

In the Uncanny Valley.

Encounters in Arts, Media, Continental Philosophy. An International Workshop in Two Parts

If we follow Masahiro Mori into *The Uncanny Valley*, one of our earliest encounters is with puppets from which we are seated far away in a theater, but by which we still might sense a ›familiarity‹ with us in their eye and hand movements, a resemblance we might call ›humanlike‹. If we encounter another human being though, and shake their prosthetic hand, which we cannot distinguish from a ›real‹ hand at a glance, we might sense a ›strangeness‹, as soon as we touch it. This marks precisely the point, when we have arrived in *The Uncanny Valley*, and encounter others, other human beings in a social realm, from where we also meet in an artificial realm, wearing masks and creating avatars, joined by puppets, dolls, and robots. What do all of these encounters point to? Are concepts of alterity, of otherness, at hand that help to locate ourselves in this valley? If so, where do we go from there? Our workshop pursues questions and scrutinizes encounters like these, with examples such as the Golem and the Avatars, while, amongst them, human beings, both in the flesh and with silicone, wander and wonder.

Part 2:

with Dieter Mersch (Zürcher Hochschule der Künste), Jörg Sternagel (Zürcher Hochschule der Künste), Nadja Ben Khelifa (Freie Universität Berlin), Allison de Fren (New York University, Shanghai), Elena Dorfman (artist, Los Angeles), Stephan Günzel (Technische Universität Berlin), Martina Heßler (Helmut-Schmidt-Universität Hamburg), James Tobias (University of California, Riverside)

Saturday, 15 December:

Zürcher Hochschule der Künste | Toni-Areal | Aktionsraum

15.00-15.30: Welcome

(Dieter Mersch, Jörg Sternagel)

Opening Exhibition »The Origin of the New World«

(Elena Dorfman)

15.30-16.00: The Uncanny Valley Effect

(Dieter Mersch, Jörg Sternagel)

16.00-16.30 Break

16.30-17.30: Session I: **The Golem Project** (Nadja Ben Khelifa)

17.30-18.30: Session II: **Pandora's (Tool) Box** (James Tobias)

18.30-19.30: Dinner

Zürcher Hochschule der Künste | Toni-Areal | Kino Toni

19.30-21.30: Session III: **The Mechanical Bride** (Allison de Fren) |
Screening & Discussion

Sunday, 16 December:

Zürcher Hochschule der Künste Toni-Areal | 5.K03

11.00-12.00: Session IV: **Still Lovers** (Elena Dorfman)

12.00-13.30: Lunchtime

13.30-14.30: Session V: **Technological Others** (Martina Heßler)

14.00-14.30: Break

14.30-15.30: Session VI: **The Avatar** (Stephan Günzel)

16.00-16.30: Break

16.30-17.30: **The Technological Challenge**. Open Discussion

17.30-18.00: **Closing Remarks, Goodbye**
(Dieter Mersch, Jörg Sternagel)

org. Institute for Critical Theory, Zürcher Hochschule der Künste; Institute for English Language and Literature, Freie Universität Berlin; Department of Media Arts and Culture, Occidental College, Los Angeles; Interactive Media Arts Program, New York University, Shanghai; Studio Elena Dorfman, Los Angeles; Department of English, University of California, Riverside | SNF research project »Actor & Avatar«