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VIENNA DIGITAL CULTURES

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Kunsthalle Wien Karlsplatz

VIENNA DIGITAL CULTURES
MODEL COLLAPSE

5–18 MAY 2025

Festival participants:
Wassim Alsindi, Anthea (Partisan), Antonia XM, Arvida Byström, Belma Bešlić-Gál, S()fia Braga, Caroline Busta, Arthur Chopin, Kate Crawford, Silvia Dal Dosso, DJ Terror, Paul Feigelfeld, Mathias Gramoso, Joey Holder, Vladan Joler, Andrea Khôra, Chiara Kristler, Etapp Kyle, Klimentina Li, Lil Internet, Jonas Lund, Malounadou, Eva & Franco Mattes, Misonica, Most Dismal Swamp, Amanda Mussi, Matteo Pasquinelli, Phase Fatale, Alex Quicho, Marcin Ratajczyk, Rent, ROTOR / Michael Fischer, Ala Roushan, Ruth Schnell, Elke Schwarz, Inès Sieulle, Catherine Spet, Klaus Speidel, Charles Stankievech, Felix Stalder, Troika, Emmanuel van der Auwera, Clemens von Wedemeyer, Markus Wintersberger and Günseli Yalcinkaya

In machine learning, 'model collapse' is a key term that refers to problems that can arise during the training of AI systems, including a loss of diversity and originality in generated outputs, excessive repetition, and amplified bias. 'Model collapse' can also be seen as a metaphor for the state of our current affairs. Today, many established systems are in disarray. The rapid pace of digital change is a key driver of this upheaval. With artificial intelligence rolling out across society, its impact upon these crises grows ever more significant. The first edition of Vienna Digital Cultures explores 'model collapse' in all its senses, inviting artists and thinkers to reflect on the disorientation and instability that characterize this moment in history.

Stadt Wien | Kultur   AUTOTELIC FOUNDATION   FOTO ARSENAL WIEN   Ö1 CLUB   DERSTANDARD

Exhibition Kunsthalle Wien Karlsplatz

The festival's exhibition features five international artists known for probing the intersection of politics and digital culture. It opens with Eva & Franco Mattes video *But I love Human* (2025), a montage of various TikTok live streamers performing as Non-Player Characters (NPCs) – a strange doorway into how algorithms are sculpting human subjectivity today. This is followed by Joey Holder's installation *The Woosphere* (2025), an immersive fever dream that foregrounds the proliferation of non-human beings in our collective imagination – a work that extends the artist's digital commission on the festival website. Kate Crawford & Vladan Joler's S+T+ARTS Prize winning *Calculating Empires* (2024) is a twenty-four metre long diagram charting the relationship between technology and power over the last half-millennium. Its mapping of how engineering subjects human bodies (and desires) to control is complimented by Arvida Byström's video and sculptural investigation of deepfake porn and digital sexual futures – preamble to her offsite performance *A Cybernetic Dollhouse* with an AI-powered sex-doll named Harmony at Haus der Republik (Wiener Festwochen) – Funkhaus. In a related vein, Mathias Gramoso explores the contemporary narcissus complex in *Perpetual Echo* (2024), documenting a 24-hour performance in which the artist stars at himself through his phone screen. Suffusing the space with coloured light, Troika's installation casts the assembled works in the hues of the RGB filter, an optical regime associated with machine vision.

In the public area around Kunsthalle Wien Karlsplatz, an Augmented Reality (AR) installation by Vienna-based artists Belma Bešlić-Gál, Catherine Spet and Markus Wintersberger is presented under the title *//ONTOLOGICAL_GLITCH://* – supported by Kultur 1.

On 16 May ROTOR (curated by Michael Fischer) provides a sonic survey of digital terrain with sound performances by Vienna based musicians Misonica and Rent.

AI Cinema/Screenings

Two evenings at REAKTOR (10 & 11 May) showcase artist videos that explore generative AI in both form and content, shining cinematic light on some of the darker corners of our latent reality. Premiers include *The Bastard Fields* (2025) by Most Dismal Swamp, a hallucinatory trip through the cultural and machinic unconscious – following its debut on the festival's online platform; Emmanuel van der Auwera's *Saturn* (2025) dives into the online conspiracy theory of 'crisis actors', and its real-world impact on aftermath of the tragic Sandy Hook School shooting. Additionally, Silvia dal Dosso presents the newest chapter in her ongoing survey of online meme culture, *The Future Is Finally Weird AF* (2025), while Troika's *Drill Baby Drill* (2025) explores wish fulfilment in AI-powered landscape design. Beyond these premiers, the programme includes further works by Inès Sieulle, Clemens von Wedemeyer, Ala Roushan & Charles Stankievech, Jonas Lund, S()fia Braga and Andrea Khôra. Each night at the theatre is opened by an artist lecture-performance: Lil Internet's *:::FEEL THE FUTURE:::* (10 May), and a new production by Malpractice (11 May).

Talks

The festival's talks programme opens with a keynote by Kate Crawford – author of the international bestseller *Atlas of AI* – at Angewandte Interdisciplinary Lab (5 May) titled *Model Collapse: The Cascading Failures of Algorithms, Ecosystems, and Economies*.

Further speakers, known for their contributions to discourse on machine learning and politics speak throughout the festival. They include Caroline Busta, Paul Feigelfeld, Matteo Pasquinelli, Ala Roushan, Elke Schwarz, Klaus Speidel, Felix Stalder, and more – including an afternoon of conversations co-curated with Spike Art Magazine (May 18) with Wassim Alsindi, Alex Quicho, and Günseli Yalcinkaya. The programme also features a series of artist talks, guided tours, and workshops.

Club Nights

Counter-balancing the festival's interest in the darker side of digital, leading electronic musicians supply catharsis and re-embodiment during two club nights. The opening weekend sees the city's best sound system (PRST.club) play host to techno heavyweights Etapp Kyle and Phase Fatale, as well as Vienna's own DJ Terror and Antonia XM (10 May). For the second Saturday (17 May) Vienna Digital Cultures curates the opening party of Haus der Republik (Wiener Festwochen) – Funkhaus, lifting the mood – in line with their theme of 'Love'' – through house DJ sets supplied by Anthea (Partisan), Amanda Mussi, and Malounadou.

Guided tours

Guided tours are available in German and English.

Festival

The complete festival programme and all texts about the artists and their works are available under:

Venues

Kunsthalle Wien Karlsplatz, Treitlstraße 2, 1040 Vienna
Angewandte Interdisciplinary Lab, Otto Wagner-Postsparkasse, Georg-Coch-Platz 2, 1010 Vienna
Haus der Republik (Wiener Festwochen) – Funkhaus, Argentinierstraße 30A, 1040 Vienna
PRST.club, Praterstraße 18, 1020 Vienna
REAKTOR, Geblergasse 40, 1170 Vienna