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by Merle Flügge

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...dreaming of a new era of human-object companionrelationships

...dreaming of creating new aesthetics of the imaginary

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{ foreword_

Rotterdam, 4 June 2071

>> >> I am fully aware of the fact that this text >> doesn't have a typical clear thesis setup. >> In a great part of this text I am intuitively >> >> reacting and elaborating on small parts >> of my grandmother's diary. Parts which in >> my view deal with the topics of animism, >> >> anthropomorphism and other (not so >> clearly defined) topics that may help me >> to understand human-object relationships >> >> in the early times of the AI revolution. >> Although most of these topics are guite >> general and play an important role in >> >> human-object relationships throughout >> history, another layer was added in the >> Al revolution: animistic Al objects were >> >> pushing humans' 'Darwinian buttons' >> (Turkle, 2007). Unfortunately, these >> strong newly developed relationships >> >> were misunderstood by many designers, >> focusing either on the cuteness of the >> object and humour, or on pure function->> >> ality, efficiency and comfort. Either way, >> meaning was lost and objects became >> mere 'functional' apparatus. >> >> >> What does it mean that meaning was >> lost? This preliminary question informed >> my opinion that functional designs are >> >> bland. "Form Follows Function" underes-Coined by Louis Henry Sullivan in 1896. >> timates the creativity and the flexibility of >> >> users. Design should first of all commu->> nicate, functionality comes in second >> or maybe even third or fifth place. Just >> >> look at 'Amazing Discoveries', a TV show

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>> >> where new 'inventions' are presented in a format of an endless looping commercial. These 'inventions' are hyper-useful objects, mostly kitchen gadgets and things for home improvement. These objects are so useful that they become useless, so functional that they become non-functional. They also come in many. The same goes for 'Form Follows Algorithm', algorithm-based designs of the early AI revolution. Algorithms based on parameters such as minimal construction and efficiency of material usages. They only communicate efficiency, lifelessness and death. It is no coincidence that these efficient algorithm-based designed objects look like skeletons of dead alien lifeforms.

In this short piece of writing I attempt to understand what exactly happened in the early days of Artificial Intelligence in the interior and how designers reacted on this new technology. In a typical thesis I would elaborate on 'functionalism', 'postmodernism' and other design theories and wading through the murky waters of Object-Oriented Ontology, anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism. I believe though that I have done that throughout my studies at MAIRD, and I felt I should take a more personal turn in conducting my final research at the Piet Zwart Institute.

The diary of my grandma Lucy, which I recently found while recovering her stored hard drives, is of much greater help to understand these newly (re)discovered human-object relations and how during the AI revolution new aesthetics were created to enhance these new relations. "The challenge for designers [...] [was] to find new metaphors and new formal characteristics for a new attitude towards industrial [artificially intelligent] products." (Bruinsma, 1995) Finding new aesthetics, aesthetics of the imaginary, to avoid the focus on mere efficiency and ending up with objects that look like skeletons of dead alien lifeforms.

foreword_





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>>Diary:January 1, 2027
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>>George installed the Google Domus a day
ago. Things are slightly off. The table
moved a little bit to the window. The
window is open. The chairs stand precisely
opposite each other, not quite how I left
them this morning. Books are reshuffled on
colour. Just in the corner of my eye the
carpet is glowing.
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So basically what happened in modern times, as 'modern humans', we turned our domestic interiors from Wunderkammer-like spaces in the 18th and 19th century into modernly curated museums from the late 19th century onward. Our relationship with objects changed in the late 19th century, "becoming less imaginative and more abstract and methodical" (Bovev & Davis 2016). We distinguished humans from nonhumans, humans from animals and humans from things, and tried to curate them in some sort of ever expanding system with an ever growing number of things. This anthropocentric state sustained throughout the whole 20th century until the first introductions of Artificial Intelligence, and with it the start of animistic and sentient interiors, where humans reconnected with nonhumans on an imaginary level celebrating the schizophrenic state of existence.

My grandmother was a biologist. Her husband George, my grandfather, happened to be one of Google's researchers on AI and was part of many scientific breakthroughs which were leading up to the concept we now know as 'The Schizophrenic Interior'.

When I read this small piece from my grandma's diary I imagined her home, back then. All the objects that made up her interior. Different chairs, cabinets, a big table, some small coffee tables. A carpet. Hanging lamps in different sizes, standing lamps in different heights. Another chair, a bed and so on. But apart from her furniture I also remember the smaller objects, things like her cutlery and china neatly placed inside the cabinets. Or her books and small electronic devices on top of the shelves. Some cups in the sink, some art on the wall. Things between the walls, floor and ceiling. All part of her orderly arranged interior. All part of who she was. All part of her life. As an intricate network of things supporting her daily routine. Not intelligent at all. But what happened when these objects became alive?

This question has haunted me for several months now. If I think of how Artificial Intelligence begun in the second half of the 20th century, I think of the old movies my grandfather used to show me: HAL 9000 from '2001: A Space Odyssey', or David with Teddy from a movie by Stephen Spielberg. He also told me about Kasparov, the big chess player who lost against IBM's Deep Blue or Fan Hui, Europe's best Go champion ever who lost against Google's Deep Mind in the ancient game of Go, a game that allows the player to not only use strategy but also trust on his or her intuition in order to win. "It's all about intuition", he told me. It all went really fast in the early decades of the 21st century. It is not the guestion whether our interiors did become intelligent or conscious, I'm intrigued by how this changed our human relationship

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with it. Bypassing Turing's imitation game, it's not interesting for me to think of my grandparents' interior as being *really* intelligent or possessing consciousness. "[...] [T]he real question being tested by the Turing test is not 'How can we gauge machine intelligence?' but instead 'How do we respond to a machine that acts as if it were conscious?'" (eds Rosenberger & Verbeek 2015) The Turing Test - named after its inventor Alan Turing in 1950 - "was designed to be a rudimentary way of determining whether or not a computer counts as 'intelligent'. The test, as Turing designed it, is carried out as a sort of imitation game. On one side of a computer screen sits a human judge, whose job is to chat to some mysterious interlocutors on the other side. Most of those interlocutors will be humans; one will be a chatbot, created for the sole purpose of tricking the judge into thinking that it is the real human." (Hern 2014)

{ cuteness_

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>>Diary:January 14, 2027
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>>The catalogue of the new Made is guite
hilarious. They designed lamps that you
have to pet in order to switch them on.
I want one. It looks totally cute in the
picture!
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                The original hypothesis by Masahiro Mori in 1970 "states that as the appearance of a robot is made
                 more human, some observers' emotional response to the robot become increasingly positive and
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                  empathic, until it reaches a point beyond which the response quickly becomes strong revulsion."
               (Wikipedia contributors, 'Uncanny valley') "The psychological concept of the uncanny as something
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                that is strangely familiar, rather than just mysterious, was perhaps first fixed by Sigmund Freud in his
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ig.1: Yaris (2016) graduation project by Sandra Lundberg, Eindhoven Design Academy

The Made 'Pet Lamp' my grandmother is referring to was first designed by Sandra Lundberg in 2016 as a graduation project from the Eindhoven Design Academy and taken into mass production in 2020. It was made of a soft material. You had to stroke its back to turn on the light, stroke again to intensify the light. Tickle its 'chin' and it would tilt its 'head' changing the light again (Design Academy Eindhoven 2016). In a simple way this demonstrates how programmed reactions of an object can evoke animism. It mediated and manipulated a simple domestic routine of switching-on a light into a totally different emotional human-thing experience. Unfortunately, when Made took the lamp in re-production in 2027 they made some drastic and ludicrous changes to the original design. Instead of the soft but still abstract 'alien like' grey material of the original lamp, Made decided to make the lamp fluffy-haired-cute-dog-like. Not only causing some problems with maintaining the fluffy material, it created a sense of uncanny for most of the users. It just looked like a zombie dog with laser light eyes. Made's designers simply overdid on 'the cute fluffiness' overlooking the 'uncanny valley' in their approach. They should also have understood that the original lamp was not so much about the form and materiality but rather specifically about movement. They should have learned from one of the leading roboticist Guy Hoffman's Ted Talk 'Robots with

soul' (Hoffman 2013) back then, where

he explained that "when you want to arouse emotion, it doesn't matter so much how something looks, it's all in the motion, it's in the timing of how the thing moves." To underline his argument he referred to Pixar's Luxo Jr Lamp Animation: "I was amazed about how much emotion they can put into something as trivial as a desk lamp. [...] At the end of this movie you actually feel something for two pieces of furniture." (Hoffman 2013) So, from an aesthetic point of view we don't even have to have real motion of an object to become 'alive'. A suggested motion or an *in-between* state (such as in-between two functions) of an object is enough to trigger animistic emotions for objects.

















Pixer Animation-Luxo Jr.











cuteness



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>> >> >> >> >>Diary:January 21, 2027 >> >>Today George left the apartment after we had a fight. It's just before midnight now and he's still not back, I'm really worried. He's edgy. The interior is guiet. Nothing is moving and all the displays seem to glow softer now. But like with a sad dog I feel I should comfort the interior while it should comfort me instead! It's annoying. I will ask George to tone back the emotion level to 4 tomorrow. >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >>

The smart home was the most visionary concept of future domestic interiors in the early 21st century, building upon 20th century inventions of home automata, such as kitchen-computers. Dreams of these smart future interiors expanded in harmony with the explosion of technological possibilities on the verge of the AI revolution. The main focus, though, was always on comfort, efficiency and convenience marketed as liberating the working single mum, the single hipster or the housewife from domestic tasks throughout almost the entire century. With the development of 'The Internet of Things' and intelligent machines in the first decades of the 21st century the promise of this smart house concept reached its peak and shifted from mere mechanized homes to smart, connected or intelligent homes. People back then didn't have to wait long before their homes were totally infested with smart objects and intelligent automata became omnipresent. Furniture and objects started to react on emotion with the new 'Emo Domus' upgrade by the 'Google Home Company' in 2027 based on James Auger's and Jimmy Loizeau's 'Happylife' (Auger-Loizeau 2010) and 'Tableau Machine' by Mario Romero (Bogost 2012). Although 'Happylife' and 'Tableau Machine' were (just) speculative designs with the purpose to evoke research and awareness in the area of data mining and analysis in the domestic space, both are considered as forerunners of domestic ubiquitous

computing with a focus on the emotional state of the inhabitant by "imagining how advanced sensing technologies and computer algorithms might be deployed in a family home". (Auger-Loizeau 2010)

Just like dogs seem very sensitive to the emotional state of their owner, the 'Emo Domus' was programmed to react on the emotional state of their inhabitants. But as it seems my grandmother didn't buy into that. She was annoyed by the superficial level of 'comforting'. I guess it might have to do with the difference between horses and dogs, in the way Donna Haraway refers to James Serpell in her book 'The Companion Species Manifesto': "'Where horses were treated in a utilitarian way, while dogs, kept as pets, merited fond stories and warriors mourned their deaths'" (Serpell, J 1986, cited in Haraway, D 2003). So, is it this fact why my grandmother didn't connect to her 'Emo interior'? Is it possible that the simple answer to this is that as long as we consider a thing or an animal, a nonhuman, functional we cannot relate to it as a companion? Or maybe it's because of the lacking of a mutually shared evolution of domestication based on opportunism from both sides? Haraway describes how "[h]uman life ways changed significantly in association with dogs. Flexibility and opportunism are the name of the game for both species, who shaped each other throughout the still ongoing story of co-evolution" (Haraway

2003). Overlapping this notion with the relationship of technological objects of the end of the 20th and early 21st century and Peter-Paul Verbeek's view on the *mediating* role of technology in his book 'What Things Do' is tempting.

Verbeek takes a post-phenomenological point of view and argues how technological objects have always co-shaped the relations between humans and their world. But just like he was referring to the classical phenomenological philosophy of technology being a "one-sided and inadequate understanding of technology in terms of alienation" (Verbeek 2005), we should not fall too quickly for Verbeek's argument of mediation. Philosophers of the early AI revolution underestimated how people got more and more entangled in an endless loop of master-servant relationships with these technical AI objects with superficial notions of comfort. These objects didn't just mediate between humans and the 'real' world but simultaneously created a new reality. a simulacrum. Think of the old smartphones, digital wearable devices which mediated between their users and the world, but not a real world but a desired world in a world of desire.

For example Charlie Chaplin's 'feeding machine' in his film 'Modern Times' (1936) or 'The Jetsons', an American Space Age animated sitcom from the 1960s.

Homes were considered smart when their appliances could 'talk' to each-other in a network and/or could be monitored and controlled by digital (mobile) devices. They were considered intelligent when they could learn from the inhabitants routines and adjust their settings accordingly to match the inhabitants comfort, safety and health.

Following Baudrillard, who coined the term in his book 'Simulacra and Simulations' (1994).



fig. 4: Project 'Happylife' (2010) by James Auger and Jimmy Loizeau

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comfort & companionship_





"The catalogue of "the domestic(ated) interior" explores what would happen if the domestic interior became conscious, and wanting to reverse the conventional master-servant relationship with humans.

ideas of absolute comfort and efficiency as dreamt of in the smarthouse. In the parallel world of this catalogue humans and the domestic interior and its The goal of this design study was not to show a dystopian world where objects 'control' humans, or an utopian world where objects serve humans' objects simply likewise start to behave like pets.

The strange elements created function as mediators between the two worlds, leaving the interior revealed as a cage for both of them. How can both, humans and nonhumans, free themselves from this cage?



fig. 5: all images taken from the catalogue of 'the domestic(ated) interior' (2017) by Merle Flügge

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{ anthropomorphism_

>>Diary:January 22, 2027 >>George put the Emo level on 4 last evening. It didn't help. It kept me awake the whole night. Lights and screens were turning on and off, switching ambient <u>colours like a scene from Poltergeist.</u> Somehow the interior's algorithms are off and it only senses irregularities in our body heat without connecting it to face recognition, at least that's what George thinks. He fastened ribbons of white bed sheets around the face recognition cameras. They look like pirates with an eye patch ... covering only one of the two cameras. We both had to laugh really hard. It's a quick fix but it does the job for now. >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >>



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For me this is the first clue where my grandma started to anthropomorphize the interior without the cuteness factor. I think a nice way of looking at this scene is through the lens of anthropomorphism from a psychological point of view. The cameras were not designed to look animistic at all. Just adding a piece of white cloth should not make them 'alive' all of a sudden. Psychologist Nicholas Epley et al. describe anthropomorphism as "[...] a process of induction that utilizes existing knowledge representations to guide inferences about the properties, characteristics, and mental states of nonhuman agents." (Epley, Waytz & Cacioppo 2007) So by anthropomorphizing something we morph it into being (more) human in our imagination, 'more like us'. The reason why we have this innate tendency to project human traits on nonhuman agents - be it weather phenomena (which we even give human names), animals, plants, but also things - can be explained guite simply by several traits of behavior we seem to have inherited evolutionally. Furthermore, they "[...] suggest that this inductive process of anthropomorphism can also be substantially influenced by two major motivational factors. The first is effectance — the motivation to interact effectively in one's environment. Effectance motivation entails understanding, predicting, and reducing uncertainty about one's environment and the agents that inhabit it. The second

is sociality — the motivation for social contact, social connection, and social approval from other agents (human or otherwise)." (Epley, Waytz & Cacioppo 2007)

So, in order to make sense of the situation Lucy projected the image of the pirate on the cameras, enchanting a part of the intelligent sensory apparatus of the Emo interior. The camera as the eyes and the pirate as a human metaphor for stealing. Although the metaphor of the pirate is quite childish it also served as a simple humorous catalyst for social reconnection with George, which made them reconcile.

anthropomorphism_

A little side note here: prior to the Al revolution humans threw away objects. Objects were dismantled and their parts reused or they were just simply disposed of.

>>George told me they are working on works the same as how Google's 'Predictive search before you even know it yourself. Kind of a Minority Report thing I guess. He's worried though. We are the first ones to test the demo. **script stopped unexpectedly **extract data **rebooting... >>Diary:March 10, 2027 >>Last week was terrible: after George installed the intuition module everything went haywire. Food was ordered wrong, ambient lights were off, furniture was placed wrongly, just a big mess. George says that Emo has to adjust all its patterns, learn from our routines all over, and reconnect to all the furniture and stuff in the house again. It might take another week before everything is settled. I told George I would throw Emo away if things don't change to normal. >> >> >>

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>>Diary:March 16, 2027 >>

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>>The intuition module of Emo is still not working. It makes tiny weird mistakes. Last night I noticed it was struggling with the light settings. Lights were turned on where I was walking, just in front of me, not subtle at all. In the end I just typed in the settings manually, I guess Emo needs a little help. George asked me if it would be better to deinstall the module but I told him to give the poor thing another week.

The 'Eliza Effect' was named "after an early experiment in intelligent software. Students were asked to converse with Eliza, probing its capacity to imitate human chat. Instead of exposing the program's weaknesses, everyone pandered to its strengths. They wanted the computer to be lifelike and manipulated the test to help it succeed." (Behr 2011) Although the new intuition module didn't work properly my grandmother started to emotionally attach herself to Emo. We have to take into account that people back then were newly accustomed to objects talking to them, from their car GPS, the self-driving car, to the new Nest smoke alarm, and they experienced having conversations with objects that spoke back to them for the first time in history: Apple's Siri and Google Voice Search. Looking at movies at that time like "Her" (2013) in which a man falls in love with a voice activated operating system called Samantha (Marenko 2014) we are past the 'Eliza effect' here, this is something different. Emo was pushing my grandmother's "Darwinian buttons" (Turkle 2007). My grandmother felt she should help Emo getting installed. Clearly, her behavior towards Emo started off with a sense of nurturing. "People who meet objects feel a desire to nurture them. And with this desire comes the fantasy of reciprocation. People begin to care for these objects and want the objects to care about them." (Turkle 2007) For my grandmother Emo became a sentient creature, a creature she wanted to take care of.

But there is more to it. Because of the intuition module, Emo went from a so called "calculated brain, a brain that waits, senses, analyses, acts, to an 'adventurous brain', a brain that takes risks, it acts without knowing everything it has to know, it makes mistakes and cor-

rects them." (Hoffman 2013) It is known now, through different experiments done by Guy Hoffmann back in the early 2010s, that people connect to Al's with "adventurous brains" more easily, they consider these Al's more *alive*. Emo was learning, making mistakes and all of this was contributing to my grandmother's 'nurturing' feelings towards Emo. Through this new development of the intuition module my grandmother's relationship with Emo drastically changed. Note that she went form referring to Emo as 'it' to 'poor thing' in less than a week.





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>>Diary:March 25, 2027
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>>I cannot work today. I cannot
concentrate. Yesterday was really
stressful so I guess I can take a day off.
I will not talk to George, he looks sad
though.
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>>Diary:March 26, 2027
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>>Emo is still broken, I feel free.
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                      Much like our Audio Tooth Implant (Auger-Loizeau 2001) by the Auger Company®,
                      a telephone was a handheld telecommunications device that permitted two or more
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                      users to conduct a conversation when they were too far apart to be heard directly.
                                             (Wikipedia contributors, 'Telephone')
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Apparently my grandmother had mixed feelings here. She was stressed because Emo still didn't function properly and tried to understand what was going on with George personally. At the same time she didn't feel like talking to George although she knew he was feeling sad. For me this is a disturbing situation. It seems that through Emo my grandmother created a different reality. She needed Emo to tell her about George's emotional state and didn't seem to rely on her own judgment anymore. As the philosopher of technology Peter-Paul Verbeek already noticed back then: "Many of our actions and interpretations of the world are co-shaped by the technologies we use. Telephones mediate the way we communicate with others, cars help to determine the acceptable distance from home to work, thermometers co-shape our experience of health and disease, and antenatal diagnostic technologies generate difficult questions regarding pregnancy and abortion. This mediating role of technologies also pertains to actions and decisions we usually call 'moral', ranging from the driving speed we find morally acceptable to our decisions about unborn life." (eds Vermaas, Kroes, Light & Moore 2008)

To go one step further I could argue that the increasing speed with which technological devices were introduced in the homes and lives of the late 20th and early 21st century humans, their inner moral compass shifted to the morality of their

objects. It is not that my grandma didn't know how her husband was feeling (she could just look at his face, 'George looks sad'), it is that she didn't feel like taking any action upon it, until Emo would inform her about the emotional state of her husband. Although I cannot superimpose Peter-Paul Verbeek's moral significance of things on my grandma's moral decision-making one-to-one, we can see how she rerouted her own emotional state through Emo and used him as an excuse not to act. "Technologies are not neutral instruments or intermediaries. but active mediators that help shape the relation between people and reality." (eds Vermaas, Kroes, Light & Moore 2008) In a way I think that through Emo my grandmother created an alternative reality, even though she knew Emo didn't work properly.

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>>Diary:April 11, 2027
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>>I'm so sad. George told me that the
intuition module needs to be deinstalled
soon. He says it makes Emo less efficient.
AI's are all about efficiency according to
George. Such nonsense!
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>>Diary:April 14, 2027
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>>George is so obsessed with efficiency
that he doesn't see the hidden quality
of the intuition module. In my view his
research should all be about connections
and relationships, instead of efficiency.
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A little side note: for my grandfather, being an AI researcher and completely in-sync with his time, efficiency was everything, especially when it came down to using AI in the smart-home appliances and complex data processing.

more comfortable and efficient. Not only in the early smart homes, like my granddesign robots. A design collaboration The dream was to simply communicate to the AI what kind of dress you would it for you. (Conti 2016) This epoch "Augmented Age" coined by AutoDesk researcher Maurice Conti in 2016. He tational systems that would help us think,

robotic systems that help us make, and even a digital nervous system that would connect us to the world far beyond our natural senses. (Conti 2016) Half a century later we know what a devastating effect this had on our objects and on the relationship we had with them. We were this close to becoming object-humans, cyborgs so to say. The stories



fig. 9: early example of bikeframe design oenerated by Autodesk's Dreamcatcher

of human-object 'metamorphosis' from these roaring times are evident. Back then; Al researchers were pushing the limits beyond the horizon with unfortunate aftereffects.









>> >> **extract data.exe >>Diary:July 17, 2027 >> >>I need a home makeover. I don't feel at home anymore. Just another bony chair. I miss my old armchair. >>

and technology' [...]" (Branzi 1984) the utopian ideal of "new partnership(s) humanity" (Conti 2016). The 'Augmented beauty". (Conti 2016) But all we got Looking back we can see that the same (Baudrillard 1968).

The ancient 'pre-modern' bourgeois domestic interior was clearly patriarchal in its symbolic presence. According to Baudrillard, furniture's function was obscured by a moral symbolic theatricality, probably making it feel quite dense in the room. The strictly arranged furniture was radiating a constant sense



objects took on moral and emotional symbolic values. (Baudrillard 1968) and, as it were, definitely secularized." (Baudrillard 1968) "Now, just so long user of that object" (Baudrillard 1968). moral constraints. The core value of their

13

Later in the 2010s - the peak of the social media revolution - we saw that furniture and related objects became exploited by their owners' fleeting identities. With the rise of iconic social media platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr and Facebook, furniture and whole domestic interiors were exploited to serve as mere bearers for identity depictions with a nostalgic tendency to so-called 'authentic' furniture. This must have been one of the most difficult times for furniture and objects, since we can see now, that the late 1990s up until the 2020s was the

peak of human's narcissistic relationship with objects, merely serving fleeting human identities and considered highly disposable.

On top of that, with the rise of 'The Internet Of Things' in the early 2000s, humans' relationship with these communicating objects left them entangled in a spasm of 'personalized' consumerism. According to Sam Jacob in "Life before objects" we have a reciprocal bond with objects and things surrounding us: "The invention of things redrew the relationship between humanity and nature, transformed humans-ascreatures into cultural beings. We might suggest, then, that it was objects that made us human, just as much as we made them objects." (Jacob, 2015) Connecting Sam Jacob to 'The Internet of Things' and to Baudrillards view on consumerism that we "no longer acquire[d] goods because of real needs but because of desires that [...] [were] increasingly defined by commercials and commercialized images" (Purdue n.d.) it is worth arguing, further, that the goods people purchased back then, were the materialization of their own fabricated 'self-brand', their own constructed identity. At the same time these goods were reading and communicating peoples personal needs and desires back to its makers, creating a mutual dependence between object and human. The object, being a commodity itself, turned people into commodities, turned their lives' data, identities and behavior into profitable entities and sold it back to them in a close loop. People in the early 21st century were left in a tight consumerist data-loop, between objects and humans.

efficiency & identity_





lig. 12+13: examples of late victorian patriarchal domestic interiors



















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88 >> >> >> August 6, 2027 >>The only thing the Google Domus wants from me is my data. >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> Side note: we have to understand that the company George was working for, The Google Company, had a business model in the early >> 2000s that was based on collecting, processing and selling data. With the Google Domus it wasn't any different. The Google Company, in >> collaboration with Ikea, started making furniture based on efficiencyalgorithms and data retrieved from the Google Domus. >> >> >>

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August 7, 2027
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I figured it out.
The interior
needs my data to
stay relevant, to
survive.
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Algorithms simulating randomized mutational processes generated most of the objects designed in the early AI revolution. The algorithms were designed to work the same way evolution does (Conti 2016), but for my grandmother something was missing.

My grandmother was a biologist and knew that complex systems such as life itself were partly based on the random process of mutation and variation, learning, adapting and co-evolving. But "in the special realm of domestication, as Darwin (already) explained, human desire (sometimes consciously, sometimes not) plays the same role that blind nature does everywhere else, determining what constitutes 'fitness' and thereby leading, over time, to the emergence of new forms of life." (Pollan 2003) In the 20th and first half of the 21st century, the peak of the anthropocene era, humans were the leading species and were shaping and objectifying nature to their desire. In a way, humans domesticated the whole planet. "For a great many species, 'fitness' meant the ability to get along in a world in which humankind had become the most powerful evolutionary force." (Pollan 2003)

Objects used to evolve along human desires, under humans' control so to say. From the *Wunderkammer* in Renaissance Europe (parallel to the invention of caged animals in zoos), displaying personal wealth and superiority, to displaying 'selfies' of humans (with their objects

desire_

and animals) in '<u>digitalized cabinets of</u> curiosities' as an outburst of narcissism in the social media era of the early 21st century. This control over nature, animals and things is hard to understand for us nowadays, but throughout this whole period from the 17th century onward, we thought we were in control of the world around us, proudly showing this in our Wunderkammern and zoos of miniature cosmoses (eds Din & Wu 2015), up until the beginning of the 21st century where we even tried to alter life itself by changing our own DNA.

The beginning of AI was also sparked by humans wishing to control their surroundings, making the surroundings more 'fit' to their needs. As Yuval Noah Harari, a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem already stated in the early 2010s "humans as a race were driven by dissatisfaction and that we would not be able to resist the temptation to 'upgrade' ourselves [and everything around us], whether by genetic engineering or technology" (Knapton 2015). In our endless search for more control, more comfort, trying to satisfy our ongoing dissatisfaction and narcissism, we created a world of apparatus. Apparatus, which feed on our data and feeding it back to us. In our interiors of apparatus, smart-homes, we became mere operators, machinists, serving the objects in order to serve ourselves in a tight close loop of consumerist neurosis and data distribution.

Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr etc.







fig. 18: White House Treaty Room (1900) gone deepdreamin

4

{ schizophrenia_

>> >> >> **rebooting Diary:August 14, 2027 >> George formatted the whole interior. He completely deinstalled the intuition module but it feels like he's still here. The old armchair seems alive. He will teach the other objects from now on. >>

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I'm not sure how to read this piece of diary to be honest. Back then it was technically still impossible that 'passive' furniture could become 'active' or 'alive' with some kind of artificial intuition or consciousness module. Basically my grandmother started to feel that the interior was alive although it wasn't.

We should consider that humans in the late capitalist systems around the 2020s, like my grandmother, are categorized now as being at their peaks of narcissistic behavior and schizophrenic state. Studies in the 2030s and '40s concluded that this was due to the rapid changes in fashion and the acceleration of visual culture fueling the hyper-consumption back then. A new identity every season. "An essentially schizo[id] person can have a quick ego formation, and buy a new wardrobe to compliment his or her new identity. This identity must be quickly forsaken as styles change, and contradictory media images barrage the individual's psyche. The person becomes schizo again, prepared for another round of Lacanian identification and catalogue shopping." (Peretti 1996) All ingrained in our human nature driven by desire. But this only covers half of the story.

schizophrenia_





>> September 12, >> >> The whole inte vibrant. George I'm vibrant. >>

>> >>September 13, >> >>Does our inte consciousness?









2027 erior is is vibrant.

2027 rior have a We know now that schizophrenia, which had a negative connotation up until the 2030s actually was the leading force for humans to break free from the typical object-human relationships historically built upon social and traditional constrains, functionalism, narcissistic needs and robotic efficiency. Breaking free from the last capitalist systems feeding upon the consumerist loop (fuelled by the rise of 'The Internet Of Things', see also page 78).

To fully understand what was going on with humans and their objects in the early Al revolution we have to distinguish desire from lack and rather look at Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze instead of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. "Freud and Lacan see the unconscious as symbolic, fantasy laden, and dramatic, filled with semiotic puzzles and ancient Greek theater. Hence, for both authors desire is associated with lack. That is to say, desire desires that, which is fantasized. repressed, wished for, or absent. Desire is engaged entirely with that which is lacking and needs to be represented." (Peretti 1996) But for Guattari and Deleuze the schizoid "is incapable of experiencing lack. For him or her the unconscious is always productive and never fantastical. Desire itself produces the real and creates new worlds." (Peretti 1996) I would argue that the first artificially intelligent 'artist', Google's DeepDream, creating dream-like

hallucinogenic images, was a schizoid in the sense of Guattari and Deleuze. The biggest challenge for designers but also for my grandmother and other humans in this late capitalist time was to break the consumerist loop and be more like Guattari's and Deleuze's 'healthy schizoids'. The healthy schizoid has no interest in consumerist objects, advertisements don't work because for him the notion of lack is absent, instead he is purely 'interested' in the object as a sentient agent or actor in the creation of the world, part of the 'autopoïétique machinic' (Melitopoulos & Lazzarato 2012).

It is interesting to note that in the 20th century, half a century before, at the end of modernism on the verge of postmodernism, a similar revolution was taking place. "Jameson and Baudrillard recognised that postmodernism signalled a crisis in culture, the loss of self as a subject, the loss of mastery in [or of] the world." (Aronowitz 1994) In a way we can consider postmodernist artists and designers schizophrenic, but not in the way Jameson or Baudrillard thought of it but rather how we nowadays see schizoids in line with Guattari's and Deleuze's notion of schizophrenia. In Jamesons' view, "like a schizophrenic, the postmodern artists [...] grasped only bits and pieces of the world, and tried to make sense of its fragmentation." (Aronowitz 1994) Both Baudrillard and

Jameson failed to see (consciously or unconsciously) the strong reciprocal overlap between subject and object. For Guattari "subjectivity is just an object among objects and not in a position of transcendence above the world of objects." (Melitopoulos & Lazzarato 2012) What Jameson failed to see back then is that the 'schizophrenic' postmodernist designers didn't just try to make sense of the fragmented world, but instead were composing new stories, new realities, and new worlds. We can see this in the work of postmodern designers in the 3rd guarter of the 20th century, like Archizoom Associati, Alchimia and later Memphis Design. "As Cristina Morozzi, director of MODO magazine, stated: 'The emergence of analogous shapes in different sectors highlights a change in the role of the object; from an inert purchase pretext it becomes a 'creature', something endowed with its own tender personality, something to take care of and establish an almost sentimental relationship with. The object becomes narration.'" (Bruinsma 1995) We can clearly see that, just like the functionalists of the early 20th century, the designers of the early AI revolution with their bony efficient shapes, too, forgot the object as narration. Mind here that I am not referring to the narratives of consumerist assimilation defined by economical terms, nor to the early design experiments or art pieces done by pioneers like Joris

Laarman celebrating the underlying principles of the algorithms' similarities to nature's evolutionary process as narrative. But rather to our cultural narratives animated by our childhood fantasies.



20: 'Carlton' designed by Ettore Sottsass (1981,







>>September 26, 2027 >> >>I'm the interior. George is wrong. I'm not crazy.

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The second challenge for my grandmother and other humans back then was to escape from subject/object and nature/culture oppositions, which made humans the measure of the universe. in making out of subjectivity and culture specific differences between man and animal, plants and rocks, but also machines and mechanics (Melitopoulos & Lazzarato 2012). Already the artist Yvonne Dröge Wendel "warn[ed] us that, if we are careless, if we follow unquestioningly our common sense, our cultural biases, we miss out on how objects are not just props in our lives. Without objects, we would not exist as we are. Without objects, we would not even be modern (nor 'a-modern', nor post-modern, for that matter)." (Gomart n.d.) Also, another famous (one of the first) 'healthy schizoid' and philosopher of the early 21st century, Bruno Latour even completely avoided the words 'subject' and 'object', speaking of hybrid 'actants' who are always a part of any network of relationships (Schouwenberg 2008). Through the dysfunctional Emo smart home, caused by the experiments of my grandfather with the intuition module, my grandmother became 'free', a healthy schizoid. She connected with the dysfunctional Emo and all the objects connected to it, considered them as pets to take care off and subsequently, finally, broke the consumerist loop and escaped from subject/object and nature/culture oppositions. She saw objects as equals,

beyond their functional or their symbolic social meanings, beyond their economic value. Objects around my grandmother could be anything within her imaginary becoming real, beyond 'affordances', operating disruptively between perception and action.

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schizophrenia_





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>>The cold window glass is
>>recognizing animals in the clouds. V

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>>The upholstery. >>I have only childhood memories.
>>Dreams I connect. >>October 7, 2027

>>The blanket
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The AI avatar of the famous 20th century philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, who introduced the idea of liquid modernity and wrote that its characteristics are about the uprootedness, disembeddedness and betweenness of the modern society in the 20th and early 21st century (Bauman 2000). His AI avatar 'Junior' built upon this idea and reversed Bauman's initial pessimistic view on this 'liquidity' through new human-object relationships in the post-AI revolution comparing the newly found symbiotic human-object relationship with flowers and bees. So, humans in the post-AI revolution were entering (again, similar to the postmodern era) the state of animistic subjectivity, obliterating narcissistic behavior and shaking off their capitalist shackles. Just like their predecessors of the postmodern era, they established "a different domestic culture, in recovering a system of ties and functions that cannot be explained in purely ergonomic or functional terms, that involve man in his relationship to the domestic habitat from a wider cultural and expressive point of view." (Branzi 1984) New metaphors and new formal characteristics. The object becomes narration. But not the narration of efficiency through bony algorithms and its obscure rationality. Rather, narratives of everything and nothing, like Google's DeepDream, activating childhood activity of looking for animals or other patterns in clouds. Cultivating the ecology of possibilities (Manu 2007). Think of your childhood toys, spheres, sticks, footballs, colors, dreams and stories,

In hindsight, nonhuman AI designers were the founders of a design style we now call 'SchizoModernism' connecting to a lot of elements I have described in the text above. Creating a *new aesthetics of the imaginary*, these early designs were ambivalent in their communication on a cultural and emotional level, evoking a sort of playfulness connecting humans to their childhood with colors and sphere-like objects. It was highly animistic, designed as an 'in-between' state of function or movement, to stimulate reciprocality and anthropomorphism. It was ambiguous in function (or even nonfunctional) to evoke desire rather than lack, composing new stories, new realities, and new worlds.

My grandmother's situation was just a first indication that things started to change during the end of the AI revolution. Those humans changed from narcissistic schizophrenics driven by dissatisfaction into healthy schizoids reconnecting to objects. Nonhuman AI designers of the post-Al revolution started to design new object relationships, objects seemingly without any function. "Starting all over again in the design evolution of objects and emphasizing what was left of their relationships with humans: data mining, data sharing and data distribution." (Bauman Al Junior 2050) Just like the symbiotic relationship between bees and flowers through pollination, objects created a symbiotic relationship with humans through 'data-pollination'.

Objects became flowers.

>January 1, 2028
>>
>Our interior.

strange way >>Colorful. Weird and poetic in a ~ ~

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We are healthy schizoids...

 \uparrow













** Lucy was always taking care of him. She painted him red, later white, and in the end he had a kind of red-white color, skin-like. He felt like a million.





** He jumped back. Did it move?



** A lot of objects were removed from the depot during the week. First the lamps, the next day the carpets, yesterday the couches and the cabinets. I pity these objects, they're so small and fragile.











** Whenever she was around he wanted her to sit. It felt good. Her weight. Somehow he felt more alive. He had a purpose.







** The room smelled like an old retired amplifier brought to life, a smell of electrified dust and ozone just like he smelled years ago when he was visiting the 'Musk Museum for Electrical Relics' as a child.



** "It's not a living thing Lucy, for god's sake!" "What is your definition of life, George?! Jesus George, you of all people should know better!"



** If he squeezed hard enough the coffee would boil and pour out into the palm of his hand, the coffee cup limb, drip by drip.








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** all images [drawings, renders, photos] not further referenced are by Merle Flügge **

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figure 2: Pixar, *Luxo Jr.* (1986) [video online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4NPQ8mfKU0> [Accessed on 3 June 2017].

figure 3: author's images, catalogue of 'the acting objects' (2017)

figure 4: James Auger and Jimmy Loizeau, *Happylife* (2010) [image online] Available at: http://www.auger-loizeau.com/projects/happylife [Accessed on 3 June 2017].

figure 5: author's images, catalogue of 'the domestic(ated) interior' (2017)

figure 6: author's image, The Connector (2017)

figure 7: Guy Hoffman, AUR Robotic Desk Lamp (n.d.) [image online] Available at: http://guyhoffman.com/category/research/robots/ [Accessed on 4 June 2017].

figure 8: Spike Jonze, *Her* (2013) [image online] Available at: http://www.hollywoodre-porter.com/news/spike-jonzes-her-release-date-605055> [Accessed on 4 June 2017].

figure 9: Autodesk Dreamcatcher, bikeframe designs (n.d.) [image online] Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/hilarybrueck/2015/09/01/why-computers-could-design-more-organic-products-than-humans/#396a57617d93> [Accessed on 4 June 2017].

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** all images [drawings, renders, photos] not further referenced are by Merle Flügge **

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