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Artificial Paradise? Immersion in Space and Time

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Künstlerhaus
Halle für Kunst & Medien
Burgring 2, Graz, Austria
Tue–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.
Thu 10 a.m.–8 p.m.

www.km-k.at

Banz & Bowinkel, Ivana Bašić,
Paul Chan, Frauke Dannert,
Harun Farocki, Olga Fedorova,
Johann Knief, Marc Lee,
Manuel Roßner, Gerriet K. Sharma,
Jakob Kudsk Steensen,
Addie Wagenknecht

Curator:
Jürgen Dehm

In autumn 2018, the Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien will address the immersion in artificial worlds. Considering past as well as present approaches, *Artificial Paradise? Immersion in Space and Time* will bring together recent immersive works by twelve international artists with works newly commissioned for the exhibition.

The immersion in an image, in its sphere of imagination, is a concern that can be traced far back in art history. Currently, it is mainly the latest technologies of virtual reality that provide access to alternative realities. However, which aspects are crucial for young artists today, in order to deal with immersion? How are these recently created artificial worlds constructed? What were the artistic approaches of the recent past to break down the borders between factual reality and virtual space?

The exhibition focuses particularly on the threshold of submersion into artificially created worlds. Whereas the older genre of landscape painting predominantly offered the imaginary participation in an illusionistic, idealistic nature, the new virtual reality works aim at a — preferably — complete absorption of the viewer. The submersion into artificial surroundings can be accomplished literally by way of spatial installations and environments with sounds. Furthermore, the artistic discussion of the relationship between digital and analog aspects as well as the immersive use of media for military and political strategies will be the subject of the exhibition.

Especially the newly commissioned works that refer to the Künstlerhaus and its elegant architecture will offer visitors the possibility to confront their experiences in the factual space with those in the virtual space. The boundary between the plane image surface and the illusionistic three-dimensionality also becomes evident in the lenticular prints featured in the exhibition. The flip effect of the lenticular printed images generates an alternative view when the image is seen from a different angle and gives thus the impression of movement and three-dimensionality.

The Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien consequently follows its objectives, hence it addresses the current way media technologies are dealt with in art. In this panorama of artificial worlds of the recent years, the thresholds of transition are graspable on various levels. However, can the belief in progress that is connected with technological development lead to paradisiacal conditions? Or do these virtually perfect worlds also evoke feelings of uncertainty and numbness? The elevation of the beautiful to the sublime, as it had been linked especially to Romantic landscape painting, apparently involves also horror and fear due to its unattainability and perfection. Moreover, the theory of the “uncanny valley” is based on the fact that artificially created bodies and figures of a certain degree of anthropomorphic resemblance can drastically lose credibility in the eye of the viewer. Too real seems to be unsettling.

Artificial Paradise? Immersion in Space and Time wants to stimulate the visitors’ conjectures and speculations regarding future artificial worlds. And thus, the exhibition also poses the question, how future artificial paradises could look like.

Artificial Paradise?
Immersion in Space and Time

Work list

1
Addie Wagenknecht
Asymmetric Love, 2013
Steel, surveillance cameras,
DSL-Internet cables,
height: 99 cm, diameter: 150 cm
Courtesy the artist and
bitforms gallery, New York

Addie Wagenknecht
XXXX.XXX, 2014
From the series
Data and Dragons
Custom-printed circuit boards,
Ethernet patch cables, 80/20
aluminum, 193 × 482.5 × 33 cm
Courtesy the artist and
bitforms gallery, New York

The artistic works of Addie Wagenknecht (*1981 Portland, lives in New York and Innsbruck) deal with the conscious as well as the unconscious impact of media technology on everyday life. Wagenknecht, who graduated from the Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University, is especially interested in the independent life of technical appliances outside controlled energy supplies and stable data networks. In 2014, she founded the collective group Deep Lab, the members of which are bringing together fields such as privacy, security, surveillance, code, hacking, art, research, and theory. By arranging surveillance cameras in the style of a Baroque chandelier for her work *Asymmetric Love* (2013), the artist reflects on the pros and cons of technological networks: while the extensively available digital infrastructure appears to facilitate an allegedly free exchange of information, it is precisely its control mechanisms which disclose the power structures of the interconnected world.

Furthermore, the flashing, wired circuit boards of XXXX.XXX (2014) suggest a constantly ongoing analysis of the surrounding data streams.

2
Manuel Roßner
Du musst dein Leben ändern (You Must Change Your Life), 2018
HTC Vive VR, VR PC,
dimensions variable
Commissioned by Künstlerhaus,
Halle für Kunst & Medien
Courtesy the artist

In 2012, the German artist and curator Manuel Roßner (*1989 Heilbronn, lives in Berlin) founded the Float Gallery to expand the classical exhibition space by a digital space. In his artistic practice, Roßner is concerned with the question of how spatial perception changes in virtual reality, furthermore, he discusses the impact of artificial intelligence on everyday life. In his works, he alludes repeatedly to the disturbing aspects that technological developments could entail. By way of the virtual reality installation, *Du musst dein Leben ändern* (2018), Roßner gives diffuse instructions that relate to the architecture of the Künstlerhaus. Hence, the digital objects that oscillate between drawing and sculpture, and move freely through the virtual space, can serve as obstacles as well as pointers to a change of direction. Their intent, however, remains unclear. The title of the work refers to the last line of Rainer Maria Rilke's well-known poem *Archaischer Torso Apollos* that was written in Paris in 1908. Its creation was influenced by Rodin's sculptural work: In the sonnet, the confrontation with the perfection of an Apollonian torso

leads to a call for improvement, respectively for the recreation of one's life.

3
Olga Fedorova
Body Positive, 2018
Lenticular print, 121 × 91 cm
Courtesy the artist and
Annka Kultys Gallery, London

Olga Fedorova
Evil Eyes, 2017
Lenticular print, 91 × 119 cm
Courtesy the artist and
Annka Kultys Gallery, London

Olga Fedorova
White Dog, 2017
Lenticular print, 121 × 91 cm
Courtesy the artist and
Annka Kultys Gallery, London

Olga Fedorova
Naked Gym, 2018
Animation, full HD, 1:25 min.
Courtesy the artist and
Annka Kultys Gallery, London

Using three-dimensional digital rendering software, Olga Fedorova (*1980 Moscow, lives in Brussels) creates aseptic spaces and landscapes as settings for the — at times absurd — interactions of digitally generated creatures. The female figures in Fedorova's works feature a stereotypical overemphasis on their sexuality, still they are mostly integrated into a domestic setting. *Body Positive* (2018), however, establishes the tension between clichéd ideas of masculinity and current approaches to technological optimization of humans in a humorous manner. By presenting her digital imagery as lenticular prints,

Fedorova evokes the illusion of three-dimensionality. In order to create these prints, also known as flip images, 74 image files, with only small differences between each image and the next, are compiled onto ridged, overlapping plates. Changing the angle at which the image is viewed leads thus to a change of the spatial representation. In her works, Fedorova utilizes an anachronistic technique of optical illusion, in order to present scenarios of potential future worlds.

4
Jakob Kudsk Steensen
Primal Tourism, 2016
Wood, plastic sheeting, postcards,
lamps, 48" LCD monitor, Oculus
Rift VR, VR PC, 250 × 300 × 300 cm
Courtesy the artist

Thanks to Danish Arts Council, Copenhagen

The interplay of imagination, technology, and ecology is the focus of Jakob Kudsk Steensen's (*1987 Copenhagen, lives in New York) artistic practice. For his elaborate works, he researches extensively, compiles a diverse range of information material, and occasionally goes on longer field trips. Subsequently, Steensen creates his artificial worlds using a 3D-scanner, photogrammetry, information gathered from satellite recordings, and game developing software. For his VR-installation *Primal Tourism* (2016), the artist built a true to scale virtual version of the atoll Bora Bora in French Polynesia. The information used was taken from scientific studies of the ecosystem of the island on the one hand, and, for instance, from photographs by tourists that were shared on the social news aggregation Reddit, and drawings

made by the adventurers of the Dutch East India Company on the other. Today the former "place of longing" Bora Bora is one of the world's most exclusive and expensive travel destinations.

5
Paul Chan
Happiness (finally) after 35,000 Years of Civilization (after Henry Darger and Charles Fourier), 2000–2003

Digitally animated video, color, sound, 17:20 min.
Courtesy Julia Stoschek Collection, Düsseldorf

The works of the American artist, activist, author, and publisher Paul Chan (*1973 Hong Kong, lives in New York) address the relationship between politics and aesthetics, philosophy and popular culture as well as art and activism. His works often refer to topical political and social events in the USA. *Happiness (finally) after 35,000 Years of Civilization (after Henry Darger and Charles Fourier (2000–2003))* is one of his earliest works. The flash animation brings together the utopian ideas of the French social theorist Charles Fourier (1772–1837) with scenarios inspired by the imagery of the "outsider artist" Henry Darger (1892–1973). Darger is the author and illustrator of the 15,000-page *Story of the Vivian Girls*, who fight against a regime that enslaves children, whereas Fourier drafted the utopian idea of an ideal society, in which satisfaction of desire was portrayed as the ultimate aim of social organization. Whether Darger, the Chicago janitor, knew Fourier's writing is unknown. By using an unusual format, Chan refers

to the history of the panoramic view in art as well as to the marketing banners of the web 1.0.

6
Banz & Bowinkel
Palo Alto, 2017
Powder coated aluminium tubes, 55" LCD monitor, HTC Vive VR, VR PC, custom printed carpet, 660×320×450 cm
Courtesy the artists

Banz & Bowinkel
Palo Alto I (Avatars), 2017
CGI, 140×105 cm
Courtesy the artists

Banz & Bowinkel
Palo Alto II (Avatars), 2017
CGI, 140×105 cm
Courtesy the artists
With thanks to Radiance VR – The Platform for VR Art

Friedemann Banz (*1980 Mainz, lives in Berlin) and Giulia Bowinkel (*1983 Düsseldorf, lives in Berlin) focus in their artistic practice on the creation of virtual spaces in the digital age. *Palo Alto* (2017) is their second work that deals with forms of virtual reality. It examines the role of the computer as an everyday device and its influence on humans. Equipped with VR-glasses, the visitors can enter a labyrinthine plateau on which a tower is situated. After passing through an underground corridor, they reach a monumental pendulum that swings above their heads and points to either 'true' or 'false'. In *Palo Alto*, the artist duo evokes a reality that, although it remains illusionist, can still be perceived as physically real and immersive with the help of the computer. Yet the virtual world is not depicted

as a simulated reality, but it rather functions as its counterpart. Banz & Bowinkel question the concept of simulated reality and thus the human perception of the real and the virtual space.

7
Ivana Bašić
Belay My Light, the Ground Is Gone, 2018
Wax, pink alabaster, breath, dust, weight, oil paint, pressure, stainless steel, ca. 140×230×250 cm
Courtesy the artist and Marlborough Contemporary, New York/London

Ivana Bašić
SOMA (Demo), 2017
Video, color, silent, 7:44 min.
Courtesy the artist and Marlborough Contemporary, New York/London

In her sculptures and video works, Ivana Bašić (*1986 Belgrad, lives in New York) examines the fragility of the human body and the way it is altered and modified by time and technology. At times ghostly and disturbing, her works display a fragile corporality that evokes both admiration and disgust; they oscillate between delicate beauty and repulsive vigour. In her sculptures, the artist fuses materials such as wax, glass or oil color, and deliberately includes pressure, weight or breath as material elements. With *Belay My Light, the Ground Is Gone* (2018), Bašić presents a body in the state of transition. Built from dust particles, it will gradually disintegrate and turn into dust again in a distant future. The video *SOMA (Demo)* (2017) is part of a larger project that the artist has been pursuing for some time. For its purpose, she had an avatar of her own body made that can be purchased online

in a variety of versions. Bašić's *SOMA*-project inspires the viewer to reflect on the availability of a body that is influenced by digital technologies.

8
Frauke Dannert
cut-out, 2018
Chroma key blue color, white wallpaint, 560×1530×600 cm
Commissioned by Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien
Courtesy the artist

Frauke Dannert's (*1979 Herdecke, lives in Cologne) installations emerge through an analysis of the spatial conditions of the respective exhibition space, with a particular emphasis on the reflection of its architectonic characteristics. Dannert's connection with architecture stems from her early collages that she created by extracting buildings from architecture volumes and recombining them afterwards. In the following period, Dannert's work shifted from the plane surface to the space; she used murals, in-tarsia carpets, and overhead projections to create walk-in environments and experiential spaces of abstract forms. For *Artificial Paradise? Immersion in Space and Time*, the artist varies the architectonic peculiarities of the Künstlerhaus, built in 1952, in a blue hue, commonly used in chroma key compositing for removing the background from a subject in film and TV productions. Subjects are filmed against a background consisting of a single color, usually blue or green, the so-called blue or green screen. The portions of the film which match this color can then be replaced by an alternate background.

9
Gerriet K. Sharma
mirage redux, 2018
Ambisonic sound sculpture, 15 min. and 5 min. of silence
Courtesy the artist
Supported by sonible GmbH

The sound artist and composer Gerriet K. Sharma (*1974 Cologne, lives in Graz) has been dealing with sculptural sound compositions in advanced 3D-audio-environments for 15 years. His work focuses especially on the theoretical and compositional discussion of space as "Spatial Practices." With the sound sculpture *mirage redux* (2018), he establishes an aesthetic practice with an ambisonic sound projector (IKO) that composes a sound-space by adapting and integrating the architectural space as a prerequisite for sonic sculptural material. Thus, self-evident and other experiences at the border between technological disclosure and the subjective feeling of being surrounded are explored. By way of a reinterpretation of the formats, he intends to establish a distinction from ordinary media technology based sound environments, such as cinema, TV, or home 5.1. Over the course of the sculptural composition, the potential of the sound material, of the apparatus, and the structural surroundings is re-assessed, and thus the continuously problematic references to time, space, and body within a so-called ("virtual") reality of the present are being investigated.

10
Johann Kniep
Ideale Landschaft mit untergehender Sonne, (Ideal Landscape with Setting Sun), 1806
Oil on canvas, 95.5×121 cm
Courtesy Neue Galerie at the Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz

Immersion in art is not a phenomenon of new media but has a long history. Already during the Renaissance, central perspective was used, for instance, in church painting, in order to generate three-dimensionality, for effects such as the simulation of an open gateway to heaven inside the roof of the church. The landscape paintings created during Romanticism, however, were idealized images of nature and served as means for contemplation and immersion. The figures placed into those landscapes occasionally functioned as substitutes for the viewer and were a point of reference for "entering" the illusionistic space of the image. Johann Kniep's (1779–1809 Vienna) *Ideale Landschaft mit untergehender Sonne* (1806), with a group of figures and remains of ancient architecture in its center, is composed to depict an Arcadian landscape. Already since early modern history, Arcadia had been known as a fantastic, idyllic place, and since the 17th century, in the context of pastoral poetry, it became the subject of aristocratic escapism. Kniep's painting can be understood as an invitation to get lost in the fantasies of an idyllic existence in nature, unspoiled surroundings. By using bent image surfaces for the cyclorama or the panoramic painting, the immersive idea was subsequently developed further, and the viewers were thus literally incorporated into the respective imagery.

11

Harun Farocki

**Serious Games I:
Watson Is Down, 2010**

Video installation, color,
sound, 8 min.
Courtesy Harun Farocki GbR, Berlin

Harun Farocki

**Serious Games II:
Three Dead, 2010**

Video installation, color,
sound, 8 min.
Courtesy Harun Farocki GbR, Berlin

Harun Farocki

**Serious Games III:
Immersion, 2009**

Video installation, color,
sound, 20 min.
Courtesy Harun Farocki GbR, Berlin

Harun Farocki

**Serious Games IV: A Sun
with No Shadow, 2010**

Video installation, color,
sound, 8 min.
Courtesy Harun Farocki GbR, Berlin

Harun Farocki (*1944 Nový Jičín – 2014 near Berlin) was one of the politically most influential directors in Germany. His work, besides having socially analytical references, also questions the technologically made image, especially in regard to simulations and computer games. Already at a rather early stage, he addressed the discrepancy between factual and virtual reality. The four parts of his video installation *Serious Games* (2009–2010), for instance, investigate the use of virtual reality in modern warfare.

The first two parts are dedicated to a military drill simulation at the Marine Corps Base Twentynine Palms in California. In *Watson Is Down* (2010) four US-Marines prepare themselves for a potential war situation, by means of a precise virtual simulation of an Afghan landscape. *Three Dead* (2010) shows a military exercise with around 300 extras. The manoeuvre was carried out in a town made from containers. According to Farocki, "it looked as though one had modelled reality on a computer animation." For the third part, *Immersion* (2009), Farocki and his team filmed a workshop in Fort Lewis near Seattle, which dealt with imparting the use of "Virtual Iraq" to military therapists. With the help of this computer animation software, soldiers suffering from battlefield trauma should be given the opportunity to deal with their experiences by revisiting the traumatic event. The method was mainly taught and practiced through role play. In the final part, *A Sun with No Shadow* (2010), pictures that were used to prepare for war were juxtaposed with pictures used to evaluate war afterwards.

12

Marc Lee

**10.000 Moving Cities –
Same but Different
(Mobile App), 2018**

Mobile app as interface for an interactive, net based installation, dimensions variable

In collaboration with Antonio Zea, Florian Faion and Shervin Saremi
Courtesy the artist

Supported by Pro Helvetia,
Swiss Arts Council

The Swiss artist Marc Lee (*1969 Knutwil, lives in Eglisau) creates network orientated, interactive projects in the field of media art. The work presented in Graz is a version of his installation *10.000 Moving Cities – Same but Different* (2010), first shown in 2010/11 at the ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, now realized as a mobile app. In this work, well-known cities are recreated on the basis of the information posted about them on the social networks of the digital world, such as Flickr or Twitter. Visitors to the exhibition can navigate through the imagery from social media with a smartphone and experience the digital perception of the changes in these places in real time. From the immense amounts of data (from the Internet), only a manageable quantity of information is displayed, out of which a fragmented impression of the respective city arises. Marc Lee's work deals with urbanization and globalization in the digital age and raises questions regarding change and assimilation in a globally interconnected world.

Art Education

20 10 18 3 p.m.
**World Lab –
Immersive Writing
Workshop***

Creating new worlds through writing
with Britta Wedam (Schreibkiste).

03 11 18 3 p.m.
**Immerse – Escape
Games Event***

We will play an entertaining round
of "room escape" at Künstlerhaus.
Together we will try to escape
from the "mysterious museum."

17 11 18 3 p.m.
**"VR Giants" –
Immersive Gaming
Games Event***

In the multiplayer VR game "Giants,"
one player becomes a giant named
Goliath, who has to help the tiny
player David to reach his goal.

* Duration 90 min. Admission 2 €.
Registration via vb@km-k.at

Guided Tours

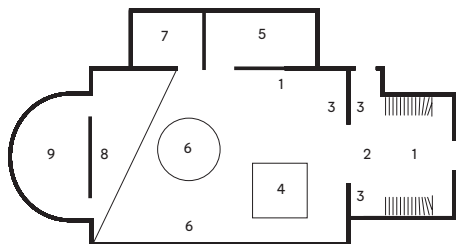
We offer free tours through
the exhibition, every Saturday
at 2 p.m. Duration 1 hour.

Art Education for Schools

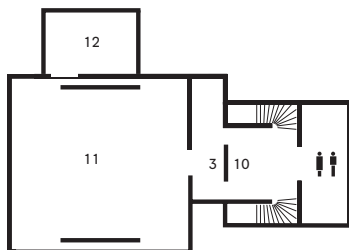
Upon request, we offer art talks
for every grade in the exhibition.
The 30-minute talk will be accom-
panied by a short task, which shall
encourage the students to explore
the exhibition on their own.

Registration via vb@km-k.at

A Ground floor



C & D Basement floor



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|------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Addie Wagenknecht | 5 Paul Chan | 9 Gerriet K. Sharma |
| 2 Manuel Roßner | 6 Banz & Bowinkel | 10 Johann Kniep |
| 3 Olga Fedorova | 7 Ivana Bašić | 11 Harun Farocki |
| 4 Jakob Kudsk Steensen | 8 Frauke Dannert | 12 Marc Lee |

An Art Day's Night Public Programs

In co-operation with the professorship of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Institute of Art History of the University of Graz

Free admission

27 09 18 6 p.m. On Immersion

Lecture by Jürgen Dehm
(Curator, Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien, Graz)

The curator of *Artificial Paradise? Immersion in Space and Time* offers insights into the concept of the exhibition and explains the different artistic positions on display, and will thus look back at the history of immersion in art. The phenomenon of immersion did not just enter the art world with the invention of the VR glasses. Already with the use of central perspective in the Renaissance or in Romantic landscape painting, the pursuit of letting the viewers immerse in alternative worlds played an important part.

04 10 18 6 p.m. Digital Vitality

Lecture by Jenny Nachtigall
(Art historian, Academy of Fine Arts, Munich)

The immersive potential of aesthetic forms always begs the question of their vitality. In view of the shifts as well as the continuities concerning (aesthetic) notions of vitality from the mechanical modernity to the digital present, the lecture by art historian Jenny Nachtigall will engage with the specificities of a digital vitality within art and beyond. The lecture will focus on its materiality, form and function as well as on the questions as to who/what counts as "alive" online and offline and who/what does not, and with which political and aesthetic consequences.

11 10 18 6 p.m. Welt am Draht (World on a Wire) (DE 1973, directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder)

Film screening

Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Welt am Draht* deals with the dark side of immersion. The film addresses the fear of the all too perfect immersion which would render virtual reality and factual reality indistinguishable. The film focuses on philosophical concepts of identity and also deals with the use of video for surveillance. It is based on the novel *Simulacron-3* by Daniel F. Galouye, written in 1964. *Welt am Draht* was originally aired in 1973 by the German TV-station ARD as a two-part miniseries.

18 10 18 6 p.m. Down the Rabbit Hole: Immersive Adventures in Analog and Digital Cultures

Lecture, Christian Stiegler
(Theorist, Brunel University, London)

The whole world fitted into one headset: friends, family, shopping, news, education, entertainment, love and sex. Immersive technologies such as virtual, augmented and mixed reality are the current signs for a dramatic change in society, culture and economics. This lecture by media expert Christian Stiegler addresses the collective desire for immersive and mediatized experiences. The focus will be on how the phenomenon of immersion changed over time and also on the desire to discover realities outside of reality.













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115 41°27.2'W





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