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ECOLOGICAL POSTURES FOR A CLIMATE REALISM

Amanda Boetzkes

The ways we imagine and respond to ecological crisis are centrally bound to acts of representation that condition perception. In turn, the honing of vision plays an integral role in shaping the course of ecological knowledge. This aesthetic activity is occurring at a time when scientific knowledge of climate change is hotly contested by corporations, governments, and the general population alike. A constellation of ontological and epistemological demands is putting the "objective knowledge" of the life sciences through its paces. Thus, a heterogeneous climate realism is emerging alongside the ideology of climate change skepticism.

In many respects, the disputes over knowledge-claims about climate change produce a delusional condition. The tension between a popular environmental knowledge and the inhibition of political action produces a cultural spasm, in Félix Guattari's terms: a painful and compulsive mobilization of nervous energies that are both symptomatic of an intensified, excitable discourse and an exploitation of those energies for the preservation of the social body. The question thus becomes: how do we disengage from this refrain of continually "reading signs" of climate change without being discredited as illiterate?

I will argue that contemporary art provides an alternative ground to experience and make claims about the realism of climate change and its impact. I will chart a trajectory that begins with an originary form of ecological denial, the political cover-up, common in the late decades of the twentieth century when governments tested chemicals in depressed cities across North America and then denied the physical effects of their slow violence. This overt denial became an integral facet of the more recent and culturally distributed forms of denial that accompany climate change–related catastrophes. Importantly, I will chart this course through the lens of conceptual artists. Thus, my ambition is not merely to provide an environmental history, but also to show how artists present ecological crisis through alternative sensibilities that attempt to ease the spasmic refrain patterning the battle over the truth about the climate condition, and resolve it into a re-syntonization

of bodies, knowledge, and exchange. I consider how art accomplishes this through propositions of moods and modalities that open the possibilities for navigating the new terrain of climate realism. I will examine four *postures*: Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*; Tony Oursler's video installation, *Kepone* (1993); Doug Aitken's *Electric Earth* (1999); and Mary Mattingly's *Wearable Homes* (2004-ongoing).

Ecological postures for a climate realism

If there is a realism to be thought through the terms of climate, it is not one that is solely defined by scientific data, nor by a hard political line. Rather, it is one that must be considered in connection with *disbelief*. The realism of climate is particular and exemplary; it is a form shaped through the oversights and responsiveness, skepticism, and speculative inquiry that it generates. Climate raises a constellation of ontological and epistemological demands that challenge the ground of objective knowledge of the life sciences while at the same time triggering regressive contestations of the value of knowledge and questioning. Thus, while climate has a shared history with ecology, it cannot be reduced to ecology per se. The drive for a purely instrumental worldview divests the discourse of climate of its hold on critical inquiry of the external world. What a dilemma: one cannot be skeptical without being conservative (i.e., a climate change denier) and one cannot be realistic without being lofty and fantastical, if not paranoid! Climate demands new coordinates of interpretation.

In this chapter, I will link climate realism to acts of representation that express ecological perspective, political scenes, and aesthetic atmosphere. But I will show how these are geared toward a specific climate realism. I do so by running through four postures that I discuss in relation to the ecologist Rachel Carson, installation artist Tony Oursler, video artist Doug Aitkin, and conceptual artist Mary Mattingly. When I speak of postures, I am referring to the etymology of this term, meaning an artificial mental position. These postures enable the transection of a systemic perspective, an aesthetic sensibility, and a critical voice in order to gain purchase of climate from its emergent terms of reality. The four postures are a starting point which give contour to climate realism and its possibilities: (1) a strange stillness, (2) psychogenic spasm, (3) *dancity*, and (4) reflexive carapace. I suggest that it is through the performative gestures of these mental positions toward climate that realism can be thought and figured.

To suggest that climate realism has form and contour is to implicate its presentness and availability to interpretation. But crucially, the interpretation of climate's realism is not of the order of either scientific or political inquiry; it requires an alternative basis for questioning. In his essay, "Various Ways of Questioning About the Thing," Martin Heidegger writes that even to ask the question, "What is a thing?" invokes a modality of thinking and interpreting. He writes,

> The answer to the question "What is a thing?" is … not a proposition but a transformed basic position, or better still and more cautiously, the initial

transformation of the hitherto existing position toward things, a change of questioning and evaluation, of seeing and deciding; in short, of the being-there (*Da-sein*) in the midst of what is (*inmitten des Seienden*). To determine the changing basic position within the relation to what is, that is the task of an entire historical period.

(1967, 50)

Following Heidegger's provocation, I suggest that to probe the question, "What is a climate realism?" is to explore the basic positions that are nested within and emerging from the co-extant discourses of climate and realism as this is being defined in the age of ecology. These basic positions, I suggest, stem from our embeddedness in global ecosystems and the critical reckoning with that embeddedness. That is to say, ecological postures are the transformed basic positions that undertake a questioning, evaluating, perceiving, and acting-toward climate.

Posture 1: a strange stillness (Rachel Carson)

The consciousness of climate stems from ecology insofar as it has developed out of the latter's understanding of its knowledge base as intertwined with systemic crisis. Rachel Carson's seminal 1962 book *Silent Spring* exemplifies this incipient crisis at the origin of ecology. She opens the book with a chapter called "A Fable for Tomorrow," in which she vividly describes an idyllic American town that succumbs to an "invisible curse" which rips through the environment, eliminating life in its wake. Animals, adults, and children fall ill; the vegetation browns and withers; the insects disappear; and there is no bird song. Instead of the plenitude of life, there was "a strange stillness." The spring is silent because a chemical contamination (DDT) has invaded all life right through to its cellular structure, preventing reproduction and system renewal. Carson ends the devastating scene commenting, "No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done it themselves" ([1962] 2002, 3).

A perspective of the systemic totality of the town is born of the realization of its contamination. This perspective is produced through its eventful temporal mode: the ecosystem becomes visible at exactly the point that its regenerative organization has been compromised. The value of life is posited belatedly and felt aesthetically as that vitality which has always already slipped through our hands before we even knew what it was. The temporality of belated awareness of the conditions that have overtaken the ecosystem has reached a new scale with the framing of global warming as a climatic event revealing a slowly emerging history. Climate crisis has no focal cause, but rather is the cumulative effect of a slow and insidious progression of industrial history which has already initiated positive feedback loops in global environment patterns. The discourse of climate thus shares with ecology the entangled domain of scientific inquiry, aesthetic sensibility, and political governance. But the appearance of climate *as* crisis means the scattering of the assumed foundations in realism that these discrete disciplines once held. The concept of

climate, like ecology, requires a reconsideration of their intimate co-implication with such crises. Moreover, where the logic of crisis as the scene of innovative thinking will strike many as capitalist in nature, we might think of ecology as the domain in which crisis turns on itself to effect a retroactive process of valuation. Retroactive valuation can only take place, however, by acknowledging and enacting its immanence and realism. By the same token, realism can only be confirmed by accepting the retroactive movement of valuation. Carson's posture demonstrates that only by turning an ear to the strange stillness can one become attuned to the sensory wealth of ecology. How, then, does this movement of acknowledgment, attunement, and retroactive valuation happen in relation to climate crisis, in and through its atmosphere of political oversight and aesthetic revealing? And how does it overcome skepticism and other forms of denial?

Posture 2: psychogenic spasm (Tony Oursler)

The ecopsychoanalyst, Joseph Dodds, considers the defense mechanisms against guilt, blame, and responsibility for ecological crisis (2011, 41). He makes an analogy between our responses to climate change and Freud's "borrowed kettle" joke from *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*: a man is told he should replace a pot he has borrowed and returned damaged. He refuses, claiming (1) When I gave it back it was fine, (2) The hole was there when you gave it to me, and (3) I never borrowed it in the first place! In a similar vein, when confronted with overwhelming evidence about climate change and its causes, we can see similar responses at play. First, outright denial: "There's nothing wrong with the climate!" Either it is a conspiracy designed to take away freedom or stop economic growth, or the evidence simply is not conclusive. Second, "There was a hole in the planet when you gave it to me"; the patterns of climate change are natural or it was caused by other people (e.g., India or China)—either way, it is not "my" fault. This is an unconscious displacement of guilt. Finally, "There is nothing we can do about it"; why try? Here, there is an acceptance of the reality, but a depressive paralysis with regards to reparative action.

For Dodds, these behavioral reaction formations are an integral part of more complex positive feedback loops that expedite global warming, such as tropical forest fires, the thaw of tundra permafrost, and accelerated melt of polar ice. The phenomena caused by global warming also intensify the problem because they result in further warming and CO_2 emissions. In other words, defense behaviors are ecological responses in and of themselves, and they aggregate with other phenomena to exacerbate environmental crisis. This interpretation gives a more radical understanding of the unconscious as fully imbricated in the patterns of earthly systems, whether in their balance or their chaotic breakdown. Dodds' theorization of the behavioral defenses against climate crisis rests on the thought that the crisis itself is not subject to a totalizing suppression, but rather is proactively defended against and is therefore incorporated into cultural life through forms of discursive, ideological, and bodily reactivity. Human defense behaviors are supple, and

therefore may point directly to an earthly condition, but because of the discrepancy between the lived human world and the scale of objective ecological realities, they are nevertheless exacerbated by the cognitive dissonance produced in trying to reconcile the two. The defense itself may present as a highly ambivalent bodily condition by which an individual incorporates and suppresses the symptoms of environmental crisis.

This oscillation, on the split between acknowledgment and denial of climate crisis, has roots in the history of environmental contamination dating back to the mid-twentieth century, when chemical spills and political cover-ups sprouted up across North America. This time in environmental history is at stake in the early works of American artist Tony Oursler. His video *Kepone* (1993) charts the case of a chemical disaster in the town of Hopewell, Virginia, which was the site of the construction of a factory that produced a deadly pesticide by that name (Figure 1.1). *Kepone* follows from a number of artworks in this time period in which Oursler carried out his concerns with trash and toxic waste as a questioning of the fabric of the mediated image. That is, he grappled with how to imbue the image with a sense of toxicity that would procure the affects of contamination.

The chemical *kepone* (chlordecone) was developed in 1951 by the Allied Chemical Corporation. In 1961, US Food and Drug Administration already knew that it was a toxic compound, and had issued warnings that it needed to be handled
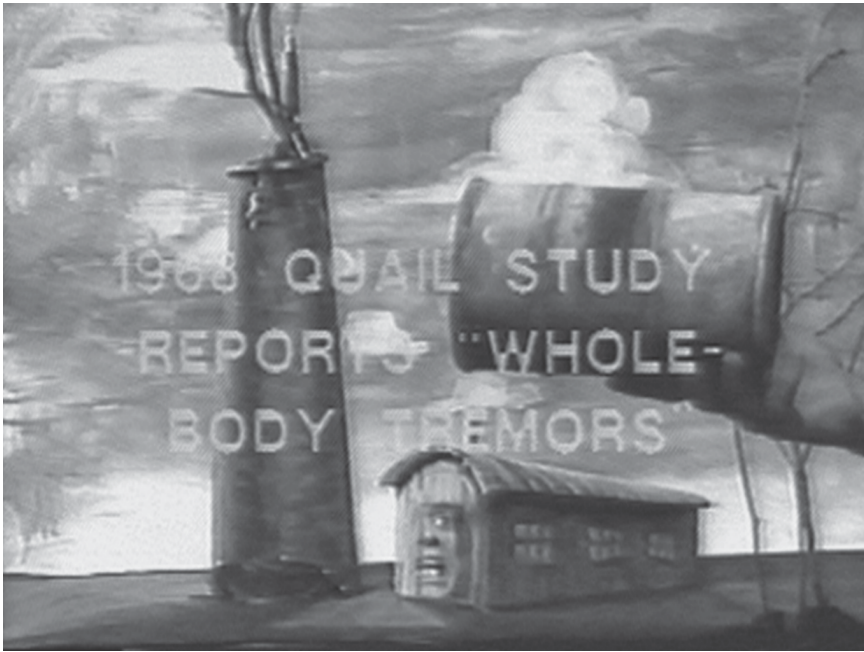

FIGURE 1.1 Tony Oursler, *Kepone*, 1993, video installation. ©Tony Oursler. Courtesy of Lisson Gallery, New York.

with care (Holst and *Encyclopedia Virginia* staff, 2014). However, when the chemical plant was opened in Hopewell in 1966 by a company called Life Science (started by two Allied employees), it seemed there was absolutely no knowledge of kepone's toxicity on the part of management, laborers, or the citizens of Hopewell. Between 1966 and 1975, Life Science dumped its runoff directly into the James River (which was the source of one of the town's main industries—fish and shellfish). Employees suffered the effects of contamination, including brain and liver damage, neurological spasm (uncontrollable shivering and shaking), slurred speech, loss of memory, and erratic eye movement. Employees were never explicitly told that kepone could harm them, so they never wore work gloves and ate on tables covered with kepone dust ("Tragedy in Hopewell"). Only in 1975 after nearly ten years of cover-up were these symptoms investigated, and following that, an inquiry into the effects of river dumping carried out. The factory was shut down in 1975, and a fishing ban was issued for the entire James River, which lasted five years. Allied and Life Science were sued by former workers, residents, and fishermen, for a total of $200 million.

The kepone scandal is the scene of Tony Oursler's representation of the delusional state that arises when a political apparatus negates the physical and affective utterances of bodies that are under the duress of environmental contamination, and creates disbelief by insisting on the priority of employment, industrial progress, and profit. Oursler is known for his video installations that feature "talking heads" projected onto constructions that hinge the internal world of the psyche to the external spatial world. For *Kepone*, Oursler created a textual script that outlined the events of the scandal, created dramatized caricatures of the major players, and then placed these in a primary scene, a painted landscape of the factory, cooling tower, and chemical drum, onto which he projected faces that run through a kind of affectscape of the scandal. The faces speak different perspectives, from the testimony of the factory owners who deny any danger, to those employees who describe their symptoms, those who insist on the importance of employment for their families, and others who describe the symptoms emerging in children. Essentially, Oursler produces a melodrama of the town of Hopewell, with its completely contradictory understandings of the hidden toxin. The faces and musical background are positively campy as they hit the peaks and valleys of both the trauma and the disbelief that the factory poisoned the entire town and its river, not only decimating its own economy *in the name of* economy, but also visualizing the co-extant bodily toxicity and melodrama that afflicts the people. At times, this is humorous like a cult-classic horror film. And yet, that is part of the point; while the work presents itself as a set of internal battles, it is also a forceful representation of a collective experience produced by a documented environmental reality.

Significantly, Oursler visualizes these elements together—an environmental trauma, the physical symptoms of shock, and the affects of skepticism. The disembodied face that speaks to the camera, to itself, to everyone, and no one is a curious blend of self-reflection, bodily utterance, and public address. The worker character, for example, describes the symptoms of neurological distress—uncontrollable

shaking—and then being told by the doctor that he needed psychiatric treatment. The hallmark of this political cover-up is the "psychologization" of an inflicted trauma (the claim that the perturbation is imagined and not real). Yet, what compels Oursler is that the victims of kepone are aware of this tactic and yet held in its sway. The cover-up is an integral part of the trauma as the characters become medical subjects of the corporate doctor, political subjects of a town that has been co-opted by a factory, and simply suffering bodies. While knowing something is wrong with them, their distress is unhinged from a known object, and therefore is internalized as an affective climate. Yet the faces (and the eyes in particular) search for an explanatory object—a realism for which to attach a causality that eludes them.

In another installation of that era called *Crypt Craft* (1989), Oursler lays out a general history of chemical catastrophes. He resets the scene of chemical production as a hall of mirrors. In one corner is a dragon's head with a wide-open mouth. From inside the dragon's mouth appears the screened talking head of a man, presumably a victim of chemical testing, who describes his dream of a field of white powder which then turns into a flood. As in much of Oursler's work, the viewer is trained on the movement of the eyes of the subject as they dart from one side to the center in recollection, disclosing the introversion of the person who is talking, and the procedure of scanning one's own thoughts and memories. Set against the psychedelic background, we understand that the account is imagined (dreamed), and yet, given the context of the installation that documents and animates actual cases of chemical poisoning, the dream becomes testimony that is anchored in a broader, nightmarish reality (Figure 1.2). The searching movement of the eyes is directed inside the head, yet the movement is nested within the visual brain, the brain that remembers and fabulates experience of the external world, and which is the site of the realism of ecological poison. Oursler's subjects relive the events of succumbing to an environmental abuse and, through this reliving, give form to Carson's statement "they did it themselves." That is, the reenactment of contamination expresses pain, but that pain is also bound up in the impetus to search the experience further. It is a traumatic repetition that inflicts the painful memory on the subject and the viewer, even as the subject seeks a ground of understanding. The talking heads enact an apparatus in which the subject is systemically contaminated, both externally and through the interpolation of the climate, and then enacts its ecological trauma as a self-contamination in the eternal return of the traumatic scene. Oursler's installation is thus a layout that combines the psyches of the chemists, corporate players, and victims as a positive feedback loop of abuser/abused/self-abuser.

This staging of a collective psyche and its real effects is a climate realism. That is to say, Oursler shows how ecological disasters create an environmental and affective ethos that is shaped and colored by the political, economic, imaginative, and bodily components of a site. While this atmosphere may appear to be "unreal" (imagined, psychedelic, melodramatic, and campy), it is precisely this gathering into ethos that is the terrain from which a realism can be discerned. This is to say that any realism for the planetary condition *must* include the imaginative procedures of the traumatized

FIGURE 1.2 Tony Oursler, *Crypt Craft*, 1989, video installation. ©Tony Oursler. Courtesy of Lisson Gallery, New York.

visual brain: the witness of environmental abuse that is precisely a witness because it has been damaged. These imaginative procedures inform a climate—now more broadly defined to include the human psyche—of the entanglements at stake in such disasters.

Timothy Morton (2013) argues that due to its massive distribution in time and space, climate change exceeds the range of human perception, but that it radiates an appearance. However, Oursler shows how automatic sensory and imaginary processes co-constitute the appearance and perception of such "hyperobjects." In his installations, characters grapple with procedures of representing and reflecting a systemic crisis; they exemplify the form of speculation within the traumatic effects of the crisis. Yet, because this speculation occurs through images, the paradigm of speculation is not exclusively one of scale and perspective but also of interpretation. Oursler lays out the ways such interpretative acts are preempted: the oppressive voices/faces that deny the validity of the complaints, the corporate cover-up, the medical system that explains real symptoms, the overzealous superego that will not permit the individual a thought that it is caught in an apparatus of self-poisoning.

These obstacles are woven into the spasms of the visualizing mind of the victims. Here, I am thinking of Félix Guattari's definition of the spasm: a painful and compulsive mobilization of nervous energies that are both symptomatic of an intensified, excitable discourse and an exploitation of those energies for the preservation of the social body. Spasm is the organism's panic effect as it struggles to interpret the hyperstimulation from the Infosphere (Berardi 2014, 187). We can also think of psychogenic spasm as the juncture between the history of chemical spills and contemporary climate crisis.

Guattari refers to finance capital as a primary example of the Infosphere. But it bears considering that chemistry itself is precisely the development of highly complex information compounds. We might think of the chemical terms by which the "synthetic bonds" that generated the financial crash of 2007 were conceptualized. By the same token, we can consider the informational terms by which petrochemical products such as polymers are rendered ever more complex and dangerous. Where the characters of Oursler's dramas spasm with chemical overload, we may wonder how parallel spasms are taking place in connection with climate conditions, with the understanding that the global atmosphere is subject to aerial dumping from oil production and consumption. Further, the terrains that cross the internal/external worlds of mind and earth can be reimagined precisely as climates. Climate is the coextensive environmental atmosphere and affective ethos that emerges from the systemic interplay between political terrain, scientific development, and cultural navigation that takes us outside of the human frame of reference (or even the frame of reference of life itself). But climate is also environmental atmosphere and affective ethos *as* these occur in bodies, lives, the human psyche, and the planet itself. Climate is the dreamy or delusional state, both internal and external, that makes itself known at the juncture of the spasm. The question becomes, what kind of posture can one take with a brain, a body, and a planet in the throes of a spasm?

Posture 3: dancity (Doug Aitken)

Doug Aitken's video installation *Electric Earth* (1999) advances a posture of coextensive embrace and reactivity to the ecological condition (Figure 1.3). It does so by understanding ecology and the body as intermediated. The video thematizes an earth that is technologically charged in ways that exceed and preclude any restricted understanding of human intentionality. In it, the "electric earth" behaves as an actant that co-opts bodies, objects, and technologies, evoking from them gestures, senses, and atmospheres. The earth is therefore an alien intentionality that makes itself known in its possession and animation of the male protagonist and his surrounding environment.

The video follows a protagonist through an arrangement of liminal zones in a city at dusk. While the setting is urban, it is devoid of people or any distinguishing marker that would identify where it is. Aitken comments that he imagines the protagonist as "the last man on earth," and it is an earth that is between prehistory and posthistory. It is both utopian and dystopian: a wasteland that follows in the wake of human worlds, but which is also anticipatory in that it becomes increasingly animate and thus seems to be waking up, preceding a world to come. The video opens with a scene of a man sitting on his bed watching television. A voice-over narration establishes the protagonist as a climate subject (one that emerges from the climate of the electric earth and who is also subjected to it): "A lot of times I dance so fast that I become what's around me. It's like food for me. I, like, absorb that energy. Absorb the information. It's like I eat it. That's the only now I get." The protagonist gets off his bed and then walks through the otherwise uninhabited city,
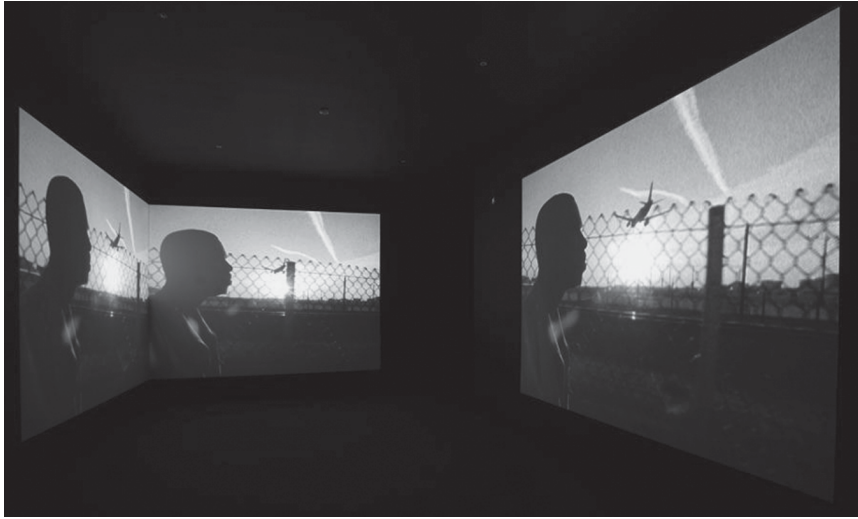
FIGURE 1.3 Doug Aitken, *Electric Earth*, video installation with eight channels of video (color, sound), eight projections, four-room architectural environment; installation view at 1999 Venice Biennale. Courtesy of the artist, 303 Gallery, New York; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich; Victoria Miro Gallery, London; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles. Photo by Doug Aitken Workshop.

absorbing the energies and information of machines that spring to life when he comes into contact with them. He encounters a host of vital technologies that start to radiate and even express themselves: a satellite dish rotates, a streetlight blinks, a security camera searches, a washer in a Laundromat turns, and water pumps at a car wash froth soap. The protagonist is affected by these energies; he absorbs them, one by one, which throws his body into nonsensical gestures. He is pushed and pulled in multiple directions as he incorporates and is incorporated into this assemblage of forces. *Electric Earth* thus carries the viewer through the protagonist's anthropogenesis within an eco-technological climate. Here, the technologies are not instruments or means; they are actants within a global equipment that possesses the protagonist and compels his body with the environment's spatio-temporal rhythms, forces, and ambience.

At the beginning of the video, the protagonist's body works through various spasms precipitated by the forces of the electric earth and eventually finds a rhythm from their impact. His jerky movements resolve into smoother movements and gestures, and the video ends with a scene of him receding down a corridor, swept up in an electric dance. He exists in a protracted state of "dancity" (*dancité*): a bodily output that encompasses the very undecideability between an autonomic reaction and a conscious responsiveness. *Dancity* is Jacques Lacan's term for the capacity of an animal to "pretend" by means of a dance, a lure, or some other choreography (2002, 293). But, as Derrida notes, Lacan's understanding of the animal's dancity

keeps it at a pre-symbolic level (2003, 130). Yet, it is an original point of departure into a differentiation between behavioral reaction and reflective response. Lacan imprisons the animal in this distinction, while using it to bolster the structure of the human subject. Derrida puts pressure on this distinction, however, by locating the human subject at this very ambiguity.

My interest here is how the protagonist procures an exuberant dancity or bodily flourishing from within the reactivity of the ecological condition. Like Oursler's subjects, he is taken up with the environment's forces, yet unlocks his body from the corporeal dilemma of the spasm and ushers in a cohabitation with them. Indeed, Aitkin's video concludes with the protagonist's "resyntonization," a calibration of the nervous energies that had bound him up in muscular reactivities. He "ecologizes," to borrow a term from Bruno Latour (2013, 231).

Posture 4: reflexive carapace (Mary Mattingly)

If Doug Aitken stages a resyntonization of bodies in reflexive communication with the assemblage of forces that constitute the earth's ecology, Mary Mattingly provides a bodily carapace that would likewise provide such reflexivity. In her *Wearable Homes* series, Mattingly devises a portable architecture that individuals wear as a superadded layer of the body designed to respond to global climate change (Figure 1.4). The *Wearable Home* encases individual bodies, giving them new perceptual and behavioral capabilities for a volatile planet. In turn, climate is incorporated into the individual movement, habitation, and perspective of the one who wears it.

The *Wearable Homes* project is speculative but takes its terms from the clothing patterns of a cross section of cultural traditions, information technologies, and portable energy systems. Through these components, the architecture of each *Wearable Home* anticipates a subject that is both radically exposed to the climate and who also has the capacity to move through it safely and responsively. Mattingly creates templates derived from Inuit garments, Indian saris, Buddhist robes, Japanese kimonos, and American chains like The Gap, Banana Republic, safari camouflage, and the military in order to construct textiles that protect the body and also provide it with a generalized global form. She relates this generality to an understanding of the clothing's sheltering capacity, insofar as she notes that one wearer would be indistinguishable from the other. However, while this would provide for privacy and anonymity, "the pervasiveness and scrutiny of high-powered networks would still catalog our movements and whereabouts" (Mattingly, n.d.). The home would be outfitted with an information technology mainframe so the wearer could receive and transmit signals, be they via GPS, cell, VA goggles, or the internet. Additionally, the home would be outfitted to inflate in water, with solar panels to provide electricity, warming and cooling fabrics, and batteries that are charged through body motion by power sensor nodes. Each would also have 30 pockets to fit the pills necessary for a month of "mood and health monitoring."
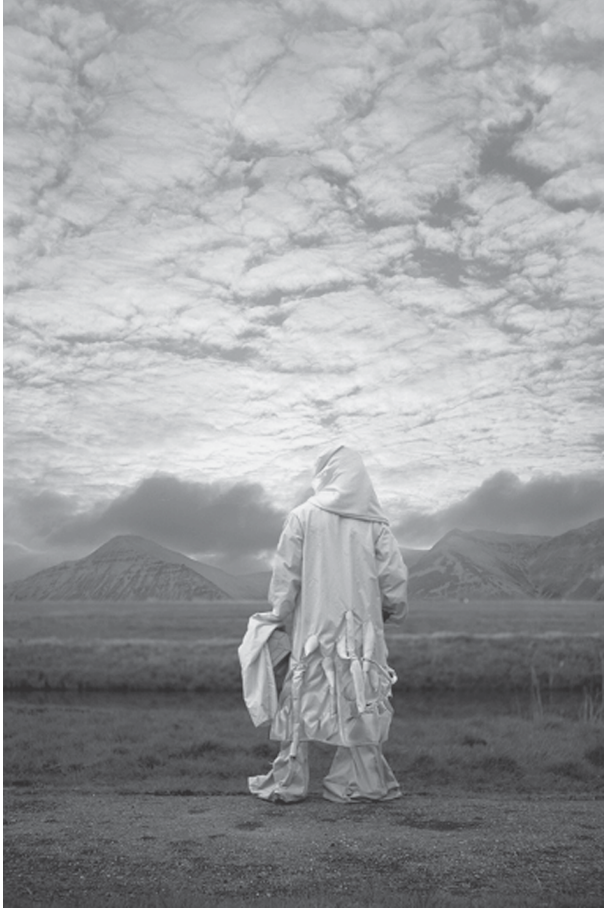
FIGURE 1.4 Mary Mattingly, *New Mobility of Homes, Wearable Homes series*, 2004.
© Mary Mattingly. Photo courtesy of the artist.

   The *Wearable Home* establishes fictional entanglement of body, climate, and new forms of responsive perception. Its design has a bidirectional trajectory, anticipating the bodily needs of the wearer and the external climate at the intersection of environmental catastrophes, like flooding, the dynamics of power and surveillance, and the culture of communication technologies. With this reflexive second skin, the politics of climate become an implicit sensible dimension of the body's motility, mobility, and expressivity. Mattingly gives this fiction a representation through her photographic series in which she stages the *Wearable Homes* in landscapes that infer the politics of environment that the designs are built for. She photographs lone individuals who stand before landscapes charged with a sense of volatility and impending weather: vast skies with rolling clouds against distant mountain ranges

or churning waters and craggy cliffs. The photographs situate the individual spe-cifically in the midst of and *against* climate, standing before it looking outward like the *Rückenfigur* in Caspar David Friedrich's landscapes. The figure mediates a vision of climate and its threats from within the protective and interactive shelter of the *Wearable Home*. The image enacts a perspective of the systemic interplay between body and climate with all the political and technological entanglements of that concept in such a way that climate becomes an integral part of the figure, and in turn the figure is galvanized by the climate.

Conclusion

Rachel Carson's original posture directs attention to a systemic perspective. The strange stillness is the result of a domino effect when an ecosystem is overtaken. But it is also the effect of denying the complex links that bind life systems. The stillness is both the effect and the cause of the problem. Moreover, as Tony Oursler shows, denial produces further distortions under the duress of purely economic logic. Denial can be the symptom of a brain in spasm, a consciousness that is so under an ideological sway that it is unable to cope with the reality of its self-poisoning. It is with this in mind that climate change denial can be rethought through the historical lens of ecology. While there can be no doubt that the disbelief in cli-mate change is delusional, that disbelief is nevertheless the most powerful existing obstacle to perceiving and altering the feedback loops created by climate change. Disbelief is the symptom that has also become (and was always already) the cause of climate toxicity.

An ecological crisis like climate change is enchained to several systems (political, scientific, aesthetic, and planetary) but isolable to none. Locating a singular caus-ality of a system in self-contamination will merely create a spasmodic search loop without object. Yet, the pathways may be eased through the introjection of alter-native energies. Such is the realism that the terms of climate suggest—from within the looping of contaminated ecosystems stems an ethos that is colored by the self-reflection of the body and the planet. This ethos demands interpretative gestures to yield its realism, yet it is manifestly present. From the strange stillness, to spasm, to dancity, to the reflexive carapace, the artists discussed in this chapter propose alter-ations of the coordinates of climate through which its realism must be rethought. For Doug Aitken and Mary Mattingly, the body is resituated in such a way as to propose engagements with the planet that are borne out through technological mediations, dispositions, and forms of speculation pitched toward a responsive cli-mate consciousness. While their postures insist on the entrenchment of the body in the systemic registers that produce climate, they leverage an interplay between the subjective experience and the objective world that moves from spasmodic denial into resolved forms of embodiment. These postures are thus the starting point to accept the task of rethinking climate's realism.

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