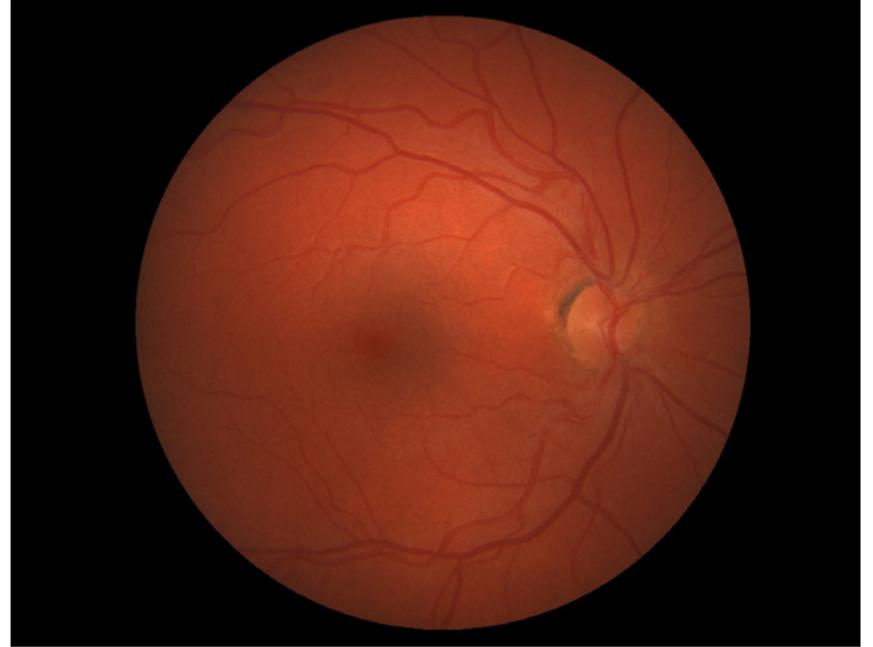


petrine vinje | on interface

questioning memories, matter and meaning through the haptic

Embracing the Biological Glitch



IR-scans of my own eyes, November 2020

“The body, or the embodiment, of the subject is to be understood as a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic and the sociological.”

Rosi Braidotti, *Body images and the Pornography of Representation*, 1991

Light enters the eye by passing through the pupil and hitting the retina at the back. The retina is encased in light-sensing proteins, which transmit what they sense to the optic nerve. The optic nerve, in turn, relays that message to the brain. On the location called the optic disc, where the cells that compose the optic nerve exit the retina, there is one small location, a spot with no photoreceptor cells. A blind spot, or Scotoma in medical designation. The scotomas are simply regions of reduced information within the visual field. Whatever shortfall there is about visual information, the brain fills in by looking at the surrounding picture, and as a result, we are never conscious of the existence of blind spots as we go about our day-to-day lives. This is, unless when they appear as transient or permanent sensory disturbances.

Is it possible to see our environments clearly through a smeared lens? Evoked, forced or by accident? What will this embracement of the failure do to our experience of being in a space in a given time? I question if we could understand fingerprints on the camera-lens, hick-ups in the image-stabilization in the camera's objective, glitches on the memory-card as technological relatives to the eye's blind spot? If so, it is an argument for technology as extensions of ourselves, that imitates and develops from the biological organism and takes part in the meaningmaking as our companions. How would this change our perception of our surroundings through our many lenses (in our own eyes, in our smartphones and other technological gadgets)?

Objective Enactive (2021) is a sculptural installation on a sliding door. The installation consists of two recognizable symbols: a point and a cross, made of artificial materials: hydrothermal quartz (amethyst) and the composite material Corian. Together, these two symbols form a well-known instrument for discovering one own's blind spot (discus nervi optici). Through the installation, the viewer can choose to look at the city scene that unfolds on the outside or explore the tiny “empty hole”, which is a small field with reduced peripheral information in our field of vision.

The term Enactive embodiment, or Enaction, is attributed to Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, who proposed the term to “emphasize the growing conviction that cognition is not the representation of a pre-given world by a pre-given mind but is rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs”.¹ It offers an alternative to the Cartesian dualism, computationalism and cognitivism. In the volume *The Embodied Mind* the three authors introduced enaction as a new form of cognitive science, and how it explains both the environment and first person's (the subject) experience are aspects of embodiment. However, enactive embodiment is not the grasping of an independent, outside world by a brain, a mind, or a self; rather it is the bringing forth of an interdependent world in and through embodied action.

In computer technology and machine learning, errors in the execution of a command are referred to as “non-performativity” or a “glitch”. With this work we ask if it is possible to understand glitches as technological relatives of the blind spot of the human eye? If so, it is an argument that technology is an extension of ourselves, imitating and evolving from the biological organism and taking part in the meaning-making, as our companions? How will this change the way we perceive our surroundings through our many lenses (in our own eyes, in the smartphone's camera lens and in other digital gadgets)? With *Objective Enactive*, we propose to redefine the blind spot in our field of vision, to a **biological glitch**: a ubiquitous protest in our perception of the environment. By examining the sense of sight by activating the biological glitch in the consciousness, we may move from being a passive observer and recipient, to participating in a world through enaction, where the experience of being a body in a space, in a city, will be crucial for our future.

¹ Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. MIT Press, 1991 (rev. 2017)