HEK
Haus der Elektronischen Künste

Pe Lang, Johanna Bruckner, Jennifer Merlyn Scherler Swiss Media Art– Pax Art Awards 2022
01.04–21.05.2023

Opening: Friday 31.03.2023, 19:00
Press tour: Friday 31.03.2023, 11:00; opening: 19:00

Johanna Bruckner, *Metabolic Hardware*, 2023, Video Still

The exhibition Pe Lang, Johanna Bruckner, Jennifer Merlyn Scherler. Swiss Media Art – Pax Art Awards 2022 offers an array of works by the prizewinning artists in three parallel solo exhibitions. The main prize-winner Pe Lang's impressive kinetic installations never fail to enchant viewers, as they openly reveal their mechanics to remarkable magical and poetic effect. The two emerging artists Johanna Bruckner and Jennifer Merlyn Scherler premiere their new video installations. While Bruckner stages her reflections on the fluidity of gender in moving images, Scherler playfully analyses representations of identity and self in popular culture and social networks.

Curator: Boris Magrini

Pe Lang

Pe Lang creates kinetic installations characterised by a minimalist aesthetic drawn from the functional and technological elements of the systems he employs. These electroacoustic works have evolved from the artist's intense research and programming activity (1999–2007), working with software for real-time simulations. Lang experiments with the properties of his materials extensively, for example investigating the friction between heterogeneous elements, magnetism or wave interference. His installations make use of the mechanics and laws of physics to which his materials are subject: motors, actuators (technical units that convert electrical signals into mechanical motion or effect physical change in pressure or temperature), cables, silicone, rubber, colour filters, mechanical parts, polarisation filters and magnets are among the recurring elements in his works. Lang's ingenious compilation of these elements and materials not only results in elegant and formally fascinating compositions but also reveals surprising phenomena unexposed in conventional applications.

The interaction of material components in Pe Lang's autonomous systems generate sounds and rhythms, giving rise to consider them as musical instruments. Lang's perfectly composed and structured systems can be described as generative, in their constant production of new combinations of their captivating audio-visual dance of sounds, colours and forms. The infinite permutations of mechanical compositions reflect a fascinating dialectic between order and chaos. At the same time, they offer an unusual encounter between the algorithmically dominated digital world and our analogue world governed by the laws of physics and chemistry.

Lang's new work created for the exhibition at HEK marks a turning point in his career. It is the first time for the artist to create an installation composed of several thematically related parts. The ensemble is organised in a space that might seem to resemble a studio but opens into a time and place of its own, with objects and kinetic works inspired by a science fiction story the artist is currently creating. For the first time, Lang's visual work expands into a narrative; although we will have to wait for the publication of his book to fully understand the symbolic references of the individual objects.

Pe Lang (*1974) received the Pax Art Awards 2022 main prize of CHF 30,000.

Pe Lang lives and works in Wald, near Zurich. His works have been exhibited at: Galerie Denise René, Paris; Kunsthal, Rotterdam; MuDa Museum für digitale Kunst, Zurich; ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe; Chronus Art Center, Shanghai; Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; Fondation Vasarely, Aix-en-Provence; BIAN Biennale, Montreal; ISEA 2016, Hong Kong; Espoo Museum of Modern Art (EMMA); Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich; Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin; Espace Expression, Miami; National Art Museum of China, Peking; Kunstmuseum Trondheim; Aarhus Kunsthalle, Denmark; ICC, Tokyo; Boghossian Foundation, Villa Empain, Brussels; Kunsthalle Lucerne; Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, Barcelona, among others.

Instagram: @studiopelang #pelang

Johanna Bruckner

Johanna Bruckner's work takes a multi-medial approach, with the human body and performance playing leading roles. Formally, her installations involve a combination of technological machinery and organic bodies, including videos generated with computer graphics software accompanied by sound compositions. Her themes revolve around biopolitics, feminism, queer theory and posthumanism. Initially, Bruckner's collaboration with dancers and performers began as an investigation of issues related to working bodies, labour as performativity and social construct, in order to develop hypotheses around alternatives to existing social norms. In her more recent work, Bruckner deepens her exploration of social bonds, including images that address queer pornography and interspecies relationships. Inspired by molecular biology, quantum physics and the study of hybrid life forms, Bruckner's work contributes to a discourse that seeks to promote an ecology of care and trust, to create a world where human and non-human beings coexist beyond binary regimes, in harmony with the environment and technologies that affect it.

Johanna Bruckner's new multi-channel video installation «Metabolic Hardware» (2023) explores how technology effects the human body and its microorganisms. The video's protagonist is a sexbot created to protect a person's intimacy, especially in situations of sexual discomfort. As the sexbot intervenes and interacts with human emotions and desires, it also unfolds its own reflections, questioning its very nature, function and role in the world. The exhibition also features the installation «Body Obfuscations» (2023) and video «Atmospheric Drafts of Intimacy» (2020). Here Bruckner starts out from the phenomenon of atmospheric escape, where planetary gases leave from earth's atmosphere into outer space, to envision their forming extraterrestrial bodies that populate her intricate exploration of posthuman relationships and polymorphous desires.

Johanna Bruckner (*1984) received one of the Pax Art Awards 2022 of CHF 15,000 for an emerging artist.

Johanna Bruckner lives and works in Zurich. Her works have been exhibited at: Berlinische Galerie, Berlin; MAXXI – National Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome; Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; La Biennale di Venezia; Suluv Gallery, Novi Sad; Hybrid Biennale, Dresden Hellerau; Kunstverein Das Weisse Haus, Vienna; DOCK 20, Hollenstein; Mamco Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Geneva; Galerie EIGEN+ART Lab, Berlin; ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe; Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA), Milan; Galerie Roehrs & Boetsch, Zurich; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; transmediale, Berlin, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg; Kunsthaus, Hamburg, among others.

Instagram: @jo_ann_bruc #JohannaBruckner

Jennifer Merlyn Scherler

The installations conceived by Jennifer Merlyn Scherler (they/them) span various media and formats, from video to performance, from photography to the production of written and spoken texts. They investigate internet cultures, questions of gender and collective identity, self-image, structures of cultural dominance and their mirroring in social networks. All the while, the artist puts forward a fascination for resistance strategies developed by niche communities in their manifestation of non-conformist values and identities. Against the backdrop of comprehensive research, Scherler has developed a personal visual vocabulary loaded with references to popular digital culture. Drawn from videos and images found online, supplemented or transformed with elements from their own experience, the fantasy world Scherler has created, resonates on an intimate level as well as being familiar to the online communities she draws inspiration from.

Scherler's new video installation «Wasteland, Baby!» (working title, 2023) explores how feelings of despair in relation to climate change and ecological catastrophe awaken people's desire to escape "back-to-nature". The artist's interest lies in collective ritual strategies of coping and grieving, particularly in the subculture of "cottagecore" which recently emerged in communities on Tumblr, Instagram and TikTok. Recognising the ideological ambivalence of cottagecore's aesthetic, with its romanticised vision of rural life and nature invoking stereotypical and strongly heteronormative Western ideals, Scherler observes how the process of appropriation and reshaping by subcultures, who disagree with these normative aspects, open collective digital escapism to more inclusivity in form of cottagecore.

Jennifer Merlyn Scherler (*1996) received one of the Pax Art Awards 2022 of CHF 15,000 for an emerging artist.

Scherler lives and works in Basel. Their works have been exhibited at: Showroom Progr, Bern; Hrdayam, Bern; Kasko, Basel; Kunsthaus Langenthal; Grand Palais, Bern; Kunsthaus Baselland; Stadtgalerie, Bern; Kunstmuseum Basel - Gegenwart; _rondell Suderstrasse, Hamburg; Wasteland, Zurich; Futur3, Citybox 24, Kiel; sososo.space, Bern; der TANK, Basel; Studio 413, Glasgow; Alte Schreinerei, Bern; Kunsthalle zu Kiel; Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal; Kulturhaus Helferei, Zurich; Galerie Reflector, Bern; MATERIAL, Zurich, among others.

Instagram: @jennifermerlyn #JenniferMerlynScherler

Art Foundation Pax / Pax Art Awards

The Pax Art Awards have been held annually since 2018. These groundbreaking prizes for digital art, awarded by the Art Foundation Pax in collaboration with HEK, honour and promote media-specific practices by Swiss artists who employ media technologies in their work or reflect on their effects. Half of the prize money is used to purchase a work for the Art Foundation Pax collection, the other half supports the artists in the development of a new work, which is presented in a joint exhibition in the spring of the following year. The Art Foundation Pax is an independent foundation for the promotion of digital and media-based art in Switzerland and is sponsored by Pax.

Instagram: @artfoundationpax

The exhibition is created in partnership with

Hashtags: #hek_basel #artfoundationpax #swissmediaart #paxartawards

Information:
HEK (Haus der Elektronischen Künste)
Freilager-Platz 9, 4142 Münchenstein/Basel

Opening times: Wed–Sun, 12:00–18:00
Admission: 9 / 6 CHF (reduced); Happy Hour (free admission): Wed–Fri 12:00–13:00
Guided tour: every Sunday at 15:00 (in German)
For more information: www.hek.ch

Instagram: @hek_basel

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About HEK (Haus der Elektronischen Künste)
HEK in Basel is Switzerland's national centre of excellence and museum dedicated to all art forms that employ or reflect on new technologies and media. HEK's interdisciplinary orientation offers a broad public insight into art production from different genres at the conjunction of art, media and technology. In a diverse programme of exhibitions, smaller festival formats, performances and concerts, HEK addresses current social issues as well as technological-aesthetic developments. In addition to organising events and exhibitions, HEK is committed to answering digital art's specific demands in collection methodology and preservation.

hek.ch