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Bloomberg Philanthropies is proud to partner with The Metropolitan Museum of Art in support of The Roof Garden Commission: Pierre Huyghe. Since 2007, we have sponsored contemporary art exhibitions on the Met’s Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden, and Huyghe’s innovative, site-specific installation continues the tradition of previous artists by taking advantage of the garden’s unparalleled position in New York’s skyline. Huyghe’s work engages with the history and topography of both Central Park and the Museum, encouraging visitors to see the surrounding monuments, as well as what might lie inside and underneath them, in new and exciting ways. We applaud the artist and the Met for sharing this innovative perspective and experience with visitors.

Bloomberg Philanthropies works to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. We focus on five key areas for creating lasting change: arts, education, the environment, government innovation, and public health. The arts are a valuable way to engage citizens and strengthen communities. Through innovative partnerships and bold approaches, the Bloomberg Philanthropies Arts program helps increase access to culture using new technologies and empowers artists and cultural organizations to reach broader audiences.

Bloomberg Philanthropies
Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden with granite tiles removed, March 2015.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden sits above galleries filled with more than five thousand years of human inspiration and ingenuity and offers unparalleled views of Central Park and Manhattan’s distinctive skyline. This combined experience of man-made and natural beauty makes the Roof Garden one of the most rewarding experiences for visitors to The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

As an artist interested in the intersection of social and natural systems, Pierre Huyghe has built an extraordinary career choreographing immersive, partially controlled artistic environments that shift and transform over the course of an exhibition’s life-span. For more than twenty-five years, he has created aesthetic encounters and time-based experiences that incorporate diverse media and objects, from film, photography, and architecture to plant life, animals, and insects. We are thrilled to present one such beguiling project on the Roof Garden this season.

Initiated by Sheena Wagstaff, Leonard A. Lauder Chairman of Modern and Contemporary Art, and organized by Associate Curator Ian Alteveer, Huyghe’s installation is the third in a new series of contemporary projects commissioned especially for the Roof Garden. Inspired by the garden’s location, Huyghe has masterfully integrated the multiple strata of the site—incorporating objects that reference the Museum’s encyclopedic collection, its architectural history, and the geologic and natural environment of the surrounding park. The result is both visually rich and intellectually compelling.

Our deepest appreciation goes to Bloomberg Philanthropies for its sustained and critical support of the Roof Garden commissions. It is through the involvement of this stalwart partner that we are able to bring Huyghe’s ambitious work to life. We also extend our renewed thanks to Met Trustee Cynthia Hazen Polsky and her husband, Leon B. Polsky, for their instrumental contribution to this project. In addition, the Met is grateful to the Mary and Louis S. Myers Foundation Endowment Fund for its commitment to the catalogue.

Thomas P. Campbell
Director
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Vestiges in the Rocks: Pierre Huyghe’s Mineral Garden

Ian Alteveer
Only in very recent times, which men still remember, was the discovery made that the earth has had a vast antiquity; that it has teemed with life for countless ages, and that generations of the most gigantic and extraordinary creatures lived through long geological periods, and were succeeded by other kinds of creatures equally colossal and equally strange. Huge fishes, enormous birds, monstrous reptiles, and ponderous uncouth mammals had possession of a world, in which man, if there, had not yet established a record of his pre-eminence. The vestiges of these creatures are still found in the rocks.¹

At the middle of the nineteenth century, such was the enthusiasm on the part of the commissioners of New York’s Central Park for new research on prehistory and the creatures that inhabited it—and such was their conviction that re-creations of these beasts would mesmerize the public—that they engaged a prominent British lecturer and artist to create lifesize models of dinosaurs for display in a museum to be housed within the park.² In 1868, well aware of the popularity of Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins’s sculptures of the 1850s for the new location of the famous Crystal Palace at Sydenham, near London, the Central Park commissioners engaged him to produce similar works based on local fossil samples for the proposed Paleozoic Museum.³

Hawkins quickly set to studying, casting, and mounting specimens recently collected by American institutions such as the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. He began building his so-called restorations in studios the commissioners had furnished nearby, first in the Arsenal on the east side of the park and then in a shed near the museum’s future site.⁴ A location for the glass pavilion that would house Hawkins’s magical models was chosen near Sixty-Third Street and Central Park West (fig. 1).⁵ All proceeded apace until corrupt William M. Tweed and his ring took control of city government in 1870. Plans for the Paleozoic Museum were scrapped, Hawkins’s contract was canceled, and the contents of his studio were vandalized and disposed of, most likely somewhere nearby in the park.⁶

This is precisely the sort of exquisitely coincidental story that French artist Pierre Huyghe (born 1962) mines for his complex installations, which build a chain of overlapping histories and incidents
to deliberately expose various strata of time and juxtapose them in an atemporal or anachronistic manner. He hoped to discover the remains of Hawkins’s casts and molds: fragments of a doomed artistic project that could reveal multiple layers of meaning for the present.

While Hawkins’s New York models may be lost to time, the conception of the project speaks to a certain visionary history of nineteenth-century scientific and artistic endeavors that has long inspired Huyghe. For *L’Expédition scintillante* (2002, pp. 38–39) at the Kunsthaus Bregenz, and for subsequent iterations elsewhere, he took Edgar Allan Poe’s only full-length novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), as a source for a group of works that aimed to catalogue the atmospheric conditions that Poe’s pseudo-autobiographical fabulist encountered at sea in the Southern Hemisphere. Inside the Austrian museum’s recently built galleries, Huyghe installed machines that produced rain, snow, and fog as well as a large ice sculpture in the form of the schooner on which Pym stowed away before undertaking his increasingly strange voyage. This glistening craft melted away within a few days, its mutable presence akin to the shifting nature of Pym’s elaborate tale—or the experience itself of reading such a fiction.

Poe’s hallucinatory text proved influential for later narratives of obsessive wanderlust, particularly Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick; or, the Whale* (1851), just as its Romantic theme of exploration...
speaks to a particularly nineteenth-century interest. That era’s great museums, zoological gardens, and world expositions—showcases for technological, geologic, and artistic wonders—are also products of a double-edged desire to distinctly categorize the planet and its resources while marveling at its kaleidoscopic variety. In 1872, just after the Paleozoic Museum was abandoned, New York City granted permanent parcels of land in Central Park to The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Museum of Natural History. These two institutions were born during a period of expanding exploration, colonialism, and scientific categorization—a time of engagement, as well, in the education of the public with a certain type of epistemological knowledge about the world and our place within it.

In the Hall of South American Peoples at the American Museum of Natural History resides the so-called Copper Man (fig. 9), a mummy of a sixth-century miner who, in the course of his labor, was trapped in a mine shaft, where he remained until his accidental discovery more than a millennium later, in 1899. The particular atmospheric conditions of his entombment near the Chuquicamata mine (fig. 10), an area that has been in continuous use since ancient times, led to the remarkable preservation of his body as well as its coating with a distinctive layer of copper salts. This transformation gives the corpse the appearance of a metallic sculpture, like some regal yet corroded bronze pulled from an ancient wreck at sea. Brought by Chilean prospectors
to the United States in 1901, the Copper Man was first exhibited at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo that summer as an example of man turned to mineral (fig. 2). Eventually purchased in 1905 by J. Pierpont Morgan, the Copper Man was swiftly installed in the American Museum of Natural History.

The Copper Man was already a source of inspiration to Huyghe when we began discussing Rite Passage (2015), his project for the Met, several years ago, and since then, he has engaged a number of scientists, forensic anthropologists, and metallurgists to learn more about how the miner’s body turned into metal. Experts at Columbia, Harvard, SUNY Stony Brook, and the Museum’s own Department of Scientific Research have been exploring ways in which to replicate the particular conditions of the Copper Man’s entombment and to apply these processes to humanely sourced carcasses of animals found nearby. Through this procedure of mineralization, the subjects’ bodies become a type of found sculpture now reified in metal. For thousands of years, copper has been used in various metal alloys, as a conductor of heat and electricity and as material for artistic or architectural decoration. In its blue-green salt form it is also often employed for various pigments.

Many of the other elements that Huyghe has assembled for Rite Passage relate, in a way, to things crystallized, fossilized, or otherwise transmuted (see pp. 58–59). Several of them also make discreet reference to the artist’s past works and exhibitions, as if he were mining not only the history of the park and an ethnographic past but also his own oeuvre. Installed near the southwestern corner of the site, a large, freshwater aquarium (fig. 3), with an improbable floating stone, is inhabited by Triops cancriformis (tadpole shrimp) and Lethenteron appendix (American brook lamprey), species thought to be millions of years old. Indeed, they have stayed the same over millennia, as evidenced by the similarity of their fossilized remains to their present forms (fig. 4). This work finds an echo in aquariums Huyghe has produced in recent years, particularly Precambrian Explosion (2014, p. 56), which included small horseshoe crabs—the saltwater relatives of the Triops. The stones in Huyghe’s aquariums float without the aid of any external support but rather because of the differential between their mass and that of the water that buoy them, recalling, in their Surrealist fantasy, the paintings of René Magritte (fig. 5).

Surrounding the aquarium, Huyghe has displaced a number of the granite paving stones that line the surface of the Roof Garden to expose the layer of concrete, sand, and other infill. The result is a landscape that evokes a quarry, a mine, or an archaeological dig, where layers of earth are peeled back to reveal a resource, a mineral, or some other
vestige of an earlier era. More recent traces are also visible, such as the occasional, evergreen ivy leaf from last year’s *Hedge Two-Way Mirror Walkabout*, by Dan Graham, or drips of Imran Qureshi’s blood-red paint between the tiles that escaped removal two years ago (fig. 6).

Excavating the Museum in a similar fashion inside the building, Huyghe also proposes to undertake a version of *Timekeeper* (first example, 1999, p. 36) in an unused gallery. To accomplish these works, Huyghe sands the wall’s surface to reveal colored bands of paint from the hundreds of special exhibitions of years past, as if they were the rings of a tree’s trunk, each marking another vibrant season.

Back on the roof, and among the remnants now revealed below the roof’s surface, Huyghe has envisioned a number of trickles of water, as though the large aquarium were slowly seeping its contents into the terrain below the tiles. Were all the water and living things to drain out of the tank, it would be nothing but a vitrine with some mechanical equipment attached. This empty apparatus, the artist has said, would then be like the lower part of Marcel Duchamp’s *Large Glass* (1915–23), the so-called bachelor machine, a zone of
frustrated and unresolved potential for the mechanomorphic figures trapped there.⁹

The metaphor of the empty machine evokes another of Huyghe’s textual sources and inspirations: science-fiction novelist Philip K. Dick’s short story “The Preserving Machine” (1953). The story’s protagonist, worried for the safe preservation of the world’s artistic treasures, crafts a device that transforms great pieces of classical music into animal form so that they may live on and be propagated in perpetuity. Unfortunately, the “Mozart bird” and the “Beethoven beetles,” while initially evocative of their namesakes’ particular characteristics, once released into the wild, intermingle and do battle with one another. The result is a multitudinous cacophony that bears no resemblance to the original, but whose caterwauling instead represents something more savage, something wilder. Dick’s fantasy that an animal or insect could be anthropomorphized or preserve aspects of human culture, whether willingly or not, is explored in many of Huyghe’s own works, including his recent and haunting film Untitled (Human Mask) (2014, p. 55), in which a macaque that had been trained by its owners to work in their sushi restaurant becomes the riveting and only occupant of a postapocalyptic world.
Fig. 5. René Magritte (Belgian, 1898–1967). Le Château des Pyrénées (The Castle of the Pyrenees), 1959. Oil on canvas, 78 3/4 x 57 1/8 in. (200 x 145 cm). Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Gift of Harry Torczyner, New York, to American Friends of the Israel Museum (B85.0081)
Fig. 6. Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden with granite tiles removed, March 2015. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
In developing the commission, Huyghe also explored the possibility of including a scaled reproduction from the scan of the Met’s recumbent Anubis—an Egyptian god of the dead depicted as a desert jackal (fig. 7). This dog is an ancient relative of the snow-white Ibizan hound that Huyghe first included in his work *Untilled*, commissioned for documenta 13 (2012, pp. 50–51). Located in a compost heap for the Karlsaue Park in Kassel, Germany, Huyghe’s project occupied a layered site—one that contained both the refuse from the surrounding park and the potential for new growth from its fecund remains. These characteristics were thrown into relief by Huyghe’s arrangement of various discarded cobble and paving stones and the overall sense of decay and regeneration—as a few trunks of the seven thousand oak trees that Joseph Beuys planted in the city as part of documenta 7 in 1982 rotted away next to a stone cistern housing growing tadpoles and verdant swells of blooming psychotropic plants. As visitors made their way through this strange terrain, it was at times difficult to separate what had already been there from the artist’s own additions.
In a sense, perhaps, this is always the case with large public gardens or parks: they are the result of certain deliberate and historically contingent choices about landscape design and its important place in the fabric of a city. Even the more naturalistically landscaped areas of Central Park were, of course, heavily engineered by its designers (fig. 8).

From the roof, looking over this highly mediated terrain—and very literally digging into it—Huyghe’s work aims to uncover the various resources, some primordial, others, as he says, natural or cultural, embedded beneath the viewer’s feet. This is the intellectual and the mineral material that begins to leak, dissolve, and transform itself all around us.
Notes


4. The commissioners’ report for 1868 also includes a lithograph depicting Hawkins’s studio in the Arsenal, then called the Central Park Museum; see “Report,” in Twelfth Annual Report, pp. 30–31. See also a photograph of Hawkins’s studio in the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, Philadelphia, Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins Album (Collection 803, 35).

5. For the location of the planned museum, see Frederick Law Olmsted’s January 1870 map of the park, in which it is listed as the “Palaeontological Museum,” illustrated in the Thirteenth Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park for the Year Ending December 31, 1869 (New York: Evening Post Steam Presses, 1870), pp. 80–81; see also Colbert and Beneker, “The Paleozoic Museum in Central Park,” pp. 142–43. Construction was reported as under way by 1869; see Thirteenth Annual Report, p. 29, and Colbert and Beneker, “The Paleozoic Museum in Central Park,” p. 147.


9. Author’s conversation with the artist, April 1, 2015.

A Conversation with Pierre Huyghe

Sheena Wagstaff
Sheena Wagstaff  May I ask you about one of your inspirations, this extraordinary mummified figure of a copper miner in the American Museum of Natural History [fig. 9]? He is what remains of an ancient worker in the Andes who was trapped in his mine shaft and whose skin was then partially copperized. What are your thoughts on him? He represents, in a way, the beginning of all this and is one of the keys to understanding how you’ve conceived your project at the Metropolitan Museum.¹

Pierre Huyghe  A trigger rather. It provokes different interests: biological and chemical, geological and archaeological, and also technological. A man became “fossilized” within the site where he was working. The mine at Chuquicamata [fig. 10] collapsed on him as he was digging with a stone tool. He found himself trapped in a specific condition. His body, protected from bacteria, was transformed by chemical reactions into the material of his labor. The miner was mineralized by his context and also recorded it, in a kind of pseudomorphism.

Considering the kind of physiological conditions that might occur in different environments, I approach the Roof Garden as if it were a mine, and the transformation it activates not as a metaphor but as a condition. So, not only am I looking at the resources, material or not, that are already present here and how the museum itself is a mine of natural matter and of epistemic, cultural material, but also how it is a site of influence on behavior or even at a cellular level.

S W  I understand your interest in the Copper Man and his embalming by the same mineral he had been working to extract. There’s a kind of poetic inevitability in it, I suppose. But there are also two other points of relevance that emerge from your example of the Copper Man. The first is the ethnographic or archaeological diorama in which he came to be displayed across the park and the ways in which that type of space is similar to the period rooms we have at the Met. I am fascinated by historical rooms because they often have a constructed authenticity. They convey the ambience of a particular time and place, but their components—furniture, painting, etc.—are
gathered together from different places to create a simulation of, for example, a receiving room of a wealthy family in the seventeenth century. They are not actually “real,” but no less deeply informative or compelling.

**PH** Yes, indeed, the way things are displayed is presented as fact. The mediation is, at the same time, the construction of the object and the subject. In exhibiting the Copper Man, the exhibition device operates like the copper in the mine.

**SW** I thought that might be part of your thinking. And secondly, your long-held engagement with the notion of labor itself: here is a guy in a mine, earning a living, laboring at the rock face to discover new veins of precious mineral, doing what we might do, metaphorically, intellectually, with historical artifacts in a museum.
It’s a question of instrument and territory. It makes me think of both the exhibition as ritual and the Chauvet-Pont d’Arc cave [fig. 11], where the earliest drawings by humans were discovered close to twenty years ago. If the cave was open to the public, the drawings would be destroyed rapidly by exposure to visitors’ breath. So the interior of the cave has been replicated using cloud scanning and surface mapping, just as today a museum exhibition could be scanned and printed. The ability to replicate is an interesting issue, economically and politically, including the circulation of goods and living organs today through printed means, giving the illusion of life as well as actually creating it.

As part of our research for the roof commission, we are searching with ground-penetrating radar for the remains of models of dinosaurs. They are nineteenth-century concrete sculptures based on fossil evidence, originally made for a museum of paleontology that was never realized [fig. 1]. There are records about their destruction and rumors that their remains were buried in Central Park in 1871, a few years before the construction of the Metropolitan Museum. The same radar could be used to penetrate the Met from top to bottom, through the different physical and temporal strata. It could replicate something that is not visible, an agglomerate of the Museum’s walls, artifacts, and plumbing networks—and maybe also locate the remains of concrete dinosaurs underneath [fig. 12]!

Fig. 11. Prehistoric murals in the cave of Chauvet-Pont d’Arc, Vallon-Pont-d’Arc, Ardèche valley, France
With regard to work and tools, there are genuine early stone tools from different periods on the roof and a boulder from the same granite quarry in Massachusetts from which the paving stones were sourced. Also, by utilizing the knowledge and technology of the conservation and scientific departments at the Met, we are investigating the chemical reaction that transformed the Copper Man’s body to see if it’s possible to replicate this process on animals found dead in the surrounding area, perhaps from Central Park or the zoo. In addition, I might replicate on a different scale the Museum’s recumbent Anubis, an object that was probably buried at one time [fig. 7].

**SW** You’ll just make a single copy of the Anubis?

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**Fig. 12. Pierre Huyghe.** Computerized proposal for ground-penetrating radar section of the Met, 2015. Courtesy of the artist
PH Yes.

SW I ask only because I’m thinking of how mythological figures flank the entrance of a sacred precinct, like the paired Assyrian winged lions in the Met’s collection. There’s something incredible about these creatures marking a threshold, an in-between space. Likewise, the Egyptian god Anubis sits at the mouth of the underworld.

PH Yes, Anubis is associated with death and embalming. Jackals lived in the desert and were known to hang around grave sites and so became a symbol of death. The sculpture of Anubis is a threshold itself, not a fixed object but a transitional one, a passeur in the present, somewhere between presence and absence. It’s a notion current in science fiction, literature, and movies that mineral figures can become biological living beings again.

SW Anubis is also a distant relative of the Ibizan hound called “Human” from your work at documenta 13 [Untilled, 2012, pp. 50–51].

PH This breed is an evolution of the jackal: you can study their genetic path.

SW It is thought, isn’t it, that dogs like “Human” were brought to the Balearic Islands by Phoenician traders?

PH Through them you can follow and trace Homo sapiens’s routes of navigation, trade, and exchange. The passage from biological to mineralization—and the other way around—is happening at different locations on the roof; for example, under the floating rock in the aquarium, which also contains living fossils. In my recent London exhibition, “In. Border. Deep” [2014], there was a headless, reclining nude in concrete, a fragment of a monument, heated to 37 degrees Celsius [98.6 degrees Fahrenheit]—the temperature of the human body [La Déraison, 2014, fig. 13]. Here, it is different, although something will animate the form, or speak in a certain way. In a form of present animism, they will converse.

SW Will it be perceptible?

PH Not necessarily perceptible, it will just change over time. It will affect the surrounding elements and inhabit them.
It’s the opposite of creating Frankenstein—fragments of one entity would become part of others.

**SW** That’s a great idea. When you look very closely, you realize that the Met’s Anubis is a composite—as many of those objects in the Egyptian galleries are—something that was found in pieces and then very carefully put back together. And sometimes, conservators reconstruct these artworks over the years.

**PH** The various components coexisting on the roof are from different moments in time, from both the lamprey in the aquarium and the stone tools used in the Lower Paleolithic Period, up to the present with hunks of plastiglomerate (a composite of detritus) and liquid crystals [fig. 14]. They each mark different temporal moments, both geologically and historically.

**SW** Is the occasional blanking out of the aquarium glass, which will be activated by liquid crystals, related to this idea of marking strata or moments in time?

**PH** Yes. I see it as a pulse, it marks time, with an economy of appearance. It has a rhythm of visibility and invisibility that is based on the beat of a human pulse. When the program causes the liquid crystals in the polymer to shift, the glass goes opaque or transparent and a floating rock appears. The suspended rock has a

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Fig. 13. Thermal scan of La Déraison under fabrication, 2014

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gravitational incongruity, which gives it a slightly unreal aspect. Living in this environment are two ancient species: the lamprey and the Triops. They are rare examples of living creatures whose forms remain unchanged from their original primordial state. The live situation is based on animal rhythms, on instinctual behaviors that go beyond the individual life-span. It’s a recurring situation as these so-called living fossils continue to reproduce. These animals also move minerals: the lampreys carry stones around with their suction-teeth and the Triops shift and dig in sand [fig. 15]. The aquarium leaks, and the living diorama flows outward. The water sinks under the tiles, creating a stream that releases biological life and oxidizes other elements as it flows through the building to the sewer. It’s a cycle: the energy and water are taken from the Met to maintain the aquarium and its program. The enclosed site, the roof with the tiles removed and the water network under it, reminds me of J. G. Ballard’s novel Concrete Island [1974] or the elegant Brutalism of Scarpa’s tomb for the Brion family [fig. 16].

SW Carlo Scarpa? We have some unbelievably beautiful vessels by Scarpa in the collection. Where is his mausoleum?

PH Near Venice. It’s a burial ground for the family that produced Brionvega electronics. The tomb is a concrete complex with a water system that flows within it. The pool in my work at documenta 13 was based on the pool there. Likewise, at the Met, different elements interconnected by water, dust, or microorganisms

Fig. 14. Recent plastioglomerate specimen, 2015. Courtesy of Hawai’i Wildlife Fund
circulate on and under the tiles and intensify the presence of what is there, allowing things to change or collapse.

**S W** In a way, your proposal to lift the paving stones on the roof reminds me of the effect of a leak I recently saw in a museum gallery. Water had run under the wood parquet flooring and made the tiles buckle up into long, upright furrows. It looked as though there was something burrowing, something underground that was trying to burst out.

**P H** As with an animal’s furrow, you sense its presence only through what’s visible on the surface. From the aquarium, you follow the cause of the leak, under the tiles, through the roof to the drain and its circulation through the building. I generally avoid objects that you can move around for an instant view or effect. I prefer a situation that you have to navigate, that you cannot see or encounter all at once, that exists, yet is not always visible.

**S W** So, no gestalt or instantaneous view . . .

**P H** No, instead there are transformations from one state to others, to different intensities, to new beings, as in a rite of passage. For example, the fragments left from cutting the paving stones, or extracting and moving the granite boulder from the quarry, when what remains becomes dust, molecular, invisible. There is a moment where things can no longer be measured: the medium is
Fig. 16. Carlo Scarpa (Italian, 1906–1978). Detail of Reflecting Pool, 1969–77. Brion Cemetery, San Vito d'Altivole, Italy
leaking, it’s diffused, processed like material in a compost, a moment where there is no clear limit or adequacy.

SW The significance of this boulder is that it goes back to your ideas around the Copper Man, in that it’s part of the place from which it came.

PH Right. And it is simultaneously connected to the paving stones on which you walk.

SW Every element you have here equals the sum of its parts. Every aspect of the project you’ve mentioned relates to everything else on one level or another. There is a kind of matrix of meaning that connects them all.

PH Yes, it’s a situated network of both heterogeneous and porous elements in coactivity—a space, a garden, a set of coordinates rather than a monolithic object. There is a certain expectation to create something spectacular up here, but I am trying to find another perspective.

SW There’s quite a dichotomy between the single monolithic kind of idea behind some of the past installations created for the Roof Garden and the overall mesh of a project like the one you are conceiving. The seductive views of the skyline, the city, and the park are a given—they are features of this space, as you just described. Yet, you don’t want to be a background noise: the artwork is not meant to be negligible wallpaper behind the view. The necessity for engagement with the monumental, in the positive sense of that word, which isn’t necessarily related to scale; it’s to do with visual and perceptual impact. Your sketches are really compelling because they give a clear sense of your landscape on the roof. I wonder if, when visitors come off the elevator or come up the stairs, they can be given a plan or map; you were talking about the museum’s lexicon or taxonomy of different artifacts that are all connected and equal in their significance. In a way your drawings for the roof landscape are akin to mapping.

PH There is a certain equality within that mesh as well as a living intensity, but no categorization or center. The plastiglomerate is as important as the rain, the stream under the tiles, the aquarium, the lamprey, or the oxidized animal. Walking through Central Park, you realize that all events there—the stone, the frozen lake, the plane overhead, the maintenance worker—are equally
necessary. The important thing is not necessarily the big event. There is an ecology in the broadest sense of the word; different states of life, each element playing a role—even sometimes antagonistically.

**SW** It is a multiplicity of events.

**PH** But mainly it is the complexity made out of these particular modes of organization, the cohabitation of multiple intensities. I am looking for a ritual other than that of the exhibition as it has been constructed since the nineteenth century; it is instead a ritual made out of the rhythms of autoemergences, events with variations, accelerations. It is an evolving organism, generating itself in a continuous, ever-changing transformation, whether biological (with instinctive behavior) or mechanistic (driven by algorithms, with encoded living presence and process). In part, what I want to do at the Met started with “Le Château de Turing” [2001, see *Blinking Doors*, pp. 36–37], in which events unfolded in a scripted space, where the different elements of the exhibition were orchestrated and animated by a program, like a time score. Machines, films, sounds, and lights, as ghostly presences, are all transitional objects. Then with *The Host and the Cloud* [2009, pp. 44–45], people inside an abandoned museum were subjected to multiple unexpected external influences—to which they reacted—something Chilean biologists and philosophers Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana have defined as autopoiesis. Recently, in *Untilled*, which you saw at documenta 13, there was a chaotic and growing system with natural recurrences, animal instincts, human constructions, or phenomena. They are examples of interconnection in a dynamic mesh.

**SW** It’s about life, a living process, nevertheless.

**PH** Life as it could be, as a speculative process.

**SW** Going back to the idea of orientation within this environment, when you go into Central Park, you see people stopping at kiosks that have beautiful little pictograms of the topographical features of the park. Can you imagine something similar on the roof?

**PH** Being generous to the public is fine as long as it is not condescending. Whether the visitors are here, or not, the situation continues to grow, indifferent to their presence. We can trace crowd regulations back to early exhibitions like the 1901 Pan-American
Exposition in Buffalo, where the Copper Man was first shown [fig. 2]. I am not interested in infantilizing the crowd. But I do like maps, maps with blanks or changes in cognitive structure.

**SW** Inviting you to undertake the Roof Garden commission was due to knowing and admiring your work over very many years. Because I’m a curator, my concern is that the significance of your installation will not be wholly understood.

**PH** I agree with you, Sheena, but it’s also generous to start with an inversion and to expose someone to something rather than something to someone. Anyone can understand that the lampreys move stones in the aquarium under the floating rock that is the same size or shape as the boulder on the floor, and that the water connects an object to another one under his or her feet.

**SW** And the connection to the Copper Man? Had you thought about moving him across the park?

**PH** It is most likely too fragile to move. Instead there is a film I made recently near Fukushima [*Untitled (Human Mask),* 2014, p. 55] in a village devastated in 2011. It’s filmed in an empty restaurant, where a monkey wearing a human mask remains alone, repeating the gestures she had been trained to do, like an automaton. Now, in a parallel transmutation a monkey, with a human mask is the equivalent to the man in copper within the museum.

**Notes**

1. This interview was conducted at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, on March 1, 2015.
4. Taxidermied specimens for the installation were sourced from American companies specializing in a new technology of freeze-drying.
Selected Works
1999–2014


Opposite: A Journey That Wasn’t, El Diario del fin del mundo, February–March 2005. Expedition, Antarctica


Opposite, bottom: Collaged chromogenic prints for **La Saison des fêtes** (2010)
Two-Way Mirror Punched Steel Hedge Labyrinth, 1996
MINNEAPOLIS SCULPTURE GARDEN, WALKER ART CENTER, MINNEAPOLIS
The Host and the Cloud, October 31, 2009; February 14, 2010; May 1, 2010. Performance at an abandoned building, formerly Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires, Paris, and HD video in color with sound, 2 hr. 1 min. 30 sec.
Opposite, top: *Zoodram 4*, 2011. Aquarium with live marine ecosystem, resin mask after *Sleeping Muse* (1910) by Constantin Brancusi, 53 × 39 × 30 in. (134.6 × 99.1 × 76.2 cm). Ishikawa Collection, Okayama, Japan


Opposite, top: Preparatory drawings for *El Día del ojo* (2012)

Opposite, bottom: *Crystal Cave*, 2009. Expedition, Naica Mine, Chihuahua, Mexico


Below, bottom left: *A Way in Untilled*, 2012. HD video in color with sound, 14 min.
Opposite, top: **Plan for Untilled**, 2012. Wool tapestry, 315 × 237 in. (800 × 602 cm). Isabel and Agustin Coppel Collection (CIAC), Culiacán, Mexico

Opposite, bottom: **A Way in Untilled**, 2012. HD video in color with sound, 14 min.

Below: *De-extinction*, 2014. HD video in color with sound, 12 min. 35 sec.

Opposite: *Untitled (Human Mask)*, 2014. HD video in color with sound, 19 min.

RITE PASSAGE
liminal state/threshold
WHERE?
leaking

PROCESSION
CHOT CONTINUE

boulder, quarry & dust

TRIOPS
FOSSIL?

DIF
LIVING STATE
INTENSITY

COPPER MAN
OXIDIZE!

PLANTS?
NO

SYMBOLIC
ANUBIS

MACHINE
(THE PROGRAM?)
NO BID LIVING

NEW BEING
(WHAT?)
KIND

MUSEUM
SEWER
CYCLE
1990
“French Kiss: A Talk Show,”
Halle Sud, Geneva

1992
“Il faut construire l’hacienda,” Centre de Création Contemporaine, Tours

1993
“La Toison d’or,” Jardin de l’Arquebuse, Dijon

1994
“Surface de réparations,”
Fonds Régional d’Art Contemporain de Bourgogne, Dijon

1995
“Shift,” De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam

1996
“City Space: Skulpturer og installationer udført til Kobenhaven / City Space: Sculptures and Installations Made for Copenhagen 96,” City Space, Copenhagen

“Pierre Huyghe, Melik Ohanian,” Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Lyon

1997
“At One Remove,” Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, United Kingdom

“Trade Routes: History and Geography,” Second Johannesburg Biennale

1998
“Voices / Voces / Voix,” Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam; and Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona


1999
“Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno,” Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

“Voices / Voces / Voix,” Le Fresnoy—Studio National des Arts Contemporains, Tourcoing, France

“Le Procès du temps libre,” Secession, Vienna

“D’APPERTutto, Aperto over All, Aperto par tout, Aperto über All” (with Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Philippe Parreno), Forty-Eighth Venice Biennale

“Pierre Huyghe—Some Negotiations,” Kunsthalle Zürich

“CI: 99/00 Carnegie International,” Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh

“Pierre Huyghe: L’Ellipse,” Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Porto, Portugal

2000
“Pierre Huyghe,” Kunsthalle Zürich

“Pierre Huyghe: The Third Memory,” Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago; Centre Pompidou, Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris; and Musée d’Art Contemporain de Montréal

2001
“Interludes,” Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven


2002
“In Many Ways the Exhibition Already Happened” (with Philippe Parreno, M/M, and François Roche), Institute of Contemporary Arts, London

“Forms Follow Fiction / Forma e finzione nell’arte di oggi,” Castle di Rivoli, Museo d’Arte Contemporanea

2003
“No Ghost Just a Shell” (with Philippe Parreno), Kunsthalle Zürich; Fitzwilliam Museum, Institute of Visual Culture, Cambridge, United Kingdom; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

“L’Expédition scintillante: A Musical,” Kunsthalle Bregenz, Austria

2004
“No Ghost Just a Shell” (with Philippe Parreno), Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; and de la Cruz Collection Contemporary Art Space, Miami


“GNS: Global Navigation System,” Palais de Tokyo, Paris

“Streamside Day Follies,” Dia: Chelsea, New York

2005
“Pierre Huyghe,” Castello di Rivoli, Museo d’Arte Contemporanea

“Utopia Station,” Haus der Kunst, Munich
“This Is Not a Time for Dreaming,” Carpenter Center for Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

2005
“De lo real y lo ficticio: Francia arte contemporáneo,” Museo de Arte Moderno de México, Mexico City

“Ecstasy: In and About Altered States,” Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles


“Volksgarten: Die Politik der Zugehörigkeit / Volksgarten: The Politics of Belonging,” Kunsthalle Graz, Austria

“Tomorrow,” Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul; and Art Sonje Center, Seoul

2008
“Traces du sacré,” Centre Pompidou, Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris; and Haus der Kunst, Munich

“A Forest of Lines,” Sydney Opera House, Sixteenth Biennial of Sydney: Revolutions, Forms That Turn


2009
“The Host and the Cloud,” abandoned building, formerly Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires, Paris

2010
“Pierre Huyghe: La Saison des fêtes,” Palacio de Cristal, Parque de El Buen Retiro, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid


“Pierre Huyghe: Les Grands ensembles / Pierre Huyghe: The Housing Projects,” Art Institute of Chicago

2012
“Zoo,” Musée d’Art Contemporain de Montréal

documenta 13, Kassel, Germany

“El Día del ojo,” Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City

2013
“Pierre Huyghe: A Journey That Wasn’t,” National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

“EXPO I New York,” MoMA PS1, New York

“Pierre Huyghe,” Centre Pompidou, Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris

2014
“Pierre Huyghe,” Museum Ludwig, Cologne; and Los Angeles County Museum of Art

“Pierre Huyghe,” The Artist’s Institute, New York
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Ian Alteveer