

More-than-Human Wellbeing Artworks



More-than-Human Wellbeing

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Vitalities Lab, UNSW Node of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, Centre for Social Research in Health, Social Policy Research Centre, Faculty of Arts, Design & Architecture, UNSW Sydney.

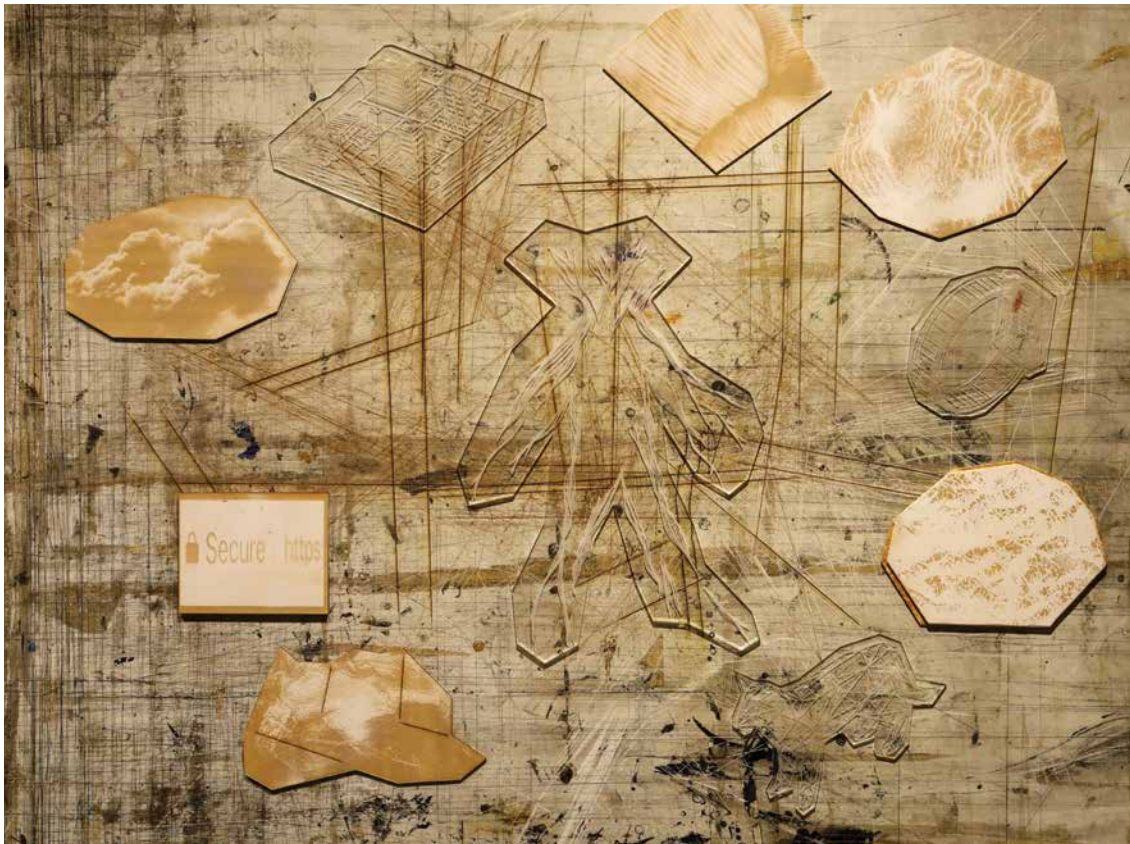
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More-than-Human Wellbeing was shown at the UNSW Library from 22 May to 18 August 2023.



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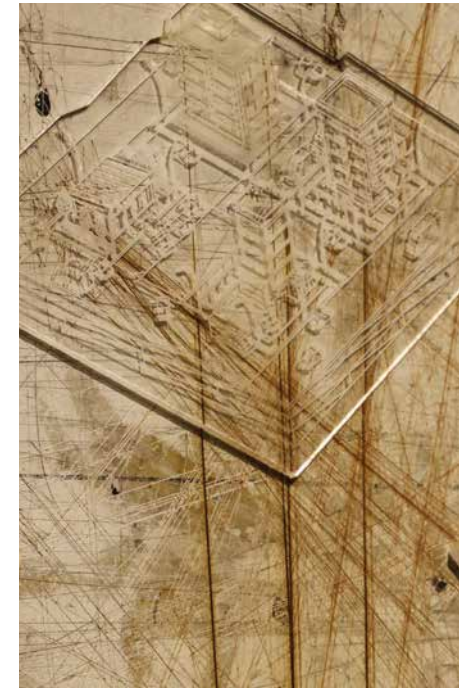
Vaughan Wozniak-O'Connor
and Deborah Lupton

*Homo Signorum for the
Digital Age, 2022*

Laser-etched found MDF,
acrylic, walnut, plywood

In this work, we extend and update the Zodiac Man concept by incorporating the contemporary forms of information that flow into and outwards from human bodies. Our reimagined *Homo Signorum* includes the digital information created when humans move in public spaces embedded with sensors, use mobile devices, or go online. The artwork includes these data forms together with attributes such as climate conditions and multisensory responses to other people, other living things,

places, and spaces. The basis of this work is a heavily patinaed sheet of recycled timber, densely laser-etched with new traces. This material speaks to the complex, layered, and interwoven relationship between human health, climatic conditions, digital devices, and information. Throughout this project, we employed digital fabrication processes commonly used for mass production to create unique artworks, bringing digital data into contact with reclaimed materials.





More-than-Digital Data Cloud plays on the metaphor of cloud computing, a term used to describe external archives of digitised information. The work shows digital data in the form of a cloud but also incorporates other forms of information that people collect and interpret when they seek to improve their health and wellbeing. This information includes human interactions and engagement with elements of place and space, other living things, and features of the natural environment. We made *More-than-Digital Data Cloud* using a digital plotter and laser-cutter to layer different materials

and textures onto the heavily patinaed surface of a sheet of reclaimed waste timber. Layering traces onto an already dense surface is a deliberate extension of, and challenge to, conventional approaches to data visualisation. Data visualisations often present digital data as clear, legible, and straightforward. However, our artistic rendering suggests more complex relations between health, information, and technology – where data practices become implicated within broader planetary, atmospheric, and celestial systems, processes, and histories.

Vaughan Wozniak-O'Connor
and Deborah Lupton

More-than-Digital Data Cloud, 2022

Laser-etched found MDF,
walnut, plywood





Vaughan Wozniak-O'Connor
and Deborah Lupton

Vital Data Etchings, 2022

Laser-etched reclaimed
jelutong timber



Recycled timber was chosen as the material for these artworks to signify the ways that people's lives and those of other organic and living entities in the more-than-human world are intertwined with place and space, with soil, air, sun and water. These pieces are designed to make the connection between the vibrant gatherings of nonhuman data (tree growth markings), human health data (words and phrases describing this information) and more-than-human data (the marks left by humans or other entities on recycled timber). Laser-etched on some of these recycled timber pieces are words from a project conducted with people who engage in self-tracking, describing what their data mean to them. A further set of forms brings together the timber pieces with etched swirling forms that convey the vibrant movement of bodies of water, thus combining two elements of the natural world to symbolise the dynamic, ever-changing flows of digital and non-digital data about humans.



Vaughan Wozniak-O'Connor
and Deborah Lupton

Lively Smartphones, 2022

Recycled European oak,
3D printed resin

These '*Lively Smartphones*' were inspired by considering how the apparently 'cold', 'non-living' technologies that are smartphones can be reimagined as living organic entities that extend into and engage with the natural world. By making the smartphones from recycled wood, the pieces are a speculative intervention into how we might imagine a better future for improving human and nonhuman flourishing. From these timber forms spring signs of vibrant plant growth – fungi, and rhizomes and leaves. These organic forms

symbolise both the more-than-digital sources of information we draw on in learning about our bodies and health, and the possibilities for generating new ways of using digital devices and data that are less exploitative and harmful to more-than-human wellbeing. The fabrication of these pieces combines more traditional hand-making with resin-based 3D printing. The wooden phone elements were sculpted and finished by hand, while the resin elements were CAD modelled before being 3D printed.



Vaughan Wozniak-O'Connor
and Deborah Lupton

Smartphone Fungi, 2023

Recycled European oak,
3D printed resin,
CNC carved plywood



With this work, we seek to make connections to the marks made on living creatures by humans and the ways humans can use devices like smartphones to record aspects of their bodies and that of the natural world. A tree discovered on a bush walk in the Blue Mountains (Dharug Land) near Sydney (Gadigal Land) inspired *Smartphone Fungi*. The tree sprouted fungi of similar size and shape to the smartphone used to capture the image. Here, we utilised a piece of reclaimed timber to represent the tree, itself marked by its human use, and employed

computer numerical control (CNC) carving to replicate the fungal shapes on the tree. We covered the central timber post with human and more-than-human traces, ranging from old tool marks to weather damage and wood borer holes. Alongside these traces, the CNC-carved fungi forms add a digital layer of human intervention. However, this does not attempt to contrast the digital and material: we seek to highlight how digital technologies rely on raw material and more-than-human worlds.



Vaughan Wozniak-O'Connor
and Deborah Lupton

Hand of Signs, 2023

Laser-etched walnut
and plywood

This work reinterprets the practice of palmistry and refers to the newer tradition of digitising human bodies through scanning and data visualising technologies. In particular, *Hand of Signs* explores how spatial data, particularly GPS, is used to deduce patterns of human activity. In palmistry and more contemporary monitoring technologies, one's health can be deduced through the map, the lines of the palm and the errant traces of

satellites and sensors. Using reclaimed wood to construct a human hand model, we compare the timber growth marks to those borne on the human body accrued as people move through more-than-worlds throughout their lifespans. The artwork also draws attention to the various 'signs' used across centuries to interpret the current and future health and wellbeing of humans, superimposing older and newer modes of corporeal knowledge.



Vaughan Wozniak-O'Connor
and Deborah Lupton

*Cabinet of Human/Digital/
Data Curiosities, 2023*

Reclaimed timber, found objects,
resin 3D prints

Cabinet of Human/Digital/Data Curiosities combines found objects from the past, such as prosthetic human eyeballs, teeth used in early dentistry, and old photographs. Taking our cue from this manner of display, we added our own curios. Interspersed among these relics is a discarded mobile phone, displayed as antiquated objects for collecting, storing, and displaying information and images about human bodies. We also added new objects created using 3D printing and digital etching technologies. Together, this collection refers to the notion of information and data as human remains assembled to represent and visualise the exterior and interior of human bodies. Our objects are not fleshly parts of bodies like those encased in glass preserving jars in medical museum collections, but instead are human-made simulacra of body parts.



Megan Rose

Silken Anatomies, 2023

Digital print on satin
and yoryu silk chiffon

Megan Rose's *Silken Anatomies* draws on collage and the material qualities of fabric, including the drape, sheen, and flow of silk to create a sensory experience. The panels depict reconfigurations of botanical and human forms that drift through ethereal curtains of sheer yoryu silk chiffon. Referencing shrouds, the artwork surrounds and holds the audience passing through. They combine an animal-made material (crafted by silkworms) with more-than-human images featuring humans and other living

creatures. The silk provides a sensuous canvas for historical images that can be touched. These more-than-human illustrations speak of the early modern natural science visualisations that underpin contemporary digital images of the human body and the more-than-human world. Rose gives the vibrancies of these beautifully engraved and coloured anatomical plates a new life and feel, both affectively and sensuously. The digital is returned to the tangible.

