



February 17, 2022

@9am / DEFINING THE FIELD

[9am] Oron Catts

Post Promethean Art

Our relationships with the world around us; with our bodies, with concepts of nature, life, materiality and identity are getting quite messy; there is a sense of impending crisis. The desperate technological attempts to fix things tend to maintain the extractive mindsets that caused many of the issues at hand and exuberate the confusion. To make things even more muddled, the era of post truth seems to take a toll on the ways we read and engage with different epistemologies and ways of doing things. It can be argued that in the last century we developed specific ways of reading and engaging with different disciplines and their respected epistemologies. This can be referred to as idealised social contracts, in practical in regard to the relationships with the idea of truth.

This talk will explore and probe what role art that deals with emerging knowledge and technologies of life can play, within the massiness of the 21st century. To do so, it will use different interpretations to Promethean mythologies and narratives, ranging from foresight to techno-utopianism. Drawing on art projects developed at SymbioticA and elsewhere, the idea of Post Promethean Art will be suggested.

Oron Catts is the Co-Founder and Director of SymbioticA: The Centre of Excellence in Biological Arts, School of Human Sciences at the University of Western Australia (UWA) and was a Professor of Contestable Design at the Royal College for the Arts UK. Together with Ionat Zurr he founded the Tissue Culture & Art Project. From 2000–2001 he was a Research Fellow at the Tissue Engineering and Organ Fabrication Laboratory at Harvard Medical School. . Catts curated thirteen exhibitions, published/co-edited four books, published more than seventy book chapters and journal articles. His work featured in exhibitions in venues such MoMA NY, Centre Pompidou, Mori art Museum, Science Gallery London and Dublin, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Ars Electronica, National Art Museum of China, and more.



[9:45am] Ionat Zurr

The Automation of Care

With the rise of Biological Arts, special environments have been designed, constructed and curated to accommodate living and semi-living entities on display. These environments are places of de/re-contextualisation, of extraction and isolation as well as maintenance, care and cultural articulation. The entanglement of life on display with its surrogate environment/apparatus, echoing human interests of control and care with non-human agencies and resistance.

The talk will draw on different artworks as well as probing the incubator, both literally and conceptually as an example of past, present and contestable futures of automation of care in cultural settings. Historically, as will be illustrated, incubators took a centre stage (visually and aesthetically) in contextualising the life hosted as a (proto) cybernetic entity. However, in recent years, there is a shift to obscure the technological surrogate vessels and render them neutral, as an attempt to avoid the biopolitics involved with what life is chosen or forced to be put in incubators, to be presented or preserved. This reflects on human wants and desires, and what get out of their control.

Dr Ionat Zurr is the Chair of the Fine Arts Discipline at the School of Design UWA and SymbioticA's academic co-ordinator. She was a Visiting Professor at Biofilia – Based for Biological Arts, Aalto University, Finland (2015-2020); a visiting scholars at The Centre of Arts and Art History at Stanford University (2007) and a Research Fellow at The Tissue Engineering & Organ Fabrication Laboratory, Harvard Medical School (2000-2001).

She is considered a pioneer in the field of Biological Arts and publish and exhibit nationally and internationally. Her work was exhibited and collected by museums such as Pompidou Centre in Paris, MoMA NY, Mori art Museum, NGV, GoMA, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, Ars Electronica, National Art Museum of China and more.

Zurr, together with Catts, ideas and projects reach beyond the confines of art; their work is often cited as inspiration to diverse areas such as bio-fabrication, cellular agriculture, new materials, textiles, design, architecture, ethics, fiction, and food.



[10:15am] Jens Hauser

Only in transit ? Organ trade ? Murder at MoMA? Paradoxes and Obstacles in Maintaining and Staging Biomedial Art

Biomedial art that appropriates the most recent technologies of the life sciences updates, at first sight, art historical tropes of “aliveness” and “creation” when coming close to “life” in a very literal, biological sense. However, while museums and collectors traditionally deal with the ontological paradox that aesthetic representations made out of dead matter can, indeed, appear as alive, such strategies fail with regard to artistic modes that insist on the authenticity of their staged biological agents, functions, and processes. Such contemporary practices pose unprecedented challenges in terms of staging, conservation, and transport. In addition, they may willfully challenge institutions’ status as art depositories or “cemeteries.”

Unlike concept-based art forms that just contain organic matter and media art using software and hardware, “moist” media art with wetware remains largely devoid of institutional advocacy and lacks a coordinated methodology to engage with the subsequent challenges. Some of these challenges present similarities to those of performance art—especially as their actual presence may not only be reenacted but “survive” in the form of documents or physical remnants. The shift from organic representation or conservation of organic matter to the staging of biological functions and the manipulation of the various nonhuman and techno-scientific agencies of micro-performativity involved in such artworks results in technical, institutional, regulatory, legal, ethical, bureaucratic, philosophical, and aesthetic issues with regard to museum infrastructures, the status of living organisms, tissues, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and their fragility when maintaining, conserving, reenacting, or shipping them. However, these difficulties should not be treated just as a straightforward grid of practical problems to solve. The conceptual challenges are philosophically most inspiring and point as much to profound changes in contemporary art practices as to institutions’ incapacity to adapt and evolve accordingly.

Jens Hauser is a Paris and Copenhagen based media studies scholar and art curator focusing on the interactions between art and technology. He’s currently a researcher at University of Copenhagen’s Medical Museion, and a distinguished affiliated faculty member at Michigan State University, where he co-directs the BRIDGE artist in residency program, an affiliated faculty member at Danube University Krems, a guest lecturer at the University of Applied Arts Vienna and at the University of Innsbruck, a guest professor at the Department of Arts and Sciences of Art at Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, and a researcher affiliated with École Polytechnique Paris-Saclay. Hauser has been the chair of the European Society for Literature, Science and the Arts’ 2018 conference in Copenhagen. At the intersection of media studies, art history and epistemology, he has developed an aesthetic and epistemological theory of biomediality as part of his PhD at Ruhr University Bochum, and also holds a degree in science and technology journalism from Université François Rabelais in Tours.



[11am] Howard Boland

Bio art: An immersive perspective

Bio art is an uncertain area, where art meets biotechnology. It deals with living matter from a post-biological perspective with its new material conditions. How artists find their place in the vast knowledge area of the biosciences suggests that there are many different readings of bio art depending on the type of engagement.

A plurality of ethical positions can be found amongst bio artists, however, debates suggest a need for artists to remain vigilant against anthropomorphic uses of bio media, that is, the mapping of cultural meanings onto living systems. As an interdisciplinary hybrid art practice that deals with knowledge processes it impinges on the biosciences' systematic investigation of intangible life processes.

Bio art has provided a rich set of debates using metaphors and staged presence of the living, but prompts the question of whether the living presence has any biological significance outside metaphorical readings and further questions: What is then the role of the living, if such preoccupation is dominated by metaphorical aspects?

My own strategy has been to engage in a material approach that has required adoptions of specific contemporary scientific methods (i.e. synthetic biology). The production of bio works may involve a great deal of learning and subsequent challenges follow when attempting to publicly stage these works.

Working with genetics has prompted me to ask what types of meaning processes we are engaging with. Unlike the idea of subjectivity, cultural references and meaning processes, the use of genetics should not merely be an aesthetic tool but understood as a network of interactions that can be tapped into to reveal (biochemical) messages and states. Unfolding these layers as an art practice is an attempt to move away from an increasing and worrying obsession that uses biological organisms to reflect on human conditions that do little to increase our understanding of the non-human.

Dr. Howard Boland is a multidisciplinary research-based artist working with biological and digital media. His innovative research in synthetic biology has produced novel visual expressions in bacteria culminating in the UK's first ever art exhibition featuring living genetically modified microorganisms. He is co-director and co-founder of the internationally recognised art-science collective and organisation C-LAB and his interdisciplinary artworks have been exhibited and presented worldwide. With strong technical and creative skills, his experience spans from artistic to scientific contexts where he has led award-winning projects.

[11:45am] panel led by Polona Tratnik



@3pm / CARING FOR THE FILED

[3pm] Olga Majcen Linn & Sunčica Ostoić

There is no curatorial education and no generally established guidelines on how to deal with the challenges of exhibiting biological materials and living beings in the art context. Consequently, each encounter with exhibiting and presenting biotechnological art projects is a pioneer work. The presentation aims to contribute to categorization of the issues encountered in curating bioart projects within authors' curatorial practice in NGO KONTEJNER, other curators' experiences and theoretical research. Art containing living or semi-living entities encompasses a few unique problems, organized around its physiology. The first issue is instability of bioart, maintaining and controlling the life itself before, during and after the exhibition. Another complex problem is the legality and ethical perspective of exhibiting hybrid art. The third topic is the health and safety of the audience. These themes along with curatorial dilemmas they create are relevant for further elaboration in future protocols and standards for exhibiting life.

Olga Majcen Linn graduated Art History and Comparative literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. Engaged in curatorial work since 2002 through NGO KONTEJNER, as the founder of the NGO and author of many renowned international projects (Device_art, Touch Me, Extravagant bodies). Since 2003 works at the Gallery VN in Zagreb which she presents young and emerging Croatian artists. In this gallery, Majcen Linn has organized over 120 exhibitions. She is also active in the field of social theory and critique: she has worked and written for the TV show Transfer, radio show Kretanje točke, T-portal, magazines Zarez and Život umjetnosti, Up&Underground, etc. She is the member of the international board of the Beijing triennial of new media arts and a member of AICA.

Sunčica Ostoić is a cultural worker from Zagreb, where she graduated Art History and Philosophy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. She is currently a PhD student of Studies in Contemporary Transdisciplinary Arts and Media at the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade under the supervision of PhD Miodrag Šuvaković. She is a guest lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb (Art at the Intersection of Science and Technology). In 2002 she co-founded KONTEJNER NGO. As the author of projects Extravagant Bodies, Touch Me and Device_art, and initiator of the DIY_ARTLAB platform, since 2000 she has worked on more than 100 exhibitions, festivals, lectures and publications in Croatia and internationally: in Zagreb, Rijeka, Dubrovnik, Ljubljana, Belgrade, Skopje, London, Glasgow, Perth, Sydney, San Francisco, Beijing, Tokyo, etc.



[3:45] Marta de Menezes

Rural Curating, an aspect of Contemporary art: methodologies of bringing together spaces, knowledges, and times. Biomedica and the community.

Cultivamos Cultura is a contemporary art space for experimentation in contemporary art in a rural part of the South of Portugal. As such we recognize and value the rural as a space for and of cultural production, a place for innovation and critical thinking. The countryside has a potential for transformation and change that is an important part of contemporary culture. Cultivamos Cultura challenges the status quo of the rural-urban binary. For this presentation I wish to discuss the situatedness of knowledge produced by our residents, contemporary artists and creative practitioners, challenging the assumptions made about culture outside the urban areas and provide a new vision of the countryside grounded on experience and hands-on embedded production.

Marta de Menezes (born 1975) is a Portuguese artist, with a Degree in Fine Arts from the University of Lisbon and a MSt from the University of Oxford. De Menezes is director of Cultivamos Cultura, the leading institution devoted to experimental art in Portugal and Ectopia, dedicated to facilitate the collaborative work between artists and scientists. Marta de Menezes has worked in the intersection of art and biology since the late 90s, in the UK, Australia, the Netherlands, and Portugal, exploring the conceptual and aesthetic opportunities offered by biological sciences for visual representation in the arts.

Her work has been widely exhibited in major venues in all continents, presented in most anthologies devoted to bioart, discussed in doctoral dissertations, and considered an example of research in the visual arts. Among the most recent international exhibitions, de Menezes was invited for the 2019 Ars Electronica Festival: Out of the Box, and organized two 2020 Ars Electronica Gardens (Lisbon and São Luis). She was invited to be the official representation of Portugal at the London Design Biennale 2016 and exhibited at the Beijing Biennale of New Media Art 2016. DeMenezes was nominated in 2015 by Time and Fortune magazines for the Art and Technology Awards 2015.

Besides her work as artist, de Menezes curated major international exhibitions including for European Capital of Culture (Portugal), Kontejner Festival (Zagreb), Verbeke Foundation (Belgium) and this last three years the editions of FACTT –Transnational and Transdisciplinary Festival of Art and Science that took place in Lisbon, New York, Mexico City, Berlin and Toronto.

[4:30am] panel led by Jens Hauser



February 18, 2022

@9am / LEARNING FROM OTHERS

[9am] Ida Hiršenfelder

Testimonial and Material Evidence

In this presentation, I examine the archive in two mutually affected trajectories, the administrative and cultural, based on the challenges posed by contemporary art practices of the past few decades by time-based and performance art. These past experiences, successes, and failures may serve as a starting orientation for those who consider including radically different materials such as biological matter or processes in the archive of contemporary art, which initially was not structured to facilitate such interdisciplinary practices. The administrative paper archive has undergone a digital turn, which declared the possibility of multiple temporal and contextual layers within memory technologies. However, the administrative digital archives are still rigorously rooted in their techno-mathematical structure, which does enable a multitemporal retrieval but is still based on arborescent hierarchical architecture. In the cultural turn of the last decades, collective memory production has shifted its focus on the one hand to the analysis of technocultural temporal dynamics of social, administrative and technological systems, and on the other to the extraordinary conceptual shifts posed by decolonial and queer cultural critique. The solution proposed so far is to enable transparency of processual, affective, and contextual aspects of lived experience as opposed to the opaque institutional selective activity. The archive thus becomes a testimonial rather than merely material evidence. To support this approach, I will offer a presentation of case studies of performative practices to think about structural conditions in interdisciplinary collaboration.

Ida Hiršenfelder (1977) was employed at the +MSUM Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (2014-2021) on projects related to digital archives: editor of Web Museum, a repository for contemporary audio-visual art, editor of Moderna galerija home page. To this day, she is a member of L'internationale Online editorial board and a co-curator of the Glossary of Common Knowledge. Previously, she was an archivist of DIVA Station, Digital Video Art Archive at SCCA, Centre for Contemporary Arts-Ljubljana (2007-2013) that contains over a thousand video works by local artists. She co-created Art-area bi-weekly edition on contemporary art and was an editor of feminist monthly Sektor Ž at an alternative radio station Radio Študent (2006-2014). She worked as a correspondent and critic at Dnevnik Daily. Amongst other media, she published texts in Art Words Magazine (Ljubljana), Maska Magazine (Ljubljana), Digidult.it on-line magazine (Milano), FurtherField on-line magazine (London), Dialogi Magazine for Culture and Society (Maribor) and in exhibition catalogues. To this day, she writes on media art, feminism in archives.



[9:45am] Rok Vevar

The Temporary Slovenian Dance Archive: approaches to archiving contemporary dance between detective, archaeological and forensic approaches

Archiving and historicizing ephemeral artistic practices that generate their products through practices, skills, actions and conceptualizations of the human body is a particular challenge, as this kind of work more or less inaccessible to its object of research. These are, so to speak, the proverbial problems concerning the archiving and historicizing of the entire spectrum of the so-called performing arts. In my contribution, I will draw on my own experience and methods of archiving and historicizing contemporary dance and performing arts to present some of my starting points for the reconstruction of individual contemporary dance events and, at the same time, of that which, with its various informational traces, functions in this kind of work as a contextual "notation of dance", the missing event. This kind of work is (partly figuratively, but in some cases also literally) a combination of detective, archaeological and forensic methods. A cross-examination of the multitude of material and immaterial forms of traces that contemporary dance practice and its events leave behind.

The historiographical reconstruction of contemporary dance events is - in the terminology of structural linguistics - made possible by reconfiguring contexts as precisely as possible and by gradually moving towards particularised texts, which are always marked (with greater or lesser informational scope) by their fundamental reconstructive deficit. The contemporary notion of dance work, which by no means means merely event products in the form of performances or site-specific/in situ events, but a whole series of production processes, is very helpful in this respect. However, the history of contemporary dance and performing arts is a series of professional and methodological speculations. Their archiving is an "exhibition" of more or less exhaustive or eloquent traces, documentation in a wide variety of media. In this kind of work, a series of meta-objects emerge in cross-examinations, which are not event-objects of the contemporary art work (performance), but witnesses to the culture produced by this kind of art, while at the same time, in individual cases, different contextual traces allow the actual contemporary dance present to emerge in a moment before us as a trace that we were looking for in the past only a moment before. No archival document is superfluous for this to happen.



*Rok Vevar is a writer on the theory and history of contemporary performing arts and a historian and archivist of contemporary dance. He graduated in Comparative Literature and Literary Theory at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana, studied theatre directing at AGRFT and attended GILŠ Kodum in Ljubljana. As a journalist, he has published in a number of local daily newspapers and in some national and foreign professional periodicals in the field of performing arts and literature. He is the author of the book *Deadline for the Show - Selected Criticism and Articles* (Litera, 2011). He has directed three performances with Simona Semenič: *Full Fist of Empty Hands* (Muzeum, 2001), *Solo without Talon* (Glej, Maska, 2005) and *Cartography of Full-Length Pictures* (Maska, 2005). He has co-directed three performances with dancer, choreographer and director Jana Menger and performed in the last two. He is the author of the performance-lecture *How My Life Turned into a Festival* (2011-13). In 2011 he founded the Temporary Slovenian Dance Archive in his apartment and has presented it in Zagreb, Sofia and Harvard University, Cambridge (MA, USA), and in 2015 he hosted actors of the Eastern European network EEPAP, students of the Master's programme in Choreography from the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies at the University of Giessen (Germany), students of the Master's programme in Dramaturgy at AGRFT. The first examples of the reinterpretation of Slovenian contemporary dance history, based on newly acquired materials and documents of the ZSPA, were published in the *Mask* issue entitled *Movements of Contemporary Dance II* (XXIX/163-64/2014). In 2013-2015 he was habilitated as an assistant professor at the AGRFT Department of Dramaturgy, where he taught a seminar on *Theatre Criticism and Theories of Contemporary Dance*, and at the Academy of Dance in Ljubljana he taught *History of Dance II (20th century)*, *Dramaturgy of Contemporary Dance* and *Analysis of Contemporary Dance*. He is an active member of the Balkan dance network *Nomad Dance Academy*, where he initiated a project of regional archiving of choreographic practices in the *Nomad Dance Institute* programme.*



[10:15am] Barbara Borčić

Barbara Borčić will present DIVA Station, the archive of video and new-media art in Slovenia. The talk will be accompanied by DIVA at Škuc Gallery, a video essay by Nika Grabar presenting the topic of archiving as “the preservation of memory”.

DIVA Station is a compendium of projects that seek to explore, preserve and disseminate (primarily) Slovenian video/new-media art. It has been developed since 1999 at SCCA-Ljubljana, Center for Contemporary Arts and encompasses documentation (Videodokument), research & education (Archival Practices, Video Turn), curated programs (Videospotting) and on-line archive (DIVA) that are accessible on-line and are open for cooperation. Today DIVA Station includes archive and mediateque with over 1100 video works by local and international artists, documents of events and works from European media archives. DIVA Station / SCCA-Ljubljana has been participating at two European collaborative programs focused on media archives: platform GAMA (Gateway to Archives of Media Art) and on-line repository Forgotten Heritage (Not Yet Written Stories. Women Artists' Archives Online).

We constantly add newly acquired works to the archive and promote an overall understanding of artistic oeuvre and video/new-media practices by organising workshops, discussions, presentations and exhibitions – e.g. Slovenian Cinematheque (Ljubljana, 2021, 2020) Alternative Film/Video Festival (Belgrade, 2019), Blickle Kino, Museum für zeitgenössische Kunst (Wien, 2017), Lace Gallery (Los Angeles, 2016), Union Docs (New York, 2016); Blackbox (Manila, 2015), Museum of Contemporary Art (Zagreb, 2014), Künstlerhaus. Halle für Kunst & Medien (Graz, 2013), TransDance Festival (Cairo, 2013), Sofia Film Festival (2012), LUX (London, 2011), K2 Contemporary Art Center (Izmir, 2011), Townhouse Gallery (Cairo, 2010), Arsenal Municipal Gallery (Poznan, 2010), ars electronica (Linz, 2009), Transmediale (Berlin, 2007), CalArts, Los Angeles (2004).



*Barbara Borčić is an art historian and media theorist, Director of SCCA-Ljubljana, Center for Contemporary Arts (2000-2015) and head of video programs and DIVA Station (2005-2019). She is active as a curator, lecturer and publicist. She has curated media exhibitions, e.g. Miha Vipotnik: Faces of Analogue / Quantisation of Red, Slovenian Cinematheque, Ljubljana (2020); Projected Visions. From art in the urban context to fiction and dystopia (e.city-Ljubljana), Apollonia, échanges artistiques européens, Strasbourg (2018); Multimedia Practices and Venues of Production (with Igor Španjol), Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, Ljubljana (2017); Race with Time. Performance and Video in a Rear-view Mirror (with Ida Hiršenfelder), National Theatre Institute, Ljubljana (2014); Archiving of multimedia art. Three Case Studies (with Ida Hiršenfelder), Project Room SCCA, Ljubljana (2010); DIVA at Škuc Gallery, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana (2009); Videospotting, Gallery 3,14, Bergen (2008); What is to be done with audiovisual archives?, Kapelica Gallery, Ljubljana (2005); Videospotting and Videodokument, Bunker, Udine (2004). She has regularly lectured and published texts on media practices, e.g. Video Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism, Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-Gardes, Neo-Avant-Gardes, and Post-Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991 (Massachusetts: MIT Press 2003); A Painter's Visually Skilled Hand in Grasp of Technology and Engineering, Mehatron Noordung (Zagreb, Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004); Myths and Legends About Early Video Art Works (with Ida Hiršenfelder; Ljubljana: Maska Magazine, No 123-124, 2009); What Television Can Be, And What Artists Can Use It For, Amuse Me (Ljubljana: Mestna galerija, 2013); The ŠKUC Gallery, Alternative Culture, and Neue Slowenische Kunst in the 1980s, NSK from Kapital to Capital. Neue Slowenische Kunst – The Event of the Final Decade of Yugoslavia (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija & Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2015). She is the author of the book Celostna umetnina Laibach. Fragmentarni pogled [Gesamtkunst Laibach. Fragmentary View], (Ljubljana: Založba I*cf., 2013).*

[11:00am] panel led by Jurij Krpan