

Experience is never immediately accessible. Like everybody else, we can only know the world and ourselves through highly indirect mediations of different technologies, one among which is symbolic language. And so the many worlds we inhabit are a play of mirrors, lenses, and multiple layers of mediation.¹ However, it's easy to forget about the mediating role of those entities that often sit in silence, that are rendered invisible, that are made redundant, transparent, mute.² In her work, London-based artist Eva Fàbregas explores the secret life of things and everyday objects, approaching them as social actors through which our feelings, affects, and desires circulate.

This exhibition is the first of a series of interventions in which the artist brings back to life Clippy, the infamous Microsoft Office assistant created by the multinational corporation in 1996. Popularly known as 'Clippy the Paperclip', this animated cartoon character was based on experimental research into human-computer interaction, which examined the unconscious responses of consumers in order to design an interface that could allow users to build an emotional bond.

The result was an anthropomorphic agent that gave help proactively, acting on one's behalf to carry out independent tasks and delivering tips triggered by user behaviours. However, the assistant became extremely unpopular. Many complained about the annoying, distracting interface that would suddenly appear on screen to interrupt the user's train of thought. The Paperclip always seemed to get in the way, thus breaking the illusion of an unmediated access to the word processor. In doing so, it made the software appear less natural, less immediate, less transparent.

The Microsoft Office assistant was once ubiquitous, and so its shape is immediately recognisable even today. The paperclip has

become an avatar — a figure of mediation. After all, this is a meaningless object. It has nothing but a transitional, connective, purely relational nature. And yet this paperclip seems to have found its place in Fàbregas work. In its new incarnation, the animated cartoon character signals the mediating role of different actors in the exhibition space, by drawing attention to those entities that normally remain silent.³ Here the paperclip is both an instrument and a sign of the agency of things. Acting on the artist's behalf, Clippy the Paperclip manipulates the language of exhibition display in order to reveal instances of material agency that otherwise go unnoticed.

For this exhibition at the Window Space, Fàbregas has created a microclimate that causes condensation to form when temperatures drop. This way the exhibition space is made sensitive to the slightest fluctuations of the weather outside, registering some of the imperceptible changes, processes, and interactions that are inherent to the vibrant matter that surrounds us.⁴ While this operation obscures the view from the street, rendering the exhibition opaque to some degree, it also has the paradoxical effect of making tangible the glass as a layer of mediation. Fàbregas intervention for the Window Space celebrates as well as multiplies these layers of mediation, inviting the audience to consider how indirect, devious, complex, and mannered is our access to the nonhuman world and its inhabitants.

This text is the result of an ongoing conversation between the artist Eva Fàbregas, and curators Cristina Ramos and Sabel Gavaldon, drawing on cross-readings of Bruno Latour and the many inflammatory Internet forums dedicated to the memory of Clippy the Paperclip.

