was a valid attempt, but Medosch remained puzzled by how this translated. 'How on earth did artists of *New Tendencies* think that those precious little objects and machines would help change the world? In which way did the notion of participation relate to the new paradigm of automation and cybernation?' (Medosch, 2011) These are fair questions when considering their ambitions. The viewer was ought to operate, but the fields of play were reduced to visual effects from the get-go, maybe a pure fetishisation of science anyway. The *situationists*, fellow competitors with a more dogmatic approach towards art and society, criticised groups such as GRAV (*Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel*, France) for trying to integrate the broad population into the dominant socio-economic system, to 'participate in their own misery',²⁵ instead of creating situations where the passivity and separation of the spectator could be broken. This critique hits, and it hits well. Not only

22. transl. from Pablo Picasso, *Wort und Bekenntnis* (1957), p. 9

23. represented by groups such as *Equipo 57* (Esp.), *Gruppo N* and *Gruppo T* (It.), *Zero* (Ger.), *Nul* (NL), a.o. participants of *New Tendencies* exhibitions, see < https://monoskop.org/New_Tendencies > [acs. 5 March 2019]

24. paragraph is a summary, see Armin Medosch, 'Art as visual research' (2011), lecture notes

25. see *Situationist International*, transl. by Ken Knabb (1964), No. 9, col. 'Response to questionnaire from center for socio-experimental art' < www.cdcc.vt.edu/sionline/si/response.html > [accessed 20 February 2019]

*Inflatable cobblestones
in use during the general
strike in Barcelona
Tools for action, 2012*



does it reveal some of the profound problems in the relation between production and participation, but frankly, it extends to challenge the range of interactivity when instructed and controlled by institutions (as the political impacts and the creation of 'instabilities' are undermined by their public responsibility).

4.3 EFFECTIVE TOYS

Another interesting aspect of participation, as well as trapping in some sense, is the way a situation was created in Allan Kaprow's infamous happenings, performances with theatrical elements which often forced the audience to persevere in discomfort. The everyday objects used in it were handled as props.

The friendly lawn-mower next door

In *A spring Happening* which took place at Reuben Gallery in New York 1961, visitors were routed into narrow corridors, confronted with darkness, rumbling oil drums, amplified machine noise and an alive-persiflage on

Botticelli's *Primavera*. In the final showdown, a lawn-mower drove the audience in front of it to the end of the tunnel, where the walls tipped over and the spectators were 'freed'. When the piece debuted, a few spectators unable to stand the oppressive restrictions any longer, would force their way out and disappear into the night. The happening was recreated in 1969 by Wendy Harpe, but this time, no one felt the need to leave or rather no one left, as by then, people expected happenings to be an unusual, but safe experience.²⁶

Novelties can not only wear off, but they can also turn into expectation. In terms of a happening, this would not be desirable, as it changes the role of the spectators. Their authentic reaction and level of involvement are big elements of a happening – it must be as 'real' as possible, without taking away the safety which one can expect when viewing a piece of art.

In an essay about happenings, Susan Sontag describes a certain pseudo-aggressivity towards the audience as a general ingredient, to create unsettledness. She alludes to participation as more or less voluntary; but if the audience participates actively, they hold them-

selves accountable to the success of the work.²⁷ From a trapping standpoint, happenings are extremely interesting. The situations I have created so far are certainly less unsettling, but they carried a bit of this momentum, too. Seeing the reactions of an audience as participation is an important aspect of my work. The balance I strive to find is making reactions visible for others without ridiculing them. An action–reaction relation among viewers would be a desirable outcome of this approach.

Tactical frivolity

The last example I mention here goes to show how a bit of genuine sneakiness can allow an artwork to maintain a double function on multiple layers. Even if operating from within institutions and being flanked by their policies, it can simultaneously pursue very own goals, not only by carrying and representing a message but by making itself applicable.

Tools for action is a network founded by Artúr van Balen in 2012, which has its roots in climate activism and aims to ‘spread their skills in [the] manufacture of inflatable sculptures and use them for political actions.’²⁸ Their blow-up cubes became recognised when featured in the exhibition *Disobedient Objects* at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum. Resembling giant cobblestones done in shiny silver also informs their media-strategy: ‘Over-exaggerating the image of the ‘stone throwing trouble makers’ provides reporters with a different perspective on protest culture, one which emphasises collective play.’²⁹ Installed, or rather put to use in public space, at the sites of protests and manifestations, the novel and otherworldly look of the cubes does indeed create a different atmosphere. Similar to what you would expect at a festival crowd,

the objects are used as toys, being tossed around, igniting playful events, ideally even with their antagonists. That is, of course, the best case scenario. If such play helps the cause of a protest is a different question.

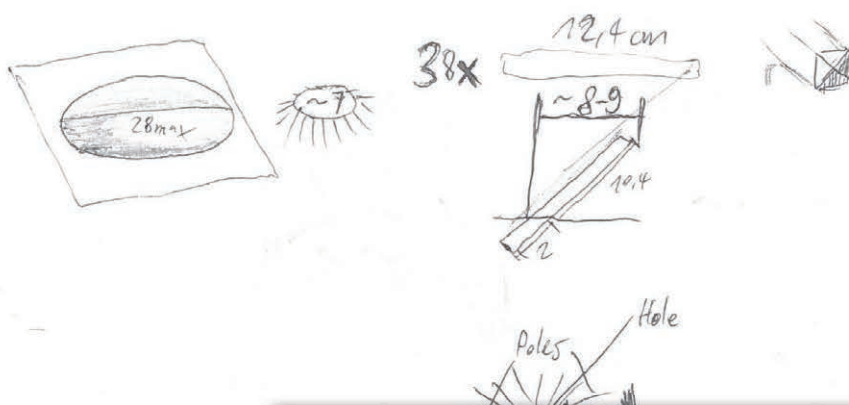
However, when things get serious is when the objects really shine, as defensive tools. Unlike balloons, they are quite refractory to burst, making each cube a buffer, protecting demonstrators from police batons, and forming a barricade when sequenced – a barricade of thin air that actually works.

The cubes are produced in cooperation with collectives and in workshops together with visitors, while instructions on how to use the cubes in specific situations are shared as well. In a little twist on the institution as a place of knowledge transfer, *Tools for action* involves the museum into the manufacturing process which allows indirectly concerned observers to involve themselves and contribute to a political issue without ever leaving their comfort zone. The overall piece is a socio-industrial sculpture with its own means of production.

Linking social uproar and production with institutions is both brilliant and problematic, but it is the thought that counts. The institution creates the distance to consider the objects as representations and cultural artifacts without taking part in unconstitutional activities. On the other side, activists likely also prefer a certain discretion. Their part is to reasonably apply the objects in a possible confrontation, as a playful symbol of defense and pacifism.

The tightrope walk between (state-owned) institutions and street activism requires mediation by a somewhat objective artist, which corresponds to the implications of the art piece as a tool as well.

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- 26. see description by Michael Kirby, in The black-e < <http://archive.theblack-e.co.uk/archive/category/visual-arts/performance-art-and-installations/content/a-spring-happening-in-homage> > [accessed 18 February 2019]
 - 27. Sontag, Susan, *Happenings: An art of radical juxtaposition*, in Text revue (2009), p. 69-70 < www.text-revue.net/revue/heft-7/happenings-an-art-of-radical-juxtaposition/text > [accessed 18 Feb. 2019]
 - 28. see Tools for action < www.toolsforaction.net/aboutt4a > [accessed 26 February 2019]
 - 29. van Balen, ‘You cannot give instructions to a gigantic inflatable’, intv. by Rainer, J. (2012), in *truthisconcrete.org* < <http://truthisconcrete.org/interviews/you-cannot-give-instructions-to-a-gigantic-inflatable> > [acs. 18 Feb. 2019]



Instructions for a trapped

- Six lives left
- Welcome in stability
- Keep calm and celebrate your mind
- Accept the cookies
- Act as if nothing happened
- On which side of the trap are you?
- Reset whatever moves
- Invite others
- Think you must; you must think
- Replay and relearn
-
-

36 "Stangen"

v2.0



- 1) circle
- 2) behaupt
- 3) mit W

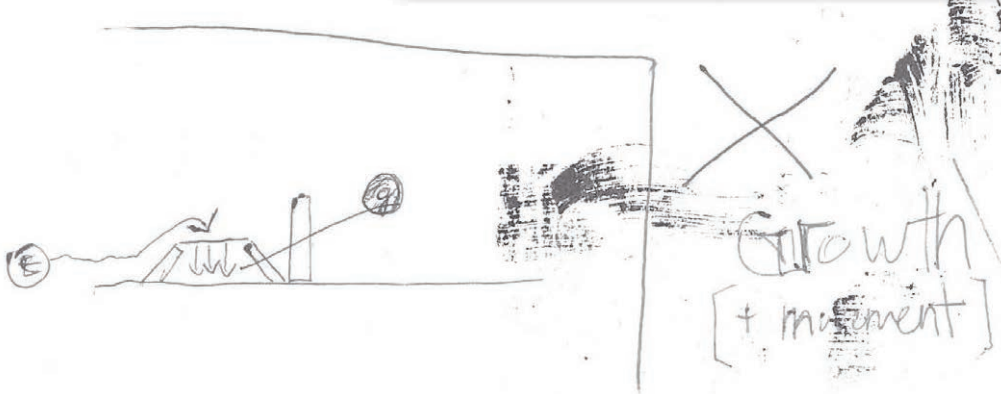
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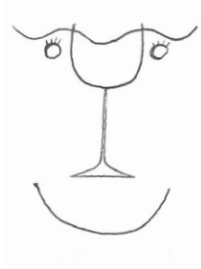
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CONCLUSIONS



Beg to differ

The proposition of this work to think of a different trap, one which comes with other or 'good' intentions contains an improbable component to begin with. Trapping without its archaic purposes or in the context of art automatically differs from any method used to frame a living being against its will. Proposing a different model or view does not simply gloss over the fact that trapping has been used for devastating effects in the past.

Nonetheless it is a necessary experiment. Trapping is a practice that is to some extent defined by how we look at it and the motives behind each step of the process. A look might just be a matter of opinion – but looks are also crucial in forming an outlook.

In this way the whole undertaking can be understood as a search for some optimism regarding the future of living together on this planet. Sometimes I find myself struggling with this, even when it seems absolutely clear that optimism is in fact the best hope or belief.

The retrospective of history, the progressive sciences and the poetic element of art all have a part in the configuration of a different trap, as well as of the traits of humankind, hence the proposition served as a good vehicle to draw these connections. For the written part, my impression is that cross-referencing ideas from various sources is necessary when *thinking about ourselves* in order to gain a 'complete' or more balanced picture. On the other hand it was challenging to keep the focus within shifting contexts and disciplines, leaving me with the desire to continue and deepen the research in one of the presented fields.

The non-trapping trap

Starting from scratch in terms of trapping, a foundation in this regard has successfully been established. Some of the historic and

anthro-psychological aspects had to be cut in order to keep the content of this thesis manageable, while the research was also carried out in a practical way by learning basic trapping skills with a focus on mechanisms. This knowledge had a direct impact on my practical work which makes use of such strategies and trigger systems, just for other purposes like catching the attention or kinetic energy of observers by surprise.

The most intriguing discovery which came out of this is the realisation that thinking like a trapper features many considerations present in ecology, at least from a standpoint of observation. Not only does this present an applicable method to construe and place a trap, but it also helped to realise what it is that I am trying to understand – the relations of beings to their environment and the magical power of predictability, which serve as the base of a (different, good) trap.

Human-kind

Despret's thinking is an important inspiration to envision another view on ourselves, including different morals and a different mentality. The 'living apparatus' was the decisive influence to think of what relations form and produce. Included in the wholeness, its parts remain individual but take on new qualities and responsibilities within the entity. What I take from Despret is to understand the social also as a (proto-)symbiotic function, which configures it in an almost technical manner.

Without hesitation, I felt comfortable to add elements and apply it to scenarios, but considering such a device in art, the crucial factor seems to be time. How many interactions and experiences are necessary to grant mutual learning so much so that a common identity or even agenda could evolve? Traps are in danger of being perceived as very ephemeral effects and I need to work on strategies to prolong the experience and enhance involvement.

The act of the observer

'Togetherness' as an interactive practice should be revisioned, especially in the natural sciences, but in art as well. How important is action, reaction, interaction and participation? With the trap or installation itself, and among viewers? What do these connections facilitate, how far can it go and where does it stop?

Tackling social, political and scientific issues with art can be problematic as the critique on the participatory approach of movements such as *New Tendencies* shows. It is tempting to put questions and concerns of magnitude into a concept or on a meta-layer. A problem is when the actual physical, visual pieces or interactive aspects are perceived differently than envisioned. On the other hand it is a good misery because it empowers the audience and the critique, which is important to me.

The examined positions were picked to illustrate the range of possibilities and how the notion of interactivity has evolved. There is a socio-political element to it which I am not quite able to grasp yet. More than just an instruction to play or press a button, I do aspire interactivity and participation in art and appreciate projects such as *Tools for action*. But the implications of my work in this regard seem somewhat unresolved and ideally, they continue to grow and develop in dialogue and experimentation instead of being claimed up front in theory.

Besides mechanical triggers or strategies of deception, the investigation of what a trap can do (or be) in art and artistic research is continuing. As of now, I can only record what I am convinced of: Traps connect movements. Traps are always situational. Traps can make you pause for a second, they can be barricades. Traps happen by surprise. Traps create an unsettling moment. Traps are short-lived pieces. Traps can be gentle and kind or massive and loud.

The situation

The researched topics of this thesis also seem relatively heavy, especially when trying to apply them with a little bit of nylon thread. Despite the moderate technical approach displayed in my work, the proposition made at the beginning was very useful to bring practice and theory together, which is a challenge in itself. It turned out to be a simple twist that allows for great implications.

*Control is good,
trust is better.*

Dominated by narratives of destruction and selfishness, the image of the world and our position in it seems to lack an overall and positive perspective. Bad attitudes might be deeply rooted in our psyche, but the feeling of helplessness (there is no satisfying translation for 'Ohnmacht') must be shaken off.

If our views should ever change they need to be contrasted with invincible and even naive 'good-naturedness', which is something that can be practised in art by initiating thought-processes with joy instead of hierarchy or sublimity. And if the magic around us is covered by the monotony of daily routines and loses all meaning, then a little vibration might be necessary in order to rediscover it.

the uncertainty is here to stay



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IMAGES

Drawings used throughout: *Sketches for improvised traps* (2018) © the author

Abstract: *The landing is on friday*, happening, Ukraine (art & science, 2018) photography © the author

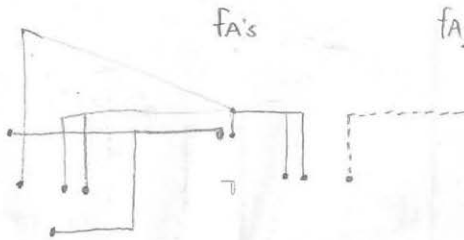
I: *Trap I (work in progress, progress in work)*, inst. intervention and video (2018) © the author

II: Master of Flémalle / Workshop of Robert Campin, *Annunciation triptych*, Mérode altarpiece, (c. 1427–1432), right panel detail view, made public domain by *The Met Cloisters*, New York
< <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/470304> > [accessed 3 November 2018]

III: *Chair*, *Early traps* series, object, mixed media (2019) inst. view at *u10*, Belgrade © the author

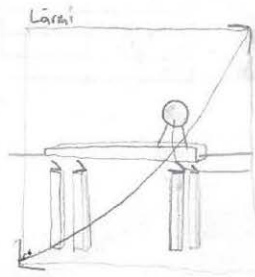
IV: *Tools for Action*, Inflatable cobblestone action by *Eclectic Electric Collective* in cooperation with *Enmedio collective* during the General Strike in Barcelona (2012) © Oriana Eliçabe/enmedio.info
< www.vam.ac.uk/content/exhibitions/disobedient-objects > [accessed 2 March 2019]

- I) draw (A well)
- II) input elec.
- III) inst. tries

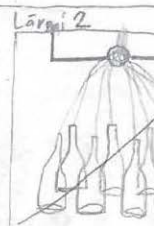
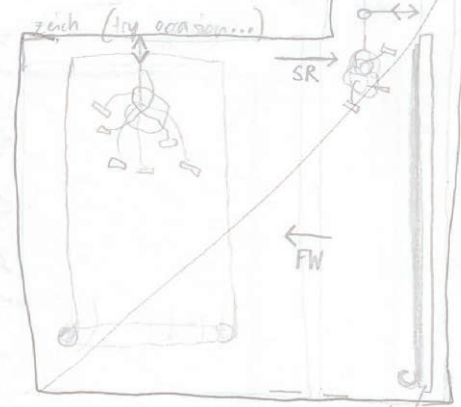
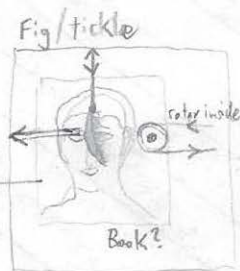
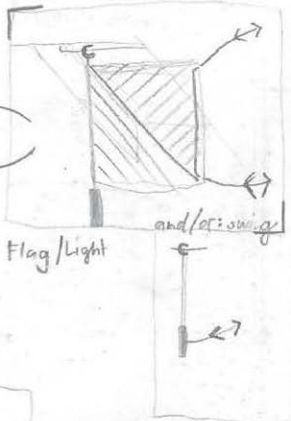
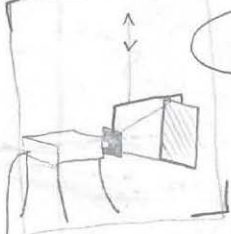


fAoutside?

MAYBE,
CLOSE
THE DOOR



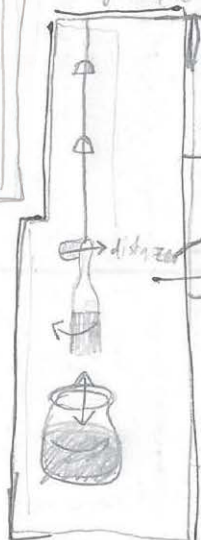
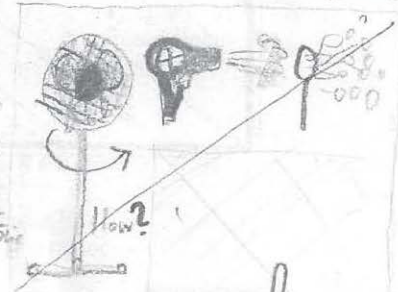
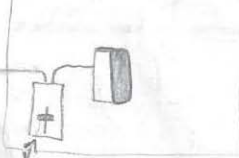
pic. open (1-3 actions)



demino → Clubhouse
→ möglich? / selb



soundrel.



stilo



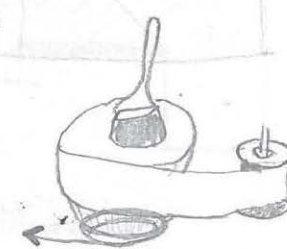
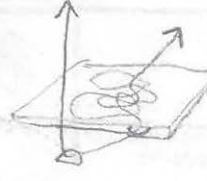
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Nylonfaden
rotor - Faden



film

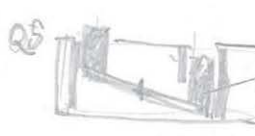
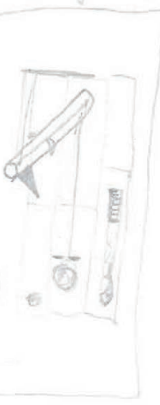


Projection

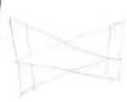


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pieces for a moment

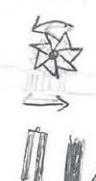
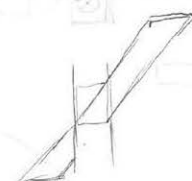
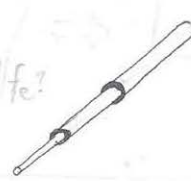
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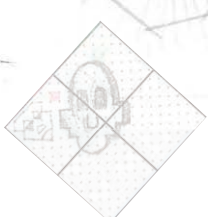
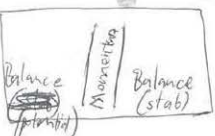
k/fc?



Faden



hüpfen
fällt der
gabel
(immer)



sch in forest

ART

SCIENCE