TOWARDS

of

ART

and

LIFE

(Im)

MEASURABILITY

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# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards (Im)Measurability of Art and Life</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes on the Presentation by Lucy Powell</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconscious Tendencies in Animal Epistemology by Oxana Timofeeva</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises in Measurement by Miya Yoshida</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Engineering: Measurement, Aesthetics, and the Rules for Art</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue between Lucy Powell and Oxana Timofeeva</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Conversation with Helmut Draxler</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogues between an Artist and a Scientist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Feels the Most Pain? by Matt Mullican</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's in the Air? Or How We Get to Know What We Know About Invisible Things by Sophie Houdart</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Calculative Aesthetic: Objects and Unconscious Desire in the Age of Big Data by Patricia Ticineto Clough</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue between Matt Mullican and Patricia Ticineto Clough</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist and Author Biographies</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From
Universality
to Ubiquity of
Measurement
Crystal Computing is a video work that uses stylistic elements of documentary, bordering on surveillance footage, and is aimed at investigating Google’s identically named data centre in Saint-Ghislain, Belgium, which is the largest Google data centre in Europe and the second largest in the world. According to recent information provided by Google Inc., around the time the film material was shot, this centre housed 296,960 servers. With prospects of rapid expansion. After the data centre officially refused him admittance to the plant as a regular visitor, Veermae made a secret research trip to Belgium. "Crystal computing" refers to the importance of materiality and locality in the infrastructures of big network companies, an importance that is often concealed under immaterial, "cloudy" advertising rhetoric. Ironically, this company’s name represents the hidden agendas of the corporation as addressed in the video; it also singles out the routine practice of establishing subsidiaries as a tax avoidance scheme, which is popular among multinational corporations. The artist visually "out-measures" the corporation by documenting its unsightly material reality on video. The work creates its subversive position by countering Google's activities of collecting, observing, and analysing user data by returning the gaze and starting an analysis of its own.
This project presents the "creative abuse" of a scanner—one of the first models available to and affordable for a broader public. Instead of directing the scanning light of measurement to a two-dimensional, closed space in order to scan it, as is the usual practice, the artist directs it towards the sky, towards the open space above the glass surface of the scanner. This simple procedure disorients the logic and mechanism of the scanner and reveals the blind spots of this technology. It creates a contrast between different notions of measurement that shows that popular notions of measurement may be much more diverse than actual technological measurement, which always comes with a set of assumptions and strict presuppositions from which one is really not supposed to deviate—although these deviations have time and again proven to be the paths that lead into the actual technological future.
Karin Sander, Museum Visitors 1:8, installation view at Labor K20, 2010, 3D body scans of living persons (scale 1:8), in the colour of their choice, monochrome 3D printing, plaster material, height ca. 10–22 cm each

This is a series of miniature, figurative sculpture prints based on 3D body scans. The figures were originally conceived as "three-dimensional photographs" — though they are actually condensed technical portraits of (living) people who have literally been scanned from the top of their head to their toes, translated into digital data, and then exported to take on the shape of miniature sculptures. The first were already created some twenty years ago, and they visually present a process, technique, mechanism, and language of measurement, although the finish of this material, which, in the meantime, has become wildly popular and easily accessible, is still rather rough and casual. The artist has developed her concept in a playful openness — a range of methods between the scientific accuracy that is applied in the precise depiction, as well as the opposite: through replacing the interpretational "lifelike" effect that comes with traditional, for example painterly, depiction of details with technological, merely mechanical precision, and through giving it a variety of colours or printed-on photo-sourced textures. The subject of datafication and the patient sitter in a portrait session are merged and folded into one artistic object. As a result of Sander's artistic intervention, through which she completely appropriated the methods and processes of scanning measurement and reconstruction and transferred them to correspond to her concept of what an artwork is, these figures reveal the gap between the sensibilities of recognition and those of perception.
Marie Docher in collaboration with Odile Fillod. *Les Imprimantes 3D: 3D Scan of a Clitoris*, 2016. 3D printing, digital images © Odile Fillod, photo © Marie Docher

The 3D scan of a clitoris is the first anatomically correct model of a clitoris used for educational purposes in French primary and secondary schools, from September 2016. Its source code, which allows for 3D printing of a clitoris model, is available "open source". This code was developed by Odile Fillod, a socio-medical researcher and creator of an anti-sexist web TV series at the Fab Lab, at the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie in Paris, and realised in collaboration with the visual artist Marie Docher. For the first time, this 3D scan of a clitoris allows for a more spatially accurate image of its shape, scale, and dimensions. It is 20 centimetres long in total! Resembling an orchid flower, it, surprisingly, seems to approximate the shape of a male sexual organ. Measurement in this case reveals that "gender" is a design relative to cultural modes of imagination and representation.
Rokudenashiko, 3D MK Boat Project, 2014–
fibre plastic © Rokudenashiko

Rokudenashiko literally means "good-for-nothing" in Japanese; Megumi Igarashi uses it affirmatively, even with pride, as her artist name. She has become famous through initiating the 3D MK Boat Project, in which she scanned her vagina, enlarged the scanned shape to the size of a kayak, and had the small boat made of plastic fibre. The project has succeeded in challenging social norms and ideologies as represented in existing imaginaries about the female body. Even though she used hi-tech measuring tools to ensure social recognition, the project has actually provoked a number of both very emotional political and legal reactions from society. Ironically, what precision measurement also achieved is a precisely measured image of governmental and social "tolerance"—but also of the current readiness to cope with what contemporary technology makes possible—as opposed to their antiquated views of what sexuality "looks like". Along with this provocative measurement, the project carefully chose the mode and format of its representation so as to refer to the particular aesthetics of the girls' comics developed in 1970s popular culture in Japan. This particular aesthetic double-questions social and historical constructions of the aesthetics of the female body, and places further emphasis on a feminist critique of social measurement.
From Universality to Ubiquity of Measurement

“When images supplant texts, we experience, perceive, and value the world and ourselves differently, no longer in a one-dimensional, linear, process-oriented, historical way but rather in a two-dimensional way, as surface, context, scene. And our behaviour changes: it is no longer dramatic but embedded in fields of relationships. What is currently happening is a mutation of our experiences, perceptions, values, and modes of behaviour, a mutation of our being-in-the-world.”

“The memory on my hard disk has reached the limit as I had kept so many data related to mountains. I perceived the weight of the mountains themselves, a weight that could not exist, in the disk space full of images of mountains and other information I collected on them. (...) The virtual mountains had neither form nor location; I wanted to create a way to perceive them.”

*Survey/Mountain* (2016) is the title of an exhibition; it is also synonymous with a series of monochrome mountain photographs by Shiho Yoshida. The mountain ridges are pictured from various points of view, and the angles assembled to form the installation are formatted in different ways. One of the installations contains four photographs of one mountain, one of which is a framed Google Maps satellite image of the mountain surrounded by a wide black space. This image is processed to erase any pre-existing locative information. The second image, projected onto the corner of the wall, shows the ground level around the mountain turned 90 degrees counter-clockwise. The strong artificial light of the projector sets a point of focus in the centre of the image; the projected image nonetheless still remains rather unclear. It becomes apparent that the light in the image does not shine on it vertically from the sky outside; rather it comes from the inside, as if in a monitor. The third image is much more difficult to identify. It consists of two photographs—one pasted directly onto the wall, without a frame, another held directly in-

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11 From the artist statement for Shiho Yoshida’s solo exhibition *Survey/Mountain.*
side a thin black frame, in order to create uneven blank spaces above and below the image. The framed photo is smaller and arranged to overlap the bottom left corner of the unframed photo, creating a visual effect that calls to mind two differently sized monitors standing in perspective. Both images are surely images of fragments of the unidentified mountainscape. It remains uncertain whether they belong to one and the same mountain. The larger image is layered, with the ground in front, a water expanse in the middle, and the crest of the mountain in the background, while the smaller one is a view of the mountain range from a distance, which also shows the sky above it. Curiously, thin lines outline the mountain range in both images. The fourth is the smallest image and is enclosed in a wooden frame, with a generously spaced passe-partout around it. Closer observation reveals that the image is actually presented on a very small monitor, almost hidden in its cave-like framing. All the photos visualise a particular presence of the mountain, but they convey a mixed impression, between proximity and distance; they appear familiar, but become disturbing upon closer scrutiny. Viewers are suspended between at least two states: They are somehow fascinated by the images, but cannot grasp exactly what they are.

As mentioned in the artist’s statement, the photographic works of Survey/Mountain resemble a geographic portrait of a mountain somewhere, but they visualise a “mountain of data” that exists nowhere in the world. The outline rendering the surface of the mountain is the visual language Yoshida chose so as to “give a form to the non-existing surface” of a mountain – a mountain is not a specific mountain, as an individual shape, but a mountain of data. This explains the peculiar feeling to which the images give rise to some degree, but it becomes clearer to those who obtain additional information about the specific photographic process, which compresses a series of actions. The artist more or less intuitively searches for and researches sites she finds interesting to visit, not because of their names or identities, but due to their shape and texture, and then starts collecting images on the net, eventually travels to that place, takes photographs of the landscape, compares her own images with those found on the net, enlarges, juxtaposes, and projects them on walls. She then proceeds to re-photograph and print them out as negatives, or sometimes uses them as data for another photographic work, in which she repeats the sequence of actions described. The artist characterises her process as a set of operations based on rules that she has established in order to come to an understanding of each landscape. The seemingly tedious procedure is diligently repeated in order to give the landscapes their “own” image; eventually they are “person-illuminated” through being given her outlines (her own measurement):

For me, the process can be understood as her attempt, based on a broad variety of images of mountains, to sense the materiality of data – its volume, its texture, its shape, et cetera – through seeing, touching, smelling, drawing, turning around, inverting, and folding it, as if dealing with the surface of existing matter, with the “real thing.” What she does in practice is hybridise different technical images and the structures behind them, and change the format and the interface to present them as her own images. Her set of operations is similar to the optical collection of data on the mountain, but with different sets of parameters in the external filters of measurement. Her repetitive process gradually in-forms, materialises the invisible pile of data, and shapes the data to make it visible. For the artist, specificity does not depend on a specific site, but rather on specific processes and formats – in this case, the formats of technical images such as photography, projection, geomapping, et cetera. Accordingly, the format assumes a key role when it comes to understanding measurement.

Yoshida’s set of operations in her production process also indicates how sensory attention is distributed and organised under particular technological conditions. The artist’s intimate relationship with the mobile phone as a means of accessing digital networks may be a typically contemporary position. Her condensed technical images present visuals in which acceleration and the specific forms of attention that are enacted in searching, recording, and displaying information “produce new forms of observation and rationality”. Orii Halpern points out that: “Our forms of attention, observation, and truth are historically influenced and trained and shaped in a certain way by the structure and the framework of technology.” Reflecting on this point while thinking in and through Survey/Mountain, we certainly need to closely observe her particular form of attention or observation, her truth, which is organised around her choice of format, rather than around the interpretation of any real physical space. This actually indicates a new imagination, a novel way of understanding hybrid space, and it also considerably changes the meaning of scale, perspective, and line.

In 1977, Charles and Ray Eames produced the short film Powers of Ten as a commissioned work for the then-emerging data giant IBM so as to visually demonstrate “the relative size of things in the universe”, in increasing and decreasing magnitudes, over the duration of roughly nine minutes. The film begins by observing a couple of picnickers on a lawn by the side of a lake in

Chicago, to then transport the viewer in two opposite directions: zooming out to the edge of universe in a rapid progression through powers of ten, and then, zooming in onto and into the hand of one the picnickers — until it reaches the horizon of experimentally verifiable knowledge at the level of a proton inside a carbon atom, shown in a schematic rendering within a DNA molecule in a white blood vessel. Thirty-five years later, in 2012, Google produced *New Powers of Ten*, rhetorically framed by a mobile phone display, apparently to evocatively refer to the present of digital images and aesthetics. Both films visualise the relativity of things like scale — and the ontological facts of a world in which the human is still the inert centre — as a quick adventure.

According to a popular online dictionary, scale is used — *mathematically* — to represent the relationship (the ratio) between measurement on a model and the corresponding measurement on an object, such as 1:1, or 1:200. *Theoretically*, scale is understood as an ontological fact, as in the simplified example of a *matryoshka*, a Russian nesting doll. Although the new version of *Powers of Ten* was made based on more recent research results and using more contemporary technologies (moving satellite images) instead of an animation of still images, both films are principally the same, as they are based on an understanding of scale as relative. The notion of scale in *Survey/Mountain*, however, does not fit these definitions. The photographs are neither the method of measurement — calculated and produced in a specific ratio — nor do they render the data for display according to an automatic process, nor are they an ontological fact. They are opposed to such relativity. They are more like a presentation of the space that floats around and appears everywhere and anywhere: no matter at what point or at what height, structure, or parameter. As Yoshida hybridises different types, structures, and formats of images in order to quantify data and to re-process them into one image, the adoption of scale in her images is similar to the section of a candy bar: no matter where you cut or how you cut, the same layered pattern appears. This is, by definition, a completely different understanding of scale, which I would then call a scale of ubiquity. Yoshida’s hybrid structure behind the image corresponds to the concept of perspective in a different way. In the context of art history, Cubism perceived and gathered a number of different perspectives of one object in one image plane, while *Survey/Mountain* merges them within the image by utilising the processing power of contemporary image technology. This also seems to be the way that the installation as a whole — as well as the layout of the two photographs situated on top of each other, which looks like a depiction of plural monitors — is constructed. Perspectives of space are replaced, both perception-wise and organisationally, by this layout of mon-

itors, instead of being integrated into a linear perspective. Her photo-centric work, in other words, marks a shift in existing perspectives of measurement, in that it has moved on — from the universal to the ubiquitous.

Yoshida aims at a portrait of a mountainscape of data. Her attempt eventually leads her to seek new visual languages in order to grasp ubiquitous space, and to invent different concepts of “scale” and “spatial organisation” through these acts and in the process of measurement. In this case, measurement is a quantification not in the sense of an exact prediction of the future, but as a method of in-forming “ubiquity” anywhere and at any time. It employs methods and acts of measuring that are different from those historically established in the natural sciences.

For the artist, who grew up with images on her mobile phone and got used to complementing her perception of the world with image searches, it is particularly important that, to her, all types of images are equivalent. There are no significant differences between images she takes herself and those she finds on the net, since she is the person who chooses them. For her, images are *signs*: they comprise maps, Google Earth data, existing jpegs, even ideogrammatic characters, et cetera. Since the images are considered equal, the crucial role of her conceptual use of *format*, which functions as a way to frame images both conceptually and practically, becomes evident in her work. Here, format does not only mean size, proportion, and the blank space around it, it also refers to the mechanisms that are applied to the images such as media interfaces, interactive applications, and programming, all of which are essential on all levels of visual appearance. This visual appearance includes both the visible and the invisible, both the tangible and the intangible. Vilém Flusser once proposed that technical images are not representations, but projections, and this is why, in his view, they should be understood not through decoding a specific meaning, but through grasping their general structure and the purpose behind them (Flusser, 1986). The juxtaposition of different formats of mountain images reveals different kinds of becoming-matter of the “mountain as sign” (image) — a distinction that is necessary to see why her work also represents a new approach to an artistic understanding of measurement. This also reflects aspects of Joseph Kosuth’s classical work of conceptual art, *One and Three Chairs* (1965) — the way in which he juxtaposed a material, an objective chair with its image and the lexicographic definition of “chair” as equivalents. His approach was based on a reading of semiotics in search of a new notion of “concept”. *Survey/Mountain* shifts this to the formation of the technical image, “the

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13 Ibid., 36.
logics of archiving, memory capacity, and interface". It corresponds to the formation of semiotics in the data society. Survey/Mountain is a conceptual artwork in that it indicates different grammars of understanding and knowing (measuring), of experiencing a sense of the real in a dimensionless world that is conditioned by a technological dataspace. It is the notion of “format” that seems to correspond to Flusser’s historical quest for any new developments that the technical image now might bring: Format, both the given and the created, offers a new category in those language games that are now defining the measurement of contemporary reality.

The Affective Component of Technological Images in the Process of Knowing and Understanding

If one considers the daily use of navigation technologies, it becomes noticeable how the sense of the real in everyday life is framed and structured by the format of the technologies. Whether, Google Earth, car navigation, or other systems for identifying location – navigation directs us from one point to another in an urban space based on the logic of geometry. It correlates anticipated and actual movements by changing the length of a graphic line ending with an arrow. We look at the navigation map, compare it with the view in front of us, and continuously compare the two images, physically following the directions of the orientation device. The constant comparison between the geometry of the map and the realistic, “direct” view from the biological body has created a visual culture that relies on a set of actions to project geometry onto real landscapes. Geometry is internalised in the perception of the user, who projects it onto a real landscape and (re-)shapes the world to correspond to his/her sense of the real. The use of geo-location systems dissolves the Cartesian division of subject and object. Navigated persons have become integral parts of the lifeworld of the technical image. They become extended objects of invisible GPS geometry and simultaneously, as subjects, actively project their worldview. In this sense, any programme for identifying location formats a sensorial perception (a sense of the real) to become geometrical thinking, and functions as an invisible framing of time-space. With such an understanding of reality, the self is perceived as a dot – as a unit of attention – and experience as a line as the culmination of attention – and the body becomes the medium for collecting and processing attention. This symbolises how the sense of the real operates in everyday life, and indicates the tipping point in the development of affect for the technological image within processes of knowing.
and understanding. The geometry that is internalised in the cultural use of technological images prompts us to produce other approaches to space, and even transforms sensorial perception of space into the ubiquitous in the sense elaborated here.

In the early 1990s, Deleuze described the kind of abstraction that was emerging in the transition from societies of discipline to societies of control. He foresaw the insignificance of the individual in the operative mode of society, spoke of a desubjectification of individuals, and said that individuals have been transformed into "individuals and masses". The internalised geometry described in the previous paragraph plays a part in such desubjectification. A set of operations in Survey/Mountain is dedicated to the desubjectification of the mountain image in order to make it become a "ubiquitous mountain", and simultaneously to the artist's experience as it is traced along the outlines of the mountain – effectively rendering herself dividual while on the other hand personalising the landscape. What interests me here is not that geo-location technology functions as a device of desubjectification in a dimensionless space – it is actually the double process of individualisation and personalisation – seemingly opposites – in a set of operations of knowing, understanding, and creating. This double process of individualising (quantification of self) and personalising (using quantification for the subject's own purpose of creation) can be encountered in applied form not only in geo-location systems, but also in other surface technologies – such as 3D scanning, motion capture, and their respective visualisations/materialisations. For example, the Research for Awareness in Motion (RAM) project provides us with an interesting case study on the affective effect that the use of motion capture technology already has on the "intuitive" movements of dancers. Two dancers wear a suit with eighteen motion-tracking sensors, whose measurement-based results can be experienced both visually in a large monitor projection as well as on the dancers' own bodies while they dance live. The dancers see the images previously recorded by the sensors as well as the live images of their own body movements. The two dancers make decisions about their body movements, about the forms and positions, based on the shared geometrical information that, in turn and simultaneously, is generated by their

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14 RAM is an experiment research project to develop a new vision of the embodiment of technology in dance performance. It started in 2011 at the Yamaguchi Centre for Arts and Media (YCAM) as a collaboration between a Japanese dancer, Yoko Ando, a dancer from The Forsythe Company, and programmers, and aims at innovating a new tool for understanding and creating movement for dancers, as well as applying the same technology for educational purposes.
bodies. The processing of motion data so as to give real-time feedback overlaps with something else: with a process of dividualisation; the actual body movement is simultaneously a process of personalisation and/or subjectification.

In a close study of the contemporary use of data in daily environments, Halpern introduced the term "communicative objectivity", which depicts the attitude shifted by recording and displaying information by means of technologies, new forms of observations, rationality, and the subsequent sets of actions based on economic management and analysis.15 The term emerges from the contemplation of the Smart City, Halpern's model case of high-tech urban planning in Korea and its biopolitical governance, but here "communicative objectivity" is applied to a process of aesthetic production. "Communicative objectivity", she writes, is based on assumptions about the value of data and our habitual obsession with "visualisation" as well as our belief in the intensification of media devices. When technological images are involved in processes of knowing and understanding, they give rise to a considerable extra amount of information that has already been processed and filtered. When one sees extensive amounts of visual information on displays in front of one's body, it is noticeable in RAM that these images are information from identical sources, which circulate on the same level and in the same format. The situation is similar to observing oneself surrounded by (digital) mirrors, a reality relation that is in sharp contrast to those of One and Three Chairs by Joseph Kosuth and Survey/Mountain by Shiho Yoshida. In this sense, the choice of information may look broader in the different renderings; whether it is "richer" is far from clear.

Instead, constantly exposing the body to data in a state of "connectedness" may equalise the orientation and coordination of thinking between the dancers and the algorithms at work – to the point of neutralisation. However, in order to have an "external" filter, the dividual subject needs an "internal" one as well, since such a filter is an essential part of the site and instrument of measurement that the body is. The process of dividualisation requires a body – as opposed to processes of personalisation, and, to a certain degree, also of subjectification. Yoko Ando, one of the dancers and the initiator of the project, regards this movement as neither expressing any specific emotion nor based on any ideology; to her, it is "not inorganic" and comes with a "certain temperature".16 This "temperature", which is characteristic of a specific emotion that is generated between the organic and the inorganic, is something that is produced in particular as the result of the removal of all possible disturbances and incidental elements in each given situation. This "affective temperature" (or temperament) is also found in Survey/Mountain. In both cases it could be rephrased as an absence of a high, "passionate" temperature, and is rather more like the steady, but relatively low temperature that comes into existence when accuracy is pursued in a rather obsessive manner. The temperature is the reflection of the obsession of the dividual subject as well as its inner desire for data when uncertain; consequently, it fantasises participation in the intensified as well as "intensificational" (i.e. pseudo-interactive) process of feedback. Accordingly, such an aesthetic develops towards a psychological process, opposed to the outward appearance of interactivity between the artificial opposites of (rational) reason and (irrational) emotion.

The body is the agential site of inter- and intra-actions/that forms and unfolds space-time and actively projects one's own measurement onto the world, instead of being exposed to measurements solely from the outside. Measurement is inside the body. This does not only concern subjective imaginaries, but also the body returning as an integral component that is indispensable to any understanding of measurement today. Ultimately, this double processing always directs the accuracy of measurement in perception and action from a bird's-eye view. The image can never be experienced as a whole, but always becomes a section, a fragment, or a part of a larger picture in the distance. In Survey/Mountain, the image is a non-specific expressive gesture; it tends toward the realm of "meta" images; instead of being a monolithic entity in itself, it retains being in repetitious self-alignment with an outer framework (not the "outside"). When image becomes meta-image, movement becomes meta-motion (gesture). It is produced in a singular praxis without having to be processed. This means that the type of measurement involved in surface technologies is unavoidably linked to a sense of the ubiquitous, rather than to ideas of the universal.

In the realm of measuring, a sense of the real, a sense of the "grid" is, however, transformed into something metaphorical, and merely indicates an exterior devised to gain access to a larger conceptual space. Here, that blank space appears to hold more significance than millions of dots at the intersections of horizontal and vertical lines. The blank indicates potential energies and imaginaries where the sense of the real emerges and grows. Survey/Mountain, 3D body scans, and the motion-tracking technologies used in the RAM project practice a sense of the real that actively dismisses the boundaries between image and matter. Such an approach to reality implies a notion of measurement that arises from the inside instead of the outside, and has a neither dichotomous nor paradoxical relationship to the real and the virtual, the digital and the analogue, the human and technologically sensory, the self-made or the existing, or even the self and

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16 Yoko Ando interviewed by Takayuki Ito. The interview with Yoko Ando was conducted by Takayuki Ito (YCAM InterLab) and Richi Owaki (YCAM InterLab) on 21 March 2013.
the other. Instead, the equivalence of these poles emerges under conditions that are bi-directionally permeable. There is nothing paradoxical here, since everything becomes equivalent. This creates a peculiar sense of the real that combines intimacy and distance; familiarity and strangeness are integrated to eventually merge into one, which Gins and Arakawa attempt to generate by means of architecture, as I explore in the following section, “Talking back to the Light: Nameless Architecture and Its Critique of Epistemology”.

To borrow an expression from Yoko Ando, measuring the sense of the real presupposes a “certain temperature”. At the same time, it also presupposes one thing “not tuning with the other”. This represents a sense of borderlessness within the meta-image; ultimately, there is only one relevant difference between codes: *dividual*. The artworks mentioned here visualise and address the “measurement of ubiquity” that is brought about by the light-based measurement paradigm, and thus indirectly refers to our dependency on and penetrated by communication through the “shallow” surfaces of media in order to understand the world. These works grasp other notions of surface that might correspond with new concepts of a “lightscape” (or “post-landscape”) of measurement, and create a novel language that aligns with a changed sense of reality.