Lucy Beech (and Edward Thomasson), Omer Fast, Mikhail Karikis, Imran Perretta, Ho Rui An, Igor Simić, and Emilija Škarnulytė
System Down? State of Affairs
07.11 - 18.12.2021

Switch off - pull the plug - plug back in - reboot. Some might wish for this when they follow the news on current political, social, ecological, economic and not least epidemiological developments: the communities of states do not succeed in living peacefully with each other and providing for a dignified life for all. Violence and racism are fuelled by populists. Individuals do not want to give up their prosperity, their rights - even if it is at the expense of others or the environment. The economy keeps cranking up consumption so that the individual feels prosperous: keep up the good work and keep the system running!

But the world is not an operating system that can simply be shut down to remove all malware and reset the systems. The main problem is the virus "humankind" in connection with the systems it has developed itself. It is its own problem. And it is a prisoner of its self-created systems, which threaten to pull it further and further into the abyss, to destruction or at least to dematerialisation, dehumanisation, drifting into virtual worlds - into a metaverse.

Not all is lost, however. A few have started to engage in a race. A race for survival. Some to stop the destruction of the host, others to ensure their survival in the destruction. Technology is at the centre of this. Energy generation, digitalisation, robotics, artificial intelligence. But technology is (still) human-made and thus prone to error. And it creates new systems that subordinate humans. Where the software - the human - remains is hard to say.

With *System Down? State of Affairs*, Klemm's invited curator Olaf Stüber to select works by contemporary artists who explore overarching questions about norms, control, security and the definition of individual freedom, but today also more personal questions about vulnerability, community and the continuity of the 'human' from different aspects and present them in an implied, scenic image:

In an obviously abandoned office space - a start-up company perhaps that has lost its financiers, another bank branch that has fallen victim to the controllers, or a government agency whose employees have fled to the home office - the selected works are shown on desk screens. Upon entering the room, everything is silent, all systems seem to be shut down. Only the clacking of a slide projector can be heard like a timing metronome. The screens are frozen. Only with a click of the mouse are the works activated and begin to run. The visitors are free to decide where they want to sit, which work they want to engage with and whether they want to watch it from beginning to end. They have the chance to do so and can influence the overall picture of the exhibition with their decisions.

Works:
The choreographic performance video **Passive Aggressive 3 (Public Relations)**, (9:49 min), which **Lucy Beech** staged and recorded together with **Edward Thomasson** in 2016, poses the question of what happens when language fails as a means of communication and people have nothing left but to use their bodies as a means. Thus, in this performance, a male protagonist invites the other male participants to play a game about vulnerability by committing violence without actually touching each other.

Lucy Beech's latest **video triptych** consists of three animations that are reminiscent of drawings made during court proceedings. The individual videos explore the accountability of animal actions when they encounter the human judiciary and are confronted with legal norms.

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The animations outline an arc of historical trials: rats tried in 16th century France for destroying a barley harvest; a pig served as a key witness in a bestiality trial in Colonial New England; and a 20th century mock trial held by the United States Department of Agriculture to dramatize the dangers of breeding genetically inferior "scrub" bulls. Challenging contemporary sentimental depictions of animals as innocents, devoid of desire and animacy, these scenes recover different historical renderings of animal agency that find them lively, lusty, and wilful and considers what these trials tell us about the ecological contexts that produced them. Documenting the digital drawing process in timelapse imbues still bodies with movement as a nod to the fragile divisions between the animate and inanimate and the ways in which the categories of human and animal have been relentlessly produced and policed.

Lucy Beech (b. 1985, United Kingdom) lives and works in Berlin and London and is currently undertaking a fellowship at Max Planck Institute for the History of Science Berlin (2020-22). Beech is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice encompasses filmmaking, writing and performance. Her recent films have explored the agency of reproductive relations, forms of bio-clinical labour, models of sickness and grief and the ways in which intimacy is choreographed in these relational contexts.
Beech is a guest professor in 'Film and Knowledge' at the Filmuniversität Babelsberg Konrad Wolf, Berlin.

The starting point for ***Her Face Was Covered***, 2011 (Part I: Single channel video, 6:00 mins. Part II: 80 slides playing at 4 second intervals) by **Omer Fast** is the story of a drone pilot who describes a live-fire mission at an unnamed location and his doubts about the logic of decision-making and selection processes as well as the overload of delegated or automated responsibility: from his drone flying high in the sky, he observes a woman approaching a burning truck on a desert road and supposedly taking a weapon from the vehicle. He takes aim and kills her with a missile. The question that torments him is: was what looked at first glance like a female civilian actually a male combatant, as he assumed? Or was she after all just a woman who was in the wrong place at the wrong time looking for food?

Omer Fast ((b. 1972 in Jerusalem, Israel) is a Berlin-based artist whose layered film installations examine modes of storytelling and reconstructions of the past. Taking key historic and contemporary events as his subject matter, Fast explores the ways memory is recounted, narratives retold and events represented. His dramatized films, characterized by high production values, manipulate the recorded image and speech and employ the discrepancy between the two as a space to blur the distinction between reality and representation, truth and fiction.

Shell Revolution, 2018 (2:00 min) von **Ho Rui An** is a 3D animation that tracks the transformation of the Shell logo over the years, as it morphs from a naturalistic seashell to its current graphic form–an evolution that succinctly encapsulates the oil industry's growing alienation from and destruction of the natural world.

Ho Rui An (b. 1990 in Singapore) is an artist and writer working in the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance and theory. Working primarily across the mediums of lecture, essay and film, he probes into the ways by which images are produced, circulate and disappear within contexts of globalism and governance. Ho Rui An lives in Singapore and Berlin.

Ferocious Love 2020, (11:45 min) is a new audio-visual installation from **Mikhail Karikis,** commissioned by the TATE in partnership with Birmingham City University and made in collaboration with students and activists. Inspired by young people's environmental activism, and

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referencing the feminist music thinker and performer Pauline Oliveros and the writings of Naomi Klein, this installation focuses on emotional responses and the need for mutual care in the face of the climate crisis. Karikis and his collaborators imagine a possible future where the climate has drastically changed and seasons have become unrecognisable.

Mikhail Karikis (b. 1975 Thessaloniki, Greek) is a Greek-British artist based in London and Lisbon. He has been dealing for over ten years with the potential of participatory art in relation to the global ecological crisis. His work comprises film and audio-visual installations for which he works worldwide, collaborating with structurally neglected groups such as children and people with disabilities. His main point is here not to speak on behalf of them but to make their embodied voices audible and to invoke the revolutionary potential of listening.

In **Emiliya Škarnulyt**ė**'s** *Sirenomelia*, 2017 (11:00 min) a woman born with sirenomelia (Mermaid Syndrome), a mythological post-human being takes us on the journey to the Cold War submarine base above the arctic circle. She exposes a future liberated from the military and economic structures that oppress the present, a future in which relations between humans and nonhumans have been transfigured, a future in which the cosmic dimension of an earthly coexistence is interlaced within the texture of the social.

Set in far-Northern territories where cold, Arctic waters meet rocky escarpments on which radio telescopes record fast-traveling quasar waves, Sirenomelia links man, nature and machine and posits possible post-human mythologies. The film is cosmic portrait of one of humankind's oldest mythic creatures – the mermaid. Performing as a siren, the artist swims through the decrepit facility while cosmic signals and white noise traverse the entirety of space, reaching its farthest corners, beyond human impact.

Sirenomelia is shot in two locations above the Arctic Circle where Emilija Škarnulytė measure and sense places with my own body: Olavsvern–Royal Norwegian Navy base located 217 miles north of the Arctic Circle–and the Geodetic Observatory at Ny-Ålesund, Spitsbergen, the most northerly permanent civilian settlement in the world.

Emiliya Škarnulytė (b. 1987 in Vilnius, Lithuania) is a visual artist and filmmaker based in Berlin. Between the fictive and documentary, she works primarily with deep time, from the cosmic and geologic to the ecological and political. In conversation and collaboration with scientist and technologists, Škarnulytė explores the decommissioning of the Nuclear Power Plant in Lithuania (a twin sister of Chernobyl), the Super-Kamiokande Neutrino Observatory in Japan, the Antimatter Factory, The Large Hadron Collider at CERN, Duga Radar and Cold-War Submarine Base.

Brothers to Brothers, 2018 (7:35 min) by **Imran Perretta** retells the artist's experience of being detained at an airport after travelling to the UK from Bangladesh by a customs officer, under anti-terror laws, chronicling racial profiling, islamophobia and state surveillance. The work details the system of violence, of being stopped, searched and interrogated by another south Asian male, shedding light on the complicated role that marginal communities have in perpetuating their own oppression when coerced by the state.

Imran Perretta (b. 1988, London) lives and works in London. Encompassing moving-image, sound, performance and poetry, Perretta's work reflects his acute awareness of the ways in which state aggression is enacted on young men of colour. He is also keenly concerned with the human impact of government policy on the lives of individuals.

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Golf Club: Wasteland, 2021, is a game by **Igor Simić and Demagog Studios** that plays in a world after the great ecological catastrophe on Earth. Just the ultra-rich escaped to Tesla City on Mars. Now, citizens of Mars take flights to Earth and play golf in the ruins of civilization. However, one of the Mars mission pilots cannot fit in the new Martian society. The homesick pilot uses his connections at Golf Club: Wasteland for one last solo trip to Earth.

Nostalgic for their past life on Earth, citizens of Mars listen to music from the 2030s and call into the radio program to share memories with the radio host. The title of the original soundtrack is Radio Nostalgia from Mars.

Golf Club: Wasteland is an atmospheric golf game by an artist in post-apocalyptic landscapes with references to contemporary art, politics and culture with the original soundtrack by Radio Nostalgia from Mars and music videos. Currently, the game is available on Sony Playstation, Nintendo Switch, Microsoft Xbox and PC.

Igor Simić (b. 1988 in Belgrade, Serbia) is an artist, filmmaker and writer. He studied film studies and philosophy at Columbia University, New York, and completed both degrees. The artist's main line of research in the field of moving image goes together with his interest in contemporary culture and politics in a broad sense, and with an attention to the social dynamics of the dystopian technological era, involving surveillance systems and post-apocalyptic visions.

Olaf Stüber is a curator, publisher, lecturer and adviser for contemporary art with a main emphasis on time-base media art.

Galerie Olaf Stüber (2001–2011) focused on moving image works already from 2003 and was one of the very view galleries asserting artists' film and video on German art market at this time.

In 2008 Olaf Stüber founded together with Ivo Wessel – a collector friend – an international platform for artists' films and video in Berlin: Videoart at Midnight. This monthly screening series in the legendary Babylon Film Theatre offers a profound insight into the current video art production of Berlin's international art scene and opens a forum both for renowned as well as for upcoming promising artists.

Furthermore Olaf Stüber is publisher of the Videoart at Midnight Edition. He holds internationally lectures on video and artist films in the context of the art market, curates video programs for institutions, fairs and festivals and has been member of juries such as Videokunstförderpreis Bremen 2009, Dokfilmfestival Kassel 2012, Videonale e.V. at Kunstmuseum Bonn 2013, EMAF – European Media Art Festival 2015 or recently Filmwinter Stuttgart 2017.

Olaf Stüber lives and works in Berlin. He is member at IKT International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art.

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