

Margaret
van Eyck —
Renaming an
Institution,
a Case Study
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Comments,
Contexts, and
Connections*

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Feminist- killjoy- matters

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“We must keep exposing the violence within the institutions that have included us, especially when our own inclusion occurs under the sign of diversity and equality, especially when our bodies and the products of our labor are used by institutions as evidence of inclusion. We become wall breakers. So we must talk about walls; we must show how history becomes concrete. We are not willing to allow our inclusion to support a happiness fantasy.”

Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, 2017

“There are no solutions; there is only the ongoing practice of being open and alive to each meeting, each intra-action, so that we might use our ability to respond, our responsibility, to help awaken, to breathe life into ever new possibilities for living justly.”

Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 2007



What happens if we unthink agency as a human-only force? How can we make sense of non-human matter as agentic? Where does it lead us when we ‘de-anthropocentrize’ feminist resistance? These questions sparked the first flames of my academic and artistic research. Overall, I am focusing on (queer) feminist agency and am intrigued by thinking about the resistant beyond the human body, *from within* non-human matter.

Occupied with these questions, I encountered *Margaret van Eyck* in June 2017. Immediately, I had conflicting feelings about the project. On the one hand, I thought: “Oh no, here we go again, yet another ticking-the-box project on ‘inclusivity’ or ‘diversity’ so that the institution can feel good about itself.” On the other hand, I noticed how there was an ongoing and dynamic force coming from *within* the sticker material that attracted my attention (📷 V1: XIII–XVIII, 117–127). I felt energy reverberating from the sticker material’s presence that went beyond its representational meaningfulness. I noticed how the sticker material silently vibrated in-between people, conversations, walls and spaces. It was there. It was noticed, picked up, and ‘did

something’ to the institution. I stayed in close proximity to the sticker material’s unfolding in 2017 and 2018, because I wanted to capture and understand this ‘something.’

Quickly I noticed that by considering all affected and potent bodies in the process, we would fall short in granting all agency as passed down from ‘artist’ to ‘(art)work.’ It is true that the ‘feminist interventionist’ inscription into the sticker material came from humans, but we would miss valuable knowledge by ignoring the agentic forces reverberating from the sticker material itself. Therefore, I will interrogate its unintended choreography—its unexpected warping—as a source of feminist agency in an intra-active entanglement with other bodies.

1 Feminist Killjoy

Feminist agency exists in many forms. In *Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed offers a critical, radical, counterhegemonic, insightful, vulnerable, intimate, strong, angry and affective theoretical framework for the ‘resistant type’ of feminist agency. She personifies this form of agency through the figure of the “feminist killjoy.”

Ahmed positions the feminist killjoy as a source of motion that is part of feminism as movement at large: “I think of feminist action as like ripples in water, a small wave, possibly created by agitation from weather; here, there,

each movement making another possible, another ripple, outward, reaching.” For defining feminism, Ahmed departs from bell hooks’ definition of feminism as “the movement to end sexism, sexual exploitation and sexual oppression” (33). This definition of feminism cannot be separated from racism and colonial history as central to the world order under capitalism.

Ahmed’s general understanding of feminism as a movement resonates with Gayatri Spivak’s definition of feminism in a globalized world: “A very general definition of work for feminism is to research how humankind is not nice to women and queers in different ways” (123). This is an effective global starting point, under which various kinds of geopolitically-specific forms of feminist critique are valued in their local specificities. Researching the “not nice” is what Ahmed describes as “sensing wrongs” (22–26), in which each wrong is specific to its concrete milieu. It is about how a body is in affective contact with the world: feminist subjectivity starts with sensing injustice and exposing the “not nice” experienced by certain human bodies in this sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, classist and ableist world.

Ahmed situates the feminist killjoy as a figure that exposes violence. Here, she does not only refer to physical violence, like a slap in the face, but also to “normative violence.” As used by Judith Butler, “normative violence” is the form of viola-

tion done through norms (*Gender Trouble XX*) by rendering certain forms of gendered life unintelligible, unrecognizable, ungrievable or invisible. Normative violence can displace accountability or responsibility and legitimize war or violence towards discursively dehumanized bodies (*Frames of War* 101–135). Whereas Butler predominantly uses the normative in reference to gender, Ahmed talks about invisible structures of exclusion in reference to race, gender, sexuality and ability with a focus on the entanglements of race and gender.

“Being a feminist killjoy is being out of tune with others” (Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* 40). With “being out of tune” Ahmed refers to feelings from and towards unwanted behavior of the feminist subject in institutionalized life. Ahmed has a broad understanding of the term ‘institution.’ For her, ‘the institutional’ can range from the art institution and university to the household, the romantic and the sexual. The feminist killjoy is a figure that points at what normative subjects (read: white cisgender, able-bodied, educated (straight) men)—the “others” with whom the feminist killjoy is out of tune—are rather not confronted with: the ways in which the system works smoothly for them, and how it is not working for marginalized and oppressed subjects. The feminist killjoy is therefore a confrontational figure that does not ‘fit in’ or ‘go with the institutional flow.’

The life of a feminist killjoy alludes to the life of a parasite. When Ahmed discusses Nirmal Puwar's work on the 'space invader,' she explains that if one asks the 'wrong' questions—becoming a “wall breaker” (*Living a Feminist Life* 264) that is out of tune with others—one can be appointed as destructive. Asking why the Van Eyck only represented men in its naming and labeling, which is what the sticker material in *Margaret van Eyck* did, is asking the 'wrong,' or rather, painful question. It disturbs the forcefully upheld institutional carefree atmosphere in which nobody openly questions the men-only visual identity of the institution. So too, to ask why it is too costly to remove an anti-graffiti layer (which caused the external sticker material to peel off) for a feminist project is asking an 'incorrect' question. And, if I would ask why the sticker material did not represent any women of color and/or trans artists, whereas the Van Eyck profiles itself as an internationally engaged institution, I would be asking another 'undesirable' question and become that institutional space invader.

Ahmed points out in *Living a Feminist Life* that when you, as a feminist subject, pick up and expose the institutional blind spots, you are often not taken seriously by the ones in power: “When you [as feminist killjoy] expose a problem you pose a problem” (37) (¶ V1: 181). In other words, when you “sense wrongs,” the people in power might consider your existence as annoy-

ing because you trouble their carefree and unrestrained movement in the system. Ahmed notes, based on her experience as a 'diversity worker' and woman of color in university: “When we give an account of something as sexist or racist, we are often dismissed as having faulty perception” (35). Here, the feminist subject is positioned as being the one possessing the 'wrong information,' of not perceiving the situation 'as it is.' Ahmed thus shows how institutionalized environments have the tendency to perpetuate structural oppression by not seriously listening to experiences of women, people of color, lesbians, trans people, working-class people, and/or differently abled people.

2 The Sticker Material as Feminist Killjoy

In the process towards de-anthropocentrizing the feminist killjoy, it is important to emphasize that I focus on *agency* and not experience. I am aware that nonhuman matter cannot feel excluded or oppressed, but that does not mean it cannot be an agentic entity in feminism as *movement*. The sticker material did not feel excluded but it did (re)act and embody resistance. By de-anthropocentrizing the figure of the feminist killjoy I do not want to look away from human experiences of exclusion and oppression. Rather, by de-anthropocentrizing the feminist killjoy I want to depart from the same point as Ahmed,

in that *feminism is by and for humans and comes from lived human experiences*, but to consider the resistant and ‘killjoyist’ not only as a human quality but also as a force present in nonhuman materiality.

There is an implied humanness of ‘the body’ in Ahmed’s work. Her conception of feeling and acting bodies, that partake in feminism as movement, are all *human* bodies. Ahmed positions feminist agents as willful subjects: “when we speak, a flow is stopped” (83). The ‘I’s’ and ‘you’s,’ making up the ‘we,’ are implicitly human bodies. But the presence of the sticker material has also been shown to stop a flow: it has stopped a flow of visual identity. It has stopped a patriarchal image-structure.

In ‘Can Thought Go on Without a Body?’ Jean-François Lyotard alerts us to the fact that thinking is inherently material. Without a body, without flesh, thought is nowhere. Likewise, without a body, feminist thought is non-existent. That is true for the human body: feminism must be embodied to be expressed and ‘done.’ However, the flow-stopping quality of the sticker material necessitates that we extend the notion of the body to a posthuman idea of the body, for which the line between the human and nonhuman is blurry.

In *A Cyborg Manifesto*, Donna Haraway asks: “Why should our bodies end at the skin?” (220). Through this question Haraway interrogates the entanglement of the human body with technolo-

gies and challenges the boundaries of the human subject. Margrit Shildrick further complicates the limits of the body from the perspective of disability studies. She extends thinking about the body as not ending at the skin with a focus on nonhuman material prosthesis, like a prosthetic leg, as constitutive of the body; as ontologically part of the body. So too, Elisabeth Grosz questions the limits of the human body in her notion of “volatile bodies”:

[the body] in its active relation to other social practices, entities and events forms machinic connections ... The body is thus not an organic totality which is capable of the wholesale expression, but itself an assemblage of organs, processes, pleasures, passions, activities, behaviors, linked by fine lines and unpredictable networks to other elements, segments and assemblages. (120)

Here, Grosz extends the boundaries of the subject—the body ending at the skin—to be thought of as an assemblage, a multiplicity, of elements ontologically overlapping and in resonance with other bodies that are, also, made up of multiplicities.

Extending the concept of the body to non-human material, Haraway, Shildrick and Grosz echo ‘the body as assemblage’ as used by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. They namely insist that “we should interrogate the genesis of *any* organized body or relatively closed form—in-

cluding the bodies of humans, societies, art, philosophy and science—and move to the “body without organs,” or the forces from which bodies are composed” (Colebrook 30). This notion of the body as an assemblage seeks to account for the fluidity, multiplicity, ever-changing and bodily becoming of matter. The emphasis for Deleuze lies especially on the relations in-between bodies that are in a state of constant fluctuation. In that sense, all forms of matter are in an assemblage and therefore co-constitutive of each other (Coleman and Ringrose 5–9).

As an assemblage, human and nonhuman bodies are in “intra-action.” This concept is used by Karen Barad in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* and comments on the anthropocentric view of bodily relationality in poststructuralist thought. Intra-action starts from the basic premise that the world is not made up out of separate entities:

[I]n contrast to the usual “inter-action,” which assumes there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. (33)

Intra-action as a concept understands boundaries are permeable and the specific situatedness of matter (human and nonhuman/organic and inorganic), discourses, social practices, environments, climates, ideologies, frames, times and

so on, are seen as co-constitutive of each other in a vibrating and always changing entanglement. ‘Intra’ (meaning: from within) emphasizes that things are not separate, isolated entities but rather exist because of their relationality to other phenomena. In that sense, every phenomenon carries an “exteriority within” (Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* 377), meaning that it is always co-constituted by other matter. Barad’s intra-active engagement with this world sees phenomena as consisting of that what they are not; a phenomenon’s exteriority is what makes a phenomenon into a phenomenon; all matter is co-constitutive.

Barad critiques a Butlerian and Foucauldian intersubjective outlook on agency. According to her, these perspectives do injustice to agentic flows in this world. She moves towards, let’s call it, ‘intra-sub-/objectivity.’ When Butler writes in *Undoing Gender*: “Let’s face it. We’re undone by each other. And if we’re not, we’re missing something” (19), Barad would argue that ‘we’re missing something’ when we only focus on human-human entanglement when we talk about performativity and agency. Barad understands the agentic as a process which involves “all bodies, not merely “human” bodies, [that] come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity—its performativity” (152). In her posthumanist account of performativity, she thus breaks with a Cartesian spilt between subject and object

and approaches the world as an always changing entanglement of agentic human and nonhuman matter in which subject/object-boundaries are not clear-cut. The ‘human’ and ‘the rest’ are spatially, ontologically and epistemologically inseparable (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 136). Rather, this world is an intra-active mess of all sorts of forces and whims and we are ‘undone by each other, and by other matter.’

So, coming back to Lyotard’s and Haraway’s questions: “Can thought go on without a body?” and “Why should our bodies end at the skin?” we can fruitfully answer that thought, and in this case, feminist thought, can only exist when there is a body but that this body does not necessarily need to be a human subject ending at the skin. Feminism is intra-active and can also emerge from sound waves, voices, words, pixels, flesh and bricks in dialogue with human bodies. In that sense: feminism = matter. Feminist subjectivity is materialized in some sort of a body otherwise it does not exist. Whether it is part of my brain impulses or the force within the presence of the sticker material, feminism needs embodiment in order to go on. Feminism is material with a message; it lives in matter and matter lives feminism.

The sticker material’s presence in Van Eyck has performed this posthumanist account of feminist agency I tried to make sense of above. It embodied a feminist force that went beyond representation. For instance, Victoria Bardakou,

head of the Pierre Kemp Lab/Thérèse Cornips Lab (the library) wrote in our e-mail exchange: “I am often annoyed that it un-sticks from the wall... Especially in the Wilhelmina Minis-van de Geijn Lab! [...] between me and ‘it,’ we constantly have fights; I stick it to the wall, it wants to leave.” Also, she started a critical feminist reading group in the Van Eyck. Her engagement shows a critical and physical interaction through thought and touch. Also, a visitor of the Van Eyck told me in a conversation that he caught himself and others imagining and talking about the back-then unknown new director of the Van Eyck as a ‘him.’ He told me that the sticker material’s presence made him realize that we often have an unconscious normative (male) image of the ones in power, which is unfair and should change.

As these two human engagements with *Margaret van Eyck* show: the sticker material’s presence triggered deeper conversations, self-reflections, actions and contemplations *from within* its *own* movement and presence, beyond representing women. Since its framing as ‘feminist intervention,’ the matter has been acting and acted upon as feminist. It has exposed violence, it interrupted and it stopped multiple flows. Initially, the sticker material was pointed at a problem with the Van Eyck: the lack of women’s representation. From then onwards, it has become a political signifier, which revealed how the system is not working. It has become

feminist-loaded matter, an agentic feminist bodily assemblage, part of a movement. It has been ‘baptized’ as questioning sexist power structures and has shown to continuously perform this on a deeper level. The sticker material’s meaningfulness has thus moved beyond representing women and encouraged others in thinking critically about the hegemonic power dynamics in the Van Eyck and the arts in general.

3 A Swarm of Vitalities (On Causality)

The sticker material has appeared to be undone by—or intra-active with—people, discourses, frames, materials, weather circumstances, regional issues, institutional guidelines and human feelings. It does therefore not stand on its own as a separate entity that has been created by an artist where its meaning is congealed in its status as object. It is entangled with all sorts of ‘others,’ and, it seems impossible to locate agency in one specific body involved. The sticker material is knotted with other forms of matter. It has acted and reacted, affected and been affected. It is in ‘intra-play’ with human and nonhuman bodies. The sticker material has been intra-active matter, in ‘multilogue’ with other material formations, such as people and the walls of the building. It was not the case that Verleger (artist) passed down his intelligence or skills onto matter (an (art)work) and that is where the flow of agen-

cy began and ended. Rather, it has been a detail amongst many in the ebb and flow of agency; a drop of water was spilled in the ‘Van Eyck’s waters’ where ripples accumulated and intra-mingled with other institutional ripples (from the past and present into the future).

Diana Coole and Samantha Frost argue in *New Materialisms* that it is crucial for a materialist theory of politics or agency (i.e. a radical reappraisal of material reality) to change conceptions of material causality (2). Here, Barad’s stance towards causality seems valuable. Her, in Western terms, counterhegemonic conceptualization of agency as arising from intra-action inflicts an alternative stance towards causality, namely as non-top down and non-anthropocentric. This seems to do justice to the process of the sticker material, in which agency—the ability to affect—has been distributed over human and nonhuman bodies in their entanglement over time. An alternative stance towards causality highlights the “force of materiality” (Coole and Frost 47–136) or, in Jane Bennet’s words, “thing power.”

In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Barad describes causality as an entangled affair (394). “Humans are neither pure cause nor pure effect but part of the world in its open-ended becoming” (150). That is to say that Baradian causality arises from, as what Bennet terms, “distributive agency” (20–38), that is agency distribut-

ed over and within all sorts of matter. She says: “A theory of distributive agency [...] does not posit a subject as the root cause of an effect. There are instead always a swarm of vitalities at play.” (Bennet 32–33). For Bennet, causality takes the form of “a swarm of vitalities,” like multiple arrows horizontally and continually moving in all sorts of directions. That is, bodies—human and nonhuman—constantly affect and are constantly affected in their dynamic agentic assemblage, in their intra-activity.

The sticker material benefits from this post-humanist and intra-active account of causality because it acknowledges its presence for its *doings* and *becomings* over time in intra-play with other phenomena. Its reverberations can be seen as its affective resonances in the art institution, which have set in motion and materialized affective feminist echoes or needs in the art institution. As Ahmed would say, the sticker material cultivated a movement like ripples in water (*Living a Feminist Life* 3). The sticker material has acted out more than the artist or art institution intended, namely, through being in motion—by peeling off—it has encouraged people to rub it in, to have conversations about our exclusionary psychological images of authorities and so on.

So, for the sticker material’s onto-epistemology, causality has not been a vertical arrow, pointing down from artist to object. Rather, what has affected and been affected consists out of

multiple arrows pointing in manifold directions in a horizontal manner. Moreover, this messy, broken, twirling and spinning chain of causality is currently in motion as I am writing this text, since people are still talking, thinking and writing about *Margaret van Eyck*, and the vinyl still peels off in certain places and people rub it back into place.

It was thus not solely the artist’s philosophy that caused a certain meaningfulness and knowledge to erupt and be transmitted. Rather, it was an anti-graffiti layer that *caused* the sticker material outside to peel off; it was the warping inside that *gave rise* to parts of the performance (📹 V1: 120, 126); it was the existence of something ‘feminist’ that *caused* conversations about the meaning of inclusion in the Van Eyck; it was these conversations that *caused* individual people to have realizations about the unconscious patriarchal images we hold. Thus, it was by no means only the artist that *caused* the sticker material’s being or knowledge-making, it was the feminist-loaded intra-active engagement with sticker matter.

4 Intra-action and Exclusion

Besides offering a de-anthropocentrized, distributed, horizontal and ongoing outlook on agency and causality, Barad notes in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* that “intra-actions always en-

tail particular exclusions” (214). She approaches the emergence of the object/subject divide as ‘site-specific’ and therefore not as non-universal nor preexistent. Following Barad, what is at stake is thus the need to approach assemblages of matter as indeterminate and to consider each moment of exclusion as a local and specific entanglement of matter. She emphasizes that her agentic account of nonhuman matter does not foreclose human responsibility and accountability in the process of “what temporarily emerges” (172). Barad’s new materialism is therefore political theory. Comparable theories, such as actor-network theory, do not make that political step towards social exclusions. Namely, according to Barad, actor-network theorists like Bruno Latour fail to take into account the human accountability and responsibility in respect to what Barad terms “apparatuses” (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 169–170).

Barad conceptualizes apparatuses as systems by which we measure this world. They are “the material conditions of possibility and impossibility of mattering” (148). Apparatuses are not passive observing instruments but productive of (and part of) phenomena. The limits enacted by these apparatuses is what excludes certain matter from being acknowledged for its existence (142). Apparatuses are “causal intra-actions through which matter is iteratively and differentially articulated” that get the instrumentation to work

in a particular way for a particular purpose (170). For Ahmed, that “instrumentation” is the institutional ‘diversity guidelines’ whose purpose is often a corrupt desire for a good reputation, and which leave deep exclusionary structures in place.

In that sense, the category ‘woman’ is the apparatus for institutional inclusivity in the sticker material’s representational qualities. However, this ‘woman’ is a normative category that enacts forms of exclusion. ‘Woman’ is commonly used as the instrument by which feminism is measured, but it is oftentimes *a certain kind of woman* that iteratively excludes the possibility of other women’s existence, humanness, creativity or intelligence. Namely, ‘woman’ as an apparatus for feminism as a movement is commonly white, straight, cisgender, well-educated, skinny and able-bodied. This image enacts the construction of what matters and what does not, what belongs and what not. In concrete terms, the ‘woman-apparatus’ of feminism in the West leaves little to no space to, for instance, the existence of a brown trans woman and her specific experiences of violence.

Apparatuses such as ‘woman’ are agentic in that they legislate, as what Barad terms, “agential cuts.” These cuts are humanly boundary-drawing practices that make certain identities or beings intelligible and exclude others through intra-activity (208). It means that matter and nonhuman matter acts and reacts towards each other in ways

in which the existence of certain bodies is foreclosed through human selection of what counts, what is human, and what is not. The exclusionary possibilities accounted for in the sticker material's representationalist qualities echoed in the intra-active responses to the matter. That is, the sticker material triggered a response towards thinking exclusion from a broader, more intersectional, perspective. This is the point where human responsibility, or ethics, comes in.

According to Barad, it is the open-ended boundary making practices of apparatuses that are formative of meaning and matter (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 146). Thus, apparatuses also offer potential for change and inclusion since they are ongoing processes in their intra-active becoming. Importantly, Barad points out that considering nonhuman matter as agentic and performative does not mean that humans do not have responsibility and accountability for fighting oppression, marginalization and exclusion (172).

She argues that if material configurations through which we measure the world change, if the world is an open-ended process of intra-activity, the onto-epistemological possibilities in this world also change: "The political potential of deconstructive analysis lies not in simply recognizing the inevitability of exclusions but in insisting on accountability for the particular exclusions that are enacted in taking up the re-

sponsibility to perpetually contest and rework the boundaries" (205). She tries to show that through human and nonhuman entanglements, humans do act agentially but do not possess all agentic qualities in the process. "The world kicks back" (215) and that which has intra-actively accumulated as existing or knowable leaves us humans with responsibilities.

5 Ethico-onto-epistem-ology

In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Barad implicitly suggests a stronger responsibility for the ones in power and with privilege, as compared to a Butlerian approach to inclusion for instance. Namely, ethics looks fundamentally different from the vantage point of human and nonhuman intra-active entanglements (158). When phenomena (people, spaces, objects, milieus, media) are co-constitutive of each other, then, feminist action is the responsibility of those co-constituting oppressive power structures, which can be materialized in institutional spaces and 'vibes.' The privileged intra-actively constitute those 'heavy' spaces for the marginalized and thus carry accountability in their relationality; in their "exteriority within."

In that sense, Barad approaches responsibility and accountability as a parasitic relationality; "having-the-other-in-ones-skin" (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 392). Parasitism can induce

political change through offering new ontological entities in which (an)other body/bodies is/are taken up into a phenomenon as partaking in its being. The existence of the other is thus dependent on what is considered ‘not other.’ She means that people are accountable for the other’s exclusion, because their own existence is co-constitutive of it. The Western construction of the neutrality of white men, or Ahmed’s consideration of ‘white men’ an institution, intra-actively constitutes the “other” as not belonging. It is Barad’s implied emphasis that oppression, exclusion and marginalization it is not only an intersubjective affair, also spaces, places, environments, atmospheres, institutional vibes and walls can affectively partake in the exclusion of certain human bodies.

Barad’s political undertone is ethico-onto-epistem-ological, because what is intra-actively constructed as intelligible/knowable constitutes possibilities for existence which includes and excludes certain bodies as visible and ‘possible.’ According to Barad, ethics is about mattering and about taking responsibility as a human being for the entangled materializations of which we are part, and importantly, do not stand above. ‘Not standing above nonhuman matter’ does not mean that humans lack accountability in systems of exclusion. On the contrary, humans can participate in the formation of new configurations, new subjectivities and new pos-

sibilities and alter the apparatuses by which we measure the world. The difference with an anthropocentric conceptualization of agency and performativity in respect to ethics is that Barad considers nonhuman matter as hefty and “kicking back” (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 215).

According to Barad, the ethical implications of her intra-active approach to the world include a high sensitivity towards small movements and becomings: “even the smallest cuts matter” (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 384). Also, the ethical suggestions of her intra-active account of the world is not to assume anything beforehand since no phenomenon ontologically pre-exist its intra-active engagement with the world. Therefore, phenomena should be addressed for their specificity. According to Barad, “specific case-by-case accountings for marks on bodies [...] accounting for our part of the entangled webs we weave” (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 384).

Thus, following Barad, feminist political action starts with pushing back against images we hold of the ones in power—think of the whiteness and/or maleness for authority positions in art institutions for instance. Feminist political action starts with pushing back against privileges which standardization make up a ‘working’ system in spaces such as the Van Eyck. Barad’s ethical implication can imply a critical self-reflective attitude towards the unconscious racialized and gendered notions we hold of the ones that

exist as competent human beings. Taking political responsibility is thus also about self-reflection on the “exteriorities within,” for instance, to reflect on how institutionalized racism is constructed through white privilege, and how sexism is co-constituted through male privilege.

6 Respons-ability

As we have seen, the sticker material has set an accumulative thinking process in motion. Resonating with Ahmed’s comparison of feminism as movement to ripples of water Barad writes:

As the rings of trees mark the sedimented history of their intra-actions within and as part of the world, so matter carries within itself the sedimented historicalities of the practices through which it is produced as part of its ongoing becoming—it is ingrained and enriched in its becoming. (Meeting the Universe Halfway 180)

In a footnote, she emphasizes that the metaphor of tree rings is meant to be evocative of the “sedimenting materiality of an ongoing process of becoming.” She notes that the metaphor for intra-active becoming could also be captured in the more dynamic image of putting drops of paint into a piece of dough (439). When you knead the dough, the paint spreads out in different patterns and is inseparable from the dough as phenomenon; it is parasited by an exteriority and shows

that things are made up out of layers and “exteriorities within.”

Ahmed argues that (a) feminist movement can be caused by a small comment, agitation or resistance. The sudden appearance of the sticker material, a ripple in the Van Eyck’s waters, is part of a bigger conversation, a bigger wave, in the Van Eyck now. Barad argues similarly that the affects of political resistance resonate in matter through intra-active becomings. In that sense, the sticker material has left a mark on an art institutional body, which by no means implies that the art institution is ‘nice’ to women or queers now. According to Barad, objectivity means to be accountable for “marks on bodies” (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 178), that is, to be accountable for intra-actively constituted normativities that co-constitute structures of marginalization and exclusion. In other words, it is a human responsibility to pick up on the exclusions arising from intra-active becomings of ‘diversity’ projects.

Following Barad on her affirmative note: “intra-actions reconfigure the possibilities for change [they] reconfigure what is possible” (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 182). The agentic qualities, the presence of the sticker material, reconfigured what is possible in the structural side of art institution. The fact that a white man noticed his unconscious image of a director was male (and most likely white) is already a gain. However, this does not mean other exclu-

sions are not intra-actively produced by the sticker material, for instance, through its white- and cis-normativity.

We can conclude that the ‘agential cut’ of institutional representation was expanded from white men to the inclusion of white women. Here the category ‘(white) woman’ can be considered as the apparatus for Western feminism. This apparatus “gives meaning to certain concepts at the exclusion of others” (Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* 142). That is, the category of women is reinforced by the sticker material as white and cisgender, amongst other privileges. Following Barad then, it is the “respons-ability” (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 55) of people to respond to exclusionary dynamics in inclusionary projects. What is at stake according to Barad is to respond to ‘site-specifically’ emerging forms of exclusion as a result of the way subjects emerge locally as ‘possible’ or visible subjects. Because we are co-constitutive of each other, this is not only the respons-ability of the marginalized, but also of the privileged. The ethico-onto-epistem-ology, or, the values, inclusion and intelligibility generated by the sticker material through the concept of intra-action includes some and has shown to foreclose others. Therefore, what is at stake in this sticker material is to pay close attention to its becomings and further vibrations in the Van Eyck so that more inclusive spaces can *continuously* be thought of and created.

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