

# Notes on Air

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Air, ethereal and elusive, defies comprehension with its fluid and invisible nature. And yet, the air is laden with particles that, despite evading the human eye, remain a constant presence in the lives of all living, *breathing* beings: they permeate our bodies, the soil we cultivate or extract from, and the vast waters surrounding us. All the conditions that pertain to air, including its purity and toxicity, share a common defining characteristic: they possess materiality while defying tangibility; they appear inconspicuous yet harbor the potential for lethality. This is evident with atmospheric pollutants, whose constant mobility conceals the extent to which they traverse unrestricted, transcending borders over considerable distances. Small enough to permeate our bloodstream, and compounded by their ability to bioaccumulate within ecosystems, pollutants settle onto land and water surfaces, where they are absorbed by plants, animals, and microorganisms. Gradually yet persistently, these contaminants gather in the tissues of living matter, posing threats to their health while also carrying profound social, environmental, and political implications.

While various methods have attempted to quantify and measure air toxicity, such approaches tend to overlook the intricacies of air pollution. In response to this, numerous voices have introduced novel methodological, conceptual, and discursive frameworks to contemplate this issue through various means that surpass the confines of rationality and cognition: an approach that looks at air toxicity as a situated entanglement of material, chemical, and socio-technical regimes.

Drawing from these powerful efforts, *Notes on Air* stages a reimagination of air toxicity, employing a blend of material, sonic, and visual experiments. Through this aesthetic exploration, elements that are typically intangible—untouched, unheard, unseen—provide an instance for an embodied, sensorial encounter.

The installation encourages visitors to engage with the materiality of air as it unfolds through a series of interventions: curtains that reveal the chemical composition of air (including nitrogen dioxide, ozone, carbon dioxide, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide), each depicted with a color indicating different degrees of toxicity, alongside embroidered data and imagery demonstrating their prevalence across varying scales, from a dust particle traversing multiple organic bodies to the skies above Istanbul; a soundscape that conjures the otherwise inaudible conditions resulting from chemical reactions triggered by the interaction of these airborne elements; and an animated reconstruction of the Istanbul sky, crafted through photogrammetry, a technique typically used to capture static, solid objects. In this instance, it attempts to evidence and give form to the invisible gaseous substances that envelop the Earth.

*Notes on Air* is a call to expand our understanding of the complexities inherent in the air we breathe. It beckons us to explore not only the toxicity that permeates and travels through the air but also the intricate social and political ramifications it carries, the local and global

traces it unveils, and the undeniable planetary interconnections it underscores. Foregrounding the fact that air is primarily a shared domain where the actions of one region reverberate across vast distances, the exhibition highlights the imperative of collective action toward a world where clean and breathable air is a common and universal right.