

Michelle Moteboom

THE CHIA LETTERS



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Michelle Noteboom is also the author of *Edging* (Chicago: Cracked Slab Books, 2006).

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Dear Chia,

These days it feels we're on a stiff ascent through a loose-hung mist clinging to a scree-strewn slope. Sifting through doors, passing the cave through a screen. There's still the torch smears and the slag heaps to consider, though at the boundaries of existence our edges are worn.

Ever since the crew stumbled upon a recombinant DNA frieze in what's now become the main chamber, dramatic changes in the interstitial alloy and overlapping textures of the datascape have been recorded. Runa's in charge of casting the chiseled glyphs, barcodes and genetic sequences with her elastomer silicones and polyester composites.

Painted on the west wall, there's a herd of uncannily lifelike bison, each one fitted with what can only be described as a backpack microprocessor. Such a discovery forces us to reevaluate any theory we'd thus far managed to erect concerning the advent of biobots as concomitant to the Nanomechanical Age (not to mention what it does to the way we look at primitive hunting techniques).

Time is a slowly branching tree with several limbs but few leaves. I'll let you know when we begin descending the network.

Yours,

L.

Dear Chia,

Do you remember the plasticine skeletons swathed in cotton robes with copper bangles wired round their wrists? The ones found on level six of the site? It now appears microsensors were woven directly into their ritual fabric. We're on the fringes of a permanent record of vanishing.

To answer your question, possession is a hardship, not least of all on the molecular level. Time keeps dripping its spores on my already pollen-stained hands. I'm plotting rings on a uniform scale.

As I write, the bees are beginning to swarm. The notches on our stick confirm the rapid approach of the solstice. Let me know if you plan to join us again this time, in the nodal construct under the deep overhang.

Yours,

L.

Dear Chia,

Today we found nanometric plough marks under the south stone bridge along the chalky bank and ditch. A web of pulse lines surrounds the pair of earthen mounds. Altered states of consciousness can be induced in several fashions, yet in the hub of exchange systems, context is everything.

So far we've quite a collection of talismans, clay replicas of myoelectric limbs, biochips and what Russ seems to think are penile implants. Each day our pile of bones and prostheses, sheathes and vessels, eroded metal gloves – which appear to have been worn under the skin – grows. Still, the data won't adhere to any specific shape or texture.

If possible, could you send another red deer antler pick? Dialk's was shattered two days ago when he rammed it into a skull. There turned out to be an entire cluster within the midden. We took turns digging them out. Their pocked craniums attest to frequent use (and abuse) of electrode caps.

I've told you before that time is a cyclical stream, a dappled helix, a folding-in of information around a sandstone shrine. Certain mapping is only the same thing.

We're considering the builders.

Yours,
L.

Dear Chia,

You will be relieved to hear we have at last reached the escarpment and are finally able to settle across the scaffolds, begin concentrating fully on the defrag. Now if only the rain would stop.

We await completion of the grid squares at which point we shall immediately flex into the polymer. Colors of the early earth - magenta, ochre, turquoise, aquamarine - rise, expand and collapse round us like fetid theories or tumors in cast urethane. My flesh throbs with nanoelements engaged in measuring the rising surface tension. I know such an affliction is an absolute necessity; this alone makes it bearable.

Who can say where these neural disruptions will take us? What new limb might we graft onto the human tree? We mustn't dismiss the stratigraphical evidence, though time, as usual, will surely run its own upgrades.

Yours,

L.

Dear Chia,

Nothing can compare to the thrill and volt of feeling the ox scapula grasped firm in your hand jolt up against some artifact – inert cathodes, jawbone, joystick, skin-response device; that glimmer of tooth, glint of stainless, as the ground slowly relinquishes its digital grip on history. It is then we know the seemingly endless weeks spent scouring the sands, scrolling down through tiers of polymers and silts, galvanic ash, are not in vain.

We've unearthed the legs of eighteen ivory figurines from the horizontal layers of the vertical plane. They're veined with ochre patterned to resemble the neuromuscular mesh stents worn as adornment on electric forms in strategic places. Meanwhile Elmer continues filling his teleological bowl with darkness.

Starbursts of dendrites spread like lichen across the thermal membrane. If our horizon map proves reliable we've reached the cusp of wiring and shall soon engage in the intentional splitting of objects. Once again the plastic face of time adjusts itself into a response.

Yours,

L.

Dear Chia,

Under the weight and heft of the fractal simulator, the meridian slips. The ancient world heaves. Such skeins of work just to sketch out an external sense of place, though time has proven that to map is to possess.

Yours,

L.

Dear Chia,

Our haptic map has broken, and time's purple lips are pressing against the liquid crystal pane. What's important now is to exhibit purposefulness despite the hectic passage of the northwest wind.

All these hours spent in the halogen sweat lodge testing the thresholds of a unifying optical field... It is imperative that you enquire quickly about the neuronal upgrade, lest I slip helplessly down some ill-fitted visceral slit in a recurrent freefall.

I'm overgrown with clinging.

Yours,

L.

Dear Chia,

Since your visit it's been difficult adjusting to the contingencies of the metafabric enshrouding the construct. Under the demeanor of dream, I can still discern your gilded eyes in a soft-focus digital approximation, though any form of visual engagement will soon grow infinitely frayed.

Disembodied electron beams blight the frozen steppes beyond the porthole and smoke is wafting once again from the charnal house which – as you know – can only mean one thing.

Yours,

L.

Dear Chia,

If you consider the migration patterns in the substrates of the oldest codes, the world starts to appear simply as multidimensional scaling. The mouths at the breast of the network whisper of transition. The question now on everyone's lips: "why not dig up through the green light?"

We continue daily leveling the structures, though the bandwidth seems to be unraveling. The marks of surface tooling hint at the presence of a local cult still functioning along analog lines. Imagine. Yet, it would certainly be an error to neglect the stratigraphical evidence hollow-cast in the soil-stained shoal. At the very least, it could serve as an alternative to dwelling.

Time sheds its liminal skin to join the insect-like creatures plying the ephemeral and frictionless mainframe. Our respective transgressions trail its murky wake.

Yours,

L.

Dear Chia,

Our bodies are becoming a new kind of language. Xun tells us we have at last reached the isotonic point and shall soon transcend the proscenium arch. Bifurcation or obfuscation? This remains to be seen.

Insatiable strategies sprawl down cavities of skin into a self-calibrating environment of possibility. Strings of ones and zeros unfurl across the tabular sky in a slow constant dissolve while the wind brings murmurs of apocalypse.

I fear the time we scarcely dared speak of is upon us; you must forgive me now if I cease triggering the feedback loop.

Yours,

L.

