HOTHOUSE

A Renegade Lab for Democracy against Technocapitalist Authoritarianism

Art, Tech, Ecology and Politics.

The Future of Demonstration. Season 5
12 September – 4 October 2025
Atelier Augarten, Scherzergasse 1A, 1020 Vienna.
https://thefutureofdemonstration.net/hothouse

HOTHOUSE is Season 5 of *The Future of Demonstration*,
an art series by Sylvia Eckermann and Gerald Nestler.

HOTHOUSE is realized in cooperation with the Heinrich Böll Foundation - Global Unit for Human Security, Vienna Office; Tactical Tech, Berlin; Technopolitics, Vienna; the Lisbon Architecture Triennale; and with contributions by adO/Aptive; Forensic Architecture/Centre for Research Architecture; the Stop Killer Robot Coalition; and Territorial Agency amongst others.

With artificial intelligence, a transformative power has emerged that will have a massive impact on our lives. Already, many people use chatbots and see them as an enrichment to their lives and work.

Yet, every promise hides a claim, and recent AI applications indicate that the promise of a more participatory, diverse and equitable world – and hence a better planetary future – veers towards a profoundly reactionary deepening of AI control. Digitally, socially, and psychologically, the claim to power unleashes binary hell.

Corporate AI is the new frontier of capitalist extraction. Its game is all life and matter. We call it the turn from AI gamification to AI weaponization.

What does it mean to resist? How do successful counter-alliances and counter-investigations operate? What can be done to expose and resolve power schemes that abuse AI infrastructure? How can we reorient the agency of resistance towards insurrections that are politically and culturally adaptable, fluid, and resilient (as the German term "Widerständigkeit" implies compared to "Widerstand")? In contrast to machines, we can betray systems and agents of oppression.

HOTHOUSE brings together artists, activists, practitioners and thinkers from around the world to challenge emerging AI supremacy and how it extracts, classifies, governs and even annihilates life. They will participate in real time via a new collective technology: 3D-point cloud video sharing allows us to create a collaborative space of shared presence at Atelier Augarten, regardless of where contributors are located on Earth.

HOTHOUSE will host four performative-discursive events, each focussing on a specific aspect of the theme *[programme]*. They are part of an installation that combines digital and analogue means and consists of objects, artefacts, point clouds, maps, posters, documentary films, videos, sound, songs, and podcasts. Talks and workshops will allow for deeper understanding and practice-based interventions.

We don't play with corporate AI aesthetics. We don't use AI to make "art". We don't debate whether AI could become more ethical or behave nicer. Instead, we ask what it takes to reclaim agency and counter increasingly unbridled forms of domination, inequality and power.

You are invited to take part in this counter-exploration.

ON DEMOCRACY AND RESISTANCE

We are told that human beings are prone to failure. They say this affliction is about to end: artificial intelligence will solve all problems. They proclaim singularity is about to arise and is a planetary being more powerful than anything a human being could imagine. They promise its benevolence will save you, me and the world. They assert that democracy is obsolete and that resistance is futile. Their slogan for our times: "Brace yourself and align with your choice of authoritarian leader." #follow #grace #playalong.

In the meantime, climate change is causing the atmosphere to heat up. Not only are global temperatures on the rise, so too are social, cultural and political tensions. Ecological, political and cultural rifts are played off against each other. Conflict resolution is replaced by armed conflict. Heatwaves smother the air, forests and arable land burn, floodings do the rest. In the wake of all this, ever more people and other beings are victims of yet another contingency, another crime against life. Oligarchs bow to authoritarian leaders, leveraging their business models to further escalate extraction and division. Once again, reactionary and repressive powers declare inequality a law of nature, eugenics slowly surface as their mode of operation. Brazenly or unwittingly, social and other media reinforce these sociopathic tendencies. Consequently, survival takes precedence and no-one's to blame.

Why would anyone still bank on democracy?
What's democracy anyhow? What's it to you? Isn't it remarkable that democracy is all the talk and woe, but hardly anyone says what they mean by it? And isn't it even more remarkable that we talk about it as if we all knew what it means?

What if the problem isn't the demise of democracy by its adversaries, as resounds from everywhere? What if the problem is that "we" – those entitled to benefit from it – have stopped developing, adapting, and deepening democracy? What if "we" have hollowed it out?

The crisis of democracy lies at least as much in our neglect as in any authoritarian attempt to undo it. Such neglect erodes what democracy meant in the first place: an inclusive and participatory process, a becoming-of-democracy. Oversimplified and yet unfinished, democracy has been sidelined for quicker and simpler gains to wealth and power.

HOTHOUSE reframes the debate on democracy from condition to process. If we say democracy, we do not refer to a system in which checks and balances are easily demolished by those who seek power for themselves. What we mean by democracy is an open and animated ecological, political, legal, and cultural framework. Or – in contrast to the Athenian model – an isonomia "based on non-rule and a lack of social divisions whereby equality is realized through the freedom to immigrate," to quote the philosopher Kōjin Karatani (https://www.dukeupress.edu/isonomia-and-the-origins-of-philosophy). Today these models need to be expanded because democracy will only flourish by exceeding the humanist constraint on our species. Democracy reborn is not only a question of who has a voice, it also implies the resolution to listen to all voices, whether human or nonhuman. Future democracy is a re-entanglement with all beings and matter.

To think is to resist, but this can only the beginning. The question is, what can be done? HOTHOUSE proposes to reorient resistance against technocapitalist authoritarianism, a turn from critique and dissent to exposure and betrayal. This shift echoes in the German word "Widerständigkeit" that – apart from resilience – implies civic engagement as a relentless force that can turn dissent into insurrection. Evidentiary Investigation is a basis of knowledge in non-transparent contexts; if we accept it as such, betrayal is an agency inherent to humans as opposed to black box AI machines and their owners. It is time to rescind loyalty and break free from forms of oppression that hold people hostage – socially as well as psychologically.

This approach entails a strategic shift from resistance as direct opposition to versatile, adaptable and resilient tactics. HOTHOUSE invites you to join us in the resolution to turn renegade.

On the format of the art series The Future of Demonstration

The Future of Demonstration resolves the conventional separation between art (exhibition), discourse (symposium) and archive (documentation). Instead, it creates participatory formats and choreographies that combine digital and physical space, discourse, conversation, performance, installation, visuals, soundscape, music, video and film.

The **art series** is based on a what we call a postdisciplinary practice: in a performative-discursive framework contributors from art, activism, policy, philosophy, science, technology and other fields jointly explore human and nonhuman forms, intensities and consequences of collective practice.

We do not treat fields and disciplines as distinct. Rather, we invite them to contribute to *demonstration* as a collaborative method for new narratives, techniques, and affiliations of resistance. What does it take to bring forth an inclusive socio-ecological paradigm, a *re-entanglement* with the planetary, a new perception of the world?

What is at stake today is the indispensable and at the same time beautiful task to collectively create counter-imagination and counter-movements that combine technological, social, cultural, and biological epistemes, phenomena, and imagery. The audience is an active part in these experiments in technopolitical resolution.