

# Border Objects as New Instruments of Design

Hybrid Sessions at A/D/O, Greenpoint, Brooklyn, Fall 2019

## *A Proposal by Het Collectief*

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A Follow-up to an Experiment at Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, Spring 2019  
Collaboration of Masters Students from Design Academy Eindhoven (NL)

As a satellite of Neuhaus, Het Nieuwe Instituut (Rotterdam) and the Master department of the Design academy (Eindhoven), a small group of passionate Masters students at DAE has developed a new template for object making; the Border Object. The Border Object aims to redefine authorship, propose new ways of integrating and generating knowledge, question design, and explore new formal and material expressions. The experiment was successfully launched at Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, and is being currently brought to an ambitious level of further development, which we offer to exhibit and share at A/D/O this Fall.

## *Het Collectief*

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As a collaborative project between the Masters departments, 10 students from Design Academy Eindhoven formed Het Collectief, a group working as a satellite to Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam. Het Collectief is established as a temporary experiment to initiate a conversation on the role of design in today's world and create objects as tools to generate and apply knowledge, thus exploring a new paradigm of learning and education.

The collective embraced the more-than-human agenda offered by Het Nieuwe Instituut's Neuhaus program. It has become an essential objective for the collective to evolve past traditional human-centered design practices. Het Collectief aims to move away from products and prototypes as market-driven, trend-setting tools, and towards probes as instruments to explore the unknown, infusing production-based material process with the more holistic notion of more-than-human matter.

## *Border Objects*

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A few initiatives have emerged from the collective's energy. One of them was a series of Border Objects (BOs) as tools to trigger and understand the border between human, more-than-human and nonhuman agents. In the friction generated by the collision of agents a new methodology can emerge; a methodology for the development of BOs as a tool for learning, as well as for the positioning of the designer today.

The initial BOs (further descriptions and photos attached) were assembled with several objectives in mind:

- To allow individuals to contribute while at the same time yielding an overall result based upon collective input, thus blending the traditional boundaries of authorship.
- To avoid prescribed functions and usage; conceive the objects as open systems with a sense of possibility, without resorting to mere sculptural and abstract form-making.
- To distance ourselves from the maker's studio and explore other situations and spaces as a workshop. Familiarising ourselves with atypical spaces of research and assembly fosters a transition from productive material to disentangled matter.
- To move from products and prototypes as tools to imagine, design and shape something clearly defined, to probes, as instruments to explore the unknown. As probes, objects facilitate research through which findings can be captured and shared to become applicable to various projects.

To that end, BOs are collages of industrial and natural elements, proposing a simple yet distinct vocabulary as an allegory to posthumanist aesthetics. The BOs are on display at Het Nieuwe until September 16, 2019.

## Hybrid Sessions

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Het Collectief has morphed into an on-going experiment that has found a working format for itself: Hybrid Sessions. Hybrid Sessions take a workshop framework within which BOs are assembled collectively. With the possibility of extending the participation to a wider audience, the Hybrid Sessions can become spaces of negotiation and conversation through object co-creation and a facilitating moment of collective discourse. Starting from this mode of working we have, among others, the goal of further developing the BOs through:

- Deepening the program informing the BOs. BOs are tools to explore the unknown, make the invisible visible, and focus on the rich areas of friction. They have been dedicated to the posthumanist agenda. They can be applied and extended to other fields relevant to design.
- Further defining the BOs design vocabulary. The vocabulary is the result of an unusual composite process engaging human authors, but is also open to the influence of non-human agents.
- Developing content and representation as a way to share what we learn from making and deploying BOs.

To that end we have organized ourselves, focusing on the development of research, narratives, new objects and novel ways of representing our learning. At the end of the Summer we will present new templates for the BOs, which we will fully develop in September and October along with a comprehensive research methodology and system of presentation and publication.

## Het Collectief at A/D/O

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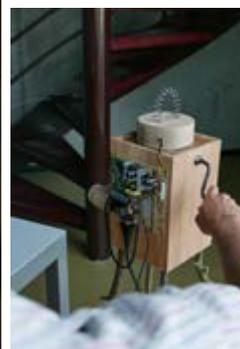
The BOs are not exactly speculative design. They are probes. They are fictional artifacts applied to something very real. They help us make, see and comprehend something that does exist but we cannot see or understand fully, as opposed to imagining a possible future for something that does not exist. This is our main proposition and what we are passionate about. It is a never-ending project and we are confident we can reach a new milestone after our first iteration this Spring. We are eager to share our findings and progress and we see A/D/O as the ideal platform to do so.

We are offering to present the new BOs and organize Hybrid Sessions at A/D/O in November in the context of a program combining an exhibition and workshops:

- We will bring two or three BO templates and make new BOs onsite as a collective over 3 to 4 days. We will partly plan in advance the making of new BOs in NYC through a network of established partners and workshops, including A/D/O. We will also rely on the unprompted participation of various actors using resources available at the time. Our goal is to present 10 to 20 BOs.
- Our research and process will be shared through a progressive publication started in Eindhoven and continued during Hybrid Sessions at A/D/O.
- We will organize recurring workshops to engage the public and various audiences, with the aim of prompting opportunities for interaction, discourse, creation, and questioning of the BOs.

We look forward to presenting our plan in further details, sharing our on-going progress and meeting with you in person.

Thanks!



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*Het Collectief Members:*

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