

HEK

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**Swiss Media Art
Marc Lee
Chloé Delarue
Laurent Güdel
Pax Art Awards 2021**

12.02. – 24.04.2022

House of Electronic Arts

Swiss Media Art: Marc Lee, Chloé Delarue, Laurent Güdel – Pax Art Awards 2021 presents works by the winners of the Pax Art Awards 2021 in three parallel solo exhibitions.

Marc Lee's current works delve into themes of biology, the human body and its relationship to nature. Interactive and immersive, they offer insight into new technologies, such as AI, which set out to solve ecological problems or to create fictional profiles on social networks. Interweaving social criticism with poetry, the artist broadens the scope of reflection regarding our responsibility towards the environment. Chloé Delarue shows new works from her ongoing *TAFAA (Toward A Fully Automated Appearance)* cycle of impressive installations simulating future scenarios between fantasy and dystopia. Inquiry into the idea of a virtual simulacrum, self-expression and the fragmentation of how we perceive reality through digital technologies are themes running through this new series of works. Laurent Güdel is concerned with sound analysis, in particular with the context of presentation and dissemination that sound production involves. His work ranges from more conceptual works, such as the presentation of an audio file found by chance in a recording device, to audio-visual creations consisting of a sample of sounds recorded over radio waves.

The prize money granted by the Pax Art Awards enables artists to develop new works, which are on public view here for first time. Groundbreaking in the field of digital art, the Pax Art Awards honour Swiss media artists who employ media technologies or reflect on their effects. They were brought to life in 2018 by the Art Foundation Pax in collaboration with HEK. Half of the prize money is used to purchase a work by the Art Foundation Pax for its collection; the other half is used to support the winners in the development of new works, which are 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 financially supported by Pax.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an extensive outreach programme on site and online. There will be regular guided tours in German, English and French.

Curator: Boris Magrini

1

**Iris Qu Xiaoyu, Marc Lee
and Shervin Saremi (Sound)**

YANTO – Yaw And Not Tip Over, 2022

YANTO – Yaw And Not Tip Over creates an alternative, fictional reality that casts confidence, hope and a critically reflective light on current overfishing and acidification of the world's oceans. Viewers are invited to use the mobile app to look 30 years into the future and discover how technologies help overcome the acute ecological crisis. Using artificial intelligence and machine learning, Lee created realistic fictional fish species with the power to defy man-made pollution and survive in contaminated environments. Drawing attention to nature's fragility, the work provides insight into the status quo and explores a possible, albeit somewhat dystopian future of an evolving computer-generated ecosystem and novel fish kingdom. Despite offering a semi-optimistic perspective, the question remains as to how far technologies should be allowed to intervene and optimise life forms and environments. Is it realistic to compare our ecosystem to a technological system; is it similarly fixable? The work was created in co-operation with the Chinese artist Iris Qu Xiaoyu and the Iranian composer Shervin Saremi.

2

**Birgit Kempker, Marc Lee
and Shervin Saremi (Sound)**

Time to Nest Time to Migrate, 2020

The interactive 360° app *Time to Nest Time to Migrate*, enables visitors to navigate through a virtual space with a mobile phone and explore inside the human body. This virtual voyage of discovery offers encounters and interaction with various bacteria, cells, fungi and other organisms. The organisms respond with sounds, written and spoken texts that are more poetic than scientific, evoking emotions of awe and compassion for the complexity of the human body and the organisms that live within it. The work was created in collaboration with Swiss poet Birgit Kempker and Iranian composer Shervin Saremi.

3

**Marc Lee, Markus Kirchhofer
and Shervin Saremi (Sound)**

***MORE AND LESS – Flying Through a
Three-Dimensional Book, 2020-ongoing***

The work *MORE AND LESS – Flying Through a Three-Dimensional Book* by Marc Lee and the Swiss author Markus Kirchhofer relates increasing human overpopulation to the destruction of animal habitats and the alarming extinction of species. Visitors are invited to a 3D city of constantly changing and growing urban architecture enhanced with information on population and urbanisation. The population data, which stems from the United Nations, is constantly

updated. It is based on land and resident statistics from the 1990s to the 2000s, supplemented with a future forecast to 2050. The work also provides information on species recently declared extinct, with data provided by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Embedded in this flow of facts are 50 haiku poems. With this work, the artists raise questions about the archiving of information and the handling of data through new technological achievements. How might these possibilities be employed toward an ethically responsible approach to our environment? How can art and poetry contribute to a better understanding of our impact on the planet and its biological diversity? The sound composition was created by the Iranian composer Shervin Saremi.

4

**Marc Lee
*Friends, 2019-ongoing***

The work *Friends* deals with social media and its application of artificial intelligence. The 3D installation, navigated by mobile phone, confronts visitors with an almost infinite continuum filled with anonymous faces in transparent bubbles uncontrollably flooding the space. No matter where you position yourself, you are constantly being stared at. The perpetually cheerful yet rather nightmarish face bubbles with their three-letter first and last names are reminiscent of profile pictures on social media forums, however, these mainly young, aesthetic portraits are AI generated. In this work, Lee implements the deep-seated desire of users to be centre of attention. He draws reference to how users disclose information about themselves, the parallel transparency of followers, likes and comments, and how companies use this data to gain maximum profit and growth, for example by employing AI systems to analyse profile data and create personalised advertisements. Lee visualises questions about the protection of personal data, the influence of social networks on individual and collective behaviour and their moral limits.

5

**Marc Lee
*Swiss Unfiltered – TikTok and the
Emerging Face of Culture, 2020-ongoing***

Marc Lee delves into the world of Swiss TikTok for this work, researching posts, hashtags and topics of particular interest to Swiss youth. In his series *Unfiltered – TikTok and the Emerging Face of Culture*, Lee examines the internet's democratisation through social media. Exemplarily exploring the platform TikTok, where users publish their own short video sequences with background music, Lee examines the different styles in which information and content are subjectively accessed and published, and looks at their effects on collective consciousness and identity

formation. Cross-sectionally, local concerns, social issues and creative currents are highlighted and complemented with questions posed by the artist. The first version was created in collaboration with the Indian artist Akshat Nauriyal and focused on how young people in India use the social media platform.

6

Marc Lee

Used to Be My Home Too, 2021

The title of the work *Used to Be My Home Too* takes the perspective of extinct animal species in relation to land inhabited and cultivated by humans. On the social network iNaturalist, naturalist amateurs and scientists around the globe share their observations on the biodiversity of our planet. Lee's work links information recently uploaded to the platform with data from RedList.org, a comprehensive resource on the global extinction risk status of animal, fungal and plant species, locating them in real time on Google Earth. With each post, visitors see locations of new observations live on Google Earth paired with information about extinct species. The work pays tribute to the biodiversity of our planet, while showing how it is threatened by human activities.

Marc Lee (*1969) received the main Pax Art Awards 2021 prize of CHF 30,000. He lives and works near Zurich.

7

Chloé Delarue

***TAFAA – FERTILITY DEVICE
(COOL AIR), 2020***

Most of Chloé Delarue's works form part of a large cycle of works entitled *TAFAA – Toward A Fully Automated Appearance*. Its title is inspired by an article published around 1971 by economist Fischer Black on the automation of the stock market. Technological progress, and on how the automation of labour, cloning or artificial intelligence affect biological life stand at the centre of Delarue's investigations.

The simulation of reality is a recurring theme in Delarue's work. In this sculpture, air currents emitted by an air conditioner cause latex prints of plant leaves to flutter and a screen mounted on Plexiglas shows a 3D digital animation of falling leaves, simulated with software also used in virtual universes and video games. While the virtual plants' endless continuum of falling leaves doesn't seem to effect reality, the energy consumption actually required for the mechanisms of digital simulation and computers' cooling system, on the other hand, do have a real impact on the environment.

8

Chloé Delarue

***TAFAA – FERTILITY DEVICE
(NUDGE FOR THE SCAPEGOAT), 2021***

This sculpture by Delarue offers a foil to explore how our emotions and behaviour are transformed under the influence of propaganda with its often subtle and conscious methods. A structure resembling a billboard or mirror is juxtaposed with a chrome-plated cast of a goat's head and a stainless steel sink containing latex imprints of cigarettes, while a screen shows advertising clips from science fiction video games. The ensemble suggests that advertising will continue to take a dominant place in society. In this work, Delarue shows how commercial advertising infiltrates all aspects of life, both in real and virtual space. Fulfilling surreal human desires for self-expression and glorification, individuals in Delarue's visions of the future transform into wondrous avatars, such as a chrome-plated goat.

9

Chloé Delarue

TAFAA - SORORIIS, 2022

Latex prints resembling the skin shed by an adder hang suspended from a metal structure. The word «Sororiis», which refers to sisterhood, is displayed with neon lights. The work is an antithesis to a memento mori's reminder of human mortality, reflecting instead the promise of immortality that digitalisation and the creation of virtual realities strive for. Just as a snake mutates and sheds its skin, we too change our look and digital identity by constantly re-inventing ourselves on social networks – perhaps a way to overcome the transience of the organic body.

10

Chloé Delarue

***TAFAA – FERTILITY DEVICE
(UNCANNY VALLEY), 2022***

Three synchronised vertical screens show the movement of a skinless female body, reminiscent of an anatomical model of the human body. This moving representation of the body finds its counterpart in a glass plate covered with a latex print, imprinted with a so-called «troll face». This image is well-known in social networks as a symbol for the phenomenon of trolling. The troll draws reference both to the humanoid fantasy figure and practices of deliberate provocation and insult on social networks. The work explores the contemporary obsession with self-representation while reflecting on the multiplication and fragmentation of online information, which can lead to a loss of sense of reality and of core community values.

Chloé Delarue (*1986) received the Pax Art Awards 2021 prize for emerging artists of CHF 15,000. She lives and works in Geneva.

11 **Laurent Güdel**
Over the Horizon, 2022

Over the Horizon is an audiovisual composition and installation created from research on sound samples of radio waves and their graphic visualisation in the online archive sigidwiki.com. The wide variety of archived sounds originate, for example, from the pulse of distant stars, civil or military flight signals, radar or satellite communication, encrypted diplomatic messages, songs from pirate radio stations or information from local radio networks. Güdel creates an electronic composition from these sound patterns, which is also inspired by research conducted by Swiss anthropologist Patricia Jäggi. In her essay *Cosmopolitan Noises – Atmospheres in Shortwave Radio Listening*, Jäggi examines sensory traces and practices of radio listening. *Over the Horizon* is shown in three different spaces in the exhibition. In the first two rooms, prints that visualise waves of various radio signals are shown, accompanied by sound excerpts from the database. In the second room, Güdel presents his own audiovisual composition created from the research.

synthesiser, initially custom-made for Radio Belgrade for the creation of sound effects and electronic music scores.

Laurent Güdel (*1984) received the Pax Art Awards 2021 prize for emerging artists of CHF 15,000. He lives and works in Biel.

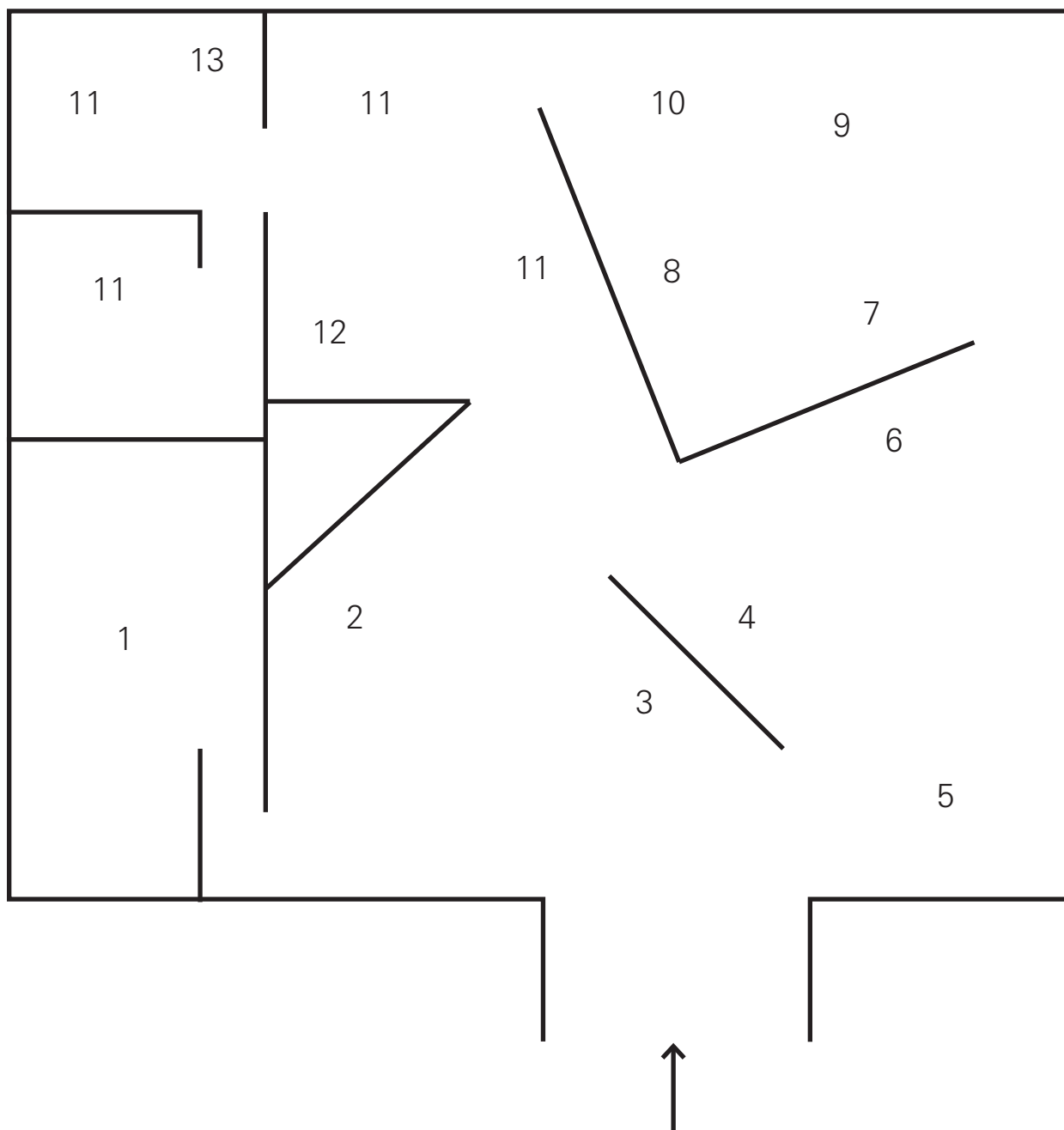
12 **Laurent Güdel**
Unknown Artist, 2021

Unknown Artist presents an audio file Güdel found by chance in a digital recorder he bought online. The artist assumes that a member of staff at the South China warehouse, from which the device was shipped, accidentally pressed the record button before packing it. 18 hours of audio material was accrued in the process of packing and shipping the order, providing an intrinsic glimpse into our globally networked, consumerist world. Invited to take the perspective of an industrial product, visitors encounter the muffled noises of scanners, employees, doors and strange sounds. Hence the audio file serves as the perfect artefact to depict the connections between the working environment, international distribution as well as trade in electronic devices.

13 **Laurent Güdel**
Radio Belgrade «The history of electronic music is also the history of radio», 2020

On a research trip lasting several years, Güdel visited recording studios throughout Europe to learn how socio-cultural, political, economic and medial factors influenced the development of electronic music.

Radio Belgrade looks at a strand of electronic music history connected with Serbian national radio during the Cold War. In the video, Güdel interviews musicologist and deputy director of Radio Belgrade's programme, Ksenija Stevanovic. Güdel can also be seen experimenting with the original 1970's EMS Synthi 100, a ground-breaking analogue/digital hybrid



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