

Molecule of interest

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David Dale Gallery

161 Broad Street

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A Critical Embrace
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At home in bed, tucked under a blanket, I am watching the 1977 film *The Powers of Ten** on my laptop. If you're unfamiliar, the premise is this: in ten minutes, the camera zooms inwards and outwards, shifting scales every ten seconds, multiplying each distance times ten. We start with a couple enjoying a picnic on a blanket in a busy metropolitan city. From here, the lens slowly pulls away from the blanket, and with each movement outward, we leave behind the scene—the scale of human perspective—first witnessing the expanse of the city, then the land, then the whole planet itself. With every multiplication of ten, the speed of the lens accelerates,

spiraling past neighboring planets, out of the solar system, and into the Milky Way. We keep expanding, pushing into the outer reaches of the universe, until, at one point, we've zoomed out forty times ten from the picnic. Then, as though rewinding a tape, we rush back through space, hurtling toward the human again. But this time, the camera dives inward, into the skin, slipping into the cells beneath, moving through atoms, and finally into quarks—tiny foundational particles vibrating with the kind of electric pulse and color one might expect from a 1970s TV that's dial is stuck between the channels.

What strikes me in this whiplash between the vast and the infinitesimal is how startlingly similar these worlds seem. The space between electrons, delicate and intangible, echoes the very pattern of dark space and matter which compose the galaxies. Moving through the spiraling Milky Way feels akin to the dense, intricately cloudy layers of the dermis, where cells stretch and pulse beneath the surface. We see that the boundaries between the cosmic and the cellular begin to dissolve into a shared rhythm.

There's something that disturbs the journey for me: despite its premise of moving away from all we know everything is still framed through the human lens in the film. The scale, no matter how large or small, is always in linear relation to us. The precision of the framed zoom moving towards and away from the picture-perfect picnic cannot hold the feral yet organized energy of the universe and the body

within the border of its focus. What happens when the macroscopic and microscopic are visualised outside of the parameters of the microscope and the telescope, outside of the human eye? What happens when we attempt to connect to the scales beyond our senses with the felt sense, with the entirety of the body?

Close your eyes and imagine: what would it [literally] feel like to stand next to a cell, a bacteria, a blackhole, a virus, a star. Try to sense it in your body.

Sense a blending of these scales. The movements of a galloping horse echo those of a drifting amoeba in pond water. The pulse of a human nervous system mirrors the branches of a tree stretching towards the sky. Smokey echo vibration fizz sounding in the air; the cool drip of condensation forming a new universe hanging on a string; a smooth bacteria protrudes through the rough edges of a fence boundary and escapes. The sun, a nucleus; the earth, a cell. Light streaming through a leaf exposing an intricate pattern of smaller and smaller worlds.

To me this is romantic, but it's not to romanticise. When our sense of scale is upended -- when everything is everything -- we are suddenly in the existential funhouse. The question *Where do I begin and end?* becomes absolutely irrelevant. *Where does a feeling begin and end?* becomes totally hysterical. When we look between the space of atoms and of stars we see the possibility to annihilate the self and reposition ourselves in a new way, an

unhuman way. This recentering can be called science, spirituality, anxiety, ecstasy, death, or rebirth -- whatever you call it this repositioning denies a static name -- looking instead for an action, a verb describing a kind of being.

I take a deep breath here and it moves in me, through me, is both a closed and open system. Oxygen enters my blood through the lungs passed along to the heart. This gas which has been recycled, viewed from space, seen closer and closer inspected under fine cut glass of the microscope until the two oxygen atoms quiver in delight. The air has a quality within me that is alive, me and not me, a visitor to my internal space. Time and thought pass by at lightning speed and it's already been exhaled. Already been alchemized into carbon dioxide and expelled, a gift for the trees for photosynthesis. The porousness of the body is a channel, a channel which moves forth and is in constant formation of that which moves it; a cosmology of many small moments, sensations, processes which tumble into the large. A delight, and a terror, to know that we are so open, so vulnerable, so a part of everything and that there is no escape, only embrace, and that the embrace is oh so critical to upending the scales.

*Eames, Charles, and Ray Eames, directors. *The Powers of Ten*. 1977, Eames Office.

Clay AD is a somatic bodyworker, artist and writer living in Glasgow.

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Kate Power (b. Tarntanya, Adelaide, Australia) currently lives and works in Glasgow. Power is a graduate of the Glasgow School of Art MFA (2023), and the South Australian School of Art (2014). Power has recently exhibited at Salt Space, Glasgow, Vitalstatistix, Tarntanya (Adelaide), Outerspace, Meanjin (Brisbane), West Space, Naarm (Melbourne), and ACE Gallery, Tarntanya. Power has undertaken residencies at the British School at Rome, NARS Foundation in Brooklyn, and SIM in Reykjavik.

