

MEDIA INFORMATION

Stormy Weather

Group Exhibition

Opening: WE, 23 09 2020, 5:00 – 9:00 pm

Duration: TH, 24 09 2020 – SA, 21 11 2020 (Kunstraum Niederoesterreich) &
SU, 06 12 2020 – SU, 24 01 2021 (Centre culturel suisse, Paris)

Artists: Susanna Flock & Leonhard Müllner, Fragmentin (David Colombini, Marc Dubois and Laura Perrenoud), Stefan Karrer, Till Langschied, Marc Lee, Yein Lee, Christiane Peschek, Total Refusal (Robin Klengel, Leonhard Müllner, and Michael Stumpf), Christoph Wachter & Mathias Jud

Curators: Katharina Brandl and Claire Hoffmann

PRESS TOUR: TU, 22 09 2020, 10:00 am

**PRESS and
IMAGE MATERIAL:** www.kunstraum.net/en/press

PROGRAMME:

Palm Reading of Tumaroh. A performance by Till Langschied

WE, 23 09 2020, 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Curators Tour

TH, 24 09 2020, 5:00 pm (with artists)

TH, 14 11 2020, 1:00 pm (with Katharina Brandl)

Public Guided Tours

SA, 03 10 2020; 1:00 pm (as part of the ORF MuseumsZeit)

SA, 17 10 2020, 1:00 pm

SA, 31 10 2020, 1:00 pm

SA, 21 11 2020; 1:00 pm **Come Together Tour**

Performance Workshop

Digging into the Archive II (with Olivia Jaques and Marlies Surtmann)

FR, 20 11 2020, 3:00 – 7:00 pm

VIENNA ART WEEK:

Palm Reading of Tumaroh. A performance by Till Langschied

TU, 17 11 2020, 7:00 – 8:00 pm (ONLINE)

Stormy Weather

In the current age of the climate change the weather has mutated from harmless small talk to, quite literally, a hot topic. And besides the meteorological transformations, we are living in stormy times: Our constant companion is an apparently ephemeral, human-made cloud, a data producing and consuming construct, which we incessantly feed and has now become a fixed component of our society.

This so-called cloud generates power, feasting on data and actual energy, too – yet it seems to be something inconceivable. Nonetheless, it has a strong influence not only on our personal lives but also on political processes, as can be clearly seen in the context of numerous elections in the last years. Just as real are the impacts of the cloud on the climate. Information technologies require an infrastructure, which – according to estimates – could account for a quarter of the energy consumption worldwide already in just a few years.

A mixture of knowing and not knowing is characteristic of our everyday experience of cloud infrastructures and services. We know that our data are not saved locally but on server farms,

whose location is unknown. We know, perhaps, that our data are also subject to US American jurisdiction, in the event that the server is located on US territory. But why data can be pinpointed as being on any state territory escapes our understanding. The cloud provides a fitting symbol for this metanetwork because the cloud, as a natural phenomenon in our atmosphere, is ephemeral and fleeting, too: Clouds float by, they are constantly changing, and they are hard to fathom.

“The exhibition Stormy Weather showcases artistic works that explore the metaphorical notion of the seemingly ephemeral cloud against the backdrop of its quite lasting effects in the real political world. The multilayered phenomenon of human-made clouds is dissected to enable one thing in the end: to pose questions, to reveal relationships, and to use artistic methods to evoke new forms of agency towards digital technologies.” (Katharina Brandl and Claire Hoffmann)

The project is realised in cooperation with the Centre culturel suisse in Paris, where it will be presented from December 2020 to January 2021. The exhibition was made possible with the kind support of Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council, Department of Culture, Canton Basel City, BMEIA Austrian Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs, and forum culturel autrichien Paris.

Artistic Positions

Susanna Flock and Leonhard Müllner

Morgenerst Abendletzt (2019)

In their video installation *Morgenerst Abendletzt* (2019) Susanna Flock and Leonhard Müllner investigate how our relation to nature has changed in the so-called information age. Screens with renderings from computer games displaying the respective cycles of the sun and moon are partially buried in the ground; the line where the physical world merges with the digital realm marks the horizon. A collage of travel reports from players can be heard as they explore their environments in different digital games. The hyperrealistic graphics of contemporary computer games elicit a certain disbelief in the players: “Maybe my eyes are playing tricks on me,” as one of the protagonists says. This awestruck enthusiasm in the face of an artificial nature recalls notions of the sublime in the eighteenth century. What is different in a virtual environment? What happens if our awe is no longer inspired by the Alps or volcanic eruptions but by images of nature created by humans?

Susanne Flock, *1988 in Graz (AT), lives and works in Vienna (AT).

Leonhard Müllner, *1987 in Graz (AT), lives and works in Vienna (AT).

Fragmentin

Displuvium (2019)

Your phone needs to cool down (2019)

In their installation *Displuvium* (2019) the artist collective Fragmentin explore the practice of cloud seeding, in which humans influence the weather by changing the microphysical processes in clouds. The possibility to intervene in the weather is employed for agricultural purposes but also of interest for military objectives. *Displuvium* consists of two screens and a pool filled with water, which generates artificial rain drops indoors. The screens map and list events related to precipitation: While natural rain results in random drop formations in the pool, the drops from weather phenomena caused by cloud seeding form geometric patterns.

As opposed to nature tampered by humans, Fragmentin focus on the effects that nature can have on technology in *Your phone needs to cool down* (2019). In the context of climate change, technology is often discussed as either a cause or a solution. Fragmentin evades this dichotomy by speculating on how consumer electronics themselves will fare in a future affected by global warming. The image of a dystopian reign of machines is countered here with the vulnerability of technology.

Fragmentin is an artist collective founded in 2014 in Lausanne (CH).

David Colombini, *1989 in Lausanne (CH), lives and works in Lausanne.

Marc Dubois, *1985 in Basel (CH), lives and works in Lausanne (CH).

Laura Perrenoud, *1991 in Lausanne (CH), lives and works in Lausanne.

Stefan Karrer

Cool clouds that look like they should be spelling something, but they don't (2016)

In his video work Stefan Karrer explores digital nexuses between images and language. A cursor clicks through his personal Internet research archive of found footage cloud pictures, while a computer generated voice reads out the corresponding captions. In 1934 Walter Benjamin saw captions as the only possibility to tear photography away from fashionable clichés. But what if the caption says as little as the image? The attributes provided by users (cool, crazy) reveal how arbitrary the categorisation is: What exactly makes a cloud cool? Now

as before, images suggest a truth value, but they no longer provide a connection to the represented.

Stefan Karrer, *1981 in Basel (CH), lives and works in Vienna (AT) and Basel.

Till Langschied

Palm Reading of Tumaroh (2019)

Datapotheosis (2020)

Trans-Tech-Ascensions (2020)

In his performance *Palm Reading of Tumaroh* (2019), which will be staged on the opening evening of the exhibition, Langschied demonstrates the palm reading of the future. As always, the physiognomy of the hand tells us our fortune, but now it is one with technology – here, the physical body serves as a gateway to neural networks that now truly define who we are. The notion of the transcendental is also present in his work *Datapotheosis* (2020): How do data transform when uploaded to the cloud? Silver flags printed with digital-occult patterns hang in the space from cables and are accompanied by the digital video *Trans-Tech-Ascensions* (2020). Formally, the flags resemble Tibetan prayer flags, which send out blessings when activated by the wind. Langschied draws a parallel between this spiritual meaning and the quasi-spiritual character of data traffic and uploads.

Till Langschied, *1987 in Frankfurt a.M. (DE), lives and works in Basel (CH).

Marc Lee

Political Campaigns – Battle of Opinion on Social Media (since 2016)

Political Campaigns – Battle of Opinion on Social Media, conceived by Swiss media artist and software developer Marc Lee, is an Internet news channel with reports that are never more than three minutes old. With no editorial hand behind the content selection and processing, Lee's work is operated by a bot, a computer program. The bot automatically chooses between diverse Internet sources and broadcasts them via the freely accessible URL

<http://marclee.io/tvbot/election.php>. The result is a rapid succession of Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube posts. It develops an election forecast of which candidate currently has more nominations. While Lee makes reference to traditional broadcasters such as CNN, the contents of his TV bot remain without context: As soon as the title of one feature is read, it is already replaced by the next one. The ever shorter cycles of contemporary news production and the related increasing randomness of information reports become obvious. The credo of the

“liveness” of news and social media is exaggerated, making the inherent challenges of the accelerated, overheated pace of news streams in the web explicit.

Marc Lee, *1969 in Knutwil (CH), lives and works in Zurich (CH).

Yein Lee

Atmospheric Trouble (2020)

glitches' lacemaking I-VI (2020)

In the work *Atmospheric Trouble* (2020), conceived specifically for this exhibition project, Yein Lee examines the materiality of digital space. Thematically embedded between the Anthropocene, the climate crisis, and the belief in technological progress, she constructs an installation that draws from wetware computing (neural and organic networks) and electronic waste to provide a new context for the cloud. Inspired by Sarah Kember, professor at Goldsmiths, University of London, Lee links technology with discourses in biology. The massive and resource-intensive infrastructure of cloud server farms is housed in remote, inaccessible places, triggering the imagination of incorporeal, placeless, and ephemeral data. Yein Lee's work counters the prevailing representation of the cloud as an abstract symbol. The installation is complemented with works on paper by the artist.

Yein Lee, *1988 in Seoul (KR), lives and works in Vienna (AT).

Christiane Peschek

Cloud No. 2, from the series *Velvet Fields* (2020)

above us retouched sky (my breath is stream), from the series *Velvet Fields* (2020)

In her ongoing work series *Velvet Fields* (since 2017) Christiane Peschek explores the ambivalences in digital imagery. By creating perfectly romantic, almost natural cloud and sky images with Photoshop, and at the same time revealing their constructed nature, she demonstrates how human-made digital natural phenomena can also become carriers of affects. The image of a romantic evening sky with cotton candy coloured clouds is touching; it reminds us of a mild summer evening on a vacation, even though all elements are just digital imitations and lack any connection with our natural surroundings. The apparent optimisation of digital images has been problematised in the media, especially concerning the digital retouching of human bodies, which produces unrealistic beauty ideals and societal norms. The debate illustrates that the constructed nature of digital images creates a new frame of

reference, when not a new reality: not only for bodies, but also in terms of our natural environment.

Christiane Peschek, *1984 in Salzburg (AT), based in Vienna (AT), lives and works in the cloud.

Total Refusal

Circumventing the Circle of Death – A pacifist finger exercise (2018)

Money is a Form of Speech (2020)

With a revenue in the trillions, the gaming industry has proven that computer games rank high in the mainstream entertainment industry. The vast majority of contemporary games are still characterised by combat scenarios. Total Refusal investigates how artists can appropriate the medium and modify its structures. In *Circumventing the Circle of Death – A pacifist finger exercise* (2018) they transform the militaristic objective of the strategy game *Sudden Strike 4* into a pacifist statement. The algorithm forces soldiers to attack automatically as soon as they spot each other. Total Refusal sidesteps this apparently unavoidable confrontation by causing the avatars to continuously circle around one another. The verbal attacks of the soldiers, however, persistently threaten the peaceful equilibrium. The subject of digital desertion is also taken up in their video performance *Money is a Form of Speech* (2020). In the tradition of Situationist *détournement*, Total Refusal misappropriates the constructed militarised environment of the multiplayer shooting game *Tom Clancy's The Division* and turns it into a peaceful, digital video dance performance.

Robin Klengel, *1988 in Graz (AT), lives and works in Graz and Vienna (AT).

Leonhard Müllner, *1987 in Graz (AT), lives and works in Vienna (AT).

Michael Stumpf, *1985 in Wels (AT), lives and works in Vienna (AT).

Christoph Wachter and Mathias Jud

qaul.net (since 2012)

In the projects of the artist duo Christoph Wachter and Mathias Jud, power structures residing in the Internet are revealed and subverted by developing independent networks, for example, together with activists, refugees, opposition groups, or Roma communities. With *qaul.net* (since 2012, www.qaul.net) Wachter and Jud create a counter-model for the existing structures of the Internet: With a direct network between computers and smartphones, the World Wide Web –

and its dependency on commercial and monitored infrastructure – can be circumvented. In this way, they provide the requirements for communication during natural catastrophes, political upheavals, and authoritarian disruptions. Wachter and Jud see their project as an alternative to centralised telecommunication structures: “qaul.net turns the maxim of global and virtual communication on its head and focuses instead on the specific position of the here and now, looking in the immediate neighbourhood, and from there out into the great wide world.”

Christoph Wachter, *1966 in Zurich (CH), lives and works in Berlin (DE) and Zurich.

Mathias Jud, *1974 in Zurich (CH), lives and works in Berlin (DE) and Zurich.

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Image material: www.kunstraum.net/en/press

Opening hours: Tuesday–Friday, 11:00 am – 7:00 pm, and Saturday 11:00 am – 3:00 pm, Free entrance