

Editorial

a digital labyrinth

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What kind of knowledge system emerges from this approach? Openness, entanglements of different knowledge spheres and body concepts are important aspects of what the Atlas does. The labyrinth as a theoretical trope again helps to incorporate the ›thingness‹ of the object you have in your hand with the greater ambition connected to the project, that is the motion and method of the Atlas. The labyrinth alludes to logic, but also to the unfamiliar, evoking concepts such as quest and exploration, and, most importantly, getting lost. For Umberto Eco, the labyrinth represents a way of organising knowledge be-

The contributions demonstrate the diverse landscape of design research at the Bauhaus today, especially within the

»We use the metaphor of a labyrinth to highlight the connection between method and output, the structure being the manifestation of the authors' explorations.«

context of digital embodiment. It is important to emphasise, however, that design and artistic research can indeed take on very different forms and methods. A notable contribution in the field of artistic research in this section is Teresa Mayr's piece. Mayr takes us on a poetic cartography as a visual artist and artistic researcher, using speculative, science fiction-like narrative structures to approach the works of the artist Hilma af Klint in relation to Mayr's own artistic work (p. 62).

The section closes with Mats Werchohlad's contribution. He describes the stage experiments at the Bauhaus as »synthetic realities« and draws parallels with contemporary social TV regarding experimental self-awareness, media performance, and the role of the stage (p. 78). Kapsreiter summarises: »Damit schließt die Sektion Bauhaus als Interface und eröffnet den Raum für zukünftige Auseinandersetzungen mit Mensch, Körper und Technologie« (p. 27).

Body Politics

The body is both the beginning and the end of the political projects and inquiries presented in this section. The body is here understood as a space, an actor, a mediator, as well as the product of changing societal conditions, not the least of those of our present digitalised world. However, with the collection of body data also comes responsibility, and history is full of misuse and exploitation connected to this topic. After the first Atlas issue had been published, and seeing the great interest in the

cartographic approach of the project, the critical perspective was something we wanted to further highlight in a second issue. Especially in a German context, the collecting of body data has a dark past with infamous figures like the medical doctor and SS-officer Josef Mengele. Many other individuals and phenomena could be mentioned. The HeLa cells, for example, became the first immortalised cell line and have contributed immensely to biomedical research, but they were also cultured without the consent of the patient, the African American woman Henrietta Lacks, who died of cervical cancer in 1951. Coming from different directions, the authors of this section show how the body and the political converge.

The sick body

Georg Dickmann explores the intersection of pharmacology and politics, showing how the concept of the body as such is also evolving with the agents used to treat and modify it. As the boundaries between body and active substance dissolves, so does the dichotomy of human versus technology, leaving behind a highly political mesh of interdependencies with the material world (p. 90). The sick body is also the theme of Christoph Engemann's exploration of media-technology in the context of the COVID and AIDS pandemics. The creation of social graphs and their entanglements with political agencies raise questions about governance and governing of the technology being used (p. 132). Both contributors call for an increased sensibility and attention to the institutionalisation of human health through pharmaceutical industries and the medium of data.



Body images and marginalised bodies

Body images and marginalised bodies are another recurring theme of the section. Swantje Martach places the slim body in the contemporary social media landscape and uses this as a starting point for theorising on the form and framing of human bodies today. The thin and the fat body are conceptualised in relation to the figure of the Iron Maiden, a mythical torture instrument, the rigidity of it serving as a symbol for limiting bodily regimes (p. 96). Evke Rulffes explores the female body in relation to another object, the corset, presenting us with a historical exposé while also referencing contemporary lingerie artist Michaela Stark in whose hands the corset becomes imbued with radical potential (p. 104). Katharina Otto points at another kind of potentiality in marginalised bodies. The *Códices* and *Casta* paintings of the 16th and 18th centuries serve as paradigmatic examples of the Indigenous in visual culture. The author averts reducing the imagery to stereotypes, instead highlighting how the contradictory images of the natural barbarian and dangerous cannibal generated an ambivalent force and meaning, thereby assuming the role of mediator between Creole and Christian-Spanish interests and cultures (p. 112).

›More than body‹-bodies

Hybrid Space Lab explore the relationship between the body and its environment by presenting an interactive and immersive architectural vision of the ethnographic museum Humboldt Forum in Berlin. The proposal embodies the idea of the interwovenness of nature and culture and presents a multi-dimensional project that moves from the physical into digitised dimensions (p. 140). Alexander Wagner likewise explores the notion of heritage. Eastern Germany is conceived as a different kind of body body, a virtual one in a dataspace; a partly speculative approach that enables the author to circle in on the experience and collective memory embedded in East German biographies. This polyphonic and visionary investigation not only epitomises the East German experience but demonstrates the presence of futuristic potentiality enmeshed in a historical space (p. 122).

Body Mysticism

Mysticism encompasses the pursuit and encounter with a divine or transcendent reality, often characterised by spiritual rituals, personal evolution, and a sense of unity with the divine. Explored across various academic fields such as theology, religious studies, philosophy, and psychology, mystical experiences are typically subjective and may involve altered states of consciousness or encounters with the ineffable (Uhde 2011: 66). While deeply rooted in religious customs, mysticism can also be approached from a philosophical angle, which aligns with the focus of the section in our *Atlas of Databodies 2*.

One might speculate that in the 21st century, our understanding of bodies has largely been demystified due to the accumulation and analysis of data, coupled with advancements in artificial intelligence. Nonetheless, with the introduction of this section, we are also addressing this apparent comprehensiveness. Similar to the original term, »Body Mysticism« not only connects with the familiar but also allows exploration of uncharted territories within the *Atlas*.

In the face of new technology, »Body Mysticism« serves once again as a motivator for generating new cartographies. The section demonstrates that mapping our labyrinth, in combination with imagination and pushing the boundaries of the explainable, might be seen as an anthropological constant. A fitting example of this is provided by Jack Hartnell in his book *Medieval Bodies*, which describes the phenomenon of the *Blemmyae*, headless giant beings guarding the borders of the known world. He notes, »Even today, with modern migration and technology, our knowledge can similarly blur at the brink: the little green men that some think we will encounter beyond the bounds of our solar system are governed not by scientific truth but by the same very human impulses that form these monstrous medieval races. The *Blemmyae*, then, sit at an intersection between medieval bodily fact and bodily fiction...« (Hartnell 2018: 31). Elements of mysticism combined with the power of imagination can be crucial components and precursors to methods of cartography deemed objective, simultaneously expanding our imagination fundamentally. Contributions from the »Body Mysticism« section not only map but also shape partially hidden territories.

Mapping the virtual

For instance, Dagmar Schürer und Vanina Saracino, in their contribution »Dreaming is the Mind Left to Itself«, explore delving into the unconscious through an artistic-scientific collaboration with augmented reality technology (p. 224). The use of these technologies brings about a new

»When working actively with the incomplete, the indecisive, the unfulfilled, the Atlas of Databodies instead makes use of the fragmented and elastic properties of our digital reality and current world. The body is both the subject matter of this exploration and serves as the potent link between the physical origin of any human enterprise and the theme of digitalisation.«

perspective on digital body images. The so-called Metaverse is a term not yet clearly defined, implying a future projection e.g. for a virtual marketplace (Gabler Wirtschaftslexikon 2023). This term, which is primarily used in economic contexts, is increasingly finding its way into cultural contexts, as evidenced by its appearance in exhibition titles and texts (Art Basel 2022). Nevertheless, our authors explore corporeality in virtual spaces with a critical perspective on the capitalisation of the virtual realm.

Maja Stark's text guides our readers through the tension between digital and physical bodies in immersive art, vividly examining the phenomena of avatars, ›Embodied Simulation‹ and ›Virtual Embodiment‹ through artistic works (p. 189). On the other hand, Janne Kummer's contribution explores how to integrate the sensory experience of the physical body into virtual environments, utilising experiments with sensors and actuators (p. 210). What unites these contributions is an inclusive and open perspective on virtual territories, as well as the creation of a space in which digital bodies and body images can emancipate themselves from existing categorisation systems of the real world.

Mapping with senses

The increasing digitisation of general cartographic methods of bodies (such as imaging techniques like MRI or

CT scans, or recording vital parameters like heart rate and blood pressure) prompts artists and scientists to dedicate themselves to techniques of mapping in our Atlas. These techniques do not solely rely on digital devices and interfaces for data capture, but rather focus our attention on senses that can connect us humans with other species even in a digitised world. Technology, in this context, is not seen as an adversary, but rather as an accomplice in the development of positive post-human speculations.

Furthermore, in the contribution »Attuning to the Symbiotic Real« by Brandon Rosenbluth and Saša Spačal, a philosophical mapping of the concept and categorisation of symbiosis unfold. Rosenbluth adeptly guides us through the apparent symbiotic network and multifaceted interrelationships addressed in Spačal's artistic work, adding a sensual element to the cartography of the databody atlas. Specifically, it is about the aspect of listening, or more precisely, quantum listening. Spačal and Rosenbluth map from a perspective that opposes conventional anthropocentric models of nature, making them not only intellectually but also sensorially palpable (p. 172).

While Spačal's artistic works often reference plants or bacteria, Marie Speckart's artistic research delves into the human body, particularly exploring the possibilities of expan-

ding the prevailing understanding of the body in medicine. A key artistic and theoretical focal point is the consideration of a symbiosis between body and technology through artificial organs, as well as the development of an architectural analogy concerning quantifiable corporeality. In the project »Memoria – Between Matter and the Immaterial«, Manuel Ahnemüller presents a profound and artistic contemplation of the relationship between physical objects, identity, and memory culture (p. 162). He intertwines areas of design, art, and »body mysticism« to explore mental and physical metamorphosis. Ahnemüller emphasises that memories can also be viewed as data bodies and that cartography can represent an ongoing, constant alteration.

Modern Mysticism

While Maria Rogg devotes her essay »Twists of the Smart Body: Biohacks of Biometric Existence« to the question of what it means to exist as a human being in a highly digitalised society (p. 192), Paul Heinicker discusses various aspects of dealing with data in modern society. He explores the notion that data significantly influences various facets of life and how this notion is expressed through terms such as »data-driven«, »Big Data«, and »Artificial Intelligence«. The text examines the expectations and aspirations associated with data usage and how they shape our perceptions and handling of data. Furthermore, the text delves into the impacts of mythologising data and neglecting their historical and sociocultural contexts (p. 218).

What do we see?

Our authors, employing both scientific and artistic methods, delve into the peripheries of comprehending technologies, wrestling with questions regarding their enduring influence and possibilities. Boldly and critically, they interrogate the cartography of virtual and physical realms within this knowledge labyrinth, as well as all that lies in between. They contribute to the Atlas method by collectively underscoring that new territories are only attainable through boundary crossings, yet emphasising the necessity to redefine the act of crossing itself.

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Marlene Bart is an artist and researcher who completed her PhD at the Bauhaus University Weimar. Her work combines elements of natural history, anatomy and the visual arts. Bart explores how a common visual language can be used in art and science to address broad themes such as the importance of systems of order. She uses a variety of multimedia techniques, including printmaking, artists' books, sculpture, taxidermy, installation, and XR technologies. In addition to her publishing activities, Bart exhibits in international solo and group exhibitions.

Johannes Breuer studied design and medicine in Münster and Berlin and completed his PhD (with distinction) on the subject of digital pain assessment at the Bauhaus University Weimar. He works, teaches and researches in the field of medical design with a focus on user interface design, visualization of body data as well as participation and co-design methods.

Cecilia Falkman is a writer and visual artist. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Lund University in Sweden and is currently studying European Literature at Humboldt University in Berlin. Her studies have focused on literature, architecture, and languages, and she has also researched these topics at Korea University, the University of Helsinki and Aarhus University.