

Critical Future(s) – Possible Procedures

Summer School | Institute for Art and Art Theory
University of Cologne | May 4 – June 26

KEYNOTE LECTURE:

Situated Practices in Precarious Times

Natalie S. Loveless

May 4 at 6:00pm (CET)

Event link: <http://kunst.uni-koeln.de/event/loveless040521>

To register email: k.schuetze@uni-koeln.de

We have almost silently habituated ourselves to the conditions of the all-prevailing Capitalocene (Jason W. Moore). The entire planet resembles a warehouse, used at times for the extraction of resources and labor, and at other times as a dumping ground for human waste. The consequences of expansive exploitation are now beginning to be felt in industrialized countries, while populations in the so-called Global South have been struggling for centuries against the destruction of their livelihoods and bodies. The presence of the ‘apocalypse’, in the form of colonialism, tyranny, environmental destruction and land grabbing is already rampant status quo (Deborah Danowski/Eduardo Viveiros de Castro).

As a result of climate change, we face sweeping and systemic changes that will shape the coming decades and fundamentally challenge everything we know: economic ideas, models of social coexistence, and mechanisms of political organization. The last few months of the pandemic have provided a flavor of what we are about to experience: While the rise in average global temperature continues to set new records, a global virus is paralyzing large parts of everyday life at unprecedented speed, accelerating intersectional and global inequalities.



Marilyn Arsem, *Water Moving*, durational performance for the exhibition *Maalstroom* at Arti et Amicitiae (Amsterdam), June 11 – June 23, 2019. (Photos by Jacques Martens)

There is no longer any question that we are living in compromised times, within which the fantasy of an uncompromised self is isolationist, privileged, and dangerous. (Natalie Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation*, 2019). It is impossible to ignore the fact that we are not dealing with individual “crises” which can be viewed in isolation from one another. Rather, we are dealing with interlocking, ongoing and overlapping states of emergency. They reveal their consequences at different speeds - unevenly distributed (and partly unnoticed), but all of them point to immediate and fatal planetary stress levels. Much still seems intangible and only dimly visible behind the porous boundaries of our imagination. Although the possibility and reality of extinction has always been present as a motif in cultural production, the pervasive feeling of a terrestrial depletion and inevitable loss calls for new forms of address in the arts, sciences, and pedagogy. Questioning the role of humans on this planet, and, in the process, developing different social, economic, and ecological ways of thinking and acting, has become a pressing question of survival for everything that can no longer be ignored.

Given the existential urgency, this series of events, following Loveless' work, explores the questions: How can we as individuals or collectives, as artists and art institutions relate to this? How can we incorporate issues of ecology, coexistence, and care into our artistic practices or even make them the basis of our work? What might artistic practices for "living on a damaged planet" (Anna Loewenhaupt Tsing) look like that lack neither complexity, openness and experimentation, nor an ecological-ethical foundation?

In search of an alternative to the flood of narratives of hopelessness, the seminar series + symposium "Critical Future(s) — Possible Procedures" seeks situated, multi-voiced and transdisciplinary strategies to generate tools for collective survival. In doing so, we want to practice a way of thinking that is rooted in history and remains situated in the present. We want to acknowledge tensions and difficulties and still speculate about possible futures in a way that is both critical and hopeful. We want to use time and space to work together to build desirable futures and — in the context of profound ecological, economic and social changes — design ways of living together in a peaceful more-than-human way and looks at both repair and healing practices.

As international guest lecturer at the Institute of Art & Art Theory, Loveless will accompany the project "Critical Future(s) – Possible Procedures" over the summer semester 2021. Loveless is an artist and professor at the Faculty of Art and Design at the University of Alberta, where she directs the Research-Creation and Social Justice CoLABoratory. In recent years, she has researched and developed the interdisciplinary approach of Research-Creation. Research-Creation initially refers to "an epistemological and methodological intervention into traditional scholarly research practices [...]" It is an experimental approach to teaching, researching, and publishing that is deeply situated in ecological, anti-colonial, and feminist practices. At its core is the recognition and inclusion of artistic creation as a research method in its own right. Further, in Loveless' work these methods are put to work for the project of ecological justice: "to develop research-creational practices that nurture our capacities not only to reflect and analyze but to act and intervene, mobilizing research-creation as a way to develop work that is not simply on ecological topics but that takes ecological form — not just on but as."

The series of events includes five seminars which can be attended independently and will converge in a joint experimental online symposium, June 25–26, 2021. For example, **Martina Leeker's** seminar "Encountering the posthuman: Training in ambivalence" examines the figure of the posthuman and probes the inescapable ambivalences of the corresponding narratives between technophilic power fantasy and relational utopianism. In "Curating on a Damaged Planet," **Nada Schroer** engages with discourses surrounding the Anthropocene and explores radical approaches by artists, educators, and curators responding to urgent planetary challenges. **Olga Holzschuh's** seminar "performative treatment as a tool" interrogates alternative practices of healing and explores their potential to address current and future crises. From an ecological perspective, **Eloïse Bonneviot & Anne de Boer's** (The Mycological Twist) seminar "Finding Fictions Interventions" explores foraging as a form of mapping social spaces, experimenting with methods of nonlinear storytelling as well as computer and role-playing games. Finally, **Natalie Loveless'** seminar on "Sensing the Anthropocene: Performance Research and Embodied Knowledges", will examine feminist research-based performance modalities that are locally attuned and attend to the ways that anti-anthropocentric perspectives reorient artistic production in the 21st century.

The seminar series provides an opportunity for a concentrated elaboration of artistic, curatorial and scientific contributions. These will be presented in experimental sessions during an online symposium on June 25 and 26, 2021, and will be tested out and put up for discussion together with all participants. The presentation of the seminar participants will be framed by keynotes, online performances, meditations, tarot sessions and concluding vision think tanks that capture the methodological potentials of Research-Creation for a social and ecological future at the Institute of Art & Art Theory.

— Olga Holzschuh & Konstanze Schütze

Part I: ONBOARDING & PRE-SYMPOSIUM

Tuesday, May 4, 2021, 6:00-7:30 pm.

Natalie S. Loveless Keynote Lecture:
Situated Practices in Precarious Times

Abstract: In this lecture, Loveless explores the role art can play in attuning us differently within the convergence of crises that govern this time. Grounded in a return to Haraway's germinal 1988 essay "Situated Knowledges: the Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," this talk will examine feminist, ecological performance art as a modality that prioritizes aesthetic and affective spaces within which we not only reflect on what is so, but imagine and model things otherwise. Highlighting the importance of a multi-sensorial and multi-species understanding of ecological ethics, Loveless argues for the value of artistic practices that denaturalize the relationalities that govern our current extractivist systems of exploitation and power, seeding the critical and speculative imaginations needed to trouble our current ways of living and dying

Thursday, May 6, 2021, 7:00pm-9:00 pm.

Natalie S. Loveless Faculty Workshop:
Making Art at the End of the World

Part II: SYMPOSIUM Critical Future(s) – Possible Procedure(s).

Friday, June 25, 2021

5.00 – 6.00 Seminar Internal Check-In.
6.00 – 6.30 Recess
6.30 – 7.00 Recap & Intro
7.00 – 8.00 Keynote Address
8.00 – 8.30 Mural Walk

Saturday, June 26, 2021

1.00 – 2.00 Synchronization
2.00 – 5.00 Parallel Sessions
5.00 – 6.00 Recess / Break
6.00 – 7.30 Parallel Sessions
7.30 – 8.30 Knitting Together
8.30 – 9.00 Strings and Farewell

WORKSHOPS / SEMINARE



[working image: film still by MELT (Isabel Paehr & Loren Britton). MELTING (2020). Verfügbar/available online: <https://youtu.be/G2iKk3GmVig>]

Natalie S. Loveless Sensing the Anthropocene: Performance Research and Embodied Knowledges

FRI **May 7, 2021** (5–9pm CET):
student workshop part 1
SAT **May 8, 2021** (5–9pm CET):
student workshop part 2
FRI **Jun 25, 2021** (5–9pm CET): student
workshop part 3 [student symposium]
SAT **Jun 26, 2021** (tba): student workshop
part 4 [student symposium]

In this workshop we will explore research-based performance modalities that are locally attuned and attend to the ways that anti-anthropocentric perspectives reorient artistic production in the 21st century. Together, we will work to demonstrate the importance of aesthetic attunement as a means of generating new imaginaries and cultivating affective resilience and capacity. How do artists address complex issues of social and ecological justice? How can art be used not only as a means of representation but as a means of intervention and activism in ways that, in the words of feminist philosopher Donna Haraway, "stays with the trouble"? And how might these larger aims manifest themselves in local situated ways, through performance research modalities? The workshop sessions will include both discussion of the readings and practical experiments with performance-

based artistic methods. We will move back and forth between large and small group discussion, performance research exercises, and the sharing of work. Participants will be invited to develop an ongoing performance research practice for presentation in the June symposium.

Eloïse Bonneviot & Anne de Boer (The Mycological Twist). Finding Fictions

Termine: 16.-17.04.2021 und 18.06.-19.06
(Fr 14.00-19.00, Sa 9.00.-15.00)

The act of foraging can be understood as a way to map a landscape in motion. While traditional western maps are flat objects, the mind map created through foraging includes a notion of temporality as well as a 3-dimensional aspect. Here foraging is taken in a broad sense, as a way to source craft materials, inspiration as well as to collect food or medicinal plants. The workshop will use our foraging sessions as a departure to create ramified stories of repetition through our visits. The journeys will become the material for game sessions where its different aspects are being redigested through role play. Eventually this will lead to experiments on non-linear script and storytelling. During this workshop we would like to explore different forms of narrative building. These experiments will be intervals between active components, foraging sessions, gameplay and moments of discussion and reflection. Due to the unstable situation and ever-changing corona measures, we have two alternative ways of engaging in the upcoming activities. In case we can all physically meet in Köln we will go together on foraging sessions in surrounding parks and greens, and meetup in the university. In case of a lockdown scenario, we will conduct the foraging sessions in a personal setting in your close surrounding, and meet up afterwards in digital landscapes to share and explore our finds. These sessions will use digital media as a way of feeling close to one another, without spending too much time in video calls.

* **The Mycological Twist** is a project by Eloïse Bonneviot and Anne de Boer, both based in Berlin. They take mycology as a source of inspiration in engaging with ecological and social practices. Their point of interest extends through the mushroom fruiting body into the rotting matter deep below ground level. DIY methods are

woven into digital cultures to construct utopias for alternative modes of living. The Mycological Twist started in 2014 in London. Since then, the materialization of the research results in a program of commissions, lectures, camping sessions, performances and works.

Martina Leeker Encountering the posthuman. Training in ambivalence

14. 5 – 15.5. (Freitag 14 – 19 Uhr,
Samstag 9 – 15 Uhr)
18.6. – 19.6. (Freitag 14 – 19 Uhr,
Samstag 9 – 15 Uhr)

Symposium und Präsentation: 25.6 – 26.6.

Die Denkfigur einer „posthumanen“ Existenz der menschlichen Spezies ist nun schon seit einigen Jahren vielerorts und mit unterschiedlichen Bedeutungen *en vogue*. In der feministischen Forschung sowie in der Medien- und Kulturwissenschaft ist damit etwa gemeint, dass Menschen nicht mehr als autonome Subjekte, sondern vielmehr als Teile einer technischen Umwelt gesehen werden müssen. *Posthuman* meint deshalb eine *mehr-als-nur-menschliche* sowie eine *nicht-mehr-moderne* Situation. Diese Konstitution wird äußerst positiv bewertet, da mit ihr soziale und politische Ordnungen der Gleichberechtigung sowie eine demütige Sorge für die Erde denkbar und umgesetzt werden könnten. Zugleich steht dieser ökologische Relationismus aber im Verdacht, die techno-humanen Ko-Operationen zu befördern und geradezu zu beschönigen, die digitale Kulturen ausmachen. Denn unterdessen sind menschliche und technische Agierende z.B. beim autonomen Fahren, bei chirurgischen Operationen, in der Arbeit mit Suchmaschinen oder der Interaktion in sozialen Netzwerken zu Handlungsagenturen geworden, die sich wenig für menschliche Subjekte, sondern vor allem für Daten-Handel interessieren. In diesem Kontext wird der ausgerufene und technisch produzierte Posthumanismus in technophilen Diskursen auch noch genutzt, um für eine Überwindung des Menschen in technologischer Optimierung zu plädieren. Es gilt die skizzierte Gemengelage sorgfältig zu sondieren, denn das Narrativ des Posthumanen trägt großes Potenzial wie z.B. die Verbesserung von sozialer Ordnung

oder des Klimawandels in sich. Dabei ist allerdings zugleich auch die unhintergehbare Ambivalenz des Posthumanen zur Kenntnis zu nehmen, mit der es immer wieder in freiwillige technologische Unterwerfung kippt. Dieses ständige Changieren ist vermutlich unauflösbar und nur immer wieder neu auszutarieren. Das Seminar konzipiert und testet dies in praktischen Projekten. Es werden „Teams der Ambivalenz“ gegründet, die die in einer (erfundenen) „Social-Media-Offensive for posthuman education“ das *Für und Wider* des posthumanen Narrativs erkunden (z. B. Tutorials auf YouTube, Lecture Performances, TikTok-Snippets, Instagram-Personen). Dieses Vorgehen soll im Hinblick auf Kritik sowie auf Ästhetische Bildung in digitalen Kulturen ausgewertet werden.

Olga Holzschuh performative treatment as a tool

Seminartermine: 15.04 / 29.04 / 10.06 / 24.06 / 08.07 / 22.07. von 14-17:30 (14-tägig)

Das verstärkte Interesse an Esoterik, Schamanismus, Hexen und Tropen der Heilung wurde in den letzten Jahren besonders bei jüngeren Künstler:innen deutlich. Woher kommt dieses Interesse – und inwieweit hat es mit einem Unbehagen in einer hyperkapitalistischen und durchtechnisierten Gesellschaft zu tun? Und wie kann diese Beschäftigung alternative, neue Praxen für eine hoffnungsvolle Zukunft kreieren und gegenwärtigen sowie zukünftigen Krisen begegnen? Das Seminar setzt den Fokus insbesondere auf die Idee der Heilung, die über eine Erholung des Körpers von einer Verletzung, hinausgeht. Entlang künstlerischer Positionen und theoretischer Texte werden im Seminar Konzepte und performative Praxen entwickelt, die als experimentell-künstlerische Methoden gegen individuelle, soziale und geopolitische Krisen untersucht werden.

Nada Schroer Curating on a Damaged Planet

Freitags 14:00-19:00h und
Samstags 09:00-15:00h
07.+ 08.05. und 11.+12.06.

Anthropozän, Klimakrise, Kollaps – beunruhigende Begriffe, mit denen wir uns gegenwärtig und zukünftig auseinandersetzen müssen. Sie rütteln an Ruhe und Bequemlichkeit und lassen wichtige Fragen auftreten: Sollten wir die Beziehungen zwischen Kunst, Gesellschaft und Ökologie grundsätzlich überdenken? Wie können wir als Künstler:innen, Pädagog:innen und Kurator:innen auf dringende planetarische Herausforderungen reagieren? Welche Methoden und Praktiken machen diesbezüglich Sinn? Vor dem Hintergrund ökologischer und politischer Krisen beschäftigt sich das Seminar mit kuratorischen und künstlerischen Ansätzen, die radikale Vorschläge für ein zukünftiges Leben im Anthropozän, dem vom Menschen gemachten Zeitalter, machen und dabei die Grenzen zwischen Kunst und sozio-ökologischer Praxis in Frage stellen. Wir schauen uns Projektbeispiele an, die Themen, wie Nachhaltigkeit, Widerstand oder Fürsorge zum Ausgangspunkt nehmen und entwickeln anhand von Übungen und Interventionen eigene Projektideen.