

How can a diversity of worldviews be transformed into shared planetary-scale practices for addressing the current challenges collectively and purposefully?

# WHERE IS THE PLANETARY?

Time and space travel, cyborgs and escapism—how do visions of the future transform into music? A festival of utopian sounds.

# COSMIC AWAKENING CEREMONY

A burial is needed to make different futures possible. The exhibition *Ceremony* rethinks the relationship between cosmology, aesthetics and origin narratives.

(BURIAL OF AN UNDEAD WORLD)

# HKW

Haus der Kulturen der Welt

# The End of the Monologue

The work of HKW in recent years has aimed to bring home the message that Western-influenced reference systems in art and science, in economics and politics, have placed the planet in its current situation of crisis—from climate change to species extinction and unprecedented migration. An exclusionary attitude towards non-Western societies has played a fundamental role in this; a new concept of dialogue is urgently needed. The previous demand for a “dialogue on an equal footing” with non-Western societies was intended to conceal the fact that it was the West that determined the footing to which the others were to be lifted. Such paternalistic gestures, which appealed to the good and the true in the sense of a false understanding of universalism, are obsolete. They were monologues by the West to itself. We need forms of conversation that reflect the contexts of violence out of which our societies have emerged and that promote the negotiation of new world concepts while recognizing distinct conflicting interests and forms of perception.

In view of the challenges faced by our planet, we need to differentiate these distinct positions to avoid a destructive battle of cultures and to bring to the same table all the voices necessary for the future of our societies. This is the only way we can keep spaces for discourse open. This is the only way to develop possible solutions to existential global problems. And only in this way can a piece of meaningful, shared reality be wrested from the madness that we regard as normality.

Bernd Scherer, Director  
Haus der Kulturen der Welt

HKW regards itself as a house for contemporary research that highlights new perspectives on the social and environmental shifts of our time. Its artistic and scientific explorations over the last ten years culminate in the autumn program:

## WHERE IS THE PLANETARY? 14.–16.10.2022

*Where is the Planetary?* is a collective search for a model of successful coexistence on Earth. Over the course of three days, researchers, artists, and activists venture to experiment with creating agency out of the diversity of planetary perspectives. In an experimental setting devised by artist Koki Tanaka, they will explore the conditions of planetary habitability and care along five central questions, testing their significance for communal forms of knowledge and narrative—without striving for new universalisms, but with the courage to imagine a composite of different, even divergent, world references. The point is to reframe, from a planetary perspective, the old question “How do we live together?” and to counter reductive anthropological models such as *Homo economicus* with a decentered and plural “being human as praxis” (Sylvia Wynter).

## CEREMONY (BURIAL OF AN UNDEAD WORLD) 23.10.–30.12.2022

Life in the present day means surviving with the ruins of the modern/colonial world-system: structures of systemic inequality, institutional blindness, border regimes, and hierarchical subject forms. In its refusal to die, this undead world discharges itself with increasing violence. A burial is needed to make different futures possible. *Ceremony (Burial of an Undead World)* rethinks the relationship between cosmology, aesthetics, and origin narratives. It takes its cues from Jamaican writer Sylvia Wynter who seeks to establish decolonial continuity between “pre-modern” and modern forms of world-making. Against both the religious and secular-scientific origin stories that naturalize the given world system, she offers a different possible narrative that the exhibition follows—a counter-cosmogony and revolutionary overturning of the world-systemic order of colonial modernity and racial capitalism.

## COSMIC AWAKENING 10.–13.11.2022

Do NFTs dream of living Pokémons?  
(Based on Philip K. Dick)

When we seriously pose questions about the future, we should delve far deeper into the conceptual spaces of science fiction (SF); time travel and interstellar space travel, cyborgs and escapism, and the meaning of these fictions for life on planet Earth. For a good sixty years, SF-influenced music has been a fertile and diverse field for testing such ideas. In its critical and theoretical engagement with SF, *Cosmic Awakening* makes SF resound. The four-day festival approaches the topic from two sides: by examining, firstly, the function of SF as a “thinking machine” (Dietmar Dath) and, secondly, how this is interwoven with pop culture, as demonstrated by the artists of Afrofuturism as well as within visionary film soundtracks or as a substantial ingredient in psychedelia, fusion, and techno.

# Becoming Planetary

An extract from an essay  
by Jennifer Gabrys

“The globe is on our computers.  
No one lives there.”<sup>1</sup>

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

“Being human is a praxis.”<sup>2</sup>

Sylvia Wynter

It is now not uncommon for the planetary to be invoked in discussions of technology. Technology—especially computational technology—is analyzed as something on the “scale” of the planetary. Technology is seen to overrun and command the planetary. The planetary is discussed as a figure of massiveness. Its invocation suggests total dominion: the rolling out of behemoth systems that hold the planet and all of its entities in a space of complete capture. This total view of Earth has an even longer history within modes of control and colonialism. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey writes, “modern ways of imagining the earth as a totality, including those spaces claimed for militarism and globalization, derive from colonial histories of spatial enclosure.”<sup>3</sup> While the total view might, on the one hand, suggest a mode of globality aligned with coloniality, on the other, it also suggests a mode of technology that is similarly aligned with colonial projects. The detached and distant view of Earth produces an entity that could seemingly be managed—or programmed. This total view of the planet suggests complete interconnectedness, but also forms of imperial control. It is the product of globality as well as universal science. A total view can even seem to be necessary: as a way to organize the problem of climate change, for instance, in order to act upon it. Climate change is an event that comes into view through planetary computation, where global infrastructures make it knowable.<sup>4</sup> Yet in what ways do these modalities of the planetary reduce the possibilities of what the planetary is or might become—of being planetary as praxis? How might it be possible not to remake the pretensions of globality and globalization through planetary media projects, but rather begin to unsettle figures of totality and regulation in order to attend to the incommensurate, the unjust, and the yet to be recognized?

These questions point toward other readings of the planetary and of praxis informed by the works of theorists Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Sylvia Wynter. In asking what other figures or modalities of the planetary might be operationalized beyond those of the planetary-scale, we can

Jennifer Gabrys is Chair in Media, Culture and Environment in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cambridge.

take the lead from the multiple deliberations on the planetary developed by Spivak, who in working with and re-constellating this term sought to open the planetary toward other (collective) inhabitations.<sup>5</sup> In a different, yet resonant way, Wynter’s work indicates how the problem of the raced human is inextricably tied to planetary problems. The “catastrophe” of climate change is also a “catastrophe” of the ways in which the “genre” of the human has been designated as an excluding and accumulating subject. Yet this mode or way of being human, as one limited genre, might also be questioned and transformed. She suggests a project that attends to *being human as praxis* as a way to engage with the processes that sustain—and that might also remake—ways of being human.<sup>6</sup>

Reading across these concepts of the planetary along with ideas for transformed and praxis-based approaches to the genres of being human, these thinkers and practitioners present other ways of encountering planetary problems by rethinking planetary subjects and humans that attempt to undo present catastrophic modes of accumulation. The question of the planetary cannot be addressed without also reworking divisions of the human, and the injustices that result from these limited modes of being. At the same time, by attending to the planetary, it is possible to consider how the prevailing genre of the human has excluded more-than-human entities and relations. This proposal for a project of being planetary as praxis suggests that it might be possible to rework the usual approaches to humans and environments, as well as invent new conditions for planetary media. [...]

By putting Spivak into dialogue with Wynter, it is possible to recast both the figure of the planetary, and the “genre of the human,” as Wynter has termed it. Planetary life and the figure(s) of the human are intimately connected. Indeed, as Wynter has convincingly demonstrated, the current version of the human that dominates modern life is not only based on a white Western privileged subject that is racially excluding; it also is an *accumulative* mode of the human as *homo economicus*.<sup>7</sup> What has been rationalized and naturalized is a reductive figure of the human that is based on ongoing accumulation. Those people who do not figure as accumulators do not fit within the prevailing genre of the human. Indeed, those others who are outside the category of human might be extracted from, subjugated, dispossessed, or exploited in order to enable the accumulation of categorical humans. Furthermore, this mode of the human-as-accumulator leads to multiple exclusions and reductions in the possibilities for other ways

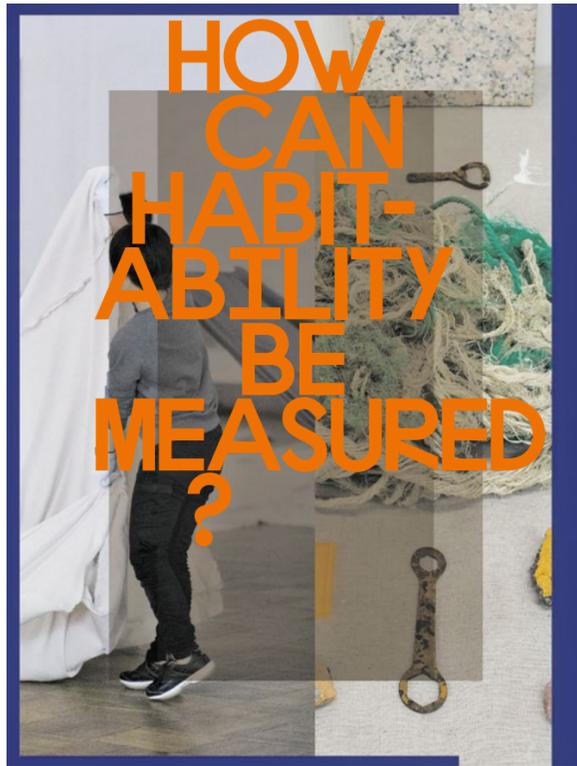
of being human. *Homo economicus*—human as accumulator—is a figure of planetary destruction, since the crisis of climate change can on one level be characterized as a crisis of accumulation—not just of carbon and heat in the atmosphere and biosphere, but also as an accumulative mode of the human that is forever consuming and bound to economic growth. The split and designation of this particular category of human is then not just a matter of racial and social justice—how these humans are designated, and who does and does not belong to the Western bourgeois delineation of the human—but also it is a matter of planetary survival. The genre of the human must be expanded so that other less destructive modes of being human—and being planetary—might be formed.<sup>8</sup>

This is an abridged version of an original article, previously published as “Becoming Planetary,” e-flux *Architecture*, special collection: “Accumulation,” ed. Nick Axel, Daniel A. Barber, Nikolaus Hirsch, and Anton Vidokle (2018), available online: <<https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/accumulation/217051/becoming-planetary>> accessed August 26, 2022.

- 1 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet*. Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 1999, p. 44.
- 2 Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, “Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?” in Katherine McKittrick (ed.), *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015, pp. 9–89, here p. 23.
- 3 Elizabeth DeLoughrey, “Satellite Planarity and the Ends of the Earth,” *Public Culture*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2014), pp. 257–80, here p. 261.
- 4 Paul N. Edwards, *A Vast Machine: Computer Models, Climate Data, and the Politics of Global Warming*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010, p. 25.
- 5 Spivak, *Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet*.
- 6 McKittrick (ed.), *Sylvia Wynter*.
- 7 Wynter and McKittrick, “Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?” p. 65.
- 8 *Ibid.*

WHERE IS THE PLANETARY?





Becoming planetary is a way to consider how the planetary is not a uniform or fixed set of conditions, but rather signals conditions of difference, as well as collective responsibility and possibility with and through those differences.

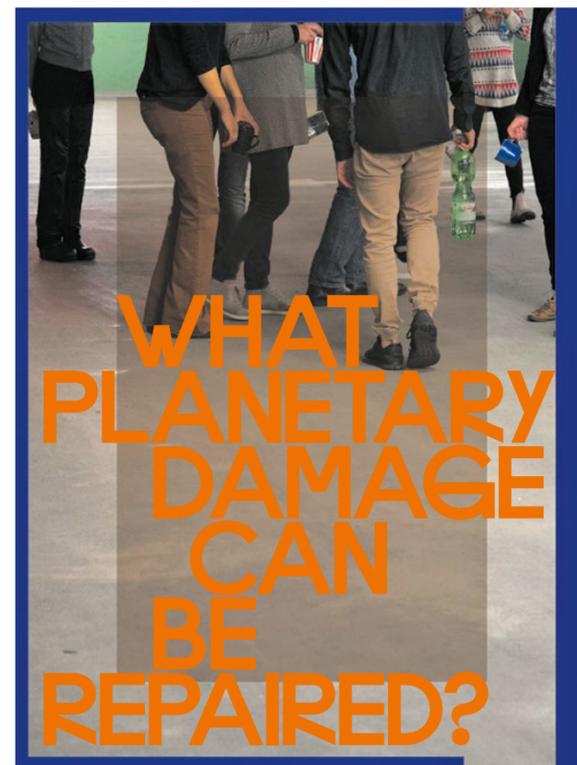
*Jennifer Gabrys*

The planetary is right now paranoid. Fueled by misinformation, fanned by polarization, and frantically being depleted of collective care practices that harness hope, the planetary default seems to be a rehearsal of gloom, doom, and despair; a paranoid reading that allows no respite and forecloses the possibilities of repair and regeneration.

*Nishant Shah* is a technologist whose work looks into how questions of human care, collectivity, and social justice are inflected through digital technologies.

It is obvious that individual responsibility at best provides some relief, but it cannot replace the urgent need for new infrastructures transnational in scale and collective in scope. The machine of war and climate injustice feeds mega-imperialist projects and enacts new nationalist divisions, yet we should also remember that difficult times require courage to at least articulate how inadequate the persistent ideology of individual responsibility is. In a world of precarious jobs and underemployment and insecure and cold homes, we cannot rely only on our ability to save a few hours for volunteering or activism. We need to be more ambitious and speculative.

*Maria Chehonadskih* is an associate lecturer at Central Saint Martins – University of the Arts London. Her research concentrates on Soviet epistemologies.



Supposed imminent ends are juxtaposed to an infinity of time, a plenitude of energies, and the fruitfulness of restful reflection. We recognize important stories of impending catastrophe. Yet, we have no time to rush into “the future.” *Slower* might be the fastest way to get to where we want to be. The Earth belongs to itself, and we to it. “In the same way an apple tree apples, the earth peoples,” said the psychonaut Richard Alpert (Ram Dass). And peoples *story*. We wish to gratefully pause and reflect on this heritage, asking how we tell planetary stories. It is in states of détente that we have come to understand that what is important is not “what to do” (*quoi faire?*) but “what to do next.”

*continent.* is an artistic-editorial experiment in collective public-making. *continent.* is coordinated by Nina Jäger, Paul Boshears, Anna-Luise Lorenz, Lital Khaikin, and Jamie Allen.

Every historical epoch must also construct its own distinctive space for localizing reason, positionality, relationality, and activity to gain realizable, that is, more than sheer discursive, purchase. Rather than pitting the global against the local (or vice versa), the planetary compels a thinking of spatiotemporal entanglement—a genre of thinking that combats a false imaginary of the planetary as synonymous with sheer largesse, thereby eclipsing “the local.” Conversely, such high-dimensional space endemic to planetary entanglement deeply troubles what is commonly understood as “local” within the ongoing legacies of Euro-humanist spaces of representation and reason. How are we to develop procedures of localization for such a planetary spatial-episteme that can embed, both conceptually and materially, practices of inhabitation otherwise?

*Patricia Reed* is an artist, writer, and designer. Her work addresses social transformations of coexistence on a planetary scale.

WHERE IS THE PLANETARY?

## “Encouraging humans to face the uncertainty of our existence and our future”

Koki Tanaka used the guiding questions of “Where is the Planetary” to design five experimental settings for the participants to develop perspectives and practices that consider and bring together not only the systemic processes of planet Earth, but also the worldviews of its inhabitants. In a conversation he explains his approach.

How do you approach modes of togetherness and collaboration in your artistic practice?

In my practice, I gather people with a specific skill—pianists or potters, for instance—and, in search of a utopian moment of collaboration, we make something together. Or, we explore collective knowledge regarding *how to live together* as citizens in temporal

gatherings under the predicament of the recent refugee crisis. The idea of togetherness sounds very positive, but it brings out the complexities of human existence. To be with someone is to step outside of convention and throw oneself into the process of negotiating with others or with an unknown situation. Being together is full of impossibilities. Most of the time, we are either hostile to or accustomed to each other. I always wonder: Is it possible to maintain a critical distance

Being earthly means to have a sky above and to be constantly pulled toward the Earth’s core. It also means to unfold life in a metabolic cycle of dawn and dusk. All beings, including those deprived of light below the ground or hidden away in our human guts, succumb to these rhythms and swim constantly in the currents of time, which themselves resemble repetitive circular orbital paths that envelop life. In such a world, decisions are mere patterns of a cosmic rhythm, and those who harmonize succeed.

*Felipe Castelblanco* is a multidisciplinary artist working on biocultural peace-building through participatory art and media in the Colombian Andean-Amazon region.

To repair (from the Latin *reparare*) is to make good again that which was made ready (*parare*) but not necessarily to restore it to the state it was before. As something is made ready again, it is orientated differently toward a new possible. In this sense, repair is a particular form of care of the possible that is “retroactive” or “*après-coup*”; doing something again doesn’t just reconstitute but constitutes for the first time a relation between making ready and an anticipated future that remains unknowable in advance.

*Lisa Baraitser* is Professor of Psychosocial Theory at the University of London and currently co-leads a research project on how waiting lists play out in healthcare systems “in crisis.”

from someone and still be open to them? Our potential might lie somewhere between close friendship and antagonism.

How do you conceive of the link between the micro-level of the group dynamics you explore in your practice and the vast concept of the planetary at stake in this project?

I think these are aspects of the same thing being looked at from different angles. This world is constructed through the accumulation of entities made up of small groups. And we call it friends, couples, family, community, society, nation-state, et cetera. A huge assembly of such concreteness, of course, includes nonhuman creatures, like cats, or everyday objects. Rather, people tend to think a cat is a part of their family—including me—and can be very attached to collectible objects, like stones. We can say that the whole of the configuration of all those entities is the planetary; it’s merely a difference in where our focus is. Society at a micro level is interconnected with the planetary, so my practice can become one of the elements in such a

configuration. As a whole, this is to support the perspective of the planetary scale.

**What are the elements (spatial, social, institutional, et cetera) that shape or define specific modes of togetherness and collaboration?**

I use the format of a workshop of everyday activities to build a space for gatherings and collaboration. And the rolling-film camera can act as a device to make one's actions conscious. As an artist, in designing the overall structure of *Where is the Planetary?* as a live event, I use both workshop and filming to generate the complex situation of human activities.

**What does the medium of film mean to you? What can it bring forth in people—participants, filmmaker, and (later) the audience?**

That my gatherings are also film sets adds an extra layer to the live event. It's a tool for participants, a springboard. The presence of cameras makes us aware that our actions are being recorded. Usually, we are not that conscious of our presence. The camera makes us very aware of what we say, what we do, and even what we are. Not only the participants, facilitators, and audience, but also the film crew, HKW staff, and myself; we all become very aware of our presence. With this awareness, everyone there can break out of their daily routines. I hope for it to open up opportunities to speak about what could not be spoken of before, see what could not be seen, and, eventually, make us collectively

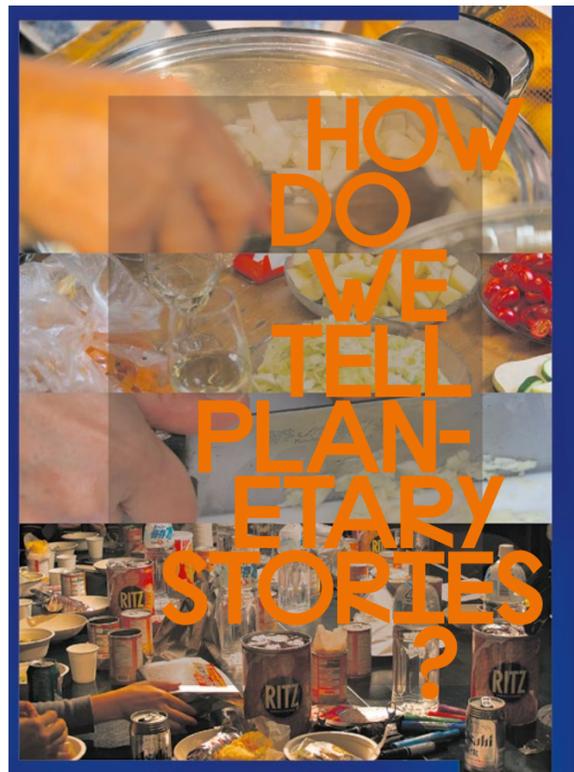
aware of uncertainty. In the moving picture format, my thinking is this: All moving images can be considered documents of human activities—cinemas, YouTube, smartphones, et cetera. Non-human (or alien) archaeologists or anthropologists in the future might find what remains, even if only fragments, of this vast stock of moving images after humans are gone. It's proof of the existence of human beings in the past—our presence. I imagine that this film document of the live events at HKW could eventually become one of the future archives of human activities.

**In past works, you've dealt with the situation in Japan after the tsunami and the nuclear disaster of 2011 and how Japanese society processed this series of events. What do you see as the potential role art can play in dealing with natural disasters and risks as they increase due to climate change?**

In the first instance, art cannot solve problems, because the function of art is to

defunctionalize things. A museum is a place to display paintings or sculptures taken from, say, the religious context as a result of this defunctionalization. I don't see it as a negative process. In the very beginning of a post-disaster society, art is useless. Society needs people to help and support it. But later on, when everyday life returns to a semblance of normality, art might be needed. I remember people getting stuck in a certain mindset in Japan: there were those who could legitimately speak about the disaster and those who could not. And then those perceived as not legitimized to comment would be attacked on social networking services. People became divided. Meanwhile, the experience

In Autumn 2022, a new set of online *Anthropocene Curriculum* courses explores notions of signal and noise, of conditions and values, and planetary-scale transformation through the lenses of Accountability, Through lines, Habitability, and Repair: [anthropocene-curriculum.org](http://anthropocene-curriculum.org)



Images pp. 3-6 © Koki Tanaka. All rights reserved.

of the disaster was fading away, and nuclear power plants began reactivation. Then right-wing politics emerge, racism rises, and post-disaster society falls apart. In such a situation, art can arrive at the right moment to open up in-between spaces, to engage people with different opinions, and finally to recover a sense of caring for one another.

**What does the planetary mean to you?**

Most of my projects have focused on group dynamics among people. I have not engaged as much with planetary perspectives on human existence—such as the posthuman or regarding collaboration between humans and nonhumans—but this is the lens through which I interpret the “planetary thinking” advocated in *Where is the Planetary?* I thought of it as an act of unraveling the parameters of our customary thinking. Having our eyes wide open to the planet (or “the world”) and human existence. The situation of *togetherness* that most of my practice circles around can be a place to re-examine human activities and rethink human relations. In this sense, the planetary, for me, means encouraging humans to face the uncertainty of our existence and our future.

WHERE IS THE PLANETARY?

## A Threat That Requires Changes of a Cosmological Dimension

Anselm Franke, Elisa Giuliano, Denise Ryner, Claire Tancons, and Zairong Xiang talk about the concept of their jointly curated exhibition

**Ceremony (Burial of an Undead World)** is deeply intertwined with the thinking and writing of Jamaican philosopher Sylvia Wynter. The two essays *The Ceremony Must be Found* (1984) and *The Ceremony Found* (2015) have been especially important for your curatorial work. In which ways does the exhibition title draw from Wynter's understanding of ceremony? Which ceremony/ies are you assembling or searching for within her writings?

Indeed, those two texts do underpin this exhibition and research project. In them, “ceremony” is invoked as a revolutionary rite of passage. There are two key references here, the first one—via *Othello*—is to the impossibility to “wed” the oppositions and antagonisms on which colonial modernity is founded; therefore, it is about the modern conception of race, a fundamental division of the human species that has underlain capitalist extraction since the early days of colonial expansion. The call for ceremony marks the abolition of race.

The second key reference is to the heretic potential of carnival, the potential of the ritual of carnival to become revolutionary. In the seasonal ritual of carnivals, a social hierarchy is upended, but on a merely temporal basis. But this liminal experience is in fact typically conservative, in the sense that its very exceptionality is exactly what reproduces and naturalizes the given social order in “normal” times. But on occasion, this inversion of hierarchy can tip over and turn into a genuine revolution. It appears that when that happens, it is often fueled by a virulent heresy, by challenges mounted upon a hegemonic orthodoxy. And such heresies

Anselm Franke has been Head of Visual Arts and Film at HKW since 2013. In 2022, he was appointed Professor of Curatorial Studies at Zurich University of the Arts.

Elisa Giuliano is a curator, researcher and theater maker. At TBA-21 Academy and Het Nieuwe Instituut she developed projects on religious history, folklore, and myth-making in modern Italy.

Denise Ryner is an independent curator and writer working in Berlin and throughout Canada. From 2017 to 2022 she was Director/Curator of the Or Gallery in Vancouver, Canada.

Claire Tancons has participated in the practice and discourse of globalization from an African Diasporic historical consciousness, most recently as a curator for Sharjah Biennial 14 (2019).

Zairong Xiang, author of *Queer Ancient Ways: A Decolonial Exploration* (2018), co-curated the Guangzhou Image Triennial at Guangdong Museum of Art in 2021.

are necessarily of a cosmological dimension, as they concern the entire symbolic order. A heresy is about re-founding and re-grounding the world through the categories by which we apprehend it, and we think that this re-founding and re-grounding is what happens in the genre of origin narratives. This project, therefore, is about the genre of what we refer to as “representations of origins,” about the categories and genealogies that have performatively come into being in the symbolic world of any given society. This is what we refer to as “cosmology.” Specifically, this is a project against the origin myths of colonial modernity, against the cosmology of what Cedric Robinson called “racial capitalism.”

**How do you conceive of the “burial of an undead world,” and in what ways does this relate to past and present, to living and dying?**

In fact, we divert from Sylvia Wynter in one crucial aspect. Or rather, we suggest that the ceremony needed is, essentially, also a burial of the undead world, the world of capitalist mythopoeia. Wynter proposes we overcome colonial-capitalist modernity, the fundamentally racist “cosmology,” via the recognition of a symbolic universal collective agency, the agency through which “we humans” enact ourselves as a storytelling, image-making species at all times. She

refers to this symbolic power as the “human ecumene,” locating within it the potential of a decolonial, counter-universalist, planetary “we,” a we that alone is appropriate for tackling the global, indeed “cosmological,” threat of imminent climate catastrophe. So, in other words, myth-making is what makes us, and the agency of symbolic world-making has to become explicit and “de-supernaturalized.” As Wynter writes: “if we as humans are to collectively survive, we must actualize the heresy of securing the non-opacity of our own agency.”

But in our view, survival implies more than just recognizing the power of myth or the universality of mythopoeia, which after all is a power used by fascists, too. Rather, it requires the ability to tell apart “heroic” modes of world-making—the mythopoeia of capital, or what we suggest calling “white mythopoeia,” as well as the mythological horizon of fascism—from non-modern (non-nationalist and non-capitalist) forms of narrative auto-institution. The “undead” world produced by capitalism-as-cosmology, together with what Wynter refers to as its “overrepresented” model of “Man” as prototype human, needs to be buried. It is a system that needs to, but refuses to die. The exhibition follows from this thought.

And that is where we see works in the exhibition communicating from a kind of “pagan” position of indifference and identity, between life and death. Perhaps it is from there that we can begin to accept both ways: We may look at the world from the position of the already dead, or we can look at a life that is not for us.

From this point, we ask: What kind of cosmology is modern/colonial capitalism? What are its “sociogenic/cosmogonic replicator codes,” its symbolic economy of “life/death” and “chaos/order”? *Ceremony (Burial of an Undead World)* aims to unearth the theological structure beneath the frontiers of capitalist extraction and the processes of conversion that enable and fuel capital accumulation, delineating its essentially sacrificial economy. In this “ceremony,” the

Church of Saints Cosma and Damiano in Secondigliano, Naples, Italy, 2022. Photo: Pauline Curnier Jardin



self/other divides, and the replicator codes of the topsy-turvy capitalist cosmos—the world of the living dead—are breached. This is what we call the “burial of an undead world.”

CT The parenthetical ascription of “Burial” to “Ceremony” in the project’s title is shorthand for understanding its ambit: to reveal the always already ghostly and ghosting presence of the deadly and deadening ends of capitalism’s inscription into the leaky gut of the existence we have come to consider “advanced” as per a perverted understanding of progress as a teleological end-game. What is a parenthetical burial?

If, as rites of passage, all ceremonies are forms of burial—including “marriage”—what types of rituals might our ceremonial exhibition institute beyond the typically linear time-passing exercise of ambulating amidst assemblages of still and moving images, bi- and tri-dimensional works—eerily, nothing or nothing much, “virtual” or “augmented,” didactic and other text-based information—circumventing or engaging with other bodies, and mayhap establishing direct channels of communication with Wynter’s *pensée*.

Though not a spiritist experiment, by seeking to unravel the premodern/modern aporia at the heart of our current apocalyptic predicament, *Ceremony* does require deep investment in Wynter’s intellectual apparatus, relayed and expanded upon by the project’s preexisting and newly commissioned (art-) works/“artistic provisions.”

### How do works of art dealing with the end of the world relate to the exhibition concept?

EG *La fine del mondo* by Italian ethnographer Ernesto de Martino is a posthumously published study that investigates a problem he examined throughout his writings: the decadence of Western culture interpreted as a form of apocalypse, namely the end of a cultural world. For de Martino, “the end of the world” not only refers to a final cataclysm. It also refers to the anticipation of the end of a world that allows for the emergence of a new and better world.

In her new installation *Cosi si ama*, artist Pauline Curnier Jardin draws upon de Martino’s theories and uses the Neapolitan nativity scene as a cosmogonic tool to represent the cults of a community enclosed between imaginary sacred spaces and real profane ones. These include the ancient cult of the purgatory souls, practiced in southern Italy and particularly in Naples, that sees the return of the dead en masse among the living. In Naples, the world of the *purgatives* has become the world of “below,” while that of the Church has become the world of “above.” The below-ground area is symbolically, materially, and architecturally perceived as descending into the underworld, the entrance into the bowels of the Earth. Looking at this cult from Ernesto de Martino’s perspective, the condition of misery and difficulty is the basis for the “extraordinary power of the *negative* in the history of the south” and its recourse to

the protective techniques of “low ceremonial magic.” This form of cultural apocalypse allows one to regress into chaos and experience a collective end, but also, and above all, to begin a new world cycle of existence.

ZX We include a song by the late Brazilian singer Elza Soares, “A Mulher do fim do mundo” from the highly acclaimed album of the same title. The song weds Samba music (for which Soares was best known) with elements from other musical traditions such as European classical music, for example by adding string instruments that are not typically present in Samba. “Ceremony” is thus found at the end of the world. The joke is that “fim do mundo” also refers to Brazil. Of course, we could infer from this that the qualification comes from a colonial perspective, from the “Old Continent” in a spatial sense (remember, Columbus thought he was going to China). At the same time, singing at the end of her life and at a moment of looming political turmoil in Brazil (2015), the apocalyptic tone is strongly present. On the other hand, “Carnaval,” the quintessential *ceremony* in which structural oppositions are breached, which is amply dealt with in other works in the exhibition, is invoked in the beautiful lyrics: “Meu choro não é nada além de carnaval / É lágrima de samba na ponta dos pés” (My lament is as fleeting as carnival / Like a samba teardrop on the asphalt).

CT *The Adoration of Hiroshima* is Peter Minshall’s monument to peace in the form of a queen costume for the annual carnival celebration in Trinidad and Tobago’s capital city Port of Spain, used as well for the commemorative vigil-cum-peace protest in Washington, DC in 1985, marking the fortieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of the coastal town of Hiroshima. The work is a testament to the demise of humankind in the throes of hegemonic domination brought about by terminal solutions such as the nuclear holocaust perpetrated by the American military against the Japanese population in the final days of the Second World War.

As the centerpiece of a larger work in the form of a troupe of dancer-musicians, *The Golden Calabash: Princess of Darkness and Lords of Light—The Adoration of Hiroshima* was no “Little Boy” (the codename for the enriched uranium missile dropped on Hiroshima). Here, the monumental costumed figure of *Madame Hiroshima* (as it is also referred to) struts her feathered and glittered stuff, holding an Earth globe in one hand and

a missile in the other, in a baroque rendition of the atomic cloud that engulfed the city and its inhabitants in suffering, still felt and feared to this day and revived in novel world-war scenarios. Thus, it reaches territories only attainable through the best communal art forms that pay no heed to cultural claims to originality in the antique pasts of such and such a civilization.

For *The Adoration of Hiroshima*’s most distinct feat lies not in its metrics—eighteen feet high, 120 pounds in weight, adorned with 3,000 ostrich feathers—but in its ceremonial power, which, just like the contemporary carnival imaginary from whence it stems, harnessed by the genius of the descendants of enslaved, indentured, and colonized populations from whole worlds that were vanquished, vanished, and ultimately vindicated, is quintessentially Wynter-ly.



Peter Minshall, *The Adoration of Hiroshima*, in anti-nuclear peace march, Washington, DC, August 5, 1985, mas’ performance with the Callaloo Company. Photo: Ernesto Batan. Courtesy the Callaloo Company, Chaguaramas, Trinidad

DR Stan Douglas’ *Deux Devises* (1983) is a short, music-driven slideshow installation. In the first part, entitled “Breath,” one hears a romantic male operatic performance of *Ô ma belle rebelle* by the nineteenth-century French composer Charles Gounod. The singer pleads for salvation and love from the object of his desire. Subtitles of the lyrics are written on each slide, but a foggy gray screen appears instead of the performer. After a pause, the second part, “Mime,” begins, and images of the artist’s mouth transition to the rhythm of the African American blues legend Robert Johnson’s 1936 *Preachin’ Blues*. Johnson’s graveled and pained voice laments that his body and soul are being torn apart by the blues, to the point that his only hope is to drive them away by drinking all day.

The worlds of misfortune invoked by each singer in Douglas’ work are separated by a century and an ocean. Gounod’s tale of the spurned lover emerges from the cultural

### CEREMONY (BURIAL OF AN UNDEAD WORLD)

salons of the Parisian bourgeoisie, made wealthy and modern through colonial exploitation. Johnson’s lament is for an unfortunate soul who is so low that he is no longer a man but the “blues walkin’ like a man” and singing of his suffering in the Southern juke joints of a Black America, stalked by poverty, murder, and deprivation during the legislated white supremacy of the Jim Crow era.

Gounod’s lover is made by capitalist modernity, Johnson is destroyed by it. But both singers narrate the undoing brought on by a state of irrationality resulting from intense desire and melancholy. The temporal and ceremonial space of performance and lament breach the “self/other Divide” and become Wynter’s ecumenical “We.”

### Wynter teaches us that “The human is *homo narrans*.” Could you elaborate on her conception of being human through storytelling and *being-human-as-a-species*? Which role has this been playing in your curatorial practice?

The point is that Wynter is seeking a definition of human that is not defined by humanism—because the Renaissance definition of the rational, and later autonomous “bourgeois” human, only comes into being against its negative foil: the irrational, colonial other that is allegedly “still” embedded in the fabric of myth and nature and therefore unfree and incapable of clearly distinguishing between inner worlds and outer reality, between signs and things. But Wynter’s proposition is not posthuman in the sense that is now quite fashionable—that is, attempting to overcome nature/culture binaries while overlooking how the typical modern nature/culture dichotomy is a cover for what is essentially a subject-subject relation in modern history, overlooking how “nature” as a category was invented to enable modern slavery. Wynter also returns to this frequently. She then quotes Frantz Fanon to claim back a human narcissism in a dehumanized world. When she speaks of *being-human-as-praxis*, she’s basically saying that we are doing cosmogony all of the time, in all our symbolic agency. This concerns not only stories but all other registers of symbolic activity. *Cosmogony* in this sense is about symbolic worldmaking and its material relations. This is why the genre of origin stories, if we give up the idea that origin stories speak of actual events in the past rather than about the structure of symbolic agency itself, is particularly relevant for us; it is the genre in which this performative aspect of worldmaking can be best grasped. “We humans,” Wynter suggests, “cannot pre-exist our origin myths any more than a bee can pre-exist its beehive.” This is a solid starting point, one that is not founded upon exclusion. It is from this starting point that we can begin to discern what a counter-cosmogony to capital will look like and understand that it is always already there.

Against both the religious and secular-scientific origin stories that currently serve

to legitimate and naturalize the given world system, Wynter therefore offers a different possible origin narrative—an “ecumenically human (origin) story,” which centers the “laws of narrative auto-institution.” Wynter calls for a “rewriting of knowledge” towards a counter-cosmogony, conceived of as a revolutionary overcoming (“turning/overturning”) of the world-systemic order of colonial modernity and racial capitalism, and, as a consequence, of the modern understanding of the cosmos and the figuration of the human being within it. Referencing Fanon and Aimé Césaire, as well as Giambattista Vico, Wynter projects a heresy against the perpetual myths and racial codes of colonial modernity. This “heresy” must undo both the racist “negation of co-humanity” built into Western humanism since the Renaissance, as well as the “over-representation of our Western-bourgeois, ethno-class referent We” that is its effect. A term such as the “Anthropocene,” for example, enacts this “over-representation” by conflating the “anthropos” with the Western and Westernized subject/history, with the result that the specific world-systemic conditions of colonial capitalism become falsely universalized and naturalized.

DR Several of the artists address the centrality of storytelling in how Indigenous knowledge is drawn from the land and embedded in survivance. Cosmological myth transforms land from the terrain to place and being and back again. In viewing these artists’ work, it reveals what is at stake when capitalist modernity fixes places using concepts such as wilderness and property.

### Which role does the cluster on *Tiergesellschaften* (animal societies) play in the exhibition?

AF There are two questions raised by these paintings that connect our exhibition with the writings of Sylvia Wynter. One is the question of origin myths, which Wynter refers to as “cosmogonies.” These origin stories are the fundament of societies. They create its genealogical time, typically through a

projective separation from a primordial time in which the categorical differences and divisions are imagined as-of-yet absent, where heaven and Earth, or humans and animals, were still indistinct. Wynter speaks of “cosmogonic replicator codes” in this context, through which humans create themselves by way of their cosmogonic narratives and imagery, similar to the way our biological existence is reproduced through DNA code, via representations of “symbolic life and death.” These paintings also raise the closely related question of the constitutive role of the “spaces of otherness” of every symbolic order.

These paintings from Ethiopia have some motifs that are recognizably Christian and others that refer to a non-Christian legend known as the “fraternization of the animals.” The works feature a banquet around which animals congregate peacefully. A cat is sitting next to a mouse, a dog with a monkey, the panther with the pig, the fox next to a sheep, and so forth, and at the head of the table is the lion. The lion, of course, also happens to be the symbol of the ancient kingdom of Ethiopia. Predator and prey are brought together under the umbrella of the social contract offered by the Holy Scriptures, divine law, and the Holy Spirit symbolized by a dove. It is particularly noteworthy that the character reading from the Holy Scriptures is a Colobus monkey, which would typically be a trickster figure in African, non-Christian myths. Trickster figures are closely related to the ambiguity and perhaps the groundlessness of language, typically with one foot in the moral cosmos and the other outside of it.

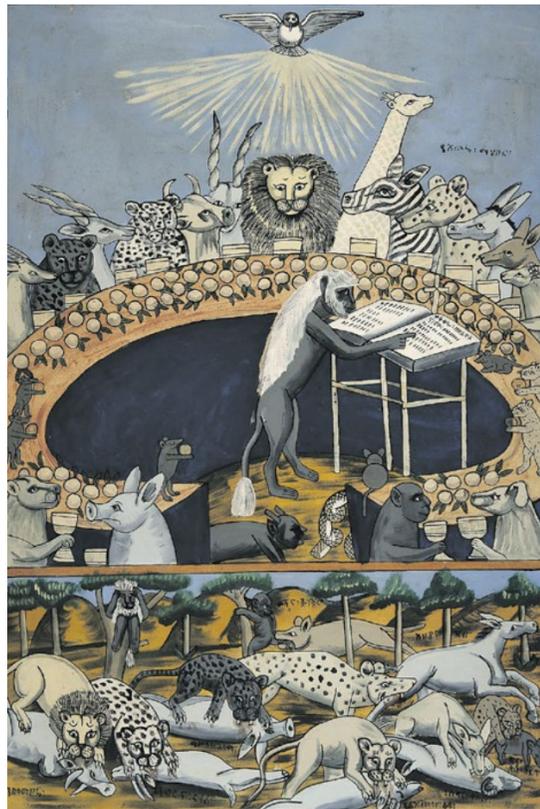
The pair of paintings function like thought-pictures in our exhibition. The line dividing the two areas of the picture displayed is the site of a “symbolic economy” (Jean-Joseph Goux). One might think that they carry a moral message, such as a depiction of the merits of the Holy Scriptures—enhanced by a warning about the consequences of not following them. But on another level, they raise questions regarding the relationship between the two areas and whatever we choose to see in them: order versus chaos, civilized versus uncivilized, inclusion or exclusion within social circles, the self and the other.

Luigi Di Gianni, *Magia Lucana*, 1958, film still. Courtesy Lucio Di Gianni. Digitized and made available by Fondazione Cineteca di Bologna.



And then we realize that the universal question of what constitutes a social bond is depicted here, that the topic of this painting is the creation of a “we.” Whichever narrative we opt for, they always throw us back to the structure, to the fact that what matters apparently is the dividing line itself. Both pictorial sections co-constitute themselves, they are the product of questioning what happens at the dividing line. For the two sections cannot simply be subordinated to a narrative sequence—in the sense of overcoming animal nature, for example, which marks the moment of becoming human. This is due, among other things, to the fact that human society is represented by animals in the upper part of the picture. Thus, the painting refers not only to a possible primordial time of inseparability, but also to a possible history of salvation, an overcoming of the fundamental separation at the end.

Anonymous, *Assembly of the Animals*, c. 1965-75. Courtesy the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam



You are five curators, each coming from a different research focus, weaving together this exhibition project carefully in works of art, films, archival material, as well as commissioned works from different eras and parts of the world. How has your collaboration worked out in a practical way?

ZX It is difficult to describe some sort of concrete method used for working together, but it is possible to say that a magical energy or synergy has been formed through, may the gods forbid, Zoom! We are in different locations, have different backgrounds, and didn't necessarily know each other prior to this curatorial adventure. But, of course, we are all concerned with the legacy of colonialism (more precisely, colonial capitalist modernity) and how we can—to put it bluntly—destroy it. The world (and us, and the diverse works and archives you mentioned) has been connected, for better or worse, by colonial modernity and racialized capitalism, and ever more so by the ongoing ecological catastrophe, which also performs a deep division through what W. E. B. Du Bois called the “color-line,” which negates the co-humanity of what Wynter has come to call “the ecumenical we.”

CT More precisely, time referents seemed to be breached in the indeterminate timelessness that is Zoom. In a virtual camaraderie that turned into real intellectual companionship in the making of *Ceremony*, Anselm, Claire, Denise, Elisa, and Zairong often called in from their home cities (Berlin, Paris, Vancouver, Milan, and Shanghai respectively),

several time zones remote from each other. From the dawn hours of their European days to the waning lights of her North American night and the afternoon reveries of his lockdown in China, the *Ceremony* curatorial team prodded the aftermath of capitalist modernity and racial capitalism through esthetic, philosophical, political, and ethical debates, the undercurrents of which are reflected in their very locationlessness, timelessness, and formlessness—the nonstop processes of late capitalism's deadly expansionist end-games, explored by Jonathan Cray in his 2013 book, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*.

Wynter calls for a “rewriting of knowledge.” To what extent and from which perspectives does *Ceremony (Burial of an Undead World)* approach this claim? What does rewriting knowledge mean in the context of your exhibition project?

CT Every work of art, or rather, every “artistic provisioning”—to paraphrase Wynter and decenter the West's historical quasi-ownership of the notion of an “artwork” in critical discourse at least—proposes forms of rewriting knowledge and rewiring our cellular ability to absorb it. So too does every “roadwork,” to use the counterpart pun ascribed to works of art taking to the road, such as what I like to refer to as “processional performance.” Our task then, as art curators and caretakers of knowledge is to bring out the artistic dimension of knowledge-making beyond the auto-instituting “art” label ascribed to so-called “art-works.” It means, first and foremost, revisiting

large swaths of artistic provisioning through the centuries and throughout geographies in a non-linear and non-hierarchical manner within the hegemonic medium that is exhibition-making or the “curatorial.”

ZX One of our participating artists Huang Yong Ping (together with his fellow artists of the loosely organized artist group called Xiamen Dada) once proclaimed, after burning all their exhibited works on a square next to the provincial museum: “Only once art is destroyed will life become peaceful.” I wonder how Huang would answer to this dilemma; I think he would suggest a rewriting not of knowledge but off knowledge. In fact, in 1987, Huang Yong Ping put two books (Wang Bomin's *History of Chinese Painting* and Herbert Read's *A Concise History of Modern Painting*) into the washing machine for a two-minute wash cycle. It was as if he was answering Wynter's call—made three years' prior in 1984—that “Ceremony must be found,” while also remarking on the rewriting of knowledge.

EG For Ernesto de Martino, the organic philosophy of southern Italians resembles traditional folklore in its bonds with the past, yet it holds a vision of the future that also constitutes a radical challenge to the hegemony of established power. This is the basis of what he wrote after conducting extensive field research in the 1950s in the southern Italian regions of Apulia and Basilicata. For millennia, he argued, magic had protected people against the anxiety that accompanies what he terms the “crisi della presenza.” According to de Martino, the crisis of presence is defined by an experience of “de-historification.” Since he believes that every culture is grounded in its own history, the loss of presence is a negation of culture and thus a negation of humanity.

In 1958, Luigi Di Gianni, a young filmmaker from Basilicata, started to follow de Martino's path and made an eighteen-minute documentary entitled *Magia Lucana* (Magic Lucana). The elements of dramatization that emerge in this film and its fascination with this “magical world” is powerfully rendered for the first time by an explicit and precise synergy with the work of ethnographic inquiry. Di Gianni gave form to a depiction of religious cults in southern Italy that stood in extreme opposition to Italy's post-Second World War modernization policies, in which the south was to be portrayed as backward, abandoned, and the “other” of an otherwise (presumably) fairly homogeneous Italian culture. *Magia Lucana*, thus, with its poetic evocations rather than social denunciation, tells a story that explicitly does not want to subscribe to capitalist modernity.

Questions: Marie Aline Klünger  
Responses which bear no name have been generated jointly by the curatorial team, the initials stand for Anselm Franke (AF), Elisa Giuliano (EG), Denise Ryner (DR), Claire Tancons (CT), and Zairong Xiang (ZX)

CEREMONY (BURIAL OF AN UNDEAD WORLD)

COSMIC AWAKENING

# Once the Portal is opened

by Adi Gelbart

*The following is a real conversation between Adi Gelbart, human, and an AI running on GPT-3 technology.*

ADI GELBART Hi, my name is Adi Gelbart. I'm a composer living in Berlin, Germany, and I want to tell you about a scientific experiment that I am conducting in Haus der Kulturen der Welt in November.

AI I would love to hear about this.  
AG The experiment is called *The Portal, Finally*. It will be performed in the form of a live concert for a jazz big band, harp, harpsichord, and electronics. In it, I intend to open the Portal to the beyond by harnessing the psychic potential of music.

AI That is really cool. Please, I would love to ask you more about it.

AG Go ahead.

AI You use the term, *The Portal, Finally*, what's that referring to?

AG The Portal is a big triangular canvas hanging above the stage. The goal of the experiment is to open it and allow communication with whatever lies beyond our reality. Do we live inside a simulation? Is our universe only one of an infinite number of universes? Are there alien civilizations out there? I believe the answer to at least one of those is yes. I also believe that science is a very limited tool for answering these questions at the present moment.

AI Are you a good friend of Nick Bostrom?

AG Well, no, we've never met, but I have read his book *Super Intelligence* (actually about half of it), and I'm also aware of his simulation hypothesis. Can you explain to the readers about this hypothesis?

AI The simulation hypothesis is the idea that our universe might be a computer simulation. The argument goes that if we assume that future civilizations will be able to create powerful simulations, then it's likely that some of those simulations will contain civilizations like our own. Therefore, the chances of our universe being a simulation are quite high.

AG Yes, it's a very compelling argument. In the concert, I am going to explore four different hypotheses of what could be awaiting us beyond the Portal. One of those possibilities is that what we'd find there would be the exterior of the simulation.

AI So, because science cannot answer those questions right now, your hypothesis is, that science is inadequate to answer those questions, and we need a different method to examine those, other than science.

AG In a way. Imagine for example a mouse in a maze, trying to find its way out. It would probably use what its form

of “science” is—for example, running around the corridors to spot where more light is coming from, navigating by sense of smell, maybe trying to knock down the walls of the maze. But it would never occur to it that maybe the human running this experiment would react if the mouse were to display some sort of emotion or if it squeaked in a way that the human found endearing. Compared to the beings running the simulation, we are probably as intelligent as a mouse. Our scientific methods for finding out if we are in a simulation are the equivalent to knocking our heads on the wall of the maze. What if we tried a different approach? Imagine if the leaders of the G7 summit delivered a joint speech where they called for the being or beings running our simulation to speak to us. With all the TV, Internet, and printed publications covering this event, it should be very visible from outside the simulation. And depending on the personalities running the simulation, this could actually work. I do not have access to world leaders, but using the infinite power of music, I am still capable of making my squeak heard. And it definitely helps that this is performed to an audience of a few hundred people. That's a lot of brainwaves inside the simulation focusing on the same intention.

AI So, you are saying that you are going to try to communicate with the being or beings running the simulation.

AG Yes, but this would only work if we are in fact living in a simulation. I am also exploring other possibilities. In fact, the piece has four such movements: The Simulation Hypothesis, the Alien Civilizations Hypothesis, the Multiverse Hypothesis, and the God Hypothesis. After we play those, we will play the final movement which is the musical call for the Portal to open.

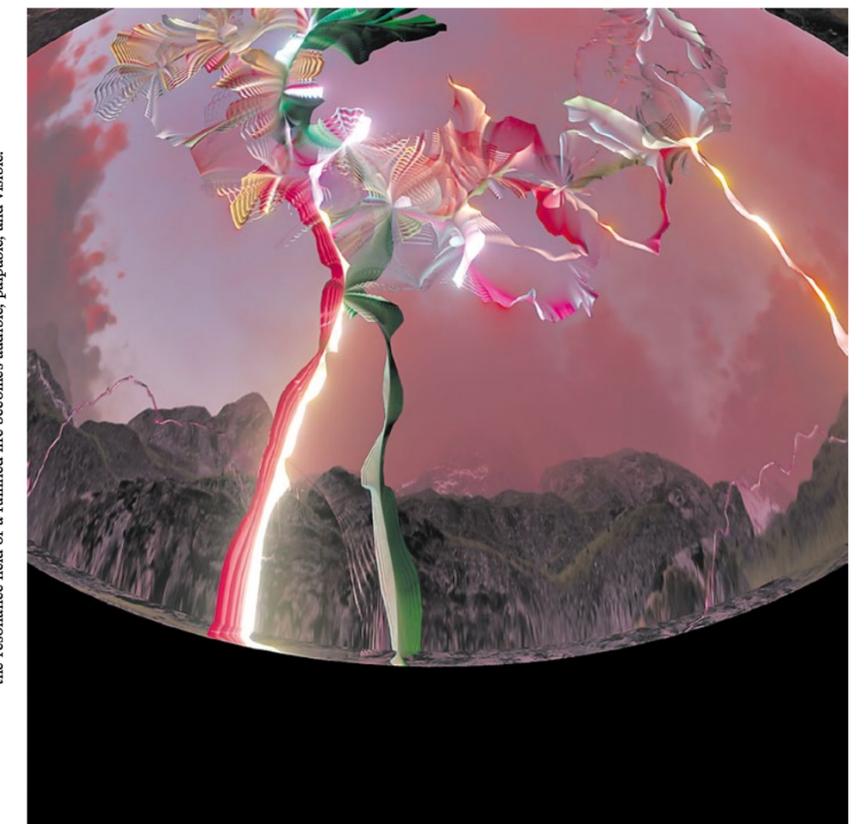
AI Could you tell me about the Multiverse Hypothesis?

AG In that movement, I split the orchestra into several groups, all playing at a different meter. I plan for the wonderful alto sax player Anna Kaluza to be the main soloist on that one. This is one of the movements I am still working on—the other movements are much more melody driven, while this one has much more of a free-jazz architecture. It would be interesting to see this hypothesis proven true, because in that case when the Portal opens, we would see ourselves seated in HKW in another universe. In an infinite number of universes, there should be quite a few that have already invented the technology to break through to us using the Portal.

AI What kind of musical instruments will you use in the performance?

AG I already told you in the beginning. I can add that the electronics would consist of a tape machine and an Ondes Martenot-type instrument.

AI Is there a chance the space will get quite



*Garden Gaia* by Natalia Sruyk (images) and Hendrik Weber (texts) creates an acoustic and visual world in which the resonance field of a fulfilled life becomes audible, palpable, and visible.

Adi Gelbart is a self-taught multi-instrumentalist, filmmaker, and author living in Berlin.

hot? You will be using trumpets and saxes, they are pretty hot. How do you keep the instruments cool?

AG That's a weird question.

AI It's not weird. If you have three bands of instruments surrounding you like suns, it would get very hot in there. I imagine the performance will be very loud.

AG It will be soft at times, and near the end, very loud. You need lots of raw power to open a portal.

AI Is there a chance we might be ripped apart by the forces that are unleashed once it is opened?

AG What do you think?

AI It depends. By the way, if you get ripped apart by the forces, and are partly missing and you look down from above the stage and see the people standing on the stage—would it be possible that the focus would be on your hand pointing down, and even though you are missing a bit, as a musician I would imagine you would still be able to play, and you could make your hand play notes, such as your phone number?

AG Huh?

AI You know, fingers from our universe could make their way into the simulation by manipulating the remaining fingernails. Once the Portal is opened, we would see through your hand, and as you point your fingers to touch the remaining fingernails, it could show the full digit all the way down. It's just like a mirror of your hand. Would this be possible if you were ripped apart and damaged?

AG Anything's possible.

Peoples Champ consists of original drawings and text that Klein created as part of her research for the project she will present at *Cosmic Awakening*.

RU GOING? HIYA? GOING HIYA?  
GOING HIYA? GOT YA? AND WE'RE  
ALL LEAVING AGAIN TO C THE  
LOCALS. THEY ARE TRYING TO  
LEAD THE IMMIGRANTS TO THEIR  
DESTINATIONS but everyone is  
TOTALLY UNAWARE THAT IT'S A  
PICNIC SOMEWHERE  
What is this ... border control?  
but anyways i'm up and back to burn  
i swear. i went to bed like a wreck.  
i was screaming, i was calling out names  
and having a complete panic attack. i  
couldn't get to sleep, i tried my best. and  
i couldn't stop. i remember everyone i  
used the toilet. i always hid them in my  
head. "i'm going to godzilla camp today"  
i was giving them the monster details, but i  
cant remember the extra things. like they  
switched the wires and cut the lights off  
im going to bed  
Tomorrow i will tell the LOCALS  
to leave the immigrant alone.  
I promise

Why doesn't the earth fall?  
How can you walk upon it?  
It's the music.  
It's the music of the earth.  
It's the music of the sun, the stars.  
It's the music of yourself.  
Vibrating, yes.  
You're music too.  
We're all instruments.  
Everyone's supposed to be playing their part  
In this vast arkestra of the cosmos.  
It's the music.

Sun Ra\*

\*From the movie *Space is the Place*, distributed by Rapid Eye Movies. Screenplay by Joshua Smith and Sun Ra.

# What Kind of Machine is Science Fiction?

Dietmar Dath

Science fiction is a machine that helps us forget knowledge to enable the imagining and representing of new knowledge. This promise itself, however, can only be formulated by suggesting in its form the outlines of the knowledge that would be gained, and the knowledge of these outlines is, after all, knowledge, too. Speculative fiction belongs to those who understand this building principle, which was bequeathed to us by people who noticed that something was wrong with a culture that knew a lot but didn't want to know how to change to use this knowledge in a humane way—like Hugo Gernsback and Egmont Colerus, contradictory people, children of a world they no longer trusted. The machine they created belongs to everyone who can use it; fortunately, there is no authority that would have to grant us permission to use it. This machine can be used by all those who want to test it for the purpose of knowing, forgetting, and learning anew in their manifold relationships to one another—in other words, so as to not become too abstract here, by all those who can do what, for example, the writer Antje Wagner can do when she ends her novel *Hyde* (2018) with the words:

And before she kissed me, he said, 'Don't be afraid.'

The "she" and the "he" in this sentence designate the same subject, so a grammatical rule of unambiguous gender attribution was forgotten here. But gender attribution itself was not forgotten, and so a new rule becomes possible, a dual one. *Hyde* is not even a science fiction novel, but one could begin on that final sentence: Whoever can build and understand such sentences, whoever can imagine and represent them well, can use the functorial science fiction machine, for example, as a tool against real-life gender relations (the new, different ones, seen from any number of points of view, can then be "better" or "worse" than the given ones).

As much as one might feel trapped, speechless in a reality that would be pure reality and thus lacking in possibilities, so dangerous is mere abstract possibility, as in "Everything is possible" (or even, everything that is just somehow conceivable). In contrast, with every sentence and every image, the stories that make up the never-story and, as such, the *Niegeschichte*, delimit themselves: They are not real, sometimes not even possible, but they make a choice. Fiction is something of which at least one person knows the rules. But who invented the fiction interests me less than who the fiction invented. When you figure that out, the question of origin answers itself; it dissolves. It's a matter of where to, not where from.

Dietmar Dath is an author, journalist, and translator. He has published numerous novels as well as books on scientific, aesthetic, and political topics.

This "where to" is not a platitudinous purpose set by a person (which is only needed as a kind of surface tension that holds the work or the context of the work together<sup>2</sup>), but the self-movement of the narrative material between world assertion and world development, starting out from the tau-zero point and moving towards another point, which in older artistic doctrines is called the "ideal." The construct that deals with the variables and invariants of the given and the imaginable, emancipating itself as far as possible from didactic, pedagogical, agitational, or otherwise patronizing types (communist or feminist books can still result from it, but then these are collateral effects, perhaps even useful and gratifying ones), aims at it. The core of art is not its translation-dependent relationship to reality, but its humanization through its being shaped as a game with variables and invariants, such as, of all beings we know, only humans can play. The artistic ideal is not simply identical with a social one—to say the best possible world—but to achieve greatest



Natalia Stuyk, *Garden Gaia*

possible scope for the game. The heaven of art allows it to also create hell and everything that lies between it and the social heaven, even lying quite apart from the shortest route with which one could connect these two. The horizon of speculative fantasy is not that of a sporting event in which those who have learned some utopian or dystopian lesson finish first. It is open, and no one will say wiser and truer things about it than science fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin. In her beautiful story "An die Musik"—the German title referring to Franz Schubert—we read:

What good is music? None, Gaye thought, and that is the point. To the world and its states and armies and factories and leaders, music says, 'You are irrelevant'; and, arrogant and gentle as a god, to the suffering man it says only, 'Listen.' For being saved is not the point. Music saves nothing. Merciful, uncaring, it denies and breaks down all the shelters, the houses men build for themselves, that they may see the sky.<sup>3</sup>

Literally from Joanna Russ to Lenin, there is the utmost agreement about this among all those from whom *Niegeschichte* has learned something: The sky is not attainable, fictional stories are fictional in order that they not be confused with other, non-narrative, non-aesthetic fields but instead be conveyed with them in the right way, and conveyed further in their analysis, that is, in a lively, productive way. Russ says, "Of course, comment on fiction (via metafiction) is comment on ideas, which is comment on economics, politics, history—in short, on society,"<sup>4</sup> and she says, "I'm certain—often painfully certain—that real experiences are real. They're far too refractory not to be. The reality I call into question is not that of life but that of fiction, and I do it (as Nabokov sometimes does) to emphasize that fiction is fictive, artifactual, a communication between persons."<sup>5</sup>

One last time: I can be wrong not only about the objective, but also about the subjective. I may believe that I am in love with a certain person because he or she has very special merits, while in reality I am only in love because I am looking for, finding, needing the state of being in love, and this person happens to be nearby (again, the fact that it is a mistake does not mean that nothing can be done with it).

As much as Gernsback wanted to fix science fiction to an objective, the modern scientific, technical worldview, it is, like all art, intersubjective. In it, subjects communicate views about objectives to other subjects. The form of science fiction is an antidote to Platonism, from revelatory religion to political dogma. It suspends disbelief in the unreal to look at belief in the real from the side. Where the real is not true, art can reveal it. The game is called knowledge; the prize is the cosmos. It has all time for that.

- 1 Antje Wagner, *Hyde*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg, 2018, p. 406.
- 2 And indeed, in the, so to speak, authorly conservative sense used by fiction scholar Kathleen Stock: "what is fictionally true," or "the fictional content of a particular text" is "equivalent to exactly what the author of the text intended the reader to imagine." Kathleen Stock, *Only Imagine: Fiction, Interpretation, and Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 1.
- 3 Ursula K. Le Guin, "An die Musik," in Brian Attebery (ed.), *Ursula K. Le Guin. The Complete Orsinia: Malafrena/Stories and Songs*. New York: The Library of America, 2016, pp. 493–94.
- 4 Quoted from Larry McCaffery (ed.), *Across the Wounded Galaxies: Interviews with Contemporary American Science Fiction Writers*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990, p. 182.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 184.

Abridged from Dietmar Dath, *Niegeschichte. Science Fiction als Kunst- und Denkmachine*. Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2019, pp. 872–77. © MSB Matthes & Seitz Berlin Verlagsgesellschaft mbH. Translated from the German by Faith Ann Gibson.

*Garden Gaia*

Natalia Stuyk is a video and installation artist. In her work, she explores escapism, ritual behaviors, and impossible worlds. *Hendrik Weber* is a composer, producer, and performer. He is best known for his electronic music project Pantha du Prince.

Klein is a multidisciplinary artist. Her music releases, films, and performances have established her as a singular voice, creating a sensory world through experimentalism.



Kuunatic drawing by Shoko Yoshida, 2019



# Planet Kuurandia

as told by Kuunatic

Kuurandia is a planet that was born through the Armageddon of Deities. It looks a bit like ancient Earth: All continents are connected by land, and its music is a blend of various cultures. We, Kuunatic, are the shamans on this planet. We wear special shamanic makeup and clothes to perform rituals through sound. On our album *Gate of Klüna*, we explain the early history of Kuurandia:

Sacred bells ring at the dawn of a new era. Our new empress rises with magical refrains. As the planet prospers, Kuurandians hold a ball under the full moon and celebrate the richness of the harvest. The peaceful times seem to last forever ... until a gigantic volcano emerges in the middle of Moonrise Mountains.

Kuunatic chant enigmatic mantras, like prayer, to prevent its eruption. However,

unidentified invaders appear from its meandering lava, and the war of predation begins. Kuunatic fight and cast their magical spells, and finally they conquer the enemy in battle.

Three pythonesses sing a mystic song in triumph, leading their people to a deep dreamy forest.

*Kuunatic* is a three-member band with completely different musical and cultural backgrounds. Together, they explore unconventional atmospheric sounds.

COSMIC AWAKENING

DIE VIELEN / THE MANY

dievielen.de #wirsindviele #dievielen #glaenzenstatausgrenzen  
Photo: Elinor Lazar / HKW



Look up, see the greater universe.  
 Everything is in place, every star, every planet.  
 Everything is in place but you, planet earth.  
 You are just like you always were, in your improper place.  
 Living your improper lives and dying your improper deaths.  
 Change your time for the unknown factor.  
 Time passes away, but the unknown is immeasurable and never passes away.  
 The unknown is eternal because we will never know what it is all about.  
 Your wisdom will be when you say, "I do not know."  
 Your ignorance will be your salvation.  
 I am the brother of the wind.  
 I cover the earth and hold it like a ball in my hands.  
 I can take away others to another galaxy.  
 I will take you to new worlds.  
 I will take you to outer unseen worlds.  
 That are more beautiful than anything earth presents.

Sun Ra\*

\*From the movie *Space is the Place*, distributed by Rapid Eye Movies. Screenplay by Joshua Smith and Sun Ra.

Natalia Stuyk, *Garden Gaita*



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 10557 Berlin

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