

Looking 'through' Biomedica: Post-Anthropocentrism as Immediacy without Agency

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The current 'molecular turn' and its accompanying 'biologism' has led contemporary artists to effectively construct links to non human 'otherness' while abstracting from previously dominant 'cognitivism'. Biotechnological art that goes beyond metaphors and representation stages the very presence of the manipulated other (animals, plants, plantimals, tissue cultures etc.) in performative displays. By making themselves into Guinea Pigs for biotechnological self-experimentation, inserting (their) genes into plants and bacteria, co-culturing cells or setting up trans-species collaborative situations, artists question models of alterity by the means of producing authentic immediacy.

As opposed to hypermediacy – which in terms of Grusin & Bolter's 'remediation' theory means looking at the media – biomedica itself is most frequently employed in art to look through the media in order to achieve an immediacy of presentation. However, these displays are in turn linked to a network of hypermedial connections and paratextual discourses. Some works may question species barriers, others can be seen as postmodern vanitas – but is non human centered art even possible? This paper addresses volitionally post-anthropocentric art practices and their (in)ability to confer agency to their subjects and objects.