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Zürcher Hochschule der Künste
Zürcher Fachhochschule

Feeling molecularized?

Symposium, Master of Arts in Fine Arts

With contributions by Sophie Jung, Omsk Social Club, Johannes Paul Raether, Tabita Rezaire, Pamela Rosenkranz, Nishant Shah, Evelyn Taocheng Wang, Lucie Tuma, Hannah Wallenfels.—

Concept by Johanna Bruckner and Yvonne Wilhelm.

Zürich, March 27–28, 2019

About

“Technology is not neutral. We’re inside of what we make, and it’s inside of us. We’re living in a world of connections—and it matters which ones get made and unmade.” Donna Haraway, 1985

Recent conceptualizations of the world are increasingly determined by divisions into micro- and nanostructures and their translation into patterns and metadata. Feeling molecularized? will engage with the latent imaginaries of extreme fragmentation, hybrid diffraction, and virtual abstraction in our quotidian environments.

It raises the following questions: How can these manifold changes—which are often mere assumptions—modifications, and modulations, focusing on the minutest level, be negotiated when there are so few conventions governing how we speak about, show, or perform them? Could artistic practices play a role in allowing us to affect and activate these molecular strategies in bodies, materialities, and ecologies? Can the tactics of opacity, monstrosity, and hapticality intersect with the cybernetic strategies of counting, measuring, and optimizing?

The term “molecular” in this symposium does not necessarily refer to “molecules” in the scientific sense. The power of the molecular goes beyond the biotechnological and nanoaesthetic forms of life sciences and algorithmic governance.

Feeling molecularized? demands that we think about, act upon, and counter the binarities of matter vs. form, content vs. expression. It proposes that we move away from the idea of a “matter” that is forced into a “form” and focuses rather on forces of becoming, deterritorialization, and multiplicity.

At the two-day symposium, artists, writers, and curators will be invited to lectures, performances, workshops, and joint discussions with students in order to ask and examine how aesthetic/artistic repertoires can engage with forces of molecularization. It will also reflect on the conditions in which art and critical thinking themselves are localized and find a voice. Feeling molecularized? sets out to explore the kinds of gestures, practices, fabulations, and exhibitions that can be invented in such highly molecularized ecologies of deep access and appropriation.

Johanna Bruckner and Yvonne Wilhelm

Keynotes

Keynote 1: Nishant Shah: Who are we when speak to machines: The algorithmic turn

The algorithmic turn was a marked response to a condition of profound textual and narrative incomprehensibility. The idea of a linear, objective, rational, and unidimensional object that is neither deconstructed through postmodernity nor subject to meaning making was seductive. In this introductory session, we understand the algorithmic through 5 digital objects: link, index, data, network, and stacks. Identifying it as a mathematical computational entity and unpacking the human agencies and interfaces of algorithms, we look at the space for humanist agency and identity in the midst of the algorithmic turn.

Keynote 2: Johannes Paul Raether: Protektorama narrates Identitecture [5.4.9]

In her lecture Protektorama will give an introduction to her experimental framework, which she as us calls Identitecture. Appearances of other figures (SelfSisters) such as Transformella/or, ReproRevolutionaries of the Ovulo-factories, will be presented and reflected, while instances, sites and practices will be discussed for their respective terms and methods. Her narrative aims to depart from a variety of assumptions on historic forms of magic and witchcraft, biology and procreation as well as tourism as a geopathological form. Instead she will aim to propose a form of hyperbolic speculation or an attempt at a self organized re-construction of anything: the body, its gender, technology and identity.

Skype-Keynote 3: Tabita Rezaire: Decolonial healing: Technology, Spirituality and the Erotic

In cooperation with the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst.

How can we holistically connect to ourselves, to one another, to the earth and to the multiverse? Through which means can we reclaim agency over our channels of information and communication apparatuses so as to nurture our health – as much physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, political, historical and technological? When the Internet failed its utopic promises of universal freedom, safety and access, to become a space of surveillance, exploitation and control, we bitterly awoke to the grim reality of electronic colonialism. Digging into African, Diasporic and Indigenous scientific knowledge and spiritual wisdoms, Tabita Rezaire reveals the layered histories, politics and memories of information and communication technologies. Here is a call to decolonise and heal our technologies.

Schedule

Wednesday, 27 March

Kunstraum, 5.K12, Toni-Areal

- 9:30 Welcome by Donatella Bernardi
Introduction by Johanna Bruckner and Yvonne Wilhelm
- 10:00 Keynote by Nishant Shah: Who are we when speak to machines: The algorithmic turn
- 11:15 Pamela Rosenkranz: Infection
- 12:00 Omsk Social Club: Deep Nation - Omsk Social Club

14:00 – 17:00 Parallel workshops

Nishant Shah, room 5.K12
Omsk Social Club, room 3.E08
Sophie Jung, room 7.K10

Thursday, 28 March

Kunstraum, 5.K12, Toni-Areal

- 10:00 Lucie Tuma: Ecologies of Attention
- 10:45 Hannah Wallenfels: Practices of Diffraction: Are we talking Metaphor or Method?
- 11:30 Evelyn Taocheng Wang: Transcultural Perspectives: Evelyn Toacheng Wang

14:00 – 17:00 Parallel workshops

Lucie Tuma, room 7.K10
Hannah Wallenfels, room 3.E08
Evelyn Toacheng Wang, room 5.K12

Lectures and Workshop abstracts

Sophie Jung

Written to be spoken

Let the priests tremble, we are going to show them our sexts

A workshop on writing through the body, on falling in love with the stammer, the stutter, the silence to be held in an awkward embrace, the syntax disrupted, the stories expanded. I try and I try and I try etc. to write a language that can flow through my system unperturbed. That knows my times and waits for my tongue to flick when it's ready. A text sculpture not governed by the what not governed by the how but in constant mediation, compassionated to the speaker and violent to the listener. Come one now, let's make polyamorous words that are free to attach themselves to my visceral instrument as well as to your cognitive ear. They can mean and they cannot, they can drum and they cannot, and they can all be like «Yes, Sir, I understand your concerns, but as of today our policy is to make multidimensional sense". During the workshop we are going to make text for an IRL body, for an IRL mouth and for an IRL page. Words have figure and words have sound and how can we possibly account for both in our writing? How do words come into being and how and what about the ABOUT of a text? We'll write some text. We'll read some context. And we'll look at some peers that struggle successfully. And we'll speak and we'll speak!

Biography

Sophie Jung (born in 1982, Luxembourg, lives and works in London) received her BFA from the Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam and her MFA from Goldsmiths, London. Recent projects and exhibitions include *Äpparät* at Ballroom Marfa, *Eh, co? Nah cis. Us!* at Kunsthalle Basel for Jungs, *Hier Kommt der Masterplan*, *Uncanny Valley* at Wysing Art Centre, Cambridge, UK, *Tarantallegra* at Hester, NY as well as *Unmittelbare Konsequenzen* at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen. She is currently working on a body of sculpture & performance for her upcoming solo exhibition at Kunstraum London as well as finishing a new piece of writing for *The White Review*. In 2015 Sophie has spent 6 months in New York at ISCP, courtesy of the Edward Steichen Award Luxembourg and in 2016 she won the Swiss Art Award.

Omsk Social Club

Lecture: Omsk Social Club

Omsk Social Club is a "futuristically political", [i.e. unrealistic] immersive action group. They use traditional methods of Live Action Role Play (Larp) and Real Game Play (rgp) to induce states that could potentially be fiction or a yet un-lived reality for the players. Omsk works closely with networks of players - everything is unique and unrehearsed. Omsk game designs examine virtual egos and popular experiences allowing the works to become a dematerialized hybrid of modern day culture alongside unique personal experiences. Omsk Social Club proposes contents and makings as a form of post-political entertainment in an attempt to shadow-play politics until the game ruptures the surface we now know as Life. In the field this is called "Bleed". In the past Omsk Social Club has designed games that have introduced landscapes and topics such as rave culture, survivalism, catfishing, desire&sacrifice, positive trolling, algorithmic strategies and decentralized cryptocurrency. Omsk Social Club's experiences are designed to exploit the player/s senses through surplus alienation. After this stage is over, the player/s should feel a sense of meshed destiny with themselves, their character, the group and the landscape that surrounds them be it fiction or reality.

Workshop: Deep Nation - Omsk Social Club

OPEN CALL

What happens in a game when a large number of players go offline? An apocalypse begins to reign hard on those left alive. Seething knowledge, forking tools or enabling revelations the lost forms start to mutate for a better life. Fanboys of the past raise their heads alongside those who choose to listen first and laugh later. This life, world, sandbox, illusion is what Deep Nation is...a moment of psycho-realness in a landscape that may never come. Omsk Social Club will create a one-off immersive work there will be 25 unique roles open. To participate, please apply at omsksocialclub3000@gmail.com with the word ZDHK DEEP NATION PLAY for further information.

Biography

Omsk Social Club and was a pioneer of the spectacle Ying Colosseum. Omsk Social Club Feat PUNK IS DADA lives and works in Berlin. Omsk Social club uses traditional methods of Life Action Role Play (Larp) and Real Game Play (RGP) to induce states that could potentially be fiction or yet un-lived reality for the players. Omsk works closely with networks of players, everything is unique and unrehearsed. Omsk's RGP's examine virtual egos and popular experiences allowing the works to become dematerialized hybrids of modern day culture alongside unique personal experiences. In the past Omsk RGP that have introduced landscapes and topics such as rave culture, survivalism, cat fishing, desire&sacrifice, positive trolling, algorithmic strategies and decentralized cryptocurrency. Moreover OMSK works heavily with the concept of Cosmic Depression – The theory of depression caused by digital utopia (Paradise without Ecology).

Johannes Paul Rather

Keynote: Protektorama narrates Identitecture [5.4.9]

In her lecture Protektorama will give an introduction to her experimental framework, which she as us calls Identitecture. Appearances of other figures (SelfSisters) such as Transformella/or, ReproRevolutionaries of the Ovulo-factories, will be presented and reflected, while instances, sites and practices will be discussed for their respective terms and methods.

Her narrative aims to depart from a variety of assumptions on historic forms of magic and witchcraft, biology and procreation as well as tourism as a geopathological form. Instead she will aim to propose a form of hyperbolic speculation or an attempt at a self organized re-construction of anything: the body, its gender, technology and identity. To her, re-engineering these forms is a practice of deliberate dramatization of the real and a flamboyant lifeline towards a radically different cosmology than the one capitalist normality has to offer.

Biography

Johannes Paul Raether lives and works in Berlin. At the center of his work are constructed identities (Avatars, AlterIdentities or SelfSisters) emerging at various sites in public space where they research, teach and tell stories. As colorful beings, made up from everyday objects, they discuss complex topics such as bio and reproduction industries, globalized tourism or occult substances in contemporary technology. Raether's works and performances were shown at, among others, the 9th Berlin Biennale, Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Fridericianum in Kassel, Savvy Contemporary in Berlin. Recent solo exhibitions took place at District in Berlin, Transmission Gallery in Glasgow, and Ludlow 38 in New York City. Raether publishes in Texte zur Kunst and was until 2018 Professor at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf.

Tabita Rezaire

Keynote: Decolonial healing: Technology, Spirituality and the Erotic

How can we holistically connect to ourselves, to one another, to the earth and to the multiverse? Through which means can we reclaim agency over our channels of information and communication apparatuses so as to nurture our health – as much physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, political, historical and technological? When the Internet failed its utopic promises of universal freedom, safety and access, to become a space of surveillance, exploitation and control, we bitterly awoke to the grim reality of electronic colonialism. Digging into African, Diasporic and Indigenous scientific knowledge and spiritual wisdoms, Tabita Rezaire reveals the layered histories, politics and memories of information and communication technologies. Exposing the violence and erasure carried by our current networks, she unearths the potential of spiritual technologies by embracing the idea that technology acts as a mirror of the organic world, capable of healing or poisoning depending on its usage and users. She investigates the cybernetic spaces where the organic, technological and spiritual worlds connect - from communicating with ancestors to embracing water, the womb and teacher plants as portals for downloading knowledge. Here is a call to decolonise and heal our technologies.

Biography

Tabita Rezaire was born in 1989 in Paris / FR, and lives in Johannesburg. She investigates racist, colonial and heteronormative worldviews and power structures and their effects on identity, technology, sexuality, health and spirituality. She sees her works as platforms for social and political engagement and confronts viewers* with predominant strategies of perception and image production through alienation. Rezaire describes herself as a non-medical practitioner, intersectional preacher, technical-political researcher and Kundalini Yoga teacher and understands her artistic practice as digital health activism. Exhibitions and workshops include: Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg (2017); AutoItalia, London (2017); Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, New York (2016); LISTE Art Fair Basel (2017); NRW-Forum Düsseldorf (2017); Karachi Biennale (2017); Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne (2017); Fotomuseum, Winterthur (2016); Berlin Biennale (2016). Rezaire is a founding member of the tech-health agency NTU and one half of the duo Malaxa.

Pamela Rosenkranz

Lecture: Infection

In her work Rosenkranz deals with a multitude of contemporary materials. The naturalness of plastics, for example, is emphasized when it treats PET (polyethylene terephthalate or thermoplastic) as a natural material and looks at the interactions that happens with the hormonal component it releases back into the eco system.

Rosenkranz pursues the relation between body and mind as well as the relationship between man and nature. Humans are seen by her – even if evolutionarily superior – only as one of many elements on our planet, so to speak as matter itself. She makes use of scientific explanations that seem to contradict current human conceptions and is interested in evolutionary mechanisms and processes that seem to undermine thought and action. In her lecture she is looking into how sexuality, one of the main markers of individuality, can be influenced by parasites that can neurologically direct our behaviour and how we are biologically linked to products.

Biography

Pamela Rosenkranz (*1979, Altdorf, CH) lives and works in Zurich, CH Amsterdam, NL. Rosenkranz received a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Bern University of the Arts in 2004 and studied Comparative Literature at the University of Zurich in 2005. In 2010 she participated in the Independent Residency Program of the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam. Solo exhibitions (selection): To you I would like to be Who, Tongewölbe T25, Ingolstadt (2011); This Is Not My Color / The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, with Nikolas Gambaroff, Swiss Institute, New York (2011); Untouched by Man, Kunstverein Braunschweig, Braunschweig (2010); No Core, Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Geneva (2010); Our Sun, Swiss Institute, Venice (2009); High Purity, Amden, Switzerland (2009); Unfade, Nuit Blanche, Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris (2008); Enter (Projectspace), Kunstmuseum Thun, Thun. Group Exhibitions (selection): Man in the Holocene, MIT, List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge (2012).

Nishant Shah

Keynote: Who are we when speak to machines: The algorithmic turn

The algorithmic turn was a marked response to a condition of profound textual and narrative incomprehensibility. The idea of a linear, objective, rational, and unidimensional object that is neither deconstructed through postmodernity nor subject to meaning making was seductive. The algorithmic has become such a strong force that it now informs the organization, execution, and even conception of life, love, and longing. In its attempt to free our worlds of myths, algorithms have now become the biggest myths of our times. In this introductory session, we understand the algorithmic through 5 digital objects: link, index, data, network, and stacks. Identifying it as a mathematical computational entity and unpacking the human agencies and interfaces of algorithms, we look at the space for humanist agency and identity in the midst of the algorithmic turn.

Workshop: Against Extinction: Rapid Feminist prototyping for the age of algorithms

The responses that the algorithmic turn generates are what I characterize as an 'extinction impulse'. They seek to diminish, eradicate, or replace the human ideas and ideologies through machine logic and logistics. Not the algorithms themselves, but the unquestioned assumptions that enable the making of these extinction algorithms positions the human then, as either resisting, or victimized. In this maker workshop, we look at touchstones of feminist interventions and critiques of digital technologies, to inspire the way in which we not only resist but rework the extinction impulses that contemporary algorithmic futures naturalize.

Biography

Nishant Shah is Professor of Digital Media Culture and Aesthetics at Leuphana University Lüneburg and Dean of Research at the University of the Arts ArtEZ, Netherlands. His work is located at the interface of technology, affect and identity as well as in social and political movements that find ways in which humanity learns to find itself in the face of technology. Shah teaches at numerous institutions and has written *Whose Change is it, Anyway?: Towards a Future of Digital Technologies and Citizen Action in Emerging Information Societies* (2013), *Queer Mobiles and Mobile Queers: Intersections, Vectors, and Movements in India* (2016) and *The State of the Internets: Notes for a New Historiography of Technosociality* (2017).

Lucie Tuma

Lecture: Ecologies of Attention

Over the last decade Tuma has been working toward a poetics of intentional non-intentionality. Material-driven processes, non-human allies and object oriented choreography lie at the core of developing methodologies for the production of a somewhat flat attention. Through a reformulation of a Kantian aesthetics of disinterestness, Tuma chose to side with indifference and anonymous generosity in order to make art pieces that provide ecologies of attention. Against the backdrop of cognitive economies in general and attention economy in particular, the commodification of daily life through the digitalization of attention has become a crucial driving force (Yves Citton, Tiziana Terranova). The mining of Big Data gives way to a Taylorization of the mind (Matteo Pasquinelli) and the production of the social turns out to be marked by derivative logic (Randy Martin). When in Fordist and Post-Fordist economies, artists and workers called for resistance through non-work and laziness, attention ecologies are a contemporary answer to the calls of having no time. The strategies manifest as a commoning of attention through the production of time. Coming from dance, the human body will always rather be potential than possibility, rather molecule and dividual than character and individual, rather attention than vector. The outcome have been several time-based sculptures, a music album, a book and a series of walks. In this lecture Tuma will present *Volkskörper* trilogy (2012-2016) - a geopoetic work combining tectonic and geological knowledge with somatic practices of dance and choreographic organization of attention. She will also talk about a current endeavor titled *Choreography of Aresols* - a proposal that articulates aerosolic kinship on this planet.

Workshop: Ecologies of Attention

In this workshop, we will focus on relationality through touch. As an interface, the touch is both active and passive, both being-touched and touching, both being-influenced and being-influencing. As a mode of being, this very much accentuates what attention is about: An expression of relationality within a set of parameters and conditions that both make who we are (produce subjectivity) as well as provide possibilities for us to impact these same conditions and parameters. We will carry out a few simple exercises in order to experience how imagination can be used as a catalyst and how subtle changes in perception can become attention technologies of an analogue kind. This will be combined with the reading of passages from *Vampyrotheutis Infernalis* by Vilém Flusser and Louis Bec, a fabulous text depicting the human condition through the eyes of a Vampire Squid Species living at the bottom of the Sea - in liquids, in darkness, in bioluminescence and in eternal ephemerality.

Biography

Lucie Tuma was born in Zurich and returned to Zurich in 2010 after studying Applied Theatre Studies and Choreography in Giessen and Montpellier (ATW - Justus-Liebig Universität Gießen / Exerce - CCM Montpellier). Her works have been shown and co-produced at Gessnerallee Zurich and at various theatres and dance venues / festivals in Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, France, Austria, Korea and Japan. It refers to both old and newer speculative philosophies and generates contemporary forms of poetics through a cosmological attitude in aesthetics. In the process, she creates mainly dance, but also books, musical albums and objects. In recent years and during her studies, she has developed seminars and workshops within and outside academic institutions and earned her doctorate at the Justus-Liebig University in Giessen, Germany.

Evelyn Toacheng Wang

Lecture: Evelyn Toacheng Wang

In this lecture Toacheng Wang introduces her path of art education: she reflects how her own background of learning traditional art in China and philosophy, involving all influences from Japan and the economic reform of China in 1980, together with Western culture was influencing her view of seeing images. In this context Wang will consider texts by the writer Eileen Chang (1920-1995 L.A) and discusses them in relation to the symposium's theme and "Cultural identity".

Workshop

For the workshop, Wang will bring two kinds of rice papers. One kind of rice paper was called Shu Xuan, it is a paper for painting very details and very controlled style and it was used by craftsman-painters to depict very seductive images for decorative or political propaganda. They were low background and being looked down upon by the "Scholar artist." Scholar artists use another kind of rice paper called Shen Xuan, usually for writing very fast quick calligraphy, and fast drawings to quickly express ideas of concept. Their goal is not to produce seductive images but only a conceptual description. Those artists are high class intellectuals and politicians who retired from their position and spent time making those scholar-drawings. Wang will introduce this history, and will ask students if they wanted to write text work to depict a certain image or they would prepare to have a very seductive image first. Secondly, they need to write or paint or glue anything onto the paper and we could talk on those media.

Biography

Evelyn Toacheng Wang was born in Chengdu, China in 1981 and expatriated China for Europe in pursuit of an international art education. She lives and works in Amsterdam where she attended De Ateliers from 2012–2014, having studied previously at Städelschule, Frankfurt and Nanjing Normal University. Wang financed her studies working in Chinese massage parlors, servicing a segment of the wellness industry where physical and racial expectations produce the "experience." Solo exhibitions of her work have been presented at De Hallen Haarlem, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Jakarta Yuz Museum and Galerie Fons Welters. Two Sights of the Elegant Mysterious Unearthly Princess Kaguya & Her Beggarly Nurtured Aristocratic Life Before She Flies Away With a Shining Ship was performed at the Stedelijk Museum in 2015. In 2016, Wang was awarded De Volkskrant Beeldende Kunst Prijs and Dorothea von Stetten-Kunstpreis.

Hannah Wallenfels

Practices of Diffraction: Are we talking Metaphor or Method?

For some years now there has been a lot of talk surrounding diffraction. Diffraction has become part of the dictionary of progressive thinking, it has been used as a technology for critical inquiries: sometimes as an image of thought, sometimes as a practice of analysis that foregrounds differentiability. Donna Haraway famously notes that diffraction „does not produce ›the same‹ displaced, as reflection and refraction do. Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction“. But what does that mean for us? Does it simply provide us with an alternative to worn out reflection loops, does it point us towards the understanding of an entangled research environment that is itself a diffraction experiment, or

could it mean something else? In this introductory investigation I want to provisionally explore the words meaning and it's possible practices in the world of theory and its environments.

Situating Frameworks: On Forms, Formats and Failures (Workshop)

The conviction that there will never be an innocent starting point for any political or philosophical quest, the belief that we are always entangled with almost everything, doesn't allow for an easy framework for organization. And yet, as part of a collective that is constantly trying to organize conversations, series, workshops, book presentations, reading groups, screenings, performances, and exhibitions – one has to find a starting point. In this workshop I would like to hide from the despair of never escaping by exchanging experiences: we will explore and test different forms and failures together and imagine what kind of practices and fabulations could be invented.

Biography

Hannah Wallenfels teaches at Freie Universität Berlin in the department of Philosophy & Humanities, Institut für Philosophie. She was a Global Humanities Junior Fellow at the Johns Hopkins University. She holds a BA degree in political science and philosophy from Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg and has been awarded a scholarship by the German National Academic Foundation (Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes). Her main area of research is political philosophy and theory, focussing in particular on resistance, passivity theory and feminism. Besides her academic pursuits, she works as an editor for the Berlin-based publishing house Merve. She is founding member of diffrakt | zentrum für theoretische peripherie e.V.