

“Impossible Territories”: Experiments around the Notions of “Nature” and “Artifice” in Contemporary Artistic Practices

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Abstract

The present article aims to analyze, based on the concepts of “territory”, “deterritorialization”, and “reterritorialization” proposed by French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the terms “nature” and “artifice” in their potential relationship with the realms of contemporary artistic practices. In dialogue with these concepts, the article seeks to comprehend how the spheres of production and “artealization” of art are immersed in a continuum of flows, exchanges, contaminations, and interferences between both territories – the natural and the artificial – becoming, symbolically and conceptually, an alternative(s) to the historically polarized essence of the terms. Or, as the French philosopher Clément Rosset would say - a form of “naturalization of the human being through the denaturalization of the idea of nature itself”.

Keywords: impossible territories; nature & artifice; deterritorialization & reterritorialization; art; artistic practices.

01

Nature & Artifice:

An etymological perspective and the quest for a definition

*Nature is a temple with living columns,
from which, often, emerge some confused words.*

Baudelaire cit. Senior, 1968 [1959], p. 94¹

Throughout the history of human thought, the idea of "nature" has always appeared under the auspices of a mirage, vanishing when believed to have captured it, and emerging at an unforeseen point on the horizon, enigmatically abandoning that point the moment one attempted

¹ Senior, John. *The way Down and Out: The Occult in Symbolist Literature*. New York: Greenwood, 1968. Obra original publicada em 1959.

to fix their gaze upon it (Rosset, 1974 [1973], pp. 18-19). Certainly, from early on, human beings exercised their capacity to question nature. It is intriguing to note that at all junctures in history where an idea of “nature” seemed to be “evaporating”, a new one took its place. One of the most concise summaries of this process is supported, for instance, by the French geographer Eliséé Reclus, who asserts that “human beings are nature becoming conscious of itself”, as nature, not as its contradiction (Reclus cited in Carvalho, 2003 [1991], p. 66). The fact is that in the current context (also in the realms of Art), we speak and reproduce this word so frequently that we often fail to realize the multiple meanings it can bear. However, the question remains: – What is “nature”? – “Isn’t it merely the product of a history in the course of which it acquired a series of interpretations that ended up making it unintelligible? Isn’t it rather vague to seek the secret of the word in a single sense?” (Merleau-Ponty, 2000 [1995], p. 3).

“Like all words that denote a very general idea, the word ‘Nature’ seems clear when we use it, but when we reflect upon it, it appears complex and perhaps even obscure” (Lenoble, 2002 [1969], p. 183). Regardless of the name it finds opportune occasion for expression, it “arises as one of the greatest obstacles that isolates human beings from reality, replacing the chaotic simplicity of existence with the orderly complication of the world” (Rosset, 1974 [1973], pp. 9-10).

When we look at the evolutionary history of the conceptions of “nature” and “artifice”, we see that there are various theories, concepts, and terminologies that contribute to the construction of these domains². Many of the definitions attributed today to the notion of “nature” precisely illustrate the difficulty of capturing it in a single and objective sense. One of the most common meanings present in many current and specialized dictionaries, especially in Philosophy, is that which, following the naturalist tradition (i.e.: Ancient Naturalism – 4th century BC to 15th century AD: Plato and Aristotle; Modern Naturalism – 2nd half of the 17th century: René Descartes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau), distinguishes “nature” as that which happens by itself, what has not been created by humans and remains untouched, though not immutable; and “artifice” as what is manufactured or produced through human interventions (Id., *Ibid.*, p. 14). According to Didier Julia, the French philosopher André Lalande in “Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie” (1960) points out the ambiguous sense of the word, namely: – the set of characteristics that define a being, a thing (animal, human nature); – the material world, specifying whether we consider it from a scientific point of view as the physical universe, or from a metaphysical point of view as an organic totality; – what does not originate from human art or industry; and, finally, – the set of tendencies or

² Such as, for example: – the material world and its phenomena; – the forces and processes that produce and control all phenomena of the material world; – the laws of nature; – the set of all beings and forces that make up the universe and the phenomena that occur in it; – the active force that established and maintains the natural order of everything that exists; – the collection of visible things as the environment where human beings live; – the natural order of the universe; – the world of living things; – the beauties of nature; – the primitive state of existence untouched and uninfluenced by any form of civilization or artificiality; among others.

temperament that constitute the natural state of an individual, as opposed to what art, civilization, or their own will can add to it (character that we attribute to ourselves) (Lalande cited in Julia, 2002 [1991], pp. 176-177).

Resulting from notable shifts in meaning over the centuries, the origin of philosophical speculation around the notion of “nature” dates back to 6th century BC Greece³ – a pioneering moment in the establishment of explanatory principles for the natural world through a renewed and genuine form of reflection on it, human beings, and their universe – Philosophy – which, as previously mentioned, definitively marked Western Culture with the opposition between the “world of nature” and the “world of society” (Carvalho, 2003 [1991], p. 30). Despite the conceptual and methodological framework on which conceptions of the world and “nature” were based undergoing profound shifts over different epochs⁴, it’s worth noting that philosophical considerations regarding “nature” seem to have oscillated almost always between two opposing tendencies: on the one hand, a tendency marked by vitalists (i.e.: Pythagoras; Aristotle), idealists (i.e.: Immanuel Kant; Georg Friedrich Hegel; Arthur Schopenhauer), and romantics (i.e.: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; Friedrich von Schelling), who extended the concept of organism to apparently inanimate beings, situating the principle of nature’s movement within the bodies themselves that move and connecting every part of the cosmos through an order immanent to nature itself – that is, a tendency that sees “nature” as divine, animated, or as a vast living organism. And, on the other hand, the atomists (i.e.: Democritus; Epicurus), rationalists (i.e.: René Descartes; Baruch de Spinoza; Gottfried Leibniz), and mechanists (i.e.: Francis Bacon; Thomas Hobbes; John Locke), who transformed nature into a lifeless machine, whose movement is always caused by external factors – and here we are facing a tendency that conceives “nature” as a great mechanized and soulless machine (Gonçalves, 2006, pp. 7-10).

³ Even though the origin of philosophical speculation around nature can be situated around that time, the expression “*Filosofia Naturalis*” – Philosophy of Nature – would only be employed in the 1st century – the first of the Christian Era – by the Roman philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca in his work “*Naturales Quaestiones*,” dated to 62 AD (Gonçalves, 2006, p. 6). According to the British philosopher Robin George Collingwood, Greek thinkers would be the first to view the natural world as a world of moving bodies that “was not only alive but intelligent; not only a vast animal endowed with ‘soul’ or its own life, but also a rational animal with its own ‘mind’” (1986 [1945], p. 10). In this sense, one of their main objectives was precisely the search for an originating substance or a fundamental principle, according to which all things would be constituted, aiming to provide explanations and foundations for the newly discovered and recognized “world of nature” (Gonçalves, 2006, p. 14). More specific discussions on the “Greek world” and organic conceptions of nature can be found in: Collingwood, Robin George. *Ciência e Filosofia: A Ideia de Natureza* (F. Montenegro, Trad.). Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1986. (Original work published in 1945)

⁴ And here, we refer to some of the key historical moments where the path of nature did nothing but assert itself, namely: from a “mythical conception of nature” among so-called “primitive” peoples – to the “organic nature” of the Greeks – to the “supernatural nature”, heavily influenced by Judeo-Christian thought (which would progressively be overcome) – up to the “intelligent machine” of the modern world, implemented through an entirely new way of thinking and acting, consequently marked by profound changes in social, political, economic, and scientific relationships brought about by the so-called “Industrial Revolution”. For example, see “*Ciência e Filosofia: A Ideia de Natureza*” (1986 [1945]) by Robin George Collingwood, which provides a historical review of the concept of “nature”, from its Greek origins to Modernity. This work is presented as an analytical, non-critical study of how naturalist ideology transformed into a historical ideology in the 20th century, gradually taking historical significance as the ideological turn of nature. Also, see “*História da ideia de natureza*” (2002 [1969]) by the French theorist Robert Lenoble, an unfinished work published posthumously, which mainly addresses the idea of nature in Greco-Latin philosophy and the idea of nature in modern philosophy (Renaissance and 17th century).

Indeed, many authors⁵, in their attempt to define nature – its sense, its meaning, and primarily its origin – have dedicated parts of their research to an exhaustive and detailed exploration of the Western historical conception of “nature”. However, that will not be our task here. Any references throughout the text regarding some of the main philosophical considerations woven through various historical periods about the “natural world” will always serve the purpose of possibly understanding their diverse current formulations and their potential relationship with the phenomenon – Art.

Often dominated by religious conceptions and scientific notions, encompassing attitudes of fear and reverence, curiosity and admiration, study and knowledge, manipulation and communion, the meaning of the term “nature” remains deeply rooted in the fundamental principles of all knowledge (Castro, 2010, p. 129). Although common sense might consistently push us towards a definition of “nature” understood as the primitive state of existence, untouched and unaffected by any form of civilization or artificiality – a concept that systematically opposes the realms of Art – it would be naive on our part to believe that our current understanding of “nature” can be easily captured in a singular and definitive concept. This reinforces the very impossibility of contemplating nature without it inevitably being permeated by artifice (Merleau-Ponty, 2000 [1995], p. 138). Moreover, a careful look at history will confirm that this understanding will always depend on our perception of nature, of ourselves, and consequently, on the purpose attributed to it, based on the needs and goals arising from our social and cultural relationships (Carvalho, 2003 [1991], pp. 4-8). – And art, possibly, is a constitutive part of these continuous mutualities.

The history of nature is also the history of human beings themselves, as they don't relate to or understand nature in an isolated, abstract, or generic manner, but primarily according to the needs imposed by their relationships with each other (Id., Ibid., p. 19). According to French theorist Robert Lenoble, a history of the idea of nature is simultaneously a history of awareness of the world, of the liberation from fears and anxieties, from magic, of accepting mechanical laws that regulate the cosmos (Lenoble cited in Beaudé, 2002 [1969], pp. 16-21). For the author, the concept of “nature” expresses less a passive reality than an attitude of human beings toward things. In this sense, there isn't a nature in itself; there is only a “conceived nature” that implicitly involves the participation of the thinking subject, without which its existence could not even be speculated (Lenoble cited in Beaudé, 2002 [1969], pp. 16-21). In agreement with Lenoble, we find in “O conceito de Natureza” (1994 [1920]) by British philosopher Alfred North Whitehead a position that distinguishes two ways of thinking about

⁵ In addition to the aforementioned authors, namely Collingwood and Lenoble, one can also refer to “O conceito de natureza na história do pensamento ocidental” (2000) by Swiss philosopher Thomas Kesselring, which similarly traces the history of the concept of “nature” in the Western context. The article covers the period from Classical Antiquity to the end of the 20th century, analyzing five specific periods – Ancient Greece; Middle Ages; the first phase of Modernity; the second phase of Modernity (19th and early 20th centuries); and the last decades of the 20th century.

nature: homogeneously, when we think “about nature without thinking about thinking”; and heterogeneously, when we think “about nature in conjunction with thinking about the fact that nature is an object of thought” (Id., *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8). In other words, he advocates an empiricism that attributes to the apprehension of the sensible the role of linking the mind to nature: “Today in philosophy and science, there is an apathetic acquiescence with the conclusion that it is impossible to produce any coherent account of nature as revealed to us in sensory apprehension without forcibly bringing to the surface its relations to the mind” (Id., *Ibid.*, p. 35).

Whatever definitions, explanations, or answers have been presented throughout the centuries by various human groups, societies, cultures, or social classes, the only conviction that seems to persist is that they always depend on the ideas and objectives of those who explain or define them (Carvalho, 2003 [1991], pp. 12). Returning to Lenoble once again, even common dictionaries or encyclopedias seem nowadays to avoid committing to any precise definition of the term, often defining it as “‘the set of things that exist naturally’ and if, in order to obtain further clarification, we look for an explanation in the adverb ‘naturally’, we find: ‘Naturally: by the forces of nature, in a natural way’” (2002 [1969], p. 183). We are facing what we could call a “tautology” or, in the author’s words, a “jigsaw” of concepts that reflect upon each other without grasping any actual reality. In other words, where “nature” refers to “naturally”, and “naturally” refers to “nature”, and it’s impossible to break out of the cycle (Id., *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184). A circle of “impossible territories”⁶.

Faced with this assertion, Lenoble reiterates in the pages that follow that “thought only begins when one attempts to escape this circle”, in the sense that, according to him, “this effort of thought to define this term that seems so clear to us is no less characteristic than the failure of verbal definitions that, as we said, reflect upon themselves” (Id., *Ibid.*).

In a brief reference to the etymological root of the word, according to the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty, the term “nature” derives from the Greek verb “φύω” (phonetically “fío”), which means “to be born”, “to sprout”, “to grow”, alluding to the vegetal realm and consequently to an idea of creative spontaneity, birth, and harmonious development (2000, p. 4). The author further adds a connection to the Latin verb “nascor” – “to be born”, “to live” – thus demonstrating the well-founded possibility that the primordial sense of the term might have been established precisely from this notion of “being born” present in both Greek and Latin languages (Id., *Ibid.*). Terry Eagleton, a British philosopher and literary critic, also investigated into the quest for the meaning of the word “nature”, presenting, in contrast to

⁶ “Impossible territories” is a term used in this article to highlight the difficulty mentioned throughout the text of fully separating or symbiotically unifying the terms “nature” and “artifice”, thereby pointing to their paradoxical essence, ambiguity, and intrinsic “indecibility” of the pairing. In other words, it underscores the challenge of overcoming, from an ontological (existence), phenomenological (experience), and epistemological (knowledge) perspective, their polarization. It indicates a “swampy territory”, where their boundaries are transitional and shifting, preventing a singular and fixed definition of their meaning or interpretation of their significance.

Merleau-Ponty, a definition stemming from a discussion of the idea of culture: "Like culture, the word [nature] means what is around us as well as what is within us" (2003 [2000], p. 16). In a highly perceptive manner, he draws attention to the indebtedness of the meaning of the term "culture" to the concept of "nature". Eagleton goes even further, asserting that "although it is currently fashionable to view nature as a derivative of culture, etymologically speaking, culture is a concept derived from nature. One of its original meanings is 'cultivation', or engagement with natural growth. (...) The word 'coulter', cognate with 'culture', means the blade of the plough. Thus, we have derived the word we use to describe the loftiest human activities from toil and tillage, from reaping and sowing" (Id., Ibid., p. 11).

Still in the realm of etymology and in accordance with Eagleton, if the Latin root of the term "culture" is "colere", which can encompass everything from cultivating and inhabiting to worshiping and protecting – or more precisely, "the active pursuit of natural growth – then the word suggests a dialectic between the artificial and the natural, between what we do to the world and what the world does to us. (...) It's not so much about deconstructing the opposition between culture and nature as it is about recognizing that the term 'culture' is already, in itself, this deconstruction" (Id., Ibid., pp. 12-13). However, – Can we rightfully claim that this conventionality we call "nature" is now closer to something that in its essence is already artificialized? In other words, – Can the concept of "nature" be conceived outside the sphere of human interaction? Or, – Is this notion today immersed in a symbiotic relationship of ambiguous interdependence with all human activities? And if so, – Might the territories of thought and artistic practice in the context of Contemporary Art contribute to a possible "re-signification" and "re-definition" of the "human-nature" dichotomy? – How can we cross this seemingly "impossible territories"?

02

Antagonisms and Creative Symbioses: The dialectic of "nature-human" and "human-nature"

In the Western world, there has existed since ancient times an ancestral tradition of considering Art – or "artifice" – as a mirror or extension of "nature" (Carlson, 2000, p. 3). In other words, "the natural extended through other means" (Clausewitz cited in Rosset, 1974 [1973], p. 13). According to the French philosopher Clément Rosset, Art thus emerges as an epiphenomenon of the intrinsic phenomena and processes of the natural world (p. 13) – a perspective that has guided many movements throughout the history of Western art, imposing the idea that Art also corresponds to a natural impulse (Castro, 2010, p. 131).

Without forgetting that all imitation carries the badge of artifice, we observe that one of the reasons behind this circumstance is that, for centuries, the representation of reality was the responsibility of intellectual means, techniques, and cultural inventions (such as drawing, painting, sculpture) that over time received various denominations, such as reproduction,

expression, illusion, simulation, among others, but always as shifts or variations around the notion of “mimesis” (Santaella cited in Wanner, 2010, p. 55) – a successful imitation of the natural world, understood not as a simple reproduction or copy, but rather as the presentation of something as real (Guinsburg cited in Wanner, *Ibid.*, p. 56) – an “accurate mirror of the world” (Manguel cited in Wanner, *Ibid.*, p. 54). To help us understand how nature was seen by culture as an object to conquer, dominate, and manipulate, we find in “The Human Condition” (1958) by the German philosopher Hannah Arendt an argument that points to the importance of recognizing in human beings, more than their condition as “homo sapiens”, their condition as “homo faber”⁷, that is, “one who fabricates” and whose actions lead us inseparably to that third condition (nature – human – product of human action) which, at first, also presents itself imbued with externality and artifice (p. 173). However, it’s worth noting that over time, the power of the image and simulacrum over the real object has led a wide audience to transfer to the observation of these constructs the contemplation that was reserved for nature (Castro, 2010, p. 119). This inevitable substitution of the true feeling of nature with simulations would necessarily entail significant changes and degenerations, positively and negatively contributing to distort and vastly expand the way the concept of “nature” can be perceived, experienced, and felt physically, psychologically, emotionally, and conceptually.

For centuries, the concept of “nature” as configured within the “landscape” – the latter understood as the most conventional means of presenting the natural world and consequently, the most prevalent model for its communication – has been grounded in ancestral myths of organization and cultural symbols perpetuated through aesthetic observation (e.g., heroic, romantic, sublime, ideal, symbolic, idyllic, real, picturesque landscapes). In fact, historically, artists sought to imitate, explore, render expressive, dramatize, intensify, and magnify, or conversely, add, organize, regulate, frame, compose, domesticate, and master the natural world. However, with the emergence of artistic avant-gardes within the context of Modernism, this dualistic spectrum of actions expanded significantly, leading to a noteworthy transformation in the relationship between “art” and “nature”. This transformation has consequently achieved a level of autonomy from other narratives and transcended its previously solely representational essence (*Id.*, *Ibid.*, p. 181).

⁷ The terminology discussed here can be illuminated through the concept of the “Anthropocene”, originally coined in the 1980s by American biologist Eugene F. Stoermer and subsequently popularized by Dutch chemist Paul Crutzen. This term denotes a geological epoch of Earth, characterized by a significant human presence (“homo faber”). While an official starting date remains undefined, various interpretations point either to the commencement of modern industrialization (late 18th century), during which human impact surged with advancements like the steam engine, or to an even more substantial temporal anchor – the advent of agriculture and sedentary cultures (approximately 8000 years ago) – marked by substantial changes across domains such as territory, environment, and ecosystems. For more focused discussions on this matter, one can refer to works like: Steffen, Will; Grinevald, Jacques; Crutzen, Paul & McNeill, John. The Anthropocene: Conceptual and historical perspectives. *Philosophical Transactions of The Royal Society: A Mathematical, Physical & Engineering Sciences*, nº 369, pp. 842-867, march, 2011; Purdy, Jedediah. *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: Harvard University Press, 2015; Davis, Heather & Turpin, Etienne. (Eds.). *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*. London: Open Humanities Press, 2015.

Beyond sentimentality and mere aesthetic contemplation, the 20th-century artists found themselves presented with the possibility of exploring and raising new questions regarding nature. This enabled them not only to engage in an inherent confrontation between themselves and the environment but also to reveal a profound desire to experience and represent space. This desire led to a need to physically and psychologically immerse themselves in a place and an active desire to intervene in the surrounding natural environment. These procedures, among many others, consequently paved the way for the formulation of an unparalleled diversity of new visual practices (e.g.: "Land Art", "Earth Art", "Environmental Art", "Performance", "Installation"), suggesting at a new ephemeral art that is updated in real spaces and time (Source, Page 181). According to "The Image and the Eye" (1981) by Austrian art historian Ernst Gombrich, the changes that occurred in the artist's way of relating to the experience of place reflected the necessity for artistic practices to respond with new approaches to the awareness that the experience of vision had degraded. Consequently, the direct, literal, and familiar representations of reality, as well as the copying of natural motifs, had impoverished the gaze (Gombrich cited in Castro, 2006, pp. 2-3).

Through the shaping, altering, and reconfiguring of "nature" into landscapes, the artist not only recognized the vital flow of its continuous movement of renewal, transformation, and invention, but also simultaneously began to attribute senses and meanings to the natural world. This was achieved by harmonizing an aesthetic dimension with a cognitive, operational, and intervention dimension (Castro, 2010, p. 153). In this sense, it ceased to be merely a matter of observing and contemplating, and instead became a matter of actively participating in the object being contemplated.

In the last three decades of the 20th century, a trend of negotiating practices and meanings emerged across various fields of human knowledge. This brought forth the extraordinary symbolic potential between human beings and their surrounding natural environment. In the face of this convergence of possible relationships and multidisciplinary approaches, artists found themselves invited to engage in anthropological and environmental reflections. This resulted in the generation of affective, phenomenological, and kinesthetic readings on one hand, and the mobilization of these readings into a broad range of interventionist methods on the other hand. These methods can be categorized as follows: – "Integrative" – using "earth" as a material. For instance, in the work "Niagara River Gorge Path Relocated" (1975) by American artist Michelle Stuart, who extended a long strip of paper, rubbed with materials from the site – soil and red shale – over the ground's landscape. This piece alludes to the original course of the Niagara Falls before they were redirected due to the last glacier's movement. – "Interruptive" – employing artificial materials in the landscape. This is reminiscent of Robert Smithson's iconic work "Spiral Jetty" (1970), where he boldly reshaped the land through significant earth-moving actions. Similarly, the work "Asphalt Air and Hair" (2017) by German artist Katharina Grosse involved spreading pink paint along the

Danish coast, creating a “mobile garden” to emphasize the constructed aspect of the place as a mediator between culture and nature. – “Engagement” – using the body in the landscape, as in performances like Hamish Fulton’s “Walking on and off the Path”. In this work, 162 people walked silently and consciously along the path that once served to build a dam. This symbolic act of walking emphasized connection and ritualized encounter. – “Implementation” – investigating ecological themes with significant political impact. Notable examples include Joseph Beuys’s “7000 Eichen (7000 Oaks)” (1982), where he planted 7000 oak trees across Kassel, Germany, each paired with a basalt stone. This act aimed to promote urban renewal and initiate a global tree-planting scheme for environmental and social change. – “Imagination” – using “earth” metaphorically for its poetic potential. Swiss artists Peter Fischli & David Weiss employed double exposure photography to create stunning layered effects in their work “Untitled (Flowers)” (1997-1998), celebrating the banality of daily existence. Similarly, Angélica Teuta’s “Inner Forest/Bosque para espacio interior” (2009) used electronic devices, paper, and colored film to construct interactive artificial landscapes that integrate sound and movement. These practices transcended the strictly symbolic realm of art, involving considerations of gender and identity, territory and politics, the place of art, and the context of its presentation (Fig. 1-2) (Kastner cited in Castro, 2010, p. 194). This transformation resonates with the words of Portuguese art historian Laura Castro, asserting that art moved from being made about nature to being made in nature; from representing to presenting; from reproducing to utilizing; from looking from a distance to incorporating itself into and within its locations (2006, p. 7).



Figure 1. Michelle Stuart, *Niagara Gorge Path Relocated* (1975), earth and shale from site on muslin-backed paper, 460 feet x 62 inches (140.2 m x 1.57 m), Artpark, Lewiston, New York, USA. © Photograph by Michelle Stuart. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:STUART_Niagara_River_Gorge_Path_Relocated.jpg.



Figure 2. Hamish Fulton, *Walking on and off the Path* (2017), group walk near the Riaño Dam, 162 people, duration: 1 hour, Fundación Cerezales Antonino y Cinia, Cerezales del Condado, León, Spain. © Photograph by Fundación Cerezales Antonino y Cinia. Source: <https://fundacioncerezalesantoninoycinia.org/actividad/caminatas-hamish-fulton/>.

In the context of Contemporary Art, the concept of “nature” has often been revisited and re-negotiated, distancing itself from the idea of an unchanging and deterministic origin, and assuming a closer affinity to something manipulable, provisional, and even virtual (Fortes, 2009, p. 542). This is because, as articulated by the Italian philosopher and art critic Gillo Dorfles in “Artificio e Natura” (2003 [1968]), even though the conflict between “nature” and “artifice” was already acute in the 20th century, the relationships between “human-nature” and “nature-object” are now immersed in a process of continuous transformation and “re-signification”, in an increasing trend that, according to the author, leads us to live increasingly surrounded by a world constructed of artificial objects: “It follows that, in the present day, we are led to live more and more surrounded by an artificial environment (...) even by artificial objects – following the many discoveries of electronic methodologies – within the realms of ‘virtual nature’, where even our sensorial experiences become artificialized (...) From all this stems (...) natural phenomena becoming increasingly completely artificial” (p. 17).

What is essential to draw from these considerations by Dorfles is precisely how the relationship between art and nature has evolved in recent decades. It no longer relies on a polarized view that separates them by a line of non-correspondences and antagonisms, but rather thrives on a mutual exchange of processes and “territorialities”. Certainly, the current

relationship between artists and nature is subject to the influence of various layers of meaning stemming from diverse areas of knowledge. While not always engaged with ecological concerns, aesthetic postures, or ideological positions, many of these actions encompass a wide range of procedures, examples of which include: – Parodies of traditional scientific paradigms, incorporating poetic elements into the discourse of science (e.g.: Alberto Baraya, “Herbário de Plantas Artificiais”, 2002-). – Creation of virtual natures (e.g.: Miguel Leal, “A verdadeira Madagáscar”, 2003). – Utilization of technologies and methods of scientific observation to apprehend nature (e.g.: Matthew McCaslin, “Wall Flowers”, 2008). – Direct interference with the constitution of the natural world, altering its original characteristics (e.g.: Marta de Menezes, “Nature?”, 1999-2000). – Physical transformation of the territory through the construction of a new nature and the creation of large artificial landscapes: long rows of stones embedded in the terrain (e.g.: Richard Long, “Muir Pass Stones: A Walk of 12 days in the High Sierra”, 1995); enclosures of leaves or branches (e.g.: Gilles Bruni & Marc Babarit, “The Lean-To: Building a Temporary Shelter for Peace and Protection in Any Season”, 1995); spirals of earth, lines, and circles drawn on the ground (e.g.: Robert Smithson, “Amarillo Ramp”, 1973); massive excavations in the landscape (e.g.: Walter De Maria, “Las Vegas Piece”, 1969); large monuments made of earth, cement, iron, and amorphous fluids of industrial materials (e.g.: Nancy Holt, “Sun Tunnels”, 1973-1976); and many others (Fig. 3) (Id., Ibid., pp. 547-548).

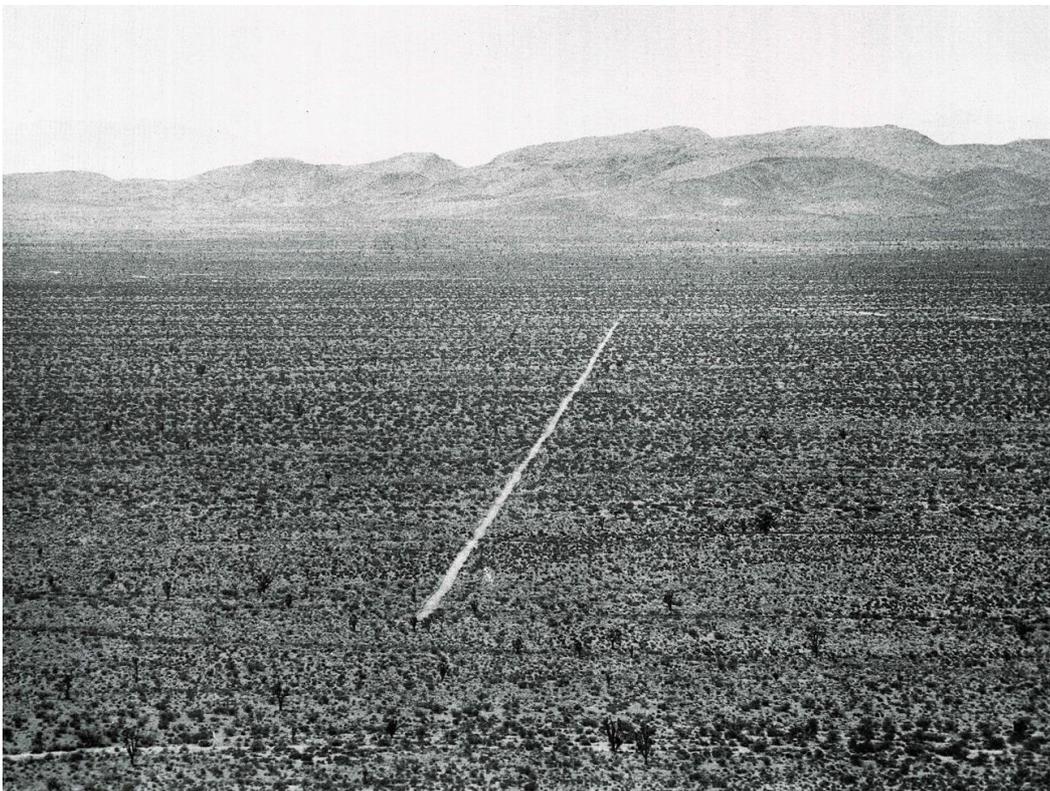


Figure 3. Walter De Maria, *Las Vegas Piece* (1969), 4,828 km, Tula Desert, Nevada, USA. © Photograph by Gianfranco Gorgoni. Source: Beardsley, John. *Earthworks and beyond* (p. 18) (4th ed.). New York & London: Abbeville Press, 2006. Original work published in 1984.

Procedures where “nature is no longer just the primordial, that is, the non-constructed, the non-instituted” by thought⁸ (Merleau-Ponty, 2000 [1995], p. 4), but something already subjected to human intervention. In other words, it is something domesticated, manipulated, transformed, and hybridized through its constant dialogue and contamination with the human: “there is no doubt that a series of actions liberated from the usual ‘natural’ parameters, the possibilities of instant and ubiquitous communication, and above all, the creation of structures, environments, and situations detached from the old physical ‘laws’ and often entirely ‘virtual’, have changed and will increasingly change the once stable and immutable relationships between the subject and the world” (Dorfles, 2003 [1968], p. 9).

This raises the following questions: Are we now entering a new historical stage in which no square inch of the Earth can be accurately called “natural”? (Vogel, 2015, p. 2) – How does the reinvention of creative processes and innovative forms of perceiving, understanding, and acting in the territory allow art to inscribe itself in this border zone of interaction and interference? Or, in other words, given such “denaturalization” and “artificialization” of the very idea of nature, – How can the artificiality of the human hand – here understood as the artist’s action – today serve as a symbolic and cognitive substitute for the phenomena of transformation and appreciation of nature? Or better yet, – What do we experience as natural in the face of an artificialized space, and vice versa?

03 Cartographies of an Alternative Paradigm: The Emptiness of the Notion of Nature

In an attempt to respond to the question posed by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in “A Gaia Ciência” (1882) – “When will nature be completely ‘de-divinized’? When will it finally be allowed to us humans to begin to be natural, to ‘naturalize’ ourselves with pure nature, recovered nature, liberated nature?” (Nietzsche cited in Rosset, 1974 [1973], p. 9) –, we find precisely in “La Anti-Natureza: Elementos para una filosofía trágica” (1974 [1973]) by Clément Rosset an attempt to overcome this old dichotomy in which “artifice” appears as the truth of existence and the idea of “nature” as an error or ideological ghost (p. 9). According to the author: “human beings will be ‘naturalized’ the day they fully embrace artifice” (Id., Ibid.). In this sense, his proposal for the “naturalization” of human beings through the “denaturalization” of the idea of nature suggests an intimate and interdependent relationship between these two modes of action (Id., Ibid., pp. 298-301). While it may seem complex to carry out Rosset’s words, another reference point can be found in “A Ideia de Cultura” (2003

⁸ “Nature is the primordial, that is, the non-constructed, the non-instituted; hence the idea of an eternity of Nature (eternal return), of a solidity. Nature is an enigmatic object, an object that is not entirely an object; it is not entirely before us. It is our ground, not what is in front of us, but what sustains us” (Merleau-Ponty, 2000 [1995], p. 4).

[2000]) by Eagleton: “The ‘natural’, a word that nowadays always has to appear in ostentatious quotation marks, is just the cultural frozen, arrested, stagnated, stripped of history, turned into spontaneous common sense or preconceived truth” (p. 122). He continues: “We are not born as cultural beings, nor as self-sufficient natural beings, but creatures whose inescapable physical nature is such that culture is a condition for survival (...) Nature is not just the Other of culture. It is also a kind of dead weight within it, something that opens an internal fracture that runs through the human subject from end to end” (Id., Ibid., pp. 129 & 142), while being simultaneously and transversely traversed by it.

The corollary of this law is the double movement of “deterritorialization” of its flows and its necessary and factitious “reterritorialization” – in human action or vice versa (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004 [1972], p. 38): “(...) life is a constant movement of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, that is, we are always passing from one territory to another, abandoning territories, founding new ones” (Haesbaert, 2004, p. 138).

When we talk about “nature” and “artifice”, especially in the realms of thought and artistic practice, but also in the realm of life in general, we are talking about “partial understandings” and necessarily incomplete ones at that (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004 [1972], p. 43), from which we cannot trace a clear path since they are systematically in transit, continuously moving from one territory to another – from nature to human action, from their seemingly artificial side, back to the domain of nature. This feedback loop leads us precisely to the phenomena of “deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization” that the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari coined from the notion of “territory” in “O Anti-Édipo: Capitalismo e Esquizofrenia 1” (2004 [1972]). That is, on the one hand, – the movement of translation, of taking the territory from someone or the territorial character from something; and on the other hand, – the action of instituting it again in another body or meaning: “there is no territory without a vector of leaving the territory, and there is no leaving the territory, that is, deterritorialization, without, at the same time, an effort to reterritorialize elsewhere” (Deleuze cited in Haesbaert & Bruce, 2002, p. 7).

According to Guattari, “territory is synonymous with appropriation, of subjectivation closed in on itself (...) it is the set of projects and representations in which a whole series of behaviors, investments in social, cultural, aesthetic, and cognitive times and spaces will pragmatically culminate” (Guattari & Rolkin cited in Haesbaert & Bruce, 2002, p. 12). Therefore, it pertains to thought and desire, the latter understood as a productive creative force (Deleuze & Guattari cited in Haesbaert & Bruce, Ibid., p. 14). However, a work of art behaves differently, operating as an element that doesn’t fit neatly into a chain or stream of things, meanings, and events. It acts, par excellence, as the link of “deterritorialization” of processes, activities, and situations external to it, which it absorbs and appropriates, “deterritorializing” that which belongs to a “territory” not its own (be it objects, things, meanings, or assemblages), “reterritorializing” them within itself and/or through itself – categorically breaking with the existential binary that pushes us into a fixed and

linear plane of things. In reality, things are rarely so defined and definitive. In most cases, they are marked by fluid and mobile flows, “impossible territories” to contain, where the same thing is permeable, at different moments, to a series of distinct “inputs” and “outputs” that make it neither entirely natural nor artificial, but perhaps a mixture of both at the same time – a mobile, permeable, and mutating operation. Now, this can be taken to the extreme, where the artwork itself can transform, becoming a “deterritorialization” of itself, peacefully or violently inscribing itself in another territory (in this case, the concept of “nature”), compelling it to “reterritorialize” based on its intervention or presence.

In this context, as an example, we could consider the work “A Floresta” (1978) by Portuguese artist Alberto Carneiro. Inflaming a sense of corporeality, a bodily impulse stemming from personal experience (Olmo, 2001, p. 129), the work documents the ritualistic journey undertaken by the sculptor through various natural environments in communion with his body. This work can be seen as a kind of “spiritual catalyst” engaged in different meditative actions that unite the self with nature (Fig. 4).

In a first moment, the artist’s body, and by extension, the artistic object – the performative action – is “deterritorialized” from the studio, gallery, or museum as it moves into a natural environment – the forest. In a second moment, within that natural space, it is also “reterritorialized” as the body becomes a foreign and ephemeral object within the location, directly interfering with its meaning. Later, through the meticulous documentation of this rigorously mapped journey, comprised of steps, pauses, and ritualized gestures – captured in 24 photographs – the artist “deterritorializes” the action once again to the realm of art, “reterritorializing” it as an object that returns to culture. In this sense, photography serves as not only a record of the body’s work within the natural space, enabling the sharing of its execution and understanding of its tenets, but simultaneously becomes a mediator between two times and two places: “the unique and irrepeatable time of the activity being recorded, and the time and place of the viewer, diverse and plural, in which the nature of art appropriates a different time and place where the artist engaged with nature” (Fernandes, 2001, p. 106).

However, it’s important to note that the notions of “territory”, “deterritorialization”, and “reterritorialization” are not employed here as a comprehensive philosophy, but rather as tools to map a mode of artistic engagement. This mode consists of dialectical processes between layers of meaning (“nature” and “artifice”), revisitations of worlds, affections, negotiations with ourselves and others, disturbances, and “states of territory”. In this context, “territorialities” become entangled and contaminated, not only in physical and geographical terms but also in senses that can be subjective – forms of thought that articulate the notions of “having” and “belonging”, oscillating between relations of “ownership” and “appropriation”. Thus, an artistic object or action can modify how we understand, experience, and interpret a specific set of values, characteristics, and meanings associated with a place or location.



Figure 4. Alberto Carneiro, *A Floresta* (1978), detail, black and white photographs and drawing on paper (24 elements), Exhibition “Modus Operandi: Obras da Coleção de Serralves” (2021), Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto, Portugal. © Photograph by Maria Regina Ramos.

In the first case, the artwork, being both everything and nothing, connects with the exterior from which it draws to construct itself. Therefore, it “deterritorializes” objects, practices, and meanings from their conventional or even natural use, incorporating them into its body and “reterritorializing” them within itself (as an artwork) and from itself (as an artwork + context). In the second case, the artwork “deterritorializes” itself, its practices, actions/objects, and meanings, inscribing them into another territory that is not its own (e.g.: it moves out of its conventional realm like museums or galleries) and intervenes, directly or indirectly, in natural spaces (e.g.: parks, woods, forests), compelling it to “reterritorialize” – to transform into a new

territory, a new context marked by new relationships among its elements, where there is a slight or substantial shift in its characteristics and how it can be experienced or perceived.

In this operation, “art” and “nature” do not oppose each other, but rather extract flows from and through themselves, acting as – “bodies without organs”⁹ – that delve into their inconclusive characteristics and definitions – an irreducible affirmation of unity (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004 [1972], p. 45). They are objects that only partially fit into these “impossible territories” of definitiveness, as their identity is composed of a dialectic of fragments of identity and context. However, for this very reason, they are not sealed boxes or non-communicating vessels, isolated entirely from their surroundings and from what they interfere with or radiate. They are pieces of different puzzles, violently inserted into each other, always local, contextual, and never specific, with discordant edges, constantly forced to overlap in this “inter” and “intra-territory” relationship – artwork + context or context + artwork (Id., Ibid.).

The artistic practice reframes the intermittent fragments of these other “territories”, including those that belong to the realm of the “natural” and “nature” (e.g.: objects, collected impressions, forms of representation and intervention, or modifications of their territory). These extend what we understand from them and through them, presenting themselves – as the Irish writer James Joyce would put it – as forms of “re-embodiment”, where certain characteristics and meanings are inscribed into a new body – the artwork – as “deterritorialized flows” (Id., Ibid., p. 46). When we closely examine many of these subjects, we delve into a vast field of investigation that seems to constantly stir, negotiate, and “re-signify” this logic of understanding the world through natural processes and constructed actions.

Certainly, a broader perspective could encompass various concepts, such as: – Domestication, Implantation, and Transplantation: explored by artists like Alan Sonfist (“Time Landscape”, 1965-1978), Meg Webster (“Glass Spiral”, 1990), and Olafur Eliasson (“The Mediated Motion”, 2001). – Ephemeral Gesture in Richard Long (“A Line Made by Walking”, 1967) and Hamish Fulton (“Sacred Magpie, Alberta”, 1999), highlighted by the transitory nature of their actions. – Temporal Perception: for example, in James Turrell’s ongoing project “Roden Crater” (from 1970) which focuses on the interplay of light and space, altering the viewer’s perception of time. – Natural Erosion: Robert Smithson’s “Amarillo Ramp” (1973) which embodies the concept of entropy and the gradual transformation of natural forms. – Natural Processes and Entropy: Hans Haacke’s “Grass Grows” (1967-1969) which emphasizes the interaction between nature and human intervention. – Fragmented Nature: Jan Dibbets’s “Land

⁹ Practice developed by Gilles Deleuze that generally pertains to the deeper reality underlying a well-formed and organized whole, constructed from entirely functional parts. However, the term can also describe the practical relationship with the literal, solid, and physical body. Initially developed in “Lógica do Sentido” (1969), this term would become a fundamental concept in “O Anti-Édipo: Capitalismo e Esquizofrenia 1” (2004 [1972]) by Deleuze and Guattari, whose meaning, now expanded and laden, would provocatively refer to literal bodies up to a certain perspective of reality of any kind.

Sea Colours” (2013) which creates a fragmented representation of nature, challenging traditional views. – Intersection of Nature and Technology: artists like Nam June Paik (“TV Garden”, 1974), Thomas Struth (“New Pictures from Paradise”, 1998-2007), and Miguel Palma (“Linha de Montagem”, 2011) which explore the convergence of nature and technology. – Humanized and Cultivated Nature: Lourdes Castro (“Sombras à volta de um centro”, 1980-1987) and Gabriela Albergaria (“Araucária Angustifolia”, 2008) which represent nature influenced and shaped by human intervention. – Expedition and Archaeology: works like Pedro Vaz’s “Lugar” (2015) and Fernando Lanhas’s “Seixos pintados” (1949-1952) which evoke the spirit of exploration and discovery. – Ecological Activism: Patricia Johanson (“Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility”, 2001) and Anne-Katrin Spiess (“Trash Collection Projects”, 2000) which address ecological concerns and environmental activism through their artworks. These diverse proposals attest to how art serves as an extension, whether legitimate or not, of our understanding of “nature”. They engage with multisensory processes, kinesthetic forms, and novel ways of experiencing or creating experiences. Therefore, these processes of “deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization” could be seen as pathways to openness to the new and the unknown, allowing for new connections that enable the acquisition of different “territorialities”.

04

Proto-Mappings:

Towards a Future Definability (Concluding Remarks)

In the contemporary context, discussing “nature” or “artifice” has become a challenge, given that these realms share processes that, within their context, are nearly inseparable and impossible to disentangle. Consequently, the foundational relational aspect that binds the human and nature is the reciprocal influence that each exerts upon the other, alternately as subject or as term/object: “We are observers of nature, whose capacity for artifice sets us apart from the natural world, while paradoxically binding us to it” (in a symbiotic and antagonistic manner), within a mutual interdependence (Crowe, 1997 [1995], p. 20).

Never before has the human being constructed and transformed the world with such intensity based on knowledge. In this sense, what we possess today is the culmination of various perspectives on nature observed throughout human history, shaped by social and cultural relations, as well as the gradual transformations undergone in scientific, artistic, and technological thought. The evolution of the definition of “nature” mirrors the evolution of thought about nature, and such a conception is composed of numerous meanings and interpretations, given that humans inhabit a “world of meanings”. In this regard, we can assert that we are currently facing a paradigm shift in concepts like “nature”, which, more than a naive return to its “original state” or an easy acceptance of its rapid disappearance, compels humanity to become acutely aware of its role in both preservation and reinvention.

Immersed in a phenomenon commonly referred to as “environmental crises”, stemming from our effective utilization of natural resources to propagate our population and material wealth (Id., Ibid., p. 8), we find ourselves in a context where the concept of “nature” and its urgent preservation have been gaining increasing prominence within political, economic, social, and environmental agendas. It is now indisputable that the safeguarding of the natural world is intricately linked to maintaining the health and survival of the human species. This interrelationship extends across all realms of human activity, ranging from seemingly inconsequential daily gestures to the formulation of regulations that govern industrial endeavors and urban life. Consequently, it has become imperative to safeguard ecological equilibrium. Expanding this awareness or intensifying its implementation, albeit often in an apparent manner, has become a central goal and agenda of many current artistic propositions. While on one hand, these endeavors navigate the ambiguous territory between the “natural” and the “artificial”, on the other hand, they contribute to nurturing new dialogues and reflections within the increasingly interconnected sphere of Contemporary Art. It is important to note that the purpose of this examination is not merely to advocate for preservationist, ecological, or activist attitudes. Rather, each of these orientations assumes a reactive stance in response to the rapid transformation of the concept of “nature”. Occasionally even paradoxically, they point to the fact that human action, recourse to technology, and scientific knowledge equally play a role in aiding the preservation of the natural world. Implicit in this endeavor is the creation of new “territorialities”.

In a world where technological innovations appear to increasingly distance us from direct engagement with the natural world – the tactile realm – seemingly leading us toward a parallel and indulgent experience produced by the technology of the “screen”, which conditions us to perceive “nature” (including ourselves) as manipulated, disembodied, and wholly removed from any context, art emerges as an immediate response to the physical environment. It challenges us to better comprehend that nature is resilient and can provide a source of reflection, catharsis, and rejuvenation (Grande, 2004, p. XV). In this context, many artistic practices manifest as an extension of this notion of nature, but one that would remain elusive unless experienced firsthand. They inherently expand our understanding of “nature” on a holistic level. Ultimately, it can be asserted that humans themselves are part of “nature”: their actions initially refer us to this idea, and then they lead us to a nature in which they are inherently embedded. An example of this perspective can be drawn from the use of a simple image, whether photographic, pictorial, or cinematic. Undoubtedly, an image, entirely structured by 0s and 1s or any other electronic, mechanical, or manual translation of the surrounding medium, can attest to this argument. It actively contributes to shaping or distorting our understanding of the concept of “nature”, even while remaining a “simulacrum” of nature

itself. An image depicting those distant universes – the cosmos – cannot be experienced by humans except through its necessary “artificialization” as a record of its existence.

However, “nature” is not merely an image, sound, or phenomenological and kinesthetic experience. It is primarily, synchronically and diachronically, the amalgamation of all images, sounds, spaces, and times. It is the comprehension of the incomprehensible, that which resists conceptualization, and therefore transcends and surpasses the human realm. Hence, the attempt to produce a definitive definition is merely an endeavor in a realm of impossibility, a vestige of that “anthropocentrism” which once placed humans at the center of the universe, capable of arranging and comprehending this “chaosmos” – to use a term by Félix Guattari – from their vantage as a grain or a small ant. The very definition of “nature” is inherently flawed, as everything used to define it corresponds merely to the expression – “a needle in a haystack”. In this case, an immense haystack where thought itself is just a needle. This is also because, apart from the epistemological choices explored throughout this article, we are aware that lenses informed by perspectives such as “colonial”, “decolonial”, or “post-colonial” worldviews, as well as modes of thought revolving around concepts like the “Anthropocene”, “Ecocriticism”, and “Environmental Activism”, or moral and ethical understandings concerning sustainability, could equally contribute to introducing new (often contradictory) viewpoints regarding the entirety of the “human-nature” dichotomy.

Still, it is a worthy effort, albeit incapable of embracing such vast dimensions. This is because speaking of “nature” without knowing it in its entirety presupposes an act of pure divination. Or, in other words, of pure non-comprehension that can only be perceived through the human need to dominate, express, and contain everything around it using its languages, unaware of the imprecision of its tools – of its own knowledge. Art cannot escape this condition by “default”. In this context, the artistic object or action somehow allows for bridging this gap, as it enables mapping such vast amplitude with all its “artifice”, adding to it the idiosyncrasy of the viewer’s gaze, turning that thing into a condition of “difference”, where the viewer distorts the observed thing, which also exists as a “differential condition” (Didi-Huberman, 2005 [1992], pp. 19-21). Through its processes of “deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization”, the work of art contributes to this expanded vision of the concept of “nature” and, consequently, to mapping the mutability of its phenomena. It does not substitute for it; instead, it embeds itself within its physical, symbolic, and conceptual territories, speaking its peculiar language. And for this very reason, not being entirely “artifice”, it expresses, in all its “artificiality”, an irreplaceable “other nature” that adds to this greater “nature”, while conveying a part of itself.

Talking about nature today means discussing an expanded field of experiences – its tools and technologies, its additions and suppressions – which serve as vehicles and extensions for our mind and body, in a quest to map the boundary of the incomprehensible itself – the meaning of the concept of “nature”. The role of art, rather than serving the ultimate

search for definability of this conception, surrenders itself to it, sharing in its most hidden spaces and places, intervening at the level of its most elementary things, merging within its processes of continuous mutability, assuming and shaping its “everchanging cartographies”. If we can still talk about “nature” today, then we speak of a state of affairs that affects, but is simultaneously affected by human action and its practices (art), “re-affecting” them inexorably in a relationship of “pseudo-equilibriums” (Guattari, 2013 [1989], p. 10).

In a world so profoundly “artificialized” and “virtualized”, yet fortunately immersed in nature, it is a fact that the interest in the natural world continues to prevail in contemporary visual arts as a significant and heterogeneous symbol of its vitality. While on one hand, they carry with them the nostalgia for the “real nature”, on the other hand, they embrace the “simulacrum”¹⁰ as an important part of their renewal. Here, where the movement of “deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization” of art itself reigns, we not only witness the movement that tears, drags, distorts, and chews upon the object of appropriation (“nature”), but also its opposite – an unfolding into reproductions of new lands, inseparable from the static points (incapacities to act) that interrupt them, exasperate them, or cause them to go in circles, only to “reterritorialize” in the experience of the work of art – an “other experiential experience” – as natural as it is artificial, as fictional as it is true (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004 [1972], pp. 136 & 332).

Artists, as mentioned earlier, seek to reinvent and renegotiate these deeply ingrained boundaries and definitions in various ways every day, contributing to the “deconstruction” of their apparent ontological and epistemological solidity. They use their practice as a mechanism to collapse the barriers that separate the “mechanical” from the “organic”, the “natural” from the “artificial”, and the “human” from the “non-human”. In the face of the dystopias of the present world, with its “Promethean” visions and accomplishments influenced by modern technologies and the intrinsically ambiguous (“contingent”) role of changes caused by human intervention, art also plays a role in “cleansing” the face of this darker horizon. Through its aesthetic and poetic languages, art critically examines our “technocentric” societies, bringing to the surface layers of manipulation and heuristic fusion in a world increasingly “hybridized” and “artealized”¹¹ by our influence upon it.

While art does not fundamentally subscribe to the ontological and epistemological asymmetry between the terms “nature” and “artifice”, it emerges, through its practices, as a determining element for a possible resolution of two deeply antagonistic and invariably complementary worlds. Experiencing “nature” in an artificial object or in a profoundly domesti-

¹⁰ See Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacros e Simulação*. Lisboa: Relógio d’Água, 1991 (Original work published in 1981).

¹¹ The term “artealization” is borrowed from the French philosopher Michel Montaigne, further developed by the French philosopher and writer Alain Roger. He argues that the landscape is “thoughtful nature”, a product of art, it is “artealized nature”. In this sense, the aesthetic perception of nature is always mediated by an artistic operation. See: Roger, Alain. *Nus et Paysages. Essai sur la fonction de l’art*. Paris: Aubier, 2001.

cated environment may raise questions and future answers regarding the definability of these “impossible territories”, in a nature that is conquered yet simultaneously impossible to conquer. In our view, it is precisely art that unveils the most “infralight” forms of dialogue and conflict between the “artifice” of the human hand and the forces of nature’s production, its “hypermutations” that position the human being ontologically – as the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset mentioned somewhere – “inside” and “outside of itself” simultaneously (Ortega y Gasset cited in Martins, 2012, p. 178). Thus, in this sense, the human being presents itself as a “second nature” (thought) that has annihilated its own “first nature”, establishing its place “within” and “as” nature, in all its creative autonomy.

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