



STREAM

S5. Affective Politics and Energetic Transductions Across Art and Design

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DESCRIPTION

Energy and energies have emerged as core concepts in increasingly expansive research across the natural sciences, the humanities, and the arts. In Western contexts, energy is conceptualized as a force of life, a materializing commodity, a physical quantity, an analytic perspective, an economy, an ecological concern, an experiential encounter, and more. Complementarily, but also differently, non-Western perspectives such as Daoist philosophy introduce relational, regenerative, and cosmological alternatives that challenge extractivist logics. Douglas Kahn has insisted on working with “energies” in the plural while emphasizing their artistic, aesthetic, and affective dimensions. Similarly, Bruce Clarke staged STS-oriented discussions of energy and thermodynamics in *Energy Forms* (2001) and later expanded this discourse toward literature and the arts (2002). More recently, these debates have opened onto historical arcs linking thermodynamics and labor within historical materialism to discussions of energy in embodied and affective contexts (Daggett 2021). Likewise, the relation between life and energy has formed a philosophical line extending from evolutionary biology and vitalist philosophies, positioning energy as a transsubstantial force beyond mere quantification (Caygill 2007). These lineages resonate in our globally entangled present and position energy as a resonant concept across contexts and domains. Beyond naming the major processes and devastating projects of modernization, the field of the Energy Humanities has argued that moving away from fossil-based energetics requires the crafting of new experiential spacetimes and worldings “reimagined in the wake of the experience of the expanded, extended selves of fossil fuel modernity” (Diamanti and Szeman 2020, p. 141).

Energy and its intersection with affect, as a force exceeding both the numerical and the emotional, can already be found in the writings of Gilbert Simondon from the 1950s onward. In his relational account of the physical, organic, and psychological (social), he draws on the concept of potential energy, as developed in early twentieth-century physics, to propose a radical approximation of material (actual) and potentiating (virtual) tendencies in the fabrication of procedural reality. On this basis, Simondon proposes what might be called a “human energetics,” radically rethinking the humanities in relation to the natural sciences. We find this especially resonant with the artistic, affective, and materialist understandings of energy outlined above.

In this stream, we are interested in interrogating the ways in which energy and energies, in deep resonance with affect, might contribute to ongoing investigations of processes of intensification and transduction in contemporary technologically infused experiential fields across human, non-human, and more-than-human bodies and dimensions. Building on Simondon's proposition of a human energetics and Eastern somatic and contemplative traditions such as Daoist practices, we wish to explore how energetic transduction might be not only theorized but also practiced and navigated across art and design—and beyond. We invite contributions that energetically and affectively engage with, question, creatively problematize, and further explore topics such as:

- How can we rethink and redesign not only the fossil-fueled energetic foundations of modernity, but the entire notion of energy, in order to imagine more livable futures today?
- What energies are needed to grow collective capacities to make life otherwise?
- What affective politics are enacted across technoscientific stratifications, and how might an energetic approach open up possibilities—and potential—for countering such developments?
- What is lost or gained when energy is theorized as affective, relational, and embodied rather than quantifiable and transferable?
- What forms, methods, and encounters might cultivate “sympathetic resonance,” not as a spiritual retreat from politics but as one of its energetic foundations?