RUK **KIBLA**

Press Release (1 October 2021)

KIBLIX 2020–2021: Virtual Worlds Now
International Group Exhibition

1 October–30 November 2021
Opening: 1 October 2021, 7 p.m.
KIBLA PORTAL, Valvasorjeva 40, 2nd floor, Maribor, Slovenia

Press Release

The international group exhibition of the festival of art, technology and science **KIBLIX 2020–2021: Virtual Worlds Now,** opening on October 1, at 7 pm, thus rounds off with a completed set of **18 works of art** by internationally renowned artists. The exhibition, which will be on view at **KIBLA PORTAL**, **the largest independent exhibition centre in Slovenia**, provides a critical overview of contemporary virtual spaces through a series of innovative art research projects in the field of the latest virtual (VR), augmented (AR) and mixed reality (MR) technologies.

The exhibition centres around the human experience of virtual reality – with all the material limitations and socio-political conditions that determine the body – while comprehending the virtual environments as spaces for speculative realities, variable identities, and ever more acute social transformations. The KIBLIX2021 festival's central question, posed by the curatorial team consisting of Živa Kleindienst, Tadej Vindiš, Aleksandra Kostič and Peter Tomaž Dobrila, is: which and what are the virtual worlds now?

Visitors of the exhibition can experience: **Lu Yang's** computer-generated video *Delusional Mandala*, which explores the influence of technology on the formation of social, cultural, political and biological identities with a genderless human-avatar; a virtual reality and a video installation *RE-ANIMATED* by **Jakob Kudsk Steensen**, a poetic experience that explores our relationship towards nature, extinction and immortality through an extinct Hawaiian bird and its distorted habitat; the digital-only fashion collection *DEEP* by **Amber Jae Slooten and The Fabricant,** questioning what the digital revolution could mean for the fashion industry and its environmental imprint; the artificially intelligent robot *Amygdala*, which learns "skin-cutting" on artificial skin, an animistic cleansing ritual, and a sculptural installation *Calyx* by **Marco Donnarumma**; a mixed-reality installation *HyperBody Portal: Stratholme.GoStop* by **Pete Jiadong Qiang**, which transitions between the virtual and physical spaces of gaming and "fandom" in anime, visual novels, comics and video games; a short animated film *How to Disappear* by the **Total Refusal collective**, which, as an anti-war film in an online war game Battelfield, illustrates the history of deserters; a virtual reality world on the Sansar platform *MetaGarden: Sphere5* by **Tanja Vujinović**, which enables the exploration of virtual reality as a social space of connectedness and speculative futures; a participatory project in augmented reality *Skiljelinjer (Lines of Demarcation)* by the art-design studio **Untold Garden and Sebastian Dahlqvist**, critically explores new tools and decision-making processes in public virtual-physical spaces; a spatial installation *The World Was to Me a Secret Which I Desired to Divine* by **Emir Šehanović**, focusing on new realities built from human and non-human entities; a video-performance by **Daniel Hanzlík** *Default Setting*, in which the artist shifts the basic principles of analogue and digital media translatability, physical and virtual reality, a two-dimensional image and a three-dimensional object; an interactive intermedia installation *Time of Flight* by the **Compiler collective**, which offers a different understanding of our experience with devices such as smartphones, computers, tablets and game consoles by visualizing machine vision; a virtual reality and first-person point of view 360° videos *Seeing I – The Other* by **Mark Farid**, dealing with privacy and control issues within digital systems; a generative audio-visual painting *Self-portrait* by **Tadej Droljc**, where the painter's brush is led by pseudo-random algorithms while at the same time an endless game of perspectives unfolds; the online performance *Nocturne in Black and Gold* by the **ATOM-r** tandem in collaboration with

the artist **Abraham Avnisan**, who seek to subvert colonial narratives of American history by intertwining virtual-physical space, specific visual language, and cover songs; a virtual reality *Nightsss* by **Weronika M. Lewandowska and Sandra Frydrysiak**, which immerses the viewer in a sensual experience of poetry, dance and nature; a video game *What Is Your Truth?* by **Dorijan Šiško and Sara Bezovšek**, who research the ideas of modern internet society, meme culture and the formation of "truths"; a virtual reality *space men r My friended* by **Tony Oursler**, who explores a person's mind and story; and the intermedia installation *Third Landscape* by **Nika Erjavec**, which focuses on sensory perception at the intersection of art and science and (in) visible transformations of the environment in the last two centuries.

With the international group exhibition at KIBLA PORTAL the festival KIBLIX 2020-2021 concludes its programs that took place in a hybrid form. In addition to artistic research projects, the festival program also included online events. From December 2020 until today, over 60 online events have been held, ranging from thematically focused conversations with international guests, AV performances, art presentations, webinars and workshops to the all-Slovenian GameJam.

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Projects

Lu Yang: Delusional Mandala, 2015
computer generated video
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/lu-yang/

Delusional Mandala is the first piece of work, for which Lu Yang created a digital genderless human-avatar based on his own physical self.

Influenced by the research on neuroscience, Lu Yang's *Delusional Mandala* refers to various physical treatments and medical modifications of our brains, such as: three-dimensional

stereotactic systems used for minimally invasive surgical interventions, deep brain simulations that implant electrodes within the brain, and transcranial magnetic stimulation technology, which uses magnetic fields to improve symptoms of depression. These physical surgical methods are symbolically presented in the work as means of physical modifications, which alongside incorporated religious visions and the elements representing our material world extend the portrayal of total delusion.

Delusional Mandala demonstrates Lu Yang's reflection on the past, present and future, of his creative work, of the physical self and of identity. The work questions the widely accepted notion of our consciousness being associated with our brains. In this video, Lu Yang simulates the delusion of destroying himself through different means over and over again - from methods of physical scientific interventions, to technological transformations of social, cultural and political constructions of our identities. While *Delusional Mandala* is a speculative video work portraying the virtual simulations of delusion, the only thing that is certain nowdays is that these simulations could eventually be realized.

Delusional Mandala was created after Lu Yang's video *Moving God*, both belonging to the same series of works exploring the intersections between religion and neuroscience.

Jakob Kudsk Steensen: RE-ANIMATED, 2018–2019
video installation and VR
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/re-animated/

RE-ANIMATED is a VR and video installation that explores extinction, preservation, and immortality by artist Jakob Kudsk Steensen. The work is based on Kudsk Steensen's investigation of the now-extinct Kaua'i 'ō'ō bird, through conversations with ornithologist Douglas H. Pratt, field work, and research in the American Museum of Natural History's Ornithology archives (NYC).

The work's vast photorealistic landscape is made of 3D scanned organic material and archival audio of the bird's mating call (recorded in1975) which have been transformed by the artist into a new world for people to explore. The environment responds to ever-evolving algorithmic music by Michael Riesman, Musical Director of Philip Glass Ensemble, as well as the audience's breath and voice. *RE-ANIMATED* is ultimately a slowmoving, poetic examination of how we relate to nature irrevocably altered by human activity.

»The last Kaua'i 'ō'ō bird died in 1987, and with it, so did the species. In 2009, its mating call – first recorded in 1975 and later digitized in an ornithology lab in New York – was uploaded to YouTube. Since then, the song of the Kaua'i 'ō'ō calling in vain to a mate no longer there has been played by people more than half a million times. (…) *RE-ANIMATED* is an artist's response to this call. The exhibition is a re-staging of its song. It's a grandiose resurrection of the bird. And it's a reconstruction of its original habitat on the Hawaiian island of Kaua'i, in a wholly new, distorted version. (…) *RE-ANIMATED* is a video and VR work that meditates on our paradoxical techno-scientific development. Advancements in man's control of nature have triggered processes that humans no longer control. A process is set in motion that simultaneously stokes fears of increasingly fatal natural catastrophes, and hopes for resurrection and eternal life. This process is mirrored in Kudsk Steensen's island, which is a landscape of both dreams and nightmares. As a *digital gardener*, the artist has collected and planted a broad range of flora and fauna, which he, by use of algorithms, has programmed to take over the island. The virtual landscape is equally an entrancing ecosystem filled with water, light, plants, birds, fish, and

insects, and a biotech laboratory for a resurrected, monstrously-scaled bird.« (text by curator Toke Lykkeberg, Director of Tranen Contemporary Art Center).

Amber Jae Slooten and The Fabricant: DEEP, 2018
digital-only fashion collection, video
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/amber-jae-slooten-the-fabricant/

DEEP – Faster Fashion is a digital-only fashion collection designed by Amber Jae Slooten in collaboration with The Fabricant, which combines fashion design with machine learning while exploring their creative coexistence.

What will be left of our dreams after computers learn to dream? Slooten, working in collaboration with 3D animation specialists The Fabricant, asked a machine learning algorithm to learn a visual representation of a large dataset of images taken at Paris Fashion week. They then let the artificial intelligence to imagine entirely new pieces of clothing by predicting shape, colour and prints that it hadn't seen before. The computer's dreamed up images served as inspiration for a brand new digital-only fashion collection, which was entirely imagined, created and is experienced on a computer. The final digital collection manifests in hypnotising 3D animations of the outfits walking through uncanny landscapes containing remnants of the fashion industry, which float through the scenes as the avatar moves forward into hyper-real places that are vaguely familiar but also estranging.

DEEP ventures into unknown territory of digital fashion, which combines fashion design with the latest technological developments, questioning what the digital revolution could ultimately mean for fashion design, the industry, its environmental impact, and the people working in it. Do garments even have to be physical to exist?

Marco Donnarumma: Amygdala, 2015–2018, and Calyx, 2019
artificially intelligent robot and sculptural installation
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/marco-donnarumma/

Amygdala MK3 (2015–2018) is an artificially intelligent (AI) robot in the form of an uncanny human-like limb, hung inside an industrial-grade computer server cabinet. The robot's only aim is to learn an animistic ritual of purification known as »skin-cutting«, found across tribes in Papua New Guinea, Africa and Eastern Asia. Abject and yet sinuous, *Amygdala* uses a knife to repetitively and carefully manipulate and sculpt its own skin, on and on. Driven by biomimetic neural networks, the robot teaches itself the physical and cognitive discipline to perform the ritual; its labour is repetitive, careful and neverending. The specific kind of neural networks behind *Amygdala* imitates the sensorimotor system of animals, meaning that the robot's movement are not pre-programmed, but emerge spontaneously and iteratively from the activity of the neural networks. Rituals of purification and AI technology are both means of social categorization and thus reflect the hidden systems of untold signs and rules which societies are based upon. With its disturbing and sensual performance, *Amygdala* reanimates a key symbol of human history through the glare of today's technocratic society.

Calyx (2019) is a sculptural installation composed of skin garments each bearing unique traces and scars caused by the operations of an AI robot named *Amygdala*. During every exhibition *Amygdala* uses a steel metal knife to carefully cut and sculpt the skin, without any particular goal other than learning to cut. The skins are thus bodily relics testifying to the computational agency

of the machine and to its oblivious brutality. The skins are the result of combined activity by the human artist and the autonomous robot. The initial, intact skin garment is first created by Donnarumma by hand, using a particular compound of organic materials designed by the artist to resemble human skin as closely as possible. The artist's bodily hairs are also embedded in the skins. When ready, the skin is attached to the body of *Amygdala*, which then begins its inexorable skin-cutting performance. Being dependent on an architecture of neural networks – an algorithmic method used to embed machines with limited »learning« skills – the cutting movements of *Amygdala* cannot be predicted and vary greatly across each performance. Initially, a skin is soft and malleable enabling *Amygdala* to sculpt it with relatively little effort. However, as the time passes the skin dries up eventually hardening completely. This makes it impossible for *Amygdala* to continue its work. Only at this point, the skin is removed from *Amygdala*'s nest and stored for inclusion in *Calyx*. *Amygdala* and *Calyx* are part of the *7 Configurations* cycle (2014–2019), a series on the conflicts surrounding the human body in the era of artificial intelligence (AI).

Pete Jiadong Qiang: HyperBody Portal: Stratholme.GoStop, 2021
mixed-reality installation
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/pete-jiadong-qiang/

Stratholme.GoStop is a visual novel developed as a virtual reality (VR) game, exploring a physical-virtual crossover between the real-life post-industrial artillery factory in the welfare zone of northwest China and the *Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne* gaming universe. Engaging with the concept of game fandom, the artist in *Stratholme.GoStop* builds an open world multi-level game made out of various 3D scans, texts, illustrations, visual cultural references, and modified 3D objects. Each level is built as its own virtual environment, which the players can explore and navigate through at their own pace, but are ultimately encouraged to search for a specific eye-like portal, which progresses them into the next level of the game. With each successful progression into a new level, the player gains a chance to win a special edition NFT (»non-fungible token«) artwork.

HyperBody Portal: Stratholme.GoStop is a mixed-reality installation based on the postindustrial context of Maribor. The Maribor *HyperBody Portal* aims to encourage players to question their own understanding of a game-fandom - a phenomena of subcultures that arise around different forms of narrative media, specifically in the context of anime, comics, games and novels (ACGN). The project thus questions how such game-fandoms, which comprise the imagination, culture, memory and affection with various digital technologies of visualisation, animation, and socialisation, have a capacity to bend into the real-world by forming specific hybrid realities that cross between the virtual technologies and our physical selves. Therefore, by using methods of digital ethnography and autoethnography, *HyperBody Portal: Stratholme.GoStop* attempts to produce a virtual-physical space, which reflects the very nature of a game fandom - an experiential entanglement of physical participation and digital modification of an ever-emerging independent universe.

Total Refusal (Robin Klengel, Leonhard Müllner, Michael Stumpf): How to Disappear, 2020
short animated film
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/total-refusal/

How to Disappear is an anti-war movie in the true sense of the word, searching for possibilities for peace in the most unlikely place of an online war game. It's a tribute to disobedience and

desertion – in both digital and physical-real warfare. Shot in the picturesque war landscapes of *Battlefield V*, the hyperreal graphics become the backdrop for an essay-like narrative. The film revolves around the history of deserters – a part of human history, which has hardly been illuminated. Performances and creative interventions explore the scopes and limits of the audiovisual entertainment machine.

Tanja Vujinović: MetaGarden: Sphere5, 2021
world in VR for platform Sansar
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/metagarden-sphere5/

MetaGarden: Sphere5 by Tanja Vujinović is the latest output from her series of artworks for social VR spaces. *MetaGarden* is an imaginary-real world that exists both in virtual and real space and is segmented into related Spheres. Its conceptual framework encourages us to think about the current human and non-human networks that we are part of.

Lee Worth Bailey wrote about »deep technology« that moves away from egoism and materialism towards caring for the other and the environment. Developing a sense of place within the *MetaGarden* is based on a tradition of phenomenology that highlights »Being-in-the-world«. It is a primordial ontological participation in the environment through which the existence in the world envelopes and opposes the »industrial ego as a subject standing against a world of neutral objects«. »Deep technology« would require a fundamental change in technological thinking towards more self-awareness. Care, instead of competition and ego-driven self-aggrandisement is the way to combat frantic materialism. It is not the rejection of technology, but its opening to deeper grounds of existence.

Sphere5 is inspired by Arcadian gardens in a vast philosophical sense where we build relationships with non-human agents, emerging from the cloud of mythology. If it wasn't for the sand as the base of this world, we could instantly think in terms of perfect heterotopias, as they were envisioned by Michel Foucault, like gardens detached from ordinary life. This garden is inhabited by biomimetic machines, Dyson spheres, and bone flowers that appeared from the roots of carboniferous plants. *MetaGarden* would not be a meta-garden without proto-machines, devices of the future arising from speculative ideas about renewable energy resources, clean industrial development of goods, and hopeful dreams of a world without pollution. Although many alternative ecological solutions are being developed nowadays, we have yet to see if any of them will be used on a broader scale. Until then, we might think along the lines of these semi-imaginary, intelligent, self-operating, and self-assembling machines that are working synergistically with their surroundings.

Sphere5 is placed within Sansar, an amalgam of a computer game and a social platform. It is a virtual club garden that enables us to explore virtual reality as a social space of connectedness, featuring a minimal techno audio-visual set or special events scheduled by the author.

Untold Garden (Max Čelar, Jakob Sköte) and Sebastian Dahlqvist: Skiljelinjer (Lines of Demarcation), 2020–2021
participatory project in AR
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/untold-garden/

Skiljelinjer, Swedish for »lines of demarcation«, is an architectural research project exploring new tools and decision-making frameworks for collaborative design processes. The project explores

ideas of agonism; processes driven by controversy instead of consensus, while at the same time acknowledging the potential of evolving and malleable decision-making protocols within collaborative processes. The project explores how Chantal Mouffe's writings on agonism and agonistics' logics might guide collaborative design processes within and beyond urban planning. This is done with a tool using augmented reality, through which participants co-create and vote on proposals. The proposals are filtered depending on their ratio between upvotes and downvotes, which can drive the project's decision-making process following a range between consensus, conflict, and dissensus.

Within the field of urban and community planning, interest in citizen participation has grown in recent decades. Increased demands for more balanced influence and more sustainable societies have led to a surging interest in creating new platforms and strategies for involving citizens. More and more municipalities, housing companies, and architectural offices are trying to open up their decision-making processes to make them more inclusive and collaborative. Finding new frameworks for collaboration within the design of the public space is urgent. In addition to finding methods and processes that address citizens' desire to participate, new perspectives are required on what this participation should result in.

Visitors will be able to design the sculpture by downloading the *Skiljelinjer* app. The sculpture park in augmented reality on the Main Square in Maribor will be on in the following months.

Emir Šehanović: The World Was to Me a Secret Which I Desired to Divine, 2017–2019
spatial installation
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/emir-sehanovic/

Emir Šehanović draws inspiration from meditations on the post-human body, Frankenstein's body as Mary Shelley wrote about it, or as discussed in the *Cyborg Manifesto* by Donna Haraway. In line with this narrative, associating further with *Storytelling for Earthly Survival* (Haraway), Šehanović presents us with worlds free from the anthropocentric complex, where both nature and artificial entities produce realities. In response to his work, one must think about the very real presence of what seems to be a fiction, and yet is not: climate change, which consequently becomes a problem for all species.

Daniel Hanzlík: Default Setting, 2021
video-performance, video projection and video
https://www.202122.kiblix.org/en/exhibition/daniel-hanzlik/

Fundamental principles lie in both duality and permeability of two contradictory particularities: the analogue and digital medium, physical and virtual reality, two-dimensional image and three-dimensional object. However, the principles of media are inverted in the video. The hanging image becomes an object of dynamic change, while the projection of the digital image remains static. The mutual interaction and synchronisation of image formats develops the illusion of elastic shape and spatial changes that may raise questions about the veracity of the reality constructed in this way. What is at work here is a tautological cycle, doubling of representation. Therefore, we are looking at an image of an image and a representation of a representation. The performance is recorded with a video camera and the video is then exhibited in the gallery, again through video projection and a large format monitor at a scale appropriate to reality. The physical presence of the artist or technical tools also plays a significant role, contrasting with the more ephemeral

nature of the projected geometric diagrams and models. Attention is focused on the ambivalence of perceiving and experiencing space and time, on its measurement and formatting, as well as on the uncertainty of perception.

Compiler: Time of Flight, 2021
interactive intermedia installation
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/compiler/

The Time-of-Flight principle (ToF) is a method for measuring the distance between a sensor and an object based on the time difference between the emission of a signal and its return to the sensor, after being reflected by an object. ToF cameras and other infrared/ultraviolet sensors are increasingly common additions to smartphones, generating 3D images used for facial recognition, enhancing photos, blurring out backgrounds and depth of field effects while having other applications in gaming, surveillance, object classification, and automotive contexts.

When integrated with other hardware and software, these sensors have the potential to affect our lives at different intensities, speeds, and scales. Our engagement with them can be emotional and considered. We tape over them to protect our privacy, but our conscious interaction and level of understanding rarely go beyond such an ad-hoc interaction.

Kinect motion sensors developed by Microsoft are now officially discontinued, despite notable popularity in open source communities; however, they do »live on« more ubiquitously than ever albeit in less accessible forms. PrimeSense, the company that initially developed the irregular infrared dotted pattern principle that drove Kinect is now owned by Apple. The iPhone X and later models include a remarkably similar system in its front-facing camera array for the Face ID phone unlocking feature. Other phones also offer alternative solutions.

This interactive installation provides an opportunity for a different understanding of our personal experiences with devices, such as telephones, computers, and game consoles; by deconstructing and re-presenting fundamental processes behind machine vision tasks in real-time via Kinect thus opening up possibilities for productive play and learning.

Mark Farid: Seeing I – The Other, 2020–2021
first person point of view 360° video
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/mark-farid/

Focusing on real lives that are neither sensational, nor a spectacle, *Seeing I: The Other* explores the movement of people; how different cultures, societies, and languages affects one's sense of self, and – especially during the coronavirus pandemic – the ability to share in one's experience and world, only through digital technologies.

Seeing I: The Other shows different people's lives from around the world streamed online, in a first person point of view, 360 degree field of view, 24-continuous-hour recording. Exploring how people respond to continuous and constant self-surveillance, whilst also testing bespoke technologies in real-life circumstances, *Seeing I: The Other* is a research arm of Farid's larger project, *Seeing I* (2021), where Farid will live as one specific individual (the »Other«) for 24 hours a day, for two weeks in virtual reality, only experiencing what the Other experiences.

Inspired by Psychologist Philip Zimbardo's *Stanford Prison Experiment* (1971), Philosopher Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), and Artist Josh Harris' *Quiet: We Live in Public* (1999), *Seeing I* will confine Farid to a gallery space, subject to the simulated life of the project's Other. With no existing relationship to the Other, how will the constant stream of artificial sights and sounds start to displace Farid's own internal monologue? For the duration of the project, Farid will experience no human interaction relative to his own life, allowing his indirect relationship with the Other to become his leading narrative. Adapting the question of nature vs. nurture to the digital age, *Seeing I* will consider how large a portion of the individual is an inherent self, and how large a portion is a consequence of environment and culture. How will the 14-days alter Farid's movement, mannerisms, personality, and most importantly, his rationale? Without free will to determine and shape who he is, will Farid's consciousness be enough to deter significant change?

Recorded in advance, every aspect of the Other's life is captured; from brushing their teeth, to their commute, to their work and social life, and their most intimate moments. The Other wears a pair of customized glasses, capable of recording 24+ hours of 4K video and audio in a full, 360° field of view, all from first person POV. Their everyday actions are transformed into an act of sharing; nothing is edited out. Any editing takes the form of self-censorship, as they determine which aspects of their lives they wish to share with Farid, and the audience.

The project invites the audience to carefully witness the lives of two protagonists. The audience can experience 24 continuous hours of the protagonist's lives without any biased editing or artistic choices. Instead, the artists asks the audience to think about the plurality of realities, and the things they have in common. None of the represented lives are to be stereotypically explored, but rather to sharpen the view for individual perceptions.

Tadej Droljc: Self-portrait, 2021
generative audiovisual painting
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/tadej-droljc/

»*Self-portrait* presents the perception of myself, which is a synthesis of various influences and experiences processed in suspicious circumstances of memory. This conglomerate is malleable and heterogeneous and is held together only by a poetic gap in which memories cross-fertilise or just awkwardly stand next to each other. Accordingly, my experience of spirituality, where I was reborn out of the denial of my own infinity through the narrow frame of a limited ego, meets the materialism of neuroscience, which reduces this experience of nirvana to the trivial level of neural fireworks. These fireworks, which under a microscope look like a chaotic avalanche of shooting starts are supposedly also managing my reason – 'reason is 98 % unconscious' (Lakoff, 2013). Turbulent forces of my unconscious would surely agree to that – they also reside somewhere in the sky and often make fun of the idea of 'me'... Given that we are made of stars, all of this doesn't even surprise me.«

Self-portrait is a generative audiovisual painting that is constantly being drawn. The painter's audiovisual brush is led in real-time by pseudo-random algorithms in front of the audience, but yet it seems that the artist is not present. The work is in a constant state of becoming and provides a frame through which the time flows. Time does, however, not flow into the past but it accumulates in memory – this eternal present where an endless game of perspectives unfolds.

ATOM-r (Judd Morrissey and Mark Jeffery) and Abraham Avnisan: Nocturne in Black and Gold (The Tenders iteration #5), 2021
documentation of ZOOM native mixed reality performance
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/nocturne-in-black-and-gold/

Does history repeat itself or do we just repeat the telling of it? Can a cover song recover something of the original, of the origin, or only bury it more deeply? *The Tenders* is a series of in-person and zoom-native mixed reality performances that engage with the cover song as a means of exploring the ways in which personal and political histories are written, re-written, and written over. The work juxtaposes an hommage to Loy Bowlin, »the original rhinestone cowboy«, with 3D scans of the site of Fort Dearborn, an early American garrison out of which the city of Chicago was incorporated. Placing the flamboyant tradition of the rhinestone cowboy in relation to the history of indigenous genocide and expulsion, *The Tenders* seeks to invert and queer colonial narratives lodged deep within the American imaginary.

Weronika M. Lewandowska and Sandra Frydrysiak: Nightsss, 2021
VR
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/nightsss/

Nightsss is an artistic animation with ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) and interactive elements that immerses the viewer in the sensual experience of poetry, dance and nature. The script is based on the spoken word poem *Nightsss*, in which the sounds characteristic of the Polish language create onomatopoeic landscapes crossing language barriers. What will you hear and see in the *Nightsss* environment if you can play with space and the space plays with your imagination and memory?

Even when you do not understand words, emotions flow from ASMR sound relations and rhythmic structures, and from the choreography of the character you will meet in the virtual world. *Nightsss* opens up the immersant for a sensual encounter with her/his own body, imagination and virtual space, which subtly resonate in thoughts and movements even after exiting the experience.

The debut of directors Weronika Lewandowska and Sandra Frydrysiak was one of the revelations at this year's Sundance. It also made it to the official selection of the prestigious goEast festival in Wiesbaden and official selection of the Melbourne International Film Festival. *Nightsss* received the American Cinequest award (Best VR Sound Design).

Sara Bezovšek and Dorijan Šiško: *What Is Your Truth?,* **2021**
video game
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/what-is-your-truth/

What Is Your Truth? is a video game by Sara Bezovšek and Dorijan Šiško in which the artists explore the ideas of modern internet society and the stereotypical logic of video games. Through the virtual world the players embark on an information oriented ideological path where he or she reveals his or her unique personality profile by visiting thematic locations and choosing the so called »truths«.

The spatial-conceptual design follows the classic iceberg analogy that concurrently alludes to the obscurity and the cultural-ideological logic of »truths« from which the players can choose. The design is divided into two segments: Light Mode, takes place on the surface, and Dark Mode,

takes place underwater; this is also where all the darkest »truths« can be found. The players follow the so called "Yellow Brick Road" (the road to success and wealth), which is actually a reference from the *Wizard of Oz,* and embark on a virtual path from the tip of the iceberg into the depths of various ideologies and confront them primarily visually. Throughout the path, players are accompanied by méms which serve as a sort of road signs while at the same time further contextualizing locations and »truths«. Centred on the choices and decisions that the player makes on his or her path, a personalised »profile« is being created. Consequently, based on the individual's acting experience, a personalized »end« is generated for the user which is shaped by the archetypes of various public personalities of the 21st century and is an ironic reflection of today's society.

The project flirts with the philosophical implications of the existence of various »truths« in the media-social landscape of a post-virtual, post-internet society. Metaphysical relativism, diagnosed by French poststructuralists in the second half of the 20th century, is now established in the practical sphere. But the project in question does not merely toy with this situation, but rather problematizes it: when the players move between individual »truths« and select/accumulate them, he or she also participates in their formation, preservation and dissemination and is thus part of a different, mutually exclusive reality. In Hegel's sense, the concept of each of the offered ideologies as a federal assumption, paired with other »truths«, is thus »abolished«.

Tony Oursler: *space men r My friended, 2016*
VR
https://kiblix.org/en/exhibition/tony-oursler/

The work by Tony Oursler is an exploration of a person's mind and story. The viewer is invited to follow George Adamski, a »contactee«, claiming himself to be the first person ever to have seen and talked to aliens and even visited other planets.

Tony Oursler has always been investigating and using contemporary technology both in his art and as a source of inspiration. The virtual reality artwork therefore lies as a natural extension to his pratice. *Space men r My friended*, arises from the path Oursler took with *Imponderable and the Imponderable Archive* shown at MoMA and Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College, NY, and explores the interlinking characters involved with the origins of Unidentified Flying Object photography.

The main character in the virtual reality artwork, *space men r My friended*, is a first generation Polish immigrant and one of the leading UFO figures, who arguably is the first UFO photographer. In the 1930s George Adamski made a small fortune by winemaking during Prohibition with a government license. At the end of the prohibition, Adamski lost his profitable earnings and with his wife Mary Shimbersky and some close friends, he moved to a ranch near California's Palomar Mountain, where they dedicated their time to studying religion, philosophy, and farming. It was in this area that Adamski first saw a large cigar-shaped »mothership« in 1946. In 1947 Adamski managed to take a photograph of the ship, and in 1950 – after seeing several UFOs over the years – he took a photograph of what he alleged to be six UFOs in the sky. Two years after Adamski and his friends observed another submarine-shaped object in the sky in the Colorado Desert, from which a scout ship disembarked, and Adamski was contacted by the Venusian pilot called Orthon. After his first encounter with UFOs Adamski began to give lectures about his experiences and paranormal activities.

Nika Erjavec: Third Landscape, 2021
interactive intermedia installation
https://www.202122.kiblix.org/en/exhibition/third-landscape/

Since 2018 Nika Erjavec has been developing hybrid artistic research related to sensory perception at the intersection of art and science and (in) visible transformations of the environment in the last two centuries. In her installations, she interweaves everyday, banal, consumable materials, such as various temporary building elements, artificial plants, processed electronic toys, etc as representatives of our current subject and living culture. On the other hand, she explores, harvests, and includes dried plants from abandoned urban areas. These are mainly *third landscape* spaces, either undefined and abandoned pieces of land in cities, fenced spaces, or construction pits awaiting capital investments such as car parks, luxury housing, and shopping malls. During this time and seeming neglect, spaces of complex ecosystems are evolving. These are places of great biodiversity, the abundance of different species that thrive in these systems surpasses the composition of mercury on the average surface that is regulated, nurtured by humans. Indigenous and invasive alien species come together in these areas. Upon contact with the installation, the visitor enters a predetermined system of operation, either through an active management gesture or through his presence and movement, with which he/she introduces perceptual disturbances into space. One cuts and suddenly changes the acoustic landscape of the space, triggers vibrational disturbances of sound, tactile and visual in the contact of the natural and the social. These are concentrated in the most marginalized and weak points of the installation, which escape us from our perceptual field due to the speed of movement.

Artists' Biographies

Lu Yang (b. Shanghai, China) is a multimedia artist based in Shanghai. Mortality, androgyny, hysteria, existentialism and spiritual neurology feed Lu's jarring and at times morbid fantasies. Also taking inspiration and resources from Anime, gaming and Sci-fi subcultures, Lu explores his fantasies through mediums including 3D animation, immersive video game installation, holographic, live performances, virtual reality, and computer programming. Lu has collaborated with scientists, psychologists, performers, designers, experimental composers, Pop Music producers, robotics labs, and celebrities throughout his practice.

Jakob Kudsk Steensen is an artist working with environmental storytelling through 3D animation, sound and immersive installations. He creates poetic interpretations about overlooked natural phenomena through collaborations with field biologists, composers and writers. Projects are based on extensive fieldwork. Key collaborators include Composer and Musical Director for the Philip Glass Ensemble Michael Riesman, Ornithologist and author dr. Douglas H. Pratt, Architect Sir David Adjaye OBE RA, the Natural History Museum London, among others.

Amber Jae Slooten works with the body, animation and digital fashion design. Her work focuses mainly on how we will be wearing clothing in the future, and how our digital identity will take shape in VR, AR and MR.

The Fabricant is a digital fashion house leading the fashion industry towards a new sector of digital-only clothing. They specialise in photo-real 3D fashion design and animation. Their work operates at the intersection of fashion and technology, creating digital couture and fashion experiences that are always digital, never physical. They aim to show the world that clothing does

not need to be physical to exist. They believe the digital-only fashion sector will open up new creative avenues beyond the limits of the physical world, while promoting sustainability and drastically reducing the negative environmental impacts of the current fashion paradigm. They collaborate with global brands and retailers, bringing our expertise as leaders in the digital fashion sector, to help them deep dive into its unlimited possibilities.

Marco Donnarumma, PhD, is an artist, performer, stage director and scholar weaving together contemporary performance, new media art and interactive computer music since the early 2000s. He manipulates bodies, creates choreographies, engineers machines and composes sounds, thus combining disciplines, media and emerging technologies into an oneiric, sensual, uncompromising aesthetics. He is internationally acknowledged for genre-defying solo performances, stage productions and installations where the body becomes a morphing language to speak critically of ritual, power and technology.

Pete Jiadong Qiang is currently a PhD candidate in Arts and Computational Technology at Goldsmiths. He gained knowledge in architecture at the Architectural Association School of Architecture. Pete's work focuses on a specific exploration of the bridges and interstices between pictorial, architectural, and game spaces. His works include architectural drawings, paintings, moving images, augmented reality (AR) drawings, virtual reality (VR) paintings, and video games. He forms an idiosyncratic research methodology; intra-acting of the physical and virtual spaces with ACGN (Anime, Comic, Game, and Novel) and fandom contexts. Pete Jiadong Qiang is often referred to as an architectural Maximalist.

Total Refusal describe themselves as a pseudo-Marxist media guerrilla that criticizes and artistically appropriates contemporary video games. However, as most mainstream game narratives employ the same infinite loops of reactionary tropes, the genre largely fails to challenge the values of their players and instead affirms hegemonial moral concepts. Acknowledging that this media is currently not realizing its cultural potential, the collective aims to appropriate digital game spaces and put them to new use. Moving within games but casting aside the intended gameplay, we rededicate these resources to new activities and narratives, looking to create »public« spaces with a critical potential.

Tanja Vujinović is a media artist whose works have been exhibited at numerous galleries and museums worldwide. She graduated in Painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Arts in Belgrade, was a guest student at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf and has a Ph.D. in Philosophy and Theory of Visual Culture from the Faculty of Humanities, University of Primorska, Koper. She focuses on the ways technology impacts human beings and nature. Through her work, she examines the relationships between human subjectivity, technology, nature, and the »amalgams« formed by these relationships.

Untold Garden is an experiential art and design studio exploring new tools for participatory design and immersive experiences. It is directed by **Max Čelar** and **Jakob Sköte**. They are artists, designers, and developers, with a background in architecture. **Sebastian Dahlqvist** is an artist and curator, who's practice involves collaborations and departs from site-specific issues with an interest in self-organization, collective memory, and ways of reading and writing history.

Emir Šehanović (b. 1981, Bosnia and Herzegovina) lives and works in Belgrade, Serbia. Outside of the region, he has shown his work in the context of solo and group shows at Jeune Création, Les Beaux Arts de Paris (2018), AQB Project Space Budapest (2018), Ultrastudio Los Angeles

(2018), Gallery Weekend Berlin (2015), Athens Video Art Festival (2013) among others, and took part in Liste Art Fair (2015), Parallel Vienna, ArtGeneve (2018), Vienna Contemporary, ArtGeneve (2019). Šehanović has recently been selected as part of *100 Sculptors of Tomorrow*, published by Thames and Hudson.

Daniel Hanzlík (b. 1970, Czech Republic) works with a wide range of media: video, hanging painting, video performance, spatial installation (often using new media elements, including experiments with interactive media), and he does not refrain from intervening into the public sphere. His work is based on the relationship between the physical reality and the fictional world of virtual data environments that influence our perception, experience and decision making. He graduated at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague. Currently, together with Pavel Mrkus, he runs the Time-Based Media studio at the Department of Electronic Image at the Faculty of Art and Design, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem.

Compiler is a platform for conceptual digital art, curation, and critical practice implemented in institutional and alternative spaces. It is led by Tanya Boyarkina, Oscar Cass-Darweish, and Eleanor Chownsmith. The group's artistic and curatorial practice investigates socio-political challenges in digital culture, where the possibilities of digital art, learning, and curation are explored as part of a process of discovery through synaesthetic technological experiences. They aim to create accessible works and events through which audiences with different levels of technical awareness can delve deeper into digital technologies that shape day-to-day experience. Topics covered include cybersecurity, surveillance, and climatic conditions.

Mark Farid is an internationally exhibited artist, speaker, and cultural critic, specializing in the intersection of the virtual and physical world, and the effect of new technologies on the individual and their sense of self. Farid's work embodies hacker ethics, such as privacy policies, use of surveillance technologies, data collection and protection, and the critique of social, legal, and political models. Farid regularly give public lectures and workshops at leading universities, and his projects have been covered by media outlets worldwide including: Fox News, Sky News, Arte, BBC Radio 4, BBC 5Live, Times Radio, The Telegraph, The Guardian, and most recently appeared on BBC 2's Great British Railway Journeys (May 2021).

Tadej Droljc is a Slovenian artist and creative coder who works at the intersection of sound, image and light. He received numerous international awards and performed or exhibited at festivals such as Ars Electronica, Paris Biennale NEMO, L.E.V., Brighton Digital Festival, Semibreve, Sonica Glasgow, Lunchmeat, Node etc. As part of his collaboration with Ars Electronica's Futurelab on project Immersify his works were also presented at events like Marché du film – Festival de Cannes, Inter BEE Tokyo or IBC Amsterdam.

Judd Morrissey is a writer and code artist who creates poetic systems across a range of platforms incorporating electronic writing, internet art, live performance, and augmented reality. He teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and co-founded the performance collective Anatomical Theatres of Mixed Reality (ATOM-r). He is a recipient of a Creative Capital / Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant, a Fulbright Scholar's Award in Digital Culture, and a Mellon Foundation Collaborative Fellowship for Arts Practice and Scholarship. Judd's solo and collaborative works have been included in a broad range of festivals, conferences and exhibitions.

Mark Jeffery is a performance/installation artist, curator and associate professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Since 1994 he has developed unconventional collaborations with visual artists, scholars, video artists, sound artists, new media and code artists, dancers, choreographers, curators, and writers. In 2012, he co-founded the language, performance, and technology collective Anatomical Theatres of Mixed Reality (ATOM-r). ATOM-r is currently in research and development of their new work, *Rhinestone Cowboy*. He is organizer of the IN>TIME Tri Annual performance festival hosted by multiple venues in Chicago. Mark was a former member of the internationally renowned Goat Island Performance Group.

Abraham Avnisan is an interdisciplinary artist whose work is situated at the intersection of image, text and code. Using a host of emerging technologies including 3D scanning, augmented reality and virtual reality, he creates applications for mobile devices, interactive installations and technologically mediated performances that seek to subvert dominant narratives through embodied encounters with language. Abraham has presented his work both nationally and internationally. He is an assistant professor of Emerging Media & Technology and Journalism & Mass Communication at Kent State University.

Weronika M. Lewandowska is a Polish spoken word poet, director, writer, and executive producer of VR Nightsss. She has PhD in cultural studies. She is a researcher of new media and immersion experiences, a lecturer of creative writing and transmedia art at the University SWPS and design trends at School of Forms in Warsaw and VR Creative Consultant for BioMinds Healthcare XR system, which explores a new way for neurological rehabilitation. Currently, in her artistic practice, she is focused on new media tools and immersive ways of expression that interfere with corporeality, embody presence, and have the potential to create non-binary digital stories. She is interested in perception, avatars creation, human voice and movement in virtual environments, the future of real-time live performances and neural input, haptic innovations for VR/AR/XR experiences.

Sandra Frydrysiak, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at the Department of Cultural Studies at SWPS University in Warsaw, is a director and screenwriter of the *Nightsss* VR experience. She holds a doctoral degree in humanities and cultural studies. Her research focuses on new media, dance studies, and gender studies. She has written a book on *Dance in the Coupling with Science and Technology. New Perspectives in Dance Research* (2017). She is a member of the Interdisciplinary Humanities/Art/Technology Research Center at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Sandra is also a feminist, social activist, and antidiscrimination educator. She researches the category of sisterhood, women strikes in Poland and the perception of the dance movement in virtual reality.

Sara Bezovšek is a visual artist working in the fields of new media, experimental film and graphic design. In her artistic practice she researches, stores and collages visual references she encounters while browsing the web and watching movies and TV series. Through appropriation, she creates new narratives, being specifically interested in what content people consume, what they share on social networks, how visual material travels on the internet, and how it changes and influences users in different contexts. Within the post-internet paradigm, it thus creates a space where online content and internet references are a consistent and indispensable part of the world in which we live.

Dorijan Šiško is a graphic designer, who also researches other areas of contemporary visual art, such as illustration, animation, installation and multimedia art, and VJ. In 2019, he received a master's degree in visual communications from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana

with commendations. His primary interests in design extend to the areas of speculative, critical, experimental and transmedia aspects of design. Through the creation of visual-theoretical worlds, he explores topics such as digital culture, the internet, futurism, virtuality, video games, science fiction and popular culture.

Tony Oursler was born in New York in 1957. He completed a BA in fine arts at the California Institute for the Arts, Valencia, California in 1979. His art covers a range of mediums working with video, sculpture, installation, performance and painting, and he has been known as a pioneering figure in new media since the 1970s. Always rooted in film and applying humour and irony to his works, Oursler creates immersive experiences using both ancient and modern technologies, and explores technology's effects on the human mind.

Nika Erjavec works in the field of research intermedia art, theater, photography, and design. In 2017 she graduated from the Department of Unique Design at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana, where she is currently completing her master's degree in the Department of Sculpture. For a series of installations (in)VISIBLE and hybrid art research, she received the Prešeren Award ALUO in 2019 and was nominated for the University Prešeren Award. During her years of study, she has actively participated in local and international exhibitions. As a set designer and prop designer she works in the theater. In the last year, she has presented solo intermedia exhibitions at the BS Mala galerija and the Alkatraz Gallery.

Contact

For all further inquiries please contact:

Zala Koren
Public relations
zala.koren@kibla.org
+386 51 614 858

Živa Kleindienst
Curator
ziva.kleindienst@kibla.org
+386 40 852 018

Association for Culture and Education KIBLA
Ulica kneza Koclja 9
2000 Maribor
Slovenia
http://www.kibla.org/en

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