

DIETMAR  
KOERING/  
EVA  
SOMMEREGGER

Digital Posthuman  
Spaces: Innovation  
and Bias in Human-  
Technology Fusion

The talk explores the dynamic relationship between humans and technology, particularly in architectural design and its computational tools: The fusion of human creativity and computational capabilities has significantly transformed this field and led to unprecedented innovation. Starting from a digital posthumanism that addresses the evolving relationship between humans and technology, the talk touches on the historical shift towards digitalisation and its profound implications for the conception and realisation of architecture. The concept of co-creation and positive feedback loops between humans and machines is central to digital posthumanism, which emphasises collaborative interactions and the blurring boundaries between humans and technology. Yet, many of today's outcomes of human-machine fused processes are necessarily biased. This is evident in the conventions and standards that are reproduced in today's text-to-image AI applications, as the machines have been trained with limited data sets, reinforcing racial and multiple other biases without practising a sense of doubt.

**Dietmar Köring**, based in Cologne, is a versatile professional in architecture, research, and education. He leads Arphenotype, an architectural research office pushing interdisciplinary boundaries. A Senior Guest Researcher at Latvia's Art Academy, he was an Assistant Professor at TU Berlin and taught at TU Braunschweig and Innsbruck University. Recognized with the Jaap Bakema Fellowship, his works have been featured globally, including MoMA New York and Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin.

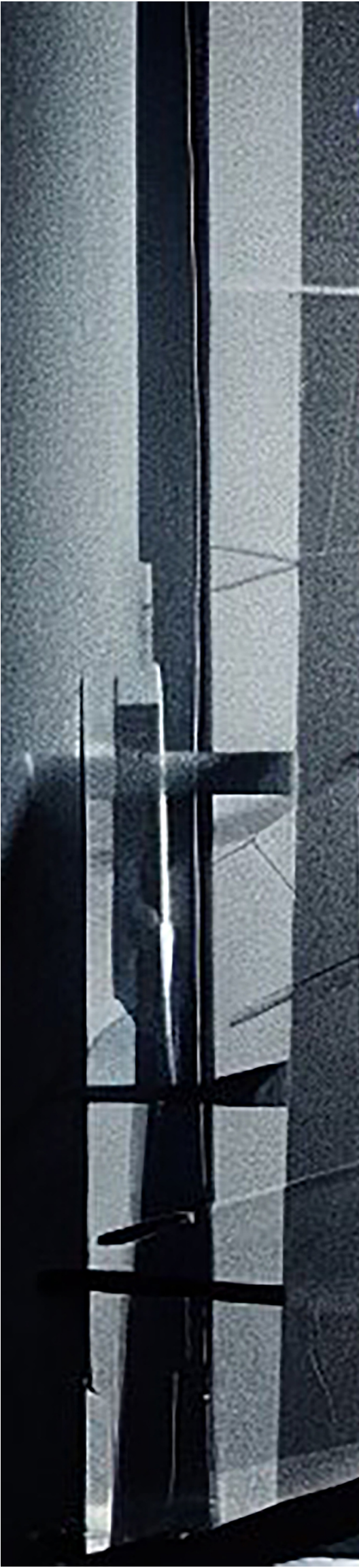
**Eva Sommeregger** is a Vienna-based researcher and architect, she works as a Senior Researcher at the Art Academy of Latvia and at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Her research investigates overlooked (digital) spaces as means of identifying entangled power relations and alternative forms of thinking. Eva is also co-founder of eyetry architecture.

MARC RIES

Deep Learning and  
Deep Dreaming: On the  
Relationship Between  
Intelligence and  
Imagination

AI applications are astonishing because of their everyday success in many fields, their performance seems superior to all old techniques and to that of humans; an amazing knowledge that inspires us to think further. Why do some things developed with AI seem most fantastic, as if from another world: overprocessed images generated with Deep Dream, artefacts from GAN, text-to-image models, ChatGPT. It seems as if computational, algorithmic intelligence is proceeding in an extremely creative way, as if it is evolving - during its „unsupervised learning“ - towards a new kind of imagination that feels like producing other, new beings, beyond all human imagination. As if any AI, any cognitive computing has a non-rational element as its premise. Are these machines „artistic“, gifted with aesthetic powers? Should we also speak of an „artificial imaginary“ as a necessary double of „artificial intelligence“? One task is to bring the universally observable invocations of AI, as an essential institution of the „digital transformation“, into a larger space and to inquire whether the motives that drive it – and its developers – do follow a „radical social imaginary“, as Cornelius Castoriadis has sketched it. The imaginary of AI, and thus of the digital, is responsible in the present for both new ways of alienation and free creations. This needs to be elaborated.

**Marc Ries**, 1995 PhD in Philosophy, University of Vienna. Research on mass media, society and art. Since 2010 professor of sociology and media theory at the University of Art and Design Offenbach. Last publications: *Microstorias? Anmerkungen zu den stories auf Instagram*. In: Schachtner, Drews (ed.), *Erzählte Welt. Sinnstiftung in Zeiten kultureller und politischer Umbrüche* (Rehburg-Loccum 2021); *Video/ Film. Introduction and Penultimate Pictures*. In: Daniels, Thoben (ed.), *Video Theories: A Transdisciplinary Reader* (Bloomsbury Academic 2022).



PROGRAM

Thursday, 14th September 2023

14:30 – 15:00  
Welcome and Introduction

15:00 – 16:00  
Stefan Sorgner  
(John Cabot University Rome) \*

16:00 – 16:15  
coffee break

16:15 – 17:00  
Rasa Šmite  
(Liepāja University) \*

17:00 – 17:45  
Sebastian Mühl  
(Art Academy of Latvia) \*

17:45 – 18:00  
short break

18:00 – 18:45  
Darja Popolitova  
(Estonian Academy of Arts) \*

18:45 – 19:30  
Zane Onckule  
(Riga Technoculture Research Unit) \*

Friday, 15th September 2023

09:00 – 09:45  
Dietmar Köring + Eva Sommeregger  
(Art Academy of Latvia) \*

09:45 – 10:45  
Marc Ries  
(University of Art and Design  
Offenbach) \*

10:45 – 11:15  
coffee  
end of public programme

11:15 – 12:30  
Collection of ideas, research desiderata,  
and podcast briefing

12:30 – 14:30  
Lunch, Transfer to Audio-Studio

15:00 – 16:30  
Podcast recording  
End of event

\*) including 15-20 minutes discussion

the workshop takes place at the LMDA  
Kronvalda boulevard 4, Riga

IMPRINT

Interdisciplinary Workshop  
Probing the Digital. Cyborgs, Avatars,  
and AI

14-15 September 2023

LMDA  
Institute for Contemporary Art, Design  
and Architecture

Art Academy of Latvia, Kronvalda  
boulevard 4, Riga

Participants:  
Stefan Sorgner (John Cabot University  
Rome), Marc Ries (University of  
Art and Design Offenbach), Darja  
Popolitova (Estonian Academy  
of Arts), Zane Onckule (Riga  
Technoculture Research Unit), Dietmar  
Köring + Eva Sommeregger (Art  
Academy of Latvia), Sebastian Mühl  
(Art Academy of Latvia).

Curated by Sebastian Mühl, Dietmar  
Köring, Eva Sommeregger

Collaboration between the HfG  
Offenbach and the Art Academy of  
Latvia

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Baltisch-Deutsches  
HOCHSCHULKONTOR

L M D A INSTITUTE OF  
CONTEMPORARY ART,  
DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

Interdisciplinary Workshop

Probing  
the Digital.  
Cyborgs, Avatars,  
and AI

SEP 14-15, 2023

Art Academy  
of Latvia



# STEFAN SORGNER

Philosophy of  
Posthuman Art

# RASA SMITE

Sensing the Climate  
Change. Aesthetics  
of Immersion in  
„Naturally Artificial“  
Environments

# SEBASTIAN MUEHL

Cao Fei's DUOTOPIA:  
Experience in the  
Technocene

In my presentation, I present the initial attempt of distinguishing different aesthetic concepts of posthuman artworks. They are neither meant to give a comprehensive picture, nor meant to give a detailed description of each of the concepts. They merely represent an initial attempt at reflecting on the meaning of the various aesthetic posthuman phenomena we are being confronted with. Therefore, I will highlight the following issues. Firstly, I distinguish the “Philosophical Underpinnings of Posthuman Reflections”, transhumanism, critical posthumanism and metahumanism. Then, I relate these approaches to “Aesthetic Concepts of Posthuman Artworks”. The following three aesthetic concepts can paradigmatically be related to one cultural movement each: i. Aesthetics of Relationality: Random International’s “Rain Room”; ii. Aesthetics of Twisting: Stelarc’s “Second Life” Performance; iii. Aesthetics of Smoothness: Hajime Sorayama’s “Sexy Robots”.

**Stefan Lorenz Sorgner** is a philosophy professor at John Cabot University in Rome, Director and Co-Founder of the Beyond Humanism Network, Fellow at the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies (IET), Research Fellow at the Ewha Institute for the Humanities at Ewha Womans University in Seoul, academic Advisor of Humanity+, and Visiting Fellow at the Ethics Centre of the Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena. He is editor of more than 10 essay collections, and author of the following monographs: *Metaphysics without Truth* (Marquette University Press 2007), *Menschenwürde nach Nietzsche* (WBG 2010), *Transhumanismus* (Herder 2016), *Schöner neuer Mensch* (Nicolai, 2018), *Übermensch* (Schwabe 2019), *On Transhumanism* (Penn State University Press 2020), *We have always been cyborgs* (Bristol University Press 2022), *Philosophy of Posthuman Art* (Schwabe 2022), *Transhumanismus* (together with Philip von Becker, Westendverlag 2023), *Homo ex Machina* (together with Bernd Kleine-Gunk, Goldmann 2023).

Our senses have always been “mediated”, but with more recent enhancements of various ‘immersive’ technologies, virtual worlds, AI and machine learning, our ‚sensoriums‘ have intensified and become more mediated than ever before. We ask, which tools, methods, technologies, and aesthetics may help us better to ‘sense’ the environment, to encounter nature and raise awareness of climate change effects? As an example, I will analyze our previous research project and VR artwork “Atmospheric Forest” (together with Raitis Smits, 2021) that visualizes the interactions between the emitting forest affected by climate change and the atmosphere, as well as our more recent immersive artwork Deep Sensing (2023) that explores how weather and climate data interact with events in our solar system. Both immersive visualisations use state-of-the-art remote sensing tools and scientific data, translated into a powerful sensory-based aesthetic that can evoke a deep emotional response in the viewer. Because of the capability to ‚sensitise‘ data and create emotionally engaging ‚naturally-artificial‘ environments, these immersive visualizations have proven to be a powerful method for conveying the complex science of climate-induced environmental change to a wider audience.

**Rasa Smite** is an artist and founding director of RIXC Center for New Media Culture in Riga, Latvia. She holds PhD, is a professor in Liepaja University, and researcher at Basel Academy of Art and Design FHNW. In her artistic practice, she works together with Raitis Smits creating visionary and immersive artworks, which have been nominated, awarded and shown widely locally and internationally.

This paper explores the aesthetics of virtual reality in the work of Cao Fei (China). Her transmedia series *DUOTOPIA* serves as a starting point to reflect on the themes of human and nonhuman subjects, virtual and physical worlds, utopian and dystopian imagination as well as experience and subjectivity in the technocene. The presentation will focus on how art is deployed in Cao Fei’s work as a framework through which the mediatized conditions of utopian imagination become palpable. *DUOTOPIA* delves into a virtual reality, thinking around art, media, technology, and futurity. The project is a virtual reality built of a dreamlike architectural structure that is seemingly free-floating between ocean and air. That structure bears reminiscence to Vladimir Tatlin’s constructivist tower, while it simultaneously depicts communist iconographies, futuristic urban landscapes, and houses an androgynous avatar called Oz who represents a blend of machine and human elements and the convergence of technology and humanity. As part of the soundscape, elements of the *Manifesto of Futurism* by Marinetti are recited. The paper elaborates on the ambiguous nature of Cao Fei’s imaginations between utopianism and critical renderings of technology’s impact on reality and lays out the experiential and identity-related assumptions regarding the technological subject.

**Sebastian Mühl** is a Senior Researcher at the LMDA Research Institute at the Art Academy of Latvia. He studied philosophy and fine arts in Munich and Leipzig and holds a PhD in art and media studies from Offenbach University of Art and Design. Sebastian was a guest professor at Klagenfurt University and HfG Offenbach. In 2020/21, he worked as Digital Curator at the Dresden State Art Collections, where he launched the exhibition platform *voices*. His book *Utopien der Gegenwartskunst* was published in 2020.



# DARJA POPOLITOVA

Haptic Visuality

I present a part of my artistic research that addresses the concept of haptic viscosity in association with contemporary jewellery practice. The concept of haptic viscosity, the term from the film phenomenology, is applied to jewellery and jewellery-quality artworks to gather perceptual data from visitors of my solo shows. At the solo shows the public can see videos where the jewellery is shown as speculative ritual tools. In this pseudo-magical context, I invite the visitors to perceive the haptic-visual qualities of audio-visual images of jewellery. Thus the research sheds light on the perception of an audio-visual image of jewellery in a gallery space.

**Darja Popolitova** (b. 1989 in Sillamäe, lives and works in Tallinn) is a contemporary (jewellery) artist, lecturer and PhD student at the Estonian Academy of Arts. Her interest lies in digital culture, pseudo-magic and various social phenomena. Popolitova’s process is driven by an ironical view of the present that further fuels her interest to blend contemporary jewellery, digital craft and video performances with fiction.

# ZANE ONCKULE

Between  
Technoculture  
and the Baltics

“Technoculture” refers to the interactions between technology and culture, as well as the politics of those interactions. Starting from the presumption that art and emerging media don’t pre-exist culture, but rather emerge from it, this presentation - delivered by one half of the curatorial entity RTRU (Riga Technoculture Research Unit) - provides an insight into the operations by the Unit thus far. Part online research journal (rtru.org), part hub for developments in emerging media, RTRU brings an interdisciplinary and technicity-centred approach to the status quo of contemporary art programming across the Baltics and beyond in an attempt to unearth a feedback loop between particular media and their reception, between technics and its looped-in culture(s).

**Zane Onckule** is Curator and Programme Director at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre in Riga. She was co-commissioner of the Baltic Triennial 13 (2018) and co-commissioner of the Latvian Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale (2013). She has curated exhibitions internationally, including at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga; Art in General, New York; Hessel Museum of Art, NY; CareOf, Milan; Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow. She holds a BA from the Banking Institution of Higher Education in Latvia (2004) and an MA from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, NY (2019). Onckule’s writing and reviews have appeared in Artforum, MoMA Post, Art Monthly, Echogonewrong.com, Kultūras Diena, Arterritory.com, and Foto Kvartāls, among others. Together with New York based curator, researcher and publisher Elizaveta Shneyderman she founded RTRU in 2022.