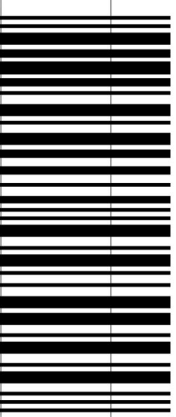




# Klima

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01

Alice Carabédian, Together!, Mawena Yehouessi, Tarek Lakhriissi, Kapwani Kiwanga, Quentin Lacombe, Rammelzee,  
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# **DORA BUDOR** *en conversation* *avec* **ANTONINE SCALI**

- EN** Dora Budor is a Croatian artist who lives and works in New York. Budor explores intertwining narratives of cinematic ecosystems and architectural structures within reactive and evolving atmospheres. These are concerns that are articulated mostly through installations, sculptures and environments.
- FR** Dora Budor est une artiste croate qui vit et travaille à New York. Budor explore des récits entrelacés d'écosystèmes cinématographiques et de structures architecturales, dans des atmosphères évolutives. Sa production s'articule principalement autour d'installations, de sculptures et de modifications d'environnements.

**AS** You integrate props or characters extracted from movies as parts of new sculptures, installations and performances. Is it a way to create a new dimension for the characters or objects? Are you trying to bring fiction into reality, to create yet another fiction?

**DB** In a way it could be called a new dimension, I like how that sounds. When dealing with the slippery space between reality and fiction, I am trying to make a backdrop for a new relationship to emerge between the two, and there is a lot of working and reworking between the layers. Nelson Goodman<sup>1</sup> found a specific word to describe it, and termed it “worldmaking”. In this process, it is understood that the creation of any new world relies on processes of recycling, or creating a “world version”. “Worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking”. Therefore, I am interested in making work as “a model of” or a “version of”, which becomes important for projecting. A model is both a proposal for and an abstraction of the world. It is a translation or remaking – in precisely the same way that Goodman implies. The art-work-as-model becomes then a carrier for a broader scenario, and the question is how it can be activated.

Because my background is in architecture, film and performance, those practices provide frameworks, methods, but also modes of viewing; one of which is to view cinematic fictions as scripted architectural spaces. Another approach is to examine built and natural environments through the lens of different observational apparatuses by shortening, connecting and synchronizing different ends of narrative arcs. Everything keeps oscillating in a vulnerable state between a thing and its image, and a world and its multitudes. Therefore, the mechanisms I use in installation often resemble editing process: closeups versus wide cityscapes shot, macro vs micro lens views, jump cuts, ellipsis and parallel storytelling; they allow for “dynamization of space” and, accordingly “spatialization of time”.

Then, we land on a question of activation and thing-power, actors versus actants; what can hold and exert agency? Anthropologist Alfred Gell, writer of *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory*<sup>2</sup>, distinguishes objects as being either agents or patients, and how each one at the time can become the other. Objects that acquire incomparable social agency used to be relics, pieces of material, wood or glass said to have been carried by a saint, or an actual part of the saint’s body, and in today’s society, these can be the castoff shirt of a celebrity, Theodore Kaczynski’s<sup>3</sup> typewriter, or parts of a cinematic world. I became interested in the castoffs from the screen as they are never solely a thing they are supposed to represent. In a film, their primary function is to serve as an instrument, tool or an event, and even with their extraction they can still recall a subjective memory of a narrative, and bear affective qualities, which again contributes to the idea of versions. Their material nature is complicated — they hold a specific way of relating to the actual object, either as a copy, variant or reappropriation.

Another characteristic of these quasi-objects is the question of scale and realism; when something is made as a miniature or made with different materials, how does it mimic reality and what happens when you bring it back from the screen into physical space?

**AS** So can we say that you transform objects into a new narrative or to a different scale? Is that what you call the “third existence” of an object?

**DB** There is no transformation of an object *per se*, but it is the new context and configuration of vibrant materials and matter that the transformation of meaning comes about. By losing their primary function, which was to perform for the screen, they become collectables and relics of a past narrative, a limbo where they are detached from their perfect image. They are ghosts of some kind, reminders of a fictional event. The “third existence” is a state where they become reanimated into art objects.

**AS** Would it be like the materialization of a fiction?

**DB** In a certain way, yes... But then, it is more about what happens in between fictions and realities. An infection, a contamination through which things start mirroring each other. A transitional situation can occur as part of a certain condition or atmosphere. This atmosphere is often perceived as an atmosphere of instability, or to describe better it, as the intrusion of one order into another. Viewer’s movement, voices, body heat, or atmospheric conditions are some of the examples of different intrusions I have made work with. The work itself is the system of relationships between its elements, that is a set of relationships of times, which can often be corroded by one temporality onto the other.

Speaking of temporalities and intrusions, I have always been interested in the representation of time in images and built environments, and I have often used special effects of aging and weathering, or layering dust and soot in sculptural works and installations. One of the premises in creating realistic cinematic universes is to make spaces look as if they had been in the world for a long period of time, and part of it is done by simulating dust. However, when you try to replicate the real world, manufacturing formless things proves to be the most difficult. By rendering into the images what David Gissen terms “subnatures”<sup>4</sup> — dust, puddles, dirt, smoke, exhaust, debris, together with living things such as pigeons, weeds and insects, they start to signify the existence of nature. These traces that constitute a kind of disorder, an inchoate state of being, are the detritus of cultural constructions of order. Weathering, similar to weather, becomes a metaphor for exteriors infecting architecture, blurring its boundaries, disturbing its contents. Some say that the history of architecture can’t be seen without a connection to the history of weather....

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**AS** One can see in your approach a very thin line between living and non-living material. Does that mean that you consider that objects have life? If we follow this hypothesis, do you think we can affirm that objects can be conscious as it is implied in your title: *What does a thing know of its own production*<sup>5</sup>, and conversely that humans could be transformed into objects?

**DB** This has been a crux of certain philosophical conversations for the last few years, ever since the “material turn” of Latour and ANT<sup>6</sup>, and Harman and OOO<sup>7</sup>. Also, Jane Bennett is an author of a book that I found very inspiring, *Vibrant Matter. A political Ecology of Things*<sup>8</sup>, and as well as Jussi Parikka<sup>9</sup>, they both discuss political agency and the wide impact that things and matter have. I’m trying to look at the world in the way that everything has some sort of agency, it is just the mode of operation that is different.

Images and cinematographic objects stand on yet another complicated level regarding agency. When you look at the position of cinematic objects, they almost never just work for themselves, they can function as tools, as events, or instruments. You can determine it by the network they can engage with, and influence they can have on other things. De-centering from the human subject was probably taken the furthest in Antonioni’s cinema, who was famous for saying that he regards the performer as he regards a tree, a wall, or a cloud. He was equalizing those elements and perceiving the environment as destiny: on the screen, if you’re shooting a tree in the wind, its potentially of expressive and effective value can be the same as that of an actor. I’m working with some of those ideas running in the background.

**AS** Do you work for and from a human time scale?

**DB** There is a pertaining interest in trying to look at things not only from the perspective of human time scale, but also grander perspectives of geological time. I was just reading J.G. Ballard’s “*The Drowned World*”<sup>10</sup> which is situated in flooded and semi-deserted London. In the world of tropical temperatures, deluge and accelerated devolution, it is not only the palpable environment that is taken over by the tropical jungle, but also the psychic space of protagonists. They start having deep dreams of the shared archaeo-psychic past, uncovering the ancient taboos and drives that have been dormant for epochs... As they keep descending back into the repressed memory of the Paleolithic period, this world continues to be drowned, and their psyche starts merging with the emerging neuronc past. Historical time becomes erased by inherited biological time.

In the human genome there are a lot of complex particles that are shared with other species, but also genetic material that has through horizontal transfer jumped from bacteria, other single-celled organisms, viruses and plants. If 8% of my genes are ancient viral and bacterial code, maybe there is more to what we now know of shared biological time...

Dora Budor, *What Kind of Person Does This*, 2015.  
Exhibition View, *Spring*, Swiss Institute, New York.  
Courtesy of the artist.





[both images] Dora Budor, *Year Without A Summer (Panton's Diversion)*, 2017. Installation view, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark. Courtesy of the artist and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art.



**AS** Talking about viruses, would you consider art as a virus? In the way that art can't live without spectators, a virus can't develop itself without an organism to live in.

**DB** You are talking about the notion of host, and the necessity of audience to receive but also distribute the information. In my work, the site, built environment and specific historical and cultural context can also be hosts.

**AS** So what would be the place that you give to your audience in your work?

**DB** It is not really about a hierarchical structuring, every actor has a different role. Nothing is independent, everything is a consequence of something else: how things are built on each other, have effects on each other. So the work tries to mimic life in one way or another. This is the process that I'm interested in, and it is about interdependencies.

Also, the work establishes itself through thinking within the context and the site, but also with consideration of the things missing. A site can also be something that is not there – or not there any more. It can exist through an archaeology of situations. For example, in the show I did at Louisiana museum in Denmark – *Year Without A Summer (Panton's Diversion)* (2017), I found a few surviving modules of original 1965 *Landscaped Interior* by the Danish designer Verner Panton, which is his first work exploring systems approach in modular furniture. It is an early Panton piece in which he was working with the ideas of what Albert Moles terms “mediators” – where the units can be recombined in endless ways to give rise to relations between entities, and how even a built system can be tangible and diverse like a “natural” landscape, continuously giving rise to minor and major changes within it. This work of his was one of the rare ones that was not preserved in a museum, and finding six remaining original modules was wondrous – imagine temporality and wear present on their surfaces; the stains, cigarette burns, aged corners, yellowed and moldy undersides and stretched flappy fabric, all narrating potential situations these objects endured. What is interesting about wear, and architectural research group Rotor examined at length in their book *Usus/Usures (How things stand)*<sup>13</sup>, is that wear is always about situations, and it is defined by its relationship to use within the world of material alterations. So wear becomes a document and index, a summary of prior operations and information. In Japan, it is called *Wabi-sabi*, when time, per se, “helps to make known the essence of things”. Furthermore, it inevitably questions a material's entropy, the irreversibility of states of energy, and our relationship with the growing disorganization of the material world.

So, I wanted to consider these objects as nuclei of the atmosphere of instability in the museum space, which would through clashing of different programs compose a new landscape. Higher frequencies of sound that audience made triggered fall of special affect ash from the machines on the ceiling, and over time build a layers of otherwise invisible sound over the furniture pieces, rendering

them non-functional. These prosthetic, uncentered and fragmented pieces form the new architectural aggregate, a new terrain or landscape. I mentioned before that I am interested in seeing architectural systems through the apparatus of cinematic vision; in this case it was a camera's view from atomizing of the kidney stones to the instability of a weather condition, in which a continuous vibration between minor and major occurs. A lens that keeps zooming in and out.

**AS** When I look at your work, I have the feeling that the world has ended, like in the work you previously described.

**DB** I try not to be didactic in any way, it is more about giving breadcrumbs to converging narratives. *Year Without A Summer...* is a system for a work that can materialize differently every time according to a site. It took its title after the event of the year 1816: a year marked by severe climate deterioration of northern hemisphere caused by the eruption of Mt. Tambora in Indonesia the year before.

The excess of volcanic detritus and dust particles in the air triggered a butterfly effect where an interesting relationship between faraway natural changes and effects on political and social events formed. For example, it was the year the horses were starving and the bicycle was invented. Polar areas warmed up, freeing the way to discover the Northwest Passage. The most important stories of 20<sup>th</sup> century horror fiction were conceived; *Frankenstein: Or, The Modern Prometheus*, *The Vampyre* (an influence on Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*), and poem *Darkness*, were all written during the time when Mary Shelly, John Polidori and Lord Byron were kept inside by the ominous cold and rain at Villa Diodati in Geneva. A world is becoming a model for something else. In *Year Without A Summer...*, there is also the idea of infecting with sound, as something invisible that becomes part of the the built space and slowly affects its inhabitants. There is a Ballard story *The Sound-Sweep*<sup>14</sup> about noise pollution which becomes so excessive that there is a whole industry called Sonovac invented around removal of sound residues. Low levels of sound are left in solid surfaces and slowly trickle out of them over time, giving the inhabitants of the spaces emotional flashbacks, which over time cause disease. It's a way to look at the traumatic natures of spaces and their histories.

**AS** There is a continuous interest in sound and its translations in other works as well?

**DB** Yes, in *The Preserving Machine* (2018) too, which is titled after PK Dick's 1953 namesake short story. The story revolves around technological invention designed to preserve music from the horrors of war and cultural collapse, and a scientist tries to have music scores encoded in living creatures capable of defending themselves.

In my piece, a musical score becomes translated into dynamic movements of a bionic bird that is flying inside of a glass-surrounded courtyard situated inside of the museum. It is accompanied by intense



Dora Budor, *Year Without a Summer (Judd)*, 2017. Installation view, A Few Open Systems, AND NOW, Dallas. Courtesy of the artist.



Dora Budor, *Year Without a Summer (Archizoom)*, 2017. Installation view, Waiting for the Summer, Spazio A. Pistoia. Courtesy the artist.

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yellow-orange light shining through the filters on the windows, with remains of the past museum architecture scattered around, turning the courtyard of the museum into a landscape. The museum itself becomes a viewing mechanism, creating an atmosphere for the inaccessible space situated in the very middle of the museum. This creates a filmic image, automated to repeat. It is also an attempt to condense or intensify the site, its architecture and the air to make it visible, tinting it with litmus. A layer of dust used in film production, made out of diatomaceous earth is dispersed over the interior areas all around the courtyard. This bonding agent to the substrate of the exhibition contaminates, spreads and disperses between objects, visitors and architecture.

In the modern cinematic imaginary birds are a proxy for nature, and they are rendered and used for the similar purpose as dust. Both introduce idea of time space outside the narrative, non-diegetic presence that is necessary to form the real. The birds serve as objects meant to possess a vague kind of dynamic, living, animal presence, but they're entirely unimportant in any close-up or individualized sense. They're shorthand for an emaciated natural world, a *minor nature*, usually subordinated to the comings and goings of man. However, in the installation the bird is the sole occupant of the inaccessible space.

**AS** And talking about duality and interdependencies, what would be your point of view on the relation between sci-fi and utopia?

**DB** Actually, I think the relationship between sci-fi and dystopia is to me more important. By Brechtian distancing, or by exaggerating the negative of science fictional worlds, we can be in a position

that is estranged from our assumptions about reality and therefore forced to question them. You can talk better about current reality and analyze it when you can project its worst effects. Darko Švin, who was one of the pioneers of science fiction studies, and a fellow Croatian emigree, made up the term *cognitive estrangement* in 1968. He emphasizes estrangement for political reasons, in a similar way as Jameson later. As a Marxist, he sees science fiction as a literature of revolt, as a genre showing how “*things could be different*”. Dystopian pessimism is one in which the narrative trajectory does not open new alternatives for the present situation but uses the *novum* to condemn utopian desires for social transformation by showing how they lead to the violence of totalitarian government.

**AS** I see a lot of dichotomy of attraction and repulsion in your work, is it on purpose? It reminds me of David Cronenberg's movies in which the same procedure often appears.

**DB** When you think of the idea of beauty in nature, as well as in human body, for me it is all about perspective and scale. A body can be beautiful and smooth, and when you zoom in with a microscope or a camera inside of it, it can appear monstrous. If you watch a field of blooming flowers, it looks pastoral and sublime, and when you try to view it through a macro lens you will see the hairy bees pollinating the bulbs, leaves decaying in the wet soil filled with various worms and insects... I think that things are built like that, and there is a necessity of both of those views to coexist. For me it is a natural way of seeing things, and where a thing outside of you could be surprisingly built out of similar materials. There is always this in-between, pushing the



Dora Budor. *The Preserving Machine*. 2018 Exhibition View. Baltic Triennial 13 – GIVE UP THE GHOST, CAC Vilnius. Courtesy the artist and New Galerie, Paris.  
Photo CAC /Andrej Vasilenko.

things to the limits of what it means for them to be potentially alive. I am a bit obsessed with this state of in-betweenness.

**AS** I read that you were into Cyberpunk culture when you were younger, Can you talk about it?

**DB** I used to read a lot of cyberpunk books when I was younger, and I was really fascinated by it at the time. It was a very tumultuous era in Croatia, and Cyberpunk was the space of imagining another reality, a place of radical social change through

clusters rebellion. There was a strong emphasis on technological advances, body-modification and enhanced types of experiences and sensations that a body could provide. It could also afford a different perspective on politics of choice, together with questions of gender and race. Nothing was predetermined, instead it allowed fluid possibilities and multiple choices. So for me, growing up in a highly conservative, homogenous and male-dominated Eastern European country it was an eye-opening experience. I could project my personal freedom through it.

- 1 Nelson Goodman (1906 – 1998), was an American philosopher.
- 2 Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998.
- 3 Theodore John Kaczynski also known as the *Unabomber*, is an American domestic terrorist and a mathematics prodigy.
- 4 *Subnature* is a book written by David Gissen. This book brings together a collection of architectural works that take their essence in the consideration of non-romantic elements atmospheric or not.
- 5 Work by Dora Budor, *What does a thing know of its own production?*, 2016.
- 6 A sociological approach that takes into account in its analysis, beyond humans, objects (“non-human”) and discourses. The latter are also considered as “actors” or “actants”.
- 7 Graham Harman, born in 1968 in Iowa City, is an American philosopher who specializes in Heidegger thought. He develops what he calls an “*object-oriented philosophy*”. He finds in Heidegger’s thought the roots of a “*meta-physics of things*”. Harman defends a new relationship with the object, always subordinated to the modes of relationship that human beings have with it. Distinguishing himself from the phenomenological tradition, Harman seeks to take objects out of their human captivity and reveals an underground network of interobjectal relationships.
- 8 Bennett, J., *Vibrant Matter. A political Ecology of Things*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2010.
- 9 Jussi Parikka is a Finnish researcher and teacher in the United Kingdom in the field of *Media Studies*. His work is at the crossroads of several disciplines and theoretical approaches, including American cybernetics (Wiener, 1952), German *Media Theory* (Kittler, 2010; Zielinski, 2006-2010) and French postmodern philosophy (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980).
- 10 Ballard, J.G., *The Drowned World*, Berkley Books, NYC, 1962.
- 11 Verner Panton (1926 – 1998) is a Danish designer whose production had a profound impact on the 1950s.
- 12 Modular furniture is pre-made or ready made furniture which can be used according to the need and room spacing. It’s easy to install & dismantle according to need.
- 13 Rotor asbl (dir.), *Usus/Usures. État des lieux / How things stand*, catalogue of the *Usus/Usures*, a project presented at the Belgian pavilion during the 12<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale.
- 14 Ballard, J.G., *The Sound-Sweep, Science Fantasy, Volume 13*, 1960.