

Intersections, Devices and Concepts in the Context of Art with/and/ in Research

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Art as a re-search or research as an art, researching in art, the art of research, doing art and research, doing research artistically, doing artistic research.

Although we seem to be condemned to fall in rhetorical abysses or maybe feel a sort of conceptual handicap when trying to define, articulate or state the true difference between art and science, we have to find ways or common grounds for the sake of the argument, even if that implies getting caught-up in complex paradoxes. We have two concepts, art and science, and although on the surface, they appear to be as far from each other in purpose and content as we can imagine, possibly, on a closer look we'll realize they are not.

Generally we tend to think of art as being more loose and abstract and of science being a concrete factual matter. Adhering to this notion too firmly can prove us wrong, and in cases be misleading, that because in some extreme conditions art can become quite a solid and tangible substance, and in many other cases scientific arguments can become totally abstract and unreadable. The attributed condition might make us wonder why science should always be concrete or art abstract, like if by going in the contrary direction of their 'supposed purposes' they would dissolve themselves, which might bring us to ask, what can we learn from making concrete art or producing abstract science?

In this text, we are not necessarily looking at the differences or at the similarities of these two disciplines, although at times we might accidentally land at certain points where they intersect, rather we'll focus on pointing out at some of devices or apparatuses that art and science tend to

appropriate or better said, to borrow from each other in order to form and exist in the world. At the same time we might also want to reflect on the somehow 'fixed notion' that certain concepts are monopolized by certain disciplines. In today's world, as matters and events become energetically hyper-connected, second after second, we can no longer remain rigid in our utilizing of tools for single purposes, especially when thinking of tools for 'constructing knowledge' or for producing knowledge. For the matter of this discussion we might want to adopt a more 'liquid' attitude towards this matters. As we deepen further in the reading of this text, we'll clearly point out to the case we are discussing in more depth: 'the activity of researching', truly as an 'activity', as something that moves, that pervades, that evolves, that flows, that acts as a way, as the means or as an attitude to further one's desire into knowing.

To research
to engage in
re-searching
re-defining
re-translating
re-activating
re-analyzing
re-examining
re-testing
re-questioning
re-appraising
re-reviewing
re-valuing
re-assessing
re-organizing
re-constructing
re-producing
re-translating
re-researching
to re-search

method's activity

As much as science utilizes research as a primary activity to come to grips, so does art. The primacy of research as 'knowledge producer' is not solely linked or appropriated by the first mentioned, but to

the production of knowledge in general. Since science adheres and constantly points out to 'method' in order to maintain consistency in its constructive narrative of knowledge, art on the other hand conceals the method or in many cases it plays with it, making it a game within its own interactivity in order to produce knowledge as its own method.¹ Sticking to one method can be as much of a safe haven, as of a burden when surveying and researching on concepts in order to produce knowledge differently. We might have to consider how flexibility (of method) in our attitude towards engaging in/on research might be a key element in order to produce new forms of knowledge, maybe because this attitude seems to be constantly adopted by the artists in order to produce their work and keep it fresh, organic, stimulating, active.

At times it appears that for some contemporary artists is viable to change their methods as they change their socks. Let's consider the work of Mike Kelly, Jimmy Durham or Maurizio Cattelan to name a few. We see this phenomena occurring in contemporary art, when quite often the artist 'style' found in form, is no longer the signature of the artist, but just a way of expressing it's respective concerns according to the needs of the artwork. "Artists today avoid saying that they are 'political artists', rather they say, they are artists that are 'politically engaged'", as stated by curator Katerina Gregos in an

interview for MO Magazine on her recent exhibition "Newtopia" in Brussels, previously she states: "[...] artists claim the public arena, art should be a free space, art has no obligation, we cannot start applying formulas, artists should be free to talk about anything, we should avoid the instrumentalization of art. [...] Art is well equipped in playing, engaging and practicing with a variety of topics art has relation with a variety of topics art cannot change the world, but it can change the way we think, by producing new ways of thinking."² The method as device, as a system of systems, the method as a procedure, the method as strategy, the method as m-o-t-i-o-n, the method as methods, a method of methods.

Somehow it appears that at the intersection point (in space and time) where/when one deliberately engages in producing knowledge, or when the activity of doing research occurs, or say, when it comes into motion, a simultaneous condition comes to existence as an agent.³ Of course, when we refer to the term symbiosis we generally attribute it to living organisms.⁴ But in this case we want to consider it on another light, as a flowing energy, as a condition that produces a sort of in-organic life, that strangely enough moves, manifests, and impregnates thought and form. As expressed by R. Sullivan in J. Benettes text "Vibrant Matter": "The curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects

¹ In the construction of this argument, I am borrowing from the idea: a question of 'method' in formulating knowledge, the possibility of a new discipline called 'Artistic Research', and the struggle that art and science might encounter as they engage in it, a notion that is cleverly un-mingled through J. Boomgaard's text: "The Chimera of Method", published in "See it Again, Say it Again; The Artist as Researcher", Janneke Wesseling. Antennae Series no.6, Valiz, Amsterdam, 2011.

² Self transcribed, from Katerina Gregos in an interview titled: "Interview met Katerina Gregos, curator van Newtopia", for MO Magazine in relation to her exhibition "Newtopia" in Brussels, 2012. <http://www.mo.be/video/interview-met-katerina-gregos-curator-van-newtopia>

³ Agent: a person or thing that takes an active role or produces a specified effect: *agents of change*. ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'someone or something that produces an effect'): from Latin agent- 'doing,' from agere. Agency: action or intervention, esp. such as to produce a particular effect: canals carved by the agency of running water | a belief in various forms of supernatural agency. • a thing or person that acts to produce a particular result. New Oxford American Dictionary 3rd edition , 2010 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

⁴ Symbiosis |,sɪmbē'ōsɪs, -bɪ-ɪnʌn (pl. symbioses ɪ-ˌsɛzəl) Biology: interaction between two different organisms living in close physical association, typically to the advantage of both. A mutually beneficial relationship between different people or groups: a perfect mother and daughter symbiosis. ORIGIN late 19th cent.: modern Latin, from Greek sumbiōsis 'a living together,' from sumbioun 'live together,' from sumbios 'companion.' New Oxford American Dictionary 3rd edition , 2010 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

dramatic and subtle”. Later in the same text M. de Landa notes: “Inorganic matter-energy has a wider range of energy of alternatives for the generation of structure than just simple phase transitions... In other words, even the humblest forms of matter and energy have the potential for self organization beyond the relatively simple type involved in the creation of crystals. [...]When put together, these forms of spontaneous structural generation suggest that inorganic matter is much more variable and creative than ever imagined.”

We then could think of ‘research as activity’, as in action, in motion and also as something that self-constitutes as it forms, research in motion as ‘agent’, as a device that produces ‘agency’ with all its interactive parts. Researching on its own is a trigger, a detonator to further thought and actions, it is in the searching and re-searching that this agent comes to existence, activity is its biosphere.

In the enquiring we are proceeding here, it might feel that it is somehow more inclined to direct its arguments towards art, this is righteously intended since most of the reflections here mention, arise from the field of artistic practice. In this sense, we try to use the activity ‘Art’ as a discussing platform, expecting that maybe in practice all of these notions that we’ll survey could somehow be applied and transformed by anyone engaging in producing research as knowledge, or knowledge as research.

Art as a device for creating affections or/and experiences, links it self to a variety of mediums including the written language (like in poetry and literature), but it does

so in order to manifest the experience it desires to provoke on the other, an experience that touches, that relates to feeling, to actual experience, that which the intellect cannot provide, because it is not intelligible.⁵ Although at times art also provokes intellectual activity and directs itself to a purpose, art does not solely stick to the production of those events, and it doesn't seek to prove one’s right or wrong, in that sense it is not argumentative, it only manifests itself. Art generally does not want to be defined, even though there are many definitions for art. While it appears that for the purpose of this paper, we rather not stick or try to formulate any concrete definition(s) of art, as we will project ourselves intermittently, through and across its field. It seems we rather remain somehow flexible and take art in a broader context as that of ‘artistic activity’ as something that is there, that is constantly happening, like now, as we speak of it.⁶

Across this text we might come to encounter some of the aspects related to the way that art handles or plays with concepts and affairs, as described before, but that clearly is not the purpose of this text. We are not looking to discuss art’s reach and its capacity to bring forth intuitive knowledge (better than/or science), but rather, the attitude that art maintains to gather and manifest the information that it produces. Art’s multi-methodic behavior does not really follow a line, unless we look at it through a hysteric gaze, but instead, it seems artists vary their methods according to their own caprices and inventiveness, distilling them, purifying them, collaging them and juxtaposing them as they feel it to be suitable. In that sense we come to wonder

⁵ “Experience in History and in Philosophy, The Rebirth of Centripetality” The first perspective originated in recent developments in history and historical theory and the other one originated in recent developments in philosophy. In both of them one may observe a shift away from language towards experience. This shift probably reflects a more general shift in our contemporary culture; one could describe it as a moving away from comprehensive systems of meaning to meaning as bound to specific situations and events. [...]Theory and meaning no longer travel in the same direction; meaning has found a new and more promising traveling companion in experience. Frank Ankersmit, “Sublime Historical Experience”, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 2005. Introduction, pg 1-2.

⁶ I rather provide a more of personal and an open concept as a ‘temporary definition of art’ as a practicing artist for the purpose of this paper, a ‘definition’ which I consider to be in constant motion as matters arise in my surroundings and as my practice evolves.

if the artist is not just using method or methods as materials as well, creating a palette of choices and modes to compose the data accumulated in whatever manner it's gut demands.

...to have many methods a **plethora** of methods!

process, in the process of

Clearly we are not referring to finished artworks as we dwell around art, rather we want to focus on the 'engagement' part of it, the activity, 'in the process of'. It seems that this is an important matter to highlight, in this case we are not pointing towards process-art, as the practice of/or the artistic movement, rather, what we are trying to point-out here, is to the process, being in the process, or 'in the process of' (making/doing). It seems that one of the most fruitful moments for a researcher, is not when all the information comes to a synthesis, but rather when the information is being searched, when the data is forming and claiming a space, when the gathering of raw materials is in-formation. It is when the activity is taking place, when it is happening and not necessarily when it has been completed, that the actual event, that which occurs, situates the activity in the present.

One could say, that the same condition applies to that one person that consumes the researched material later, that person is also caught inside that conceptually organic activity. The researched material in the form of the final output is a mere by-product of all that labor, the thought and investigation that are put together in order to produce a concluding outcome. Oddly enough, the threatening death for the author and its effort, proceeds slowly, as artworks end-up isolated in homes, museums or warehouses and texts inevitably end up occupying electronic folders or get stacked-up in shelves in the form of books or documents. Unless

someone, somehow brings them back to existence, into thought, to form a new life occupying a space in their own 'subjective present', as the new investigator picks-up on them and engages in the activity of re-searching.

to process, processing a process of process, process as process to produce more processing, in the process of processing a process for process

archiving/gathering, to gather

Everyone gathers things, either for the need to survive or for the purpose of possession, we like to collect and to stack. We engage in the activity of gathering with a purpose. As stated by J. Clifford, "Some sort of 'gathering' around the self and the group--the assemblage of a material 'world', the marking-off a subjective domain that is not 'other'--is provably universal. All such collections embody hierarchies of value, exclusions, rule-governed territories of the self. But the notion that this gathering involves the accumulation of possessions, the idea that identity is a kind of wealth (of objects, knowledge, memories, experience), is surely not universal."⁷ As we start gathering, accumulating and building piles, we immediately feel the need to categorize, to systematize our activity, to discriminate and give 'value' to what deserves to be kept, 'to be archived'. Subjectivity can disguise in the suit of objectivity, that could produce beautiful and dangerous results at the same time, specially when one engages in the activity of producing knowledge, subjectivity can be a double edged blade when it serves self-interest. On one side we can cut through stablished knowledge smoothly and somehow produce new thoughts on matters, as we archive with alternative

⁷ James Clifford, "The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art.", chapter 10, On Collecting Art and Culture. Harvard University Press, 1988

categorization, but on the other hand we are condemned to lead our thoughts by prejudice and common sense. In a way we could also might just end up stacking for stacking's sake, producing knowledge that just ascends to previous discourses.

“The History of collections (not limited to museums) is central to an understanding of how those social groups that invented anthropology and modern art have appropriated exotic things, facts and meanings. (Appropriate: ‘to make one’s own’, from Latin *proprius*, proper, ‘property’.) It is important to analyze how powerful discriminations made at particular moments constitute the general system of objects within which valued artifacts circulate and make sense.”⁸ In archiving, discrimination applies, the hazard and the allure of subjectivity clouds and clears our minds and thoughts at the same time. As we begin to consider standards as criteria for preserving and organizing knowledge, we can become victims of what Clifford earlier, ‘It is important to analyze how powerful discriminations made at particular moments constitute the general system of objects within which valued artifacts circulate and make sense.’ It really make us wonder, if others know better? Should we accept that the world is already invented? Should we leave it at rest, to let it be? To become static in common sense categorization?

Situating one in the present always involves some sort of action, of being active, in the here and the now, to be present somehow is to avoid being static. As we are speaking of action and activity, we probably want to suggest looking into the subtle but apparently key difference of gathering, to ‘gather’, rather than to ‘archive’, although conceptually they run quite close to each other. But in order for us to continue in a somewhat organic flow of thought, we might want to further our reflections into the action of gathering, as

it possesses a quality of movement in it, of activity. When referring to gathering we might want to point directly to that moment that occurs before we actually begin to stash, to categorize and to systematize the material. This notion of gathering and making an effort of remaining in the present, might become quite an important concept if we want to avoid certain pitfalls in just engaging in archiving as an automatic reflex or standard procedure, rather than as an apparatus to go beyond what is already there.

The archive can become so big and out of context, that it can evolve in becoming a sort of wasteland, this is not necessarily a negative connotation because great ideas can be born out of just letting one’s mind dwell in the immensity of concrete and imaginary worlds, but it also makes us ask a few questions for example, can an archive go stale? What good is an archive if no one visits it? What is the purpose of accumulation if there is no consumption? How can an archive become organic? Well, there is no real need to answer this questions, but only to question them as an exercise, maybe in order to feel a bit critical towards piles of data that stand before us. As we set ourselves into researching on the archive, we also begin ‘to gather’ information once again, by engaging in this action consciously, we might feel naturally inclined to build our own narratives, by coding and decoding the material before us we might find conceptual treasures in between the gaps of the stacks, we might want to see ourselves as fictive archaeologists, in a sort of Foucauldian notion of digging through the layers in the strata of knowledge, forming formations of in-formation, thinking differently.

⁸ Ibid.

stacking
 archiving
 categorizing
 de-organizing
 discriminating
 organizing
 compartment-alizing
 gathering
 re-organizing
 stacking
 classifying
 categorizing
 methodizing
 systematizing
 codifying



framing/to frame

Discussing ‘in the process of’ and ‘to gather’ as devices to produce knowledge, might lead us more towards a direction of developing somewhat of an extreme ‘holistic’ view of events and occurrences in the world, an attitude that can free and unplug the stagnation of our creative mental space, which in most cases might direct us into the way of wondering and imagining. But by focusing only on process and gather-ing we could end up with a view that might come to be too broad, too vague, even too far reaching, plus, we run the risk of just ending up lost, as scavengers in the wasteland of thoughts.

We have come to know that there is no such a thing as an all encompassing view, we cannot hold so much at once, not in the present, neither in our hands, nor in our minds. Although in today’s hyper-linked-globalized-world we might constantly have full access to internet having a smart-phone in our pockets, coming to the assumption that we have the world available in our hands on a 24/7 bases; we are still holding something, we are holding a thing, a device, one thing that takes us or allows us access to (into) other things. We have to be able to locate things within our universe, we need systems, indexes, arrangements and agreements. We need to frame, to fragment and territorialize things. Although we know, that we must fragment and compartmentalize in order to make sense, we also know, that at the same time we loose touch with totality as we narrow into specialization. It becomes clear that the above mentioned notions ‘to conclude, to frame’ must happen no matter what, they have to, in order for us to assemble formal devices we call end-products (ex: books and artworks) be that they are tangible or not, but something has to come to conclusions, even if those conclusions end up looking like questions, we need to synthesize, to frame.

Everything that we comprehend is within a frame, our mind is linked to this very notion. Our thoughts are in our mind, our mind in our brain, our brain in our body, our body in an environment, the environment in a planet, the planet inside an atmosphere and so on. Without the capacity to frame things, we could not even produce thought, we could not make sense, framing starts with the formation of a cell, the division of the sexes, there is an inside an outside, a male a female, as suggested by E. Grosz, we separate, we form, we have boundaries to contain and differentiate. “The frame is what establishes territory out of the chaos that is the earth. The frame is thus the first construction, the corners of the plane of composition. With no frame or

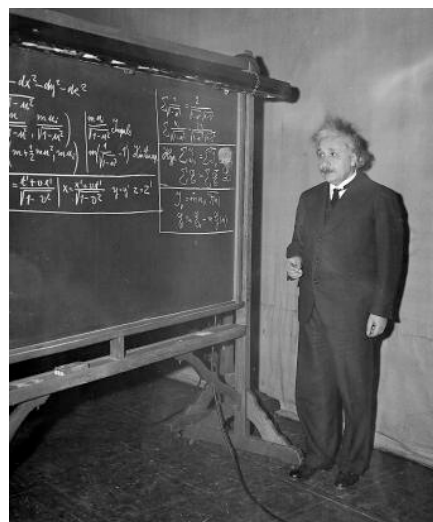
boundary there can be no territory.”⁹ The Deleuzian notion of territorialization can aid us further, by performing as a conceptual stage, or rather as Deleuze mentions, as a ‘plane’ where we could fragmentize and frame the chaos that surrounds us.

On her text Grosz brings to clarity two key Deleuzian concepts that deal with our thinking of/on art, and that can also bring light to this discussion: the plane of composition and the constitution of a frame. “The plane of composition, which cuts across and thus plunges into, filters and coheres chaos through the coming into being of sensations, is thus both an immersion in chaos but also a mode of

[to frame] to put inside a frame [make a frame] and then make another [frame] when [the frame] has been framed [make another] frame [fit] frames into frames [many frames] to make one single frame as a [frame] that contains a frame of a frame that was already inside a frame [a frame] that explains something that has been [framed] by someone else that also makes [frames] a [f]

disruption and ordering of chaos through the extraction of that which life can glean for itself and its own intensifications from this whirling complexity--sensations, affects, percepts, intensities--blocs of bodily becoming that always co-evolve with blocs of the becoming of matter or events”.¹⁰ Later Deleuze and Guattari state, “Art indeed struggles with chaos, but it does so in order to bring forth a vision that illuminates it for an instant, a sensation”. Somehow we come to grasp the idea of ordering the chaos, and if not really

ordering, at least to put it together somehow, to define it, to separate it. If for a moment we drop out the idea that using the plane of composition to frame things, is only and exclusively the realm of art, what if it could well serve as a way of operating innovative investigation systems and new ways of researching, we can bring the ludic into researching, we can create compositions within the frames, frames within frames, and compositions within compositions.



composition/to compose, to de-compose

“I have to use the word “composition” to regroup in one term those many bubbles, spheres, networks, and snippets of art and science”.¹¹ It is when we start composing that all the information and the materials that we have gathered consciously and unconsciously, start to make sense, it is at this moment that the material starts speaking to us, asking, demanding to be composed, to be arranged. The chaos needs to be framed, it needs to change its form in order to enter other levels of exchange. “Composition may become a plausible alternative for modernization. What can no longer be modernized, what

⁹ Elizabeth Grosz, “Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth”, ch 1. Columbia University Press, 2010.

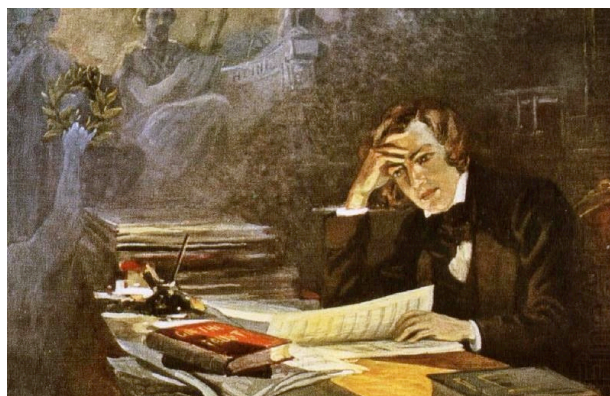
¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Bruno Latour, “Steps Toward the Writing of a Composer Manifesto”, New Literary History, 2010.

has been postmodernized to bits and pieces, can still be composed.”¹²

Compositioning has to be an activity, an event, because it is in the act, in the action of composing where we create dialogs, debates among the sources and concepts. If we truly let it be, letting it interact and somehow play with it, while in this activity, we embrace mediation, we somehow engage in a dialectical event while knowledge is being produced. At peak moments compositioning becomes a thing on its own, it becomes an agent, it acts with agency, demanding and creating its own systems that interact with other systems, we create methods to compose, we compose with other compositions. In the compositioning, we criss-cross frames, we juxtapose them, we collage them, we copy them and we multiply them, we refer to them, we stack them, we shuffle them, we re-create them, we re-enact them, we re-read them, we de-compose them and re-composed them until we get what we need.

“We compositionist want immanence and truth together. Or, to use my language: we want *matters of concern*, not only *matters of fact*. For a compositionist, nothing is beyond dispute. And yet, closure has to be achieved. But it is achieved only by the slow process of composition and compromise, not by the revelation of the world beyond”.¹³ While we compose, immersed in the activity, trying to make something out of the information we are arranging within the frame(s), by the very nature of the action, we keep questioning open, matters fluid, affairs in motion, we flow between and within the research.



While composing data, information and materials, we attempt to deal and organize the chaos of reality to bring forth knowledge, we actually tend to de-compose first and then to re-compose things to give them form, as we seek for possibilities to make sense of them in order to depict reality and its meanings. To fragmentize is already to create fictions, we separate, we categorize, we give priorities, we exaggerate and accentuate, in art we might refer to this as aesthetics and in science as rhetorics. Like all man made creations that cause awe and admiration, there is always an element of illusion, ‘a something’ that disguises in the form to make content more digestible. This element of illusion is what shows the mastery of the wizard, to create depth is an effect, things are not really deep, we make them deep, we give depth to them, this depth is not universal.

This frames of knowledge can at times serve as bearers of realities and truths, and at others act as distorters, but somehow, we still look at them, into them, refer to them and expect to find truth in them. Condensed forms of knowledge can easily become fixed meanings, common sense. In science and art, it appears that the closer to the truth our picture of reality is, the more suspicious we should feel about it. This does not imply that we should discard or feel skeptical towards the canons of knowledge and the works we admire, but

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Bruno Latour, “An Attempt at a Compositionist Manifesto”, *New Literary History*, 2010.

rather calls for attention and focus to the places where affairs are in motion, where matters are active and fluid, where events occur and intersect.

places of intersections

As it was previously stated, we need to have 'end-products', essentially because they also function as 'new' devices of knowledge on their own, as triggers. The term end-product contains the word 'end' in it, and we've commonly heard that for the new to rise, the old has to come to end. That we are told, is the cycle of life, a cliché which we rather might want to question and re-phrase as the re-cycle of life, as not all things completely fade into nothingness, things never start from zero, there always are remnants, residues, molecules, particles, activity.

There are always things around, compositions, frames, methods, processes, chaos, truths, scams, archives, books, facts, fictions, etc. But what we have been trying to point-out here, is that by giving 'agency' and creating interaction between, through and across concepts, we amplify our notions, we create movement in thought, therefore we open new venues. This elaboration and construction of new routes and the setting in motion of vehicles consequently and inevitably creates intersections where traffic occurs.

Negotiations, dealings, translations, transactions, tradings and mediations occur in 'places of intersections'. In the field of the mind, our creativity navigates through multiple venues, information that we have archived or that we are in the process of gathering is also in transit, many things are happening, our mind is a city, and it is at the points of intersections that things come together, be that it is the surprising accident or the predictable encounter.

The effective flow of traffic, can only be determined by the quality and the creativity of the systems that are put into

action, but like in all progressive environments, things are always growing, with a tendency to move faster, demanding better connections and an easier flow of their transactions, matters and affairs of knowledge are not static, they need constant reconfiguration, translation and activation to keep in motion.

to give
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give
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gives
concep
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devices
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device