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CUSTOM INTERIOR
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The International Ergonomics Association defines ergonomics as “...the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data and methods to design, in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance.” The body, when combined with the manufactured good, designed to fit in the hand and mold to the skin, can be seen to form a sort of synapse over which the information of our evolutionary history is propagated into structures of manufacturing and industry; driven in part by mechanisms of selection like consumer choice and commercial competition.

For example, Orthotic footwear designed to fit comfortably as well as aid and protect against tendonitis, derives its shape in part from the shape of the Achilles tendon, whose specific geometry confers the adaptive advantage of a long distance running capacity to our hominid ancestors. This is how the millions of years of morphogenetic information, embodied by the human foot, is translated into plastics and fabrics, and by extension, the tools and institutions that manufacture those materials. The ergonomically designed product therefore becomes the reflection of the body: a symmetry expressed through tools and systems, paddings and curves. The imprint of humanity, as carried by metals and rubbers, is therefore like the symbolic figure represented by the image of the hand in prehistoric cave markings.

With this in mind, not only does the video game controller, the grip of a pistol, and the contours of a sex-toy become the reflection of the body and a stand-in for the figure, but they are also the products of (and therefore signify) the entire evolutionary history of human morphology: the ergonomic product contains within the utopian vision of an odor-absorbing, micro-perforated continuum of humanity and technology, body and economy. But if technology is simply an extension of biology, the ergonomic product also represents a vision that denies the dualistic notion of the natural vs. the synthetic, a representation of humanities’ reunification with nature - the rubber comfort-grip on the key to the Garden of Eden. If the information that informs the shapes of reality are causally transferred from the environment into our genes and from our genes into a product (not to mention any other possible path combination of flow and order), then there are no ontologically grounded divides between the mineral, the biological, the cultural and the synthetic. There are instead what De Landa would refer to as ‘state-changes’, like that of ice to water and water to gas. The genetic and memetic materials undergo a bifurcation, changing mediums from deoxyribonucleic



acid to neoprene and polystyrene. The ergonomic product is the crystallized form of our genetic heritage complete with flex zones and lumbar support.

The dynamic interplay of system and body also finds its analogues in the relationships of body and environment. An organism is the reflection of its environment in the same way the ergonomic product is the reflection of the body. The environment (actual or virtual) influences all aspects of an organism’s being, ultimately shaping its genes and behaviors: a living representation of the outside that its insides are shaped by. But the organism (and its body) is also factored into its environment, because it affects its environment. In this sense, the body of the organism represents the other (everything external to it), while still signifying the self, forming a reflecting feedback loop fundamental to the very notion of life itself. It is this autocatalytic loop that Deleuze regards in terms of a musical call and response, indicating a commonality to the organism and the artwork:

“The spider’s web contains ‘a very subtle portrait of the fly’, which serves as its counterpoint. On the death of the mollusk, the shell that serves as its house becomes the

counterpoint of the hermit crab that turns it into its own habitat, thanks to its tail, which is not for swimming but is prehensile, enabling it to capture the empty shell. The tick is organically constructed in such a way that it finds its counterpoint in any mammal whatever that passes below its branch, as oak leaves arranged in the form of tiles find their counterpoint in the raindrops that stream over them. This is not a teleological conception but a melodic one in which we no longer know what is art and what nature (‘natural technique’).”

Maybe an artwork is also an organism, sensing and navigating its environment, responding to the call of its exterior, an exercise in ergonomics designed to extract energy and propagate information. But rather than designing the shell to fit and augment the body, it’s an act of designing the body to fit and augment the shell. A product designed to trace topological contours as well as geometric. Its field deployment being architectural, spatial, historical, social, mental, actual and virtual, forming a synaptic exchange between a gesture and its context. – 2011