

ALICE ANDERSON, BIOPHILIA, BERLIN 2022

THE CULTURE OF AMNESIA

The core of Anderson's work is dance and performance, and the paintings and sculptures that form **BIOPHILIA** were brought into being through careful, meditative movement practices, always initiated at the intersection of Anderson's body and other technological objects – VR masks, USB hubs, keyboards, remotes, and drones.

Anderson believes strongly in the vitality and cultural significance of the relationship between humans and non-humans, which she reanimates through her performances. While deeply ritualistic in their origins, Anderson's actions are also forward-looking, a means of remembering the relation with those entities she employs by first covering them with paint to create her vibrant abstract pictures, and then "memorising" them in thin copper-coloured wire. These two work groups – abstract gouache paintings and copper ensconced sculptures – form a circle, with Anderson's expressive dance, its centre.

Anderson's paintings **TECHNOLOGICAL DANCES**, are always made through the imprint of a technological object and the artist's body on fabric placed on the floor. In the **DIGITAL GODDESSES** series, Anderson coats her recycled item in paint and then presses her body against it, while dancing across the surface of her painting. In other modes, Anderson ritualises drones to drop paint in random formations. What is recorded on the painted support is the evidence of a human/nonhuman interaction, its impressions forming concrete outlines that register the gestures that first created them. This performance enacts the very concept of the exhibition's title – Biophilia – which, as a theory, maintains that humans have an innate tendency to seek out connections with other forms of life, in nature, and elsewhere in the objects in the world. Even more than this ingrained desire for connection is Anderson's espousal of Animism, which holds that there is a life in all things in the world, between humans and nonhumans, but also between non-humans and other non-humans. This element is crucial to Anderson's practice, for it places her role as artist not as a mere creator, but as one who, like a shaman, re-enacts the lifeforce of the object world and conjures its presence as a means of shaping the work that she co-creates with her non-human "beings".

Anderson maintains that "from birth we are all 'animists' until the western world asks us to stop. *"Being animist is to be aware that everything is alive and responsive - from animals, plants, fungi, bacteria, viruses, rivers, seas, winds and clouds - to stones, objects and machines"*. The practice involves slowing down, paying attention, naming the beings (and use appropriate

pronouns such as ki and kin) and trusting what our own body already knows to connect with the environment.”

Anderson’s selection of copper wire – an eco-friendly thread symbolising cerebral and technological connections and the origins of the internet debut – as a material for weaving around her objects is both ritualistic – methodically, endlessly, obsessively, the object of a performance – and incredibly timely.

In the archaeology of underwater electric cables, copper remains the contemporary conduit par excellence. Embedded in this nonhuman agent is an entire history of electricity and the global expansion and hegemony that it engendered. According to Anderson, one cannot see copper as a pure object of detached contemplation: it is always connected to its uses.

Anderson calls her copper-coloured, weaved sculptures, **SPIRITUAL MACHINES**, in reference to a 1999 book by computer scientist and artificial intelligence pioneer, Ray Kurzweil (The Age of Spiritual Machines). There, Kurzweil attempts to answer a seemingly unanswerable paradox: How did one intelligence (human) create another (computer, non-human) that is capable of an intellect that challenges its very creators in the form of AI (artificial intelligence)? Anderson is less interested in the proofs of such a question than its basis: A theory whose very foundation depends on the existence of the life and perspicacity of non-human agents.

For Anderson, it is not enough to merely acknowledge the real animistic energy that connects humans and non- humans; rather, her dance is a way of rehabilitating it, paying tribute to it through performance, remembering it, keeping it alive. Perhaps the division between honouring something and remembering it is itself an artificial one, imposed by a **culture of amnesia**?