

# Awake, Arise, Animate, Vegetate

THIS TEXT by **Marjolein van der Loo** guides the reader through compendium-style definitions of core concepts in **Sara Bjarland's** works in the exhibition *Awake, Arise, Animate, Vegetate*. In between these thematic paragraphs are fictional writings like log notes from a future world that imagines the agency of human and non-human debris in a post-apocalyptic struggle.

## Antenna

1: definition:

an·ten·na | \ an-'te-nə

plural noun: antennae, antennas

moveable appendages for sensing, sensorial organs, usually on insects or electronics

2: antennae can be assembled from discarded pipes, window blinds, laundry racks, connection strips, finishing materials, pedestals, supports, and legs.

3: the characteristics of the used materials continue to suggest the usability and function of these sculptures in their newly assembled shapes.

## 2652 (CE)

The second flock of scraps arrived two orbits of Jupiter ago and already the field is a mess. They came with what seemed like young and especially incredibly hungry congeners. Since the disconnection of our veins with the parabolic antennas, it became hard to tell their intentions from air formations but the transmissions seem to indicate benevolence. In any case, according to old coding files, these kinds of scraps might awake large voids that redirect damaging dust clouds and radiation typhoons. So, for now we will leave them be.

## Consumerism

1: definition:

con·sum·er·ism | \ kən-'sü-mə-ri-zəm

noun

a preoccupation with the buying of consumer goods

2 a: in the story of 'Leonia' from the book 'Invisible Cities', writer Italo Calvino describes the city that 'refashions itself everyday' and questions whether the motivation of the citizens is in consuming the new or in discarding the old as cleansing from 'recurrent impurity'.

2 b: this text, published in 1972, is ever more urgent since consumption and its promise for happiness is still at the core of modern and capitalist societies.

2 c. the inhabitants of Leonia are constantly redefining the meaning of 'old', 'out of use', and 'trash', especially outside the city walls where "a fortress of indestructible leftovers surrounds Leonia". Calvino locates 'away' and 'out' on the map by including the perspective of the 'external' world that is being invaded and considers retaliation.

3. "Garbage doesn't go out; it goes around!" (Lynn Margulis, 1992)

### 8.777 (CE)

Whether you call them floods, blizzards, tsunamis, or the magic veil, the effect is the same: visual perception is deleted and audio signals are distorted for half a Jupiter orbit to a moon orbit, and afterward, the environment is reorganized. It is also how we started our vintage satellite collection, first without intention. We obtained one that detects minerals and so we started attracting others here like rain clouds. It's a relief to care for something unexpectedly plentiful when most of our orbits arise with deficits. The last satellite seems to contain weak data on primordial scales that might guide us to an understanding of causes of environmental destruction.

### **Liminal**

1: definition:

lim·i·nal | \ 'li-mə-nəl

*adjective*

of, relating to, or being an intermediate state, phase, or condition: in-between, transitional.

2: the assembled sculptures are a push out of the limbo state of discarded trash into a possible becoming of the unknown. They create an invitation to imagine worlds with not-yet-known species, with not-yet-known senses, with not-yet-known cultures.

3: simultaneously, they are very much part of our world by materializing our failure and reckoning with the destructive consequences of modernity's unholy trinity: capitalism, colonialism, and industrialism.

### **Materiality**

1: definition:

ma·te·ri·al·i·ty | \ mə-tir-ē-'a-lə-tē

*noun*

the quality or state of being material

2: the majority of the materials used in the sculptures are plastics and deteriorate slowly but are not biodegradable.

3: it is the transformation and aging of materials that show by traces of use, patina, and discoloration. This makes these objects receivers and carriers of time and information, illustrating processes of use and decay.

4: this process in which emotions, experience, and associations arise allows re-interpretation of the agency of objects and sparks the imagination.

5: "All forces and flows (materialities) are or can become lively, affective and signaling." (Jane Bennett, 2010)

## 12.944 (CE)

In the endless variation each of us embodies a certain uniqueness; nonetheless, it's destructive to apply separation. Collaboration, for us, is equal to survival. Our networks of exchange are based on the former mycelial networks. We started building from the fungi legacy on large patches of depleted agriculture soil during the CoRoT era.

Form is one of our core projects: we animate overground hooks, feelers, antennas, spirts, flaps, suckers, branches, and protrusions to find the shape that allows efficient transmission. The data we collect is used to feed algorithms that sustain our livelihood, like fries to a seagull: plenty, addictive, and just enough nutrients to survive.

### **Totem pole**

1: definition:

to·tem pole | \ 'tō-təm \ 'pōl

*noun*

an object, a totem pole can serve as a representation for a group of people and often as a reminder of their heritage.

2: these sculptures are reminiscent of totem poles in how they are vertically assembled from stacked components with different characteristics.

3 : here, figuration emerges from play and a combination of collected and scavenged materials. These objects—what, and how they represent—could be future relics referring to an era where capitalism and consumerism were practiced widely.

### **Vegetal**

1: definition:

veg·e·tal | \ 've-jə-təl

*adjective*

of or relating to the division of nature comprising the plant kingdom.

2: recent research into plants invites a redefinition of what humans have defined as 'intelligence'. The ability to take information from the environment, adapt, communicate, and respond for the benefit of survival—and the greater good of their local ecology—is commonly found in plants.

3: plants receive information and establish communication through biochemical compounds. They respond to sound, smell, color, light and touch without a central nervous system or the use of neurons.

4: this gradual acceptance of other ways of intelligently interfacing with the world helps to re-envision what other life forms could look like and how they might sustain themselves.

## 17.562 (CE)

It is the fifth orbit of Jupiter on the search for a signal, and 2 moons since we discovered the fresh gooey shadow marks from the Venus transmission towers on the east side of the bay. Our little Barra was stuck to one of the shadows deciphering possible encrypted messages--talons, suckers, and all gone in goo--so we had to leave them there for the time being.

From the path leading to the bay across the former mining site, there was a pungent smell in the air reminding of radio signals but sourer and less melodious. Strong bushes of fiberglass vegetate on both sides of the path and had a seasonal blooming of incombustible bulbs springing up from its core branches. In a few moons, on our return, we will see if it makes sense to unplug Barra and take them back home with us.

## **Waste**

1: definition:

waste | \ 'wāst

*noun*

refuse from places of human or animal habitation: such as garbage, rubbish, excrement, sewage.

2: plastic garden furniture, dish racks, building materials, washing baskets, parasol holders, curtain rails, house plants, etc.

3: in several European cities, bulk waste like furniture and household goods is weekly collected from street corners. For a short period of time, the sidewalk becomes a space where a non-monetary and anonymous exchange is established.

4: the temporary installation of household goods and furniture shows what is perceived as waste, broken, and not worthy to put for sale.

5: "Dirt is just matter out of place" (Mary Douglas, 1966)