

el motion

with Victor Barragán, Miguel Calderón, Owen Fu, Samuel Guerrero, Jihyoung Han, Empire Libre, Gerardo Rocha, Bárbara Sánchez-Kane, Ramón Saturnino, Pol Taburet, and Peter Brock

Of course, the eyes still see. Bombarded with fragmentary impressions they see too much – and register nothing. Thus the simultaneity of overstimulation and numbness is characteristic of the new synaesthetic organi[s]ation as *anaesthetics*. The dialectical reversal, whereby aesthetics changes from a cognitive mode of being ‘in touch’ with reality to a way of blocking out reality, destroys the human organism’s power to respond politically [...]¹

– Susan Buck-Morss, “Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin’s Artwork Essay Reconsidered” (1992)

Our modes of sensing have become anaesthetic, “not through numbing, but through flooding the senses,”² so that we register *too much* while retaining *too little*, diminishing our capacity to attune ourselves to contemporary reality. In late capitalism, the technocultural conditions of production have, on the one hand, disenchanted older religious and metaphysical forms of consciousness; and, on the other hand, sparked the need for a new compensatory *re-enchantment*. Commodity fetishism reanimates pseudo-mythic forces within the image-world of commodities to sustain the ideological fiction of endless novelty and guaranteed progress, thereby reproducing the motivational ground of a collective dream life.

Modernism’s recurrent desire to overcome fragmentation through a consolatory aesthetic totality, most notably in the form of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, emerged as a response to this disenchanted world. Once disenchantment has become the ordinary tone of late capitalism, however, critical practice can no longer confine itself to subverting spectacular effects in contemporary art.³ If, as Fredric Jameson suggests, postmodern thought is marked by the disappearance of the existential anguish once bound to the death of “God,” it is because disenchantment has ceased to register as a loss and has thus become the status quo. The fact that “God” is dead recedes into the background, as does the alienation of consumer society, even though both continue to permeate

¹ Buck-Morss, Susan. “Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin’s Artwork Essay Reconsidered.” In: October, Autumn, 1992, Vol. 62, p. 18.

² Buck-Morss 1992, p. 22.

³ Cf. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin’s formulation of the double logic of re-mediation, which captures the postmodern desire for immediacy through an escalating layering of hypermediacy – two sides of the same coin that structure post-digital regimes of visibility: “Our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the act of multiplying them.” (Bolter, Jay David Bolter and Grusin, Richard. *Remediation. Understanding New Media*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999, p. 5.)

everything that is, setting its tone.⁴ This unquestioned status quo habitually elicits little more than a nonchalant “it is what it is,” rendering concrete the anaesthetised inability to respond.

el motion intervenes in this impasse by testing the material ripple effects of a *critical secular mysticism* after modern and postmodern thought. It neither seeks to compensate for the loss of a transcendental guarantee through a unified aesthetic experience nor does it accept the postmodern disenchantment, with its reign of subjective relativism, as the ultimate horizon of experience. Instead, this exhibition *dowses* through a compossible space, actualised by dizzying motion and changing possibilities,⁵ for the latent cosmotechnical relations that continue to take effect beneath late capitalism’s apparent indifference. The exhibition thus asks: can art still *re-activate* the sensorium, *un-do* our sensory alienation, within the anaesthetic intensities of the present without reinstating another false unity promised by religious cult or spectacular immersion?

In dialogue with Mesoamerican cosmological thought,⁶ the artworks are curated as a constellation of partial cosmotechnical propositions.⁷ Yuk Hui defines cosmotechnics as “the unification of the cosmos and the moral through technical activities, whether craft-making or art-making.”⁸ The universalising template of Western individuation homogenises these historically sedimented and cosmogeographically situated models of relating to the world and thus, obscures the manifold cosmotechnical relations nested within the local configurations of globalisation’s unequal infrastructures of circulation. By contrast, each work rehearses how artistic activity might reconfigure the relations between moral and cosmic orders threaded through a particular way of life and constrained by cosmogeographic specificities. The cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe at Tepeyac, for instance, emerged through a violent colonial reordering of worship. Catholic authorities promoted Marian veneration at a site associated with Nahua devotion, reorientating established ritual practices around a new sacred image within Catholic worship. Such a reconfiguration makes concrete how ritual objects and images, understood as cosmotechnics, enact a specific relation to the world within a dedicated architectural space.

⁴ Jameson, Frederic. “The Aesthetics of Singularity.” In: *New Left Review*, N°92, March/April 2015, 125, <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii92/articles/fredric-jameson-the-aesthetics-of-singularity>, accessed August 17, 2026.

⁵ Anderwald, Ruth and Grond, Leonhard. “Contemplations: A Perspective on Reflexivity Out of the ‘Brackish Waters’ of Artistic Research.” In: *Revisiting Reflexivity. Liveable Worlds in Research and Beyond*, ed. Sarah R. Davies et al., Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2025, p. 219-240.

⁶ Cf. Arsenault, Lou Manuel. *Of Enemies & Venison. First Materials for an Aztec Cosmotechnics*, Berlin: Becoming Press, 2026.

⁷ Cf. Hui, Yuk. *Art and Cosmotechnics*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2021.

⁸ Hui, Yuk. “Cosmotechnics as Cosmopolitics.” In: *e-flux Journal*, No. 86, November 2017, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/86/161887/cosmotechnics-as-cosmopolitics/>, accessed August 17, 2026, p. 6.

Within the gallery transformed into a shrine-like dwelling space, these heterogenous narratives make contact and jointly bring forth an apocryphal mythology of contemporary reality. A rope suspended across the gallery guides the movement of the visitors through the exhibition. Unlike Ariadne's thread, their walk-through withholds the promise of an assured exit from present-day contradictions. This spatial arrangement holds the works' exhibition value in tension with their capacity to retain a ritual charge, without claiming to restore their cult value or concealing the techno-historical conditions of their mediation.⁹

The following four artistic practices articulate situated points of entry into the wider constellation of *el motion*.

Jihyoung Han collects memes, fads, and online imagery from the disremembered digital cultural debris of history, fragments haunted by spectral absence yet charged with latent virtual potentials. In her paintings, these degraded remnants return as haunted icons within speculative constellations that express the sensory saturation of platform economies. In doing so, Han dowses for not-yet-actual modes of world-making.

Miguel Calderón photographs Buddhist sculptures encountered in mattress stores, where devotional figures become unlikely companions to a trial sleep before purchase. Adopting the tone of a nonchalant "it is what it is," the series turns irony into a deadpan critique. It makes visible the mundane accommodation of emptied-out ritual charge within commercial displacement, exposing the absurdity with which religious imagery is rendered decorative and absorbed into the commodity image-world of late capitalism.

Bárbara Sánchez-Kane's engagement with queer identity, masculinity, religious iconography, and incorporated objects lets familiar materials acquire a relic-like charge without becoming devotional objects in any conventional sense.

Drawing on the Vedic equanimity of karma, Empire Libre's sculpture holds the decorative and the functional, chaos and harmony, gender and queerness in unresolved tension. Based on an ornamental drawing by Christoph Jamnitzer's sourced from *Neuw Grottesken Buch* (1610), it reworks early modern European craft knowledge through digital modelling, CNC machining, and bronze casting, translating the source material into a relic-like sculptural hybrid between different cosmotechnical models.

The critical secular mysticism at stake in *el motion* dowses for the cosmotechnical efficacy of the relations enacted among bodies, symbolic signs, and the exhibition's constellation of artworks that may nonetheless produce real, if partial and indeterminate, *ripple effects in the world*.

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⁹ Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In: *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken Books, 1969, p. 217-251. Originally published in 1936.

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