

Between and Beyond

Open! COOP Academy

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Editorial – June 1, 2016



Giulia Crispiani, *0001*. – Image by [Federico Antonini](#)

By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. This cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics.

—Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto*, 1983

For posthuman theory, the subject is a transversal entity, fully immersed in and immanent to a network of non-human (animal, vegetable, viral) relations. The zoe-centred embodied subject is shot through with relational linkages of the contaminating / viral kind which inter-connect it to a variety of others, starting from the environmental or eco-others and include the technological apparatus.

—Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 2013

Between and Beyond, a series of artists' publications, is the result of the 2015–2016 *Open!* COOP [Academy Publishing Class](#) at the Dutch Art Institute (DAI) MA Art Praxis based in Arnhem, the Netherlands, but international in its scope and assembly. As a partner of DAI *Open!* conducts thematical research and publishing projects on an annual basis, with a class of first- and second-year MA students using the *Open!* digital platform as the overarching discursive framework and site for presentation. You can find the results of last year's Publishing Class [here](http://www.onlineopen.org/did-you-feel-it) [www.onlineopen.org/did-you-feel-it].

The theme for this year's Publishing Class was the 'posthuman.' The concept originated in the fields of science-fiction, contemporary art, feminism, queer theory and

poststructuralist philosophies and literally means a person or entity that exists in a state beyond being human. Often reverting to Donna Haraway's seminal essay *A Cyborg Manifesto*,¹ first published in 1983, critical discourses around posthumanism seek to reconceive the notion of the liberal humanist and anthropocentric subject that has been dominant in Western culture since the Enlightenment. In questioning the central position of the human, critical posthumanism also involves the issue of the animal other, the inhuman, neo-materialism and the anthropocene. It is engaged in rethinking modernist dualisms between nature and culture, matter and mind, man and woman, man and machine, the human and the inhuman. If 'Man' is not the measure of all things, what should our frame of reference be, and what else than human are we becoming?

Posthumanism is also concerned with technologized and virtual bodies in the digital age, but should not be confused here with transhumanism, which regards man and technology as able to solve the world's problems and aims at producing a supra human being. The critical notion of posthumanism we are interested in is much more about empowerment, rethinking and resilience within the current entanglements of technology, culture and nature.

In a series of seminars with guest tutors and the *Open!* editorial team, and with several face-to-face meetings, *Open!* COOP Academy Publishing Class has been exploring and discussing critical posthumanism – its ethics, politics and aesthetics. We read texts by Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, Vilém Flusser, Baruch Spinoza and Jacques Lacan among others and worked on two publishing assignments. Each student-participant contributed to the printed group publication *Between and Beyond – A Posthuman Bestiary*. This compendium of 'beasts' provides physical and allegorical descriptions and illustrations of real or imaginary posthuman animals along with interpretations of the philosophical and political significance each animal embodies. *Between and Beyond – A Posthuman Bestiary* considers and represents new relationships and entanglements, questions old hierarchies, crosses boundaries and introduces new subjectivities and narratives.

Alongside the bestiary the student-participants developed (image) essays related to the main subject matter, but grounded in their individual interests and ways of working. This has resulted in a rich and heterogenous body of texts in which aspects of the posthuman appear without assigning it a fixed identity. The contributions of Giulia Crispiani, Malcolm Kratz and Miguel Ángel Rego Robles are concerned with the philosophical implications of human entanglement with developing technologies. Sebastian De Line, Despina Sevasti, Wayne Wang Lie Jim, Florencia Almirón and Zhenia Vasiliev are focused on the need to decentre the male and anthropocentric perspective in the social and political realm, while Valentina Curandi, Maike Hemmers and Mirjam Linschooten depart from the material entanglement of bodies, things and institutions to dislodge prevalent Cartesian dualisms. These contributions will be published on *Open!* in the coming months, together with a curatorial-editorial extension by Sonia Kazovsky, who provides an extra discursive layer by linking the texts to each other and to existing texts on the *Open!* platform.

Tutors and guest tutors: Kayla Anderson, Janine Armin, Rick Dolphijn, Florian Göttke, Mohammad Salemy, Niels Schrader, Jorinde Seijdel, Etienne Turpin

Contributions

- Giulia Crispiani, 'Cloud_0001' [www.onlineopen.org/cloud-0001]
- Maïke Hemmers, 'I, They, Body, Space' [www.onlineopen.org/i-they-body-space]
- Malcolm Kratz, 'Silicon-companion Species' [www.onlineopen.org/silicon-companion-species]
- Wayne Wang-Jie Lim, 'On Demasculinization' [www.onlineopen.org/on-demasculinization]
- Sebastian De Line, 'All My / Our Relations' [www.onlineopen.org/all-my-our-relations]
- Mirjam Linschooten, 'Temporarily Removed' [www.onlineopen.org/temporarily-removed]
- Miguel Ángel Rego Robles, 'Art and Neuro-philosophy' [www.onlineopen.org/art-and-neuro-philosophy]
- Zhenia Vasiliev, 'Cyborg Politics. Notes for a Lexicon' [www.onlineopen.org/cyborg-politics]

Jorinde Seijdel is an independent writer, editor and lecturer on subjects concerning art and media in our changing society and the public sphere. She is editor-in-chief of *Open! Platform for Art, Culture & the Public Domain* (formerly known as *Open. Cahier on Art & the Public Domain*). In 2010 she published *De waarde van de amateur* [The Value of the Amateur] (Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam), about the rise of the amateur in digital culture and the notion of amateurism in contemporary art and culture. Currently, she is theory tutor at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and Head of the Studium Generale Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. With *Open!*, she is a partner of the Dutch Art Institute *MA Art Praxis* in Arnhem.

Team: **Course leader** Jorinde Seijdel; **Associate PhD researcher and co-tutor** Florian Göttke; **Editor** Janine Armin; **Design** Niels Schrader

Footnotes

1. Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,' in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991), 149–181.

Crosslinks

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Critical Theory, Research

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