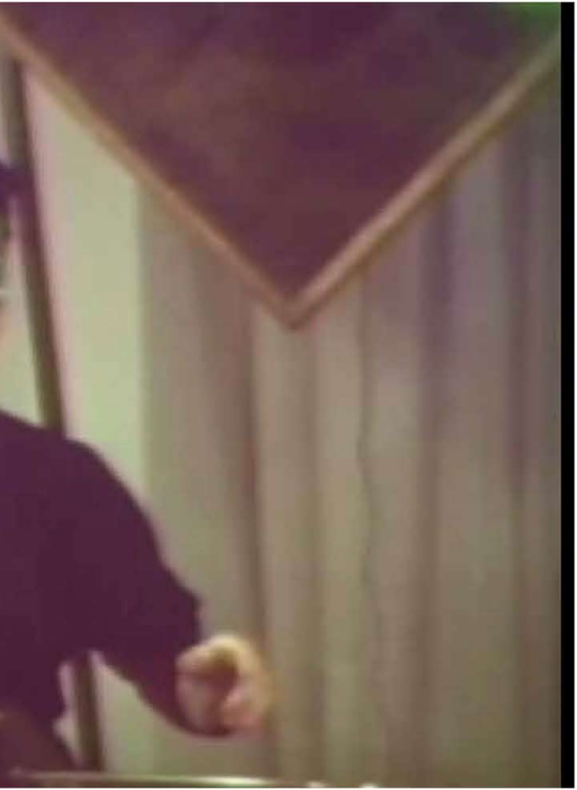
How rocks move?
They don´t move
The rocks don´t move.

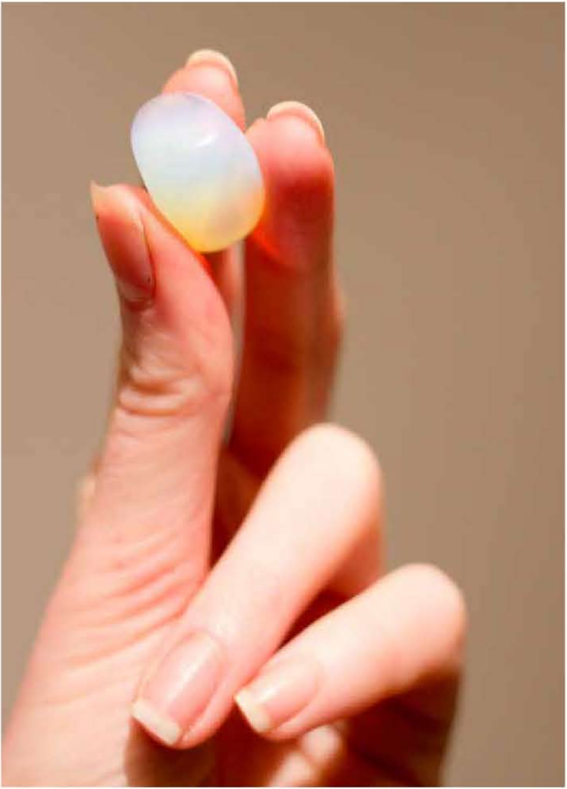


1.

This is a still from a youtube video called: “Theremin - Clara Rockmore play “The Swan” (Saint-Saëns)” posted by yaoikan1981 on May 3rd 2007.

The video starts with gentle piano playback. A woman is standing behind a high, black, box-like object. She has a sober look on her face, hands bent and held in the air in a sophisticated gesture. A second sound appears as the woman starts moving her fingers in tiny, precise movements. Its tone is dense but flexible, reminds me slightly of a violin but with an electric feel to it. The camera zooms in. Two antennas are sticking out of the box towards the woman’s hands. The one on the right is bent, u-turning from the box and back in. The one on the left sticks right up into the air, ending abruptly in the proximal height of the woman’s headscarf. The camera keeps on zooming into a neat frame that shows the top of the box, the antennas and the woman’s modest dance moves. Her posture is straight, her expression solemn. She’s wearing a black dress that almost blends in with the box in front of her. The silvery tone of the headscarf frames in her piled -up dark hair. Her slightly swaying, sometimes quivering hands continue in sync with the melody of the song. She is immersed with the song, eyes closed, hands moving. The camera zooms in even more, now the frame consists only of the upright antenna, the woman’s right hand still shivering gently, her chest and face with the same somber look emphasized by her eyebrows that, we can see now also sway softly with the music. Sh seems to be the source of the sound

She know's it's every turn and tremble. She syncs with the tones effortlessly, it seems, as if they were attached to her fingers and eyebrows by an invisible string. The black box looks static, unaffected, almost alien in the whole setup. Like a poorly designed prop meant to somehow underline the woman's dance moves. But still, it's presence is crucial. How can it be that they are producing this sound together?



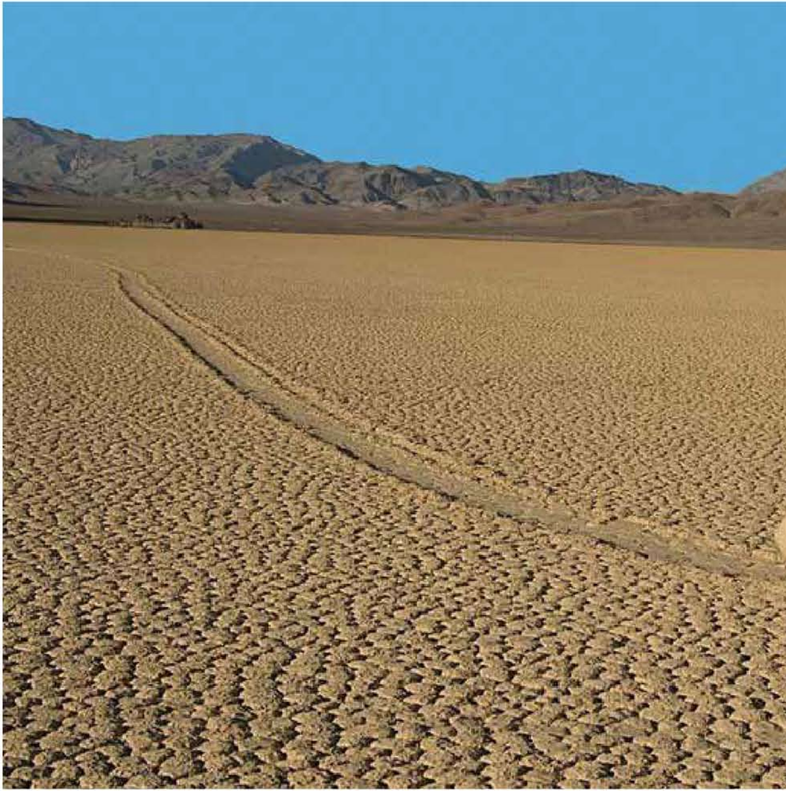
2.

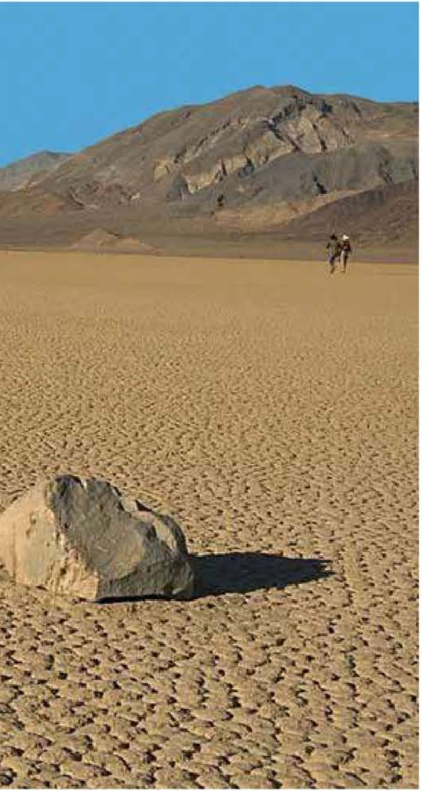
I own a stone, it's a moonstone and I know it very well since it's been in various pockets of mine for over a year now. I first started keeping it there as a kind of cheeky experiment of occultism. I liked the idea of pretending to be some sort of a new-age character that carries stones and crystals around in coat pockets. Later, I started to appreciate its presence so I guess I'm not pretending anymore (if ever). Sometimes I forget about it completely, coincidentally leaving it in a coat that I rarely wear and don't think about it for months until my hand brushes against it again and I remember. I take it out and hold it in my hand.

It has been polished at some point, before it came into my possession, and the texture feels very soft to the skin. I feel its smooth, solid surface and look at the light shine through it. It somehow seems to be more transparent towards the edges and more milky and opaque towards the middle. Its colors change with the light, scattering around at the slightest turn of my wrist. There's sunny warm yellow and then suddenly a fragment of ice cold blue that fades into green. I turn it a fraction and a shiny cold pink appears, quickly shifting into a warm orange, all mixing in with this ghostly, milky white. It's small and fits perfectly between three fingers (thumb, index and middle finger). The width of it matches the tip of my index finger almost exactly - its proportions feel familiar, like it belongs in a hand. Its form is clear, its weight never a surprise.

If my eyes suddenly acquired microscopic vision and I were to zoom in until the stone was 100 times its size, the edges would look completely different. What before marked an edge, suddenly passing the point where I believed the end to be, fading out slowly, particle by particle, like a pixelated image. The colors would multiply, melting into each other with millions of brand new in-between tones. Its materiality changing in front of my eyes. I'd dive in deeper, until all that I could see were molecules. Even deeper, the molecules become atoms and this 'thing' which was a moonstone only minutes ago, is now a bizarre landscape of particles.

I zoom out to my usual perspective. The stone exists again as a separate spatial unity, laying in my palm, and I realize I'm chronically biased. Biased by my human scale and my biological time rame.





3.

I can make out some faint traces on the surface of my moonstone. Tiny cavities here and there and small scratches. I know that the stone has accumulated these in the past year or so during the stay in my pocket. It's strange to think that the stone is very slowly but surely changing, bearing marks of being carried around with various other objects. Some sharp or pointed, made of materials more aggressive. Still I can't really imagine it changing beyond these small cavities. I can't imagine this stone ever eroding or its shape and size transforming drastically.

Maybe if I would, say, accidentally lose it and it would find it's way into the sea. The shiny surface matting slowly by the wave-triggered movement of the coarse sand.

Or, let's say it were to become a family heirloom which redhaired descendants of mine would carry around for centuries. In 300 hundred years it may have shrunk into 1/3 of its original size.

Original size? What could possibly be its original size? I assume it to once have been a part of a bigger whole. A part of a rock which was a part of a mountain which was a part of a peninsula which belonged to a certain area situated on planet earth. But in my head, my moonstone will maintain its fingertip size eternally and it most likely will look almost the same even if I carried it around in pockets for the rest of my life. That still doesn't mean it's static, its pace of transition is simply unfathomable for a being like myself, my human life is so brief when compared to many other materials. As Jane Bennett points out:
"Perhaps the claim to a vitality intrinsic to matter itself becomes more plausible if one takes a long view of time. If one adopts the perspective of evolutionary rather than biographical time, for example, a mineral efficacy becomes visible."

Jane Bennett is a political theorist whose research on the possible vitality of matter I find extremely inspiring. She coined the term 'Thing-power' and writes beautifully about it in her book Vibrant Matter. According to her; "Objects" only appear as such because their becoming proceeds at a speed or a level below the threshold of human discernment."
The Sailing Stones of Death Valley are another mineral example I can use to explore this further. These stones are a famous phenomena since they appear to move and form long paths in the sand in Death Valley, California. What's going on here? Running rocks? How is this possible?

In a youtube video called "How Rocks Move" posted by Scripps Oceanography on August 27th, 2014, a hypothesis to the phenomena of the Sailing Stones is explained.
The video tells of a research that was carried out in Death Valley by paleobiologist Richard Norris and his partners in 2011-2014. The team observed both native rocks and specially installed GPS rocks moving in rare weather condi-

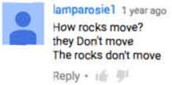
tions in November 2013. They concluded from the research that there are several factors that play a part in the movement of the rocks:

The playa has to be filled with water deep enough to form floating ice when the temperature drops on a cold winter night. The ice has to be thin enough to move around but thick enough to be able to push the rocks with it when the sun starts melting parts of the ice sheet during the day forming large ice panels. The panels move when a slight breeze ripples the water and push the rocks with them along the playa at a speed of 2-5 m per minute. The movement causes traces to form at the sandy bottom which appear once the water dries away.

These conditions are so specific and rare that years or decades might be in between rock motion.
In the comments below the video you can see people's reactions to the hypothesis or the 'solving of the mystery' as it is mostly referred to. It's interesting to read the different remarks people feel inclined to leave behind after watching the video.

I can divide them into a couple of groups:

Denial:



lamparosie1 1 year ago
How rocks move?
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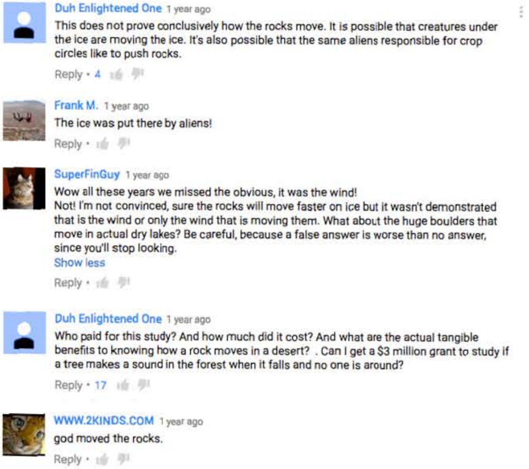
Reply •

The sceptics:



Duh Enlightened One 1 year ago
This does not prove conclusively how the rocks move. It is possible that creatures under the ice are moving the ice. It's also possible that the same aliens responsible for crop circles like to push rocks.
Reply • 4

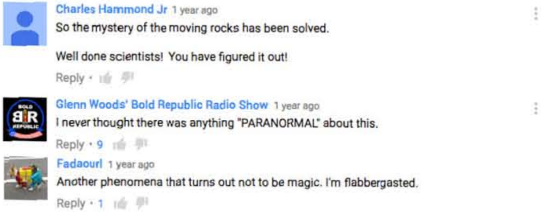
Frank M. 1 year ago
The ice was put there by aliens!
Reply •

SuperFinGuy 1 year ago
Wow all these years we missed the obvious, it was the wind!
Not! I'm not convinced, sure the rocks will move faster on ice but it wasn't demonstrated that is the wind or only the wind that is moving them. What about the huge boulders that move in actual dry lakes? Be careful, because a false answer is worse than no answer, since you'll stop looking.
Show less
Reply •

Duh Enlightened One 1 year ago
Who paid for this study? And how much did it cost? And what are the actual tangible benefits to knowing how a rock moves in a desert? . Can I get a $3 million grant to study if a tree makes a sound in the forest when it falls and no one is around?
Reply • 17

WWW.2KINDS.COM 1 year ago
god moved the rocks.
Reply •

The relieved:

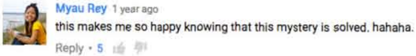


Charles Hammond Jr 1 year ago
So the mystery of the moving rocks has been solved.

Well done scientists! You have figured it out!
Reply •

Glenn Woods' Bold Republic Radio Show 1 year ago
I never thought there was anything "PARANORMAL" about this.
Reply • 9

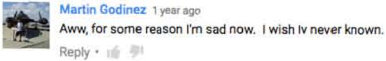
Fadaourl 1 year ago
Another phenomena that turns out not to be magic. I'm flabbergasted.
Reply • 1



Myau Rey 1 year ago

this makes me so happy knowing that this mystery is solved. hahaha.

I can really relate to most of these reactions to the video. The excitement to satisfy my curiosity mixed with a pinch of disappointment that it can be explained at all. The willingness to believe there is another more exciting cause of the movement and the longing for the unresolved, the room for speculation.



Martin Godinez 1 year ago

Aww, for some reason I'm sad now. I wish Iv never known.

This mineral's pace of transition seems to be closer to the human pace. I can relate my own body to the movement of the stones and therefore make up the mystery by drawing the conclusion that this is unusual. Stones should not move at such a speed - if at all. It's not normal and not obeying the laws of nature.
Does nature have laws? Does nature need laws?

4.

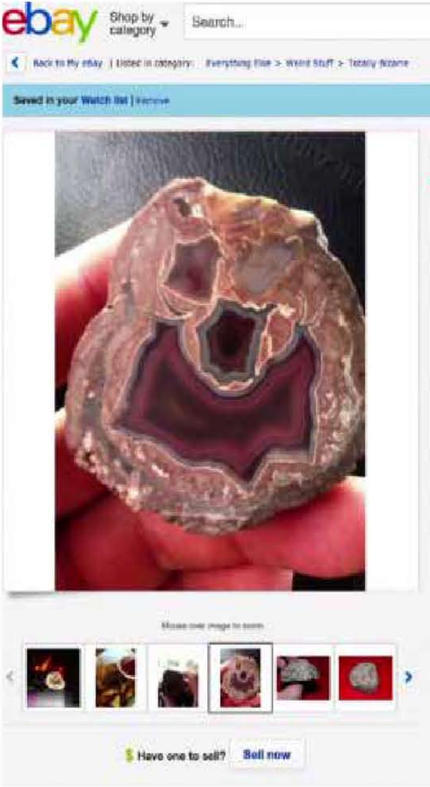
track 1 \trak
noun
1 a rough path or minor road, typically one beaten by use rather than constructed: follow the track to the farm | a forest track.

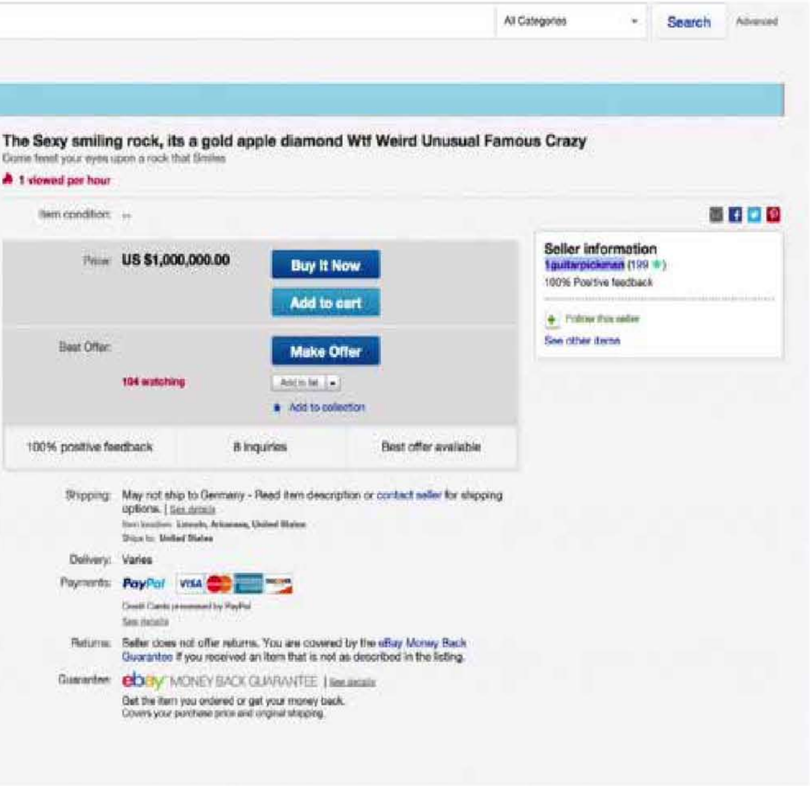
I've been wanting to tune in on a certain track. A sensory track on top of what I usually perceive, an extra layer of experience. It's not a superstitious, paranormal, animistic or religious track but more of an offer to take in more information. I think the phrase 'beaten by use rather than constructed' is a very fitting one to this track which I think I might be quite used to experiencing while rarely realizing that I am.

In Jane Bennett's above mentioned book Vibrant Matter, she relates being struck by an assemblage of items on the street: a glove, some oak pollen, a dead rat, a bottle cap and a stick of wood, Bennett describes the items as *"stuff that commanded attention in its own right, as existents in excess of their association with human meanings, habits, or projects."*
She experiences a *"swarming activity"* inside her head and wonders if this *"evanescence"* is a property of the stuff or of her own.
I find her descriptions very captivating. The idea that between her and these objects there is an overlapping of sorts, a sensation not necessarily linked by touch and sight but by both and neither. Some intensity that might take on a form.

It feels to me, as if there is a hierarchy within our sensory faculty. What we see and what we touch is real, the other three are more subjective, more questionable and to think further is almost absurd. Are these 5 traditionally recognized senses enough? Aren't we reducing our capacities way to much?

The track could be an extension of the material world, a way to sense more than only what is 'there', what is touchable or visual. It could also be a matter of language, a matter of redefining. A new category might open up a possibility for a whole new range of things to happen within it.


Shop by category
Search...
Back to My eBay | Listed in category: Everything Else > Weird Stuff > Totally Bizarre
Saved in your Watch list | Remove
Mouse over image to zoom
Have one to sell?
Sell now



The Sexy smiling rock, its a gold apple diamond Wtf Weird Unusual Famous Crazy

Come feast your eyes upon a rock that Smiles

1 viewed per hour

Item condition: --

Price: US $1,000,000.00

Best Offer:

104 watching

Seller information

1guitarpickman (199 ★)

100% Positive feedback

100% positive feedback | 8 inquiries | Best offer available

Shipping: May not ship to Germany - Read item description or contact seller for shipping options. | See details

Item location: Lincoln, Arkansas, United States

Ships to: United States

Delivery: Varies

Payments: Credit Cards processed by PayPal

Returns: Seller does not offer returns. You are covered by the eBay Money Back Guarantee if you received an item that is not as described in the listing.

Guarantee: Get the item you ordered or get your money back. Covers your purchase price and original shipping.

5.

Earlier this winter I went to a lecture about yet another mineral. It was about a specific smiling rock listed on ebay. Lindsay Lawson, the artist who hosted the lecture, had been fascinated with this object, watching it from a distance on ebay for years. She explained that she experienced the rock, or The Real Smiling Rock as it was titled, to reside on this ebay page.

I thought that was an interesting notion. Even though she knew that these photos were taken of a real material rock, lodged somewhere in Texas, she couldn't help but feeling it truly resided there - on its ebay listing page. Sitting there in the profile image, its molecules switched out for pixels, waiting to meet possible buyers. The Real Smiling Rock waiting to be sold.
The price of the Real Smiling Rock was set to 1.000.000 dollars. That's quite a lot of money for a piece of rock (or a jpeg, for that matter). I wonder if the seller calculated possible erosion or deterioration into the price. For how long was the rock estimated to stay smiling? Would it be 500 years or 15.000?

And thinking about erosion, would the digital, ebay residing version of the rock also erode? If it were never to be sold - endlessly waiting, smiling on the ebay page, what would happen? Do pixels also fade away with time?
I recently found out that software erosion, or bit rot, is an existing term. It's a term that describes a deterioration of a software's performance over time. It's a perfect metaphor when thinking of the digital as a new kind of material,

that it transforms and changes in its own pace just like a mineral would.
On the programmers' QandA website: stackoverflow.com, I found a question posed by Toad on August 13th 2009:
"How can I make my code survive? (anti software rot)
looking back at my programming career. I have made a lot of things. But unfortunately, a lot of it doesn't work anymore.

....

Actually. This realization made me kind of depressed.

Here we are, every day designing and programming our most clever bits of programs, and in a few years it just doesn't work anymore (apart from the fact that it's probably surpassed by another software program which is even more clever)
If I were a builder. I would lay bricks on other bricks. And 80 years later, I would walk through the city with my grandson. Point at a house and say: Look kid... your grandfather made this.
So my question:
How can I assure that my software survives the test of time?"
From Toad's perspective, the decomposition of software goes quite fast. He experiences a brick building as a solid, stable construction while his software's endurance is vulnerable to time. If the digital and the mineral are two kinds of matter, I can see his wish as alchemical. Transforming the pace of digital matter and syncing it with that of the mineral.

I like the idea that digital material has a time frame of its own on the other side of all the layers of mediators I need to go through to get to it. The idea that it would live on even when its object container becomes obsolete. The container is, in the end, only a tool for me to decode and locate the whereabouts of this impalpable material.

6. The Email

He couldn't wrap his head around it. There was so much and he really needed the overview. Endless pages, endless scrolling, endless numbers and words. It was hard for him to feel how much there was.. How heavy would it be? Or how many cardboard boxes would it fill?

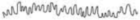
The measurements were so unfamiliar to him. So foreign. He really couldn't stand it anymore so he took action. He walked to the nearest copy-shop and asked for it to be printed.

"Print it?" The young boy at the counter asked. "What do you want printed exactly?"

*"All of it." He said firmly.
The young boy shook his head slightly and started.*

It took the young boy six days to complete the task and the printer outpour had to be transported in a truck. It counted 347 cardboard boxes of paper. Each weighing 7,6 kilograms. 2.637,2 kilograms in total.

The physicality of it reassured him. Just looking at the stacks of boxes filling up each room of his modest apartment made his mind calmer. Finally it was understandable, doable! He could slowly start working his way through. Opening a box in the morning, touching each page and reading it from top to bottom. Filing them in order: Spam. Trash. Inbox. Important. The ones that needed answering immediately.
The ones that could wait.



"Generally, everything that is not material is conceived as a secondary result – deducible and reducible, or emergent and irreducible – of material composition. Everything that is not material exists, but only as a secondary thing or less-than-thing."

Tristan Garcia.

Knowing that my experience of my moonstone is based on pure biases, I still regard it as a concrete thing. It is physically present in my pocket at this moment as is the chair I'm sitting on and the cold coffee I'm sipping slowly. I also notice different materialities around me of a less solid substance. Through the window I can see trees moving and a girl's hair hauled upwards against the laws of gravity. Those movements are caused by the wind which I accept to be, in itself, invisible but the effects of which I can clearly detect. The sun keeps popping up from behind a cloud and changing the whole atmosphere at once, very present yet its actual material is very far away. Was that a stare I just felt on the back of my head? The café barista seems to think I've been sitting here too long without buying another drink. The guy that was sitting next to me just stood up and left but somehow I can still feel his presence - is it his breath in the air? His smell lingering behind? The gap from the mass of his body slowly filling in with air again?
Or just me adjusting to an altered situation?

"The problem is not, in fact, the possibility of designating material things – what we can hold in our hands, what is concrete, what is not fictional, and so on. Rather, the problem is finding what is material in a thing and what is not."

Tristan Garcia

In front of me is my laptop, which in itself is a gate to a whole range of material. Endless files, .jpegs, .mp3s, .mp4s, .movs, .avis, .psds, .pdfs and I could go on and on. These units hold information and they feel like touchable material since I treat them as such. I can stack them and organize, open them and close and even send them or copy onto actual physical materials by exporting, burning or printing.
Still, most of these digital objects won't take on physical form but stay within this metal structure, two-dimensional and in theory, untouchable. It feels like extensions of the whole material world can be found inside this one object. Not only the Smiling Rock resides on the pages of the internet but everything else. An extension of me resides on my email, my facebook and my instagram accounts. An extension of the Taj Mahal is easily visited on google image search. An extension of a tiny ambiguous plastic object, once found and wondered about, waits on an obscure forum for someone to stumble upon.
I sometimes feel like they are quoting the material world from afar but maybe they are just as important a material as the ones on the periodic table.

There are other things to consider too. Dark matter particles hovering around, going through me as I write this. Dark matter is also material - actual solid material which does not interact with light and is therefore undetectable by human senses. That might seem like a weird and unnatural type of matter until you know that it makes up around 85% of the mass of the universe. The rest, the 15%, is normal matter. That's our everyday matter - which suddenly doesn't seem so normal anymore - it's actually the exception.
This notion that matter can be undetectable by me blows up everything I know about mass. I once again become aware of my biases. How could I have thought that the matter I know was the only one? Turns out it's a tiny little minority.

There suddenly seems to be so much I'm missing out on. What else am I failing to register? Things that may be slowly affecting me but I fail to notice for what they are.

In Joshua Simons book, Neomaterialism, he writes about how Walter Benjamin experienced the difference of the language of man and the language of things:

“For Benjamin, the language of things is not the language that names, identifies, and categorizes things---that is the language of man. The language of things is that of God, of potential, of what can be done with things. Its interest is in the extension of what things have to say—this is “the language of the practice.” But we do not understand the language of the lamp because the lamp doesn’t try to communicate its language to us.“

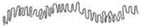
Should I feel excluded from the language of other materials?
There are so many things I KNOW and so many things I can SENSE but somehow they often seem to oppose each other. I know that rocks change and move, that even golden rings, computers, swimming pools, trophies, stars and chewing gum will eventually, transform, erode, pollute or dematerialize. I know their contours will alter when zooming in, I know that deep down they are composed of infinitely small particles of matter. But can I ever truly EXPERIENCE that? Could I get from my house to the supermarket with my head tuned in on the same pace as my moonstone or with my eyes in microscopic zoom? The gap between my knowledge and experience seems so vast sometimes that they seem impossible to combine.

I came across an article about a man recently, who seems to be trying to reduce this gap between knowledge and experience for himself. He’s called Steve Mann and he is an inventor and researcher who has been experimenting with wearable computing systems for over 35 years. He wears a self designed, computerized, vision system that allows him to “get a better view of the world”, as he says. Mann is a part of a small, but ever-growing group of people that develop and wear these customized computer systems around the clock. Mann’s system has gone through many stages during those years with different variations of head gear and computing devices in backpacks or on belts. He currently wears a modest set of glasses with a tiny camera and equipment covering one eye, not unlike the ones available from Google. He claims however, that his glasses differ from the Google Glass in the sense that not only do they overlay (or augment) his vision with additional information but with his version he can mediate what he sees and what he doesn’t. He is able to filter his visual reality and focus on those points he finds important. Inspired by welding glasses, he sees his glasses as a tool to help him achieve things he otherwise could not, like zooming in on distant details, visualizing heat signals, recognizing faces and places using the constant recording and archiving function, and controlling the brightness of his vision - making him somewhat more ‘efficient’ than otherwise.

Wearable computing definitely intrigues me as a way to improve the senses and experience more layers at once. Using technology to improve my interactions with my surroundings is something that already started affecting my life, quite drastically, one and a half year ago when I joined in on the smartphone wave. I can now instantly access so much information that was either harder to obtain or simply concealed to me before, using 3G, google maps, qr codes and so on. It seems inevitable to me that there will be a further fusion of man and computer, especially when I consider my increasing dependance and blind trust on this constant flow of information being laid on top of my regular reality. For example, when driving long distances with a GPS navigation system, I start doubting road signs and conditions that differ from the ones reported by the GPS, favoring screen to window.

Still, I don’t believe technology will allow me to reach this track that I’ve been longing for. It feels problematic to me since even though a computer can filter out and add layers of perception that I myself could not experience without it, it is still an entirely man made system. It is built on man made algorithms which automatically embed older networks of human thinking (along with their limitations), for example, language. How could a computer inform of things that its maker could never have conceived of? Things of a different sphere, different language?

If this track of mine is something that I cannot yet grasp, I think a computer system cannot help me. I'll have to look elsewhere and my suspicion is that the key to this track is somehow intrinsic already, that it lies slumbering somewhere in the roots of humanity; some kind of muscle memory from centuries ago that I could possibly relocate and reactivate.



9. The Octupus

He felt out of sync that day.
As if he was a coin with two sides that didn't fit each other. One was slightly bigger, flapping at the edge where it exceeded it's supposed twin side.
It wasn't necessarily a bad feeling, he felt quite in touch with his surroundngs but slightly lagging somehow. As if he was experiencing the things around him after he already passed them by or ometimes slightly beforehand.
Déja-vu-ishly.

He experimented with this new sensaion; he closed his eyes and practiced icking up the cup of coffee in front of im. It was a surprise every time when e opened his eyes again, checking if is hand was indeed holding the cup r not. As if sometimes he grabbed it ith his hand and the other times with is hand's twin side, slightly bigger han the first but just as functional, just s significant. As if. It felt exactly the ame each time but he knew it couldn't e true.. Because sometimes, he opened s eyes his hand hadn't moved and he asn't holding anything at all.

For a while he suspected that it was his eyes which were playing the trick on him. But then he grew sure that it was as it felt, he was somehow bigger than he seemed. Bigger than his own body. He knew he only had two arms but it really felt like he had three other of various sizes and shapes, moving sometimes of their own accord and sometimes by his instructions. It was getting harder and harder to discern the material arms from the invisible ones. The ones that did grab the actual cup from the ones that felt like they did, but didn't.

He felt like he was losing control while at the same time he had never been this in touch with himself. He was communicating on so many new levels. It was as if he was emitting and receiving all these signals that he never picked up on before. As if he was touching things which had been concealed to him up until now. How had he not noticed this before?

He stood up from the table at the cafe and left, feeling how one of his phantom arms resisted and stayed put at the table even as he walked out the door, stretching.

Ásgerður Birna Björnsdóttir
Gerrit Rietveld Academie 2016

the track

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Direct references:

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