

## FIELD ESSAYS #0

Sophie Krier

Marek Pokropski

Lucyandbart.com

a specific order. In this sense, our embodied "I" spatializes  
normalizes external objects by including them into our  
oral structure of activity. When we learn how to use  
teach our body how to fit it in our bodily schema.  
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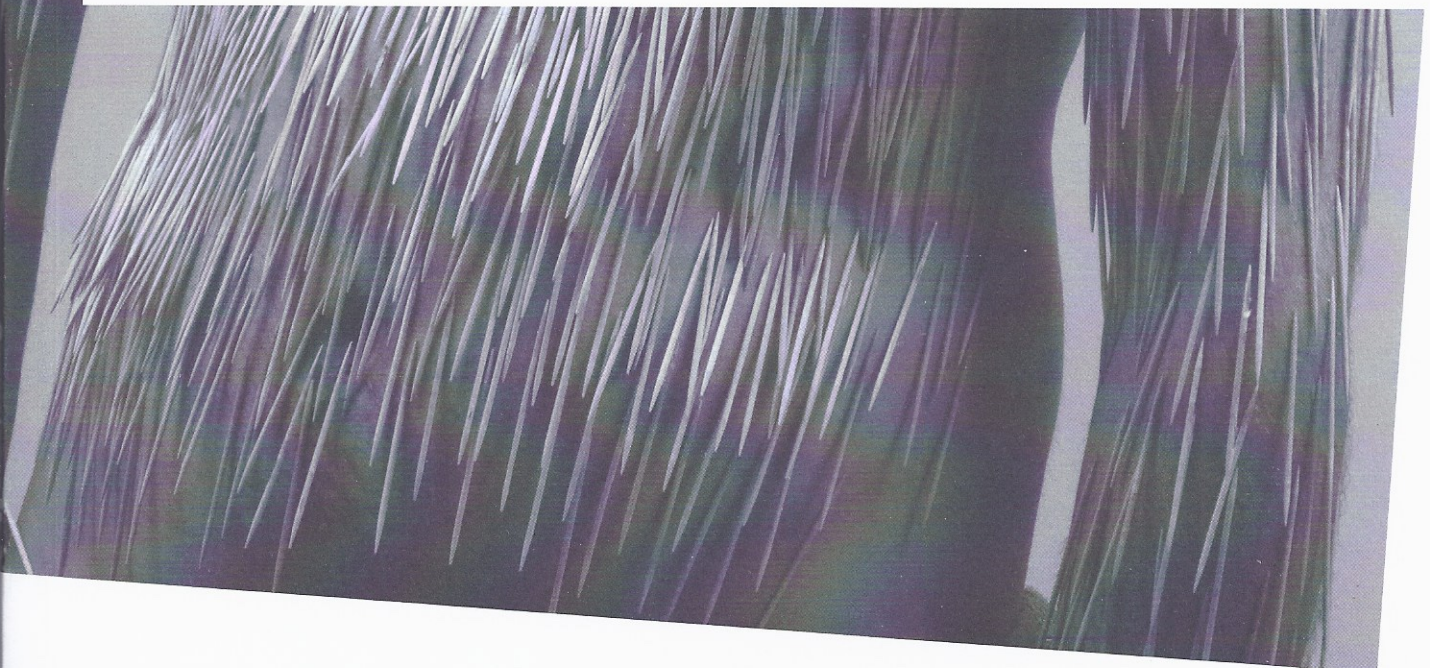
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# EMBODIED PICK OF STICKS





**Field Essays** is a new series of journals about the dynamics of design processes. **Field Essays** works in a practical manner, by acting as a critical and reflective backdrop to the production of new work. Its contents will speak to all involved in today's visual culture.

The first issue is devoted to the work of **Lucyandbart**, an ad hoc duo from **Eindhoven / Amsterdam**. **Lucyandbart** work close to the body, and their mode of operation is impulsive; they generate ambiguous images that depict our skin as a an interface between our self and the world. **Field Essays** tries to grasp the nature of their design process and to map their motives. Guest writer **Marek Pokropski** adds a philosophical perspective through an essay about our embodied perception of the world. Finally, a collection of **Notes** explores the relevance of **LucyandBart's** practice for the field as whole.

**Field Essays** is a research project of **Atelier Sophie Krier**, published twice a year. Part fieldwork and part introspection, its aim is to refine our understanding of design as an agent of change in all fields of human activity.

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Field Essays is my personal tribute to design processes. At the same time it is an attempt to emancipate our understanding of design by claiming space for critical action and reflection. It asks what happens if we start to look at design processes as autonomous spaces, with their own behaviour and nature.

This first issue is devoted to the work of Lucyandbart, an ad hoc duo from Eindhoven / Amsterdam. Central to their work is the question of how behaviour shapes the ways in which our body interacts with the world and vice versa. In their absurd human enhancements, skin performs as an intimate interface with the material world. The instinctive, erratic, and at times even trivial nature of Lucyandbart's process is hard to decipher, especially because it refuses to be understood, labelled, or contextualised. "When you blink it moves"; it is only through such seemingly matter-of-fact observations that the motives behind their ambiguous imagery can be detected.

The idea of embodiment is explored from a phenomenological angle in Marek Pokropski's essay – a study of how our bodies continuously mediate the world around us. The question of the borders between self, body, and surrounding, and how these three domains collapse in the dynamic system of behaviour, drives Pokropski's analysis.

Related thoughts and references, side observations and tentative conclusions are orchestrated in a series of Notes, and inserted now and then. Transcribed conversations between Pokropsky, Lucyandbart, and me connect the different ideas that inhabit this issue.

I want to thank LucyandBart, René Put, Andreas Tscholl, and Jeroen Boomgaard for their sustained and generous commitment to this adventure; Field Essays would still be a mere concept on paper without their support. Many thanks also to Freek Lomme, Renée Kool, and Willem van Weelden for their crucial feedback at critical points in the process.

*Sophie Krier, October 2010*



**"We must ... avoid saying that our body is *in* space, or *in* time. It *inhabits* space and time."<sup>1</sup>**

**What does it mean to *inhabit* space? I have grown accustomed to thinking about space as something which surrounds me and in which I am immersed. Space appears to me as a kind of vast "container" which encloses me and the objects that surround me. But at times I feel so connected to my surroundings (on a hot day, at the swimming pool, in the presence of close friends) that I ask myself what this difference is "made of".**

**Around me are countless material things. They are common: a chair, a desk, a lamp that lights up the scattered stuff, a glass of water. There is not one moment in my life that things do not surround me. I have grown up with them and I have learned how to use them. When I am thirsty, I extend my hand and grasp a glass of water without thinking. My hand registers the smoothness and coldness of the glass. My fingers wrap themselves around the rim. A cold liquid fills my mouth and insides. The glass is the same as my body placed in space, yet it is *my body* that uses it and that derives tactile sensations from its shape, texture, and content.**

1 M. Merleau-Ponty  
Phenomenology of Perception  
tr. Colin Smith, Routledge, 2002, p. 161.



### Living body

According to the founder of phenomenological philosophy, Edmund Husserl, the sense of touch is crucial for the constitution of our sentient *living body*. The distinction between the material *object-body* and *my body* is based on impressions, which are present only “inside” *my body*, such as tactile sensations, pain, etc.

“Obviously, the body is also to be seen just like any other thing, but it becomes a Body only by incorporating tactile sensations, pain sensations, etc. – in short, by the localization of the sensations as sensations.”<sup>2</sup>

When I want to move my hand, I see it move. When I lay it down on my desk, I begin to experience sensations of coldness, roughness, and hardness. These are present, living sensations localized in my hand. If I move my hand across my desk, the sensation will change; the roughness of wood will change into the sensation of smooth metal.

We perceive our *body* in two ways: as an external material object and as an embodied space, which “carries” our “internal” sensations – *living body*. The perception of our body as a material thing is always fragmentary. We can see or touch parts of our body; we always see some side of it, but we can never grasp the wholeness of it. *Living body* is *my body*; it is an “internal space” of tactile sensations, which manifests itself simultaneously throughout the visible surface of our body. Husserl emphasizes however, that we cannot identify the localization and the

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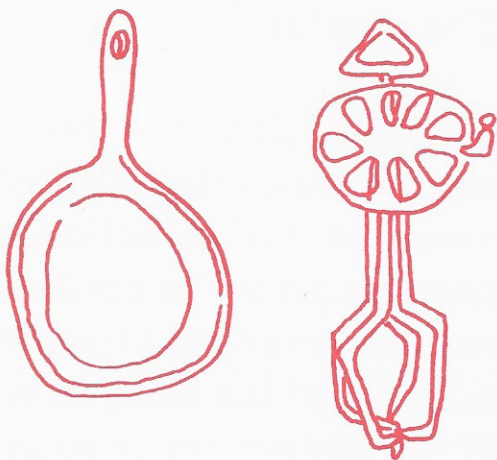
<sup>2</sup> E. Husserl  
Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and  
to a Phenomenological Philosophy, vol. II  
tr. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer  
Springer, 1989, p. 158.



001 We always see some side of it, but we can never grasp the wholeness of it

Our body is our own blind spot. This is ironic because our body is also our sole source of perception; it is the mediator through which each of us continuously filters, channels and processes impressions of our surroundings.

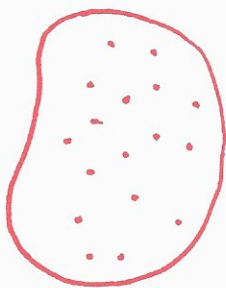
When I give a lecture I usually start with the projection of an image of cooking utensils, accompanied by the question: "which type of mediator are you? The one that can solidify a liquid, or the one can fluff up air?"



[the mediator]

What I am really asking is: what do you let in and what do you let out – what do you exclude, and what do you transform in this mediating process? In my own experience, practicing design is like the cellular process of osmosis in the sense

that all the things that I put in the world are the products of the way in which I relate to that world – and at the same time, the products of the world's way of dealing with me. In other words, all the things that I make are extensions of myself (materialised intentions) as well as extensions of the world (materialised impressions).<sup>1</sup>



[the membrane]

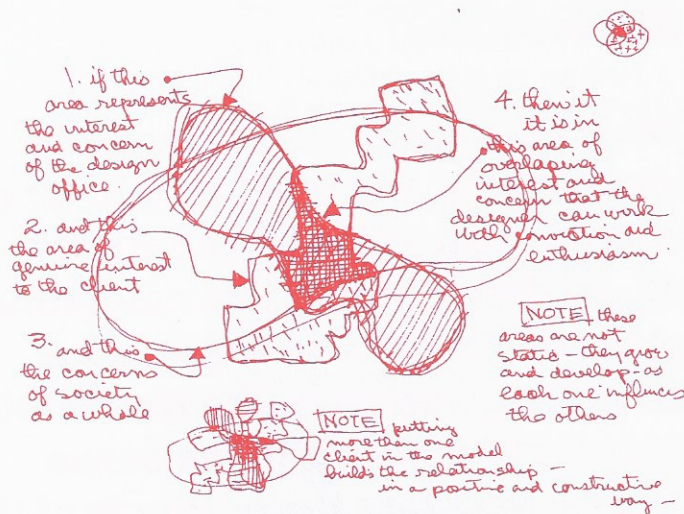
The precarious balance (*semi permeable membrane*) between my intention (*inside*) and the context for which the design is intended (*outside*) is never fixed. (Moreover,

the outside world is also often the context that triggered the intention, originally.) The permeable membrane or margin that I envision is a margin where intention and context meet, and is



what should be at stake in any design, from conception all the way to delivery and use.

A scheme of the design process, drawn by Charles Eames<sup>2</sup> in the early seventies, is worth mentioning here. Eames was renowned for his opportunistic attitude towards commissioned work: Eames' Office only worked on topics that were of "genuine and immediate interest" to him, Ray, their employees, the client, and society as a whole. The resulting, overlapping zone of common interest "where the designer can work with conviction and enthusiasm", is the darkest and densest zone of the diagram – symbolizing the high concentration of, interestingly, potentially conflicting interests.



[the overlap]<sup>3</sup>

In my opinion, it is this continuous, interest-driven movement of selection, and in consequence the continuous reassessment of priorities, which lent the body of work of the Eames' its unequalled strength and significance.

1 In osmosis, water moves across a semi-permeable membrane from an area of low solute concentration to an area of high solute concentration, thereby maintaining the vital, dynamic equilibrium between cells and their surroundings.

2 Neurath J., Neurath M., Eames R., Eames Design (The work of the Office of Charles and Ray Eames), p. 13-14, 1989, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York.

3 Scheme, by Charles Eames, in Eames Design (The work of the Office of Charles and Ray Eames), p. 13-14.



extension of internal sensations with the same kind of extensiveness as we do with material things. Bodily spatiality is essentially different from "objective" space.

Our sensations "extend in space"; they fill the space that we can discover as the spatiality of *my body*. Touch works in two ways. It constitutes the external object by defining its shape (a phenomenon of extension), border, temperature, and texture, but it also defines our hand as the "place" where all these sensations are localized. Every sense of tactile perception of an external object is also a self-perception of *my body*.

When my hand is moving across the surface of the desk I perceive its texture, but at the same time I can shift my attention and feel the texture of my hand's skin; the same goes with shape or temperature. Reversibility of touch is a manifestation of externality as a negative of our moving, touching body.

### Here

Movement itself also lends us sensations – such as muscle tension and an impression of weight – which pervade our whole body. Our weight is what chains us to space. It determines our possibility of movement, of reach, of *taking place*.

I am *here* whereas things are *there*. Thus, my body is an orientation point; it defines basic spatial distinction between here/there, and next, between up/down, left/right, etc. However, these spatial relations are dynamic. *Here* dynamically determines



*there*. I can move and thus change the spatial meaning of *here*. I can go *there* and take the place of a previously perceived object.

This basic division (here/there) is constantly changing, and the necessary condition of it is *bodily dynamic*. As an orientation point, our body generates spatial relations that organize exteriority and external objects. However the body itself is like a blind spot. Czech philosopher Jan Patonka wrote:

"... experiencers do not appear in the object field as its components; that would only mean its objectification. Rather, each of them appears as a centre, as ordering the basic dimensions of near/far, up/down etc. This ordering shows us experiencers as corporeal, as living as bodies."<sup>3</sup>

For Patonka, the essence of corporeality is movement. He claims that the possibility of movement is a necessary condition of perceiving things. Without the possibility of bringing nearer, walking around, seeing from different perspectives, a thing could not be synthesized from these different sensual modalities into one "stable" object.

### There

Thus, perception must always be considered as embodied and in motion. Another essential part of every act of perception is perspective. Every view of an object is one of an infinite number of perspectives, which can be changed by bodily activity (movement). Thus the object of perception is always open, incomplete.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Patonka  
Body, Community, Language, World  
tr. E. Kohák, Chicago, 1998, p. 77.



On the contrary, *living body experience* is different because it necessarily relates to the whole body. Obscure and non-verbal feelings of good mood, weakness or tiredness, experience of movement or posture, even impressions of bodily warmth, would not be possible without relating to the coherent and inclusive “space” of our body.

The specificity of the perceptual field is that the centre is always understood as a part of the perceptual field on which the embodied ‘I’ is focused. Around the centre is a perceptual background that completes the view. Movement can alter our perceptual attention from one object of attention to another: something that was separated from the background and was at first seen in detail, can be pulled apart again, and the “centre” of attention will be filled with another perception.

### Body posture

Kinaesthetic phenomena described by Patonka are considered in contemporary cognitive science as proprioception. Proprioception, taken at large, is information that comes from the experience of bodily posture, limb position, and movement. We can consider proprioception as a kind of non-perceptual awareness<sup>4</sup>. It means that even though we are aware of our current posture, even though it is constantly present in our consciousness, it is at the same time hidden in the perceptual background. It is transparent in order to enable acting and object interaction.

4 Shaun Gallagher  
Bodily self-awareness and object perception  
[in] *Theoria et historia scientiarum*, vol. VII  
Toru, 2003.



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S "In your essay, you mention a few notions that interest me as a designer: the idea of *Zuhandenheit* (the stuff we discover around) versus *Vorhandenheit* (concepts, things that are in the present), and the idea of resonance (resonating with another body). Can you elaborate a bit further on these ideas?"

M "Heidegger recognizes two types of beings; one where ideas are described as *Vorhandenheit*, present to me as a subject, while *Zuhandenheit* describes the things around me, which I discover in my *Umwelt*, my surroundings. Discovering them is a pre-reflective activity, a form of pre-reflective understanding. Reflectivity is the realm of presence, as is *Vorhandenheit* for the isolated 'object of thought'. A being, which is *zuhanden* is never alone, it is always related to a whole set of other tools and structures. For example, 'pencil' is related to 'paper', and so on. It shows the close relation, which connects all things together, including me. ... About the idea of resonance: understanding something is much more than an intellectual process. Understanding is something we do through our body. Perception is a primordial kind of understanding; our movement, our emotions, are forms of understanding too. Some of the patients described by Sacks' cannot move except in the company of others; we can assume that these Parkinson patients suffer of a lack of rhythm, which is essential in guiding our behaviour. When we talk we need a rhythm to synchronise, when we move we need a rhythm to keep our balance. ... In short, to be active, we need rhythm to synchronise all our actions. Sacks wrote about how this rhythm can be substituted by music – some of his patients cannot speak but can sing; others cannot move but can dance. It's all about resonating rhythms."

S "You have explored the dynamics of *inhabiting space*; what I want to talk to you about now is how we inhabit space today. You have shown what perception is 'made of', arguing that it is necessarily embodied (via our emotions) as well as spatiotemporal in nature (via movement, direction,

activity, and use). You have also shown how our pre-reflective encounter with the world (via instinctive, bodily understanding of our surroundings) 'embeds' our active, intended 'being in the world'. My question is how all this works today?"

M "And you want me to answer now? ... It's rather complex, because your question already starts with the communication problem – communicating with people in other parts of the world, which nowadays largely defines our experience of space. The next thing is that the level of bodily, everyday experience has become incorporated into the domain of information flow and communication. For instance, when our movements are used to manipulate virtual objects. Then, there are also our *net identities*, where in the most radical case we create another identity with a bodily representation, an avatar, freeing us from our 'authentic' identity as well as from our body. ... Virtual reality creates a virtual body that is seen, which expresses emotions and personality, which even gives a perceptual perspective. Today, the virtual body can already be modified; parts can be added or removed. In the future, maybe, the virtual body will actually be felt (see the rubber hand experiment?) through direct brain access and body map modifications. ... Current socio-technological phenomena (e.g. creating 2.0 behaviour and content), which involve a process of virtualization of body, identity, emotions, bodily expressions, and point of view all show that embodiment remains an integral part of our essence (through emotions, perception and perspectiveness) so it cannot be removed; the virtualization process is not a process of disembodiment but a hyper sublimation of our body; the body is de-materialized, extended, dispersed, multiplied. However, we won't get rid of our biological anchor to the world (fed through our emotional feedback system); but, with the progression of the virtualization process I can see our body becoming a remnant of the real: a museum piece on display, as is already happening in anatomical exhibitions, or on live web cams."

S "Another thing. Everything you describe in your essay would be different depending on where we are in the world, right?"

M "And you wonder where are we now?"

S "Exactly, and also: which ideas form the 'outside' of your essay, which things did you not address but are still relevant to the dynamics of perception?"

M "Well, to start, one problem is that I didn't write about the perception of *others*. We didn't put this problem in the text. Yet, the perception of others is crucial in understanding our own body. First of all, there is the projection of our own ego into *another* body. So the other ego is always an alter ego. (Merleau-Ponty shifts the problematic ground from intersubjectivity to intercorporeity. He thinks of the subjects as always immersed in all embracing sensuality and corporeity.) Thus, I perceive another body as a potential place of perception that I could also take; in this sense the other is read as a co-percipient. And, if we all co-perceive each other's worlds, you could say that we all participate in the production of a collective, global *sensuality*."

S "So, what does this mean in terms of behaviour?"

M "It means that another person, to me, is a potential being I can act with, therefore another body is also a being that can act with tools that I act with, therefore others are present in all the things I perceive. I am able to understand others' behaviour because their behaviour is entangled with the same things I am entangled with. This is what forms the basis for understanding one another: that we are together in a world with things that we can use. Co-perception is a basic condition of understanding, just like empathy."

S "And how would you relate the idea of territory to this idea of co-perception?"

M "... Our existence used to be somehow defined by territory and now it seems it is completely open, it has no borders, because of the endless possibilities



of communication and because we 'get' our information from anywhere. Travelling, shifting places, and speed have also changed the meaning of territory. For example, nowadays when we travel it's impossible to perceive a landscape so we 'make a stop' and stay there for a while; in the time of 'oil paintings with men travelling on horses' you actually perceived the landscape *while* you moved, so 'being in travel' was also a place in itself, while now it's mostly a transit mode. Our territory has exploded. Today we can only know the islands and the connections between them."

S "But at the same time this is the first time that we can see the totality of the surface of the world, from above [through Google Earth]."

M "But do we, really, see it? I think we don't because its complexity is so overwhelming that we cannot grasp it or 'be' in this space. What we look at is only a representation, like studying a map. To *be* in space would be to inhabit it, to derive delight from it. While going to a certain place used to be about *making* the journey, meaning getting to know all the places between, nowadays we move from point to point."

S "And how would you define *home*, then?"

M "Maybe we don't have a home today ... The place that I live in is merely a point-to-point connection to others. Home as an idea has become dispersed. Here and now are no longer the sole parameters, 'my place' is filled with people, contacts, that flow through it."

1 Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings*, Random House Inc, 1990.

2 An experiment that shows that we can easily manipulate our body schema. In the "Rubber hand" experiment an artificial hand is put on the table in front of the examined person, whose real hand lies nearby, but is hidden from view. The person looks at the fake hand, while a stick touches both the rubber hand and the real hand. After a while, the person starts to localize tactile sensations in the fake hand, which he is watching: the person identifies this hand as its own. This shows that the identification of part of the body as 'mine' is based on simultaneous presence of visual and tactile perception, and proprioception (hand localization). The experiment can be repeated with a 3D image of a hand projected on a digital display, instead of the rubber hand.

[mumbling] ... on the balcony." Lucy "Oooh yeah." Paul [mumbling] Lucy "Yeah, yeah, that's alright ..... fine ... good ... We just have to keep working." Bart "I was only thinking." Lucy "Uhum ..." Bart "It also can be nice ... You see this going out? If you have this one in the middle, this also, oops, sorry, this one is going out." Lucy "Yeah." Bart "This one would be like this?" Lucy "Uhum, yeah, straight." Bart "Or not?" Lucy "Yeah, yeah ... So put the glue somewhere different." Bart "Yeah." ..... Lucy "But I like how it's going." Bart "Uhum." Lucy "From the top." Bart "But maybe the nose is a bit too much." ..... Lucy "Yeah." Bart "It's nice." Lucy "Yeah." ..... Bart "It's like." ..... Lucy "How is this going? [stumbling] ..... You go over there and do it. .... Just fake it a bit." ..... Bart [mumbling] Lucy "What do you mean? ... Oooh ..... is it?" Bart "Maybe not." Lucy "I think not ..... I thought more about uuhhhm ... [mumbling] ... [stumbling] ..... Huuh, put the heat on? ..... [noise] ..... Step forward a bit ..... Let's just do it." Bart "Huh?" Lucy "Just ... It doesn't have to be that styled, is it?" Bart "No." ..... Lucy "I think it's going to be nice." Bart "Yeah." Lucy "I feel like I'm enjoying Lucy and Bart even more ... I don't know ... Just like we talked about it." Bart "Uhum." Lucy "Yeah ... like ... no pressure ..... OK." Bart "Yeah?" [clicking] Lucy "Maybe just one ... more like that ..... [clicking] ..... Yeah, nice." Bart "Hmmm ... uhum ... looks good." Lucy "Nice isn't it?" Bart "Uhum." ..... Lucy "I'll go to the toilet, and could you do another close-up." Bart "Yeah." [stumbling] [door closing]

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Bart "Ah ... The guy from the ... 'MU' ..... Lucy "No ..." Bart "I think this is my favourite." Lucy "Hmm ... I think we have to check the photos, maybe we haven't got enough." ..... Bart "It's also too ... sorry ... too hard to record ..... video uuhhm ..... record it." Lucy "No. ... Are you cold? ..... What would you like, 24 degrees?" Bart "Haha, no that's a little bit ..." ..... [door closing] ..... Lucy "Haha, it's gonna be like a sauna." ..... [door closing]



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L "Yeah, we recorded one day."  
 B "It's quite ..."  
 L [smiling] "Long ..."  
 B "It's eight hours, ten hours of ..."  
 L "Mumbling ... And then, [breathes in, pauses] silence ... Like, whilst I'm sticking stuff on, not really saying anything."  
 B "And a lot of like, this is nice, oh, this is nice, like, not explaining what we're doing, so this a little bit higher, or this one a little bit lower. [loud laughter] Or if you look at that, you don't know what this is, of course."  
 L "But it could be nice, too."  
 S "Does it give any clue, to ..."  
 B "I think really when you see the image."  
 S "To ..."  
 L "Yeah, if you see the image."  
 B "If we say 'Oh we better use the larger ones, so ... [shrieks, laughter, sigh] No, if you see the images ..."  
 L "It's a bit silly really."  
 B "Yeah so, we can have a look, if you want." [Clicking away through the more than 500 images]  
 S "So this is the ... OK. And the decision for the toothpicks? ..." [...]  
 L [frowning] "This is where it gets more dense I think. [giggling] Nice curls."  
 B "It's nice that for me it looks a bit like rain, also."  
 L "Mmmm. Yeah, it's weird."  
 B "Or like you have these filters on."  
 L "Photoshop."  
 B "Where you can make a sketch of yourself."  
 L "Like a trace or something." [...]  
 S "There's some sort of reptile thing about it. [pauses] What are you looking for, in these, when you take these pictures, Lucy?"  
 L "Well, first of all I was trying to make sure I could get it all in the shot, because the wall was right behind me and I couldn't move any further back, [giggles] so it was just trying to line everything up, and then, [pauses] just finding positions, like poses and also the hair was [pauses] just trying to make sure that the hair looked ... less dominant because it's really contrasting with the toothpicks and then trying more close-up ones and more further away ones."  
 S "Somehow the poses when you are not straight, they ..."  
 L "Yeah, because you get this, you really get this movement and you get this shadow in the close-ups coming and you really get this, like, chest

[emphasizes this word] shadow.  
 [enthusiastically] That's really like you're blurred there! Can you go back to the one ..."  
 S [whispering] "Where is it."  
 L [loudly] "There. This is like you're blurred. Your face."  
 B [zooming in] "Mmmm. [...]  
 [pensively] It's also a bit like when, mmm, ... a painter starts, doing his ... thing, like my father is a painter, and he does this before he has eyes or nose or any detail ..." [trails off]  
 L "I think I like it better when it's on the side. [positively] It's nice. We haven't seen them for a while. These are earlier ones."  
 S "Mm, they are less dense."  
 L "Yeah ... [suddenly alert] That's weird. [...] [clicking sounds] This is on the day of the intro, just testing."  
 B "This, this. This is ..."  
 S "This is a nice series to show how you can go from something completely normal to something unfamiliar, this."  
 L [softly] "It's a nice one. [smiling] My beard!"  
 B "We just glued the whole thing, and then, just, glued the whole bunch on."  
 S "Just with glue or ..."  
 B "Yeah, the skin glue."  
 S "Ah, there is skin glue? ..."  
 B "For fake wigs, things, moustache ..."  
 S "I like them also when they are moving."  
 L "Mmm. Ah yeah. Now we want to do a big one! [smiles, sighs] It's like a landscape ... [giggling] Still with my beard on ..." [smiles]  
 B "Ah ..."  
 L "I couldn't do it on my face because it was so ... smelly. It made my eyes water. From all the glue."  
 S "It's quite funny the try outs of how to make it work ... This one, and this one too. Nice one."  
 L "Oh."  
 B "That kind of worked."  
 L "Mmm." [clicking sounds]  
 S "But somehow since this one is still a bunch, ... Ah, this one is interesting. Here you don't see the borders so much and ..."  
 B "Mmmm."  
 L [matter-of-factly] "This is really like a fur. [sighing] [loudly] It's like your stomach's exploded. [laughing out loud] [sighing deeply] Ah ..."  
 S "Now they're falling in a completely different ... Now it's like hair."  
 B "Mmm."

S "Even though you see that ..."  
 [clicking sounds]  
 L "Next trial ..." [...]  
 S "You're very concentrated aren't you, when you ..."  
 L "Mmm."  
 B "Mmm."  
 L "Sort of in a zone."  
 S "Yeah, there's a stare. Both your eyes are just ..." [trails off] [...]  
 [Lucy and Bart laugh like three year olds]  
 L "This is for my, uhm, for my thirtieth birthday."  
 B "We had all these caps left over." [...]  
 L [all happy] "I'm going to have a D.I.Y. fancy dress buffet. [seriously] And here we go again." [...]  
 L [gasping] "Oh ..." [Lucy and Bart laugh loudly and then Lucy shouts out]  
 S "Aauw."  
 B [smiling] "Then we tried to do it serious. [softly] Do a better lighting and ..."  
 L "Gmrhg ... It's like putting up a tent ..."  
 S "Mm."  
 L "Now we go ..."  
 B "I think it's nice with the hand in ..."  
 L "Mmm. We had to concentrate to ..."  
 S "It's not that easy to ... They fall off ..."  
 L [half apologizing] "We were thinking this is the intro."  
 B "It's also really weird because you really don't know which face you're pulling, so when you see it later you think 'oh, this is really crazy' but when you do it, it only hurts."  
 S "Mmm."  
 B "You really lose like your own ..."  
 S "It's not direct, not as if you were doing it with your own fingers."  
 L "This one I like. ... It's so nice!"  
 B "But you just for your feeling have a neutral face on; I'm not smiling in this one." [...]  
 L "Such a shame I didn't take a picture of how many sticks I bought ... I must have bought about a hundred thousand of them ... I don't know what I was thinking ..."  
 S "Did you use them all?"  
 L "I had to bring them all back. A bag and then another bag ..." [...]  
 S "I like the pictures where you see that the body is trying to understand what kind of new skin this is, how it works."  
 L "This is nice, when I was taking them off." [Talking about Lucy and Bart's methodology]  
 L "We do tests, and then make, we test



the material and then make a shoot, see it, test the material, shoot, test, and then, even when we go for the final one, we say 'shall we make a test' and then yes to it. There's no method to it."

B "Normally, we make it to one final image. We sit down and ..."

L "Choose one."

B "That one, that one, that one, that one, and then we say yes but there, the back-ground or there you are like this, and then we have three, sometimes it's about cropping, and then that's it. You just see it."

L "It's like it's obvious, the one to choose."

S "Do you know already for this series which ones you'll choose?"

L "I saw quite a few. I can't remember them now. When it's turned and a bit hunched over ..."

S "Do you know why?"

L "Mmm. Just looks good ..."

S "And what is good?"

L "We say we just work from instinct and I guess it's like: 'yep'. It's just ... It's hard to explain ..."

B "There are also many things you don't speak about, like composition and colour. We don't say that. We look for a feeling."

S "Last time you were talking about that it shouldn't be too much this or that, that you were looking for a pose or ..."

B "Normally we go like, 'oh this is too sad, or too posed, or' ..."

L "Too arts and crafty."

B "I think when the hair is loose, then we say ..."

L "Definitely no! It's distracting."

B "It would be nice when I would be blond and my hair would be mixed."

L "If my hair was blond, then definitely. Like in the evolution one, where it gets wrapped in. It still wants to be natural without ..."

S "Being too stuck on ..." [...]

B "If you see them small you only think that the picture is blurred."

S "Like a high-res digital picture sharpening itself."

L "Mm!"

S "What did you see?"

L "Maybe ..." [...]

B "This is the beginning again. Or not? Oh, no." [...]

L "Have a look at one of these, closer. [...] Because we just can't chop off any part of the week and start, it just comes."

S "And you don't want this to get philosophized, right?"

L "Yes, because it's not about that. When you talk about play and fun and process then definitely they are really in there."

S "But should we name these things by their name, or? I think it would be a good thing to find what kind of text can live alongside your images. So not text describing your pictures, or analyzing them, because that would ... For instance, Bas van Princen is always looking for a suggestion of something, or when he takes a pictures, he actually wants people to imagine what's happening outside the frame ... These things are interesting because they are new ways to look at architecture ..."

L "[...] "For us it kind of exists in the background, but it's not in the foreground ... It's really ... primitive."

S "But how could you have a text interacting with your work but not explaining it? Not 1:1. Will the recording thing add something to it, or ... I do like the instant quality of your work. This is it, now. The fast process and the slowing down when you look for the final image. It's very physical, your process. Can we make the reading of your work a physical experience?"

L "What's the book's main ..."

S "The book's really about the way to get to something. The way you approach something. And what's behind that. Even when we are not aware of it. The motives behind what we do."

L "I just want to ... It just reminded me - you know how birds fly, in a direction, and suddenly they just kind of go this way and that way, or ants move in a very indescribable way, in a way it's like that, or, some emerging thing that goes like this or like that and we do it together and then we go off and we get back together, like an animal sniffing and checking it out and ... You can't really describe it."

S "So what if that's what the text would be about ... The movement of ants ..."

L "Have you read 'Emergence'? It's all about bottom-up emerging patterns: swarms, architecture. It's by Steven Johnson, he is an American scientist. There's no real method and it's more a kind of evolution, that's happening."

S "Metaphors would be a nice way to describe your process. Because they don't pin you down, they create space." **014**

L "Yes, and you asked before what's good, we're looking for a good image and what's good, it's hard to describe ..."

S "Is it when you stop swarming?"

L "When the bird sits. [...] You should read it. There's a great example what ants do, the way ants harvest. They did this little example, put all the ants in a box, and monitored them. Basically, they organized their community like a city. All the corpses of the ants were at one end, like a cemetery, and the food opposite. And they created a mini-city that made such sense. They have their little trails and ... There's no queen bee, no one in charge, just waves that go out [pauses, spans her arms wide] and everyone knows what to do ... It's really incredible." **015**

S "So in this system, if the waves are going out and this is how you respond to it, you have to be receptive. Because if you're both going your own way ... You have to be really attentive." [...] [Listening to part of the recording. Silence: Lucy is sticking the sticks on]

L "When we do this we find the most efficient way. If we did it again we couldn't do it faster, we find the fastest way from the start." In the recording, Lucy is babbling on about a party where 60 percent of the people were wearing checkered shirts.

S "It's also about hierarchy this." **016**

L "About what? [sighs, shrieks] This is so boring." [Lucy says: "And another funny story ..."]

L "I can't bare it! So scared of what I'm going to say ..."

S "You're really talking to keep him quiet ... to pass time."

L "Just anything that passes through my time ... All of a sudden, snap ..."

L [to Bart] "Maybe I am really boring you, you're just not telling me ..."

B "I didn't expect that we didn't say ... I would have thought we have more conversation when we work ..."

L "Funny how listening to this conversation is taking me right back to the table, where I was, what I was doing. I was on the side ... just sticking stuff on. Lifting my hand like this, and then go ... One by one."



There is something about instinctive reactions that has always fascinated me – the way they take over a situation in a split second and the way they generate totally unforeseen scenarios, often with a hilarious or desperate outcome. It seems that the *hyper focus*, which is triggered by the impulsive reaction, contributes to overturning a given situation. Classic slapstick movies have played this out countless times: a man trips over an insignificant object, tries to catch himself by mowing furiously with his arms, and in doing so sets an array of causes and effects in motion which further aggravates his situation. It's terrifyingly funny, because it is highly recognizable.



[the tripping man]<sup>1</sup>

Instinct originates from our need to *remedy* acute and often conflicting situations. In this sense, I feel that it is much more relevant to design than the notion of intuition: this is because intuition, though a profound insight, is not usually put into action. According to Dr. Robin Groeneveld, author of

*The inner strength of the designer – the role of intuition in the design process*<sup>2</sup>, intuition yields: “*Insights or principles which are immediately evident and about which the truth cannot be directly described through argument.*”

The second part of Groeneveld's definition is interesting to consider here, because it links back to instinct: although I acknowledge that all designs (by their applied nature) need validation, I also think that rational arguments need not be the only valid ones. Sometimes a design just *is* right as it is, with no way to explain it. Just like we sometimes feel we *have* to do something, instinctively.



Biologist Tijs Goldschmidt explores a related phenomenon in his book *Oversprongen*<sup>3</sup> (leap over), where he analyzes, among others, cases of *third behaviour*. This type of behaviour typically comes into being when two contradictory instincts are at stake, with no apparent way out. He describes the scene of two fighting peacocks in a painting by Melchior d'Hondecoeter, where the weakest one, having the equal urge to flee and attack, starts cleaning his feathers – an absurd way to deal with the imminent defeat, that ultimately serves its purpose by disconcerting the enemy, and thereby maximizes the chances of overturning this specific situation.



[the imminent defeat]

Although the above example is clearly related to innate self-preservation mechanisms, I still see a parallel with design in the sense that I recognize this apparently peculiar type of behaviour in the methodologies that I consciously or unconsciously use in my own work: when I reach a deadlock in a process, I tend to search for *open spaces* – spaces from which I can leap towards something new, something different than what I was looking for, or something outside of the set framework. What is important for me is that in doing so, it should not be about taking the right way or the wrong way, but about finding *another* way. In *Dialogues*, Gilles Deleuze talks about this subtle difference with his former student Claire Parnet<sup>4</sup>:

*“Il ne faut pas chercher si une idée est juste ou vraie. Il faudrait chercher une tout autre idée, ailleurs, dans un autre domaine, telle qu'entre les deux quelque chose passe, qui n'est ni dans l'une ni dans l'autre.”*

1 (inspired by *The Principles of Uncertainty*, Maira Kalman, The Penguin Press, 2007)

2 Groenveld R., De innerlijke kracht van de ontwerper (de rol van intuïtie in het ontwerpproces), p. 349, 2006; Proefschrift.

3 Goldschmidt T., *Oversprongen*, p. 52, 2004, Uitgeverij Bert Bakker.

4 “It isn't about finding out if an idea is true or false. It's about searching for another idea, elsewhere, in another domain, such that between the two something can happen, that is neither present in one or the other.” (Translated freely from Deleuze G., Parnet C., *Dialogues*, p. 16, 1996, Champs Flammarion.)



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### Sophie Krier (Lux)

Sophie Krier lives and works in Rotterdam. A 1999 graduate of the Design Academy Eindhoven, Krier directed the designLAB course at the Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, between 2004 and 2009. Atelier Sophie Krier explores the peripheries of the design field, with a focus on film, writing and temporary social interventions, generating tools for narration and reflection.  
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LucyandBart is a collaboration between Lucy McRae and Bart Hess. An instinctual stalking of fashion, architecture, performance and the body. They share a fascination with genetic manipulation and beauty expression. Unconsciously their work touches upon these themes, however it is not their intention to communicate this. They work in a primitive and limitless way creating future human shapes, blindly discovering low tech prosthetic ways for human enhancement.  
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### Marek Pokropski (PL)

Marek Pokropski graduated in computer science (Gdansk University of Technology, 2005) and philosophy (University of Gdansk, 2007). Currently he is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Warsaw. His research focuses on phenomenological philosophy, in an attempt to show how our body constitutes and settles various kinds of spatialities and temporalities.

This issue is dedicated to Raoul Teulings (4.4.1959–2.4.2010), whose infinite curiosity remains a source of inspiration for me.

## Colophon

### Onomatopee 55

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Field Essays

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