

be water again



An exhibition curated by:
Panos Giannikopoulos & Theodoulos Polyviou

Participating artists:
Eleni Bagaki, Maurizio Bongiovanni,
Lito Kattou, Orestis Lazouras,
George Henry Longly, Theo Michael,
Petros Moris, Eleni Odysseos,
Anastasia Pavlou, Theo Triantafyllidis

Texts by:
Androula Kafa, Lito Kattou,
Nika Mahnič, Penny Rafferty,
Bert van de Roemer, Haris Stavrakakis

Introduction

Water is between bodies, but of bodies, before us and beyond us, yet also very presently this body, too. Deictics falter. Our comfortable categories of thought begin to erode.
Neimanis, 2012

Streams, lakes, oceans and bodies, waves of thought and fluid movements. Humanity evolution histories out of the sea and our microscopic ancestors. The water percentage in our body. We are water indeed; yet we have to become water again and again. But who are we? This exhibition tries to reflect on what is meant with this first-person plural pronoun. It is interested in a 'WE', beyond human, which is living relationally with others, that is constantly becoming.

Moving like water, it brings together artists exploring the dislocation and diminishment of the natural/culture divisions linked to patriarchal histories, observing forms of community between human & non-human agents. By looking at trans-species, cyborgs as forms of multi-becoming that blur categorical distinctions of human/machine or nature/culture, male/female born/man-made, this group show acts as an invitation to think of new kinds of bodies, or non-bodies as mediators of feelings, sensibility and intuition.

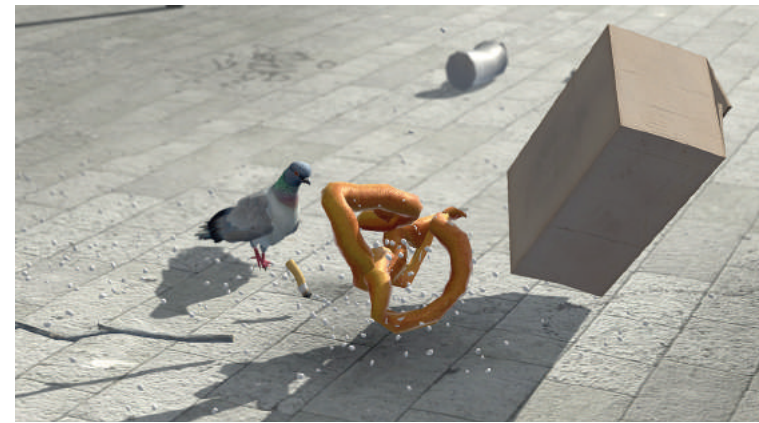
It looks back at Donna Haraway's cyborg myths, inviting us to understand the becoming animal of Deleuze as an allegorical representation for the hybrids we are.

The works presented encourage coalitions through affinity and emphasize moments and decisions that this affinity is made possible. It is the animal pack we choose, our dancing bodies, our questioning of nature and science, the monsters we want to be, the molecules we are. Digital water topographies: the mutual and interconnected production of space and identity is no longer assumed only through a lens of geographical positioning. Instead, the virtual here is a spatial reference point, a realm of potential in which the body - accumulation of forces, vibrations - is being produced.



Eleni Bagaki, Hanging Tongues, 2016
Printed images, aluminiumstand, 80 x 60 x 22cm
Courtesy the artist

This leads us to investigate new ways of unification and multiplicity, that escapes the presumably efficient bodies imposed by capitalism strategies, hence, moving away from systems that preserve sexual oppression and put animals, women, queer entities, black and brown bodies - others - at permanent and actual physical threat. Becoming "water" is a tool for destroying the foundation that has been hosting heteronormative and ethnocentric ways of being; becoming water is to desire and seduce differently and through this to cause the sense of self to collapse, diffusing it with others.



Theo Triantafyllidis, Prometheus, 2017
Screen piece, custom software, live simulation, HDTV, gaming pc
Duration: ∞, edition of 3 +2AP
© the artist and The Breeder, Athens

Be Water Again: once more and continuously. Be water repeatedly. This ironic - yet not dry - review of the past creates a counter-ritual in an effort to shake the formed regulative discourses. Rituals of becoming are being theorised in an attempt to understand methods of visualising and acquiring queer-feminist life, creating unique hybrids surpassing any sexual chronicle. These kinds of hybrids fight our tendency to anthropomorphise everything and seek no preservation for their own future. Like fluids resisting the spatial and sequential nature of existence, they are in a constant mode of transformation, permanently mobile, spatially in-between, affecting their surroundings.

Re-thinking the becomings of Deleuze and Guattari, and their feminist critiques, the works showcased are seen as calls to such processes. Becoming animal, becoming monster, becoming germinal, becoming machinic, becoming intense, becoming imperceptible.

Ultimately, Be Water Again focuses on assemblages, flows and tensions that produce a new social field, breaking the flow of one in relation to another. Entering into "perverse" alliances and creating new forms of connections with tech-others, the exhibition brings to the fore the politics of desire and pleasure of in-between identities, identifications and disidentifications. Distancing itself from the human, it detaches from the heteronormative and patriarchal hierarchies. It takes a closer look at the animals, the plants, the (desiring) machines and the microcosm, and tries to imagine a shift from an anthropocentric way of thinking to one that is tracing of associations with actors/actants that are considered non-human.

Haris Stavrakakis

Drunk

It's 4 o'clock. Raining started early today, wishing I stayed home. This is not the case, home is full of unsatisfied expectations. I head out, light drizzle is slowly turning into denser drops, they evaporate as they touch my skin. No skin is impermeable as far as I know, except mine tonight, and as I walk up the hill, empty street to my left, wooded darkness to my right, I know that the clouds which have been building up for hours tonight are very impatient, but even though they will probably pour everything they have on me, I will already be wetter inside than outside.

I have had enough of worn-out shoe soles, enough mud on my socks in the past, I just follow the concrete paths zig-zagging through the empty square, it looks more like a terrace or some sort of shooting ground. Everybody is visible here, huge lights sitting on top of massive columns have managed to stay unaffected from the waves passing under them all these years, absolutely necessary at this time of the night. Here, in the light, two hundred meters across, somebody tries to walk while being disfigured by the rain falling heavier on our shoulders, that is, if this creature even has shoulders.

Our paths collide, rain drunk, smashed against the wall, underpants, pants, jeans, briefs, jackets and shirts between us, incapable of blocking our inner storms constantly trying to fill up every garment hole and find the shortest way to gush out.

We even add rubber between us, to no avail, only lubricating this exchange, we try to stop it by adding even more layers, but what can a condor do to stop the Atlantic from furiously swooshing unto the Pacific between the rocks of Tierra del Fuego, on this rainy, artificially illuminated night.



Anastasia Pavlou, *Scenes from The Tempest, no78, 2018*
High flow acrylics, gesso on canvas, 50x70 cm
Courtesy the artist

Nika Mahnič

Be Water Again

Do we WANT to be water again?
WERE we ever?
ARE we water?
NEED we water?

For one is clear: we need water,
not identity.

Water is increasingly controlled by few corporations. Representations are ever more fluid, ever more meaningless. Water knows no fluidity of that rank-ing, and redistribution is not a sexy topic. While we are sipping the last drops, our algorithmic identities get thirstier in a pre-emptive manner, the ones in power flagging environmentalists and vitalism fans as risky. A Tinder match burned me with the insight that people will soon choose citizenships of countries that guarantee access to water. Citizens will soon be controlled by corporations owning water. Owning us, if we are water, again?

Is my digital shadow as significant as the water supposedly forming me - profiled, measured, directed, steered, manipulated, injected, driven. Identity is ever more controlled by few corporations. Dear individuals, they do not provide liquids, blankets and food supplies.

Naïve, the thinking that dissolutions of ontological categories is empowering - when what gives you rights to cross borders, drink water, is your gendered body. Water knows no fluidity.



Eleni Odysseos, *The Thinker, 2018*
Oil on canvas, 201x130cm
Courtesy the artist

Oh, the will to be water! From the deserts, from the floods, we will rise. Us - excrement, ash, cuticles.

I do not know any patriarchal histories. I do not want to be community with Siri the soldier, Siri the spy. I do not support its legal recognition, I will not give away my rights for the rights of machines and synthetic beings, the offspring of military patriarchy. The communities we form with bots online are driving the fascist hell we are burning in, companion speakers shout over the shrieks of our bloody others, while the water that we were, the water that we are, the water that we need, cannot overflow the burning.

The Sunday Post

Lito Kattou and Penny Rafferty

The Sunday Post: Lito Kattou & Penny Rafferty, Part I

In this series of epistolary exchanges, artist Lito Kattou and writer Penny Rafferty share with each other – and consequently, the reader – thoughts on interfaces; organisms both physical and digital; the vastness of emotion; and art.

These epistolary exchanges were originally published in KubaParis and can be found at <https://kubaparis.com/the-sunday-post-lito-kattou-penny-rafferty-part-i/>

IP ADDRESS 83.35.178.124.

Dear Lito,

My mind is lit-up today, like char-grilled petrol on sunny-sided tarmac.

I began to think of the shadow between human and other at around 5.30 this morning, I pulled up images of your creatures on my phone – this physical archive (the phone), in-between-space that’s often forgotten or erased – seems important right now. It’s like... when you wipe/cut a part of the background out in Adobe Photoshop and you’re left with a checkerboard of grey and white cubes – you know it’s nothing – but it’s never nothing – it’s in fact more adorned than the thick white faux slice of an A4 page.

What I’m trying to say... is: it seems specific but entirely abstract that I used my phone to enable thinking of becoming an in-between-ness state to see your work – why is not entirely clear yet. But it’s important.

I’m left wondering how you spoke of training your mind in the methods of becoming insect/woman/imperceptible, but I know that is the wrong way to approach this too.

I must remove the duality concept from my mind and body before we can even begin to talk or perform these acts. The mind and body are so connected it’s foolish to separate them, I know this, yet as I scroll through I do. As the hours go by and I sit to write this the day becomes more stereotyped. I become/enact the art writer looking at the images from the artist.

I wish I had written this letter to you in the early hours of the morning not now, at 14:37 but the act of translating my thoughts onto a mechanic interface, stamping out the social hieroglyphics of my time was too much of the other. Then.

Now, I look down at the space between my fingertips and the keys, this chasm of air, expectant, poised. I imagine it becoming compressed as my thoughts run down my nerves both linguistic and physically they attack the air, and there it is again this in-between-ness. The move into the technological paradigm that becomes this letter.

Is this an act of becoming imperceptible I wonder?

Tell me more.

Best, Penny

Dear Penny,

I am reading this at dusk. It is 19:46. Kaha is standing opposite me in this messy studio. Its shadow, dense and elegant, reveals its own private patchwork of night.

Kaha is a member of a synergy, of a gang. A wanderer in a dialogue shared between its allies, those constructions. They are becoming strangely distant to humans but simultaneously strangely peculiar, as the same as a common word which when repeated continuously becomes distant and foreign, a nonsense sound. And it is in this strangeness of this reciprocity with those characters that I am trying to seek for space. A space where cardinal materiality could take shape.

Machine bodies absent and present, an approach to a world where the co-belonging of earth and sky, of mortals and divinities is not determinate. And they could shout out:

“Beyond anything you could imagine, almost beneath your notice.”

The automaton is a humanoid like machine, capable of generating its own energy and following a pre-established program although in this case energy refers to metaphysical virtues. It combines and embodies distinctive features of the technomonstrous other. It is inorganic but functional, and that means that it interacts with humans in terms of usefulness and productivity. Automata have haunted the human imagination since Antiquity and well before the mechanical realization of perfectly functional body-doubles. In Greek myths, for instance, technological skill is represented with the greatest ambivalence, as something divine but also daemoniac. This is the case of the god Hephaestus, the blacksmith who is physically deformed and doomed to manufacture in the earth’s entrails, exactly as like some insects, the tools and weapons that will change the face of the earth forever more. Half-god and half-slave he

is a master craftsman as an object of both admiration and divergence.

Automata are objects of wonder and terror, loathing and desire exactly as some insects. They represent a re-arrangement of organic parts, often assembled in a new order. Quite often, these new configurations express a fantastic array of alternative body-shapes, bodily functions, morphologies and sexualities. As such, the technological anthropomorphic machine is an object of imaginary projections and fantasy. While being very much itself, the mechanical body is also irrevocably other. It is consequently positioned in ways that are analogous to the classical ‘others’ of modernity. The vulnerable, the chthonic, the bewitched, the trouble.

Insects could be perceived as the entity most closely to the becoming-molecular and becoming-imperceptible. Their transformative speed, an immense power of adaptation through the different stadia of metamorphoses its life cycle contains it’s a manifestation. Hybrid par excellence, tiny miniatures, they exercise the same immense sense of estrangement as other monsters like dinosaurs and dragons do.

It is dark now. I haven’t gotten up to turn the light on. But I can still hear them repeating in whispers: “Beyond anything you could imagine, almost beneath your notice.”

“Listen to us. We greet you in silence” they declare. Ido, Kaha, Emler are border-line figures, capable of bearing different meanings and associations. Figures of liminality and in-between-ness which share a number of structural features with the feminine. Is that a silence of an abject space? Are they figurations of the abject? A very skilful abject I would say, trained with warrior-like virtues. And I would situate them in closer connection to the technological rather than the actual animal ‘kingdom’. Don’t you think?

All best, Lito

Androula Kafa

Ethics and the problem of other minds

Analytic philosophy of mind has always assumed a certain asymmetry between our awareness of ourselves and our awareness of others. This asymmetry is thought to follow from the fact that we each possess a direct awareness, or knowledge, of our own minds, which we lack with respect to the minds of others. Moreover, and importantly, the presumed fact that we can only be indirectly acquainted with other minds is thought to raise a problem regarding our capacity to know the latter accurately, or even at all. This problem can take several forms, which, together, comprise what is traditionally known as the problem of other minds.



Theo Michael, *Anthropos Invisible*, 2012
Graphite & pen on paper, 76cmx56 cm
Courtesy the artist

One form that the problem of other minds can take concerns whether, and how accurately, we can know the specific contents of other people's minds, i.e. what other people think, feel, desire, believe, etc. Where 'knowledge of minds' is taken to mean 'knowledge of the contents of minds', the asymmetry between our knowledge of ourselves and our knowledge of others is springs from the fact that, on the face of it at least, we are in a much better position to know what we our-selves think, feel, desire, believe, and so on, than we are to know these things about others. This is because, whereas we are able to know most of our own mental states directly, simply by virtue of experiencing them, to gain knowledge of other people's mental states we must

their outward behaviour, and subsequent observation-based inference.

Consider, for example, situations in which you felt intensely angry. Presumably, to know that you were angry, you did not have to ask yourself whether you are angry, or check the mirror to determine whether you are wearing an angered expression. You knew that you were angry simply by virtue of feeling angry; we may say that you had a direct awareness of your anger, which surrendered immediate and non-inferential knowledge of your mental state. By contrast, since you cannot feel other people's feelings directly, as you do your own, to know that someone else is angry, you must rely on inferring their mental state from their testimony, or their aggravated yells and flushed faces. However, since people's overt behaviour is not always the best guide to their subjective states, we can never be certain about our approximations of the contents of other people's minds. By sharp contrast, our direct awareness of our own mental states guarantees the certainty and accuracy of (at least some of) our self-knowledge. Hence the first form of the problem of other minds.

A more central form of the problem of other minds does not ask whether we can know what goes on in other people's minds, but whether we can know that others have minds at all. Thus, whereas the previous construal of the problem simply assumed that others are minded, i.e. that they have thoughts, feelings, etc., and questioned how far we can know what they think and feel, the second construal asks whether, and how, we can know that others think and feel at all. The worry here is that, unless we can 'enter' other people's minds and experience their mental states directly, as we do our own, we can never be certain that they have inner lives in the first place. Thus, on this formulation of the problem, the asymmetry between our awareness of our own minds and our awareness of the minds of others

threatens scepticism about the very existence of the latter.

Of course, we do assume that others are minded, and live our lives accordingly. After all, as John Stuart Mill famously points out, others act and behave exactly as if they have minds – so why should this not be enough for us to conclude that they do? What reason do we have to think that the signs of mindedness other people outwardly exhibit do not correspond to, and are not caused by, inner experiences? These are powerful remarks, but the sceptic's point is even more powerful: however natural it may feel to assume that others are minded, the existence of other minds is ultimately impossible to confirm. Unless I can be directly aware of the minds of others, like I am of my own, there is no way in which I can know that others are minded. This is a quintessentially Cartesian insight: part of the point of 'I think, therefore I am' is that it only applies to the first person.



Orestis Lazouras, *MARIA*, 2016
Steel structure, Italian leather boots, raincoat, sand
Courtesy the artist

The final, and perhaps most fascinating, form of the problem of other minds, often referred to as the 'conceptual problem of other minds', asks whether we can even make sense of the concept of a mind that is not our own. This form of the problem rests on the idea that, since our concept of



Theo Michael, *We Live to See the Arid Mountain*, 2018
Graphite on paper, 50x35 cm
Courtesy the artist

'mind' is derived exclusively from our experience of our own minds, and signifies a centre of consciousness or viewpoint that is strictly first personal, the concept of a a centre of conscious-ness that is not ours is simply unintelligible.

These comments illustrate that the problem of other minds, in its different forms, hinges on the assumption of an asymmetry or 'gap' between a subject's knowledge and awareness of her own mind, and her knowledge and awareness of the minds of others. But why does all this matter? Why, if at all, should we care about this elusive gap between minds? This is a question that philosophers often neglect to ask, despite the perennial importance of the problem of other minds in all traditions of philosophy.

A possible answer is suggested by what has already been said; namely, that if the gap between minds is a genuine one, skepticism about other minds seems to follow. The possibility that we cannot know that others have minds, or that we are not particularly adept at knowing what goes on in them, feels like a troubling and undesirable one; hence the asymmetry acquires some importance in virtue of its skeptical consequences. But we can further ask: why is skepticism about other minds important? Our answer to this question depends on the extent to which we take the possibility that others do not have minds to be a genuine one. As already mentioned, a common response to skepticism about the existence of other minds is to say that it is a mere philosopher's problem, and that, if its



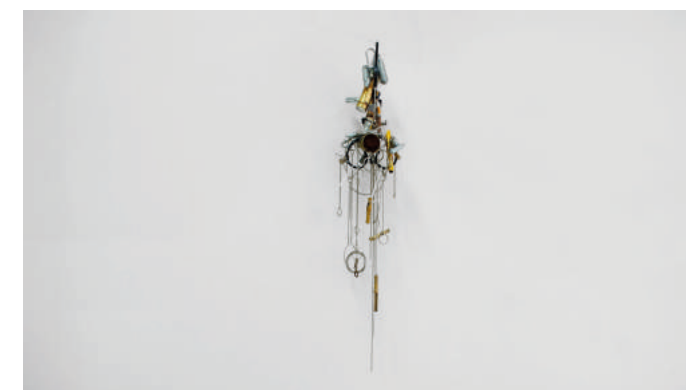
Petros Moris, *Spirit Structure*, 2018
Steel, Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

importance amounts to no more than that, it does not amount to much.

I think that the intersubjective gap is not important so much because it threatens solipsism, but because it threatens a form of life which is unappealing or undesirable. This means that its consequences are moral, or ethical, to the extent that one takes morality or ethics to be concerned, not only with how we ought to live, but also with the notion of the 'good life' – with how we want or how it is good for us to live, given the sorts of beings that we are. For the gap, if it is a genuine one, entails a profound separateness between subjects, and condemns each of us to a kind of aloneness which we could hardly be thought to want. It pictures subjects as enclosed within their own individual minds or consciousnesses, and as in an important sense 'cut off' from one another. On this picture, each of us can only ever be truly aware of her own reality or conscious-ness: other beings may be represented as conscious, as possessing their own perspective or point of view on the world, but their perspective can never be grasped in its full reality, as the distinct point of view that it is. We may attempt to take the point of view or perspective of another subject, but

all this amounts to is shifting our own point of view elsewhere: ultimately, we can never exit the confines of our own perspective or consciousness. Within this framework, then, our minds never cease to be separate from the minds of others, and the barrier between us and them is never broken.

If all this is true, the existence of the asymmetry can give rise to a sense of solitude, and make some forms of connection with or understanding of other minded beings seem hopeless. Thus one might feel that one is left with no choice but to concur with those naive pessimists who declare that 'We are all born and we all die alone.' In addition, as confused as our folk preoccupation with egoism might be, I suspect that a worry that we are radically separate in this manner is partly what underlies or motivates it. It is not difficult to see how an unphilosophical observer may conclude, from reflection on the gap between minds, that we are all out to satisfy ourselves, that we cannot truly care about others, and so on. For, the observer might think, if we cannot even get outside our own heads, how can we truly care about others? Can we ever even grasp 'others' as what they actually are, i.e. as full-blown subjects like ourselves, as distinct centres of conscious-ness, with their own, distinctive perspective and point of view on the world?



George Henry Longly, *Str8 cock worship*, 2018
Mixed media,
Courtesy the artist



Lito Kattou, *Rogue Path*, 2018,
Aluminum, steel, ink, 210x140 cm
Courtesy the artist



Maurizio Bongiovanni, Autopilot, 2018
Oil on canvas, 70cmx100 cm
Courtesy the artist

After all, the thought that others must be fully-blown subjects like ourselves, pitted against the sense that we can never really grasp them as such, nor they us, can itself give rise to a sense of despair and resignation about our relationships with them.

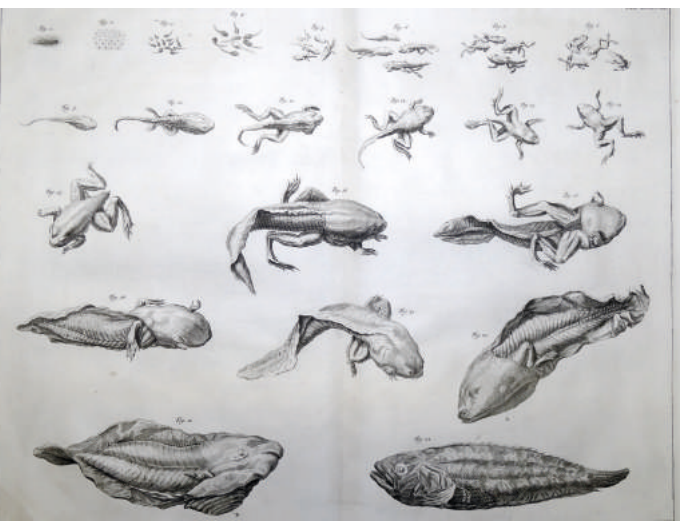
These remarks are meant to make somehow appealing the view that the asymmetry between our awareness of ourselves and our awareness of others may possess a distinctively ethical importance for us. For, if it is true that we are, in a sense, radically distinct, and that there are limits on how far we can go in knowing or grasping one another, might we have to revise our view of our interpersonal relationships, and the value we place on them? Indeed, might we have to revise how we view our lives? In particular, might it be true that, as the unphilosophical observer fears, the presence of a gap between minds impoverishes and radically limits the potential of certain important interpersonal phenomena, such as caring, love, and altruism?



Maurizio Bongiovanni, No Qualities, 2016
Oil on canvas, 70x101,5 cm
Courtesy the artist

Bert van de Roemer Water

Water, one of the Empedoclean elements. It fused with earth, air and fire and detached from it again in an endless process of transition, activated by the powers of Love and Strife. Producing form after form, object after object, organism after organism; simultaneously dissolving all into the world's grand disarray. An endless repetition of becoming without fixed essentialia. Earth not seen as an inert atomistic clockwork, but perceived as a magnificent organism comprising blistering internal magna pools and subterranean water lakes and rivers that paralleled bodily heat and the human vascular system.



Rana pisces,
 from: Albertus Seba, *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri accurata descriptio, et iconibus artificiosissimis expressio, per universam physices historiam ... Tomus I, Amsterdam 1734, plate 78 (Tab. LXXVIII)*
 Artis Library, Special Collections, University of Amsterdam,
 Legkast 034.01 Photo by Bert van de Roemer



The Deluge,
 from: Athanasius Kicher,
Arca Noë, in tres libros digesta (...), Amsterdam 1675, Special Collections, University of Amsterdam, OF 06-1074



Danish Sea Monkey,
 from: Johannes Jonston, *Naeukeurige beschryving van de natuur der vier-voetige dieren, vissen en bloedlooze waterdieren, vogelen, kronkel-dieren, slangen en draken, Amsterdam 1660, Artis Library, Special Collections, University of Amsterdam, 126: 22, part I (fishes), plate 7 (Tab. VII)* Photo by Bert van de Roemer

The world as a gigantic pulsating womb, breeding stones and minerals, lava and water, inward where nature's productivity competed with human artistry. Petrifying juices penetrating organisms and turning them into stone and producing images like a painter. Life sparks inciting inorganic matter. Lot's wife becoming a salt pillar sculpture. Pygmalion's ivory statue becoming a mistress. Mythical processes of indiscernibility that defy binary oppositions. Nature producing images of humans, artists creating moving figures. In a quest to improve forms and beings, the human hand could gradually take over nature's productive powers. The artist's hand imitating, adjusting and excelling nature's artwork. In this zone of boundary confusion, energy was generated. Nothing stable, everything in conversion, like the interplay of elements.



Two artificial dragons and three basilisks,
from: Johannes Jonston, *Naeukeurige beschryving van de natuur der vier-voetige dieren, vissen en bloedlooze waterdieren, vogelen, kronkel-dieren, slangen en draken*, Amsterdam 1660, *Artis Library, Special Collections, University of Amsterdam*, 126: 23, part V (snakes), plate 11 (Tab. XI)
(reproduction of library)

Hydra,

from: Albertus Seba, *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri accurata descriptio, et iconibus artificiosissimis expressio, per universam physices historiam ... Tomus I*, Amsterdam 1734, plate 102 (Tab. CII)
Public domain, internet source:
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/70/Albertus_Seba_-_Hydra.jpg



Scythian Lamb,

from: Jan van Rymdyk, *Museum Britannicum (...)*, London 1791, *Artis Library, Special Collections, University of Amsterdam*, Legkast 158, plate 15 (Tab. XV) Photo by Bert van de Roemer



Satyr,
from: Jan Velten, *Wonderen der natuur (...)*,
manuscript Artis Library, Special Collections,
University of Amsterdam, Legkast 238, fol. 51 recto
(reproduction by library)

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