

GUEST,
GHOST,
HOST:

HOST:

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MACHINE!



SERPENTINE MARATHON 2017

GUEST, GHOST, HOST: MACHINE!

Friday

6 October 2017

7 – 10.30pm

GUESTS, GHOSTS, HOSTS: *An Evening with Manthia Diawara, Alexander Kluge, Sarah Morris and Richard Sennett*

Serpentine Sackler Gallery
London W2 2AR

Saturday

7 October 2017

10am – 10pm

GUEST, GHOST, HOST: MACHINE! Marathon

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Online

radio.serpentinegalleries.org
[#serpentinemarathon](https://twitter.com/serpentinemarathon)

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SILICONTOLOGY

HIMALI SINGH SOIN

Silicontology is or is not.

Silicontology is a way of (non)being that is both hard and soft. It is a brittle criticality combined with a viscous sentimentality. It is white sand suspended in blown glass.

Silicontology fuses the world of integrated circuits, data bytes and transistors with sea sponges, plant walls and amoebic shells.

Silicontology is a secretion and an absorption.

Silicontology resists carbon. It begins with a residue. It preserves the future.

Silicontology is metallic. Silicontology is non-metallic. It transpires, perspires, expires.

Silicontology is an armour and an artery made of silica. It zooms out into the celestial where the astronauts of Apollo 11 left a silicon piece inscribed with messages from Earth on the moon, then zooms back in, first to the crust of the Earth, then further inward, to the cyber-object but finally finds rest in the aesthetic realm of poetry, which 'consistently disembodies the substance of objects.'¹

Silicontology is a metaphor, a movement across, a voyage. It is a force of attraction between seemingly disconnected events. Distance is in the vicinity. 'What if we deployed metaphor itself as a means of grasping alien objects' perceptions of one another.'²

Silicontology is an extension.

Silicontology is a device. 'You probably carry around a quartz crystal – or silicon dioxide – with you, carefully sculpted to vibrate at 32,000 times a second when a small electric current is applied to it. This vibration is then translated, by the commonplace miracle of microelectronic circuitry, into the exact time of day on your wristwatch.'³

Silicontology is an assemblage of invisibilities: a tangle of intimate distances between human and nonhuman entities.

Silicontology is a medium through which humanity might discover its geological roots, an over-the-top de-anthropomorphisation: 'We are walking talking minerals.'⁴

Silicontology asks, 'What is it like to be?' It cannot have this and you cannot pinpoint it.

Silicontology collects messy ontogenies written from the perspective of nonhuman forms of life that are affected by human life.

Silicontology is a protest. It says yes and no. It is that palimpsest of erasures that shows the presence of loss. Silicontology is what is left.

Silicontology is a triologue between a mollusc, a rock and a non-native plant species. One is not one, two is human, three is external. A proposal to infinity: Will you 'ABC to fulminate against 1, 2, 3?'⁵

Silicontology listens to triangle player, arguing for the indecision of the triad. It points with the nib of its nose, like a gnomon on a sundial, or like the rare, white tips of tea.

Silicontology may be a speculative ecosystem, a forest of curious, dystopian, dangerous, deluded, shimmering whispers.

Silicontology is a pellicle between I, thou and Us.

Silicontology may be a slippery modality, both bumping into the solid boundaries (of signs) and seeping through the viscous vacuum (of signifieds).⁶

Silicontology rejects its name. It tells its history because its skin is marked.

Silicontology is an irreverent epistemology, it de-canonises by de-reasoning and not-knowing. Its language is coded with the ghosts and absences of the deleted and drowning.

Silicontology is petrified.

Horsetail

You insist on yourself. You burst through concrete tissue, burst through the cement faces fading without stories. You lean on the untold trails, maps without lines and linseed oil on your oxcart. No one told them that this is also there. At first, you are a passive passer-by then you plié into opulence. Your shoot is emergent, like reading into it could be forever. You thrust upwards, you stay and stay and stay. You are heckled at, what yesterday we had no word for. You skirt around the edges of borders, as if the diffuse liminality of context accentuates your dance. You are not welcome here. You insist on yourself. You lumber beneath where the railroads were built and long for light. Distance is in the vicinity.

They tried to get closer to you. You took your time. They named our clouds after vegetables, our vegetables according to what they were exchanged for. They took away our books, they took away our songs, both of which were prayers, prayers like petrichor, prayers like home. Your magickal uses spanned fertility, snake charming, bone-healing and strengthening boundaries. Your magick was their pest. They tried to get closer to you. You took your time, like all impossible things. You rhizomed out of the remains of their infrastructure,



of ownership without belonging, critique without care. Where the sidewalks part, you claimed your betweens, like witches in the night. One by one, they took you out.

You wait. It feels like there is no one here, there is only waiting. Numbers in no particular order and street signs dented and pointing in obscure directions. Where the sidewalks part, you claim your betweens. Your intuition knows the lay of the land, you laugh into this labyrinth that has settled for the artifice of arrangement. You spore about how things were before. You are alone but do not have the privilege of the private. You are a threshold but your membrane has been filched of meaning. You are neither here nor there, you are meanwhile, an alien. Your love runs venational to your tempo. They might believe it's vertical, but you know that it is not so.

~~~~~

Silicoloculinida

This mollusc's spiralling algorithms churn the shallows of the sea, swirl the outskirts of space. Maybe they are mirrors to the galaxy. Maybe they are our astrologers, perpetually turning inside out or outside in, turning on themselves. They pulse formless, lit by the indirect moon. As an adult, when they need solitude or nurture, the mollusc secretes and gathers a shell out of the mineral ether that surrounds them. It is hard and it is soft. The way some have genius, they have aesthetes, miniscule eyes on its mantle that look once, at once, they form a single, dispersed, compound eye. Beginning to see the world by resisting the world, beginning to like the projections, the reflections, beginning to like the impermeability enough. Only aesthetes can change the course of history. Distance is in the vicinity. They are silent. They are looped, receiving data waves in the water, emitting light and colour across silicified scrims, circuiting through currents of code. Their 8 layers like standing up lemniscates, their butterfly corpses imminent in infinity. They foresee the past. They live open and liquid in the bounds over there. The shell rings. It perishes before it arrives. It has been lost in order to survive. It arrives after it arrives.

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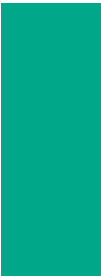
Quartz

We are before you thought us. We are contoured with the habit of time. We announce time before time, before the grated grids and golden eyes deleted detours, detours that dissimulated the secrets of the lichen, the mischief of the moss. The soot cover that could tell only one story, a compressed compound cast not as a crystal but as morose opacity. We have been folded outside in, now your creases elide our script. Distance is in the vicinity. We hurl closer to eternity, where we think you are, using what we have, what we have is this debris of desire. Remember when you told everyone you had a magic pebble? We have dug up everything you wished for. We are phantoms for you, bulging moulds around empty bits. We perceive our rockness, your rockness. We hold the light, we shiver.

~

We terminate anywhere between your stalactitic nodules. We coalesce. We dissolve. We oscillate, gauge, stabilise. We charge, we resonate. We are matter and spirit. We are clay, we vibrate. We smash and sinter. We warn, we are worn, we age and presage rain. We are our cenozoic laboratory. We will think of you at the end.

1. Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology*
2. Ibid.
3. Jan Zalasiewicz, *The Planet in a Pebble: A Journey Into Earth's Deep History*
4. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*
5. Tristan Tzara, *Dada Manifesto*
6. The author is undone by the English language, a product of her own postcolonial subjectivity, and recognises her further delusion in believing that any language contains the structures to resist anthropomorphisation, but she is human, on the verge.





COLOPHON



GUEST, GHOST, HOST: MACHINE!

Marathon curated by

Hans Ulrich Obrist
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Taylor Le Melle
Kay Watson

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Special thanks

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Temet nosce, machina

The work of artist Mario Santamaría studies the role of the contemporary observer. Amongst his work is the continuously growing collection of images of Google Streetview robots' gaze falling upon themselves, in the mirrors of the institutes they are tasked to document. Staring at their own image, what do they see?

Santamaría collects his findings on mariosantamaria.net/ and on the-camera-in-the-mirror.tumblr.com/.

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Iain Pate

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