

## The Glove as Tool To Touch: An Intra-view from Within New Dawn Felipe Duque in Conversation with Swantje Martach

Swantje Martach  
University of Presov

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1344/jnmr.v2i2.35901>

### Abstract

New Dawn is a global arts/theories queering project, which was initiated in Berlin in 2020, and which speculates future aesthetics of the glove as “tool-to-touch.” The present intra-view is a real ‘view-from-within,’ as it unfolds a conversation (a turning, moving, becoming [versare] together [con]) in-between the two members of this project’s theoretical section: Felipe Duque and Swantje Martach.

This intra-view sets out to explore the role the glove plays within the touch. A gloved touch differs from a non-gloved touch, as the glove heightens the touch. The glove functions as a first other that is encountered in the touch, hence it is touched and touching us back. And it is a medium for and mediator of touching other others, as it is through the glove that the ordinarily touched (the world) is touched. By means of this double position in the touch, the glove emancipates from human control. It enables us humans to realize many touches that we alone would not be capable of, and in this way, it emancipates us from our limitations as humans. The glove is a very material invitation to become, that increases with every new gloves invented, a switch to which is just another un/dressing away.

By focusing on the glove/hand entanglement, New Dawn can be read as promoting the haptic sense as a hitherto neglected contributor of the aesthetic. Being self-critical however, we argue that depicting the future of touch by means of the glove eventually is a rather restrictive speculation, as it limits all touch to the one we exert by and experience from hands; whereas reality disposes a multiplicity of touches (e.g. a touch between shoulders, eyes, lips). To expand future touches could thus be an interesting continuation for New Dawn.

## Keywords

glove; tool-to-touch; speculative aesthetics; futurism; fetishism

## Introduction

The following text is an intra-view, an 'interview from within' the non/human multiplicity that names itself New Dawn, and that materially/discursively (which is to say: via processes in which theory and art/design enmesh) speculates future aesthetics of the everyday object of the glove, which herein is defined as 'tool to touch.'

'From within,' because who in a conventional role allocation would be the 'intra-viewer' Swantje Martach (SM), as well as who would be 'the intra-viewee' Felipe Duque (FD) are members of this arts/theories queering initiative, so that this intra-view is to be seen more as a dialogue than a Q&A, viz. as a 'conversation' - a term which owns the connotation of a turning together, a converting each other - that materializes thoughts which circulate within, which haunt New Dawn, and are thus responsible for the very formation of this project. This intra-view intends to be a true democratic exchange of thoughts, that as such methodologically corresponds to the topic it is to engage with: the (here: gloved) touch, which the "philosopher of touch" (as Derrida baptized him, see introduction to Nancy, 2021) Jean-Luc Nancy describes as being always a reciprocity: "one cannot touch without being touched" (Nancy, 2021, min. 4:33-4:38).

In November 2019, his fascination with virtual reality gloves incited Berlin-based photographer Tobias Faisst to initiate New Dawn and gather in total 59 individuals and studios working in the culture sector, that today form part of the project's team. Soon thereafter, Vienna-based theoretician, DJ, and editor-in-chief of *ENTKUNSTUNG*, Felipe Duque - in collaboration with whom the present conversation materialized - joined Tobias in his undertaking.

In early 2020, New Dawn's team was ready to start speculating future aesthetics of the glove. The basis for the multiple working streams realized in New Dawn were 'analogue' which is to say: materially handcrafted gloves, that materialize specific vectors of becoming that we experience of and with the glove. Outgoing from

the material, New Dawn photographed, post-produced, CGI-embedded and -animated, choreographed, danced, filmed, styled, wrote, and virtually exhibited its gloves. During this process, the gloves were constantly shifting, and *peu a peu* allowed New Dawn to approach their future aesthetics.

The present introduction attends to this processual manner of engaging with the glove because of two reasons. On the one hand, New Dawn's approach is processual without being linear, and as such is of high interest for new materialisms that are generally characterized by a re-thinking of linearities (see e.g. Barad, 2017; or Dolphijn and van der Tuin, 2012, p. 163). At times, the virtual embedding of the glove happened on the basis of its model, and its handcrafting thus was likely to happen parallel to its virtualization. Once the neutral picture was taken from an analogue glove, its embedding into a speculative environment likely happened simultaneously to its being-danced. And its being-danced was filmed, so that being-danced and being-filmed are two steps that the glove experienced at the same time.

On the other hand, it is precisely in this process that the glove becomes an actant, becomes determinative for a circularity of 'next' steps, which is why New Dawn as such can be denoted as a 'non/human' multiplicity. To a high extent, it is the glove that specifies its speculative CGI-environment. It is the glove that 'is danced,' that steers the movement of the dancers and thereby materializes itself. And it is the danced, even: the dancing glove that dictates the movements of the camera and the cuts of post-production, for the sake of best revealing the intentionality it contains.

Already during the work on, and following up on (another timely circularity) the release of New Dawn's virtual exhibition, its medial distribution began, which shall here be regarded as a mere spatial widening of New Dawn's processual character. In this vein, New Dawn's Instagram account (@newdawn.digital), exhibiting material and discursive bits and pieces of New Dawn, is as much part of its core work as its website's exhibition. The 'stories' contained in the former, in which initiator Tobias (at times on the suggestion of other New Dawn members) explores and sets out to bundle the vastness of artistic/design works featuring gloves that can be found in this social medium, enmeshes with the mood board he sent out in his initial call for participation.

And texts uttered from within New Dawn entangle with press texts written about New Dawn. Theoretic text researching and media texts promoting New Dawn circularly refer to each other. And interviews with one member of New Dawn engage with and scrutinize interviews with other members of this arts/theories-queering project.

This intra-view, which was realized via ZOOM, recorded via the voice memo function of an iPhone, and then typed down as close to the original conversation as possible, can thus be seen as one part of New Dawn that is as 'central' in this non-centralistic and rather rhizomatic undertaking as a particular glove is therein: All are materializations of the idea that flows within and overflows New Dawn, and as such are democratically entangled. A last remark before the intra-view begins: During the textualization of the intra-view, square brackets were added to include information and explanations; all round brackets were meant as such during the oral/medial intra-view itself.

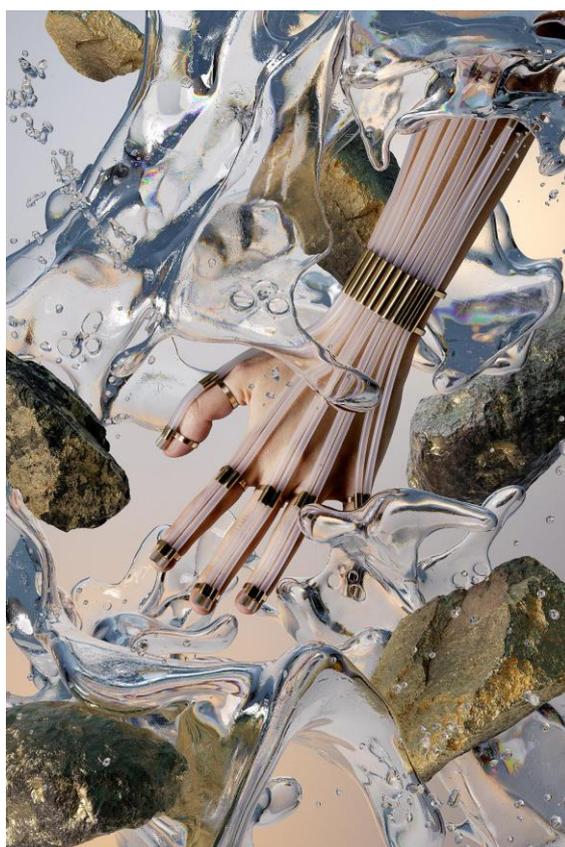


Figure 1. Jewelry Glove (glove: Johanna Gauder, photography: Tobias Faisst, retouching: Studio Wolfram, CGI: Kiwi Bravo & Edu Torres, 2020)

## Intra-view

SM: Let me briefly introduce you to the scope of the present virtual get-together before we start with the intra-view, which I have the honor to realize with you, Felipe! The topic of this conversation is not intended to be the glove in its ontological approach as an object, nor the sketching of an ontology of the touch [What is the touch? What affords the touching? What is the touching capable of? As in-depth researches focusing on such questions, see e.g. Nancy, 2021 or Manning, 2007], but it rather shall be the role the glove inhabits within the touch. In the following, we shall thus regard the glove as a touching medium as much as a medium for touching, as a “tool to touch” as you, Felipe, also named it so adequately for New Dawn. In a former work I did on and with New Dawn [see e.g. Martach, 2021], I claimed that the glove ‘shoves’ itself in-between human and world, even human and reality, and mediates the touch in the sense of the human’s haptic perception and understanding of the world.

FD: If we talk about the glove as the ‘medium,’ I read this as asking for the touch that the glove allows me to realize. But what about the touch that the glove does to me? What I like to call the ‘fetish’ part of the glove is that when you dress a glove, there immediately is a contact that, dependent upon the glove you are using, triggers something different. There is an initial touch, a touch not via, but with, even from the glove. And only via this first touch, you become capable of performing things, hence you become capable of touching.

Even if it is just for work, when you dress a glove, it immediately changes your performativity. One could even say that your own performativity becomes the performativity of the glove, the glove’s own performativity. For instance, by getting my hands into my bicycle gloves, I become a mechanic; by getting my hands into some rubber gloves, I enter a cleaning mode. Gloves have the capacity to immediately make us enact what they determine for us. For this reason, I think of gloves as highly powerful devices.

SM: Would you hence agree with me in saying that the glove ontologically is an attitude?

FD: I am not sure if it 'is' an attitude, but it certainly enables an attitude, or a *modus*. It enables you to perform something, to enact a performance. When I was 16, I was living in New York and working at McDonalds as a dishwasher. I see this experience of mine as strongly determined by the gloves I was wearing for work there. Coming to work, I would enter the restaurant, see the pile of dishes, dress my gloves, put my headphones on, and for two hours or so be in this washing mode which I regard as enabled by the gloves.

The glove incites an action in you, it creates a certain mindset for you. There is this first touch, the touch with the glove. There first is a *Darstellung* of an action by the glove, and only thereafter comes its enactment – by means of you, through you as a medium. And through this enactment, the action is not anymore an act, but it rather is just a being.

SM: I really enjoy the latter thought you expressed, Felipe. In my work on the 'clothing,' the daily dressing relation, I usually define the cloth, the dress, the garment as a 'first other' we often unconsciously are engaged with while being engaged with 'other others,' further things in the world. We usually wear clothes while we eat, while we sleep, while we work, while we do sports, and while we meet friends. I am thus generally curious about clothes as manipulating our reality in ways we are lacking knowledge of [see e.g. Martach 2018]. So while I speak of the cloth as a 'first other,' and thus would define the glove as a first other we encounter in the touch; you just defined the glove as providing us a 'first touch.'

I think Barad's concept of "self-touching" [see Barad, 2012, p. 5] can also clarify further what I suppose we both mean here. I claim that we can see the glove as a form of self-touching, because as long as I wear a glove, there is something, an actant, an existence, that presses itself against me. In fact, this pressing becomes heightened when I glove-touch further things (e.g. hold a cup, or grab another - gloved? - hand), because my touch with this other thing presses the glove-thing against me, and the glove-thing crucially does not retreat, has nowhere to evade, but remains right there, in-between me and world, and steadily presses itself onto me and the other other

equally. In this vein, we might tentatively suspect that the glove 'wants' me to touch other others in order to engage with it, in order to touch itself more intensely.

FD: I like when you say that the glove "wants me to touch other others." I perceive garments in general, and the glove in particular, as a game of alterity or multiplicity, as representing without drawing too much attention to the fact that the queer and the ephemeral are always right there, directly with us, on our bodies.

SM: However, when we both speak about a 'firstness' of the glove in the touch, then we do introduce a sequentiality here. Would you really say that such a sequentiality properly depicts reality? Is it indeed true that the glove's touch comes prior to the touch of the other, which is to say: the other other?

FD: If we put it in a sequence, then I see this as initiated by an idea (what I priorly meant by the *Darstellung*), an image that I create before using the glove. It all begins with the thought: "I need gloves," for instance in order to ride a motorcycle, or to wash the plates. This incites the first touch, in which I wear the glove and the glove is holding me. This first touch has information. It informs the body about its new, its widened set of capacities. And only then comes the moment in which I dare to touch, dare because 'glovedly' touch the cycle's handlebar, or the first dirty plate.

Yet I do not regard this as the glove's specialty. The same happens when I dress e.g. a suit, or high heels. The moment when I jump into these heels, I will be tall, I will stand erect, my body posture becomes another, as well as my walk. And as soon as I enter the suit, I become, e.g. a professor, or a banker. I dress these offices by dressing into them. 'Clothes,' as you name them in your work, do something to you. They change your body, and you know that they will change your body. The same is valid for the glove.

SM: When we think of dressing the glove in order to, then I certainly agree with you. However, when remaining in the conventional timely linear manner of thinking, then after the dressing there is, or even: with the dressing starts another reality, namely the one of wearing the glove. For our purposes, I claim that the concept of 'wearing' means to say that the glove and its 'first' touch remains there, its engagement with the hand

continues to happen throughout the action of washing plates, or riding the bicycle. In this vein, I would suggest to shift our conceptualization from a temporary firstness to a local primary, because in effect, very materially, when we wear gloves, it is through the glove that we touch everything else.

FD: I agree. And what is more, there is also a certain fetish in the way we engage with, hence in how we wear gloves. For instance, in the past I did professional BMX. For about 15 years, every afternoon I was wearing my BMX gloves. Very soon after I started this sport, these gloves shifted from gloves that I would simply wear, to a garment that receives specific attention. I would determinedly speak up for, and wear precisely these gloves from precisely this brand. And every now and then, I would have these new gloves, this freshly released model, that would crucially improve the experience of my BMX-riding.

Still, I needed these gloves for the riding itself, for protection, for the rules of the game. But there was more to my gloves-wearing. My gloves alienated me from the others. They lifted me up. They were more than just gloves for me. I was alive with them. There is something inherent, this use value, that changes the relation that we have with ordinary things.

For New Dawn, we speculated gloves as 'wearables' [which is a term used in the respective métier for intelligent pieces of clothing, viz. for dresses that include smart technology, such as the solar panel dress made by Dutch designer Pauline van Dongen, that already achieved to find an access into academic thinking, see Smelik, Toussaint, van Dongen, 2016]. As a role model for us functioned especially the postmodern smartphone, which I also like to call the 'tamagotchi phone,' because it tells you how many steps you should take, how many calories you ate, when to go to bed, when to wake up, and so on. This whole thing is alive. So we thought: "What could come next? What other thing, apart from the telephone, could be alive, maybe: is already alive? The liveliness of which other thing could we use for our purposes, and how could we use it?" Apparently, the answer we found is: the glove.

SM: This is highly interesting. In a former interview from within New Dawn, that I realized in the frame of a conference contribution [see again Martach, 2021], Hongwei

Tang, the coder of New Dawn, mentioned something that I consider as contributing gainfully to this thinking about the gloved touch that we are presently undertaking. On the one hand, he already said that the glove is mediating the touch, hence that it is of the glove that we are receiving a first touch. This first touch, so one could add, is materializing in this very tiny yet highly determinative space between our fingers and the glove, that might be not even a millimeter wide, if the glove fits really tightly. But on the other hand, Hongwei expressed the thought that very often, the glove is not intended to be witnessed. The glove does not want to be experienced, but rather strives to hide, to withdraw in the touch. It seeks to hide itself, if we ascribe to the glove this kind of agency.

In this vein, Hongwei instanced the medicinal glove, which is exclusively intended to enable us to fulfil certain actions, e.g. touching the injured body. But from the perspective of the glove, nobody really ever should think about the very action that is already in the glove, about the very touch of the glove. Put differently, we could say that it is always about the touch with the glove, but hardly ever about the touch of the glove. I see this as creating a very peculiar tension, would you agree?

FD: From my perspective, it is the other way around. I do not regard the glove as hiding. But for me, it is more about saying: "I am here, I am the one who allows you to, who enables you to perform. Without me you cannot do this." I see the glove as exposed in this role.

SM: For New Dawn, you called the glove a 'tool to touch.' Up to today, I read this in a Heideggerian vein, as stating that the glove is a tool, and as such is *zuhanden*, ready-to-hand, and precisely not *vorhanden*, not present-at-hand [see Heidegger, 2006, pp. 83-84]. In how Graham Harman pulled this Heideggerian distinction into object oriented ontological thought, your definition can be interpreted, how I so far did it, as if stating that the glove-tool pretends to offer itself completely for our usage, but thereby creates a blind spot in our attention. And precisely this blind spot allows it to act on us in manners that we usually do not witness [trying to paraphrase here the overall message conveyed in Harman, 2002]. I also see Hongwei's thought as pointing

into this direction. But now I start to wonder, did you mean the glove's definition as a tool in a distinct manner?

FD: When we called the glove a 'tool to touch,' we did so in the attempt to not think of it as emancipating from human control. We intended to give the glove agency. But we humans are the ones who are giving it agency. The glove does not have agency by itself. But the agency is what we do to it, and when we do what to it. For me personally, the idea of fetishism was reigning over New Dawn, the inquiry into how things live, when we grant things a life. To go back to our role model I mentioned earlier, smartphones are always present. They are there when we eat, when we watch television, when we go to the toilet, they sleep next to us, and so on. We give things a life, but only ever through the practices in which we engage with them.

Whereas some members involved in New Dawn had a more dystopian concept in mind, in which they speculated the glove as almost already an AI, an autonomously acting subject that is intending to gain the upper hand over us, other participants, me included, were more drawn to speculate an utopian idea of a future in which we can interact with gloves, yet which still affords both, the human and the glove. We thus tended towards the incitement of a symbiosis between object and human, in which we imagined the human orienting towards the object in a thought such as: "We enable you. We give you an agency. But in return, you also help us. And together we can create a certain kind of reality." The terminus 'tool-to-touch' intended to imply exactly this, that the glove enables me to do many things that I alone as a human being would not be capable of, because of my limitations as a human.

SM: This clarifies pretty well the democratic or rhizomatic entanglement as which you define the future of touch. Besides, another thing that always comes to my mind when reflecting about the relation between glove and touch is that I somehow see it as a disadvantage, a material/conceptual shortcoming of the glove (which by ordinary definition is a dress we apply onto our hands) that it reduces the sense of touch to the hand. Yet it is obvious also that the hand is not the only body part with which we can touch. We can give each other a kiss with our lips, or with our noses. We can touch each other's elbows, or even 'shake our feet,' as it has recently, in COVID-times,

became a fashion. So the touch is omnipresent within, even an 'omnipotential' owned by the body. If I thus regard New Dawn's gloves as also working on the issue of a future touch, which obviously was not the project's primary issue, but if we think of them as such, then I feel this would be a limitation of New Dawn.

FD: Definitely. It is reducing your body and the senses, your whole body to only one region, whereas in reality, you perceive via the whole and distributed program of the senses. To say: "this is for this, and that is for that," is always reductive. For me, it is the same as reducing sexuality to a kiss on the mouth, or to the genitalia. If we think of New Dawn as an idea of a future in which you can only touch with your hands, this would not be such a nice future I opine, maybe a bit boring in this regard.

SM: I am thinking here of public signs, board games, or school books: When they show a hand, then the message they wish to convey is always connected to the touch. Apparently, the hand achieved to become the epitome of the touch, in a very stigmatized, ordinary, commonsensical worldview. But you might remember how Deleuze and Guattari talk about the "body-without-organs" as a goal worth striving for, in delineation to the ordinary organist structuring of the body. As they say:

"Is it really so sad and dangerous to be fed up with seeing with your eyes, breathing with your lungs, talking with your tongue, thinking with your brain ...? Why not walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly." (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 167)

I feel that this thought could be very nice when integrated into New Dawn.

FD: This reminds me of the 90's in New York. When you rode an elevator, you were socially obliged to not look at anyone, to only stare at the floor. Because in case you, as a man, would look at a woman, it would immediately be embarrassing, it would be like: *harrumphs intendedly*. When these days we regard it as normal to not touch a stranger, e.g. in a bar, back then this rule of 'social distancing' included the look. You were not supposed to look at each other, because the look was already the touch, the look contained the touch within itself, so to speak. You were seen as touching with your eyes.

These days, the eyes are still allowed more things, and also more things than the hands. Just think of the situation in which you intend to pass by a stranger on a crowded street, or on an escalator. You really have to ask yourself: “How do I best do this? How do I realize this action without causing irritations?” Because you do not want to end up in a situation uncomfortable for all participants.

SM: For so doing, many people do a sort of ‘fish’ gesture with their hands, holding one of their arms close to their body, with the wrist as high as probably touching their chest, the hand standing in a 90° angle from the arm, all five fingers tightly pressed into each other, a very straight hand posture, as if their hand would be the bug of their body-ship sailing through these stormy and unpredictable waves of people.

I find the position of the hand in relation to the body here to be a very peculiar one, as here the hands are locally primary. They are a first touch. They are blazing the trail, carefully advancing, probably because intended to be the most harmless potentially touching part for the entire body of the other. They act as a sort of security shield, a cushioning between the two bodies. And in this cushioning, the glove could be of help as an extra layer of textile in-between the two bodies that do not wish to, but might happen to touch each other.

FD: I like the metaphor you are using here. Back in the 90’s, such actions were undertaken in order to keep, and visibly stress one’s intention of keeping the distance between each other.

SM: To try not to touch whilst touching.

FD: Exactly.

SM: At the ICI, the Institute of Cultural Inquiry here in Berlin, they are currently hosting a series of talks about the touch. One of them, which was held by Tim Dean, was called “How to Have Sex in a Pandemic.” I see this as telling much about where we are right now. This COVID-situation has increased the relevancy, the significance in the sense of the expressive power of the touch. It seems to create a ban of touching, that applies even in the private.

FD: And precisely this situation creates tension. On the one hand, it asks for an increased control over the own body; and on the other hand, we also experience a missing, meeting a friend, embracing each other as a greeting, receiving an appreciative clap on your shoulder: "Well done!", or simply a conversation with someone next to you. Today at the office we were having a ZOOM-talk from different rooms in the same space. We are getting so used to these kinds of things, that once we happen to meet live, to be confronted with each other's bodily beings in reality, we don't have anything to talk about.

SM: Yes, this social distancing is creating an awkwardness, also at times when it is broken. But these small moments of breaking the rules, these tiny ruptures, even if it is only a clap on a shoulder, are also highly necessary these days, I opine.

FD: And we can draw the analogy from screen to glove. The glove is like this screen through which we are chatting right now. This screen enables us to have this conversation between Berlin and Vienna, just like the glove provides you the possibility of doing certain actions that without the glove you would not be capable of realizing.

What is more, the screen also inserts a game into the how of this conversation. It allows us to filter what we show, what we present or expose, and what we hide, just like the glove does it to and for us. I like to think of both the glove and the screen as devices that mediate our presence. One could also think of them as functioning like a joker: They open up some things, meanwhile they conceal others.

SM: I totally see your point here. Would you hence say that the glove inserts a game of expectations into the social sphere?

FD: Indeed, yes. And we also have to manage our expectations in relation to the glove itself. In the fetish thinking, we give love to objects not only because of the object, but it is about what we expect that this object could give us. But this also entails the possibility of becoming disillusioned.

I might expect a glove to keep me warm in winter, but when I go out, I realize that it does not. Or I might expect its fabric to feel comfortable on my hands, but after a while, it makes me sweat. This is what I mean by the glove's tool factor: As humans, we still

want to be in control, so we impose expectations on the objects we engage with. All we do is projecting. We project on our gloves that they perform in a certain way. Maybe I selected the right one for this weather, or I took the wrong one. Maybe I chose the cheapest one, and it surprisingly meets all my needs. Or I bought the most expensive one, but still am unhappy with it. You cannot entirely foresee the glove's degree of smooth functioning prior to every specific wearing situation.

SM: Which reveals the clothing to be an unpredictable, even uncanny, but also a highly fascinating practice. I wish to argue that the glove can also be a shelter. What I have in mind here is for instance a gardener, who realizes projects in very different gardens and with distinct clients, but he always wears the same gloves, his gloves. Or as you said before, as a BMX biker, you might have driven to distinct tournaments, and rode different courses, but luckily, you had your gloves with you, that gave you support, comforted you, that provided you a sense of security in how they touch. Maybe we could even think of the 'grip' that the gloves give in this example in the double sense of allowing for a firm touch and providing support?

FD: This is a nice wordplay! Or one could also speak of the composition of safety and security. The feeling of safety is provided by a proper hold. It means protection. But the feeling of security, even of self-security, a confidence and motivation is brought forth by what could be titled the 'aesthetics' of the glove. Wearing a specific glove, like for instance the jewelry glove Johanna Gauder created for New Dawn (see figure 1 above), you feel prettier, more attractive. Or when you wear New Dawn's Black Latex Glove (see figure 2 below), you feel aerodynamic. This is to say that the glove creates a feeling that improves performance. The same happens when you wear your favorite shirt to go out. You have a mojo. You come with an extra.



Figure 2: Black Latex Glove (photography: Tobias Faisst, retouching: Studio Wolfram, CGI: Lukas Popp, 2020).

SM: As you already mentioned the aesthetic, now it is the time for me to add a second aspect to the thought I expressed before. So far I said that the glove's restriction to the hand (and probably the lower arm, as it is the case in several of New Dawn's gloves) is a limitation of the haptic sense. But on the other hand, I feel capable of arguing in favor of our, of New Dawn's actions and selection of the glove as a subject matter for a 'future aesthetics,' because when you inquire into the history of the aesthetic, it soon becomes visible that prior to what we are doing today, always only the eye and the ear, viz. the visual and the auditory sense were foregrounded. But despite Cicero, who is a remarkable exception in his praise of the hand [see Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, II, e.g. LX (here cited edition: 1967, p. 267)], the hand was hardly ever mentioned in ancient theories of beauty, art, or sense perception. Apparently, it was not held as capable of inciting us with proper aesthetic experiences. In this vein, could we say that in New Dawn, we are trying to level this historical imbalance in the awareness of the contribution of the different senses to the aesthetic?

FD: This is a very apt way to express our scope. And I can even add that historically, one's artistic taste was always regarded more important than the experience one lived through in relation to art. So in the art world, the sense of taste was classically rated higher in importance than the sense of touch. And even in music, for instance in Kant or in Adorno, as paradoxically as it might sound, the sense of taste was prioritized over the sense of hearing. There thus has always been a hierarchy inserted in the senses, and touch was at its very bottom.

However, this is not to say that the aesthetic cannot be narrated alternatively, and that its sensual hierarchization has not undergone changes before. Whereas classically, the narrative of art was entirely visual; its performative narrative is pretty young in comparison. We can easily speculate the touch as being another step in the evolution of art's perception, in part because this change has already begun: Immersive art invites you to trigger all your senses, not only the visual one. House and techno both are immersive genres of music, and precisely the immersion they provide explains why they are so powerful. It is because of the base they both include: something you do not hear, but which vibrates in you, which moves your body.

SM: Such a nice analogy! I never thought of the base in this manner before, but it entirely makes sense. Let us stay a little longer with this historical hierarchization of the senses, which remarkably already the Sophists introduced [see Plato's *Hippias Major*, 298 A and 301 D]. So this grading really has a long history. If I read the respective literature correctly, the reason why they allocate the touch a lower position within this hierarchy is that they think of the sense impressions we get from our ears and eyes as giving way easier for being ordered by our minds; meanwhile the sense perception we receive from our hand, or from touching in general would be more confused, would not allow to be cognitively structured [see e.g. *ibid.* 303 E]. I do see a paradox here, because later on, the aesthetic was precisely defined as a sense perception that is, as Shaviro recently called it, "without criteria," so not structured.

FD: I suspect a connection here between the locating of the aesthetic in eyes and ears, and the cultivation of both respective senses. In contrast, the touch is something

direct. It is a pragmatic sense, it literally is 'hands-on.' It simply is there, either felt or not felt.

SM: But are there not manners of touching also? I mean, I can touch in a hands-on manner, but I can also caress, or crawl, hit, tap, or touch in many other ways. Also the touch can be cultivated.

FD: Yes, but this is only possible to conceptualize nowadays. After Antiquity came medieval Christianity, which was a time in which the court would be having sexual intercourses with a mantle between the two 'lovers,' with a hole in it for penetration only. A sort of 'all-body glove,' so one could put it. This they did because it was not customary to touch another person's body. The touch of the body, a touch in-between two bodies was seen as connected to mere sensual pleasure, as the Bible repeatedly calls it: the mere flesh; whereas these people were striving for, were only regarding as appropriate another pleasure and hence touch, namely the one of the soul. Much later still, we can detect traces of this thinking in the theory of music, which was regarded wholly a product of the intellect, but not a hand-crafted thing, a product of strokes and strings and pressures and pinches.

SM: Indeed, this is true. Even though in Antiquity we can find an alternative position, the hedonist one, which was elaborated by the Sophists and deepened by the Epicureans. But apparently, a more transcendental worldview suppressed hedonism, and the latter only achieved to revive within Modernity.

So, Felipe, we kind of touched on all the points that I intended us to discuss. The last and rather open question that I would like to direct to you is: In how far is the glove itself a conglomerate, a multiplicity? I am asking this because I feel that in New Dawn as well as in commonsense, we are mostly thinking about the glove as well as the hand as a unit. But if we look onto both subject matters, we can see that they contain at least five different participants, five distinct directions, and hence five vectors of becoming. I thus wonder, what happens if we change our conceptual approach and go one more step into the detail, hence when we stop thinking of the glove/hand as a unified whole but rather think of it as sending out several messages?

FD: Certainly, in *New Dawn*, it is all about the hand, the hand as a whole, and not so much about the hand as a sum of parts. But if we consider it that way, I have to think of an octopus. Its tentacles are a multiplicity of independent organisms in this really complex organism. Besides, the hand as multiplicity is already made manifest within its symbolism, in which each finger stands for something else, is seen as representing a different realm of culture. There is the finger that says: "I am (/not) married," side by side to the finger that says: "fuck you." In this regard, the hand is already performing different roles, and is capable of performing them simultaneously, all at once, as a multiplicity.

SM: And this multiplicity becomes even heightened by the fact that this symbolism shifts among cultures. I am thinking here of for instance the Italian sign language, with all its very specific postures and gestures that makes the hand move and hold itself in ways it does nowhere else in the world [Bruno Munari created a remarkable dictionary to approximate their richness, see Munari, 2005]. And when speaking of hand gestures, if I recall it correctly, then the thumbs-up, which for us means "it's good," for Chinese people means "fuck you."

FD: Yes, or just think of sign language as such. Here, the hands are already opening worlds. They are already performing as a language. And what a rich multiplicity is a language!

SM: In this regard, I think we can define the glove, and indeed also the touch, as two among many ways in which we can use the hand, a sort of application of the hand, that crucially 'in practice' heighten and enrich the multiplicity that the hand ontologically is.

What is more, in this stream of thought, what does it mean when I have these different possibilities of becoming, that materialize in distinct fingers, and I then take my entire hand in order to grab a pen, and in this action unify, standardize, or streamline them all? What does this say about me? And if we turn the common direction of thought around: What does it say about the touch, not anymore the role of the hand for the touch, but rather the role of the touch for the (gloved) hand? In such situations, am I ignorant of the multiplicity literally 'at hand'? Or am I especially clever in using them

for my purposes, viz. am I the conductor of an orchestra of fingers in every touch I undertake?

FD: Involved in the how of the touch, I see an aesthetic as well as a historical component. As a matter of fact, many things we touch daily, such as a smartphone cable, a kitchen cloth, or a fork, we are capable of holding with very little effort, with little pressure exerted by our fingers. But indeed, we do not always reduce our touch to the least effort its functioning affords. At times, we might hold a fork in an enclosed hand, a determined, not to say aggressive gesture, which signals a readiness to do whatever it takes in order to seize that food. And then again, we hold a fork in just two fingers, a delicate and open as much as elegant, subtle, even aesthetic gesture, that leaves room for play and interpretation.

But these differences in touching are not only of an aesthetic, but also of a historical nature, as they are often read as signaling the sort of family you stem from. Without going more into the depth of social norms of eating, another example would be the how of an embrace. Whereas lovers might embrace each other in a soft and gentle way, an easily flowing 'intra-touch'; the embrace rather reserved parents often give is characterized by tightly stretched fingers, clearly separated from each other, that produce more of a rubbing than a proper caressing, and thus convey a really cold, and harsh, even hollow feeling. They show you another level of being 'care-ful'.

SM: An interesting term you are selecting here: careful. If I interpret you correctly, you mean to say thereby that to be full of care can on the hand mean: to be orientated towards and care for the other; but it can also mean: to be mindful of the how of your touch. Whereas the former means to dissolve in, to move with the touching flow, and to allow the touch itself (a trans- or multi-human subject) to gain the upper hand, which thus produces a haptic encounter of a hearty sort; the latter is not always a good thing, but too much orientation on the touch itself can cause a break, a rupture, a friction within the touch. This shows once more that the touch itself also is an other that we can get in touch with.

To subsume, I think we can conceptualize the glove as one manner of touching among many, as well as an increase factor in the multiplicity that the touch is. Thank you Felipe for this enriching conversation!

## Recommended Links

[www.newdawn.digital](http://www.newdawn.digital)

<https://felipeduque.eu>

[www.tobiasfaisst.com](http://www.tobiasfaisst.com)

## Bibliography

Barad, Karen (2012). On touching - the inhuman that therefore I am (v1.1) [unpublished version uploaded on academia]. [https://www.academia.edu/7375696/On\\_Touching\\_-\\_The\\_Inhuman\\_That\\_Therefore\\_I\\_Am\\_v1.1\\_](https://www.academia.edu/7375696/On_Touching_-_The_Inhuman_That_Therefore_I_Am_v1.1_).

Barad, Karen (2017). Troubling time/s and ecologies of nothingness: Re-turning, remembering, and facing the incalculable. *New Formations*, 92, 56-86.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius (1967). *De natura deorum* (H. Rackham, Trans.). In E. H. Warmington (Ed.). H. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Dean, Tim (2021, April 26). *How to have sex in a pandemic* [Video]. ICI Berlin, *Intimacy Online Lecture Series 2021*. <https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/tim-dean/>

Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Félix (2004). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (Brian Massumi, Trans.). London/New York: Continuum Books.

Dolphijn, Rick, and van der Tuin, Iris (2012). *New materialism: Interviews & cartographies*. University of Michigan: Open Humanities Press.

Harman, Graham (2002). *Tool-being: Heidegger and the metaphysics of objects*. Chicago/La Salle: Open Court.

Heidegger, Martin (2006). *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Manning, Erin (2007). *Politics of touch: Sense, movement, sovereignty*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.

Martach, Swantje (2018). Being-in-clothes-in-the-world: Why we are clothed and clothing beings. In Daniela Calanca (Ed.), *The culture, fashion, and society notebook* (n.p.). Milan-Turin: Pearson Italia.

Martach, Swantje (2021, February 19). *The speculative futurism of New Dawn (.digital)* [Video]. Contribution to online conference *Demarginalizing Futures*, Vienna Association for Intercultural Philosophy. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8gDuLQGepc&t=17s>.

Munari, Bruno (2005). *Speak Italian: The fine art of the gesture*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Nancy, Jean-Luc (2021, March 24). *Touche-touche* [Video]. ICI Berlin, *Intimacy Online Lecture Series 2021*. <https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/jean-luc-nancy-intimacy/#regform>.

Plato (1861). Hippias Maior. In Friedrich Schleiermacher (Ed. and Trans.). *Platons Werke, Band III, Teil II*. Berlin: Georg Reimer Verlag.

Shaviri, Steven (2009). *Without criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and aesthetics*. Cambridge/London: The MIT Press.

Smelik, Anneke, Lianne Toussaint, and Pauline van Dongen (2016). Solar fashion: An embodied approach to wearable technology. In *International Journal of Fashion Studies*, 3(2), 287-303.

---

## Authors Information

**Felipe Duque** ([info@felipeduque.eu](mailto:info@felipeduque.eu))

Felipe Duque works as editor, curator and electronic music producer.

**Swantje Martach** ([swantjemartach@gmx.de](mailto:swantjemartach@gmx.de))

Swantje Martach holds a PhD in Philosophy from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, in the frame of which she elaborated a new materialist ontology of the clothing as a daily human/thing relation. This she did in cooperation with the London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London. Swantje is a member of the theoretical section of New Dawn (. digital). She is part of the editorial board of IMAGE, ca. the German Journal for Interdisciplinary Image Studies, as well as ESPES, the Slovakian Journal for Aesthetics, and she regularly contributes to the Swiss Portal for Philosophy ([www.philosophie.ch](http://www.philosophie.ch)). Right now, she is realizing a postdoctoral research stay at the Institute for Aesthetics of the University of Presov in Slovakia.