

# Introduction

## MATERIAL DYNAMICS

We study religion in the midst of compelling critiques of the concept. I have participated in those critiques.<sup>1</sup> The concept of religion bears indelible traces of imperial ambitions, colonial conflicts, and persistent ambiguity. Get rid of the term, some say. But there it is. We are stuck with it. For those of us interested in an academic study of religion, how do we make a disabling term, which bears this legacy of ambiguity, colonialism, and imperialism, an enabling vortex for thinking, especially for thinking about the human in the humanities and social sciences?

Now that we know that *religion* is a modern invention, a Western construction, a colonial imposition, or an imperial expansion, how do we study religion? How do we reject yet still retain the qualifier *religious* in our study of human discourses, practices, personal experiences, and social formations? How do we move beyond religious studies and stay within religious studies?

*Religion: Material Dynamics* identifies openings for multidisciplinary research and reflection in the study of religion, looking beyond religious studies, not in a temporal, but in a spatial sense, for points of entry, intersection, and connection in the academic study of religion. The book focuses on categories, formations, and circulations, highlighting the

historical contingency of basic categories of religion, the colonial and imperial forces in formations of religion, and the mobility of materiality in circulations of religion. The book participates in the revolution that has liberated materiality—embodiment and the senses, objects and their social lives, exchange and power relations, media and mediation, and all the forces and fluctuations in the production, circulation, and consumption of things—as the stuff of religion that demands the attention of the study of religion. Important programmatic overviews and orientations to the material study of religion have been provided.<sup>2</sup> Indicating a remarkably multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary enterprise, the authors of these introductions to the study of material religion are variously situated in religious studies, anthropology, history, sociology, and art history, while each dwells deeply in the repertoires and intersections of academic disciplines. As their profiles of the field demonstrate, this grounded and dynamic range of inquiry creates openings in religious studies through the study of religious materiality.

What holds this study of material religion together? What opens this area of inquiry to multidisciplinary engagements?

Clearly, no single center holds for the study of material religion, but a shared orientation is evident in the impetus to move beyond any restriction of the scope of religion to the authority of texts and the interiority of beliefs. Rejecting this Protestant construction of religion, the study of material religion has nevertheless retained the term *religion* by demonstrating how even the most dematerialized religion entails material senses, practices, and exchanges. Taking a cue from David Morgan, we can relate this theoretical orientation of rejecting and retaining to Hegel's logic of sublation (*Aufhebung*), the simultaneous destruction and preservation—canceling and keeping, disposing and transposing—that results in a new synthesis.<sup>3</sup> However, instead of resulting in a synthesis, rejecting and retaining can produce an enjambment of disparity, a palimpsest of illegibility, or a mash-up of incongruity. In the study of material religion, theoretical resources are deployed to move through disparity, illegibility, and incongruity into surprise.

Rejecting the very term *religion* as an invention and construction, as an imposition and expansion, the study of material religion can retain the term to signal a terrain in which human beings engage in meaningful and

powerful ways with the material constraints and animations of matter, the interplay of sacralizing and desecrating, the labor of producing space and time, and the myriad ways in which incongruity, the material effect of the collision of incommensurables, can be transposed into moments, perhaps fleeting moments, of congruence. Studying religion, in this sense, focuses attention, not on religion, but on the material conditions of possibility for negotiating the human.

In search of openings inside and beyond religious studies, I propose here that we can find multidisciplinary crossings of disciplinary boundaries in the study of three things: categories, formations, and circulations.

## CATEGORIES

As an overarching category, *religion* is a relational term, emerging and shifting as it is deployed in relation to such terms as *superstition* and *magic*, *heresy* and *infidelity*, and *secularism* and *irreligion*, which have all acted at one time or another as defining oppositions for *religion*. Not merely the product of scholarly inquiry, “religion” has been produced in a diverse array of human engagements, including politics, legislation, public discourse, and popular culture, which have rendered the term as not only meaningful but also powerful in the world. Over the last few decades, thinking about the category of religion has moved away from any Aristotelian distinction between inherent substance and accidents, or any Kantian notion of a priori categories, or even Wittgenstein’s logic of family resemblances, into the historical contingencies of religion’s production and deployment as a category.

Demonstrating the relational productions of the religious and the secular, the sacred and the profane, in the contemporary United States, a recent book by Nicolas Howe, *Landscapes of the Secular: Law, Religion, and American Sacred Space*, illuminates how the U.S. legal system shapes American landscapes by staging crises of interpretation of profound emotional, religious, and political significance. Dwelling on detailed case studies of legal disputes over Christian displays, Native American traditions, and wilderness preservation, Howe enters the changing contours of the sacred in America at the intersection of the religious and the secular. In

legal disputes, basic categories are defined, often with surprising results. For example, in the longest-running church-state case in the United States, a cross displayed on Mount Soledad in La Jolla, California, has been interpreted by secular opponents as an offending religious symbol and by religious defenders as a secular war memorial.<sup>4</sup> As these conflicting interpretations move through the courts, the cross becomes simultaneously more sacred and more profane. In this dispute over the meaning of a material object, basic categories for the study of religion are contested as the secular struggles to define the religious and the religious struggles to define the secular.

E. B. Tylor's minimum definition of *religion* as "belief in spiritual beings" was based on a fundamental dualism that separated the realms of spirit and matter.<sup>5</sup> By imagining animated materiality, religion was essentially a category mistake, a failure to distinguish spiritualism from materialism, a distinction that could be made only by a scientific materialist. Although Tylor drew on African evidence in developing his theory of religion, literary scholar Harry Garuba has identified the "animist realism" in contemporary African poetry and novels not as a category mistake but as a way of negotiating community through the "refusal to countenance unlocalized, unembodied, unphysicalized gods and spirits."<sup>6</sup> This recovery of animist realism resonates with recent research on dynamic objects, from the social lives of things, through assemblages, networks, and entanglements of humans and things, to vibrant materiality, which are at work and at play in producing the sacred.<sup>7</sup>

Shifting from the distinction between spirit and matter, Emile Durkheim regarded the basic categories of sacred and profane as separate and distinct, observing, "In the history of human thought, there is no other example of two categories of things as profoundly differentiated or as radically opposed to one another."<sup>8</sup> However, in tracking the sacred in the history of religions, we see that these categories are not so easily distinguished, because anything can be sacralized through the labor of intensive interpretation and formal ritualization; the transformation of scarce resources, especially material objects, space, and time, into sacred surplus; and the contestation over legitimate ownership of that sacred surplus.<sup>9</sup> In the political economy of the sacred, the categories of the sacred and profane are not separate and distinct, because they are mutually entangled within

the social fields of meaning and power in which the sacred is produced, exchanged, circulated, owned, operated, and contested.

The political economy of the sacred is evident in the categories of religious space and time. Here multidisciplinary resources are needed to analyze the poetics, politics, and economics of sacred space and sacred time. With respect to space, structural oppositions—inside and outside, up and down—are deployed in producing spatial orientations of religious purity and power: religious purity through rituals of exclusion; and religious power through rituals of subordination, subjection, and extraction of human and material resources. While an embodied poetics is involved in these structural oppositions, a poetics perhaps derived from the left-right axis of the human body,<sup>10</sup> an oppositional politics is also integral to productions of sacred space. With respect to time, poetics and politics also merge, with embodied sensory rituals marking out temporal processes and authoritative mythic narratives marking out temporal origins. Long regarded as basic categories in the history of religions, space and time can be reopened through research at the multidisciplinary intersections of aesthetics, politics, and economics.

Although the study of religion can identify coherence and cohesion, the most promising openings in religious studies can be found in critical reflection on incongruity. Attention to incongruity was pioneered by Jonathan Z. Smith in rethinking such basic categories as myth and ritual. Confronting order with its violation, especially in the disorder of colonial situations, myth is a way of “working with this incongruity.” In the disjuncture between ideal and actual conduct, “ritual gains force where incongruity is perceived and thought about.”<sup>11</sup> Incongruity, in these instances, appears in the gaps, but it can also register in mixtures and mergers, in syncretisms and hybridities, in which disparate factors converge without synthesis. As both an unstable category and a destabilizing category, incongruity challenges all of the categories in the academic study of religion.

## FORMATIONS

Multidisciplinary resources are necessary for studying religion in context. What are the relationships between religion and culture, politics, and

economics? Perhaps that is the wrong way to formulate the question of context, because “relationships” assumes relations between discrete entities—religion, culture, politics, and economics—that are thoroughly entangled. Perhaps we need a wider sense of context. Broadening the scope of context, however, does not necessarily help. In his definition of *environment* in *A Dictionary of Ecology*, Michael Allaby expands the scope of context to such an extent that it includes absolutely everything: “The complete range of external conditions, physical and biological, in which an organism lives. Environment includes social, cultural, and (for humans) economic and political considerations, as well as the more usually understood features such as soil, climate, and food supply.”<sup>12</sup> Following this definition, if we wanted to study religion in its environment, we would have to study everything. Although it seems like a reasonable proposal, studying religion in context, in these terms, is actually an impossible undertaking.

Situating religion at the intersection of different domains, such as culture and economics, might be a more feasible way of studying religion in context. However, the most challenging research in this regard has explored the entanglements of these apparently different domains, giving us insight into the economy of culture and the culture of economy. In the economy of culture, as Pierre Bourdieu proposed, if we “abandon the dichotomy of the economic and the non-economic,” we can see cultural practices as “economic practices directed towards the maximization of material or symbolic profit.”<sup>13</sup> Simultaneously material and symbolic, the economy of culture has consequences for analyzing religion. Attention to the “political economy of religion,” Bourdieu promised, would advance “the full potential of the materialist analysis of religion without destroying the properly symbolic character of the phenomenon.”<sup>14</sup> In the culture of economy, we find the production, circulation, and consumption of signs that are mediated through economic activity but which bear wide-ranging cultural significance. With respect to religion, analysis of the culture of economy has generated research on “capitalism as religion,” the “religion of the market,” and money as “a system of symbols that generates powerful moods and motivations, desire and agency, and clothes those human dispositions in an aura of factuality that makes them seem ultimately real.”<sup>15</sup> As these examples can only suggest, exploring the intersections, mutual

implications, and surprising reversals of culture and economics is not merely about context; it is about the dynamics of religious formations.

A recent, groundbreaking book on African American religion, Sylvester A. Johnson's *African American Religions, 1500–2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom*, illustrates what I mean by religious formations. This book is not a conventional survey of African American religion, which might trace religious origins and developments, placing African survivals, adaptations, and innovations in different historical contexts. Instead, the book is an exploration of the conditions of possibility for thinking about African American religion. Transatlantic empires, colonial enclosures, and political engagements, as Sylvester Johnson shows, are more than historical contexts; they are forces of religious formation. As Johnson explains, “The specific historical formations that have constituted African American religion have been derived through transnational networks and global linkages of trade, politics, and religious exchanges.”<sup>16</sup> These constitutive forces enabled the emergence of specific religious subjectivities and mobilizations, not merely within changing contexts, but within the shifting pressures, power relations, limitations, and possibilities of colonialism and empire in the Atlantic world.

Although colonialism and imperialism bear specific histories and localizations, some generalizations are possible. For example, in the history of British colonization a significant transition occurred when a mercantile capitalist mode of colonialism shifted to a more expansive empire. Analyzing this shift in terms of power relations, Lisa Lowe has observed that an earlier “negative” power of occupation was overlaid with a new “positive” power of administration. “While colonial power had employed ‘negative’ powers to seize, enslave, occupy, and destroy,” she notes, “a new mode of imperial sovereignty also expanded the ‘productive’ power to administer the life, health, labor, and mobility of colonized bodies.”<sup>17</sup> Under these changing conditions, different religious formations emerged, not only among the colonized, but also among colonizers, whether situated on the front lines of contact or in the metropolises of empire. This mutual implication of colonizers and colonized in changing bodies, subjectivities, and cosmologies under colonial conditions, as Tony Ballantyne has argued, indicates the far-reaching “entanglements of empire.”<sup>18</sup> Colonial and imperial forces shaped Black American religion; however, as

Sylvester Johnson insists, “the same holds true for White American religion.”<sup>19</sup> Attention to these religious formations allows for studying multiple and entangled histories of meaning and power not only in modern but also in ancient empires.<sup>20</sup>

## CIRCULATIONS

Increasingly, the study of religion has become the study of flows, the study of religion in motion through the circulations of people, objects, technology, money, images of human possibility, and ideals of human solidarity. Transnational circulations of people, as Nilüfer Göle has observed, have affected the very categories of the religious and the secular because the “configurations between the secular and the religious are shaped not only by nation-states but also by transnational dynamics and global migratory flows.”<sup>21</sup> In *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*, Thomas A. Tweed defines religion as circulation and religions as flows, as “confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries.”<sup>22</sup> While this definition focuses on religious space, a similar focus on flows could apply to religious time, attending to temporal rhythms (from the Greek *rhythmos*, “flowing”) in religious practices and performances.<sup>23</sup> Although circulations are perhaps most evident in the transnational or global migratory flows of diaspora and dispersion, religion also flows through popular culture, social networks, political mobilizations, economic transactions, and other configurations.

A brilliant illustration of religious circulations appears in the recent book by Thomas Alberts, *Shamanism, Discourse, Modernity*.<sup>24</sup> Leaving behind Mircea Eliade’s construction of shamanism as archaic (and timeless) “techniques of ecstasy,” Alberts treats shamanism as a total social fact—religious, political, and economic—embedded in modern discourses of subjectivity and alterity. Against representations of shamanism as pre-modern or antimodern, he locates shamanism at the center of crucial mediations of modernity. Here the key is tracking circulations. Shamanism discourse, which bears traces of a particular history of colonial and imperial relations in Siberia, has circulated widely through networks of human-



rights activism, environmentalism, and neoliberal commodification. The discourse of shamanism, becoming central to what Alberts calls *indigenism*, is deployed in political struggles over indigenous rights to land, sovereignty, and religious freedom. Emerging as an exemplar of natural wisdom, the shaman is mobilized in campaigns for ecological awareness and environmental sustainability. In a neoliberal economy, shamanism is bought and sold in a global market of shamanic tourism. All of these circulations show how shamanism is moving not only through global flows but also through specific political, social, and economic circuits of modernity.

These circulations require new ways of thinking about religious change and diffusion, religious mobility and plasticity, beyond the frameworks provided by religious institutions. With respect to religious change, research on tradition and innovation tends to assume an underlying continuity, a tradition handed down from the past that might be engaged in new ways. This assumption of continuity, however, cannot capture the kinetic dynamics in which tradition is not that which is handed down but that which is taken up in ongoing material negotiations over the production, surplus, and ownership of the sacred. Here religious mobility signifies more than simply moving from place to place: it signifies constantly shifting configurations of religion in motion. Challenging research that recognizes religious change only within the framework of continuous religious traditions, Walter H. Capps called for a study of religion that engages “the moving, inconstant, spontaneous, irregular, discontinuous, non-forensic, once-only, explosive, surprise element.”<sup>25</sup> In this extraordinary sentence, Capps issued a challenge, which still stands, to those who study religion to develop theoretical resources and methods for tracking religious mobility. Authors of studies of religion and media have taken up this challenge by reconfiguring religion as mediation, thereby enabling new understandings of imagery, sound recordings, video films, machines, and other media as material religion in motion.<sup>26</sup> Studies of religion and popular culture, more generally, have given new meaning to religious diffusion. Anticipated by Thomas Luckmann’s “invisible religion”—independent of religious institutions, diffused through modern societies—studies of religion in and as popular culture have explored the plasticity of religion in a variety of cultural formations.<sup>27</sup>

More than mere metaphor, circulations range from the embodied firing of neurons and pulsing of blood to transnational migrations and global explorations, from the intimacy of tactility to the alterity of encountering alien worlds. Materialities mediate these circulations. In the tactile register of religion, caressing and shocking, intimacies of binding, burning, moving, and handling place the sense of touch, disdained by ancient authorities, at the center of modern religious circulations.<sup>28</sup> Emerging out of European oceanic exploration and colonization, the fetish and the cargo, disdained by economic rationality, return in the modern fetishism of commodities and the modern cargoism of “occult economies” that promise abundant wealth from mysterious sources.<sup>29</sup> As these brief allusions to religious tactility and occult economies can only suggest, religion is something, if it is anything, that moves from embodied intimacy to global economy in material circulations.

#### MATERIAL DYNAMICS

The material dynamics of categories, formations, and circulations reveal different dimensions of Marx’s rendering of the “spiritual intercourse” of human beings as an “efflux of their material condition.”<sup>30</sup> Categories reveal historical contingencies in thinking about religion; formations reveal forces at work in the emergence of religious configurations; and circulations reveal the mobility of materiality pulsating through religion in motion. Each dimension provides openings for multidisciplinary engagements in the study of religion. They can also be related to each other in exploring the intersections of categories and formations, formations and circulations, and circulations and categories.

*Categories and formations:* Basic categories in the study of religion can be linked to the material conditions of colonial and imperial formations. On the front lines of colonial encounter in South Africa, missionaries, travelers, and colonial agents in open frontier zones denied the existence of any religion among indigenous people; after colonial containment was secured, they discovered religious systems that mirrored colonial administrative systems for keeping people in place.<sup>31</sup> In the development of British imperialism during the nineteenth century from a mercantile to

an administrative empire, we see a transition from an interest in the fetish as an object of indeterminate value within an empire driven by mercantile capitalism to a focus on totemism, a term encompassing religion, sexual selection, and social cohesion, within an expanding, totalizing empire of administration.<sup>32</sup> These intersections of discourses and forces give new meaning to the old phrase *category formation* in the study of religion by situating ways of thinking about religion in historical formations.<sup>33</sup>

*Formations and circulations:* The adoption of colonial models, which is different than conversion, resulted in all kinds of formations turning into organized human activity that looked like churches, or their structural and functional equivalents, religious institutions all over the world that circulated and recirculated basic structures of European colonial formations. For example, nineteenth-century Hindu organizations in India, such as the Brahmo Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission, were structured to function like churches.<sup>34</sup> The agency animating such structures, however, was often distinctly anticolonial, moving through colonial formations in the struggle against colonialism, appropriating the Bible, for example, but with a difference, as in the case of Kwame Nkrumah's exhortation "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things will be added to you" (adapting Mt 6:33).<sup>35</sup> In many postcolonial states, the irony of liberation has seen colonial formations recirculating as new constraints, often underwritten by promises of redemption, which have further entrenched oppression.

*Circulations and categories:* Like race, which does not exist but is everywhere, religion has thoroughly circulated throughout the world. As suggested by Nilüfer Göle, the circulations of migrants, perhaps most evident in the movement of Muslim immigrants and refugees into Europe, have altered the very categories of the religious and the secular in both theory and practice. Circulating throughout the world, U.S. foreign policy advancing religious freedom has generated new incongruities in categorizing religion. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd has distinguished between three types of religion—expert religion, lived religion, and governed religion—that collide in the discourse and practice of international relations.<sup>36</sup> Transnational and global circulations, therefore, are affecting not only religion but also the categories of religion and religions, of religious difference, religious pluralism, and religious diversity, for a wide range of actors

who have embraced these circulating, unstable, and often incongruous categories for thinking about religion.

What is beyond religious studies? This book indicates possibilities for studying religion beyond restricting its scope to texts and beliefs and by moving beyond stable categories to historical contingencies, beyond contexts to material formations, and beyond institutions to material circulations. As evidence of the multidisciplinary character of the study of religion, the authors of the recent books that I have highlighted in each section of this introduction are variously positioned—in a Center for Environmental Studies, a Department of African American Studies, and a nongovernmental organization dealing with diversity and corporate responsibility—but all are involved in charting the future of the study of religion. In all of these positions and possibilities, the “beyond” is already within the academic study of religion; the future is already present in the material study of religion.

#### MATERIALITY MATTERS

*Religion: Material Dynamics* focuses on material engagements as essential in the cultural processes and productions of religion, which is always constructed—invented, assembled, staged, and performed—and yet always, in a myriad of ways, consequential in the real world and often experienced as really real. As a result, we are faced with this challenge: How do human beings really fabricate the real thing? How do real things really fabricate human beings? In this material dialectic of fabrication, the being of the human being is at stake.<sup>37</sup>

By focusing on categories, we will see how the human is positioned in religious terms between the more than human and the less than human, between the superhuman, perhaps regarded with awe, and the subhuman animals, vegetables, and minerals that are not treated with human regard because they are treated as objects to be exploited for some human purpose.

These classifications—superhuman, human, and subhuman—are fluid and contested. We will find beings with opposable thumbs, bipedal locomotion, and an increased frontal lobe of the brain being treated as less

than human, being dehumanized under categories of race, class, or gender, while we will also find superhuman power and humanlike agency in material objects.

We will encounter many objects—relics and icons, stones and feathers, papyrus and parchment, spears and guns, flowers and rice, petroleum and plastic, Tupperware and refrigerators. What are these things?

The study of material religion, according to David Morgan, “should begin with the powers attributed to objects by religious devotees.”<sup>38</sup> Although Morgan also appreciates the capacity of objects to afford powers to people, his starting point is the attention paid by religious devotees to religious objects. An alternative starting point, however, might be objects at the intersection of different and often competing communities of interpretation, practice, and association. In this respect, religious objects are boundary objects. The notion of boundary objects can draw from the work of Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer on objects that find themselves situated at the intersection of different interpretive communities. The boundary object is flexible in that it is subject to multiple interpretations, but its materiality, as an object, sustains continuity through these multiple engagements. Although Star and Griesemer meant more than interpretive flexibility in their analysis of boundary objects, the notion of objects being defined by their boundaries, and by the multiple crossing of boundaries, is a promising entry into the role of objects in religious categories, formations, and circulations

In their original formulation, Star and Griesemer define boundary objects as “objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites.”<sup>39</sup> Although these authors developed an analysis of scientific boundary objects, this dialectic of plastic adaptability and robust continuity captures the role of objects in religious formations. Concrete or abstract, tangible or intangible, boundary objects “have different meanings in different social worlds[,] but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation,” providing crucial resources, according to Star and Griesemer, for “developing and maintaining coherence across intersecting social worlds.”<sup>40</sup> However, boundary objects can often generate more chaos than coherence, more conflict than cohesion, among

competing parties engaged in disputes over the interpretation, use, and ownership of an object.

By focusing on the materiality of objects, we expand the study of religion beyond the limited scope of beliefs, doctrines, and texts, but we also run the risk of reducing the study of religion to metaphysics. What is real? An old materialism might be happy to see objects, as inanimate objects, as real, a materialism that Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) famously established by kicking a stone.<sup>41</sup> However, even the “new materialism” that sees agency in objects, sometimes recognizing life in stones, can seem like a new metaphysics, an alternative to an anthropocentric view of reality, perhaps, but a view of reality that humanizes objects as actors, along with human actors, in networks, entanglements, and assemblages of vibrant materiality in real worlds.

By contrast, in the real worlds made by such disciplines as law or accounting, materiality takes on a very different meaning, referring not to any metaphysics but to practical conditions and consequences that matter. In the annals of the great lawyer Perry Mason, judges are often confronted with the objection “Your Honor, that question is irrelevant, inconsequential, and immaterial!”<sup>42</sup> Materiality, in this legal context, refers to the conditions of a specific case, a materiality that is significant to the matter at hand and consequential to proceeding toward an outcome. Essential in criminal law, material conditions and consequences are also crucial in the negotiations of contract law.<sup>43</sup> In accounting, which developed out of the double-entry bookkeeping that the historian Mary Poovey has identified as the origin of the modern fact, *materiality* is a technical term of art.<sup>44</sup> Is any discrepancy between one side and the other of an accounting ledger material? Is it inconsequential, with no effect, or does it make a material difference that must be addressed? Auditors often operate with a “materiality figure” to guide the determination of whether the numbers under review rise to the level of materiality.<sup>45</sup>

These considerations of materiality in the modern practices of law and accounting move us away from the old metaphysical divide between spirit and matter, which might still be retained by new materialists attributing spirit, vibrancy, or agency to material objects, into the political economy of materiality. Moving into this practical terrain, we can ask: What are the material conditions and consequences that make materiality matter in religion?

Accordingly, this book explores categories, formations, and circulations of material religion that rise to the level of materiality. In the political economy of materiality, the material conditions of colonialism, imperialism, and apartheid matter; the material consequences of diffusions and dispersions matter. All of these conditions and consequences, which are thoroughly material in their constitution, rise to the level of materiality by making a difference in the fabrication of relations between people and things in the world.