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THEMA [CONFERENCE DAY + WORKSHOP] • master DTCT • NOV-DEC 2017

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# SEX PLAYS

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## designing the sex objects of our time

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### *context*

As of 2017, it is estimated that 13% of search engine requests on the Internet are related to porn. It is rather banal to state that fact, as it is to observe that “sex sells”. As new sex toys monthly hit the markets, it seems there is an underlying, deeper conversation taking place about sexual encounters and activities. While we do not yet have the technical means to build perfect sexbots, our fictions, from *Ex Machina* to the *Hot Bot* series keep on contemplating the possibility of human-machine sexual interactions. Numerous documentaries represent the contradictions of sex in western culture, between instant availability (through Grinder, Tinder, and such connected services) and addiction patterns (as in *Chem Sex*, 2015).

Sex is about power, and the absence of sexual autonomy can be translated into being disempowered. In France, it is still forbidden to require the services of a sexual assistant if one is disabled, whereas the practice is legalized in Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, etc. and state-funded in Denmark. The documentary film *Yes We Fuck* (2015) reminds us that sex is not only connected to pleasure, but also to autonomy, agency, and as such, it should ultimately be part of any project caring for social justice. Current debates around sex also come to question our understanding of the gender / sex dichotomies. As trans, intersex, queer, fluid individuals struggle for visibility and respect, it seems design products, and more specifically sex toys, can play a decisive role in identity politics.



## *let's ask ourselves:*

- Does a sextoy have to be a dildo? What would “undildoing the sextoy” mean?
- How can sextoys help rewrite gender roles and expectations?
- **How can a sextoy be more than a toy?**
- How can sextoys, which are pricey possessions, be made available to a wider audience regardless of class and economical restrictions?
- How can sextoys be understood as being more than mere objects to become spaces, practices, *dispositifs*?

In order to address these questions, we welcome **Beatriz Higón**, from the **BSAtelier** team, designer and expert in the field of sextoy production. Their sextoys are handmade, made of hypoallergenic silicon and carry a sex positive / sustainable attitude. We wish to approach sextoys using a material-oriented methodology. Many sextoys are made of silicon ; but how can we use such a “classic” material to produce unexpected and challenging user practices? **Maria Murcia, from Elkem silicons** — the company sponsoring us for this workshop — will also bring her expertise on the material.

Such is the aim of this workshop, and the students will have 5 days to complete a project opening up vistas for sextoys — not the sex objects of tomorrow, but objects that echo current problematics in the realm of sex, and in society at large.

## *what about silicon?*

Medical grade silicon is a frequently used material to make setoy — along with glass, steel, wood, etc. Silicon is also a pricey material that offers elasticity, contact, texture properties, making it a versatile element to work with. Silicon is met under a liquid, solid, gel forms. By **rethinking the “obvious” choice of silicon** in sextoy making, we hope to questions its organic qualities to challenge the way they are articulated with bodies, and with the other objects summoned in sex *practices* which can be reinvested in unexpected and creative ways.

How can silicon cover, wrap, complete the naked body, or the body already equipped with other systems?

Is silicon limited to the realm of sextoys? Can we imagine a **transdisciplinary design approach** which would engage with wider, non-normative territories (furniture, spaces, systems for sex?).

This is what we will tackle with this 2017-2018 workshop in our masters DTCT program.

## *program*

This program is currently being validated and can undergo changes.  
Time marks are indicative.

### **DAY #1 : LUNDI 27TH NOVEMBER // CONFERENCE DAY**

**Welcome coffee** for the speakers at 9am in room GH003, Olympe de Gouges Building. **Talks start** at 9:30am in auditorium 3, same building (UT2J).

→ **9:30am** | *Introduction by Pia Pandelakis* (teacher, researcher in design) :  
"Queering the design of sex objects, how & why?"

→ **9:50am** | *...towards a presentation of the work co-produced with Anthony Masure* (teacher, researcher in design) : "Sexbots: sex, technology & politics"

→ **10:10am** | *Alexandre Saint-Jevin* (psychoanalyst, art teacher) "From paroxistic hysteria to sextoys: what are the psychological stakes?"

coffee break

→ **11:10am** | *Beatriz Higón* (designer at BSAtelier) : *TBA*

→ **11:40am** | *Marcia Murcia* (sales manager from Elkem Silicons) : *TBA*

lunch break

→ **2pm** | *Carmina* (camgirl, tester, journalist at the *Tag Parfait*) : *TBA*

→ **2:30pm** | *Élodie Lefebvre* (artist, sculptor) : "Second Skin"

→ **3:00pm** | *Rachele Borghi* (teacher, researcher in Geography, University Paris IV) :  
"My Body is a Playground"

→ **3:30pm** | *Camille Khoury* (teacher, doctoral candidate in Theater Studies, UT2J) :  
"The Anus and the Dildo, the other interpreters of *Pâquerette* by François Chaignaud and Cécilia Bengolea (2008)"

### *final exchanges (until 6pm)*

We are also pleased to welcome :

*Cécile Laporte & Irina Pentecouteau* from the design studio *candiD*, teaching interns from the MEEF masters program. They will assist the students for the duration of the workshop.

*Carole Fillière* (director of the *CeTIM*) and the students of the *TIM* masters program (*Claire Barbet, Biondi Julia, Simon Ginestet, Fouad Mardam-Bey, Janie Reynès*) who will work on the translation in spanish for Beatriz and Maria.

**DAY #2 : TUESDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER // TECHNICAL CLASS + PRACTICAL WORK WITH BEATRIZ HIGÓN, GUEST DESIGNER**

→ *9am* | prep for the room, presentation of the goals for the day.

→ *10am* | *Émilie Prouchet Dalla Costa* (sculptor, artist) : 2 hour lecture on the possibilities of silicon and silicon casting.

→ *after 11am* :

At the end of the day scenarios will be drawn out using the teachings of the conference day.

Students will use their evening to sketch preliminary contexts, using scenarios to outline situations in which design could play a role (using specific locations, specific audiences...). Preliminary models can be made to visualize concepts.

**DAY #3 : WEDNESDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER // WORK WITH BEATRIZ HIGÓN > DEVELOPEMENT**

→ *morning* : students present their contexts in short pitches. They exchange with Beatriz and their teachers.

→ *afternoon* : the scenarios move from analytical sketches to prospective representations. The students present their project proposals using clay or other modeling tools.

**DAY #4 : JEUDI 30<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER // WORK WITH BEATRIZ HIGÓN > DEVELOPEMENT**

→ *the entire day* is dedicated to the selection of a specific scenario, to the production of sketches and preliminary work on one or several 3D model(s).

**DAY #5 : VENDREDI 1<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER // WORK WITH BEATRIZ HIGÓN > FINALIZATION & EXHIBIT**

→ *morning* : fine-tuning the 3D model.

→ *4pm* : presentation of the projects to the other teams, guest students and guest teachers. Final talks around future options to further develop/exhibit the projects.

→ *evening* : party?

**master-dtct.github.io**

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