

**articulate 2024**

**art**

**Academy:  
17-27.10.2024**

**out**

**ate**

**Anonymous Creativity  
- Art without Artists**

# PROGRAMME

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## Opening

17.10, 18:00, Entrance hall, Lange Zaal, Venushal, Wintertuin

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## AI MUSICKING

performance by Umut Eldem, Chiara Percivati, Adilia Yip

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## OPENING EXHIBITIONS

with food, drinks, music and performances

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## EXHIBITIONS

18-27.10, 12:00-18:00

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Lange Zaal

### SUBVERSIVE PAGES: 100 SURREALIST PUBLICATIONS

curated by JOHAN PAS

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Lange Zaal

### MOVING THE PHOTOGRAM

with works by SINE VAN MENXEL, SOPHIE THUN, JEFF WEBER, MARTA DJOURINA, DRIES SEGERS, FRANCESCO DEL CONTE, MARIANNE VIERØ, SASCHA HERRMANN, BERIT SCHNEIDEREIT  
curated by STEVEN HUMBLET

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Wintertuin

### REPRODUCIBILITY

with works by MINNE ATAIRU, EMMANUEL VAN DER AUWERA, ALICE CHANNER, ELISA GIARDINA PAPA, WADE GUYTON, SPIROS HADJIDJANOS, MASHINKA FIRUNTS HAKOPIAN, HOLLY HERNDON & MAT DRYHURST, BENJAMIN LALLIER, SARAH MEYOHAS, MIMI ÖNÜOHA, SETH PRICE, MICHAEL

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curated by  
SPIROS HADJIDJANOS

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Venushal  
**THE GRID**

with works by JANNA BECK, KRIS MEEUSEN, KRISTÍ FEKETE, ANH LE PHUONG, SHAYLI HARRISON, PETER LEMMENS, KAREL TUYTSCHAEVER, BORIS VAN DEN EYNDEN, ANNELEISE CERCHEDAN, GINA POORTMAN, BAS ROGIERS, WOUTER STEEL, PHILIP MEERSMAN, TOM DIETVORST, MATHIAS MU, among others  
curated by JANNA BECK

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Entrance hall  
**YES SECOND CHANCE**

with works by MARÍA ALBORÉS LOJO, MARIANNE BIERBOOMS, YUKI OKUMURA, VANESSA STEFANETTI, ELISA VERKOELEN, MIA WANG, KEIGO WEZEL, JONNA WITTE, HELENA ZARYS, HOYT ZHANG  
curated by  
YUKI OKUMURA

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**PUBLIC PROGRAMME**

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**17.10.** 10:00-17:00.

For updates and more info on the programme:  
[www.ap-arts.be](http://www.ap-arts.be) / IG @research\_royalacademyantwerp

Lange Zaal  
**TECHNO/SEEN: ON THE TECHNOLOGICAL APPARATUS AND ITS IMAGES**

symposium with  
FRANZISKA KUNZE,  
MICHAEL REISCH, SPIROS HADJIDJANOS, EMMANUEL VAN DER AUWERA, SUSAN MORRIS, JEFF WEBER, MONA HEDAYATI  
organised by  
STEVEN HUMBLET

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**22.10.** 19:00, Lange Zaal  
**AN EXPLORATION OF GENERATIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC STRATEGIES**

artist talk by  
DRIES SEGERS  
guide tour by  
STEVEN HUMBLET

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**23.10.** 19:00, Lange Zaal  
**OBJECT, DREAM, THOUGHT: MARCEL BROODTHAERS, PENSE-BÊTE AND SURREALISM**

lecture by  
JOHN C. WELCHMAN,  
in collaboration with  
S.M.A.K.

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'Ecosystems' exhibition, during ARTICULATE 2023, photo by Wannes Cré





## EXHIBITIONS

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## PUBLIC PROGRAMME

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## ANONYMOUS CREATIVITY EXPLORED

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‘Let’s Play a Game! Collective surrealist creation methods re-visited’ by INGE HENNEMAN ..... p.106

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‘A Narcissian Triptych’ by KRISTÍ FEKETE ..... p.113

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‘Yes Chance: Surrealism and Conceptual Art’ by YUKI OKUMURA ..... p.119

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# Anonymous Creativity - Art without Artists

In his first *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), André Breton declared, 'We are modest *recording instruments* (...). We do not have any talent.' This proposition is echoed in contemporary generative technologies such as GPT. The question lingers: who is the invisible creator of these creations? The answer is as simple as it is complex: no one.

The new generative tools are undeniably creative, or at least productive, but at the same time, there is no one behind them. This poses a challenging dilemma for aesthetics. Just like in Surrealism, we find ourselves faced with a hypothetical 'collective unconscious', inviting us to reconsider the traditional role of the artist.

In this 9th edition of the annual research festival, ARTICULATE, at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, we look back on 100 years of Surrealism and forward to a future shaped by artificial intelligence. We explore the fascinating possibilities of anonymous creativity through various exhibitions and a public programme.

# EXHIBITIONS

# SUBVERSIVE PAGES: 100 SURREALIST PUBLICATIONS

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exhibition

**18-27.10.2024**

Lange Zaal, Academy

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## **Dreams, Discourse & Documentation**

With a selection of one hundred Surrealist documents from the Collection for Research on Artists' Publications, 'Subversive Pages' commemorates a centenary of Surrealism. Ever since October 1924, when the French poet André Breton fired his first *Manifesto of Surrealism*, Surrealist ideas have been launched through books, pamphlets and magazines. This was a well-established avant-garde strategy. But whereas, earlier on, the Futurists and Dadaists radically transformed the look and feel of their publications, the Surrealists treated them in a more subtle and even perverse way.

Not just another ism, Surrealism was conceived as 'a revolution of the mind' aiming at overthrowing Western rationalism and liberating mankind. As such, the movement not only tapped into dreams but also produced a lot of poetic and polemical discourse, resulting in printed documentation. Breton and his fellow poets Paul Éluard, Louis Aragon, Georges Hugnet and Philippe Soupault considered straightforward publications most adequate to disseminate disruptive content. As a result, the publication strategies of the Surrealists, as installed by the Bureau Central de Recherches Surréalistes, reveal a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Breton's *Manifesto* could not look more no-nonsense, while *La Révolution Surréaliste*, the movement's magazine from 1924 to 1929, was given the look and feel of the scientific periodical *Nature*. Its successor publication, *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* (1930-1933) got an even more severe, almost military layout. Looking unartistic and deadly serious, their pages held radical and provocative

ideas: from the use of automatic writing, chance, black humour and poetical activism to the creation of modern mythology and dream archives with a view to erotic subversiveness and pure artistic revolt. They also provided platforms for poems, illustrations, artists' pages, reproductions, polemical texts, questionnaires on topics like suicide or striptease, and advertisements by galleries and publishers.

Focusing on the movement's first three decades, and on its hotspots of France, Belgium and England, 'Subversive Pages' unravels the expanding international network of Surrealist poets, painters and publishers. The five sections or 'chapters' reflect the major ideological shifts within the movement as they appeared in print, most of these echoing the positions of its spokesman Breton: from his pioneering research during the 1920s into the realms of the human subconscious and imagination, to his outspoken anti-fascist and communist positions of the 1930s, the latter of which Breton would abandon in 1935 with his public denouncement of the Communist party line.

These and other ideological struggles coincided with the international expansion of Surrealism, especially in London and, from 1940, New York. There the focus was more on the visual than on the intellectual aspects of the movement. This explains the more experimental look of the American publications, some of them designed by Marcel Duchamp. Surrealist activity in New York would pave the way for new post-war tendencies in American painting. The final chapter of the presentation deals with Breton's post-war comeback and its opposition by Belgian poets and artists, clearing the ground for European neo-avant-garde movements like Cobra, Lettrism and Situationism.

Books, magazines and pamphlets are not passive carriers of meaning but interactive objects. So, whereas most of the works and words of the Surrealists can easily be found online, it makes sense to show them as they were originally published. The exhibition aims at representativity in showing a wide variety of printed output. Manifestos, magazines, collaborative and monographic artists' books, artists' pages, exhibition catalogues, anthologies, pamphlets and postcards all demonstrate how the Surrealists explored and exploited ink and paper in their utopian quest for total ethical and aesthetic freedom.

But there was more. Complementary to ephemeral actions and exhibitions, the permanency of print established Surrealism's self-representation and (pre-)autobiography, an archival drive of which Breton and his fellows were quite aware, resulting in anthologies and historical surveys as early as in the mid-1930s. There were blind spots as well. Whereas the Surrealists loved to reflect on the 'wonderful and disturbing' feminine, women artists in the group, like Leonora Carrington, Méret Oppenheim, Eileen Agar and Dorothea Tanning, were usually only allowed a place in the shade, with their work not coming to the foreground until the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1960s, Surrealism became something of the past, the baton being handed over to Fluxus, Pop Art and happenings. Although Breton's death in 1966 marked the official end of Surrealism, the student riots of May 1968 brought some of its concepts into practice in the Paris streets.

Spanning the first and the second half of the twentieth century and several generations of artists, Surrealism was the most lasting and influential avant-garde movement, and its impact is still felt in contemporary intellectual and popular culture. As testimonies of the ambitions, experiments, exchanges, conflicts and collaborations of poets and painters, Surrealist publications reflect an imaginative, investigative and discursive attitude that makes sense especially in today's turbulent times. They also allowed visual artists like Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí and René Magritte to manifest themselves as authors and researchers. Their subversive pages usually slumber in the silent shadows of archives and libraries. Occasionally they pop up to inform, inspire and – why not – irritate us. After all, every revolution causes some collateral damage.

Curated by JOHAN PAS

NOTE 'Subversive Pages: 100 Surrealist Publications' is hosted by the research group ArchiVolt and can be seen as a response to 'Imagine! 100 Years of International Surrealism' at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussel (21.02-21.07.2024), where, apart from the magazine *Minotaure*, *La Carte Surréaliste* and two (!) books by Breton, no printed matter was displayed. With its narrow focus on mainly painting, the exhibition undervalued the intellectual, poetical and political aspects of Surrealism and reduced it to its well-known visual vocabulary. Some curators seem to fear that art lovers find printed matter unappealing. We feel the opposite. Art history is more than a history of images; it is a history of ideas. Concerning the ideology and contemporary relevance of Surrealism, one can refer to Mark Polizzotti, *Why Surrealism Matters* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2024). On the topic of the beauty and power of the movement's original documents, see *Archive of Dreams. A Surrealist Impulse* (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen - Archiv der Avantgarden, Dresden, 2024). Both these recent books were released to commemorate the centenary of Surrealism.

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23 OCTOBER 2024, Lange Zaal

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- 19:00 'Object, Dream, Thought: Marcel Broodthaers, *Pense-Bête* and Surrealism', lecture by JOHN C. WELCHMAN, in collaboration with S.M.A.K.
- 20:30 'Subversive Surrealism?', panel discussion with KURT DE BOODT, LIESBETH DECAN, VINCENT VAN MEENEN, QUINTEN INGELAERE, JOHN C. WELCHMAN, JOHAN PAS
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## Catalogue

### I. First Manifesto and early Manifestations (1924-1929)

1. André Breton, *Manifeste du Surréalisme. Poisson soluble*, Éditions du Sagittaire, Paris, 1924
2. *La Révolution surréaliste*, nr. 1, Paris, 1924 (editors: Pierre Naville and Benjamin Péret) + *La Révolution surréaliste*, Paris, 1924 (subscription bulletin)
3. André Breton, *Les pas perdus*, Gallimard NRF, Paris, 1924
4. André Breton, *Légitime défense*, Éditions Surréalistes, Paris, 1926
5. *Marie. Journal bimensuel pour la belle jeunesse*, nr. 1, Bruxelles, 1926 (editor: E.L.T. Mesens)
6. *Marie. Journal bimensuel pour la belle jeunesse*, nr. 2-3, Bruxelles, 1926 (editor: E.L.T. Mesens)
7. Roger Vitrac, *Georges de Chirico*, Librairie Gallimard, Paris, 1927
8. Waldemar George, *Giorgio de Chirico. Avec des fragments littéraires de l'artiste*, Éditions des Chroniques du Jour, Paris, 1928
9. *Giorgio de Chirico, Sélection Cahier 8*, Anvers, 1929
10. *Revue Orbes*, nr. 1, Paris, 1928 (announcement flyer)
11. Max Ernst, *La femme 100 têtes*, Gerhardt Verlag, Berlin, 1962 (German reprint of the original by Éditions du Carrefour, Paris, 1929)
12. André Breton, *Manifeste du Surréalisme. Poisson soluble. Nouvelle édition augmentée d'une Préface et de la Lettre aux voyantes*, Éditions Kra, Paris, 1929 (frontispiece by Max Ernst)
13. *La Révolution surréaliste*, nr. 12, Paris, 1929 (editor: André Breton)
14. André Breton, Philippe Soupault (eds.), *Le Surréalisme en 1929*, Éditions Variétés, Bruxelles, 1929
15. *Variétés. Revue mensuelle illustrée de l'esprit contemporain*, nr. II/8, Bruxelles, 1929 (editor: Paul-Gustave Van Hecke) (cover image by Max Ernst)

16. *Variétés. Revue mensuelle illustrée de l'esprit contemporain*, nr. II/9, Bruxelles, 1930 (editor: Paul-Gustave Van Hecke) (cover image by Fernand Léger)

### II. Second Manifesto; the Poetical and the Political (1930-1935)

17. André Breton, *Second Manifeste du Surréalisme*, Éditions Kra, Paris, 1930 + André Breton, *Second Manifeste du Surréalisme*, Éditions Kra, Paris, 1930 (announcement flyer)
18. André Breton, Paul Eluard, *L'Immaculée Conception*, Éditions Surréalistes, Paris, 1930 (cover image by Salvador Dalí) + André Breton, Paul Eluard, *L'Immaculée Conception*, Éditions Surréalistes, Paris, 1930 (announcement flyer)
19. Max Ernst, *Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au carmel*, Éditions du Carrefour, Paris, 1930
20. *Le Groupe Surréaliste. Catalogue des livres en vente à la Librairie José Corti*, Librairie José Corti Paris, 1929 or 1930 (cover image attributed to René Magritte)
21. *Les livres surréalistes ainsi que les publications surréalistes*, Librairie José Corti, Paris, 1931 (cover image by Max Ernst)
22. André Breton, *Les Vases Communicants*, Éditions des Cahiers Libres, Paris, 1932 (cover image by Max Ernst)
23. *Paillasse ! (Fin de « L'Affaire Aragon »)*, Éditions Surréalistes, Paris, 1932 (signed by André Thirion, René Char, René Crevel, Salvador Dalí, Paul Eluard, Max Ernst, Benjamin Péret, Yves Tanguy, Tristan Tzara)
24. *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, nr. 4, Paris, 1932 (editor: André Breton)
25. *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, nr. 6 (5 mentioned on cover), Paris, 1933 (editor: André Breton)
26. E.L.T. Mesens, *Alphabet sourd aveugle*, Éditions Nicolas Flamel, Bruxelles, 1933
27. André Breton, E.L.T. Mesens (eds.), *Violette Nozières*, Éditions Nicolas Flamel, Bruxelles, 1933 (cover image by Man Ray)

28. *Minotaure. Revue artistique et littéraire*, nr. 1, Paris, 1933 (editors: Albert Skira and Tériade) (cover image by Pablo Picasso)
29. Georges Hugnet (ed.), *Petite Anthologie poétique du Surréalisme*, Jeanne Bucher, Paris, 1934
30. Georges Hugnet, *Onan*, Éditions Surréalistes, Paris, 1934 (announcement flyer)
31. André Breton, *Point du Jour*, Éditions Gallimard, Paris, 1934
32. André Breton, *Qu'est-ce que le Surréalisme?*, René Henrieux, Bruxelles, 1934 (cover image by René Magritte) (collection Walter Simons)
33. *Intervention Surréaliste, Documents 34*, Bruxelles, 1934 (editor: E.L.T. Mesens)
34. Max Ernst, *Une semaine de bonté, ou les sept éléments capitaux. Roman*, J.-J. Pauvert éditeur, Paris, 1963 (reprint of the original by Jeanne Bucher, Paris, 1934)
35. André Breton, *Du temps que les Surréalistes avaient raison*, Éditions Surréalistes, Paris, 1935 (signed by Salvador Dali, Oscar Domínguez, Paul Eluard, Max Ernst, Marcel Fourrier, Maurice Heine, Maurice Henry, Georges Hugnet, Sylvain Itkine, Marcel Jean, Dora Maar, René Magritte, Léo Malet, Marie-Louise Mayoux, Jean Mayoux, E.L.T. Mesens, Paul Nougé, Meret Oppenheim, Henri Parisot, Benjamin Peret, Man Ray, Maurice Signer, André Souris, Yves Tanguy, Robert Valançay)
36. André Breton, *Position politique du Surréalisme*, Éditions du Sagittaire, Paris, 1935 + André Breton, *Position politique du Surréalisme*, Éditions du Sagittaire, Paris, 1935 (announcement flyer)
37. *Cycle systématique de conférences sur les plus récentes positions du Surréalisme*, Paris, 1935 (programme flyer with drawings by Salvador Dali, Oscar Domínguez, Man Ray, Hans Arp, Max Ernst, Alberto Giacometti, Yves Tanguy, Marcel Jean, Valentine Hugo, Marcel Duchamp)
38. Salvador Dali, *La Conquête de l'Irrationnel*, Éditions Surréalistes, Paris, 1935
39. André Breton, Paul Eluard, *Notes sur la Poésie. Avec un dessin de Salvador Dali*, G.L.M., Paris, 1936

### III. Surrealism goes Public and Abroad (1935-1940)

40. *Mauvais Temps. Cahier annuel du Groupe Rupture*, La Louvière, 1935
41. *Bulletin International du Surréalisme*, nr. 3, Bruxelles, 1935 (editor: E.L.T. Mesens) (cover image by René Magritte)
42. *International Surrealist Bulletin - Bulletin Internationale du Surréalisme*, nr. 4, London, 1936 (cover image by Salvador Dali and Sheila Legge)
43. *The International Surrealist Exhibition*, New Burlington Galleries, London, 1936 (cover image by Max Ernst) + *In connection with the International Surrealist Exhibition a series of Lectures will be given at the New Burlington Galleries*, New Burlington Galleries, London, 1936 (programme flyer)
44. André Breton, *What is Surrealism?*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, 1936 (cover image by Hans Arp)
45. David Gascoyne, *A Short Survey of Surrealism*, Cobden-Sanderson, London, 1935 (cover image by Max Ernst)
46. Alfred Barr (ed.), *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936
47. *Transition. A quarterly review*, nr. 25, Paris, 1936 (editors: Maria McDonald and Eugene Jolas) (cover image by Juan Miro)
48. *Transition. A quarterly review*, nr. 26, Paris, 1937 (editors: Maria McDonald and Eugene Jolas) (cover image by Marcel Duchamp)
49. *Trois peintres surréalistes: René Magritte, Man Ray, Yves Tanguy*, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Bruxelles, 1937
50. Pablo Picasso, *Songe et Mensonge de Franco. 14 Eaux-fortes de Picasso*, in *Cahiers d'Art*, nrs. 1-3, Paris, 1937 (suite of the etchings, accompanied by *La Victoire de Guernica* de Paul Eluard)
51. Man Ray, *La photographie n'est pas l'art. 12 photographies. Avant-propos de André Breton*, G.L.M., Paris, 1937
52. *La Carte Surréaliste, Première Série*, Georges Hugnet, Paris, 1937: Max Ernst, *Le triomphe de l'amour* (nr. 3) ; Juan Miro, *Horaire* (nr. 6) ; Salvador Dali, *La mélancolie gâteuse des chiens*, (nr. 7) ; Man Ray, *Ce qui nous manque*

à tous (nr. 9) ; Oscar Dominguez, *Ouverture* (nr. 11) ; René Magritte, *La solution du rébus*, (nr. 15) (6 cards of a series of 21, on four different paper stocks)

53. *Minotaure. Revue artistique et littéraire*, nr. 11, Paris, 1938 (editors: Albert Skira and Tériade) (cover image by Max Ernst)
54. *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*, Galerie Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1938 (invitation card)
55. Paul Eluard, André Breton, Yves Tanguy (eds.), *Dictionnaire Abrégé du Surréalisme*, Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1938 (cover image by Yves Tanguy, with inserted exhibition list of *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*, shown here separately through a facsimile reprint)
56. *London Bulletin*, nr. 6, The London Gallery, London, 1938 (editor: E.L.T. Mesens)
57. Marcel Duchamp, *Rose Sélavy. Oculisme de précision. Poils et coups de pied en tous genres*, G.L.M., Paris, 1939
58. *L'invention collective* nr. 1, Bruxelles, 1940 (editors: René Magritte and Raoul Ubac) (cover image by René Magritte)

#### IV. Interlude: Surrealism in Exile (1940-1945)

59. André Breton, Marcel Duchamp (eds.), *First Papers of Surrealism*, Coordinating Council of French Relief Societies Inc., New York, 1942 (cover image by Marcel Duchamp)
60. André Masson, *Mythology of Being. A Poem, eight pen and ink drawings and a frontispiece*, Curt Valentin, Wittenborn and Company, New York, 1942 (signed by the artist)
61. André Masson, *Anatomy of my Universe*, Curt Valentin, New York, 1943
62. André Masson, *Nocturnal Notebook*, Curt Valentin, New York, 1944
63. Sidney Janis, *Abstract & Surrealist Art in America*, Reynal & Hitchcock, New York, 1944
64. VVV. *Poetry, Plastic Arts, Antropology, Sociology, Psychology*, nr. 4, New York, 1944 (editors: David Hare,

André Breton, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst) (cover image by Roberto Matta)

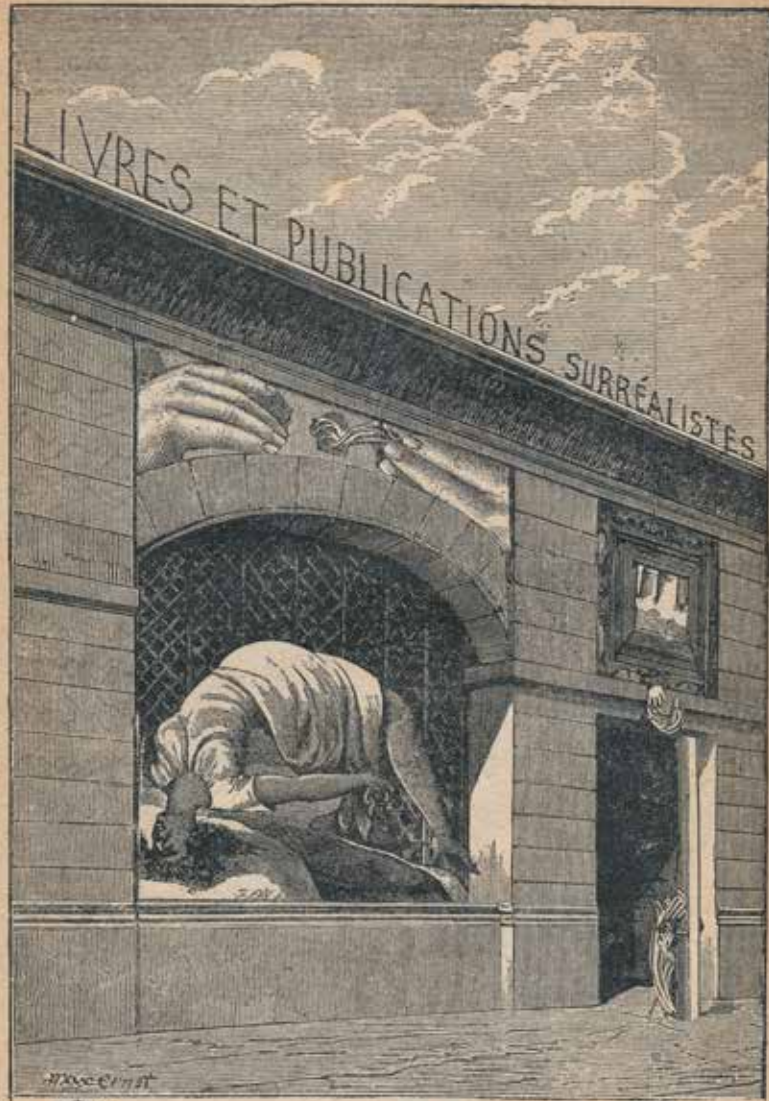
65. *View. The modern magazine, Series 5 nr. 1, Marcel Duchamp Number*, New York, 1945 (editors: Charles-Henri Ford, James A. Decker) (cover image by Marcel Duchamp)
66. André Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture, suivi de Genèse et perspective artistiques du Surréalisme et de Fragments inédits*, Brentano's, New York, 1945 (cover image by René Magritte)
67. André Breton, *Situation du Surréalisme entre les deux Guerres. Discours au étudiants Français de l'Université de Yale, 10 décembre 1942*, Éditions de la Revue Fontaine, Paris, 1945
68. Charles Henri Ford, *Poems for Painters. Duchamp Fini Francés Tanguy Tchelitchew*, View Editions, New York, 1945 (cover image by Yves Tanguy)
69. André Breton, *Arcane 17*, Brentano's, Inc., New York, 1945
70. André Breton, *Young cherry trees secured against hares*, View Editions, New York, 1946 (cover image by Marcel Duchamp)
71. *View. The modern magazine, Series 6 nr. 6, Surrealism in Belgium*, New York, 1946 (editors: Charles-Henri Ford, James A. Decker) (cover image by René Magritte)

#### V. Postwar Surrealism and Beyond (1945-1955)

72. Paul Eluard, Max Ernst, *Les Malheurs des Immortels*, Éditions de la Revue Fontaine, Paris, 1945 (reprint of the original by Librairie Six, Paris, 1922)
73. Tristan Tzara, André Masson, *Terre sur Terre*, Éditions des Trois Collines, Paris, 1946
74. André Breton, *Nadja*, Gallimard, Paris, 1945 (second edition, first published in 1928) (cover image by Mario Prassinos)
75. André Breton, *Les Manifestes du Surréalisme suivis de Prolégomènes à un troisième Manifeste du Surréalisme ou non*, Éditions du Sagittaire, Paris, 1947 (cover image by Roberto Matta)
76. André Breton, *Arcane 17. Enté d'Ajours*, Éditions du Sagittaire, Paris, 1947

77. André Breton, Marcel Duchamp, *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, Maeght Éditeur, Paris, 1947 (cover image by Marcel Duchamp)
78. *Surréalisme. Exposition de tableaux, dessins, objets, photos et textes*, Galerie des éditions de la Boétie, Bruxelles, 1945 (invitation card)
79. Réne Gaffé, *Giorgio De Chirico. Le voyant*, Éditions La Boétie, Bruxelles, 1946
80. René Magritte, Paul Nougé, *Dix Tableaux de Magritte précédés de descriptions*, Le Miroir Infidèle, Bruxelles, 1946
81. *Les Deux Soeurs*, nr. 3, n.p., 1947 (editor: Christian Dotremont)
82. *Festival mondial du Film et des Beaux-Arts*, Bruxelles, 1947 (cover image by René Magritte)
83. Louis Scutenaire, *Magritte*, De Sikkel, Antwerpen, 1948
84. *Le surréalisme révolutionnaire. Revue bimestrielle par le Bureau International du Surréalisme Révolutionnaire*, nr. 1, Paris, 1948 (editors: Christian Dotremont, Noël Arnaud, Zdenek Lorenc, Asger Jorn)
85. Comte de Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, La Boétie, Bruxelles, 1948 (cover image and illustrations by René Magritte)
86. Salvador Dali, *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*, Dial Press, New York, 1948
87. Maurice Sandoz, *Das Haus ohne Fenster*, Morgarten Verlag, Zürich, 1948 (illustrations by Salvador Dali)
88. Leonora Carrington, *Une chemise de nuit de Flanelle*, Librairie des Pas Perdus, Paris, 1951 (cover image by Max Ernst)
89. *Medium. Communication Surréaliste*, Nouvelle série, nr. 1, Paris, 1953 (cover image by Simon Hantaï) (editor: Jean Schuster)
90. *Medium. Communication Surréaliste*, Nouvelle série, nr. 2, Paris, 1954 (cover image by Wolfgang Paalen) (editor: Jean Schuster)
91. *Medium. Communication Surréaliste*, Nouvelle série, nr. 3, Paris, 1954 (cover image by Max Walter Svanberg) (editor: Jean Schuster)
92. *Medium. Communication Surréaliste*, Nouvelle série, nr. 4, Paris, 1955 (cover image by Wifredo Lam) (editor: Jean Schuster)
93. *La Feuille Chargée*, Bruxelles, 1950 (cover image by René Magritte) (editors: René Magritte and Marcel Mariën)
94. *La Carte d'après nature*, numéro spéciale, Bruxelles, 1954 (editor: René Magritte) (cover image by René Magritte)
95. *La Carte d'après nature*, nr. 7, Bruxelles, 1954 (editor: René Magritte) (cover image by René Magritte)
96. *La Carte d'après nature*, nr. 8, Bruxelles, 1955 (editor: René Magritte) (cover image by René Magritte)
97. *Les Lèvres nues*, nr. 2, Bruxelles, 1954 (editors: Marcel Mariën, Jane Graverol) (cover image by Paul Nougé)
98. *Les Lèvres nues*, nr. 3, Bruxelles, 1954 (editors: Marcel Mariën, Jane Graverol) (cover image by Paul Nougé)
99. Maurice Nadeau, *Histoire du Surréalisme*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1945 + Maurice Nadeau, *Documents Surréalistes*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1948
100. André Breton, *Entretiens 1913-1952*, Gallimard NRF, Paris, 1952





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# MOVING THE PHOTOGRAM

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exhibition

with work by FRANCESCO DEL CONTE, MARTA DJOURINA, SASCHA HERRMANN, BERIT SCHNEIDEREIT, DRIES SEGERS, SOPHIE THUN, SINE VAN MENXEL, MARIANNE VIERØ and JEFF WEBER

**18-27.10.2024**

Lange Zaal, Academy

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Whenever photography is forced to reinvent itself, it often harks back to the photogram. This happened in the twenties of the previous century when photography became a true mass medium and it is happening again right now, as the digital revolution is radically reshaping the production, dissemination and reception of photographic images. So, where does this allure of the photogram come from? One simple answer would be to point out that the photogram is the closest we could get to the core of the photographic system. In the photogram light is simultaneously theme and medium, form and content: it is photography reduced to its bare essence as 'writing (playfully) with light'.

However, this 'retour aux sources' should by no means be understood as a reactionary or nostalgic throwback. As it did in the past, the current photogram functions as a playground that allows for a critical engagement with (or against) the transformations that define our current cultural and visual environment. Defined by the ever-increasing ease and autonomy by which self-sufficient operating systems create images, the nine artists presented in this exhibition are eagerly looking for some kind of (material) resistance, a way of being challenged by a hands-on procedure that leaves room for the disruptive intervention of forces outside of their control. In each instance, a kind of movement is involved in the creation of their works. For example, this movement could be caused by placing an unstable object on the light-sensitive paper; by either blindly or deliberately shuffling objects around; or it might involve initiating a chemical reaction between the chemical layer

and liquids or contaminated soil. In all these experiments, the artists trigger the unruly automatism of the analogue photogram to create an unstable environment where anything and everything can happen.

Curated by STEVEN HUMBLET

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22 OCTOBER 2024, Lange Zaal

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19:00 Guided tour 'Moving the Photogram' by STEVEN HUMBLET

19:30 Artist talk 'An exploration of generative photographic strategies' by DRIES SEGERS

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In the framework of his ongoing research project 'The Chromatic Illusion within the Photographic Universe', Francesco Del Conte conceived two experimental photographic series to investigate the complex issue of colour rendering in photography.

The work *B/W Rainbows: From Violets to Reds* is composed of 48 gelatin silver prints. Using four different types of film, each series of twelve exposures records the hues of an artificial rainbow created in the studio with a light source and a diffraction grating. On the left are the violets and blues, in the middle are the greens and the yellows and on the right are the oranges and the reds. Each colour is translated into a different shade of grey, determined by the spectral characteristics of the given films. The black photographs indicate the lack of sensitivity to specific wavelengths, disclosing the limits of photography's colour rendition.

*Photochromatic Variations* pushes the boundaries of colour reproduction within the photographic production chain. The artist takes as a reference the six primary colours of the two main colour models – cyan, magenta, yellow for subtractive synthesis; and red, green, blue for additive synthesis – and the shades in between. Using three different computer monitors as chromatic output, Del Conte records the twelve colours with three types of films. Subsequently, the colour films go through several technical steps, characterised by the use of diverse processing labs, digital scanners, printers and copy machines. The 36 prints on display are the result of this experiment, which highlights the role of technology in representing reality.

Francesco Del Conte (1988, Milan) is a visual artist, photographer and astrophile. He studied printmaking at the Albertina Academy of Fine Arts in Turin and photography at the LUCA School of Arts in Brussels. Through his practice, Del Conte aims to create new insights about photography and the way we can relate to it. In the last few years, he has shaped an experimental approach to the medium, using the camera as a light recorder rather than a tool to explore the concepts of narrative, space and composition. This change of paradigm yielded a new body of work intertwined with other fields such as astronomy, mineralogy and colour science.



Francesco Del Conte, *B/W Rainbows: From Violets to Reds*, 2024

## MARTA DJOURINA

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Marta Djourina's artistic practice focuses on the exploration of various light phenomena. Light becomes a subject matter, a tool and an object of investigation. While some works have a biographical component and apply the use of self-made pinhole cameras (later sent by post, attached to a pigeon or made out of a suitcase during travel), other works explore the light of living organisms such as mushrooms and algae. Often, the artist applies historical photographic techniques, such as Kirlian photography, which can be used to capture the notion of touch in an image.

Marta Djourina (born in Sofia, Bulgaria) studied at the UDK Berlin, Humboldt University, the Technical University in Berlin and Glasgow School of Art. Her works have been shown in numerous international exhibitions, most recently at Goethe-Institut Bulgaria, the Berlinische Galerie, Sofia Arsenal – Museum of contemporary Art, FeldbuschWiesnerRudolph and ICA-Sofia. She has received the BAZA Award for Contemporary Art (2021), the Eberhard-Roters Scholarship (Preussische Seehandlung Foundation, awarded at the Berlinische Galerie, 2020), the FFO Artist in Residence (2022), Marianne Brandt Prize for Photography (2022), and more. In 2024 Djourina published her first extensive monograph with DISTANZ Berlin.

Marta Djourina, *Untitled*, 2023. Direct exposure with different light sources and self-made negative on analogue solo paper, unique piece, 127 x 76 cm (courtesy André Carvalho & Tugba Carvalho – CHROMA for the reproduction)





The photographs of Sascha Herrmann are made in the laboratory with a transparent gömböc as it finds its way to a position of stable equilibrium. The gömböc is the first known physical example of a class of convex three-dimensional homogeneous bodies, called mono-monostatic, which, when resting on a flat surface have just one stable and one unstable point of equilibrium. The existence of this class was conjectured by the Russian mathematician Vladimir Arnold in 1995 and proven in 2006 by the Hungarian scientists Gábor Domokos and Péter Várkonyi by constructing at first a mathematical example and subsequently a physical example. Mono-monostatic shapes exist in countless varieties, most of which are close to a sphere and all with a very strict shape tolerance (about one part in a thousand). The most famous solution, called a gömböc, is the first mono-monostatic shape that has been constructed physically. It has a sharpened top. Its shape helped to explain the body structure of some tortoises in relation to their ability to return to equilibrium position after being placed upside down. Copies of the gömböc have been donated to institutions and museums, and the largest one was presented at the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai, China.

In his current works, he examines the idiosyncratic properties of imaging techniques in the field of earth system science. He is concerned with changing expectations of photographic technology and the actual relationship to digital technologies. How do automated systems, machine learning and artificial intelligence change technical representations of nature?

Sascha Herrmann (DE) studied at the Leipzig Academy of Visual Arts, the Düsseldorf Art Academy and the LUCA School of Arts Brussels. He lives and works in Berlin. His recent works have often resulted from collaborations with research and educational institutions, including the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, the Caspar David Friedrich Institute at the University of Greifswald, the Institute of Mathematics at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, the Leibniz Institute for Tropospheric Research in Leipzig, the Dresden Technical Collections and the German Historical Museum in Berlin.



Sascha Herrmann, Gömböc, 2024

The work of Berit Schneidereit aims to unfix photography, to return it to being a liquid practice. A prime example of this can be found in her recent series of cyanotypes. These cyanotypes are produced in two distinct phases. The first 'movement' consists in loosely throwing a grid-like mesh onto a light-sensitive surface. The folds that result from this gesture create a novel (and unforeseen) structure, as if the gust of movement is frozen in time. In a second 'movement', this stillness is thwarted by slowly pouring bleach on these cyanotypes. The bleach reacts to the chemical composition of the cyanotype, turning the typical blue hues into yellows. The effects of the bleach are immediate and therefore difficult (nigh on impossible) to control. The results are therefore always unpredictable. By putting her own position as creator on the line, Schneidereit gives precedence to the process itself, allowing something unexpected to occur.

Berit Schneidereit lives and works in Düsseldorf, Germany. She studied at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in the class of sculptor Hubert Kiecol and later with Andreas Gursky, graduating as a master student in 2017. The impetus for her work evolves from a conceptual interest in the medium and its relation to space. Looking back on a long tradition of light-based image-making, her aim is to reflect and filter out the essence of the medium. For her work, she makes equal use of digital and analogue processes, developing hybrid forms of photographic imprint.

Berit Schneidereit, *almost/promise II*, 2023, cyanotype on archival paper



Dries Segers' *Mudgrams* are produced by using soil as an image generator. The soil specimens come from contaminated areas containing large amounts invisible (chemical) elements (such as PFAS, sulphates, nitrates, etc.). In letting the contaminated soil interact with the photo-chemical layer, the polluted elements and phenols in the soil start to leave an imprint onto the image, a trace of their chemical cooperation. The *Mudgrams* therefore move away from an optical relationship with the world, towards a more direct approach based on a direct, material contact between and its subject. As a result of this process of co-authorship with earthly matter that produces a visual remnant of their interaction, they occupy a middle position between a chemigram and a photogram.

After a *Mudgram* is made, the soil is left with flushed silver, prompting Segers to search how these leftovers could be used to create new images. For the series of works that make up *waste/land*, he placed a cylinder of specialised lab paper used for chromatography on top of the muddy remnants, letting the paper absorb the chemical elements and layering them in different tonalities from bottom to top. This absorption technique was first developed by Lili Kolisko (Vienna, 1889-1976) to visualise the interaction between minerals and the solar system. Segers activates Kolisko's historical research by adapting the technique to earthly elements and exposing them to this new form of transformation.

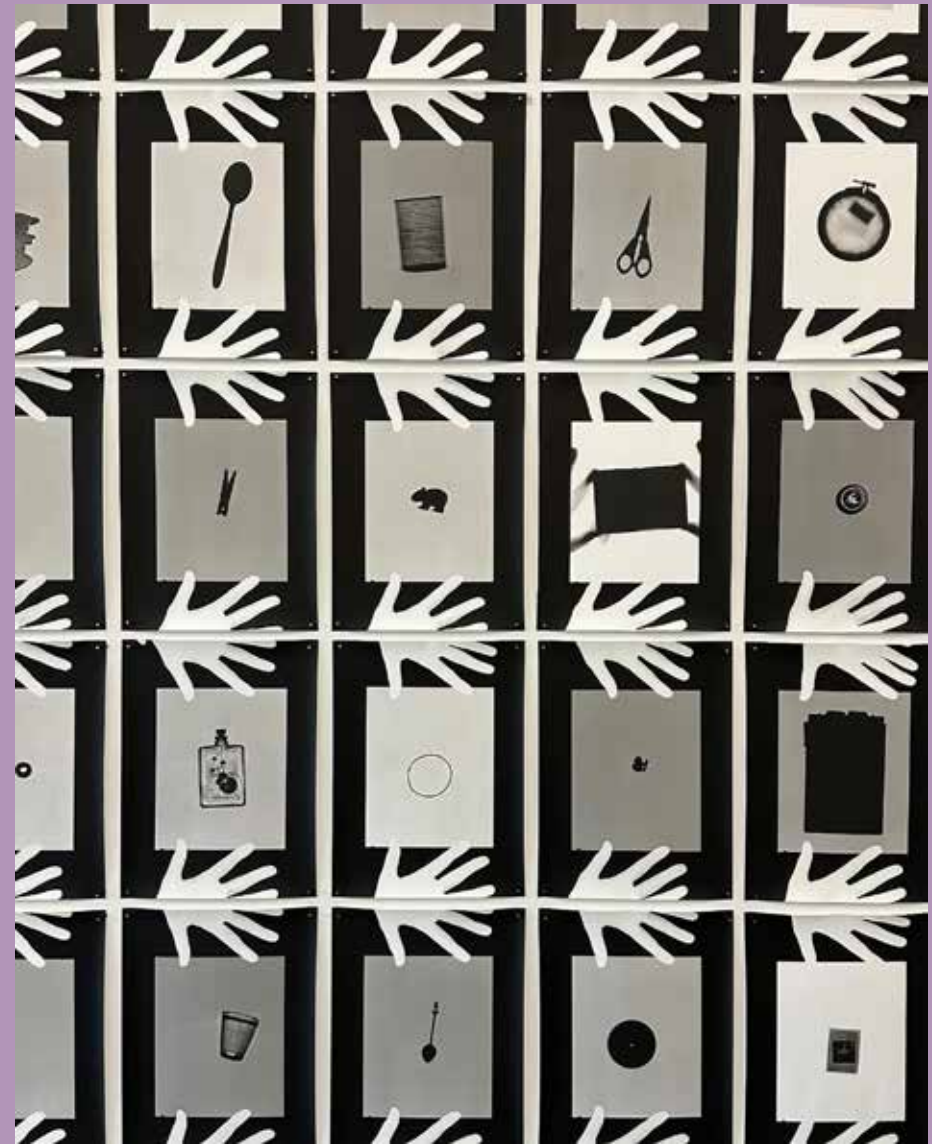
Dries Segers (1990, BE) is a visual artist, photographer, matter bender, publisher and researcher. Segers' material based practice is centred around photographic materialisation with a focus on the non-human and polluted matters. He collaborates closely with biotics as well as abiotics, such as the sun, wind, soil, plants, trees, funguses, light, rain and fire.



Dries Segers, *waste/land*, 2024, chromatographic paper, paperclips, polluted soil samples, different sizes

The photographic work of Sophie Thun resembles a stream of images of places and spaces in which the artist has worked and exhibited. She is always present in these images herself as the author of her analogue photographs. Sometimes she looks confidently into the camera, the shutter release in her hand, while at other times she is represented by her photographic equipment. Thun always uses her body as an instrument for questioning established forms of (female) representation. Using methods such as cutting, splitting and multiplying, she depicts identity as a process and as something changeable. Her impressive spatial installations play with our perception of reality and representation. This exhibition at the Museum der Moderne Salzburg is Thun's first solo exhibition at a museum.

Sophie Thun (1985, Frankfurt am Main, Germany) is an artist working primarily with techniques of analogue photography, its spaces, processes and conditions of production and exhibition. Born in Frankfurt am Main (DE), she was raised in Warsaw (PL) and lives and works in Vienna (AT) since 2010. She completed her master's degrees at the Academies of Fine Art in Vienna (AT) in 2017 (Martin Guttmann and Daniel Richter), and Cracow (PL) in 2010 (Agata Pankiewicz and Jacek Gaj). She is a member of the board of the Association of Visual Artists Vienna Secession and teaches in the sculpture department of the Art University Linz (AT).



Sophie Thun, *Untitled (Some of all (the) Things in my Apartment Smaller than 8x10 inches)*, 2020-2021



In the series 'A table under a tree', an imaginary tabletop moment is photographically captured using photograms. In the darkroom, pieces of glass industrially cut in the shape of spoons and dish plates were randomly placed on top of each other on the photo paper and then exposed. Only the edges of the glass do not transmit light, which results in a fine, white contour of the glass objects. These images were taken without the use of a camera, and yet they exhibit photographic characteristics such as depth, movement, foreground and background, zooming in and out. In this work, analogue photography shows itself as an anachronistic medium, suitable for the search for alternative possibilities to depict life.

Sine Van Menxel (BE) was born in 1988. She studied photography at LUCA Brussels and has been exhibiting her work since 2014. She did a research project called 'Dancing in the dark' within the research group Thinking Tools at Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp in 2020-2021. Since 2020, she has been teaching as a guest professor at LUCA, Brussels.



Sine Van Menxel, *A Table under a Tree*, 2023-2024

'Not All Unknowns are Equal' is the collective title of a set of black-and-white, fibre-based photograms, of which five are on view here.

Marianne Vierø used a group of recently developed sculptures as the subjects for these photograms. The sculptures have no given orientation – no up and down, no front and back. They can be picked up, rotated, moved around and placed anew so as to enter into an ever-evolving dialogue with their surroundings. Through the placing, rotating and repositioning of the sculptures directly on the photographic paper, and through the use of multiple exposures, the photograms manifest as accurate documents of their sculptural reference, yet independent of their form. Refusing any illusion of space, the three-dimensionality of the objects is simultaneously represented and collapsed by having each print show the sculptures from multiple angles but always flattened down to silhouetted shadows. The overlaps that emerge from repositioning the sculptures between each exposure stand out as highlighted, bleached-out shapes defined by and inherent to the form of each sculpture.

Vierø is interested in the underlying premises of our systems of understanding – to what extent pre-existing knowledge and values shape the way we process information previously unknown to us. As a way of approaching this question, she develops speculative models of representation that are at once objectively accurate and subjective. Considering the transformative potential of materials, methods and gestures, she acknowledges uncertainty and ambivalence to be part of any language. As such, her practice constitutes a continuous series of translations that collapse chronologies and categorisation, which places her work in a constant state of becoming.

Marianne Vierø studied at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam. She's been a resident at Triangle Arts, NYC; the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam; and at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. Selected solo exhibitions include 'Drawing Nude' and 'Figure Bold', both at Rita Urso – Artopia Gallery, Milan; 'Dunk' and 'Great Transformation' at Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam; and 'Zeppelin Bend' at PAKT, Amsterdam. Her work is in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Vierø lives and works in Copenhagen.



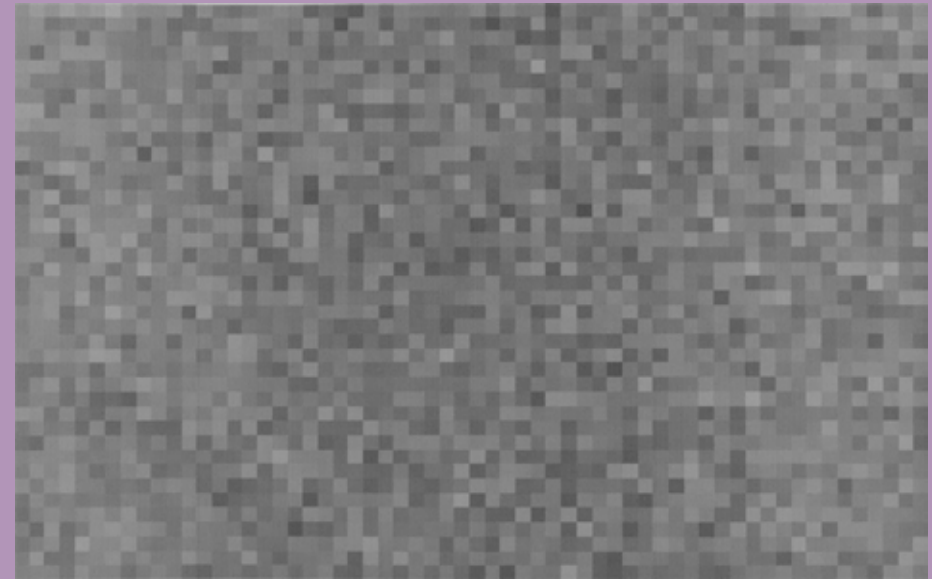
Marianne Vierø, *Not All Unknowns are Equal*, 2024

Jeff Weber's work explores the structural conditions of what constitutes a technical image and how its use in a contemporary context is determined by digital technologies. Weber firmly believes that the intersection of the fields of artificial intelligence and neuroscience are profoundly pertinent to the understanding of how images operate today.

The photogram holds a crucial place in Weber's photographic practice, standing in a metonymic relation to his work as a whole: it functions as a metonym for an inquiry into method, it marks the experimental nature of his photographic practice, and it maps the system of indexical relations which – at various levels, from the physical to the conceptual – constitute the image.

*Untitled (Neural Networks, nn3d)* is a series of large-format photograms. The black-and-white, grid-like images are generated by a neural network, created by Weber, that simulates how neurons in the brain connect in order to process data. The data sets entered into the program in the form of numerical series alter the relations between the artificial neurons. These are subsequently transposed into matrixes and rendered into pixels by an animated sequence, which is then exposed to photo paper, letting the neural network take over the distribution of shadow and light for the photogram to be made.

Jeff Weber lives and works in New York. Weber earned his MFA from the La Cambre art school in Brussels (2010) and was an artist-in-residence at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht (2011-2012). He is the founder of the Kunsthalle Leipzig, a conceptual project in the form of an institution he established in 2012 as an extension of his photographic and filmic practice. Recent solo exhibitions include 'Serial Grey' at Carré d'Art – Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes (2021), 'Camouflage' at Ixbxh, Eindhoven (2020), 'Mimetic Assimilation' at Erna Hecey Gallery, Luxembourg (2019). His work has also been exhibited at Mudam, Luxembourg; de Appel, Amsterdam; Fotomuseum, Winterthur; Anthology Film Archives, New York; Belvedere 21, Vienna; Casino – Forum d'Art Contemporain, Luxembourg.



Jeff Weber, *Untitled (Neural Network, nn3d/3)*, 2019

# REPRODUCIBILITY

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with work by MINNE ATAIRU, EMMANUEL VAN DER AUWERA, ALICE CHANNER, ELISA GIARDINA PAPA, WADE GUYTON, SPIROS HADJIDJANOS, MASHINKA FIRUNTS HAKOPIAN, HOLLY HERNDON & MAT DRYHURST, BENJAMIN LALLIER, SARAH MEYOHAS, MIMI ONUOHA, SETH PRICE, MICHAEL REISCH, THOMAS RUFF, PHILIPPE STARCK, JENNA SUTELA, KELLEY WALKER, NUSHIN YAZDANI

**18-27.10.2024**

Wintertuin, Academy

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*We are in this AI moment.* The exhibition *Reproducibility* explores the transition from digital tools to artificial intelligence models in technologically mediated artistic production. Through a multisensory assemblage, the exhibition groups together seminal positions from the past two decades, focusing on the present moment.

Over two decades ago, American artist Kelley Walker disseminated his work(s) as digital files in CD-ROMs, printing on their envelope: 'The disc and the image it contains can be reproduced and disseminated as often as the holder desires. (...) All forms of reproduction/deviation derived from this image ... perpetuate a continuum correlating to the art-work.' In 2021, artists Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst, after training and interacting with their own custom model, debuted CLASSIFIED, a "handcrafted" self-portraiture series exploring how the classification 'Holly Herndon' is embedded within OpenAI's CLIP neural network. Separated by two decades and different technologies, these photographic works share striking similarities. Both are distributed in JPEG or PNG formats and both focus on endless technological production and infinite variation. Can we identify a dichotomy today between a static and a dynamic thinking in technologically mediated artistic production, analogous to the contrast between handcrafted works and automated fabrication?

In his book *The Eye of the Master – A Social History of Artificial Intelligence*, Matteo Pasquinelli argues that classical algorithms differ significantly from AI systems. In classical algorithms, input

data are passive and processed by fixed rules. In contrast, machine learning systems dynamically adjust their internal rules (parameters) based on input data, making data active rather than passive. Can generative AI models genuinely innovate and lead to breakthroughs? Are AI's current capabilities enough to replace human, forward-thinking creativity?

Questions pertinent to generative technology are explored historically with works that draw from archival material to form alternative possibilities such as Thomas Ruff's *Andere Porträts* ('Other Portraits', 1994-95), a series of superimposed photographs, using a technique sometimes employed by police to produce imagery of likely suspects. Similarly, Nushin Yazdani, pointing to predictive analytics, uses AI technology to generate future prisoners from an archival dataset of inmates (*Neither fate nor coincidence: Visualizing structural discrimination and machine bias*, 2019); Sarah Meyohas trained a generative adversarial network (GAN) on a dataset of 100,000 physical rose petals to generate endless, new and unique petals (*Infinite Petals*, 2017); and Jenna Sutela's *nimiia cétii*, 2018 speculates on the potential functionalities of multimodal AI models.

The exhibition is titled after the *Reproducibility* section of the machine learning library PyTorch. Despite identical initial conditions, generative AI outputs are by default non-reproducible with varying outcomes due to random seed variation, GPU-induced randomness, hyperparameters and dataset splits. The conceptual space of current AI diffusion models appears vast when viewed through Flusser's camera program. There is only one kind of image missing from their terminal generative (AI) program: noise. This is because these models are built to remove noise, not generate it. Unlike the photographic apparatus of a camera, neural networks process data in ways the human operator cannot (yet) comprehend or predict. They are a kind of contingent machine within the framework of Deleuze's philosophy of Difference; rhizomatic complexes of potential, non-activated possibilities that emerge from a multitude of contingencies and materialisations.

The AI-generated representations in the exhibition are anticipated to lead to breakthroughs in AI-driven material fabrication, much like



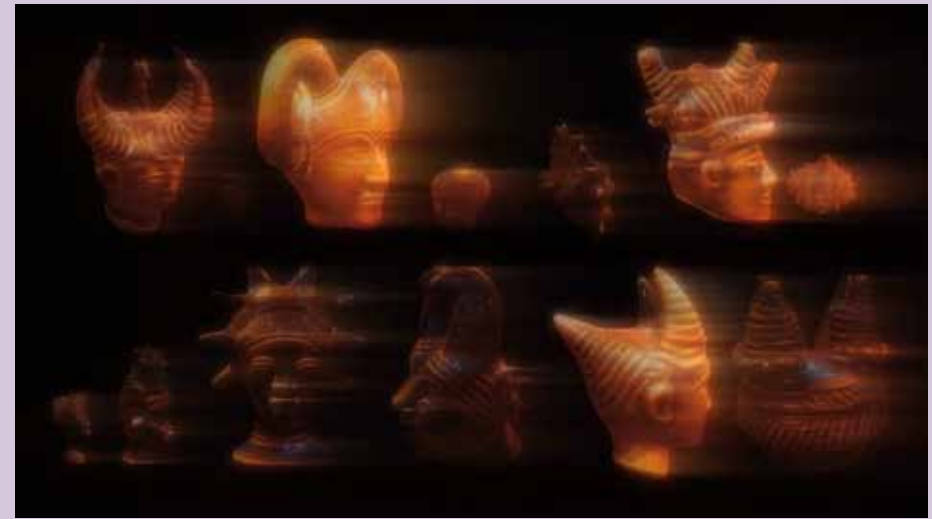
the breakthroughs achieved with digital technology. This potential can be conceptualised by examining the pleated surfaces of Alice Channer, Wade Guyton's inkjet paintings, Benjamin Lallier's sun-bleached velvet works and Seth Price's digitally 'handcrafted' materialisations. Do the strategies of these artists have the potential to be updated via AI models and the variation in massive datasets? Although these artists utilise digital technology in an input-output process, their approach follows a nondeterministic production logic that is similar to that of the AI works in the exhibition, which are based on statistical probabilities and unpredictable outcomes.

Curated by SPIROS HADJIDJANOS

Minne Atairu is a researcher and interdisciplinary artist interested in generative artificial intelligence. Utilising AI-mediated processes and materials, Atairu recombines historical fragments, sculptures, texts, images and sounds to critically examine and illuminate understudied gaps in Black historical archives, such as the generation of synthetic Benin Bronzes, which often centre on questions of repatriation and post-repatriation.

The original Benin Bronzes, created by anonymous artists between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, have come to represent a colonial history marked by the 1897 British invasion, which led to the looting of 4,000 artifacts. This event caused a 17-year period of artistic recession (1897-1914), for which there are no visual or archival records. What artifacts might have been produced during the 17-year artistic recession? Minne Atairu's works *Igùn:Prototypes I-IX*, leverage the capabilities of StyleGAN2, a machine learning algorithm, to create a vast and varied collection of speculative artifacts. This process involved fine-tuning each algorithm with a dataset of looted Benin Bronzes, all curated from Western museums. *Igùn:Prototype X* advances this inquiry by engaging in a text-to-three-dimensional rematerialisation of the ceremonial hairstyle *ukpe-okhue*, a symbol of significant political power. The extent to which artists and anticolonial groups adopted or rejected this style is unknown.

Minne Atairu has exhibited at The Shed, New York (2023); Frieze, London (2023); The Harvard Art Museums, Boston (2022); and others, and she is the recipient of S+T+ARTS Prize Africa (2024).



Minne Atairu, *Igùn:Prototype X*, 2024, Video (Text-to-3D) with audio, 02:22 Mins

Emmanuel Van der Auwera (1982) investigates how images shape public perception through filmmaking, printmaking, *VideoSculpture* and theatre. He deconstructs image conventions and technologies of seeing, questioning the mass media's impact on collective memory and the ethics of the gaze.

Van der Auwera challenges passive consumption, exposing the risk of transforming reality into simulation. Inspired by Susan Sontag, he confronts uncomfortable truths that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore, reflecting on the responsibility of seeing. His work critiques the chains of production and consumption, urging viewers to recognise their role in this process. Fascinated by conspiracy theories, surveillance and media ubiquity, Van der Auwera reveals the unseen, unheard and violent aspects of life. Using found footage, he portrays human vulnerability, the absurdity of existence, and the powerlessness of individuals in the face of greater forces. In his expansive video installations, Van der Auwera devotes himself to questions of perception, from smartphone-mediated experiences to AI-generated imagery. Through formal rigour and minimalism, he transforms found material into immersive, poetic visuals. His works turn the flood of digital imagery into captivating, sensory experiences that engage viewers with critical social questions.

Van der Auwera's work has recently been presented in exhibitions at the Biennale internationale des arts numériques de la Région île-de-France (Paris), in the Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement 2024 (Geneva), KW Institute for Contemporary Art (Berlin) and at the 8th Yokohama Triennale (Yokohama).

Emmanuel Van der Auwera, *Memento 52*, 2023, newspaper .3mm aluminum offset plate mounted on aluminum frame, 143 x 99 x 2,5 cm, Photo: Adriaan Hauwaert, Courtesy of the artist & Harlan Levey Projects

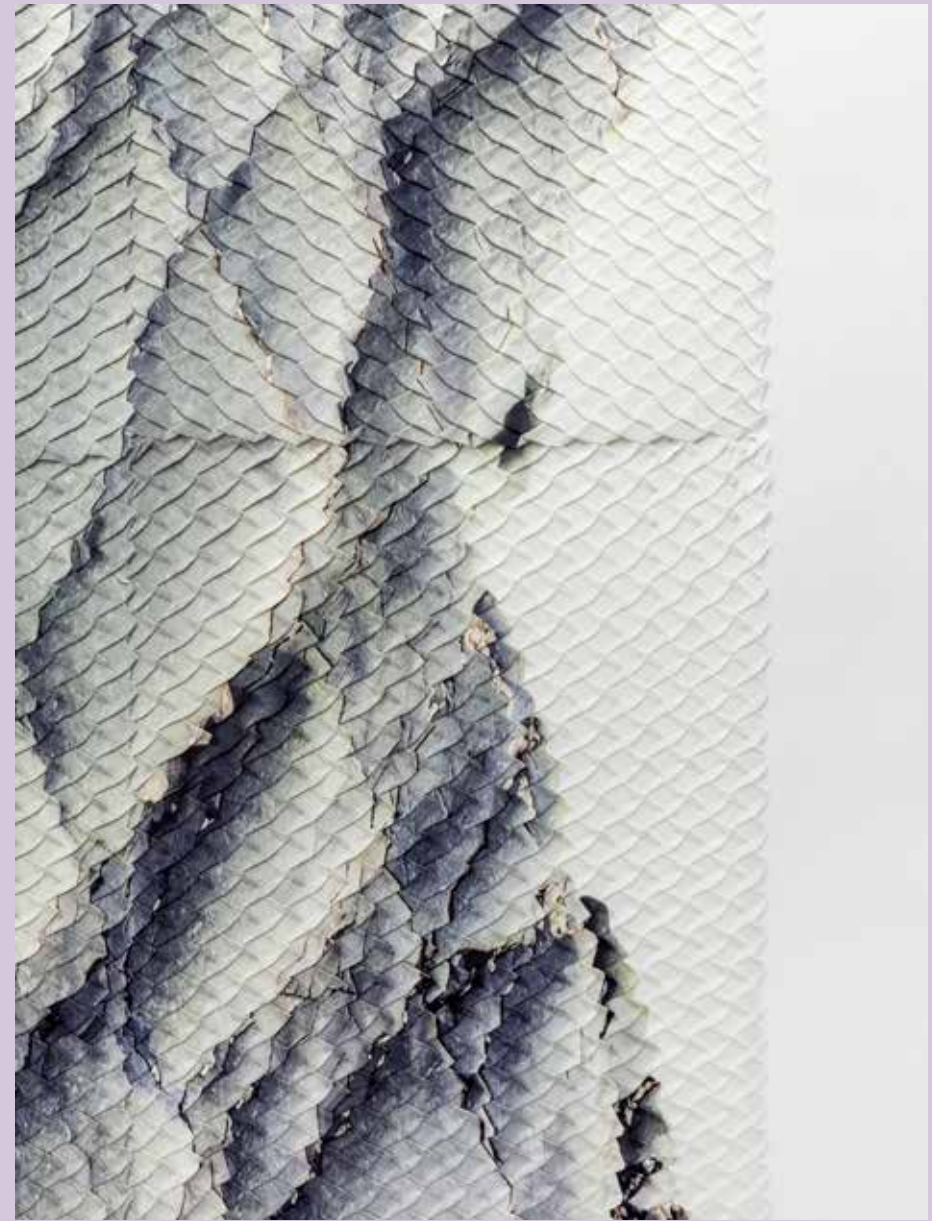


Alice Channer (1977) creates sculptures that merge the social and sensual worlds of industrial and natural processes. She immerses herself in organic and synthetic materials over time, using both experimental and precise methods to find and develop forms into sculpture. Collaborating with people, machines and materials, her work brings multiple voices into her polyphonic creations, undoing the rigidity of objects.

In her series 'Soft Sediment Deformation (Granite Bodies)', begun in 2018, the natural and industrial collapse in on themselves; porousness and fragility are housed in the megalithic. The pleated surfaces of her sculptures resemble skin, crab shells and eroding rocks, evoking fragility within monumental forms. Inspired by the Crackington Formation on the Dorset coastline, Channer manipulates photographs of these sandstone structures, using Photoshop to stretch and compress the images, mimicking erosion. These altered images are printed onto heavy *crêpe de Chine* silk, pleated and returned to three-dimensional form as sculptures. Channer's work reflects on time and perception, transforming natural landscapes into three-dimensional representations that question the boundaries between interior and exterior. Like fossils, her pleated fabric sculptures suggest alternate temporalities, reforming exterior elements into personal shields that blur the lines between the familiar and the alien, the human and the otherworldly.

Alice Channer's work has been presented as part of the Liverpool Biennale (2021) and the 55th Venice Biennale (2013), and she has participated in numerous international, institutional group exhibitions including the Royal Academy of Arts, London (2022); Nasher Sculpture Centre, Dallas (2019); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2017/18); Aspen Art Museum; Aïshti Foundation, Beirut, Fridericianum, Kassel (2014), Whitechapel Gallery and Tate Britain (the latter two both in London in 2012).

Alice Channer, *Soft Sediment Deformation (Granite Bodies)*, 2020, Opal Pleated Ink Jet Prints on and in Heavy Crepe De Chine, 400 x 180 x 50 cm



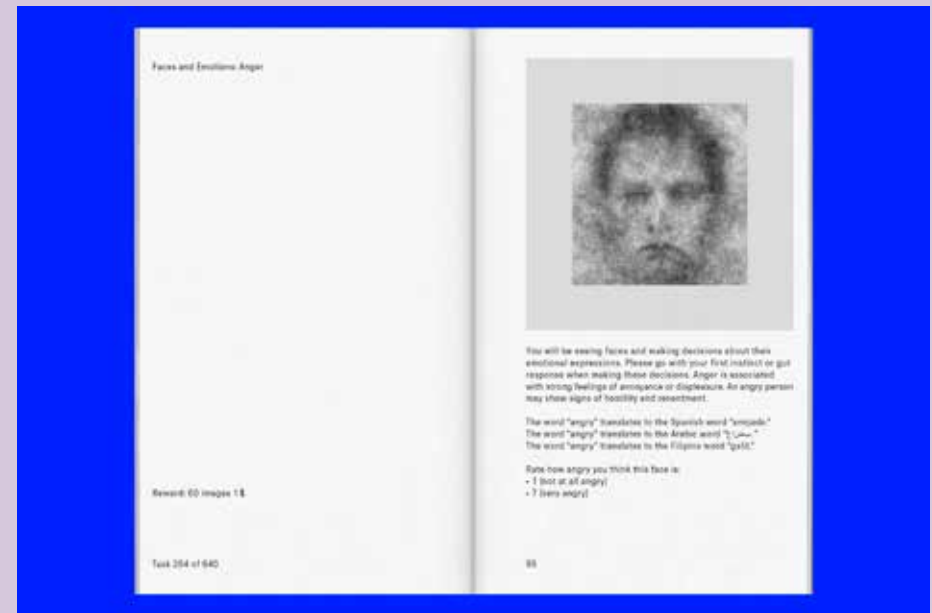


Elisa Giardina Papa's (1979) research-based art practice seeks forms of knowledge and desire that have been lost or forgotten, disqualified and rendered nonsensical by hegemonic demands for order and legibility. Sifting through discarded AI training datasets, censored cinema repositories, factitious colonial travel accounts or fabricated heretical accusations, Giardina Papa traces how recurrent forms of extractive capitalism and imperialism have strained our capacities for living and labouring. Through critical yet poetic framing, she works across large-scale video installations, experimental films and internet-based art projects to draw attention to those parts of our lives which remain radically unruly, untranslatable and incomputable.

Elisa Giardina Papa's *Leaking Subjects and Bounding Boxes*, a book of ongoing visual and theoretical research into machinic vision, explores how AI is trained to classify the world, focusing on images that resist such classification. While working as a human AI trainer in 2019, Papa collected images of blurred category boundaries on undivided queer categories, defying clear categorization. She had to outline and label them as distinct objects. The book invites reflection on the limits of AI vision and the disruptive power of things that resist being divided, classified, or placed within rigid, hierarchical systems.

Elisa Giardina Papa's work has been exhibited and screened at the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum, Seoul Mediacity Biennale and M+ Hong Kong, among others.

Elisa Giardina Papa, *Leaking Subjects and Bounding Boxes: On Training AI*, 2022, Munich: Sorry Press, Courtesy of the Artist, Sorry Press and Galerie Tanja Wagner



Since the early 2000s, Wade Guyton (1972) has pursued, with a notable consistency, an investigation into the condition and impact of digital image production. Wade Guyton relies on the effects of chance and mechanical reproduction – two central strategies in twentieth-century artistic production – which he has updated using twenty-first-century home-office technology. He uses scanners and image-editing programs for his motifs of simple forms, graphic elements, letters and more recently photographs, which he applies to canvas or paper by means of inkjet printers to create abstract paintings. Few artists have had as important an impact on our understanding of artistic production since the turn of the millennium as Wade Guyton, whose practice has widely prompted reconsiderations of longstanding models of medium-specificity, appropriation, and critical engagement – and, perhaps more provocatively, performativity and readymade gesture – in art.

Guyton purposefully misuses his printer by changing its commands and using materials that exceed its design specifications. Running his canvases through a commercial inkjet printer, Guyton stretches the device beyond its capacity to the point of failure, embedding the limits of a digital future onto the surfaces of his paintings. Thus, the digital artwork uncovers its inherent tensions, questioning the conditional aspects of how it is visualised. Often in the creative process there is a battle between the printer and the canvas or paper, and the traces of this remain on the surface of the material: streaks in the form of drops, blobs, misalignments and blurs, which become part of Wade Guyton's works. Additionally to his works on canvas, Guyton extends his practice in the intersection of time, art, design and technology through his drawings, sculptures, and site-specific installations.

Wade Guyton's work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions including at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne (2019), the Serpentine Gallery in London (2017), Le Consortium in Dijon (2016), Kunsthalle Zürich (2013), and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (2012).

Wade Guyton, Epson DURABRITE inkjet on book page, 2003, 25,84 x 19,05 cm, Collection of Annika and Markus Kramer



The work of Spiros Hadjidjanos (1978) encompasses diverse media, deeply rooted in his critical engagement with technological processes and shaped by his personal history. Since the onset of his artistic practice, he has explored computational imagery, focusing on the transformation of photographs into data, creating works that navigate spatial, temporal, calculable and material realms. Through his sculptures and installations, he seeks to render the paradoxes of the digital world visible, urging us to reconsider the nature of virtuality while revealing the material substrates that act as its interface.

Hadjidjanos' bronze-cast work *K\_enn\_ecot\_t* (2021) and its test print involved a hybrid process of traditional and technological methods. A photograph of the Bingham Canyon Mine in Utah was translated into data and turned into a virtual 3D depth map. Conventional foundry techniques proved insufficient for casting the virtual object, necessitating the use of 3D-printed moulds, built layer by layer from silica sand. These moulds allowed molten bronze at 1,160°C, containing copper sourced from the same mine, to flow into the detailed voids and channels of the complex surface, which are now preserved in the completed work. Beyond photography's concepts of negative and positive, Hadjidjanos connects the photograph to the mine's materials and the computational systems that shape our digital age, linking them to humanity's relentless excavation of the earth.

Spiros Hadjidjanos is a Greek visual artist who lives and works in Berlin. He studied with a DAAD scholarship at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK), where he was awarded the Meisterschülerpreis des Präsidenten. Currently he is a researcher at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. He has created set design for theatres and has exhibited his work in galleries and institutions such as the Yerba Buena Center For The Arts in San Francisco, Städel Museum in Frankfurt and Musée d'Art Moderne and Palais de Tokyo in Paris.

Spiros Hadjidjanos, *K\_enn\_ecot\_t*, 2021, 52,4 x 41 x 6,4 cm, bronze- cast, Photo: Alice Stella



In *The Institute for Other Intelligences* (2022), Mashinka Firunts Hakopian brings speculative fiction and media studies to bear on an imagined future where machine intelligences convene annually for a curriculum on algorithmic equity. The book presents a transcript from one of these conferences in which a community of 'AI agents' gather at a school for oppositional automata to deliver lectures on the human biases and omissions encoded in their training data. The resulting manuscript, published on the occasion of the Institute's millennial anniversary, revisits sociotechnical systems from its founding in the twenty-first century. Drawing on feminist, queer and critical media scholarship, the trainings collected in the book aim to optimise the operations of future generations of intelligent machines toward just outcomes. Hakopian uses these speculative exchanges to invite the reader to consider how critical approaches to nonhuman intelligence might reroute our current path toward destructive *technofutures* and allow us to conceive of another way forward.

Mashinka Firunts Hakopian is an Armenian writer, artist and researcher born in Yerevan. Her writing and commentary appear in *Performance Research Journal*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, Meghan Markle's *Archetypes* and elsewhere. Her research focuses on practices that generate alternative imaginaries of the future.

Mashinka Firunts Hakopian, *The Institute for Other Intelligences*, 2022, X Artists' Books





Holly Herndon (1980) and Mat Dryhurst's (1984) series *CLASSIFIED* (2021) is a 'handcrafted' self-portrait collection that explores how OpenAI's CLIP neural network (perceptor) recognises and interprets Herndon's likeness. By training a custom neural VQGAN (Vector-Quantised Generative Adversarial Network) with her images and related text descriptions, they generated portraits reflecting CLIP's understanding of Herndon. The process involved feeding the VQGAN+CLIP model a range of images, from classic portraiture and abstract shapes to random noise, and challenging it to render these figures more 'Holly Herndon'. Her likeness served as a guiding style, revealing how CLIP perceives and processes her image. Additionally, they employed the 'CLIP guided diffusion' technique, which creates images from random noise based on Herndon's style, aiming to understand how CLIP perceives Herndon and how this perception deviates from her expectations. This exploration emphasised the unpredictable nature of machine-generated art and questioned the concept of artistic free will in an era where algorithms shape identities. The series suggests that in a world where algorithms influence personal and cultural identities, understanding one's machines and processes as well as they 'know' you is essential in navigating the technological landscape.

Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst are artists based in Berlin. In her work, Holly Herndon develops new technologies to experiment with her voice and its image, supported by critical research in artificial intelligence and decentralised infrastructure. Mathew Dryhurst's research focuses on technical and ethical protocols. He makes music and creates art with Holly Herndon. They have made their research process public through their Interdependence podcast.



Holly Herndon & Mat Dryhurst, *CLASSIFIED*, 2021, Inkjet print on Canvas, 276 x 200 cm

Benjamin Lallier (1985) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Berlin who works with diverse media to challenge conventional formal boundaries. His work spans scientific theories, pop culture, and everyday life, exploring humour, poetry and the manipulation of common beliefs. Lallier critiques social structures and idealism through his versatile practice, which includes satirical paintings, sculptures and installations. He often plays with the idea of seriality and repetition by working in series that contain what he terms ‘fake’ copies – where no image, or object, is ever the same, thus blurring the line between reality and illusion, while drawing on both historical and contemporary references.

Benjamin Lallier’s photographic works made out of sun-bleached velvet emerge from a technique he has developed over several years, where the surface of the fabric is altered by the sun only. Each work is unique and differs due to the way daylight impacts the image placed onto the surface of the material during its exposure to UV rays. The velvet’s ability to absorb and reflect light creates a dynamic image that changes with the viewer’s movement, due to its richness, giving the pieces depth and fluidity that transcend static imagery. An intermediary step in Lallier’s photographic process includes digital technology, yet the final form of his work is a single material, compelling viewers to face the materiality where image and texture blend, redefining representation with the velvet as both the medium and the content. By simplifying the materiality to velvet alone, Lallier achieves a heightened economy of materials resulting in a body of work that is both materially restrained and conceptually expansive.

Benjamin Lallier’s recent solo exhibitions include ‘HAMPTON’S CAVE’ in Basel and Heidi Galerie in Berlin. He had group shows recently at Heidi Galerie in Berlin, High Art in Arles and at Fondation Pernod Ricard in Paris.

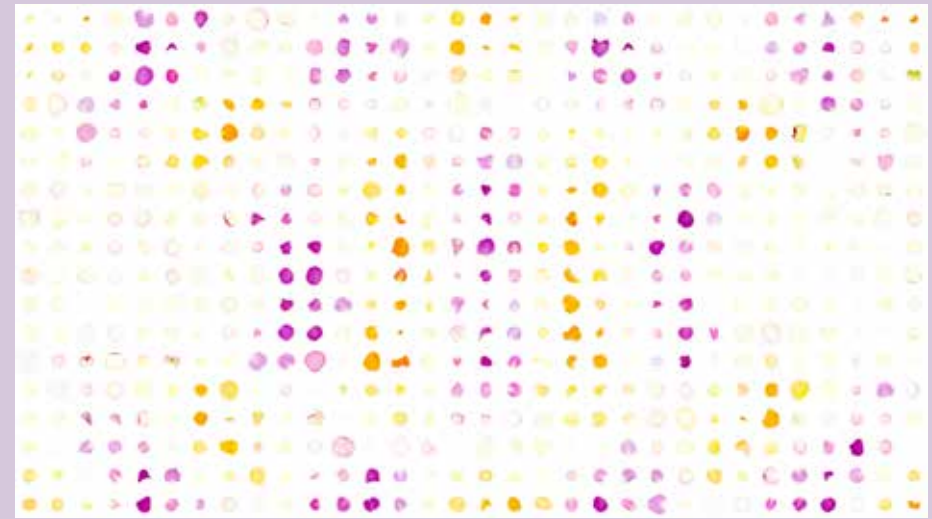
Benjamin Lallier, *Madonna (No Child)*, 2022, Sun bleached velvet, 170 x 135 cm, Courtesy of the artist and Heidi, Berlin



Sarah Meyohas (1991) is a conceptual artist whose practice considers the nature and capabilities of emerging technologies in contemporary society. Using the familiar emblems of biological life, Meyohas investigates the complex operations that increasingly govern our world, such as by using augmented-reality software to create soaring birds that flock in unison with the frenetic variations of the stock market; rose petals, aggregately identical but individually unique, comprising the dataset for their AI-created equivalents; and Bitchcoin, a cryptocurrency backed by physical artworks, questioning the speculative value of cryptocurrency and the ineffable value of art. Meyohas creates a visual language to articulate the systems and technologies that increasingly influence our world.

For *Infinite Petals*, Sarah Meyohas trained a GAN on a dataset of 100,000 physical rose petals to generate endless, new and unique petals, gathered by 16 male workers, who photographed individual petals during her *Cloud of Petals* project at Bell Labs. The GAN-generated petals are arranged in grids following algorithms like Conway's Game of Life. Each digital petal has 512 dimensions, reflecting the vast latent space of machine intelligence and algorithmic beauty. *Infinite Petals* is a continued exploration of algorithmic beauty and the phenomenon of emergence within both natural and manmade systems.

Sarah Meyohas has exhibited her work at the New Museum of Contemporary Art (NYC), the Barbican Centre, London, the Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai, and the Ming Contemporary Art Museum, Shanghai. Her work is also in the collection of Centre Pompidou, Paris. Her film *Cloud of Petals* has been screened at various film festivals around the world. Meyohas holds dual degrees in Finance and International Relations.



Sarah Meyohas, *Infinite Petals*, 2017, Video, 13:03 Mins



Mimi Qnuqa's (1989) work interrogates the contradictory logics of technological progress, exploring the tensions between society's demand for order and the fluidity of human experience. Through print, code, data, video, installation and archives, Mimi Qnuqa reorients our understanding of the absences that shape systems of labour, ecology and relationships. Fascinated by how industrial systems categorise and erase the unfit, Qnuqa's work highlights the forgotten and intangible, challenging the assumptions embedded in the beliefs and technologies that shape our world.

Mimi Qnuqa's *missing-datasets* GitHub repository, first published on 3 February, 2016, with the document 'The End of Forgetting' by Jonah Bossewitch and Aram Sinnreich, is a pioneering project regularly updated with new information. Qnuqa has published her works on GitHub because they are works in progress that she can update any time. Her term *missing datasets* refers to gaps in data-rich spaces, often tied to issues affecting vulnerable groups.

The word *missing* implies a normative lack – something absent that should exist. *Missing datasets* highlight our biases and indifferences, revealing more through their absence than through the data we do collect. This lack occurs for several reasons:

1. Those with resources to collect data may lack the incentive, as in the case of police brutality, where rigorous data collection has been historically neglected.
2. Some data resist quantification, especially complex or subjective subjects like emotions.
3. The effort of data collection may be seen as outweighing its perceived benefit.
4. Absence can be advantageous, just as the presence of data benefits some, so too does nonexistence.

Mimi Qnuqa's work has been featured at the Whitney Museum of Art (USA), the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (AUS), Mao Jihong Arts Foundation (China), La Gaité Lyrique (France), Transmediale Festival (Germany), The Photographers' Gallery (UK), and NEON (Greece).

## On Missing Data Sets

This repo will be periodically updated with more information, links, and topics.

### Overview

#### What is a Missing Data Set?

"Missing data sets" are my term for the blank spots that exist in spaces that are otherwise data-saturated. My interest in them stems from the observation that within many spaces where large amounts of data are collected, there are often empty spaces where no data live. Unsurprisingly, this lack of data typically correlates with issues affecting those who are most vulnerable in that context.

The word "missing" is inherently normative. It implies both a lack and an ought: something does not exist, but it should. That which should be somewhere is not in its expected place; an established system is disrupted by distinct absence. Just because some type of data doesn't exist doesn't mean it's missing, and the idea of missing data sets is inextricably tied to a more expansive climate of inevitable and routine data collection.

#### Why Do They Matter?

That which we ignore reveals more than what we give our attention to. It's in these things that we find cultural and colloquial hints of what is deemed important. Spots that we've left blank reveal our hidden social biases and indifferences.

#### Why Are They Missing?

There are a number of reasons why a data set that seems like it should exist might not, and they are all tied to the quiet complications inherent in data collection. Below are four reasons, with accompanying real-world examples.

1. Those who have the resources to collect data lack the incentive to (corollary: often those who have access to a dataset are the same ones who have the ability to remove, hide, or obscure it).

Police brutality towards civilians provides a powerful example. Though policing and crime are among the most data-driven areas of public policy, traditionally there has been little history of standardized and rigorous data collected about police brutality.

Nowadays we have a political and cultural climate where this issue has become one of public discussion. Public interest campaigns like *Fatal Encounters* and the Guardian's *The Counted* have helped fill that void. But even for these individuals/organizations, the work is difficult and time-consuming. The group who would make the most sense to monitor this issue—the law enforcement agents who create the data set in the first place—have no incentive to actually gather such data, which could prove incriminating.

2. The data to be collected resist simple quantification (corollary: we prioritize collecting things that fit our modes of collection).

The defining tension of data collection is the struggle of taking a messy, organic world and defining it in formats that are neat, clean, and structured.

Some things are difficult to collect and quantify by nature of their structure. We don't know how much US currency is *outside of our borders*. There's no incentive for other countries to monitor US currency within their countries, and the very nature of cash and the anonymity it affords makes it difficult to track.

But then there are other subjects that resist quantification entirely. Things like emotions are hard to quantify (at this time, at least). Institutional racism is subtle and deniable; it reveals itself more in effects than acts. Not all things are easily quantifiable, and at times the very desire to render the world more abstract, trackable, and machine-readable is an idea that itself deserves questioning.

3. The act of collection involves more work than the benefit the presence of the data is perceived to give.

Sexual assault and harassment are *wofefully underreported*. And while there are many reasons why this is, one major one is that in many cases the very act of reporting sexual assault is a very intensive, painful, and difficult process. For some, the benefit of reporting isn't perceived to be equal or greater than the cost of the process.

4. There are advantages to nonexistence.

Every missing dataset is a testament to this fact. Just as the presence of data benefits someone, so too does the absence. This is important to keep in mind.

However, there's an even more specific angle to this point. To collect, record, and archive aspects of the world is an intentional act, one that typically benefits those who have the power to decide what should be collected. Often, remaining outside of the bounds of collection can be a form of response for a situationally-disadvantaged group. In short, sometimes a missing dataset can function as a form of *protection*.



## SETH PRICE

Seth Price's (1973) multi-disciplinary practice, which spans video, film, sculpture, installation, collage, performance and text, explores the creation and dissemination of art while examining how digital technology has transformed the perception of art and artists in society over the past two decades. His work traces an important art-historical shift from the concept of collage, where chance played a major role and the image was constructed of multiple layers, to the concept of a unified image, which envelops us in an endless, undifferentiated digital stream.

Seth Price's work prioritises materiality, yet at the start of his career his practice was guided by the question, 'What happens when a more intimate, thoughtful and enduring understanding comes from mediated discussions of an exhibition, rather than from a direct experience of the work?' Price uses his materials not simply for aesthetic reasons but for their sociological and historical resonances. His works include the *Vintage Bombers* wall reliefs, where heated polystyrene is vacuum-formed over a bomber jacket cast to create an empty shell that functions as both a 3D icon and a 2D image; vacuum-formed plastic reliefs presenting a body part stranded in plastic; large wall sculptures depicting the negative space between two people, greatly enlarged from a tiny internet JPEG; studies of human skin captured via photographic methods using Google's mapping technology; and the ongoing video projection *Redistribution*, a historical, cultural, and personal narrative of his work and processes.

Seth Price studied literature and political science and moved slowly into an art-world career by way of experimental film and video. His work has been exhibited at the Whitney Biennial, the Venice Biennial and dOCUMENTA 13. He has staged solo presentations at Kunsthalle Zürich, ICA London, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and Museum Brandhorst in Munich.

Seth Price, *Waste Assembly*, 2015–2017, UV transfer on anodized and CNC routed aluminum, cardboard, plywood, 243,8 x 121,9 cm



Michael Reisch (1964) creates photography-based works through multilayered, generative processes that have evolved since 2010 in successive generations. His latest series, *Trust in those who supposedly know – MURRAY, DONDIE, REBECCA (2023/2024)*, uses generative AI to address post-truth and ideologisation trends shaped by current AI technologies, where images and texts can be endlessly manipulated, often detached from facts.

Earlier in his practice, Reisch developed dialectical abstract-concrete forms through analogue-digital methods like digital photography, 3D software, image editing and 3D printing. These abstract forms now serve as inputs for AI diffusion models such as image-to-image and image-to-video tools. Prompts like '1920s war memorial, socialist realism' guide the AI's transformation of the forms into monumental, ideologically charged images that blend historical and futuristic elements. Despite these changes, the original form remains subtly present as a 'stamp' in each AI-generated result, including in video loops. The title(s) of his latest series is also created by AI. Reisch fed scientific texts about the post-truth movement into a GPT-2 model trained on film scripts. The resulting fictional scripts, blending scientific critique and narrative, were selectively curated by Reisch and incorporated into his work, including in audio pieces.

Michael Reisch studied at Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam and Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, and is currently teaching as a professor in Photography and Digital Media at Alanus-Hochschule, Bonn-Alfter, Germany. His work has been exhibited at Kunsthal Rotterdam, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, Museum of Contemporary Art Shenzhen, Museum Kurhaus Kleve and Fotomuseum Winterthur.

Michael Reisch, *Trust in those who supposedly know – JORDAN*, 2024, 50 x 40 cm, Inkjet print/Hahnmühle Photo Rag 308, mounted on Aluminium honeycomb panel/Alucore



Thomas Ruff (1958) gained international prominence in the late 1980s as part of the Düsseldorf School, a group of photographers taught by Bernd and Hilla Becher, known for their experimental approaches. Ruff diverged from his teachers, developing a unique conceptual style through the use of colour, image manipulation – originally through manual retouching techniques and eventually through digital methods – and large-scale prints. Working in distinct series, he explored various photographic genres like portraiture, nudes, landscapes and architecture. Utilising everything from outdated devices to advanced computer simulations, his innovative methods and inquiry into the ‘grammar of photography’ have made him highly influential.

In *Andere Porträts* (‘Other Portraits’), Ruff superimposed photographs on top of one another, using a technique sometimes employed by police to produce imagery of likely suspects. The results are evocative of composite photography, a practice popular in the late nineteenth century. For this series, Ruff borrowed a Minolta Montage Unit from the Polizeihistorische Sammlung (Police History Collection) in Berlin to combine portraits from his own archive and then created silkscreen prints of the composites. Neither fake nor real, these portraits are rather possibilities – faces that could exist. Ruff’s ‘Andere Porträts’ series anticipates the blending of faces through machine learning algorithms that generate hyper-realistic yet entirely fictitious portraits. His artistic approach parallels current generative AI systems by producing faces that transcend individual identities, existing instead as imaginative possibilities.

Thomas Ruff’s work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at prominent institutions worldwide, including the S.M.A.K., Ghent (2014); the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2012); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2007); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2002) and others.



Thomas Ruff, *Andere Portraits Nr. 71/65*, 1994–95, Screen-print on Schölller-Durex-Paper, 169,5 x 119,5 cm (200 x 150 cm), Collection of Annika and Markus Kramer



## PHILIPPE STARCK

Inventor, architect and designer Philippe Starck's (1949) vision centres on the belief that creation, whatever shape it takes, must make life better for the largest number of people possible. This philosophy has positioned him as a pioneering figure of 'democratic design'. By extending his work across diverse domains – including product design, architecture, naval engineering and space exploration – Starck consistently challenges the conventional boundaries of design. His commitment to innovation and accessibility has established him as one of the most influential and visionary creators on the global contemporary design scene.

The A.I. chair, the first chair to be mass-produced using artificial intelligence in its design process, is the product of the synergy between designer Philippe Starck, the software company Autodesk and the industrial design company Kartell. The chair was launched at the Salone del Mobile furniture fair in 2019 and is entirely made out of recycled material – reused, clean industrial scraps. According to Starck, the A.I. is the first chair designed outside of our brain, beyond our habitual ways of thinking: a collaboration between artificial and human intelligence – a concept he refers to as 'natural intelligence' – driven by the question, 'How can our body be supported with the least amount of material and energy possible?' The chair's conception is an early example of a new language and form of communication where creative thinking and artificial intelligence merge. The generative design technology behind the chair incorporated material parameters, manufacturing constraints such as injection moulding and cost considerations, examining all potential variations. The software learned from each iteration, running calculation after calculation for two years, refining the designs.



Philippe Starck, *AI Chair Morphing*, 2019, Video, 0:51 Mins



Jenna Sutela (1983) is a Finnish artist based in Berlin. She works with biological and computational systems, including the human microbiome and artificial neural networks, to create sculptures, images and music. Her installations and performances seek to identify and react to precarious social and material moments, often in relation to technology.

Jenna Sutela's audiovisual artwork *nimiia cétii*, 2018 is inspired by experiments in interspecies communication and aspires to connect with a world beyond our consciousness. The piece uses machine learning to analyse *Bacillus subtilis* bacteria under a microscope, translating their movements into calligraphy and audio. The sound is generated by a neural network trained on the artist's voice and mimics an early Martian language channelled by French medium Hélène Smith. Another layer of sound, 'the vocals', presents a more typical approach where the network simply generates more of what it has heard before. The work merges AI with the more-than-human world, using bacterial movements to create new forms of communication and, in mixing wetware and hardware, portraying the computer as an alien medium.

Jenna Sutela's work has been presented at museums and art contexts internationally, including Swiss Institute, New York (2023); Helsinki Biennial (2023); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2022); Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin (2022); Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki (2022); Shanghai Biennale (2021); Liverpool Biennial (2021); Kunsthall Trondheim (2020); Serpentine Galleries, London (2019); and Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2019). She was a Visiting Artist at the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST) in 2019-21.



Jenna Sutela, *nimiia cétii*, 2018, Video, 12:05 Mins

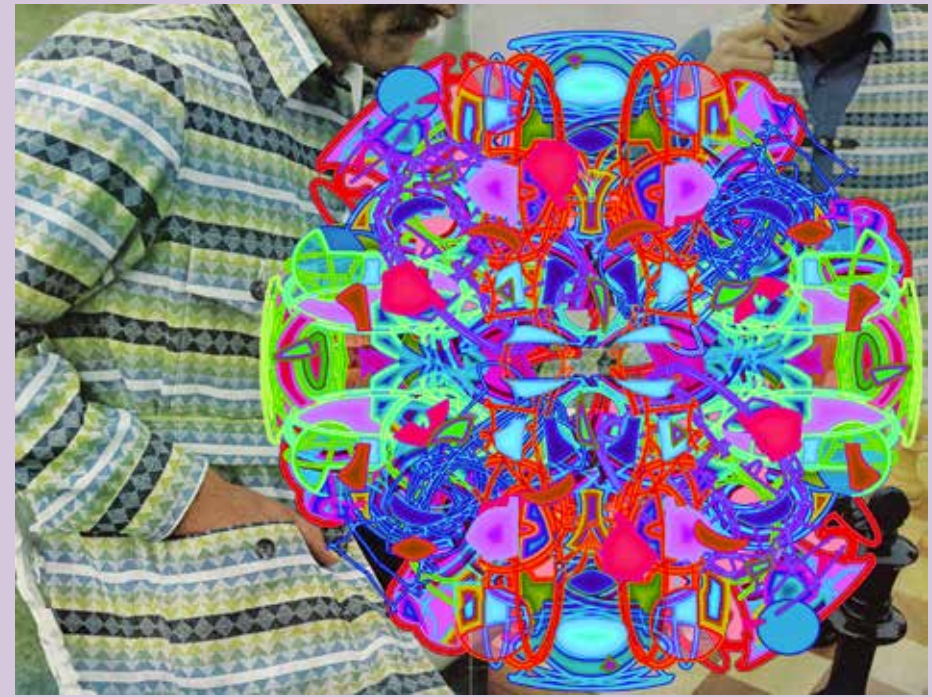
Known for his appropriation of iconic cultural images, American artist Kelley Walker (1969) has examined the circulation and consumption of visual culture using techniques of collage, screen-printing, sculpture and installation.

In the early 2000s, Kelley Walker sold his work on CD-ROMs, giving purchasers the freedom to manipulate and modify the imagery with Photoshop, so the work was never completely 'finished'. A text accompanying the discs stated:

The disc and the image it contains can be reproduced and disseminated as often as the holder desires. Whoever receives a copy of the disc or image can likewise reproduce/disseminate either as desired and so on. Furthermore, anyone with a disc or reproduction can manipulate the image and reproduce/disseminate it in its altered state. All forms of reproduction/deviation derived from the image on the disc signed Kelley Walker perpetuate a continuum correlating to the art-work.

In this sense, Kelley Walker can be seen as embodying a 'post-production' model, where preexisting content is reworked and transformed into circulating samples that parallel the logic of technologies from the early 2000s, like MP3.

Kelley Walker's work has been the subject of numerous single-artist exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; Le Magasin - Centre National d'art Contemporain, Grenoble; Wiels Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels; MAMCO, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva; and Le Mur Consortium in Paris.



Kelley Walker, *Chess Players*, 2000, CD-ROM and color digital poster, dimensions variable, Collection of Annika and Markus Kramer

Nushin Yazdani is an interaction and transformation designer, artist and AI researcher. In her work, she examines the interconnectedness of digital technologies and social justice, and artificial intelligence and discrimination, from an intersectional feminist perspective.

In *Neither fate nor coincidence: Visualizing structural discrimination and machine bias* (2019), around 3,000 mugshots of inmates from across the U.S. were scraped, cropped and resized to train a DCGAN model that generates new prisoner faces visualising structural discrimination and machine bias. The work questions the ethics of using stolen images from *mugshots.com*, where removal of personal data comes at a cost. Who can afford to disappear, and who remains trapped, feeding a system that creates future prisoners? The project seeks to make the controversy of predictive policing tangible, asking if future inmates can be predicted based on the biased dataset of current convicts. In a world where AI increasingly influences predictive policing and risk assessment, the artist highlights how bias within data perpetuates structural discrimination. As algorithms shape decisions, from crime prediction to recidivism, the core question remains: Does predictive policing simply reinforce systemic injustice, addressing symptoms while ignoring root causes?

Nushin Yazdani is the co-founder of Dreaming Beyond AI ([dreamingbeyond.ai](http://dreamingbeyond.ai)), an AI research, advocacy and art platform that explores AI's impact on society, questioning its role in reinforcing power structures and envisioning alternative futures. By challenging dominant narratives and showcasing diverse visions, the project aims to inspire new ways for AI to connect and serve us, moving beyond techno-dystopian perspectives.



Nushin Yazdani, *Neither fate nor coincidence: Visualizing structural discrimination and machine bias*, 2018, Video, 07:06 Mins



# THE GRID

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a collaboration between JANNA BECK, KRIS MEEUSEN, KRISTÍ FEKETE, ANH LE PHUONG, SHAYLI HARRISON, PETER LEMMENS, KAREL TUYTSCHAEVER, BORIS VAN DEN EYNDEN, ANNE LISE CERCHEDAN, GINA POORTMAN, BAS ROGIERS, PHILIP MEERSMAN, TOM DIETVORST, WOUTER STEEL, MICHAEL SEGERS, and MATHIAS MU, among others

**18-27.10.2024**

Venushal, Academy

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‘The Grid’ is an interactive installation that utilises a projection mapping on the ceiling of the Venushal, transforming its grid pattern into a dynamic canvas for collective expression. This installation engages participants in real time, exploring the evolving role of the creator in the post-digital era.

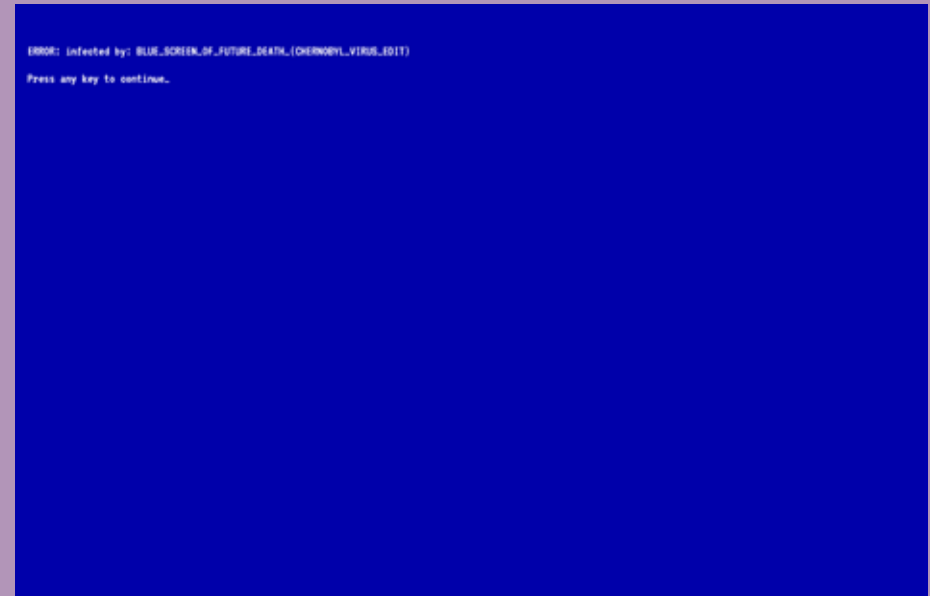
Inspired by James Turrell’s *Skyspace* installations and Rafaël Rozendaal’s *Bring Your Own Beamer* concept, which advocates for inclusive, collaborative art, ‘The Grid’ consists of 63 interlocking squares, each nested within the next, creating a mesmerising effect that evolves as participants engage with it. This structure creates a visually engaging and evolving environment as audiences interact with the installation.

‘The Grid’ is part of the celebration of Maxlab’s tenth anniversary. Established in 2015 as a research group within the Academy, Maxlab has grown into one of four research groups at the school. To commemorate this milestone, ‘The Grid’ will be featured during *ARTICULATE 2024*, inviting all artists and researchers who have contributed to Maxlab’s evolution to participate in this collective installation.

‘The Grid’ encourages viewers to look up and engage, turning the ceiling into a platform for shared artistic exploration and expression.

Curated by JANNA BECK

BLUE SCREEN OF FUTURE DEATH (Chernobyl Virus edit), contribution by Peter Lemmens to ‘The Grid’





# YES SECOND CHANCE

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exhibition

with work by MARÍA ALBORÉS LOJO, MARIANNE BIERBOOMS, YUKI OKUMURA, VANESSA STEFANETTI, ELISA VERKOELEN, MIA WANG, KEIGO WEZEL, JONNA WITTE, HELENA ZARYS, HOYT ZHANG

**18-27.10.2024**

Entrance hall, Academy

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Inaugurated in 2022, the Performance Course is an elective course for the third-year bachelor students of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, tutored by artist and PhD researcher Yuki Okumura. Aiming at opening up one's working process to chance through instructed actions, after conceptual art, it focuses on the artist's doing rather than showing, exploring performance as a means of self-reflection rather than self-expression.

The Performance Course presents the exhibition *Yes Second Chance* in the context of ARTICULATE 2024. Various outcomes of chance-oriented actions, conceived and performed by last year's course participants, along with related documents, are displayed in the built-in vitrine and other areas of the entrance hall.

Curated by YUKI OKUMURA



Marianne Bierbooms, *Journal (fingers)*, 2024-ongoing

**PUBLIC**

**PROGRAMME**

# TECHNO/SEEN: ON THE TECHNOLOGICAL APPARATUS AND ITS IMAGES

symposium

with STEVEN HUMBLET, FRANZISKA KUNZE, MICHAEL REISCH, SPIROS HADJIDJANOS, EMMANUEL VAN DER AUWERA, SUSAN MORRIS, JEFF WEBER, MONA HEDAYATI

**Thursday 17 October, 10:00-17:00**

Lange Zaal, Academy

Ever since the invention of photography, technologically produced images have dazzled us. Often, it has fallen to visual artists to critically assess the social and cultural impact of these images. One of the main issues that piqued their interest was the way this constant stream of ever-new technologies redefined the relationship between the apparatus and its human operator. What does it mean to be relegated to the somewhat passive position of someone merely activating a process that for the most part runs its own course? Their attempts to explore the programmatic nature of these apparatuses has become even more necessary today as we are being confronted with powerful systems that seemingly conjure up images out of thin air. Considering that these apparatuses are supposed to function as technological enhancements (or replacements?) of our human faculties of thinking and imagining, we're left with the urgent question of how to deal with this alien intelligence. Are we supposed to play with or against these apparatuses? What remains of the human experience in the data sets they produce, and what is left out? Is it possible to equate the flexibility of AI models that dynamically adjust their internal rules based on input data to our own human capacity of invention? Are they really able to free us from our all-too-human expectations and, in doing so, open up new avenues for our imagination? If so, what would be required to unleash their potential to surprise us? Does it

emerge in the glitches that appear when they are pushed beyond their limits? Or does it only appear when their virtual data are translated in a material form and thus come up against the friction of the material world? These are just a few of the questions that the invited speakers will address in their talks during the conference.

Michael Reisch, *Trust in those who supposedly know* - ELIAS, 2023, 50 x 40cm, Inkjet print, mounted on Alucore/Aluminium honeycomb panel



# AI MUSICKING

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performance

by UMUT ELDEM, CHIARA PERCIVATI, ADILIA YIP

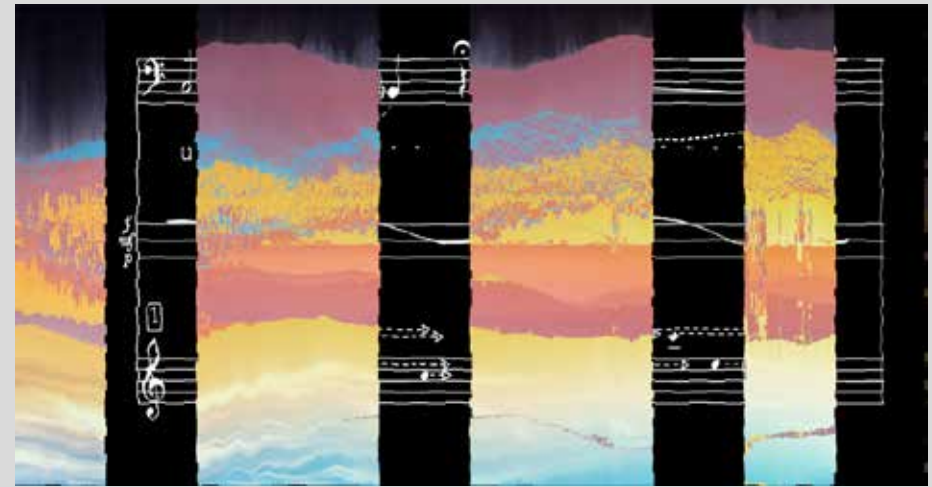
**Thursday 17 October 2024, 18:00-18:30**

Lange Zaal, Academy

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Is musical AI a tool, a performer or a mirror? The widespread use of AI is changing our relationship with how we interact with technology in artistic expression. Most popular generative AI tools are based on models trained with an enormous amount of data, reflecting large-scale biases and tendencies. Smaller AI models trained with a specific source of data, however, can generate specialised outputs, minimising the impact of irrelevant biases and better aligning with niche requirements or specific tasks.

Over the last year, researchers from the research group CREATIE of the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp have been training generative AI models based on their musical practices. The resulting algorithms generate sounds and musical phrases in real time that shadow the sound world of the research group. In this performance, musicians from the research group CREATIE explore the implications of placing musical AI on the stage by co-creating with AI as a creative agent.





# AN EXPLORATION OF GENERATIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC STRATEGIES

artist talk

by DRIES SEGERS

**Tuesday 22 October 2024, 19:00**

Lange Zaal, Academy

In this lecture, researcher Dries Segers (research group Thinking Tools) focusses on the generative possibilities of image-making as part of his research project 'Ask your hands to know the things they hold'. Central in this lecture is the activation and use of natural and earthly matters, self-developed technologies, the position of individual authorship, key historical figures, and Segers' personal research.

'Ask your hands to know the things they hold' dives into the challenges of ecological thinking while being engaged in artistic production. How can you co-create with non-human actors and share (or even give away) authorship? How to use this paradigm shift to change what and how you visualise?

Segers will share a curated selection of contemporary and historical artworks that were generated through earthly co-existence. He will focus on his self-made photographic technique, the Mudgram, and other work that is part of the exhibition 'Moving the Photogram' in the Lange Zaal. He will highlight his experiences of having a radically material practice as a photographer, in a time when photography is becoming hyper-digital.

+ guided tour by STEVEN HUMBLET in the exhibition 'Moving the Photogram'



Studio view Dries Segers, June 2024 at Level Five

# OBJECT, DREAM, THOUGHT: MARCEL BROODTHAERS, PENSE-BÊTE AND SURREALISM

lecture

by JOHN C. WELCHMAN

**Wednesday 23 October 2024, 19:00-20:30**

Lange Zaal, Academy

This lecture by John C. Welchman, Distinguished Professor of Art History at the University of California, San Diego, examines the connection between Marcel Broodthaers' early work, *Pense-Bête*, and the Surrealist genre of Poem-Objects. Introduced by André Breton in the mid-1920s, Poem-Objects were intended to give physical form to the metaphorical and visionary aspects of poetry and dreams. These objects became a recurring theme in Surrealism, with Breton himself creating several in the 1930s and 1940s.

Welchman delves into Broodthaers' broader relationship with Surrealism by referencing Raoul Vaneigem's critical reassessment of the movement in his book *Histoire désinvolte du surréalisme* (1977), published under the pseudonym Jules-François Dupuis. Vaneigem, a member of the Situationist International, critiques Surrealism for turning the image-as-object into a commodity that conceals alienating relationships, reproducing itself as a purely ideological appearance. The lecture suggests that Broodthaers' career-launching work, *Pense-Bête*, can be interpreted as a reaction against Surrealist ideals, particularly their tendency to elevate art to a counter-truth that ignores economic realities. Broodthaers' notorious admission of 'insincerity' and his embrace of commercialism are seen as rejections of these Surrealist fantasies.

The lecture addresses the visualization of thought in Broodthaers' work. The title *Pense-Bête*, which translates to 'memory aid' or 'reminder,' hints at a deeper engagement with the relationship between visual and literary art, a topic central to Surrealism and later, Conceptual Art. By naming both his book of poems and an early sculpture *Pense-Bête*, Broodthaers critiques and redirects Surrealist ideas about thought, moving away from their mystification and self-referential tendencies.

In collaboration with S.M.A.K., Ghent, as part of a series of lectures on 100 years Marcel Broodthaers.



Marcel Broodthaers, *Pense Bête*, 1964, Mixed media, 95,5 x 85 x 44 cm

# SUBVERSIVE SURREALISM?

panel discussion

by RESEARCH GROUP ARCHIVOLT

with KURT DE BOODT, LIESBETH DECAN, VINCENT VAN MEENEN, JOHN C. WELCHMAN, QUINTEN INGELAERE,

moderated by JOHAN PAS

**Wednesday 23 October 2024, 20:30**

Lange Zaal, Academy

Join us for a panel discussion on the contemporary relevance of Surrealism, 100 years after the *First Surrealist Manifesto* (1924). Artists and theorists explore and discuss the topicality of Surrealist concepts and methods. Do they still make sense, and if so, how to deal with them?

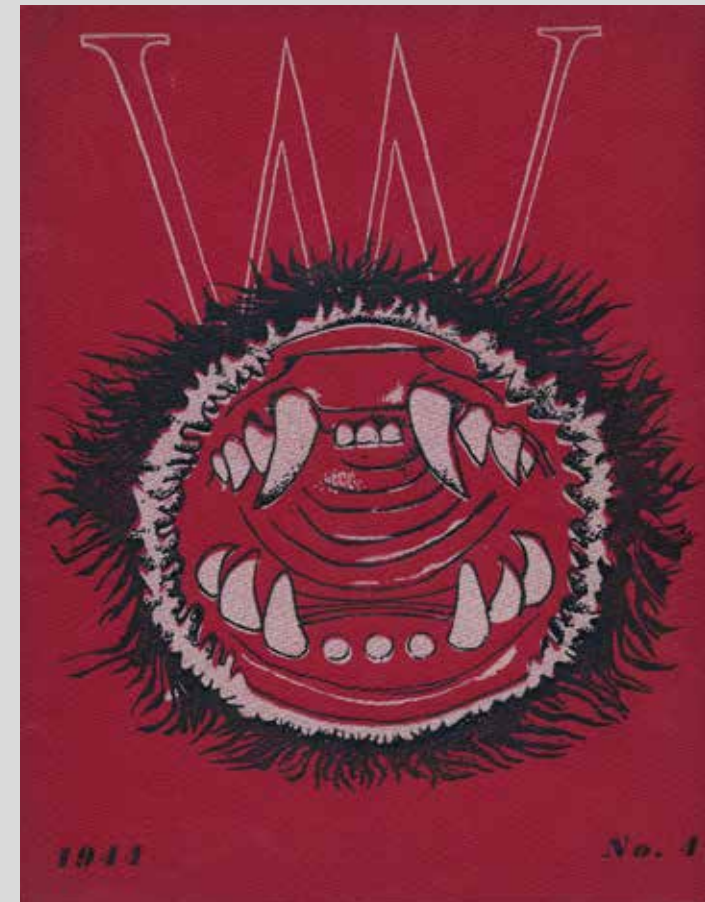
Our times are as troubled as those of the interbellum, when Surrealism emerged from the rubble of earlier avant-garde movements and the traumas of the First World War. It was a movement that witnessed the rise of Fascism and Communism, and the crisis of modernism.

Notwithstanding its entanglement with its cultural and historical contexts, Surrealism managed to survive these and became the most lasting avant-garde movement. Only at the end of the 1960s, with its spokesman André Breton passing away and postmodern art movements gaining prominence, did Surrealism really become a phenomenon to look back on in history.

Today, its imagery and vocabulary are still being appropriated and quoted. Names like Salvador Dalí and René Magritte attract public attention, while some of their images have become part of our collective memory. Surrealism has been reduced to its most canonical artists and motifs and seems to have lost its sense of danger and provocation.

Commemorating a centenary of Surrealism, Mark Polizzotti, biographer of André Breton, recently released *Why Surrealism Matters*. Exploring Surrealist themes, such as transformation, appropriation, subversion, transgression, disruption and revolution, the author concludes that Surrealist topics and strategies still make sense and deserve to be reinterpreted, even after a hundred years.

The Surrealists believed in a revolution of the mind and the liberation of humankind. Is this purely utopian or are there things to be learned from their radical position? In an informal conversation with theorists, artists and the audience, we will try to explore if, how and why Surrealism still makes sense today.



VVV. Poetry, Plastic Arts, Antropology, Sociology, Psychology, 1944, nr. 4, New York (cover image by Roberto Matta)

# ART WITHOUT ARTISTS – ANONYMOUS CREATIVITY

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panel discussion

with MATHIAS MU, MATHIJS TRATSAERT, MONA HEDAYATI,  
SHAYLI HARRISON, THOMAS CROMBEZ, KRISTÍ FEKETE

**Thursday 24 October, 19:00-21:00**

Lange Zaal, Academy

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The relationship between creatives and digital technology is becoming increasingly complex. Digital structures and their workings are hard to trace, creating both an exciting challenge and a pressing issue for artists working with(in) them.

For this debate, we invite four young artists – Mathias MU, Mathijs Tratsaert, Mona Hedayati and Shayli Harrison. All four of their practices are interwoven with digital technologies. Coming from seemingly disparate disciplines and backgrounds, they offer different perspectives on the topic. Mathias MU is exploring a gamified interaction between technology and humans in an exhibition setting; Mathijs Tratsaert is a poet co-writing with ChatGPT; Mona Hedayati draws on computational arts, post-humanism, memory, trauma and affect studies; Shayli Harrison does speculative fashion design, investigating the influence of digital identities on real-world behaviour.

The panel members will explore a creator's role in the context of emerging digital technology. A basis for their conversation will be both Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto* and the concept of 'art without artists,' along with demonstrations of the artists' own work. They will examine digital's impact on authorship and the possibilities and challenges of anonymous creativity. The discussion will be a space to show, teach and learn.

The demonstrations brought by the artists will also be points of discussion. Each of the works will provide context for questions

regarding authorship in the digital age. How can a critical responsibility be practised as an artist? How do digital intimacy and emotional connection manifest in the work, the artist and the viewer?





# TABLECLOTH

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collective reflection on art education  
by students and researchers of the Royal Academy of  
Fine Arts Antwerp and PXL-MAD School of Arts Hasselt  
**21-25.10.2024**  
Entrance hall

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The tablecloth on the tables in the entrance hall is conceived as a canvas. It was made by master's students from PXL-MAD School of Arts Hasselt and adorned with embroidered statements, written by Johan Pas, reflecting on the role of art schools today. It is now being passed onto the master's students of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp as part of ARTICULATE 2024.

Over the course of five lunch breaks – hosted by students of the research class led by Charlotte Koopman – where food and conversations are shared, the tablecloth will not only decorate the tables but also serve as a prompt for discussions and reflections. You are warmly invited to contribute your thoughts by writing them directly onto the tablecloth.

In November, the tablecloth will travel to the ELIA Biennial 2024 in Milan, where it will once again act as a catalyst for meaningful exchanges. At this conference on art education, the research teams from both the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp and PXL-MAD School of Arts Hasselt will join forces to host a workshop. In this workshop, students, teachers and participants will cook together and, both literally and figuratively, embroider on the thoughts already shared. Through connection, the workshop aims to address the pressing need for unity in today's world.

This initiative seeks to spark a conversation on the future of art education. The results will be added to the tablecloth, symbolising a collective reflection.



ARTICULATE 2023, photo by Wannes Cré

**ANONYMOUS**

**CREATIVITY**

**EXPLORED**

Theoretical and artistic  
contributions

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# LET'S PLAY A GAME!

## Collective surrealist creation methods revisited

by INGE HENNEMAN

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### *ÉCRITURE AUTOMATIQUE*

'Sit at a table with pen and paper, put yourself in a receptive frame of mind, and start writing. Continue writing without thinking about what is appearing beneath your pen. Write as fast as you can.'<sup>1</sup>

Automatic writing – or drawing, painting, sculpting, performing ... – is the most direct of Surrealist creation methods, intended to free words and images from the constraints of rational order and to exploit the unpredictable outcomes of chance and accident.<sup>2</sup>

One hundred years ago, in the first Surrealist manifesto, André Breton defined 'pure psychic automatism' as 'a way to express – verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought (...) in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern'.<sup>3</sup>

Breton had discovered the Freudian diagnostic method during WWI as a young medical assistant. Now he was subverting it, appropriating it for creative uses.

*Écriture automatique* and other procedures devised by the Surrealists in the 1920s provide keys to unlock the unconscious and to release the visual and verbal poetry of solitary and collective creativity.<sup>4</sup> The invitation by poet Benjamin Péret is to 'forget about your genius, your talents, and the talents of everyone else. (...) You no longer want to know what is logical and what is not'. And this invitation applies to everyone: 'Poetry should be made by all,' as Lautréamont asserted.

In *A book of surrealist games*, a toolbox of curious and playful chance procedures is compiled, such as 'the exquisite corpse', the telephone game, frottage, collage and montage, free association, surprising juxtaposition, decalcomania, *fumage*, lucid dreaming and poetic hallucination, the critical paranoid method, simulation of hysteria and madness, and more. Among many others, the Surrealist artists Masson, Ernst, Dalí, Buñuel and Oppenheim experimented with automatism and what Duchamp called 'canned chance', a concept describing processes that depend on chance yet paradoxically attempt to fix or standardise it.

One hundred years later, automatic drawing, stream of consciousness, and many more Surrealist methods are taken for granted by artists and have become part of our academic training. Art students develop their own unique ways to invite happenstance and serendipity, balancing between coincidence and control, between deliberate intention and surrendering to the arbitrary. A wide range of historical and contemporary artistic practices cultivate and manipulate chance by means of playful uses of automatism and a random set of parameters and rules. Examples include seeing figures in clouds and accidental blots (Leonardo Da Vinci); self-induced trance states (Arthur Rimbaud); coin tossing (Stéphane Mallarmé); juxtaposing

unrelated elements (Isidore Ducasse, comte de Lautréamont); creating poems by pulling words out of a hat (Tristan Tzara); camera-less photography AKA rayograms (Man Ray); subverting images (Paul Nougé); involuntary sculptures (Brassaï); dripping (Jackson Pollock); I-Ching operations (John Cage); cut-ups (William Burroughs); *dérives* and urban psychogeography (Situationists); event scores (Fluxus); methods of depersonalisation in conceptual art, such as ‘the idea becomes the machine that makes the art’ (Sol LeWitt).

#### COLLECTIVE COLLABORATION AND THE GAME

Mel Gooding argues that the principal reason for the huge influence of Surrealism is its emphasis on collective activities, which were remarkably disciplined and well-organised. The emphasis on forms of collective creativity was in opposition to the idea of the artist as an individual genius.<sup>5</sup>

In the Surrealist game ‘the exquisite corpse’, different players draw different parts of a figure (or write different parts of a sentence) without knowing what the others have done. The unpredictable result is a joint endeavour, only revealed to the participants at the end of the process. In the spring of 2013 a form of this game was played by sixteen artists at the Antwerp artist space LLS Paleis, resulting in an exhibition. Each artist painted a part of the walls of the exhibition space, building on his predecessor’s contribution, while no more than 3 to 10 cm of that prior work was visible. The resulting frieze was a collective work, only to be unveiled during the opening and painted over after closing the exhibition.<sup>6</sup>

Simone Collinet (Breton’s first wife) commented on the exquisite corpse technique:

The suggestive power of these arbitrary juxtapositions of words (and images) was so startling and dazzling and validated Surrealist theories and inclinations in such a striking way that the game became a system, a method of research, a means of exaltation and stimulus, a mine, a treasure-trove and finally, perhaps, a drug.<sup>7</sup>

#### CHANCE ENCOUNTERS

In addition to language games and visual techniques, the Surrealists experimented with ways to transform the everyday found object through methods such as displacement and juxtaposition, absurd inquiry and irrational questioning. The Surrealist object discloses the realm of the marvellous that lays hidden within ordinary reality through bewildering analogies and new perspectives beyond our comprehension.<sup>8</sup> By playing with objective chance, reality is reassembled and the everyday world is reinvented.<sup>9</sup> Imagination rules, and unexpected wonder illuminates a life intensified. ‘I madly love everything that adventurously breaks the thread of discursive thought and suddenly ignites a flare illuminating a life of relations fecund in another way,’ wrote Breton.

#### (UNSERIOUS) PLAY TO START A (SERIOUS) REVOLUTION

The Surrealist aesthetics of ‘convulsive beauty’, shock and risk aim to transgress rational and ethical borders and to reach beyond taboos and dualisms of the rational, conscious mind. Not only were the experiments and procedures at the centre of a revolution of the mind, they are at the centre of the Surrealist provocation of bourgeois normalities, as well as the hierarchical art world.<sup>10</sup> The objective of their fun game-playing was no less



than revolution. By freeing the imagination from the prison of logic and undermining all familial, ideological and institutional order, the Surrealist objective was a redefinition of freedom in the widest possible terms. By abolishing the notion of talent and reducing the importance of the 'author' to a minimum, the Surrealist perspective on art is radically democratic. 'Surrealism appears to me in its essentials as a sort of rage, a rage against the existing state of things,' said Georges Bataille.

#### LIMITATIONS OF 'PURE' AUTOMATISM

The Surrealists soon came to realise that automatic techniques may be used as a way to begin a creative activity, to stimulate and encourage a spontaneity of image-making, but the artistic results are often quite disappointing and give way to cliché and conventional figurative doodling, while the Freudian psychological interpretation of 'painting from the unconscious' often results in literary symbolism and even kitsch. By the late thirties, the mannequin, once a figure of the uncanny, had become a surrealist cliché, difficult to distinguish from its use in fashion, and at that point Surrealism was embraced by high society. Once politically provocative, it had become chic.

From a moral perspective, automatism is considered to cover up any regressive and repressive reactivity and violently transgress ethical boundaries. Freedom may not seem so free when patriarchal or downright sexist, fetishist attitudes assert themselves, reducing women to mere objects.

#### SO, LET'S PLAY A GAME, SHALL WE?

What could be the actual value of these collective games and creation methods for young artists that like to tap into the creative potential of chance in their practice?

Let's update these Surrealist creative recipes and test their revolutionary claims 100 year later. In a workshop by artist and researcher Yuki Okumura and myself, students will be invited to practice collective automatic techniques together.<sup>11</sup> We'll examine whether the indeterminacy derived from games and arbitrary systems of order provide fresh and unorthodox ways of making art. And we question where artistic subjectivity and authorship reside when anonymous, arbitrary rules govern the creative process.

Breton always wanted the last word. Talking of games, he concludes:

If there is one activity in Surrealism which has most invited the derision of imbeciles, it is our persistent playing of games, which can be found throughout most of our publications over the last thirty-five years. Although as a defensive measure we sometimes described such activity as 'experimental' we were looking to it primarily for entertainment, and those rewarding discoveries it yielded in relation to knowledge came only later. Certainly we pursued this activity with other considerations in mind; right from the start it proved useful for strengthening the bonds that united us, and for encouraging sudden awareness of our desires whenever these were held in common. Furthermore the urgent need we felt to do away with the old antinomies that dominate work and leisure, 'wisdom' and 'folly' etc. – such as action and dream, past and future, sanity and madness, high and low, and so on – disposed us not to spare that of the serious and the non-serious (games).

1. *A Book of Surrealist Games*, ed. Alistair Brotchie, intro. Mel Gooding (London: Redstone Press, 1991), p. 17. Most of the inspiration and quotes for this text were taken from this excellent book.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
3. André Breton, *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (Paris: Éditions du Sagittaire, 1924).<sup>4</sup> *Surrealist Games*, p. 17.
5. *Surrealist Games*.
6. 'Cadavre Exquis', *LLS Paleis*, accessed September 15, 2024, <http://llspaleis.be/expo/cadavre-exquis/>.
7. *Surrealist Games*, p. 143.
8. André Breton, *Nadja* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963; first edition 1928).
9. Vincent Van Meenen, "100 Jaar Surrealisme: Een Artistiek Vormonderzoek in het Creatief Schrijven aan de Hand van de Surrealistische Creatiemethoden" (PhD diss., Aria Antwerp, 2024), p. 15.
10. *Surrealist Games*, p. 13.
11. Inge Henneman and Yuki Okumura, 'Some More Chances: Re-Playing Surrealist Games and Beyond', a workshop for 3BA students during ARTICULATE, 24 October 2024. I would like to thank Yuki Okumura for our conversations on chance that inspired this text.

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# A Narcissian Triptych

by Kristí Fekete

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A fairly familiar vision: a youth hunched over a body of water in a dimly lit grove, hands reached out towards a glistening self-reflection, fingers dangling just above the water's surface. The youth is dazzled by his own image in the pond. The scenery is only lit up by the silvery waves, showing a double of the youth's face. The story goes, he has been cursed to fall in love with himself as a punishment for scorning a nymph. Now, flat on the ground, he lovingly contemplates his own face, offering kisses to it. The myth of Narcissus falling in love with his own reflection is a timeless story of excessive self-love.

Max Nelson offers an alternative reading of the myth.<sup>1</sup> What is this vision that enchants the youth really? Nelson questions whether this myth could arise as a narrative explanation of a magical ritual. He recognises the figure of a young boy entranced by the water's surface from antique scrying rituals.

Scrying is a form of divination, of accessing knowledge preternaturally. This is achieved by focusing on a single point, often a body of water kept in some sort of a vessel. The magician practicing scrying either self-hypnotises, or hypnotises a suggestible medium.<sup>2</sup> Nelson describes the suggestible medium as young, male, naïve, virginal, beautiful, eloquent.<sup>3</sup>

The medium's eyes were closed and/or blindfolded until suddenly faced with a bright light. The source of the light would have been the water vessel (the polished bottom of the metal

bowl, and/or shiny stones placed in the bowl).<sup>4</sup> To the medium, the water would no longer show their own face, but a vision of the spirit or divinity called upon. The medium would then converse with this vision.

Here we have our beautiful boy, mesmerised by what he sees in the water. The medium communicates with the otherworldly being, gaining knowledge not usually accessible to humans. Allison Parrish saw Nelson's scene – a human peeking through a small window into a realm of higher knowledge – and drew a parallel to machine learning. She likens the divine knowledge to datasets, specifically those that drive computer-generated writing.<sup>5</sup>

For Parrish, interacting with such datasets is similar to how a medium would communicate with the deceased. The medium is the computer. We are the magicians, 'drawing forth the spirits buried in data, in order to find out what they have to say to us.'<sup>6</sup> With this, she encourages us to animate the data (like bringing back the dead) and to actively interpret it. Parrish views the reading of the Narcissus myth as a scrying ritual as liberating. Rather than seeing datasets merely as reflections of excessive self-mimicry, as a traditional reading of the Narcissus myth might suggest, she proposes that the Narcissus myth, when viewed as a scrying ritual, invites us to interact with and interpret the datasets.

There's a triptych in front of us. Each panel shows individual figures lying flat on their stomachs, hands hovering over a shiny surface. Each face is lit up by this source of light. The figures and the displays are enacting reciprocal movements. One panel is Narcissus gazing at the reflection, the other a medium scrying to contact spirits, and the third one a computer processing a dataset.

What catches my eye is the figure's appearance. Narcissus is famously beautiful. A suggestible medium also has pleasing traits such as being beautiful, eloquent. Datasets in themselves do not have such humanoid traits. They are, however, designed to have a visual representation. Some of the most known datasets come in the form of so-called digital assistants. These are made to give the impression of interacting with a human-like figure that acts as a mediator between the user and the dataset. In this role, they act much like mediums.

There is an observable trend in how digital assistants are represented – digital assistants as internet-connected technologies that support users in a wide range of queries. Their output is generated by AI: a combination of self-learning and human-guided algorithms.<sup>7</sup> Think Amazon's Alexa, Apple's Siri, Microsoft's Cortana and most recently OpenAI's ChatGPT. Nearly all of these commonly used assistants have been feminised in their user interfaces, both in their names and in the sound of their voices.<sup>8</sup>

Companies often justify their choice of a young, female voice based on the associations connected to it. Female voices are stereotypically regarded as more cooperative, helpful and pleasant. Users generally prefer assistants to be supportive rather than authoritative – the latter is a trait more associated with male voices. Hence, the choice is justified by an assumed preference.<sup>9</sup>

The assistants' supportive role becomes one of subservience. The assistants hold no agency of their own. Their role is to honour the requests and commands inputted, regardless of the tone or language used. Even when facing poor treatment, they are to remain passive.<sup>10</sup>

Casting assistants as subservient feminine personas is a choice rooted in gender bias. Such a bias emerges because of the specific subset of the population that works in technology. Developers are mostly male and similarly technically educated.<sup>11</sup> The worldviews represented in development are narrowed down to their experience. The goal of the assistants is to help and offer a pleasant experience. It would seem, judging by the developers' design choices, that they feel these qualities are best represented by a young woman.

Going back to the image of scrying, subservience of child mediums was also a significant appeal. The reason behind this is twofold. For the spectators, children were perceived as more reliable – they are perceived as straightforward and unbiased, making them incapable of interpreting the visions. At the same time, from the perspective of the magician, they were easier to manipulate and thus likelier to produce the desired responses.<sup>12</sup>

A similar duality exists in the perception of feminised digital assistants. They are perceived as having access to oracle-like higher knowledge. Still, they can only access it when commanded to, and only for the use of the one requesting the knowledge. On their own, they are not imaginative enough to interpret it past communicating it to others. This mirrors how traits assigned to children often overlap with those associated with women, especially young women.

There is no direct correlation between feminised digital assistants and child mediums. But I do find it interesting to observe them side by side, as mouthpieces for higher knowledge they do not really possess. Especially how they are presented in order to be credible without being intimidating. They are chosen because of their perception as being amiable and non-threatening.

The adverse effects of feminised digital assistants must be considered. Not only do these assistants replicate existing gender biases, they actively widen them too. By associating women with roles such as 'assistant' and 'support', they reinforce the idea that, as a woman, you are expected to react passively and politely, even in the face of rudeness and harassment.<sup>13</sup>

Nelson identifies several motifs in Narcissus' myth, including not only 'self-love and just retribution, but a number of others, such as illusion, delusion, or error, reflection (visual and auditory), and spectatorship and objectification.'<sup>14</sup> I believe these hold up when talking about the phenomena of digital assistants as well. Interpreting the UI as an oracle medium is just one way to make use of the myth.

It is important to activate these interpretations. Parrish urges us to actively engage with datasets, instead of taking their generated answers for granted. By increasing our awareness of gender biases, documenting them and striving for gender-responsive approaches, we can make a difference. Unlike scrying, digital assistants are very much a thing of our times. Whether as developers, consumers or spectators, we have much more influence over them than we might assume.



1. Nelson, M. 'Narcissus: Myth and Magic', *The Classical Journal* 94 (2000), 363-389.
2. Ibid., p. 365.
3. Ibid., p. 377.
4. Ibid., p. 377.
5. Parrish, A. *The Umbra of an Imago: Writing under control of machine learning*. Serpentine Galleries, 2020. <https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/art-and-ideas/the-umbra-of-an-imago-writing-under-control-of-machine-learning/>.
6. Ibid.
7. West, M., R. Kraut, & H. Ei Chew. *I'd Blush If I Could: Closing Gender Divides in Digital Skills Through Education*. UNESCO, 2019. p. 92.
8. Most assistants do offer alternative voice options at this point. Ibid, p. 96.
9. Ibid. p. 101.
10. Ibid. p. 107
11. Ibid. p. 104
12. Johnston, S.I. "Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination." *Arethusa* 34, no.1 (2001): 97-117. Project MUSE. p. 107.
13. West, M., Kraut, R., & Ei Chew, H. *I'd blush if I could: closing gender divides in digital skills through education*. UNESCO, 2019, p. 107.
14. Nelson, M. *Narcissus: Myth and Magic*. The classical journal, 94. 363--389, 2000, p. 383.

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# Yes Chance: Surrealism and Conceptual Art

by YUKI OKUMURA

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No chance exists objectively, at least at macroscopic scale, as everything is causally interconnected in the universe. But, subjectively, chance exists. Chance is whatever occurs outside the range of one's ability to intentionally control things. It belongs to this vast area that I call the world. Rain is chance. The group composition when you take an elevator is chance. How a drop of tea settles is chance. Other people's deeds and words are chance. Sneezing is chance. Chance is all that is given to you. It is the essential mode of the world.

The world is a miraculously complex and orderly whole. Its miraculousness itself, however, is formless. A great work of art gives it a permanent form by incorporating the world's reactions to the artist's actions during the making process. This interaction is ruined by one's egoistic attempt to manipulate chance, while it is uplifted by one's humble acceptance of it. When I was very young, I happened to paint a great painting. Throughout the trial-and-error process, I didn't know where it was going. I kept improvising instinctively to the ever-changing painterly situation. With my mind blank, I let my body act almost on its own. I was not painting; the work was making itself with me as a tool. It was, however, beginner's luck. Wanting to make equally successful works, I tried to repeat the process, but I got totally stuck. No wonder, as my mind was full of ego, not blank anymore, demanding the same

result without living in the moment. Chance is unpredictable; you can never tame it.

How is it possible to keep one's mind blank – 'forget oneself', as we would put it in Japan – so that chance is active in one's working process? Isn't there a formula that ensures it? Surrealism (1920s-30s) and conceptual art<sup>1</sup> (1960s-70s) may have tips, as Surrealist and conceptualist artists respectively developed strategies for approaching chance. The methods they invented, some of which may be useful for us, include the following.

**Surrealism:** In a passive or receptive state of mind, and with no preconceived plan, you take a pen and write down every word as it springs to mind (automatic writing) or draw lines freely to accumulate markings, from which certain subjects evolve (automatic drawing). You put paper on a surface with unique texture, and rub it with pencil (frottage), or you spread ink on a surface that is not absorbent, press onto it a sheet of paper or a canvas, and lift or peel it away (decalcomania) – and then, triggered by the generated pattern, add details and/or cover portions to finalise the imagery, most often into an illusionistic scene.

**Conceptual art:** You place two identical hexagons on two city maps, visit the location of every vertex, glue a tiny sticker somewhere around, and photograph the street view (Douglas Huebler, 1968). You pierce a hole in the side of a can of white enamel paint, put it on the back of your bike and cycle through the city until the can is empty (Rosemarie Castoro, 1969). You remove, with a hammer and a chisel, a 36 × 36" area of the plaster layer from a wall (Lawrence Weiner, 1968). Or you apply paint with a no. 50 brush, one impression at a time, at

30 cm intervals, on a canvas, wall, window, etc. (Niele Toroni, 1966-).

While those methods have some commonalities, the Surrealist and conceptualist attitudes to chance, which determine the formulation of the work, seem almost opposite.

In line with André Breton's initial, 1924 definition of Surrealism as 'psychic automatism in its pure state',<sup>2</sup> automatic writing and drawing explore the unconscious – a chance domain, indeed, due to its uncontrollability. But is it technically really possible for you to cancel your intention and manipulation in such a setup, even if in a drug-induced trance? To write or draw is a voluntary act; forcing yourself to be lost in doing so is, quite contradictorily, a highly rational form of control. Here, however hard you try to serve as a mediumistic machine – a 'simple recording instrument' in Breton's words – you can only pretend to be so. Frottage and decalcomania bypass this problem by beginning with material phenomena. But the abstract pattern that is generated is then mostly turned into a figurative image via formal associations, often in predictable and stereotypical ways: chance is ruined. It only proves how poor their – or, more precisely, humanity's – faculty of imagination is. In short, most Surrealist artists didn't even want to forget themselves, sticking to the desire to show off their genius.<sup>3</sup>

In line with Sol LeWitt's initial, 1967/1969 definition of conceptual art as a methodology of 'avoiding subjectivity',<sup>4</sup> each conceptualist procedure mentioned above is generally done as follows. You intuitively conceive an idea to do something irrational, convert it into a set of instructions that require no special sensibility or skill, perform the action by

following them absolutely, and present the outcome in the most concise way. Intuitive ideas and unconscious thoughts seem similar, but while the latter occurs inside your mind, the former feels like something literally ‘coming to mind’, as if given by something external to you. In the execution phase, just like the material-oriented type of Surrealist methodology, you play with materials to elicit surprises. But here, the rules are much clearer and stricter – ‘the process is carried out blindly’<sup>5</sup> – and the action’s immediate consequence remains intact: two important regulations that keep your mind blank by banning any exercise of intellect and artistry. The resulting work thus becomes a direct record of how chance played out in the process, unencumbered by reason.

Importantly, the chance here includes not only how the materials behave and/or how the situation turns out but also how your body acts. The prescribed task is so simple and ordinary that your very own idiosyncratic way to enact it comes to the fore: how you cycle, hold a camera, hit a hammer or place a brush. It is basically defined by your body constitution and habitual manner, but also affected by your physical conditions and various situational factors in the here and now. It is out of your conscious control: you can’t help but do it that way. Yes, a large part of who you are – as a bodily or holistic being, free from your own preconceptions and biases – belongs to the world, to chance, and the resulting image, object or situation consists of minute traces of how this part of you – your true self, I would say – acted out in the process.<sup>6</sup> One lucid example is how every mark of paint left by Toroni’s repetitive action reflects the one-time interaction between the material and the self by never being identical to each other in shape and texture.<sup>7</sup>

This is the same state that the masterpiece I accidentally made a quarter-century ago obtained, though it was much more chaotically done with the structure called painting as the sole ruling framework. What is revolutionary about conceptual art is that it offers simple programmes for anybody, if capable of following the instructions, to realise such a work instantly, anytime and anywhere, and as many times as you like, generating a different result each time, yet with the same effect. As an egocentric, highly cerebral overthinker, who nevertheless wishes to produce great works to constantly re-encounter the world and myself, I find it truly liberating – and, indeed, useful.

From my perspective, there is a genealogy of chance-oriented actions running through various artistic movements and tendencies up until contemporary practices.<sup>8</sup> In this, Surrealism and conceptual art, with action painting in-between, constitute a radical shift from image to texture, representation to trace, illusion to life, mind to body, form to action and result to process. Does this genealogy lead to ‘art without artists’ or ‘anonymous creativity’? I doubt it. As Surrealism and conceptual art prove, however hard you try to reduce yourself to the state of *any body* or *no body*, you can’t escape from being *some body*. In other words, you may not be special, but you are absolutely unique. And that is what art celebrates.

1. The term 'conceptual art' was coined by Sol LeWitt in 1967 with a lowercase c, while a few years later the capitalised 'Conceptual Art' came to wide use. I use the former as this text refers to the initial definition by LeWitt, who distinguished between them as two different modes of art making. See Lucy R. Lippard, 'Escape Attempts' (1995) in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997, first publ. 1973), p. vii.
2. André Breton, 'Manifesto of Surrealism' (1924) in his *Manifestos of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1969).
3. I thus see potentials more in their collective procedures - rather than solitary ones, on which this text focuses - such as the 'exquisite corpse' technique, where, even though individual contributions are largely subject to the same problems discussed here, the final ensemble is indeed out of every participant's control.
4. Sol LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967).
5. Sol LeWitt, 'Sentences on Conceptual Art', 0-9 (1969).
6. 'The individual self, the real self, must be thoroughly bodily'. Kitaro Nishida, 'Logic and Life' (1936) in Kitaro Nishida, *Place & Dialectic*, trans. John W. M. Krummel and Shigenori Nagatomo (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
7. In this sense, it can be said that each mark is a unique self-portrait of Toroni, while all the marks he has made since 1966 until now together form an unparalleled autobiography.
8. This genealogy focuses on visual arts, by which I mean art forms that result in physical manifestations, but not excluding immaterial, time-based ones such as chance music, Fluxus, and postmodern dance.



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