B-human

Develop an Inhuman horizon to critique technological development

MA Contemporary Photography, Practices and Philosophies, CSM, UAL

（Ziqi）Tree Xu

treexu2000@gmail.com

Content

Introduction

I believe humankind is now standing at a vital crossroads where choices need to be made based on a different path to that previously taken. As predicted by the video game Death Stranding, all reconstruction after a certain order has been destroyed needs to be carried out more carefully, or the whole planet may be plunged into an even more profound crisis: a big, fat lie[1]. This possibility of lie is the reason why I have tried to suggest another potential path in this research paper: we desperately need to break free from the illusions of love and peace, which are becoming a kind of cliché nowadays and find another way of seeing and perceiving the world, an inhuman way.

Drawing inspiration from Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*[2], in this research paper, I will take the case of the dog meat festival tradition and its prohibition in a small town in southern China as an example to illustrate why the disappearance of some traditions of violence in global localities that modern society has accused of being 'barbaric' has brought about a deeper kind of violence. This case about the relationship between humans and non-humans will lead us to a discussion of how technology establishes a threat to its own self-generating purposes to reveal a certain systemic violence that looms over our contemporary lives. At the same time, as a contemporary art practitioner, I will also elaborate on the possibilities of the Inhuman vision as a path in relation to the many practices that already exist in the art scene. This Inhuman horizon will allow us to have a critical lens towards our quotidian life built on technological development.

I hope that this writing can provide further sources for debate among practitioners and scholars in studying the human condition. Additionally, this

---

[1] Hideo Kojima, "Death Stranding Directors Cut: Kojima Productions," Death Stranding: Director's Cut, 2022, https://www.kojimaproductions.jp/en/death–stranding–dc.

[2] Jean Francois Lyotard, The Inhuman: Reflections on Time, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991).

research paper will also establish a comprehensive context and a critique framework for my own art practice. This research paper will also contain many relatively subjective experiences, conclusions and poetic metaphors due to my perspective as an art practitioner, and I hope that these speculative conclusions will one day be discussed further.

The fate of the dog

In my hometown, a town called Hutou in China, the Dog Meat Festival is 600 years old and originated from a military event when domesticated dogs within the town sounded the alarm and thwarted attack after attack. This resulted in slaughtering all the dogs first by some infiltrating soldiers. All the dogs' bodies were later cooked to celebrate the successful taking of the town. The dog festival had been held every autumn since then[3]. As one of the locals who participated in this festival, I can still remember there would be a performative process of bloody butchery that takes place on the streets every year. In Yulin, a city in China that hosts a dog meat festival as well, it is said that 'ten thousand dogs are slaughtered daily' during the festival[4]. To some degree, this slaughter at the festival functioned as a local sacrificial ritual. In the book *Violence and Sacrifice*, Girard René argues that there is no difference in the function between the festival and other sacrificial activities, as they all take the role of suppressing the internal violence of the community[5].

According to Rene's theory on sacrifice and violence, there will be a role called *surrogate victim* in sacrificial practices as a central element to stop the internal conflicts in the community. Here, the dogs killed in the festival thus became *surrogate victims* for the town. By setting the surrogate victim, the

---

[3] "浙江'狗肉节'招致网民批评后被取消," BBC NEWS CHINESE, September 20, 2011, https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/chinese_news/2011/09/110920_dog_meat_china.

[4] Qian Zhang, "广西玉林狗肉节官方退出主办 往年日杀万狗," people.cn, June 17, 2014, http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2014/0617/c1001–25157374.html.

[5] Rene´ Girard and Patrick Gregory, Violence and the Sacred (Baltimore, the United States of America: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 119–20.

truth of the conflict will be transformed, usually into myths (here is the story of the ancient war) to re-energize the dying cultural order. Rene uses the example of cannibalism to substantiate the function of the surrogate victim in festivals and sacrificial practices and argues that the more abhorrent the image of this sacrificial object is, the more influential the sacrifice will be[6]. This concept of *surrogate victim* leads us back to the origin of the dog meat festival[7]: the dogs were deployed as a 'war technology' within the town that the generals were trying to attack; they were in the image of 'enemies' in the humans' war and had become mediators of the conflict, which is to say their technological presence as the alarm system on the battlefield would bring about endless attempts of attacking.

When the solders first killed off the dogs in town, the conflict stopped. The dogs thus were chosen to become sacrificial objects that could stop the transmission of violence in the town. Since then, this sacrificial practice has been set up to prevent possible *ancient violence*. Consequently, the function of the dog meat festival is a sacrificial practice rather than food-gaining. The slaughter scene of the festival has played as an outlet for violence.

Around 2011, the development of the Internet and communication eventually brought this local sacrifice practice to a broader range of audience. People started to criticize this apparent violence happening in the modern world. Due to the impact on the city's representation, the government finally banned this festival in that town[8]. This, for me, can be seen as the extinction of a ritual of sacrifice that came about through a combination of internal and external forces after economic and technological development.

---

[6] Rene´ Girard and Patrick Gregory, Violence and the Sacred (Baltimore, the United States of America: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 274–77.

[7] "浙江'狗肉节'招致网民批评后被取消," BBC NEWS CHINESE, September 20, 2011,

https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/chinese_news/2011/09/110920_dog_meat_china.

[8] Ibid.

What is worth noticing here is that, in fact, the sale of dog meat remains legal in the town, as in many other places in the world, while the public slaughter has disappeared. Globalization has brought local traditions, such as dog meat festivals, under broader attention from the Internet, and modern moral standards often clash with these practices. As local cultures are increasingly under pressure to conform to global norms, time-honored rituals are erased in favor of a homogenous, 'civilized' global marketplace. The 'humanity' that dogs are given in the ideology of this international market does not allow them to be present in the butcher's shop, which is why the 600-year-old sacrificial practice of this town is deprived of their right to be presented when they are captured by cameras and represented by Internet technology.

After the bans, the trade and production process of dog meat has been hidden since prohibition, and the source of dog meat is no longer restricted to on-street slaughter during the festivals. It may cause a higher incidence of theft or poisoning of some domestic dogs that were initially used as a burglary deterrent, because a certain inertia possessed by the custom leads to the fact that people who consume dog meat do not stop eating it just because the festival is banned. A report by an organization called AnimalsAsia shows that the theft and poisoning of domestic dogs for sale has always been a problem in China, but statistics from 2001 to 2015 show a spike in the number of cases in 2011. In the graph given in the report, the curve has a significant rise in 2011[9]. It is possible to speculate that around 2011, China's economic growth and deeper connections to globalized markets[10] brought unprecedented attention to the dog meat festival tradition found in many towns and villages in China, and the government tightened up laws that made dog meat farming more expensive. At the same time, the regular annual

---

[9] AnimalsAsia, "The Black Market for Dog and Cat Meat in China: Media Reports 2001–2015," animalsasia.org, June 2015, https://www.animalsasia.org/assets/pdf/2015_FOF_reports–report2_A4–EN–20150609_low.pdf.

[10] Julia Kollewe and Justin McCurry, "China Overtakes Japan as World's Second–Largest Economy," The Guardian, February 14, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/business/2011/feb/14/china–second–largest–economy.

killings during festivals as a practice of sacrifice became covert killings that took place at any time of the year, making violence within the community even more unpredictable. In other words, dogs in the town are in a more dangerous situation now.

Here, we can see a shift in the function of dogs inside the community. In the dog meat festival, the dogs played as *surrogate victim* and had the function of stopping border violence within the town. It was when the festival was banned that the number of illegal killings of domestic dogs began to increase. This does not just raise anger among human groups in the community. As the source of dog meat becomes obscured by the disappearance of fresh slaughter on the streets at the festival, the families who lose their dogs may direct their anger not only at the illegal dog thieves but also at everyone involved in the dog meat consumption industry, even if they were consuming the dogs that are legally raised for meat.

Dogs as a species are caught in a situation in this town where they can be killed at any time, but without being sacrificed in the festival. They are what is called the 'bare life' now in Giorgio Agamben's book Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and bare life. Giorgio Agamben introduces a figure called Homo Sacer, who existed in ancient Roman law, who is a person that can be killed but not sacrificed. This concept has been developed by Agamben into 'bare life' in the modern world, which is a form of life that exists in included exclusion in the contemporary political world[11]. This is a stage where the dogs in the town are included by the rules made by the government for the dog meat industry while they are actually excluded because the killings are still continuing and may happen at any time.

---

[11] Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life, trans. Daniel Heller Roazen (Stanford, Calif, The United State of America: Stanford University Press, 1998).

The shift of dogs' function in the town as surrogate victims to bare life provides a metaphor for rethinking the violence of contemporary everyday life, while the inhabitants of this town are thus externally given the stamp of savagery, infinitely amplified by internet technology. 'Dog Eater'[12] is still a racist discourse against the people of East Asian countries, but it is based on the development of Internet communication technology, which has allowed the expansion of a culture that was initially internal to a specific region to the global level. This has led to a change in the form of violence in the modernization of some non-European countries, from internal killing, evident in ancient rituals, to externally dependent and systematic exploitation, which we can argue is more challenging to represent and see. The violence has not been eliminated but hidden.

This modern form of violence works through cuts in every part of daily life: the distinction between human and animal is made when the human has the right to choose a certain species of animal as a pet. The dog acquires a place on the planet above the other animals, just as man is above the other animals in his own eyes. Francis Bacon sensitively expresses in painting the suppressed animality of humans, but this animality is, for him, an image of death, pure meat. As Deleuze quotes: Bacon always imagined himself in the butcher's shop, hanging in the window with the other animals to be sold[13].

If our reasoning were valid, then perhaps we now need to ask what forces are driving a region, or even a country, to turn to an ideology from the Western center to discard these ancient practices. All the political, economic and cultural developments that have taken place since China's reform and opening up complicate the analysis of this ban event if we consider it broadly enough. At the same time, this ban is only one of many similar developments around the globe which are difficult to summarize in a single article. What I

---

[12] "dogeater," accessed November 9, 2024. https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dogeater.

[13] Gilles Deleuze and Francis Bacon, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation (London, UK: Continuum, 2003), 24.

can do as an art practitioner who has experienced this event firsthand is to provide a speculative summary of some of its outcomes and to stimulate a possible critical path. In the following chapters, we will discuss the ideological paradigms brought about by the technologies and their development as a sort of driving force to prohibit these ancient practices.

The trees long for peace but the wind will never cease: Technology and its possible Anti-human nature

I propose that the modernization process that started centuries ago for the whole world is the main reason for the retreat of rituals. This speculative conclusion is inspired by Caliban and the Witch by Silvia Federici. In this book, Federici sees the witch hunts that took place in 16th and 17th century Europe as part of the primitive accumulation of capital and argues that this process of de-mystification is a necessary part of the establishment of the modern form of repression and exploitation of the body. Through the stigmatization and persecution of the witch figure, women were reintegrated into domestic production by patriarchal societies, a logic that Federici argues is eternally embedded in the ongoing process of primitive accumulation in the modern era[14].

Building on Federici's analysis of oppression through de-mystification, we can see a similar logic working in the modernization process of some non-western worlds. Like the case we have already discussed in Chapter 1, the dog meat festival as a local ancient practice of sacrifice is also seen as a sort of barbaric substance in conflict with modern standards, and for non-Western regions, those Bannings of the old way of being are usually firmly attached to a kind of neo-colonial process which will operate through cultural or economic means rather than straight violence and rules[15]. It is always hard to totally

---

[14] Silvia Federici, Caliban and the Witch (Brooklyn, NY, The United States of America: Autonomedia, 2014), 165–69.

[15] Sandra Halperin, "Neocolonialism," Encyclopædia Britannica, October 16, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/topic/neocolonialism.

avoid this neo-colonialism during the process of modernization for less-developed countries since nowadays, the technologies of the Internet and communication are so powerful that there is nowhere to hide for people. In my opinion, this is the reason why the connection between neo-colonialism and technological development is so robust. In this chapter, we will focus on the ideological paradigm of 'technology' and its development and ask: if there is a destructive power inherent in technology, what are the foundations of our contemporary life built on it?

To answer this question, we first need to define the term 'technology' in less-developed countries. However, the definition of technology often varies significantly from region to region. Chinese philosopher Yuk Hui argues that to overcome modernity, we must rethink all the practices from the legacy of modernization in Europe, and the point is to unveil the plurality of 'Technology' in The Question Concerning Technology in China[16]. For him, the modernization happening in China has brought ancient ways into the category of 'tradition', which separated some rituals and practices, like the dog meat festival from the development needs of the less-developed nations[17]. Consequently, he uses the term *Cosmotechnics* to refer to these ancient ways of being to avoid resisting the devaluation of these ancient practices at the discursive level[18]. Whilst there is a certain suspicion that the use of this concept over-exalts ancient practices in an optimistic way, it does give us another possibility of looking at modern technology.

It reminds me of an appropriation that often occurs in contemporary art contexts, namely practices that take place under the appearance of witchcraft, sacrifice rituals, God-making, etc. These practices usually want the viewer to

---

[16] Yuk Hui, The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics (Falmouth, UK: URBANOMIC MEDIA LTD, 2016), 7.

[17] Ibid., 164.

[18] Ibid., 18–33.

enter a state of connection that cannot be captured by modern technology, a kind of psionic that takes place within the art context. As in the works of American artist Matthew Barney, witchcraft is embedded in contemporary life by the artist and is represented to the viewer in a vast and diverse range of practices. In *River of Fundament,* the automobile, an essential cultural element in the United States, has been given the ability to reincarnate by the artist and has been assembled in a moving image that combines witchcraft practices from a variety of local cultures into an invocation scene[19]. This combination may have vital violent attributes, but the extensive enough representation system after the combination somehow bridges the binary cut between ancient practices and modern technology, which echoes Yuk's concept of *Cosmotechnics*, challenging the contemporary notion that

Figure 1: still from trailer of *River of Fundament,* film by Matthew Barney and Jonathan Bepler, 2007
Source: Internet trailer, http://www.riveroffundament.net/rof_trailer.htm

technological reason plays as the only way of viewing the world*.*

Thinking about the plurality of concepts of technology facilitates our reassessment of the power of traumatized local practices in the aftermath of global modernization and the true origins of 'technology' for non-Western

---

[19] Matthew Barney and Jonathan Bepler, "River of Fundament," River of fundament, accessed November 10, 2024, http://www.riveroffundament.net/rof_synopsis.htm.

regions. In Western contexts, the origin of technology is often attributed to the myth that Prometheus stole fire for mankind. Fire then is seen as one of the first technologies that mankind has mastered. Yuk also quotes the Promethean myth written by Aeschylus in his pursuit of the concept of technology in China and introduces a critique of *Prometheanism*, which plays as an affirmation of the idea that technology will liberate human beings from modernity. He argues that if we see the figure of Promethean as a global symbol, the risk of totality and potential colonization possibilities will emerge[20].

However, we may already be in this situation that the *Technological Reason* has almost become the foundation of everything. Here, we need to emphasize that this technological reason should point to an ideological paradigm that takes place in the process of modernization, which emphasizes technological harmlessness and pursues technological development. This technological development has created a kind of antithesis to *Cosmotechnics* in Yuk's discussion[21].

In order to overcome this ideological dilemma, I will use a metaphor other than 'fire' in the Prometheus story here in order to bring an unfamiliar perspective in order to infer some kind of non-Western-centered conception of technology, but this metaphor is limited to my own personal experience of its emergence, and is not entirely applicable to every non-Western part of the globe in specific cases, as if we need to chase the origin of modern technology in every region in this planet it will be a huge project.

However, the connection between technological globalization and colonization is quite clear. In an article called *Europe, Technology, and Colonialism in the 20th century*, the author David Arnold suggests some

---

[20] Yuk Hui, The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics (Falmouth, UK: URBANOMIC MEDIA LTD, 2016), 7–14.

[21] Yuk Hui, The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics (Falmouth, UK: URBANOMIC MEDIA LTD, 2016), 196–97.

paths between the technology history and the colonial process. He emphasizes the need to study the history of technology in a cultural context and argues that the cultural communication between Europe and the colonies was one of the main motivations for modern technological development[22]. Here, we can still see the cut between Europe and the colonies, that is, an internal and external cut. While a simple cut between inside and outside can fall into a simplifying binary thinking, here we can still find the exotic nature of the history of technology in non-Western regions. This exotic nature facilitates the further inclusion of new metaphors in our discussion when we try to discuss a modern path of technological development, which may come from the neo-colonial process. At the same time, we can get a glimpse of how the two processes complement each other to some extent.

As in the case of the dog meat festival in Chapter 1, it was the internet technology that brought it to a broader audience and then banned because of the economic and development needs of the city. In contrast to the past when technology served as a sort of violent repression, the modern processes associated with colonization take place more in the realm of representation. Technology exists as a mechanism for the production and transmission of images and pictorial representations, which means that it acts as both agent and content at the same time.

This brings us to the metaphor of the wind, an ancient Chinese saying, 'The trees long for peace but the wind will never cease.*(*树欲静而风不止*)*'[23] Modern technology is just like the wind for non-Western societies. It is an impermanent force in the world that both nourishes and destroys everything.

---

[22] David Arnold, "Europe, Technology, and Colonialism in the 20th Century," History and Technology 21, no. 1 (March 2005): 85–106, https://doi.org/10.1080/07341510500037537.

[23] "树欲静而风不止," Yes! Chinese, accessed November 10, 2024, http://www.yes-chinese.com/zh-cn/culture/idiomStory/info.do?id=261.

This technological force is both imposed and unavoidable, and like the wind, it shapes trees even when they want to be still. The wind needs to be represented by its dependence on everything around it because it cannot manifest itself. One wind can also collide with another, but nothing is subjective to the will of the tree. This metaphor of the technology also exists in an article titled *Towards a poetics of artificial superintelligence*, author Nora N. Khan uses the hurricane as a metaphor for artificial intelligence to emphasize the fact that human beings are only able to observe and prepare for this technology, but not to control it[24]. In other words, it has become a threat that we have been facing.

If we did see the Globe as a whole, then this wind, which was initially blowing from one side to the other, has become a turbulent current that is constantly changing direction and colliding with each other. Consequently, technological development as an ideology becomes dangerous. Kittler's penetrating enquiry into modern technology argues that it is generally built into the process of war. In his article Unconditional Surrender, he discusses the technological development of World War II and the struggle for and transfer of technological legacies that took place within the Allies after the defeat of the Axis powers, revealing the importance of war as a catalyst for technological development: perhaps many of the technologies that reshaped our world were built on the results of the slaughter of thousands of people in a particular war[25]. The lethality of some technologies in war will effectively build representations, just as the explosion of a nuclear bomb, which has used only an instantaneous image to construct a threat that has been affecting humans and the planet for almost a century. This threat is established through the development of technology in war, and it will, in turn, drive the technological

---

[24] Nora Khan, "Towards a Poetics of Artificial Superintelligence," essay, in Atlas of Anomalous AI (London, UK: Aldgate Press , 2020), 75—87.

[25] Friedrich A. Kittler, The Truth of the Technological World: Essays on the Genealogy of Presence, trans. Erik Butler (Stanford, California, The United States of America: Stanford University Press, 2014), 198–203.

development for future wars. This is the Cold War mentality, but it has changed from a bilateral to a multilateral status with the process of globalization. It brings us back to the relationship between the tree and the wind: countries outside the struggle want to stop the chain of violence, but deterrence, which has been a matter of history for a long time, cannot stop blowing like the wind. This is where the anti-human nature of technology comes in. When the automated cruise missile replaces physical combat, the subjectivity of the human being is gone, and we are already in a world where technology is the 'I'[26].

The threats built up by technology, rather than the technology itself, compel the countries that receive these representations to initiate action: development is not driven from within. It is forced upon them. It is the fear of the violence that technology inflicts that drives technology itself, just as the term 'apparatus' from Vilém Flusser. In his writing, the original intention of the apparatus was to liberate all humans, but sadly, only a small group of people had access to the apparatus. And this causes the reverse: apparatus becomes a way of repressing rather than liberating[27]. Technology as an assemblage of multiple apparatuses reproduces itself apart from its creators, and this automatism ultimately leads to a technological ideology, as described earlier.

This situation regarding apparatuses and their ideological reproduction is further discussed by Althusser, who argues that there is an Ideological State Apparatuses will make masses automatically follow a particular way of being[28]. While in our discussion about technological ideology, it is about the whole planet. We are thus able to conclude, and paradoxically, that there is a certain anti-human nature to technology, which is clearly created and

---

[26] Ibid., 207.

[27] Vile´m Flusser, Towards a Philosophy of Photography, trans. Anthony Mathews (London, UK: Reaktion Books, 2000), 71–73.

[28] Louis Althusser, 论再生产 Sur La Reproduction, trans. Zifeng Wu (Xian, China: Xibei University press, 2019), 179.

developed by human beings, that it plunges them into infinite suspicion and uses it to produce itself, and that this hiatus of violence is gradually erased by technological thought. Further, this nature is not carried by technologies themselves but by the system of representation the modern technology creates, which leads to its disconnection from humans and the whole planet.

Inhuman horizon: living from the brink of death

Modern technology as an ideology produces itself through the establishment of a universal threat, which has led to the reduction of ancient practices across the globe. The disappearance of local sacrifice rituals with explicitly violent attributes invalidates the hiatus of violence within the community against the wider community and, in doing so, establishes a systemic implicit violence that is compatible with the threat required by technology. Thus, a global-to-local system of modern technology generation becomes clear. This chapter explores how contemporary art practice can serve as a sacrificial space in the modern world. We will draw out a concept 'inhuman' to use it as a bridge of the cuts between technological development and human's pre-modern root for proposing another possible path to overcome modernity.

The term Inhuman for me first comes from a book The *Inhuman*: *Reflections on Time* by Jean-Francois Lyotard. In the introduction of this book, Lyotard argues that we must distinguish between two different 'Inhumanity', one is the modern system we have been living in with development needs, while the other is the one that has been originally rooted in humankind. What we can see here is Lyotard's critique of technology and its modern development, as well as his call to revisit the debt of human childhood[29]. However, I would like to suggest the possibility that using Lyotard's second inhumanity rooted in the

---

[29] Jean Francois Lyotard, The Inhuman: Reflections on Time, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), 1–7.

human body as a way of resisting the inhumanity brought about by modern technological development.

As Karen Barad asked in an interview with Adam Kleinman. 'How would we feel if it is by way of the inhuman that we come to feel, to care, to respond?'[30] As a researcher in a highly technical and sophisticated scientific field, Barad has already started to find a possibility beyond modern technological development and the cut between human and non-human, nature and man-made. The inhuman, as Karen Barad described, is a kind of endless intimacy that engages with the essence of touch. It creates and sustains the space where the vitality of uncertainties emerges, flowing through the separations and existing within the in-between space of specific entanglements.[31] The space created by the horizon of *inhuman* does not exist in the present; it is the past, where non-human and human co-exist without boundaries set by technological ideology. This is a nostalgia that humans cannot go back again. However, it can be experienced again, even though it will be only one instant moment.

Then the Dog meat festival in the first chapter becomes my inhuman memory, where killing is a kind of deeper cooperation between humans and non-humans to cease systemic violence. Here, allow me to appropriate Donna Haraway's creative concept game about the sign SF ('science fiction, speculative feminism, science fantasy, speculative fabulation, science fact, and also, string figures'[32]), a game that does a good job of bridging the cuts that are prevalent. Here *Inhuman* may mean *B-human*: before human, beyond human, B-grade human (like the bloody B-grade movies), becoming human. 'Becoming' in Deleuze and Guattari's writing indicates another

---

[30] Adam Kleinman and Karen Barad, Intra–actions, other, Mousse, Summer 2013, 81.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Donna Jeanne Haraway, Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene (Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2016), 10.

possibility outside of a single plane[33]. However, the concept of Inhuman or B-human is not Huxley's Savage who appeared in a world occupied by technology[34]. The *Inhuman* is supposed to be in a perspective for looking back after all the experiences of contemporary life. The *Inhuman* is a moment for those who witness the S*avage* in person and start to question their own quotidian life.

The exploration of *Inhuman* may have already happened within the art world. Take Bacon as an example. He depicted many monster-like human bodies. They are fragmented and twisted together, struggling with the frame Bacon has limited them to. Humans are transferred to pure meat in his painting. It is indistinguishable between man and animal when it is in the zone of meat[35]. This is not only a rediscovery of the animal nature of human beings but also suggests the possibility of another way of being, which is clearly disturbing to contemporary eyes. This being is about explicit violence: roaring, biting, killing. As if the paintings of Bacon foresee that we are bound to isolate this potential memory of the human past, a time when the *Cosmotechnics* was still functioning, and we are still animals. However, can they really be erased? When we live in a high-rise building with floor-to-ceiling windows and browse Instagram feeds of beautiful landscapes in other countries, there is a sudden moment when we remember something we cannot put into words: a lump of meat, a tumor, slimy and round, that tickles the heart, a tumor. Perhaps this is part of some contemporary art practices: To prolong this moment for the viewer.

The inhuman then is the ancient sensation of knowing that is rediscovered within the viewer after witnessing it. In Bacon's paintings, he succeeds in establishing this indistinguishable state of man and beast, reminding the

---

[33] Susan Archer, "What Is Becoming?," Academia Letters, August 26, 2021, https://doi.org/10.20935/al2933.

[34] Aldous Huxley, Brave New World: With the Essay "Brave New World Revisited" (New York, The United States of America: Harper Perrenial Modern Classics, 2010), 187–201.

[35] Gilles Deleuze and Francis Bacon, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation (London, UK: Continuum, 2003), 23.

viewer of that distant feeling that once upon a time when we were still a part of nature. The dogs in Bacon's paintings are also reduced to a lump of meat, so that the viewer can hardly recognize the face or the breed of the dog, which is the effect of the meat, a kind of ineffective identification without boundaries, and a resistance to the inherent visual system of human beings[36]. As in the scene of the slaughter of the dog described in the first chapter, amidst the pools of blood and excrement, human beings become aware of their rooted animal nature inside them, and are briefly disengaged from modern life, left only with a prayer for life or death that is parallel to that of all

Figure 2: Study of a dog, painting by Francis Bacon, 1952, Oil on canvas, 198 x 137 cm.
Source: Picture taken by the author of this paper at Tate Britain, London, UK

animals[37].

This intense violence and death are different from the threat posed by technology. Manifest death brings with it animal sentience while giving the

---

[36] Francis Bacon, "Dog," Francis–Bacon.Com, 1952, https://www.francis–bacon.com/artworks/paintings/dog–0.

[37] Gilles Deleuze and Francis Bacon, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation (London, UK: Continuum, 2003), 20–23.

ending a predictability that makes death easy and the flow of all life sustainable. The threat of death established by technology, on the other hand, is not. This suspended death becomes unpredictable; death is hidden, but its end is ever-present, and it is difficult for all life to predict when it will come, and the process of living itself becomes for torture. Like in the final scene of the film L'eclisse by Michelangelo Antonioni shows a newly developed modern town where people play, wonder, and wait[38]. The scene is so every day that it creates a stark cut-off from the first half of the film. However, when the camera shows a newspaper in the hands of a passerby with a warning about nuclear weapons, everything is instantly shrouded in the threat of death. The world has become a testing ground for nuclear technology, and every new building in the world is just a small town in the middle of a nuclear testing ground. Only this time, the test subjects are no longer a bunch of plastic figures but actual living beings: dogs, cats, trees, people...This threat of death incorporates the whole of contemporary space, creating a sameness of death, but at the same time, it is an essential part of the emergence of an inhuman horizon: it is an inspiration to die, just as a beast pushed to the brink of extinction is always able to exhaust its life in order to resist, as a seed grows the most robust trunk in the precipice...

Back to the art practice, the birth of the inhuman vision depends on the exposure of the death threat towards humans' quotidian life. Thus, the practice requires two planes: *the Unveil* and *the Generate*. The Unveil will bring about a devastating impact, where the viewer is reduced to meat, and where the Generate points to new paths of life. Such practices thus place certain limitations on the viewer: they must be in a contemporary life built around technological thinking, they must be devoted users of mobile phones or lifts. In fact, under the leadership of the global free market, this has probably become the common life of most people on the planet. This pre-

---

[38] L'Eclisse (ITALY: INTEROPA FILM & PARIS FILM PRODUCTION, 1962), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%27Eclisse.

existing life experience will provide the impetus for unveiling, which is a way of destroying, while generating is rebuilding, re-establishing a connection with the ancient past.

If we needed to think about one example of this kind of work within the contemporary art world, Pierre Huyghe's works have given me an intense feeling of the process of setting *Inhuman horizon*. From the photographic work Cerro Indio Muerto[39], we can see a strong sense beyond the post-human condition---it is an anti-human attitude which brings us the imagination of a non-human world, and this world is possibly made by technological development. This kind of possible scene of the future of the world returned when we start to read the statement of this work: it is NOW, somewhere on this planet, there has already been a place of death. However, this single work could only unveil the death threat beyond us but without the generating.

In one of the exhibitions for Pierre Huyghe's works, Le Château de Turing, the circle from unveiling to generating became more complete[38]. The three zones in the exhibition have brought the whole process of Unveil-Generate to the audience. The curatorial approach by Le Consortium allows for the combination of images, installations, and spaced-out areas to be threaded together into a strongly narrative yet non-linear space, where the viewer experiences, from entry to exit, a powerful revelation of the violent properties carried by everyday technological objects[40]. There is an indescribable sense of unease that pervades space, an unease that is the beginning of our suspension of everyday life. Without seeing the exhibition in person, we can

---

[39] Pierre Huyghe, Cerro Indio Muerto, 2016, photograph, Artsy, 2016, https://www.artsy.net/artwork/pierre–huyghe–cerro–indio–muerto–1.

[40] Pierre Huyghe, Le Château de Turing, Consortium Museum, accessed 2024, https://www.leconsortium.fr/en/le–chateau–de–turing.
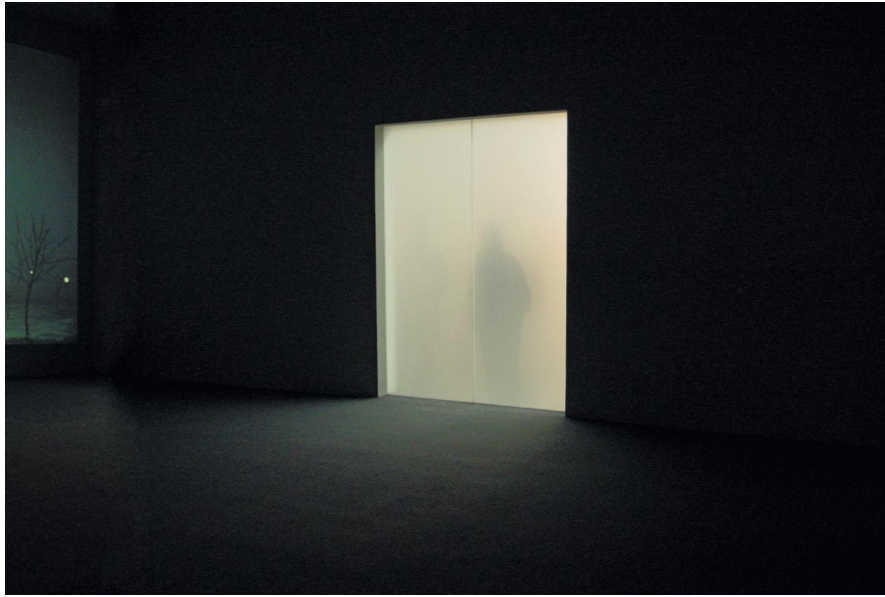
Figure 3: picture of Le Château de Turing, 2001, Pavillon français, 49ème Biennale d'art contemporain, Venise, exhibition of Pierre Huyghe's works curated by Le Consortium.
Source: Consortium Museum, https://www.leconsortium.fr/en/le-chateau-de-

still feel this through the pictures from the archive.

However, the lack of depiction of meat in Le Château de Turing leads to a somewhat lacking establishment of the final inhuman horizon, which is to say, the trigger is not strong enough. In another artist collective Jake and Dinos Chapman's works, the inhuman horizon seems more thorough. The body, as one of their subjects, was omnipotently and constantly reinvented. Fused, segmented, shrunken or enlarged, these means are combined to form a thrilling effect in sculptures with hyper-realistic textures. In a way, this presentation of the body is even anti-ethical, which shows a pessimistic response to the ideology of the Western Enlightenment[41], which is at the very heart of the inhuman horizon, just as the dog sacrifice in the first chapter is labelled as anti-ethical can be seen as a way of rethinking the modern technological development as well. In the realm of art, all acts considered 'violent' or even 'terrorist' exist in a legitimate way, which may lead to a certain doomed weakness of art trapped in a specific area, but this is also the

---

[41] Clare Hindle, "Arter: Jake and Dinos Chapman 'In_the_realm_of_the_senseless,'" World Art Foundations, May 14, 2020, https://worldartfoundations.com/arter–jake–dinos–chapman–in_the_realm_of_the_senseless/.

corner where resistance grows. If we imagine that the modern systems that define 'violence' or 'terrorism' are themselves the most entrenched perpetrators of violence, what is to stop us from questioning and re-examining these concepts and the things they frame? Just like Donna Haraway has called for, 'It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.'[42]

By analyzing the work of Pierre Huyghe and Jake and Dinos Chapman, we may be able to generalize a paradigm of artistic practice in relation to the Inhuman experience. Through the use and exposure of everyday technological objects and their images or appearance, we can bring the viewer into a state of questioning, while at the same time, the use of flesh and its texture as a boarder may complete the establishment of an Inhuman horizon and bring about a certain momentary experience. This establishment implies the beginning of resistance. This paradigm requires the collaboration of the space as a whole, just like Jameson points out in his analysis of the postmodern spatial paradigm that has emerged in the city: human beings do not yet have the capacity to recognize these spaces, which requires us to develop some new kind of organ to perceive and locate ourselves[43]. This generating of new organ will be part of the artist's job. *Inhumanity* may be one of the paths to follow in this endeavor. At the same time, it is one of our effective weapons of resistance to the apparatus brought about by the ideology of many modern technological developments, namely our own awakening.

Conclusion

By analyzing the case of the Dog Meat Festival as a tradition of sacrifice in a small town in China, we can uncover a modern form of more insidious

---

[42] Donna Jeanne Haraway, Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene (Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2016), 12.

[43] Fredric Jameson, The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998 (London, UK: Verso, 2009), 15–17.

violence built through the suspension of explicit and apparent violence. This establishment of widespread violence is one of the local phenomena brought about by the globalization of technology. The threat posed by modern technology through the representations created by a small number of people has become one of the ways in which many backward developing countries have been forced to connect with the global marketplace to develop themselves. This relationship, like that between the wind and the trees, is one of the ways in which technology continues to produce itself. After it has revealed itself as a destructive force, technology no longer needs human beings; on the contrary, it has acquired an anti-human nature, which has led to a crisis in everyday life based on modern technology. It is therefore urgent that we find another way of looking at modern technology and its surroundings. In this paper, we discuss the possibilities of an Inhuman Horizon by resorting to the concept of 'Inhuman' and its development in the field of art, which may bridge the gap between the human and the non-human life, between technology as an artefact and nature.

Bibliography

Agamben, Giorgio. Homo sacer, sovereign power and bare life: Sovereign Power and bare life. Translated by Daniel Heller Roazen. Stanford, Calif, The United State of America: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Althusser, Louis. 论再生产 Sur la reproduction. Translated by Zifeng Wu. Xian, China: Xibei University press, 2019.

AnimalsAsia. "The Black Market for Dog and Cat Meat in China: Media Reports 2001-2015." animalsasia.org, June 2015. https://www.animalsasia.org/assets/pdf/2015_FOF_reports-report2_A4-EN-20150609_low.pdf .

Antonioni, Michelangelo, and Peter Bradshaw. "L'Eclisse Review – Antonioni's Strange and Brilliant Film Rereleased." The Guardian, August 27, 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/aug/27/leclisse-review-antonionis-strange-and-brilliant-film-rereleased.

Archer, Susan. "What Is Becoming?" Academia Letters, August 26, 2021. https://doi.org/10.20935/al2933.

Arnold, David. "Europe, Technology, and Colonialism in the 20th Century." History and Technology 21, no. 1 (March 2005): 85–106. https://doi.org/10.1080/07341510500037537.

Bacon, Francis. "Dog." Francis-Bacon.Com, 1952. https://www.francis-bacon.com/artworks/paintings/dog-0.

Barney, Matthew, and Jonathan Bepler. "River of Fundament." River of fundament. Accessed November 10, 2024. http://www.riveroffundament.net/rof_synopsis.htm.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Francis Bacon. Francis Bacon: The logic of Sensation. London, UK: Continuum, 2003.

"Dogeater - Wiktionary, The Free Dictionary." Wiktionary. Accessed November 9, 2024. https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dogeater.

Federici, Silvia. Caliban and the witch. Brooklyn, NY, The United States of America: Autonomedia, 2014.

Flusser, Vilém. Towards a philosophy of photography. Translated by Anthony Mathews. London, UK: Reaktion Books, 2000.

Girard, René, and Patrick Gregory. Violence and the Sacred. Baltimore, the United States of America: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.

Halperin, Sandra. "Neocolonialism." Encyclopædia Britannica, October 16, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/topic/neocolonialism.

Haraway, Donna Jeanne. Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the chthulucene. Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2016.

Hindle, Clare. "Arter: Jake and Dinos Chapman 'In_the_realm_of_the_senseless.'" World Art Foundations, May 14, 2020. https://worldartfoundations.com/arter-jake-dinos-chapman-in_the_realm_of_the_senseless/.

Hui, Yuk. The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics. Falmouth, UK: URBANOMIC MEDIA LTD, 2016.

Huxley, Aldous. Brave new world: With the essay "Brave new world revisited." New York, The United States of America: Harper Perrenial Modern Classics, 2010.

Huyghe, Pierre. Cerro Indio Muerto. 2016. Photograph. Artsy. https://www.artsy.net/artwork/pierre-huyghe-cerro-indio-muerto-1.

Huyghe, Pierre. Le château de Turing. Consortium Museum. Accessed 2024. https://www.leconsortium.fr/en/le-chateau-de-turing. Exhibition curated by Le Consortium, 06 May 2001 - 04 November 2001, Pavillon français, 49ème Biennale d'art contemporain, Venise.

Jameson, Fredric. The cultural turn: Selected writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998. London, UK: Verso, 2009.

Khan, Nora. "Towards a Poetics of Artificial Superintelligence." Essay. In Atlas of Anomalous AI, 75–87. London, UK: Aldgate Press , 2020.

Kittler, Friedrich A. The truth of the Technological World: Essays on the Genealogy of Presence. Translated by Erik Butler. Stanford, California, The United States of America: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Kleinman, Adam, and Karen Barad. Intra-actions. Other. Mousse, Summer 2013.

Kojima, Hideo. "Death Stranding Directors Cut: Kojima Productions." Death Stranding: Director's Cut, 2022. https://www.kojimaproductions.jp/en/death-stranding-dc.

Kollewe, Julia, and Justin McCurry. "China Overtakes Japan as World's Second-Largest Economy." The Guardian, February 14, 2011. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2011/feb/14/china-second-largest-economy.

Lyotard, Jean Francois. The Inhuman: Reflections on Time. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991.

L'Eclisse. ITALY: INTEROPA FILM & PARIS FILM PRODUCTION, 1962.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%27Eclisse.

Vickers, Ben, K. Allado-McDowell, and Bill Sherman. Atlas of anomalous ai. United Kingdom:
Ignota, 2020.

Zhang, Qian. "广西玉林狗肉节官方退出主办 往年日杀万狗." people.cn, June 17, 2014.
http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2014/0617/c1001-25157374.html. The article title is
"Guangxi Yulin Dog Meat Festival official withdrew from hosting the festival in previous
years, killing 10,000 dogs per day.", translated by author.

"树欲静而风不止." Yes! Chinese. Accessed November 10, 2024. http://www.yes-chinese.com/zh-
cn/culture/idiomStory/info.do?id=261. The English translation of this saying is translated by
author.

"浙江'狗肉节'招致网民批评后被取消." BBC NEWS CHINESE, September 20, 2011.
https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/chinese_news/2011/09/110920_dog_meat_china. The
article title "Zhejiang Dog Meat Festival cancelled after netizens criticize it", translated by
author.