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## INTRODUCTION

# Art Matters: reconfiguring the relationship between art and its materiality

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Materials and technologies of contemporary art invite us to rethink both the role that they play in the articulation of artistic practices and infrastructure and the theoretical frameworks that reflect the role of materiality itself in the history of art. This implies new methodological challenges and important epistemological transformations in the study of art; challenges that must be analysed, discussed and contrasted with their long and fertile tradition. Key issues, such as the distribution of agencies involved in research and artistic practice, temporal causality lines, interconnection between materiality and discursivities, the role of technology and society, the space and location of art become particularly relevant from the challenges raised today.

The theme of the node is not exactly new to *Artnodes*, which in recent years has published various articles that have dealt with the concept as well as monographs discussing the relationship between art and materiality.

For instance, our issue No. 12, coordinated by Jamie Allen and titled “The Materiality of the Media: New Materialisms through Media, Art and Technology” or issue No 14 coordinated by Beatriz Revelles-Benavente, Ana M. González Ramos and Krizia Nardini titled “New Feminist Materialism: engendering an ethic-onto-epistemological methodology”.

This monograph brings together a number of articles that reconfigure the relationship between art and materiality: contributions focusing on theoretical, methodological and epistemological approaches as well as rather empirical studies on or from art practices and infrastructures. The selection of articles is

linked, on the one hand, to the open call we made from the magazine and, on the other hand, to the Art Matters International Congress, co-organised by Barcelona University, Hangar and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya that was held in December 2014 at the UB School of History of Art. All of this linked to research projects on Art, Architecture and New Materialities with the references HAR2014-59261-C2-1-P and HAR2011-30347-C02-01.

In the first article of the node, Helen Pritchard and Jane Prophet use the concept of diffraction proposed by Karen Barad to reassess the relationship between contemporary art and new media art, rethinking the controversy between them, which incidentally was the focus of our issue No 11, which was coordinated by Edward Shanken. Then, Nuria Peist proceeds from the consideration of the non-hierarchical relationship between physical subject and material object raised by philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to analyse the phenomenological and interrelational links between technology, people and contemporary art. In this sense, this connects with the paper presented by Carles Sora and Sergi Jordà that starts from a phenomenological and cognitive approach to the role of the body in the construction of perception to present and discuss a selection of interactive works and associated time frames, forcing us to rethink our relationship with contemporary images.

Sergio Martínez Luna starts from concepts such as that of epistemic objects, offered by Karin Knorr Cetina, or Jacques Rancière’s aesthetic regime to think about new production methods and sharing of knowledge in interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary initiatives. Thus, from an interdisciplinary discipline *par excellence*

such as nanotechnology, Tincuta Heinzl invites us to reflect on the paradoxical nature of nano-objects while at the same time she analyses the relationship between an imperceptible material and its ostensible manifestation forms, speculating through a reconstruction of some of Joseph Beuys's works as a strategy of approach to the aesthetics of imperceptibility.

On a different scale, María de la O Ariles Burgos and Javier Boned Purkiss' paper focuses on modern architecture and the phenomenon of transparencies focusing on two key concepts such as materiality and virtuality. And on a different continent, Ana del Castillo and Jesús Fernando Monreal discuss the importance of a set of artistic practices in Mexico linked both to the high-tech infrastructure of the Centro Nacional de Artes and to the cultural environment of technological obsolescence in the period studied.

In another approach to the theme of art and materiality, Lorena Lozano starts from the review of some perspectives on the processes

of natural and organic life in relation to the artistic and scientific practices, based on a couple of her case studies and fieldwork. And in a related direction, Christian Alonso's article explores the role of artistic practice to question, answer and understand our position in the world under the terms of the Anthropocene, and this critical analysis done by studying several art projects featured in a group exhibition. Finally, to close the monograph node, Claudia Kozak discusses digital literature from the study and analysis of its own materiality, in this case inspired by considerations about the so-called dematerialization of informational works developed in Argentina in the nineteen sixties.

A total of ten articles that deal with art and materiality from different complementary perspectives – texts that echo each other providing interesting areas of convergence and divergence that invite us to think from multiple locations from where they are presented. We hope you enjoy them.

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## Recommended quotation

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