

# Time Obstructor - A Milestones Observatory

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**Abstract:** - This article presents several ideas about Time as a perception of reality and how once added to a model of perception in action art, it could be obstructed by some factors called time obstructors, thus making it possible for new observations about the process, mechanisms of creation of the "here and now" and their structures in "real-time". The problem observed is that Time is a constant, and the plan becomes a problem when it is part of the creation of time-based media art. Specifically, this article poses the idea of an obstructor of time, basically by doing a link-bridge between the development and then when the current action happened. The use of -anticipation- and -selective router- makes the concept of observation possible. The novel temporality obstructor makes it useful to modify behaviors, change goals, and complete tasks related to the actions planned as well as connect with the model of analysis of action art based on the factors: context, sense-making, efficiency, effect, attractors, sensitizer, activators and now the temporality obstructor.

**Keywords:** Time obstructor, real-time, performance, obstructor analysis model.

## I. Introduction

In the ecology of time, practices such as actions, performance, video, film, music, and media art, time are used to develop and stream content into the ecology or biosphere of Time - based media arts, but those contents are a different thing. This article observes the problem that appeared when the cultural background of people is related to what is understood as a constant measure and control of something called "tempo" or temporality. Therefore, time becomes a sort of past, present, and future line observation more than a material to work, adapt, and be molded.

If everything about the perception of time is accepted as a possible control tool for useful social activities, the utility of defining time in terms of time-based media arts could twist the analysis of their practices. As we proposed in this article Time can give access to and facilitate culture in other levels of comprehension and embodiment by media art practices.

The observation of the time-based art biosphere engages a multi-layer of variables that become part of the model analysis Effect/Affect [1] published before. The addition of one more layer related to efficiency and context related to resources and failure specifically, in terms of how resources are wasted and how efficiently they are placed in the environment.

Within the observation of time as a matter of this biosphere, the ecology of practices forces the practitioners to understand their own art practice as becoming their own media, in terms that time as constant is stretched, smashed, and re-streamed as contextualized content. Somehow the possibility of rebuilding or reconnecting structures of time is mostly impossible in real-time. Still, it could be useful as an observatory that could change the overcoming actions and in the end the projectile effect.

The article proposes as well a milestone observation as a selective router and anticipation as an alternative possibility of how to think about time as an event tree that impacts the trajectory with a different effect, somehow the impact of the action released will be part of a tree of events that could be read as router and be traced as a milestones observatory in their art practice.

## II. Cultural facilitation context

Cultural practices, however, result from an interaction of the many factors involved, in the ecology of practices there exists a biosphere of layers that make it possible to connect practices and gravitational practitioners as the result of the streamed context and as the art evolved history defined by periods, eras, vanguards and modern, postmodern narratives that are all part of the biosphere of arts.

The observation cannot avoid how physically humans perceive time spent and how it affects daily life activities such as eating, sleeping, and living. Maybe time affects activities differently to assume goals, and chapters of life or is simply discarded differently. In terms of what art is using as a nutrient in the narrativity of time, as a succession of acts that co-relate in the production of knowledge and contextualizing by streamed contents of practicing, mistaking, and failing over and over.

On the other hand, time-media observers such as philosophers or artists as examples don't consider the reduction or redundancy of flexibility in terms of perception as does John Cage among others. But culture bridges the media and practitioners are the facilitators of mediation of the media in the biosphere of the ecology of practices. The possibility of observation of the co-relation between

events could help to understand the milestone succession and their composition where the attention/distraction could focus on which factors involved make an audience a different experience and for critics a completely different analysis.

**III. Time**

The study of action art and time-based media art, in general, is about performance, film, and video and video installation. Time as a medium refers to the duration, and length, as well as how to use that time. Within the art practice of performance, it is all about “doing actions”. In this context and in past publications about “sensitizer, disperser, and activator”[2], as a possible classification of the strange attractors of time within a network of actions, and how these actions are not alone in a model of analysis of the variables in performance art. Moreover, the model attempted to explain how they are organized, how actions are under control and organized to reach a goal, and finally, the aim of the model is to describe the articulation of these actions/goals and how they connect one to another.

One of the observations in performance is the possibility of a chain of actions, if there exists an interdependency between them or if they work separately. In the beginning, we used the idea of four critical classifications to evaluate actions organized in time: effect, affect, sense-making and efficiency. These factors play a role in the analysis specifically at the moment of how resources are used and in what context they are placed, for example. On the other hand, how balanced and what proportions are observed? For example, is it more efficient if the effect is big in the audience and the budget very small, so that proportionally the smaller the resources the bigger the impact of the context is presented, and looks as something positive more than the elements of formal composition or only by the narrative used?

Continuing with the idea of modeling the factors to be observed in performance, where the strange attractor factors modify the invisible structure of actions. Attempted definition of what it means to be a strange factor and how to attract the other actions changing their goals.

Within the novel model of analysis, the observation helps to develop a particularity of activator and sensitizer strange attractors, both related to how actions evolved in the action time. So now, the article posed another perspective as a zoom-out of the actions to better understand the invisible structure of the network of actions. Actions where each individual has a goal and where there could exist strange factors that could attract unexpected results. Therefore this article is about the observation of the event or the succession of events, that could describe the net of actions and goals, but also, how to host other people that have no idea or what to understand about performance. For example, simplify the terminology to make it relatable to their own succession of events in life or in certain specific situations.

As past and future are here and now hand to hand to build every singular history, such complexity of the net of events is difficult to read them as actions with goals found in performance art. The strange factors and the overlapped lives could make it impossible to scrutinize the web between what is more effective or not. Furthermore, this article proposes a point of observation based on a selection of relevant events or milestones and by them getting access to understand how important it could be if they were different or if they make a wrong development.

In performance it is important to understand that an event is a collection of actions with a goal or purpose to reach, these actions could have an abstract interpretation but the actions always have a concrete goal, a verb with a reaction caused by the action. On the other hand, an action is an activity that has the motivation to reach a goal. Even more, actions can fail and the attempt and failure become a positive goal where repetition will end up out of time-based media arts, for example in performing arts like music, circus, theatre, and dance.

Perhaps the nature of actions is defined if the goal is one and the same during the performance of the action or changed during the performance of that action. When one action has multiple goals, an action is an event but one goal could be reached by many actions with the same goal which is also an event. The traces of one event to the next is possible to be observed through an observatory of milestones. As far as performance is not a close indicator to result, the trajectory of one artist could be read as an observatory itself.

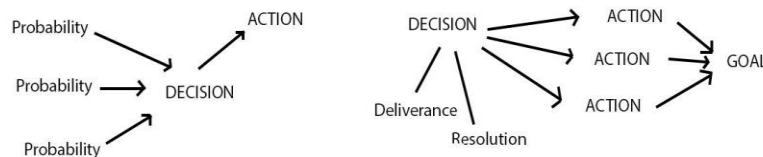


Figure 1. The scheme describes how the many probabilities will make a decision that becomes an action and how the decision (that has two components; deliverance and resolution) through multiple actions will reach the same goal.

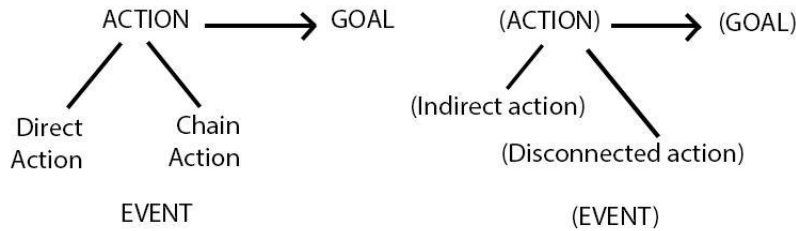


Figure 2. The scheme describes that one action has two qualities: direct or chain. On the other hand, it explains the existence of a hypothetical non-action called : (action) and non-goal (goal) with two hypothetical qualities: indirect and disconnected within a non-event named (event).

In life, we understand that we are the consequence of the reaction of our past actions and events, but the idea of the future is to understand the best right now, not how we see ourselves in the future looking to pass. From the static point of view is it if we observe the actions that affect the trajectory we would find, for example, the breaking point where the past takes a different direction and makes a different history that we didn't live.

To exercise the possible reactions of one milestone define a (goal) within an (event) milestone, the (action) that did not happen, and the consequences of an (event) to observe. After all, tracing this imaginary (goal) part of one (event) can help us understand and anticipate for the next milestones to happen which could possibly be a breaking point in our life, for example. In terms of action art and performance, as the event is a bunch of actions all the (actions) could become a new idea, a new testing process, and controlled and anticipated development in the creative process where risk levels exist, but the trajectory could inevitably reach the same future goal, but differently.

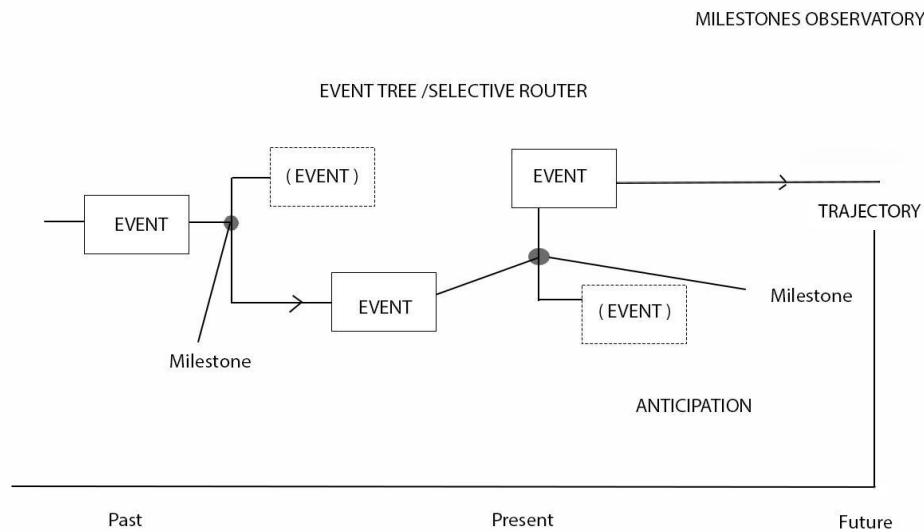


Figure 3. The scheme attempted to translate the organization of concepts described through the milestones observatory, where the event tree is called a selective router. The trajectory described into past, present and future organizes events and non-events into a router when milestones are the crucial step to continue the trajectory.

The milestone observatory and anticipation elements of one event allowed the creative process to expand as well to the limits of time, observing not only the results but even more the (actions) and practices that could result in a possible (future). Those milestones as failed trajectories or impossibles could help to anticipate upcoming failures or open up new possibilities in a safe space of exploration.

Most of the time the observatory would show me two versions of the same event's consequences. The milestone will show me a trajectory A and B, where trajectory A has trace succession and B, the one that has no succession because of no trace development. Based on this model of milestones of (actions) an element called obstructor that could be the element that stops that composition of

time from happening. It is not related to the action itself, but it would be relevant in tracing a possible (event) built by the suppression of this factor. In the end, what we observe are these two different things here. The most important is the utility of anticipation in the trajectory of actions, these decisions are based on a possible anticipation awareness that could make possible the map of events. The map is based on the trace of the events where the final trajectory observed is called a *selective router*.

The *selective router* is a criteria or why in art practice decisions are made constantly has to do with narratives and discourses, but mostly, by a selective pattern of decisions that make it possible. Therefore, for the art practice, these taken decisions become a route, where creativity is routed, as a track in a highway.

What defines a milestone in life and in action art, live performance, or film? In life, milestones are situations part of one important event in human lives, usually identified for a “before and after” character and most of the time, life-changing, as a pillar or stilt where life is constantly building. Action art is not the opposite of that idea, but is reduced to performance time, basically, the trajectory of one performance artist will never be his complete life, but could be a long period to analyze.

For example, maybe Stelarc has three main projectiles that travel his practice and production, from my perspective human machine, body extensions, and telematic control of his actions, for example. Where each one has events that build the trajectory, of course in one moment they cross each other making the analysis more complex. One of the important milestones of his production was the suspension in the meat factory and the famous ear implant on his arm. They were not the most visible and in the public eye worldwide, they changed forever his practice before and after. For example, the event itself was implanted, as a consequence of body-cyborg extensions, so then the implant was a decision between more that we do not know maybe was not an ear, not an arm, not exactly there. Not on him, many other options and decisions that when the ear idea is conclusive and the aim of the whole event, the reaction of the action becomes the milestone. Therefore, just to make a differentiation milestones would be the reaction of the aimed action taken and completed.

### **Obstructor of time**

This problem of time is observed within the narrative’s structure of a prototyped event as “climax and outcome” that is not possible to apply to a performance that simultaneously has many layers or narratives or metanarratives about micro events or successive climaxes. For example, William Forsythe with “Black Flags”, John Cage with “4’ 33”” or the repetition of the climax for hours as Vito Acconci did in “Three adaptation studies”. However, this could make narrative perceptions full of frustration for a classic structure analyzer, where the goals are not determined, and where the development is part of the action art so the action becomes an echo or repetition that has become perpetuated by itself and the audience that completes it.

On the other hand chaotic or puzzle/fragmented narratives such as Joan Jonas with “Song Delay ” or Carolee Schneemann with “On-Line” [3], make it more difficult to discern and most of the time not applicable in reality perception and awareness. Somehow the fragmented narratives become these called conceptual or abstract, something that perhaps in the 80s was called postmodernism. Of all the performance ideas that survive until today, the one most digested and understandable by people is Marina Abramovic with one action used in a durational performance, for understanding the meaning behind energy, the performance itself, and repetition clarifying what the performance is about, perhaps is not a climax repetition, only a conceptual minimalism.

If the clear version of time perceived is perhaps in repetition or loop, where time is “becoming”, a conceptual matter. All refers to a progression of events whereas “becoming” refers to progress in order to reduce or grow the layers of information, therefore organizing a chaotic constellation. The conceptual matter of “becoming” refers to time as an object, where the progression perhaps becomes objects, statues, and frames. Like the verb in german *bekommen* means to get, so then time gets transformable, moldable, convertible, and shiftable. Perhaps that idea is what it reminds us of, as time is connected or linked with memory and not with something that is constantly happening. For example when Wallace said about a new kind of memory: “*Memory is gone. Feelings are mist. Reality is imaginary. Imagination is true. I do not know what to grasp. My phone is in my hand. It is becoming both increasingly hard and deceptively easy to let go*”. [4]

As Wallace transforms the idea of perception of the memory, it is implicit that the perception of time would shapeshift that memory. Memories and time perception are not the same, memory is changing in terms of the experience of time in every event in real life for example. But time is not changing, anyways it is a constant.

It’s clear that the perception of time in real-life events is constant and memories, that are related to our experiencing things and traces, will change the perception of time, but time will remain constant. In terms of time-based media arts, the relationship between real-time and no real-time (manipulated, changed) is what we could call obstructed. Because it is slow, fast, repetitive, distorted and the succession of the event could occur in reverse or suppress the main action, delectable, malleable, among others. Obstructors could define the last name depending on what happens perceived in the time that was used for the time-based media art result, like

speed obstructors, reverse obstructors, and intermittent obstructors, among others that it is possible to find as a tool for timeline editors for video and sound for example.

#### IV. Phenomenon description

What is it about the obstructor in action art then? The phenomenon to observe is a complex machinery that happens within the event. The event temporality becomes part of the conceptual endeavor of the analysis and the past, present, and future of the action happens at once, supposedly starting and ending at a certain point.

For this study, the action never ends or starts and is only obstructed to produce a certain memory of the experience of time, where time-based media arts are laid and presume their own control and manufacture. But it is the obstructor who decides which will start and close the event, giving the answers about: milestones, trajectory, future, past actions, and goals.

In a previous model Effect/Affection presented in 2019, the relevance of one factor called attractor was the main protagonist of the analysis of an element of time-space arrangements of the event in performance art or action art. After the distinction of sensitizer and isolator as the main characteristics of two of the variations of the attractor factors. The research points out more in a general observation about one of the growth concepts into the performance, related with the performativity as a sort of the effect level of the experience. Diving into that level of abstraction, time could be stretched and manipulated by the time-based media artist using other variables of the event or better to call it node as one of the edition tools in programming when a node can connect with other interactive tools and sensors, for example in Max platform.

In the following of that analysis, Groot and Merx defined the composition in a performance event as: “*A performance event always involves the triad of composition, spectator, and context*” [5], but in performance art or art action there are more factors involved as to the effectiveness of the action, how much impact did the action provoke in the *audience/spectator*, and in the art *context*, how did the context influence the narratives and interpretations and how it makes sense in terms of the experience for all factors involved. Adding to that model are the attractor factors and an active principle of time in this article: the obstructor as a form of *composition*. In Barad's words, the idea of time today is presumed to be a: “*wartime/science time /spacetime / imaginary time / mythic time/ story time / inherited time / a time to be born / a time to die / out of time / short on time / experimental time / now / before / to-come /*” [6]. If philosophy gives such characteristics to time as a concept, time-based media art uses these ideas to mold and create with time experiences to share, live, and participate in it. Perhaps the results or performativity of time-based are the temporalities created within the experience in terms of how the artists obstruct time to make it manageable, instrumentalized, and versatile in terms of the design of the node-event to possibly make it as a milestone in the trajectory of their own practice.

Zahavi and Kriegel, for example, define temporality as a conscious phenomenon by a structured time experience: “*Temporality is a pervasive feature of all phenomenal consciousness. Each experience has a certain temporal extension, structure and articulation*” [7] What they called a pervasive feature as temporality might be structured by a composer of the experience, the design of the experience is planned by an artist as goals to reach by action, actions that could be modified by attractor factors and moved to a different attracted experience. The composer or planner and guide for the articulation that aims a goal using an obstructor of time, to modify the perception of time-space under the parameters of this article.

*When Barad presumed performativity of time:*

*“A performative understanding of discursive practices challenges the re-presentational belief in the power of words to represent preexisting things. Performativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, per-formativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real”* [8]

In terms of this proposal, the idea of performative understanding, Barad, helps to understand the idea of the power of language, especially on his idea of representation. To paraphrase the idea of performative understanding linked to time as a word, the time has a performativity in terms of trajectory, especially when it is concerned with the idea of an artist doing and practicing. To be more specific, time performativity would be the perception of the experience of time in terms of the event-based practice that Time-based art performs and share as an experience with an audience, viewer or beholders, as you reader wants to call it.

The understanding of obstructing time in time-based media arts could be compared with the value of culture to disclose the power of bodies when they say words, so then what the words refer to a name isn't the same as what is real. To be more concrete, the perception of time within one experience could change completely the awareness of time in terms of extension, so then as a consequence, the perception of length or reversion of time could be applied, but never change the notion of time itself, time will continue as constant. Even more, time coupled to space as spacetime will continue as a constant in a real perception of the self-



awareness linked to the idea of context placed in a cultural context. In this case, Barad it would be useful to precise this phenomenon to understand that awareness of time-space as a notion will confirm the cultural context where the experience planned took place, but also the unfolded time perceived in their experience adds a level of performativity in the audience/spectator, as well in the temporality created by the composer/ planner/ media artist that design and scrutinized that experience by making a difficult decision of obstructing time and edit, modify what is real to the “un-real”.

In 2012 Carola Dertnig wrote to Yvonne Reinner defining the state of performance in Europe at that time by saying:

“Europe, historically, the term "performance" was originally more situated within a visual art context. The term was defined by performances, for example, those by VALIE EXPORT, Peter Weibel, Günter Brus's *Spaziergang*, and Abramovic / Ulay. In the States, I came to understand that the term "performance" had various meanings in different fields, for example in theater, dance, or plays... Today, performance may be at its "highest point," and now it has come to be a term I sometimes still have a hard time understanding”. [9]

As Dertnig said about the context of performance specifically the difference between power of performance as a word installed in arts, socially in visual arts in europe, she made a clear point a difference between the term and the practice. The definition of performance for this article is related with use of actions that are part of Time as a medium in media arts where actions art part of one Event that is moulded and planned by practitioner of media art.

On the other hand, if the event built by one or more actions with goal/goals influences future events, the crucial decision/decisions will turn the event into a milestone with trajectory or node, where the nodes will take part of a tree of milestones in a trajectory that can possibly describe as; successive event, before/after event, visual chaining event, for example. Where the pervasive feature of temporality was time-obstructed by one creator even if the experience itself was attracted by strange factors.

Where was the obstructor observed to inspire this analysis? The idea of time-obstructing features was detected especially in performative events placed into the cultural context and the performativity of these actions and how they were affecting societies lately. Particularly in the scalation between Russia and Ukraine; in this particular to the Lgbtq+ rights as a *performance of abomination* to the family traditional structure, plus the Iranian feminist movement as the performance of matriarchy to dictatorial patriarchal society. Where time was obstructed by decision-makers and vulnerable parts of modern societies were censored, eliminated, forced into the exodus, or exterminated by men in power. In the observatory of milestones of both histories, it would be interesting to think about what happens if the actions were different and events occurred differently writing different histories and narratives. Events at the moment of this article are still ongoing.

**V. What to apply to the model of attractors?**

Obstructors can be detected and used for the performative understanding of an experience in time-based media art where the structures of temporality have been composed by obstructed spacetime. The obstructors are part of the relevant decisions behind a milestone to occur into a trajectory of one creator and could also give some possible ways for new explorations to travel into a different spectrum of actions. The utility of that will force an observation of possible scenarios to clearly distinguish the nodes of the milestones tree, which for this study that activity is called the milestones observatory.

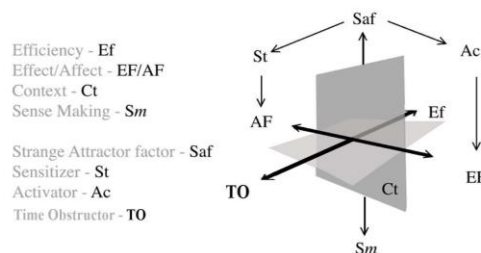


Figure 4. The scheme describes the variables of the effect/affect model in time-based media arts including the Time obstructor, aka TO variable. Within the multiples factor to attend TO is proportionally direct to the Effect: Ef and proportionally indirect to the Strange attractor factor: Saf and Sensemaking: Sm. It has a constant variation in the Affection and Effect variables.

The goal of the model and his development is to analyse time-based media arts framed into the variables of a model that aimed to produce knowledge, as Rokach and Maimon considers knowledge mining: “Some of the researchers consider the term ‘Data Mining’ as misleading and prefer the term ‘Knowledge Mining’ as it provides a better analogy to gold mining” [10] The idea behind

the model is observing the complexity of one action from many points of views and perspectives and another hand the idea of the mining as an activity to push the borders of the meaning of the action and observe his projection within the trajectory of the artist. Moreover, the model is not able to understand the impact of the event on the artist's trajectory, which is one of the reasons the milestones observatory attempts to take out the relevance of the actions in long-term observation.

As far as the model is based on quantum physics theory between time and perception of it, the idea of variables and factors, as well as anticipation, it forces the understanding of time-based media arts as a complex multi-layer web and multidirectional implication of the reactions. Therefore, the question comes back to the initial state, what is Time then within Time perception in art practice? Perhaps, when Barad posed the impossibility of science, specifically when she refers to Quantum field theory, it makes an assumption of indetermination that could give a key to the main problem:

*“The indeterminacy of time-being opens up the nature of matter to a dynamism of the play of being and nothingness. What are the conditions of im/possibilities of living-dying in voids produced by technoscientific research and development” [11]*

It is here, where the indetermination of the science is a resonance and mirror of time perception in real life as well where time is impossible, as well as performance determination, so then, the initial conditions of the event never start and end, the duration is practically undefined, but in a macro relation of the events perhaps the idea of trajectory is crucial to observe the tree of what to understand and why as a fact as part of becoming a time-based media practitioner?

Inside the model, TO or time obstructor has in media arts the possibility to transform and manipulate Time perception with one planned event by doing one action or multiple actions. The idea of shapeshifting Time has to reach a goal through actions as part of the model of attractors in the spacetime of the experience, TO is related to the impact in terms of efficiency. In

other words, obstructing time will generate an impact in the event (beholders and practitioners and actions) reaching the goal. The most efficient use of the resources and study of the context will create a complete stretch of time perception giving the experience one unique sensation.

## VI. Final words

TO come to the point that in time-based media as a possibility to build a critical analysis of action art, performance, and video installations that involve action rather than performers the audience could take a role as well. Even more art critic development will be able to observe the trajectory of the artist more than individual and separated artwork, procedures that make the coherent and cohesive trajectory of art practice. In that case, critical observation requests not only the sharp observation of the creative and practical evolution of one artist or collective, but it is also about the inclination, speed, twists, and destination observed that could reach a why and therefore the circumstance and references linked to that. The final results are not final, in terms of the end of creative activity is just a milestone in the long and intersectional way of evolving. Perhaps the key to something is only reading as Barad says the voids of time, but not as possible leftovers, as the increasing potential to be developed in the next time obstruction creative strategy.

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