

HONEY

— *Ido Radon*



Conditions

Do you remember it? Blown on the winds, on current and tide, its gas-filled float like a silicone potsticker on the surface of the ocean. Iridescent bubble with a gradient to a deep blue. Below the waterline dragged bulbous tentacles, mucous-y midnight blue with venomous barbs coiled, trawling for passersby.

Many as one, this colony of function-specialized clones in their symbiotic interdependence, four types of physiologically integrated zooids in unseverable relation. Colloquially a man-o-war, it/they was/were in its/their exquisite mutuality and organization nonetheless operationally rudderless, adrift, opportunistic.

Do you remember when you and I and all of us joined those who access the world primarily through the window of the monitor, the seventy-one keys, and cursor/selection input device?

And how some people counted days and others didn't, and neither tactic (reframing or unframing) changed anything. And time that normally marched onward unstopably, and all of the other things that for better and also often worse one relies on happening regularly, didn't. Do you remember the feeling of moving through molasses or marshmallow cream or chest-high water?

Early on, in the time when the virus moved freely, when things were changing daily, he said, This time is different.

He had been at ground zero, had become ill, did the research before any of the rest of us. When he returned, he said, we would have to seal off our household of six. We have to think of it like this, he said:

We are all one organism.

That year the wasp children came, emerging from the ground as they did each year when the sun returned, leaving piles of chewed clay around their perfectly circular holes. I had struggled over the years about what, if anything, to do about the wasp children, worrying that in their enthusiasm they might hurt a passerby, and yet unable to do more than hang a single ineptly-loaded wasp trap in the camellia some years.

When the density of their flight paths became acute, I would do a little haphazard internet searching and finally conclude, given the wasp lifespan, that we only had to cede the tiny front yard to them for a month or so. And wasps are pollinators, aren't they? It seemed in that year important, more than ever, that things should be pollinated.

Let us LIVE, I remember saying. And I meant the wasp children and the finch family and the dog-walking people, even, and the crows, and Catherine my regal neighbor and former symphony violinist drinking Prosecco six feet away from a friend out front of her house, and the man in his robe putting out the trash.

I had made plans more than once to dig out the clay of this tiny plot in the winter and add so much mulch that it might make it less conducive to perfect-hole-making so that the children might elect to go somewhere else. But the truth is I might miss them.

That was the year I learned that the wasp children were in fact ground bees. Remember the slow one with heavily-laden legs.

George Markov, *Fungal rhizomorphs on dead wood*
(Photo: Shutterstock)

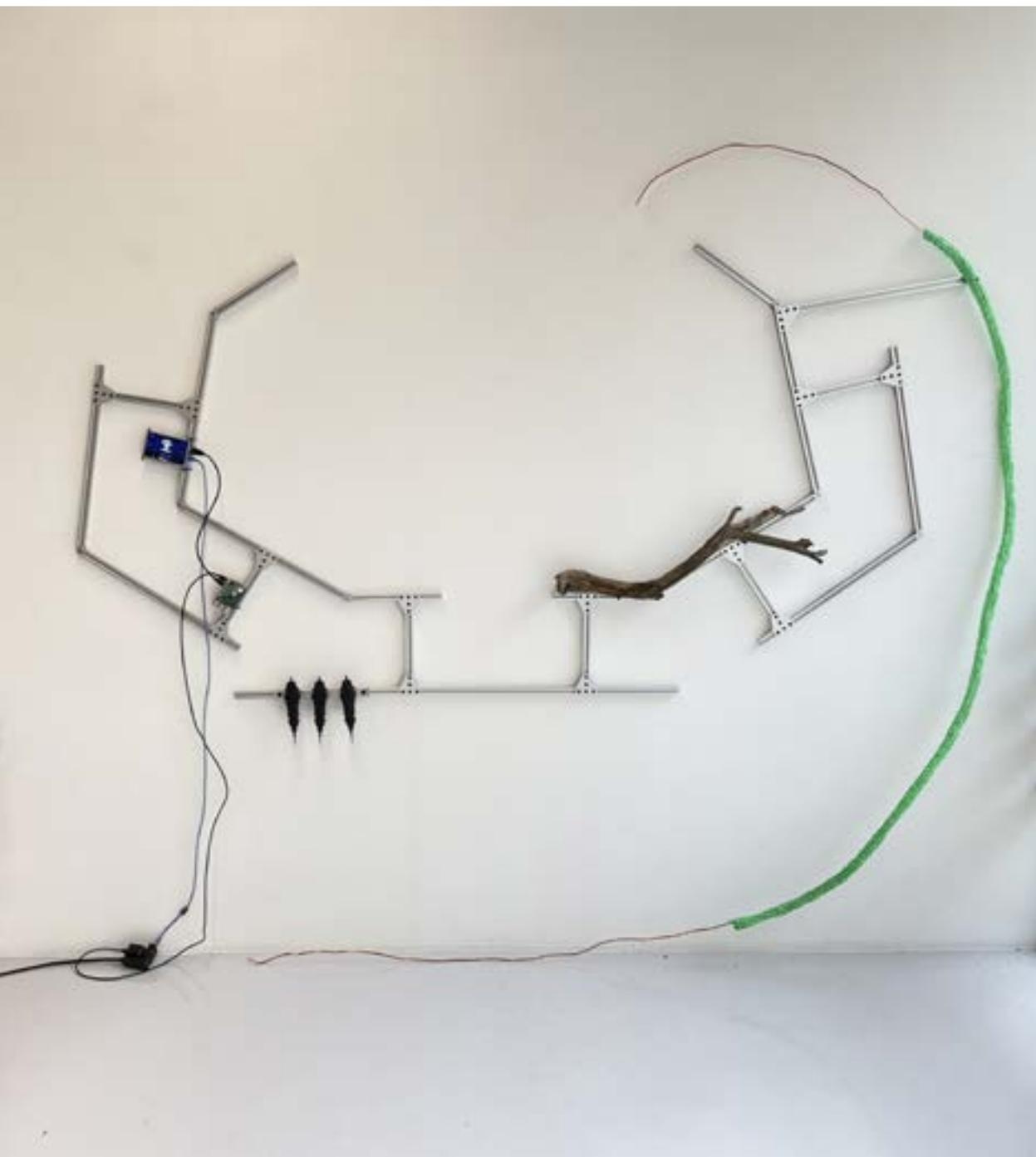


Elenia Photo, *Honey mushrooms grow on a tree trunk. Edible mushrooms in the forest.* (Photo: Shutterstock)

Opposite:

Ido Radon, *Framework Zero (with Node Prototype 192.168.1.165)*, 2021. Aluminum profile, PLA 3-D prints, microcontroller, display, mp4, extension cord, rosemary, aluminum, copper, day nylon twine, hardware, (with Oskar Radon). Imagining a post internet method of serves and sharing data, this work hosts a local website on a microcontroller-based webserver that is only accessible via the gallery's wifi router. Courtesy the artist and Air de Paris, Romainville (Photo: Marc Damage)

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Ido Radon,
Frstddceamework
 (192.168.1.100/), 2021.
 Aluminum, PLA 3-D prints,
 Apache webservice on
 meeeeeeeicrocontroller,
 display, power cords,
 tripod, selenite, sand,
 mahogany, latent electromag-
 net, bay leaves (with Molly
 Radon-Kimball), mp3
 (with Neville Kimball), mp4
 (with Oskar Radon).

Slatan, *Closeup of agaric honey
 mushrooms growing on tree
 stumps* (Photo: Shutterstock)

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What I don't remember, because it was before my time, was this place being an incubator for anarchist thought. The *Firebrand*, later known as *Free Society*, an anarchist newspaper that was published in Portland, Oregon, in the late 1800s was apparently influential in disseminating and shaping anarchist conversation in the United States. Notably, it also addressed sexuality, women's rights, and free love.

I reread, among other things, Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*. He rejected, you'll recall, the notion of competition or survival of the fittest as the way of things in the natural world as well as human society. And I thought and still do about radical empathy and an ethics based on care.

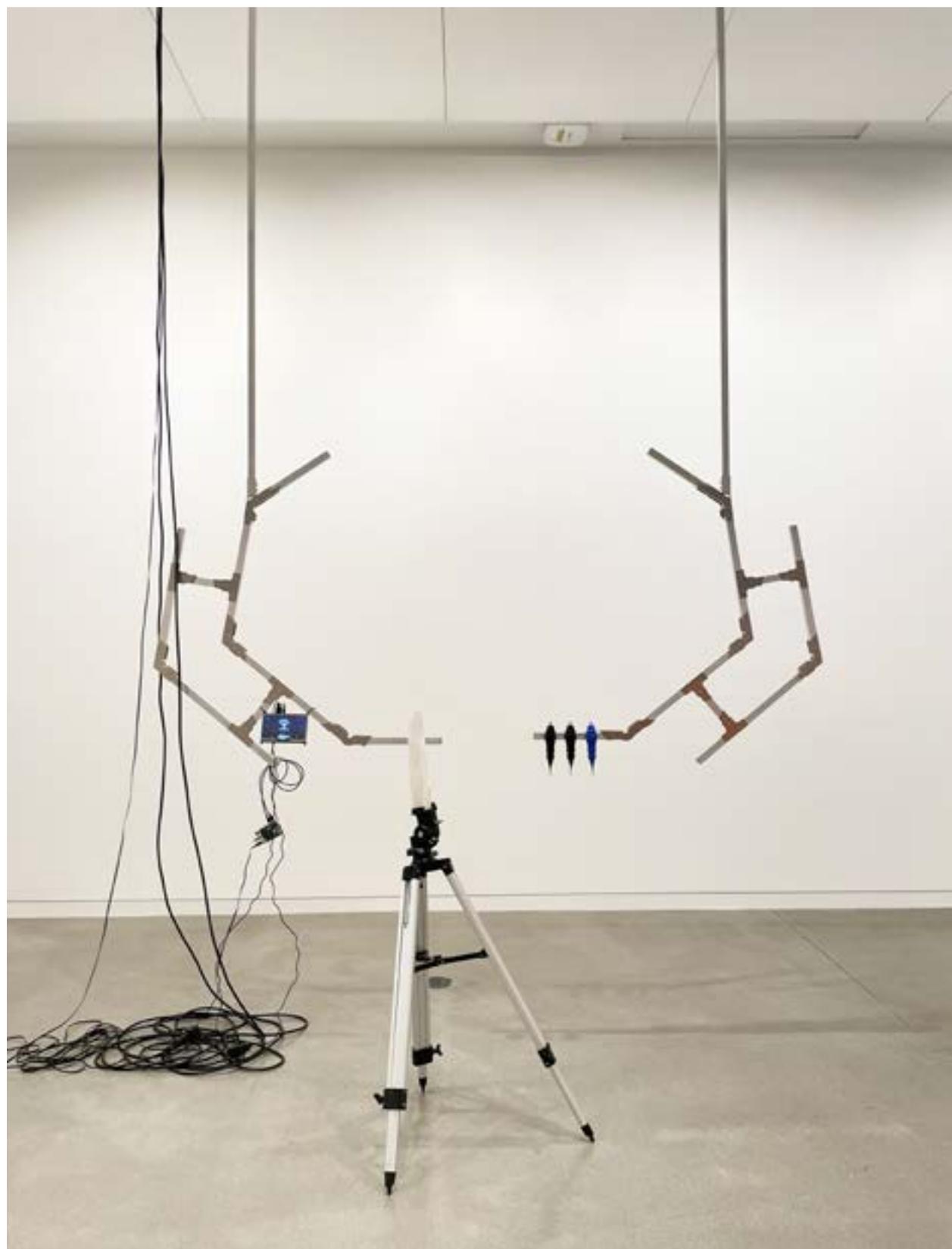
And I remembered how tides of awareness rise and fall and that histories are as tangled as fungus rhizomorphs and buried as deeply beneath straight lines and grids of capital-H history written by the victor.

The lyric mode exists without chronology or causation; its principle of connection is associative. (Of course, no piece of writing can exist purely in any one mode, but we can certainly talk of the predominance of one element, perhaps two.)...A writer who employs the lyric structure is setting various images, events, scenes, or memories to circling round an unspoken, invisible center. The invisible center is what the novel or poem is about; it is also unsayable in available dramatic or narrative terms. That is, there is no action possible to the central character and no series of events that will embody in clear, unequivocal, immediately graspable terms what the artist means. Or perhaps there is no action or series of events that will embody this "center" at all. —Joanna Russ, "What Can a Heroine Do? Or Why Women Can't Write" (1971)

Somewhat earlier was the 2003 manifesto titled *The Wireless Commons*. Among its charter signatories were the Electronic Frontier Foundation's Cory Doctorow and Creative Commons' Lawrence Lessig. Framed as an open letter, it was drafted by Adam Shand who, in 2000, founded Personal Telco, a network of open, free wifi nodes throughout Portland, installed and maintained by a group of volunteer engineers and believers.

We have formed the Wireless Commons because a global wireless network is within our grasp.... We will break down commercial, technical, social and political barriers to the commons....

The Internet's value increases exponentially with the number of people who are able to participate. In today's world, communication can take place without the use of antiquated telecommunications networks. The organizations that control these networks are limping anachronisms that are constrained by the expense and physical necessity of using wires to build their networks. Because of this, they cannot serve the great mass of people who stand to benefit from a wireless commons. Their interests diverge from ours, and their control over the network strangles



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our ability to communicate.... Most importantly, the network needs to be accessible to all and provisioned by everyone who can provide. By adding enough providers to the network, we can bridge the physical gaps imposed by the range of our equipment. The network is a finite resource which is owned and used by the public, and as such it needs to be nurtured by the public.

The anarchists made hand sanitizer. And then it was the case that we joined them in wearing masks. And once the immediate threat had passed, having regained a tiny sliver of unsurveilled privacy, why would we stop.

By 2004, Personal Telco had installed 114 wifi nodes in Portland and were working on installing more powerful WiMAX (Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access) boxes to increase coverage.

In December of 2006, the city of Portland launched its “Unwire Portland” citywide wifi network project that was meant to offer free wireless internet access

Denis Gavrilov, *Armillaria mellea* or honey fungus growing on a tree trunk in the forest among moss (Photo: Shutterstock)

Opposite:
Ido Radon, *Two-Axis Crafting Table*, 2021. Aluminum profile, passionflower vine, 3M 2097 filters, PLA 3-D prints, display, video (“The Lighting,” with Molly Radon-Kimball), extension cord, solar panel, Voxeljet print, fulgurite (lightning glass), copper, ripstop nylon, aluminum, selenite, paracord, cat claw. The first of the frame-works. The PLA 3-D prints are the waveform of a crow’s call modeled around an axis. 2020 gave me a new appreciation for the black bloc of birds. Courtesy the artist and Melanie Flood Projects (Photo: Leif Anderson)

across ninety-five percent of the city. Rather than work with the team of Personal Telco, the city contracted with a company called MetroFi to build the network by installing access points on light poles.

Just two years later, in March of 2008, Unwire was over. MetroFi reported that it had not been able to generate enough revenue from ad sponsorships, and was pulling its access points from the city.

But Personal Telco persisted, with 100 nodes in its network providing free wifi at numerous sites throughout Portland.

It was still the case that the largest organism on earth lived in Oregon. For eight millennia, an interconnected colony of *Armillaria ostoyae* had thrived on 3.5 square miles in the Malheur National Forest in the Strawberry Mountains. It wound beneath the ground in tangled networks of brown-black rhizomorphs. It embraced the trunks of Douglas firs in thin sheets of pale mycelium beneath the bark. And at their bases it thrust forth clutches of charming golden mushrooms, glossy and sticky.

There had been a dispute about the scientific name, but in the vernacular, the mushroom was commonly called *honey*.

There in the Malheur, an infected tree would often grow a distress crop of cones.

So it was years earlier in my birthplace: the Monterey Pine out front succumbing, as so many did, but in a last great push expressing dozens and dozens of cones in clusters on her bare, grey limbs.

What you will remember is that redundancy mattered. In various and crucial ways, too many to enumerate here. That preservation, maintenance, distribution of deprecated vessels, knowledges, technologies, seeds, was perhaps even more vital than anyone could have known. That backup systems need backup systems. That everything depends on this.

But okay, now we can look back and see clearly the benefit of choosing correctly between a handful of cloud and a handful of sand.

It had been just before that time that I had studied to take the test to earn my amateur radio operator Technician license from the FCC permitting me certain privileges on the radio waves to which the United States government, within its borders, laid claim. And so I became aware of the repeaters. Maintained by volunteers, repeaters regenerate signals suffering from distortion. Repeaters empower the signal to cover greater distances, to move around and be received on the other side of an obstruction.

Flower to flower 60,000 strong she and her fellows foraged. On return to the hive, her honey crop or second stomach full of nectar, she would transfer some of her nectar to a receiving bee's mouth. There, an enzyme helped

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break down part of the sugar, removing some of its moisture content, and the bee passed the nectar on to another bee's mouth.

The nectar was passed repeatedly mouth-to-mouth, slowly thickening into a pre-honey. Finally, she, another, inserted the then-honey into a hexagonal waxen cell. Others fanned their wings above the open cells, removing more moisture before the cells were sealed with wax plugs.

Every one of the worker bees was female.

Postscript. This writing gathered to it thinking that fed my art practice but more importantly laid the groundwork for bodies of work exhibited in 2021 at Melanie Flood Projects, Air de Paris, and the AHVA Gallery at UBC. These works illustrate this essay. I continue to think about feminisms, technologies, persistence, and power.

END

Overlaying considerations of the digital network on the radically interconnected, interpenetrated nature of things and beings, Ido Radon prototypes technologies and protocols via temporal laminations of cypherfeminist speculation and deprecated tools and methods including applied material folk knowledges.

Ido Radon, *Redundancies (Touched)*, 2021. PC cases, custom aluminum brackets, passionflower vine, ripstop nylon, paracord, aluminum

