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Author: Ms. Daniela De Paulis
The Netherlands

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF A PERIPLANETA AMERICANA

Abstract

The Metamorphosis is the extension of my project COGITO in Space (2013-2018) into the realm of animals other than humans. The first step of this long term project focuses on the realm of insects, especially looking at a locust and a cockroach as potential subjective entities. Initiated in 2015, the project took first shape in April 2020. Whereas COGITO in Space focuses on the subjective, inner experience of the participant traveling into space with their mind, The Metamorphosis aims to expand in time and space the existential experience of non-human species that have been resilient terrestrial inhabitants for millions of years, potentially outliving humans in the far future of our planet. For the first stage of The Metamorphosis I transmitted into space the neural activity of a locust and of a cockroach converted into audio, in collaboration with a multidirectional antenna in Italy and with the Bochum Radio Observatory in Germany. Like in COGITO in Space, the radio transmission is not aimed at a specific object in the cosmos, rather the antenna is kept still while the Earth rotates, spreading the signals across the sky. For the first stage of The Metamorphosis I have been collaborating with a team of neuro-ethologists, lead by Prof. Amil Ayali at the University of Tel Aviv in Israel. I first visited their lab in 2015 at the start of the project, to collect samples of the neural activity of a locust. During the pandemic, between April and August 2020, I finally revisited this material and structured it into a remote performance. Adding to the samples of a locust the neural activity of other insects studied by the team, allowed me to shape the project into a philosophical enquiry into the hard questions of consciousness and subjectivity in species that appear enigmatic and unfathomable to humans.