

## Press Release

Basel, 29.11.21

### Regionale 22 – Wired Magic

The exhibition *Regionale 22 – Wired Magic* looks at the rituals and methods artists use to relate magical thinking and other forms of knowledge production to the use of modern technologies. The selected works address various historical incidences of the suppression of knowledge production and explore paradoxes arising from the perception of technology. The exhibition invites the audience to question their own impressions and encourages the exploration of reality through technology.

Knowledge and knowledge production have undergone a transformation with the industrial age. From archaic ritual and healing practices, knowledge became a commercial commodity. As a result, education and academic knowledge were consolidated as symbols of power and domination. Recent studies from anthropology and sociology have shown a resurgence of interest in rehabilitating other approaches to knowledge production, such as shamanism and also witchcraft, as a celebration of diversity in the study of the self and reality. Some theorists, such as the activist and writer Starhawk,<sup>1</sup> who explores local cultures and magical practices erased by colonial rule, believe that there is a need to enforce a process of decolonising the memory associated with these places and practices through the rediscovery of their past and cultures. Other theorists, such as Silvia Federici,<sup>2</sup> attribute the transformation of magical practices and witchcraft to the development of capitalist ideology and point out that witchcraft is an example of the larger phenomenon of social formation and class production. The research and telling of the history of witchcraft, as well as the appropriation of magical thinking by activists in conjunction with technologies, can be understood today as resistance to the capitalisation of knowledge. They are revolts against corporate control and technological surveillance.

Following this train of thought, artists invent fictional scenarios in which they explore the potential of bodily transformation, widely various behaviours and a renewed communion with nature. Restoring our relationship with nature could be an essential part of understanding the world and a way to rise up against the capitalist violence evident in our exploitation of resources, destruction of biodiversity and pollution. In line with technological progress, alternative approaches to experiencing reality are seen as a way of investigating unknown areas of knowledge that can take different forms and appear in different kinds of approaches and practices. In addition to exploring the potential of magical thinking and rituals, the artists sometimes spin them ad absurdum to present ironic and critical points of view. Some of the artworks, rather than bringing shamanic practices into synergy with modern technologies, emphasise their absurdity. Others draw attention to the dangers inherent to the mystical and ritual character inherent to modern technologies, their idolatrous position and, as a consequence, almost religious cultishness. The exhibition raises the question of whether the expansion of senses and techniques, as well as the connection with modern technology, contribute to the exploration of the world and enable critical thinking beyond conventions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Starhawk is an American feminist and teacher at the California Institute of Integral Studies. She is the author of *The Spiral Dance* (1979) and *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics* (1982).

<sup>2</sup> Silvia Federici is an Italian-American scholar, teacher and activist. She is professor emerita and teaching fellow at Hofstra University, New York, and author of *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (2004).

Witchcraft, predominantly practised by women, was seen as a threat to society. In this context, the female body was also often demonised. The artist duo **Jasmin Bigler & Nicole Weibel**, employ the space of video mapping and transformations to reclaim the female body and render it a symbol of emancipation.

**Karin Borer's** series of collects film material and reveals tricks, illusions and riddles performed on stage and recorded using technologies. Some of these spiritual rituals are simple, while others elaborate manoeuvres, both serving the purpose of deceiving and distracting attention.

The artist duo **Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė** explore the history of knowledge developed by witches and healers on the transformation of matter. Using Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) as a modern re-enactment of such practices, they create synthetic narratives and chimeras, hybrid beings from Greek mythology, as they result from digital alchemy.

**Ludovic Hadjeras** draws inspiration from the ancient Roman myth of Diana, goddess of the hunt, protector of women and girls and herself a fighter. Her name is often associated with ghosts and witchcraft. In this video work, Diana roams through mountain forests and digitally rendered environments in search of a place of belonging.

**Susanna Hertrich** pursues connections between mythology and technology. In her latest work, the wireless electromagnetic wave technology is connected with the ancient belief in the deity Aether and his power to control high spherical winds. In esoteric circles, the dodecahedron, a 12-sided form representing aether, is used as a source to collect energy for healing purposes.

**Maya Hottarek** explores the everyday life she experiences in society and seeks a refuge in nature. In her video, the protagonist is seen wandering through a swamp after a supposed emergency landing on earth, in search of magical berries believed to provide the power to overthrow established power structures.

**Hae Young Ji** is critical of the claim that technology can forecast the future and forge a sustainable environment. Her work reflects on the dual consequences of technological progress and its respective enslavement of labourers. Here, the artist predicts a future where human resources serve global prosperity, united on a common digital platform, in semblance to the worship of deities' services in prehistoric times.

**Till Langschieb's** work addresses the metaphysics of data transformation in cloud storage and the notion that technology's invisible operations in could be perceived as magic. The artist also draws attention to how the process of information distribution via Wi-Fi and cloud storage also serves to spark spiritual and superstitious ideas about the purposes of technology.

German artist **Johanna Mangold** explores the mythologisation of personal stories and offers a journey into the unconscious by means of virtual reality, which on the one hand creates a multimedia environment and on the other opens the door to the surreal. In these memories and dreams, everything seems enchanted – a phone turns into a banana and the image of mother mutates into an extraterrestrial being.

**Romain Tièche** creates performances reminiscent of shamanic rituals and combined with modern objects and technologies. In his recent video works, the artist stages himself in self-portraits, using machine learning techniques to replace deleted video sequences with new combinations, creating an impression of magic and mysticism.

**Curators:** Yulia Fisch, Boris Magrini

**Artists:** Jasmin Bigler & Nicole Weibel, Karin Borer, Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė, Ludovic Hadjeras, Hae Young Ji, Susanna Hertrich, Maya Hottarek, Hae Young Ji, Till Langschied, Johanna Mangold, Romain Tièche

**Accompanying programme:**

**Guided tours:**

Sun, 28.11.2021, 3pm: Guided tour in German  
Sun, 28.11.2021, 4pm: Guided tour in French  
Sun, 5.12.2021, 3pm: Guided tour in German  
Thur, 2.12.2021 and 20.01.2021, 6pm: Curators' tour with Boris Magrini and Yulia Fisch  
Sun, 12.12.2021, 3pm: Guided tour in German  
Sun, 09.01.2022, 4pm: Guided tour in English  
Sun, 19.12.2021, 3pm: Guided tour in German  
Sun, 26.12.2021, 3pm: Guided tour in German  
Sun, 2.1.2022, 3pm: Guided tour in German  
Sun, 9.1.2022, 3pm: Guided tour in German  
Sun, 16.1.2022, 3pm: Guided tour in German  
Sun, 23.1.2022, 3pm: Guided tour in German  
Sun, 30.1.2022, 3pm: Guided tour in German

**Educational programme:**

Wed, 2.12.2021, 10am: Wednesday Matinée  
Sun, 5.12.2021 and 02.01.2021 Happy Sunday – free exhibition entry  
Sat, 20.11.2021 and 11.12.2021, 9:30am–12:30pm & 2–5pm: BitFabrik – computer programming club for children and teens aged 9–14

**Information:**

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

Opening times: Wed-Sun, 12–6pm

Entry: 9 / 6 CHF (reduced price), Wed–Fri 12–1pm Happy Hour (free exhibition entry)  
Public guided tours (in German): every Sunday at 3pm

For more information: [www.hek.ch](http://www.hek.ch)

**Press contact:**

Elena Kuznik  
[elena.kuznik@hek.ch](mailto:elena.kuznik@hek.ch)  
+41/(0)61 331 58 41

**About HEK (House of Electronic Arts)**

HEK (House of Electronic Arts) in Basel is Switzerland's national centre of excellence for all art forms expressing themselves through and reflecting on new technologies and media. With its interdisciplinary orientation, HEK enables broad public insight into art production in various genres in art, media and technology. HEK's diverse programme of exhibitions, smaller festival formats, performances and concerts addresses current social themes and issues as well as technological-aesthetic developments. In addition to events and exhibitions, HEK is also committed to the methodology of contemporary art collection and preservation of digital art.