

# Infrafacing

ERIN MANNING & BRIAN MASSUMI

*Questions for Erin Manning and Brian Massumi sent by e-mail from Jonas Fritsch, Gregory Seigworth, Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen.*

Q: In this interview we're interested in speculations on how interfaces activate or intensify affects and how or if interface-affects might even-tuate change—or indeed respond to ideas of becoming related to artistic creation. We'd like to begin this interview by asking about how questions of 'the interface' first presented themselves with the start-up of your online journal *Inflexions*. Then we wonder how these lessons from *Inflexions* have fed into your recent work and contributions to the research project *Immediation: Media, Art, Theory*. In what ways could these undertakings of yours be seen as alternate paths in the practice of a kind of 'immanent resistance' to ideas about 'immediacy' and 'real-time'—and, indeed, a response to the type of control society prevalent in today's globalized societies?

A: When we started *Inflexions*, our journal, in 2008, the issue of the interface was central ([inflexions.org](http://inflexions.org)). A leading question for us was how to shift the conditions of the mediating entryways facilitated by the increasingly dogmatic use of web interfaces to 'display' content. At that point, there were very few (if any) examples of online journals that didn't seek to replicate the form of the print journal: most existing online journals looked like print journals in terms both of form and content. Our aim was to open this up not only by adding artistic work (sound, images, video) but more emphatically by asking how the conceptual motor of the work (philosoph-

ical, political, aesthetic) might shift the conditions of reading. To achieve this, Leslie Plumb and then Matisse ApSimon Megans, have worked very closely with the 'content' of the journal to build digital affordances that amplify the resonances of the work to facilitate a certain transversality of the work and the web as medium.

Each issue has taken a year or so to make because the coding of the journal is not seen as separate from the gathering of so-called 'content.' As the journal has come into itself, practices for exploring what we think of as the 'force' of form have shifted to the point where now there is no moment in the unfolding of an issue that is not collaborative across the digital and analog, not directly engaged in the how of a work's evolving into and across a different medium. This took several years, as so much of our training with regards publishing involves keeping the form and content on two different levels. This more typical approach to internet-based journals means that the 'web designer' is rarely conceived of as a participant in the process. Their job is to background the digital so that the 'content' of the issue makes its way to the forefront. A typical reader expects the 'text' to be easily available, downloadable, the web serving as a proxy. We really wanted to challenge that. We wanted to explore what other forms of reading were available thanks to the medium of the web, and of the internet more broadly.

This approach could only work if we dispelled the notion that what a web design does is produce an 'interface.' For years Leslie Plumb challenged this vocabulary, emphasizing the work of transduction that occurs when one field is brought into relation with another. This meant thinking about things like the horizon (how does the typical web interface reinforce notions of perspective and posture?), of drop-down menus (what presuppositions about content do we set in place when we direct the reader this way?), of the grid (what is suggested when we accept that the readable portion of a text fits into a pre-composed frame? what might escape the frame?), of the dominance of the visual (what is presupposed when the engagement is packaged for the reader such that the final form is given through a click? what kinds of participatory processes might be invented to challenge that?) etc. With this approach, there is no longer a clear separation between content and form, and we similarly refuse the separation between 'coder' and 'artist' and 'philosopher.' The work of reading, viewing, listening, the work of 'entering,' can no longer be separated from how reading/viewing/listening can be made to work differently. Instead of an

interface understood as a mediating surface, we propose conduits, affordances, openings that spark deviations, detours, movements of thought and feeling.

It's a change of perspective. You could look at a traditional medium like the printed word as a medium, with the surface of the page as the interface. But reading only occurs when you look *past* the words, and directly enter a space of abstract movement that carries you along. You don't connect to the surface, the surface dissolves, through the words, into an event-space. It becomes a threshold of direct entry into that abstract space, into which your experience is absorbed, rather than a thing that is interposed between two concrete spaces, the body and the technical system, that remain distinct. Putting it in those terms, however, gives too much credence to the opposition between the abstract and the concrete. Even in print reading, the bodily is intensely engaged and activated. The meanings of the words are inseparable from flitting proprioceptive sensations of movement and rhythm, diaphanous seeings, brushes of touch—experiences that are barely there, unacted-out, unseparated from each other, but all the more real, all the more compelling, for coming together in that richly suggestive way. It is a way that betokens a *more* of experience, and beckons it to continue. All of this is bodily. It is the mode of concreteness of the entry into the abstract event-space of reading. What the digital can offer is a multi-modal threshold, and a different rhythm. The work of *Inflexions* seeks to bring words, sounds, and images together, and vary their rhythm of appearing and relaying, recognizing that the rhythm is not just that of the eye, but also of the hand. The aim is to foreground the way thresholding carries multiple dimensions, multiple rhythms moving across the field of 'reading'—transversal modalities of absorption into the abstract-concrete event-space, diverse angles and approaches, twists and turns. This is not to say the digital is better. It is different: a different composition of experience's dimensions intensely unacting-out—or, in-acting. Because if you look at this way—as being absorbed into an abstract space of experience that is otherwise concrete—you have moved through the surface of the screen into another space. It's like the screen is doubled by another surface, upon which a roil of concrete experience, barely, suggestively, diaphanously, varyingly there, is abstractly inscribed. This is the surface of affect. It is like an infra-surface, immanent to situation, on a different plane — an infraface. That is where it's actually happening. Not 'on' the technological surface as a physical object, and not 'in' the body as receiver

of signals, not in the technological system as apparatus, but immanent to their ensemble, expressing their powers of producing effects, events, event-effects or effective events, in concert.

The technological apparatus is, of course, a key element in conditioning the infraface. In the early years of *Inflexions*, our productions were animated with Flash. This allowed for a particular kind of nonlinear exploration which became a lot more difficult (but also very interesting) with HTML5. Some of what was achieved with the formal capabilities of Flash has transferred to the ‘how’ of the entry and moving-through. Recent iterations lure the reader/viewer/listener into exploring ways of making the work work for their ways. A vast array of modes of entry are embedded, inviting them to create their own rhythms, in ways that we could not pre-program or anticipate. This welcomes neurodiverse techniques for composing—something still too rare in a world too often stridently neurotypical in its orientation. The kind of infra-facing *Inflexions* proposes suggests a nonlinear movement of surfacing, the opening screen already a tunneling into reading’s multiplicity, a conduit that facilitates different comings-to-expression, facilitating modes of entry that might otherwise stay backgrounded. This approach is aligned to “immediation,” a concept we have been collectively working to define (see the two volume book entitled *Immediation* recently released at Open Humanities Press).

We give the web example since the interface is often defined using digital vocabulary, but this discussion could easily be extended to thresholds more broadly. In a recent interview, Erin Manning and Halbe Kuipers (2019) discuss thresholds in a similar way: <https://www.onlineopen.org/download.php?id=587>. The threshold as we understand it is never a neutral mediator from one space to another. The threshold is an active intervenor in experience, a co-composer. As such, it is urgent that we understand how thresholds are carried and what is assumed in their crossing. One way to think of the importance of the threshold as infra-facing is through the complex discussion of how to create safe/r spaces in the academy. Working, as SenseLab does, extensively with the question of neurodiversity—asking how worlds can be crafted to challenge the systemic neurotypicality that frames and polices knowledge and bodies—the issue of accommodation is an urgent one. How to create infrasurfacings of emergent collective composition? How to attune not only to what is actually reverberating but also what moves infrasensorially, infrathinly, unseparated-out in a way that intensifies and multiplies potential?

Alison Kafer speaks to this challenge in her 2016 text *Un/Safe Disclosures: Scenes on Disability and Trauma*. In a complex intervention that aims to recognize the importance of the social model of disability *and* to make space for discussions of pain and trauma in disability studies (issues that are often backgrounded in discussions of how ableism renders bodies disabled in a systemic operation that excludes difference), she asks how we might address traumatic experiences without resorting to a too-simplistic account of categorization of triggers. For isn't the very definition of trauma (especially PTSD) the impossibility of mapping the trigger in advance? You could think of a list of trigger warnings in a fairly traditional way as a kind of interface—a mediating apparatus. But what if you looked at the issues infrafacially instead?

In her article, Kafer talks about a BDSM information event organized by an LGBTQ organization during her graduate years. The gathering's aim was specifically to discuss modes of consent and to sensitize the audience to ways of navigating the complex territory of sexual experience, especially for those who might have suffered sexual trauma. Close attention was paid to survivors of sexual abuse and many attempts were made to make sure any such people in the audience took care of themselves. What wasn't addressed (how could it be?!) was the possibility that one of the facilitator's caps would act as a powerful trigger for Kafer, a survivor of a terrible fire. The cap had "arson" written on it in capital letters. She writes:

I am grateful for their awareness of and frankness about the pervasiveness of rape and sexual assault; grateful, too, for their acknowledgement of the effects of gender-based assault and harassment. And if that person had chosen to wear a different hat that night, I probably would have found nothing lacking in their presentation. But he did not, and that fact leads me to questions about the narrowness of their definitions of trauma. They assumed that some of the workshop participants might have histories of sexual trauma, but there was nothing about racial trauma (which is noteworthy, given the discourse of master/slave in some BDSM practices), or medical trauma (again noteworthy, given the common use of medicalized paraphernalia), or other "everyday" trauma. Is sexual trauma the only trauma relevant in or to feminist and queer spaces? Or is disclosure of queer desire the only disclosure pertinent to such spaces? The ARSON hat, for me, required an entirely different, and entirely less sexy, disclosure: flashbacks, panic attacks, anxiety.

Infrafacial allows for composings across thresholds that take to heart the fact that the question of how things register can never be fully choreographed in advance: it cannot be mediated. Attention to thresholds can do this work, though. What if in the infrafacial an attention to emergent

conditions of a given environment are crafted? Can participation be made operational across many different strata? What if there were consistent attention to architectural affordances that make entering and exiting possible and take seriously the weight of entry on some bodies (racialized, disabled, neurodiverse?). The interface of teaching suggests that the working document—the syllabus—acts as the motivator of entry and exit, but the syllabus can only do a bit of that work, poised as it is in a hierarchical relationship to students. Much more attention needs to be paid to all the constituent thresholds of the encounter: what modes of study are welcomed? how is learning valued? is attention paid to what the crossing of the threshold costs certain bodies? are there ways of entering that don't privilege neurotypical modes of attention? is learning at a distance possible? This kind of infrafacial makes learning a collective endeavour, not mediated but *immediating*, inviting participation in drawing the limits of study. A class that takes this form is no longer mediated by the frontality and hierarchy of the standard pedagogy. It emerges in the ongoing negotiation of multiple forms of participation.

Our interests in issues raised by the question of the interface extend to a rethinking of multiple aspects of what we think of as co-composing in the worlds we work—which is to say, to pedagogy as a whole. And beyond pedagogy, to the research environment it takes place within. And beyond, that, to the ways of living and working and creating together that surround and perfuse the educational institution as a whole. The recently published two-volume collective work, *Immediation*, edited by Anna Munster, Erin Manning, and Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen, brings together a wide range of essays growing from the collaborations of the Immediations project that explore the issues from many angles (<http://www.openhumanitiespress.org/books/titles/immediation/>). Looking beyond the *Immediations* project, for the past three years we have been working together to get an alternative platform for study going. It will be autonomous from the university but still linked into it in some ways, embedded in the everyday but composing abstract-concrete event-spaces of life living infrafacial to it. This is what we're calling the 3 Ecologies Institute (<http://senselab.ca/wp2/3-ecologies/3-ecologies-institute/>).

Q: If Deleuze and Guattari's chapter on faciality in *A Thousand Plateaus* is about a certain 'capture' of the body-nature relation in perception and affect in the Western world, colored by Christianity and activated in colonialism and science, could we think of interfaciality as another

kind of capture in which immanence is at stake, resulting in new states of perception and forms of ‘ontopower’? And what would it mean to affirm the world’s potential today—and maybe even activate the infraface as an alternate way of affirming affective encounters as political forces? We have still not seen artistic interventions into the operations or forms of utterance of the interface—or have we?

A: In answer to the previous question, we were talking about how the immediation of experience—the infraface—opens onto an abstract surface—an event-space of potential that can be intensifying of powers to think and to feel. This is a space of real, bodily dynamism, but at a level of interfusion where dimensions of experience are activated in relation to one another, but un-acted-out—in-acting their difference, without separability (as Denise Ferreira da Silva might say) This is what Brian calls “bare activity”: the dimension of co-incipiency of what, to take effect more broadly in the world, has to separate out into lines of process following different paths. Any engagement that addresses this level is an ontopower: a power to capacitate, to potentialize, and at its most potent, to bring to be. An ontopower activates powers of existence that are like embryonic forms of life. Under certain conditions, these germs of process can mature. The over-determined roil of incipiency can ripen and relay into determinate unfoldings. This movement of potential taking determinate expression is transductive: it can move into other fields, implicating other apparatuses, and domains of bodily activity. In a word, the potential can actualize. A barely-there being-in-becoming has made its mark. Its movement has left a wake: it has had carry-on effects.

This actualizing expression of potential is always limitative. Bare activity is overfull, over-determined. It has to shake down, to fold out into actual shape. In *Architectures for the Unforeseen* (2019), Brian develops the notion of the abstract-(concrete) surface of affect in relation to certain digital artistic and design practices (specifically Greg Lynn’s mobilization of virtual forces of formation in his topological design in architecture, and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s “relational architecture” practice of large-scale digital urban-art intervention). He suggests that there is a proto-politics to staying with the roil, or contriving to return there, so that the limitative unfoldings don’t become restrictive and take over, colonizing potential. This is proto-political, because instead of maturing into a determinate political path, it tends the embryology of differencings, prolonging the engagement with potential into a thickening variety of in-active paths.

For this kind of proto-politics to work, certain modes of actualization that channel the expression of potential down restrictively normative paths have to be strategically disabled. If this is not done, ontopower turns vicious. The power to bring to be, in a movement of becoming, turns into an enhanced recolonization, bringing more of the same, only potentially worse, because it hijacks forms of life in their very emergence. In this, ontopower is far more virulent than biopower, which is a power over life. The power to bring to be is an order of magnitude beyond any power over what already is.

One of the reasons we are so mistrustful of the term interface is that among the most potent of restrictive ontopowers is the face: the overlay of the infraface by the Face. This is a humanizing power turning the power-to-be into the power of the personal—paradoxically, by collective means. For there is no Face without the face-to-face. Faciality, as Deleuze and Guattari call it, is an impersonal machine to limitatively personalize potential. Face-to-face: isn't that what the very word 'interface' invokes? The implications are enormous. The model of faciality, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is the White Man's face: the "average adult-white-heterosexual-European-male speaking a standard language" (105). The "Major." Whiteness personified.

Can we talk about the interface without talking about racism and colonialism? And not just as an unfortunate content that gets spread through it, but as engrained in the etymology of the word, integral as to the genealogy of the concept, as infecting the practices associated with it with an ontopower of the Facially limitative kind, building-in tendencies toward Whiteness?

Erin's piece, "Waltzing the Limit" in *Always More Than One* (2012) addresses the politics of faciality. The film *Waltz with Bashir* is a fascinating place to stage a conversation about the affective image of the face because, unusually, it refuse to frame the face as an affective condition of the encounter until the very end when the film turns to the one image which will retroactively frame the horror of political genocide: the face of the Palestinian. Continuing her earlier work on the face in Canadian cinema, this piece explores what else can be foregrounded when the camera refuses to make the (White Man's) face the interface of civilization.

Faciality, as Deleuze and Guattari articulate it in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) is, as your questions suggest, a vital exploration of the mediating power of whiteness in the scopic regime, from landscape paint-

ing to cinema and beyond. Whiteness is here the operator of legibility, and the White Man's face—the territorialization of whiteness onto the earth as regimen of ultimate registerability—is not only the superimposition of colonial operations onto the body, but onto the earth itself. It is an onto-power of genocidal, ecologically destructive, force that haunts all dreams of appearing otherwise.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) write: "Faces are not basically individual; they define zones of frequency or probability, delimit a field that neutralizes in advance any expressions or connections unamenable to the appropriate significations" (168). The face is the operation through which perceptibility becomes facialized, which is to say, valued. The face is the mark of discernment of presentability itself. That's why the White Man's face can't so easily be reduced to a white person. A white person carries an a priori valuation, but the face must every time be produced. It is not a representation: it is a systemic operation. As Deleuze and Guattari emphasize: "The face itself is redundancy" (168). Across the redundancy, in the expression of its frequency, in its collective stretch, whiteness makes a claim on existence.

But as always with Deleuze and Guattari, there's more to the story than this nightmare. Other modes of transduction are possible that begin with the transindividuality of experience and move from there. In this transduction, what is produced is a different kind of subjectivity—a subjectivity unsubordinated to the face, a minor sociality activated in the schizz of experience folding on itself, resonating with the overfullness of bare activity. Expression lives here, in the detouring of experience from its capture, in the excess of the face (-to-face).

The impersonality of minor sociality is also ontopowerful, in that it does its work immanently to the event, sideways, in relation to forces not yet captured by the contours of what already stands in as face. It is a fugitive counter-ontopower: "If the face is a politics, dismantling the face is also a politics involving real becomings, an entire becoming-clandestine" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, 188). The becoming-clandestine is the operation through which the twists and turns of the process itself is foregrounded, turning away from the face, or turning the face away from its overcoding, from the overlay of mediating mechanisms upon the infraface, away from what effects and protects the channeling into whiteness and backgrounds its overfullness with relational potential, even as it draws on it limitatively. Away from the forms of interactivity and interpersonality that

the paradigm of the interFace implies and fosters. For the face-to-face of whiteness thrives on the inter-. The inter- is its operator. Mediation is its (pale) passion.

Q: We would also like to discuss the question of ‘interaction’ in relation to the (affective) interface as well: especially as understood within the field of interaction design. When and how does it make sense to talk about interaction (or interaction design) in a time where the affective and relation seem like better terms for unfolding the processual dynamics and infrafacial foldings? With your reconception of interface as infraface, what happens to interaction? In what ways do we need to re-think interaction? For instance, Gilbert Simondon introduces the concept of transduction—but still retains a reconfigured notion of interaction, or, we might turn to Daniel Stern, who also uses as a motor in his work moment-by-moment interaction sequences to account for larger mobilizations. Is there a still place for interaction with infrafaciality or should we go somewhere else?

A: There is definitely a role for interface design, provided it problematizes its own name, and processes the implications of the distinction between interaction and relation. Interaction works with the presupposition that the poles of engagement are fully-formed, whereas relation is invested in the quality of the field itself and what the coming into encounter makes possible in terms of qualitative transformation. Daniel Stern is a great place to look. His concept of vitality affect takes what most people would think of as the paragon of interpersonal interaction, the carer-nonate encounter, and gives an account that relationalizes it. He talks about how the apparently imitative back-and-forth of vocalizations and gestures is not really a back-and-forth, and not really imitative. The carer and the infant are engaged in a relational interplay where one action cannot be reduced or even directly compared to the other. For instance, what might be interpreted as call and response is typically being played out in different experiential registers, a gesture greeting a sounding. It’s really a play of point-counterpoint, he says. There is a certain entrainment where the infant’s and carer’s actions are carried by the momentum of the play. They entrain each other in a rhythm that does not reproduce one or the other’s movement but emerges as a relational third. Infant and carer participate in the same event, from different angles, moving into the interplay of what is co-composed. This dynamic is often mistaken for a simple sequence. In fact, in the entrainment of the co-composition producing itself, the next move is echoing the last in its own manner, and pre-echoing the next. It

is a situation of what Erin calls “preacceleration” in *Relationscapes* (2012). What this means is that the successive plays are modulating each other’s formation, from within their arising. They exert an immanent formative influence that is reciprocal. This is relation: the formative in-each-other-ness of actions that reciprocally modulate, so that the terms are the product of the relation, more than the relation is the product of pre-given terms interacting. Relation and interaction are really two very different species (far too often mistaken for the other). Interaction implies an exteriority of actions to each other, across the boundary of the screen, or whatever apparatus is attributed a mediating function. Relation is the activation of the in-between as a field of resonance that modulates rather than mediating. It is an immediation. It occurs in the immediacy of a co-composition. Interaction *presupposes* preconstituted terms (the infant, the carer, each on its own side, acting in its assigned role, according to its own devices). Relation *produces* its terms (an infant-carer speciation where what both bodies can do and how they be is qualitatively altered by what passes between them). Although interaction is often thought as a togetherness, it is actually separative. That is the very meaning of “inter-”: that it separates out, and that neutralizes the formative activity of the in-between. To view the infant-carer relation as interactive, and the call and response as sequential, is to assimilate the co-produced movement as stimulus-response. Stimulus-response doesn’t get under the skin creatively. It triggers already-known routines. It reproduces more than it produces. If a setup is designed in such a way to foreground the inter (-facial), it forcibly backgrounds the infra-. It is in the infra- that the relationality resides.

The infra- of relation is what Simondon calls the “preindividual.” The preindividual is the condition of individuation. The preindividual is a field of tendencies in germ, buds of unfoldings to come, of rhythms in seed, that exceed given form, because they play out in modulations of form. Individuation is teeming with preindividual tendencies that are like minor inflections vying to come to expression and take-form. They keep individuation qualitatively open at the formative level, making it what we just called a “speciation”: individuation is always collective, a co-becoming. In the infant-carer example, what individuates is fundamentally the relation itself, spinning off variations on ‘carer’ and ‘infant’ born from the manner of their coming together. The reciprocal determination of the carer’s and the infant’s lines of action and bodily capacities must therefore never be substracted, treated as separate. Similarly, the rhythm

must never be treated as a synchronous line. The playing out of the relation in an individuation, as you suggest in your question, is transductive. In the carer-infant example, the sounds heard and gestures seen on both sides are emergent expressions. In the relation, rhythm is in-between. It is neither properly visual nor aural. It is amodal: it is in both equally, but differentially, in point-counterpoint. The amodal is that which is in no particular exteroceptive sense (involving sense channels registering external impingements on the body). It can be expressed in any sense, but is not contained in any of them (it is most closely allied to the interoceptive senses of proprioception and kinaesthesia). The amodal, considered in itself, is abstract, in a most efficacious way. Its field is the infrafacial force-field of emergence in-forming any and all other domains.

The question, not only for digital art and media, but for all creative activity, is how to access that dimension of forming experience that impels collective individuation. How do we perceive what is no sensory mode *in itself*? How do we influence it, if we, as terms of relation, are more its product, in correlation with others, than the producers of it? How do we cure ourselves of our inculcated sense that experience is 'ours,' that experience belongs to the 'subject,' that form is already constituted and simply interacts with other forms? How do we foster relation?

Just how far-ranging these questions are is shown by Stern's work in his book *The Present Moment* (2004), which your question alludes to. In it, Stern sets forth a kind of methodology for the archeology of the present moment (William James's labile "specious present," lasting from eight to twenty seconds or so: the atom of our experience). He shows how incredibly full, complicated, and hyperdifferentiated the present moment is. We normally only retain certain peaks that stand out from it, a bit like landmarks that have impressed themselves in the form of easily accessible conscious memories. We also retain a more or less vague affective tonality marking the quality of the experience of that present moment. But it is possible to excavate the moment (he suggests very specific tools for doing this). When we do, we realize that the moment was so full as to be effectively infinite. Its dynamic contour, its rhythm or vitality affect, is composed of any number of subrhythms. Its global affective tonality is composed of any number of under-affects. Events within events, even when nothing much is happening. Ingredient elements are not combined part to part, in extrinsic relation, like bricks assembled to form an edifice. They are not inter-. They are infra-. Each of their actions are in each other.

They resonate. They reciprocally modulate. They do not combine, so much as fuse, and not into an edifice but into a complex, internally differentiated flow, composing an atom of life experience with more or less vague and variable boundaries: an open whole. These compositional infra-elements of the moment—of the very time of our life—are not lost. With technique, they can be made to peak, brought to conscious expression, and committed to explicit, episodic memory. But when they don't—which is the usual situation—they are not nothing because of that. They will have effectively in-formed what has registered, and live on through that, in flow-on effects. They also live on with unregistered, or barely registering, subterranean efficacy, as somewhat-experiences that have not yet had their day. A later experience might bring a sub-affect to the fore, so that it displaces the already-registered affective tonality, and as a consequence alters the formal memory and how we subsequently relate to that moment. They are not just flotsam and jetsam of experience. They are a reservoir of would-be and could-be changes in experience. Potentials for more. They are everyday experience's infraface.

The questions about interface, which we've counter-answered with questions about infraface, overflow the digital into everyday life. They extend to such fundamental questions as how we bide our time, what constitutes our every present moment, and what potentials reside there. What does this mean for digital design? What kinds of new crossings-over and cross-currents might it be possible to orchestrate between digital systems and the off-line world—given the transductive (which is to say, fundamentally analogue) nature of the life process that runs through both? How do we influence it, if we, as terms of relation, are more its product, in correlation with others, than the producers of it? How do we cure ourselves of our inculcated sense that experience is 'ours,' that experience belongs to the 'subject,' that form is already constituted? For this is what interaction teaches us: that the terms are decided. Interaction takes the field for granted, turning all attention to the terms of the interaction, the subject and the object, the human and the machine. From that standpoint, mediation becomes a necessity. But amodality is immediating. It moves in the between of qualitative fields of feeling to activate transductions of sense. The carer's voicing in the interplay with the infant's movement produces a thirdness that becomes the motor for the ensuing rhythm, modulating how it unfolds. The abstract dance is formative of the relation, which itself becomes the conduit for new variations on the terms in relation.

In our work on the anarchival project we call the 3E Process Seed Bank—an altereconomic proposition for other modes of valuation—these questions have been at the forefront (the altereconomic aspect of the project is discussed in detail here: <http://senselab.ca/wp2/3e-process-seed-bank/interview/>). What we have found through our longstanding explorations of immediation is that infrafacings must remain a verb: to do the work of activating the polyvocality of the field of relation, the field itself must be kept in play. This means that we not only have to create the conditions for an active infrafacings in the digital design, we have to practice immediation in our approach to all the fields of relation that populate our lives. We have to be attuned to what elements compose their formative in-betweens—including surfaces conventionally marked as mediating—and what modes of expression spin off from them.

To practice immediation is to become sensitive to the ways in which we have become habituated to mediating surfaces that promise to lead us where we need to go. It is to become aware of all that is presupposed in that act of mediation, and to recognize the compositional force of all that is lost when relation is overcoded by the mediating impulse. In the design of the 3E Process Seed Bank, this has led us to be less concerned with creating a platform in itself than creating a variety of entryways into modalities of web-life interplay. This has proven necessary because code in and of itself remains limited to a particular array, its protocols always oriented by certain relatively predetermined sets of operations. By playing with the relational interplay of offline and online activities, something else begins to emerge that allows the digital to participate in the composition in ways it might not otherwise be capable of. An example of this is the work we call “composing” at SenseLab. In the early explorations of the 3E Process Seed Bank, our main concern was with the threshold: how might we activate the kind of thresholds discussed above for a digital environment? How might we make the entryway do the kind of work we have experimented with at SenseLab, when the reigning digital protocols individualize users’ access and subject it to disciplinary control (user agreements, password protections, etc.)? Might there be a way to multiply the coming into encounter in a digital environment without making that multiplication simply the interactive sum of its individual parts? Is there a way to activate that excess described above, that more-than-the-sum of its parts that is relation? Can the digital screen be contrived to operate as a catalyzer of infrafacial rhythms?

Strictly speaking the answer is no. In and of itself, the digital, with its sequential processing, tree structures, and classification shema, cannot spark the kind of excess that a ray of light on a piece of fabric produces in an offline space. It cannot produce the kind of lure that ray might be for a cat, or a human, who simply can't keep themselves from lying on the patch of orange on the ground. But it can compose with tendencies generated in the offline space to activate modes singular to the digital that might reverberate with similar qualities. Or, even better, it might be capable of bringing certain qualities of experience into overlap in a way that resingularizes an offline experience, thereby producing more appetite for offline play. This catalyzing of relation cannot be accomplished *on* a platform in itself. But it may be possible *through* a platform. The screen might potentially be contrived to operate as a threshold in a transductive process moving through it, between offline experiences. What would happen on the screen wouldn't be just be permutations on already-formed operations. The screen also would have to be populated with preindividual tendencies that resonate with the offline preindividual fields it thresholds—code events that transform the stimulus-response of interfacial interaction into an in-each-otherness of operations suggesting emergent rhythms that might modulate the actions of the user, but more importantly, might invite a counterpoint in actions offline.

The most available model for the in-each-otherness of digital code operations is the glitch. A glitch is interruptive, an interference—but an interference is a kind of resonance. A glitch is a point of undecideability where potential lines of unfolding overlap and vie with one another, without one in particular being able to follow through on its routine. The glitch interrupts routine. Creative glitching is one of the things the 3E Process Seed Bank has been experimenting with, along with play with error messages. But the infrafacializing of the interface doesn't have to be interruptive. There are ways, for example, of creating positive overlaps between the categories to which habitual online operations are normally assigned that create relational resonances. For example, with the entry-way, we have been inflecting the authentication routine to organize itself around the model of gift-giving, mixing the category of legitimation and authentication that the digital entry is conventionally designed to fall into with that of hospitality. This gives a singular quality to the action of entering. It is still somewhat colored by the habitual connotations of being legitimized, in the sense of bearing a certain responsibility toward the

system and toward others, simply by virtue of being a way of recognized by the system and gaining access to it. But the responsibility is de-individualized. The dominant tone is generosity and conviviality. This modulates the posture with which one enters, enabling further modulation once they're online—which primes for different ways of relaying back offline. Creative overlaps and unexpected phasings among text, image, and sound are also ways of preindividualizing the digital field that the 3E Process Seed has extensively experimented with (the journal *Inflexions* is where these experimentations are most publically presented).

To explore the potential of online-offline transduction, the practice of 'composing' was born. Since few of us were capable of doing the actual digital coding, the SenseLab physical space became a site for us to experiment with materials to build qualitatively different thresholds and entryways.



SenseLab SpaZe December 2019. Photo by Leslie Plumb.

This work then became a field of operative exploration for the coding. Over more than three years, an ongoing practice of attuning to emergent qualities of relation in the space has taken place, working with materials that for the most part remain the same. The aim of the work is not to build an architecture, or an installation—though that is often the effect. The aim is to attune to material affordances, to become attuned to overlooked qualities, to explore how shapes can affect each other, to practice an engagement with an emergent architecture that *sites* differently—a study in how found ingredients can take on a catalytic function for relation. Things becoming field-factors rather than the things they normally are, with their habitual uses and functions. A chair might levitate toward the ceiling and remain suspended there, creating an awkward depth to the space that inflects our sense of perspective, in turn modulating our movements through the space. Tunnels and underspaces might appear, allowing anxious bodies a refuge, and encouraging non-frontal modes of engagement that expand the point-counterpoint potentials of voicing and gesture. Corners may sprout in the middle of the space in the vicinity of an upturned table, troubling our well-trained habits of siting ourselves in generic spaces. Sails of fabric might softly differentiate the space into a continuous variation of spatial sinuosities, troubling traditional perspective. Markings on the floor might suggest virtual differentiations of space that lure a mode of occupation, in the way a square of tape on the floor will lure a cat into a virtual box.

This is demanding and careful work. Often the first tendency is to “do” something in the space, but that returns to individual decision and an instrumental relation to things. The richness comes of the second or third tendency. At a certain moment, it is the emergent environment that moves you, that tunes a movement toward a field of relation. The action of the environment is now in you, as much as you are in the environment: environmental in-each-otherness, preindividualizing the body/surround separation. This takes time. We often find ourselves staying late, composing differently as the light changes, finding that a shape will emerge on its own in a time that exceeds our own determination. Once a shape has composed itself, something has revealed itself: a process has actualized. This process feeds the digital work both in terms of the shape/quality/colour/atmosphere/threshold created and in terms of rhythm or duration. The temptation is always to dwell here, to settle in the shape composed. But invariably it collapses. What felt so dynamic becomes a form, and we

find ourselves going back to the ‘doing,’ the shaping and being shaped as if they were separable, falling to either side of a subject-object divide. We then have to reattune, and it may be necessary to decompose before we can get back to it.

The 3E Process Seed Bank proposes a similar engagement with composition in the digital. The offline experimentation is practiced as a prototyping of catalyzing strategies and fielding relation. The idea is that analogues for them might be found in digital operations. This transport of modes of fielding relation between online and offline experimentations strengthens their transductive connection. The relaying among the fields of the exploring body, screen operations, and the surrounds fuse them into a larger field. They are reciprocally infrafaceted. So instead of just a simple interface, what we are proposing is a compound infrafaceting. To facilitate this, we have devised many techniques: creatures of code we call processual operators (POTs) will be deployed that impersonalize the engagement with the digital strata, along the glitch-and-overlay lines explained earlier (<http://senselab.ca/wp2/processual-operator-thingies/>). What we call self-organizing propositions (SOPs) function as formative-rhythm channelers, transducing deliberative governance (with its inevitably disciplinary and normative functioning) into emergent decision-making following a self-organizing cadence (<http://senselab.ca/wp2/3e-process-seed-bank-further-possibilities-for-smart-contracts/>). The work is of course ongoing. These are really demanding propositions, in no small part because they challenge the interactive presuppositions embedded in digital interface design, going all the way down to the lowest levels of code. But our collective exploration at SenseLab over more than a decade has led us to have a strong appetite for other ways of thresholding, fielding, and moving (with) the relation, and we have learned through many exciting encounters with other collectives that we are not alone in the desire to explore this—which amounts to inventing other forms of valuing experience collectively.

As SenseLab moves toward the 3Ecologies Institute (<http://senselab.ca/wp2/3-ecologies/3-ecologies-institute/#missionstatement>), we take the question of infrafaceting into an expanded field of living and learning, beyond the confines of the university. Moving toward other ways of living and learning without the mediating gesture we are accustomed to means valuing experience differently. It means refraining from making the Human—which is to say, Whiteness (as discussed earlier)—the be-all and end-all of experience. It means becoming attuned to the more-than

that courses through ‘us’—or more precisely, through the compound in-between of our things and technologies, bodies and surrounds, that spins us off into new variations on ourselves. It means becoming alert to what formatively exceeds us, including those infrathin modes of pre-individual life that we presently unperceive—but which may return to feed new speciations. Most of all, it means refusing to neutralize experience by formatting the encounter in advance.

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