HOTHOUSE

A Renegade Lab for Democracy against Technocapitalist Authoritarianism
September 12 – October 4, 2025
Atelier Augarten, Scherzergasse 1A, 1020 Vienna
thefutureofdemonstration.net/hothouse

HOTHOUSE, the fifth season of the art series *The Future of Demonstration*, explores the political, social, and ecological implications of artificial intelligence – and asks how democratic agency can be reimagined under technocapitalist conditions.

Many people now use AI applications routinely – at work or play – and often see them as a benefit. But behind every promise lies a set of power claims. With AI, a new actor has entered the stage – one with far-reaching consequences for our lives. The use of AI in economic, political, and military conflicts shows how the promise of an open, participatory, and diverse world is in danger of being hijacked by reactionary forces. AI marks a new frontier of capitalist exploitation – driven by a logic that sees democracy not as an asset, but as an obstacle. This development signals a shift: from AI gamification to AI weaponization.

HOTHOUSE brings together artists, activists, scientists, and theorists from around the world to explore what it means to resist. What can be done to expose and resolve power schemes that abuse AI infrastructure? How do successful counter-alliances and counter-investigations operate? How can we reorient the agency of resistance towards insurrections that are politically and culturally adaptable, fluid, and resilient? Unlike closed AI black box machines, human beings are capable of betraying systems and agents of oppression.

Four live events focus on different aspects of the topic. Embedded in an installation that combines digital and analog media, the discursive-performative format of the live events is complemented by an exhibition of objects, artifacts, maps, posters, documentaries, videos, sound, and songs. Podcasts, lectures, and workshops offer deeper insights and encourage hands-on engagement.

HOTHOUSE does not use AI to create art. It is not about AI aesthetics – nor about whether AI can be made "ethical" or "friendlier." Instead, HOTHOUSE asks how we might reclaim democratic agency in the face of technological forces that reproduce and reinforce inequality.

The audience is invited to participate!

ART, DEMOCRACY, AND RESISTANCE - A Programmatic Question of HOTHOUSE

In some circles, artificial intelligence is seen as a solution to human error – a step toward the singularity, a "superior being" with global knowledge and flawless decision-making. At the same time, ecological collapse, social fragmentation, and political conflict are pitted against each other. Technological power is used to entrench existing inequalities. Reactionary forces declare democracy obsolete – and call for submission to authoritarian leadership. It is no surprise, then, that democracy is in crisis. But what does democracy even mean today? And how can we prevent it from being not only attacked from outside but also hollowed out from within?

"Thinking is an act of resistance," says philosopher Alva Noë – but that's only the beginning. When critique and dissent no longer suffice to confront the new alliances of political, economic, and technological power, we must recalibrate democratic resistance. The question is: What can we do?

HOTHOUSE proposes a reorientation of resistance against technocapitalist authoritarianism from critique and dissent to exposure and betrayal. It is time to renounce loyalty and break free from oppressive forces that hold people hostage – technologically, socially and psychologically. This shift echoes in the German word "Widerständigkeit," which implies civic engagement as a relentless force that can turn dissent into defiance and insurrection. It entails a strategic turn from resistance as direct confrontation to versatile, adaptable and resilient tactics.

Art reinforces our capacity to perceive reality and imagine alternative ways of cohabitation. Aesthetic practice is indispensable for uncovering hidden potentials and achieving self-determination. Evidentiary investigation is the basis of knowledge in non-transparent contexts like AI. And if we accept betrayal as an act of self-defense, it is a powerful agency against abuses of technology, law, and power.

About 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 disciplines and fields as distinct. Rather, we invite them to contribute to *The Future of Demonstration* and its 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 crucial 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.

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

ABOUT

Sylvia Eckermann is an artist based in Vienna whose work critically engages with sociopolitical and economic conditions. Since the late 1980s, she has explored digital spaces, their intersections with the physical world, and the power structures embedded within them. A pioneer of game art, she works across media with installations, video, sculpture, and digital environments. Her work has been exhibited internationally, including at Kunsthalle Wien, Kunsthaus Graz, and KIASMA in Helsinki. Eckermann is a member of the Technopolitics working group and has received numerous awards, including the Austrian State Prize for Media Art.

Gerald Nestler is an artist and researcher whose practice combines installation, video, performance, intervention, and text with theory and conversation. His research focuses on financial capitalism, technology, and power, with particular attention to the concept of the **"Aesthetics of Resolution"** as a strategy against opacity. Nestler develops and curates postdisciplinary formats between art, philosophy, science and other fields of knowledge and experience and frequently collaborates – especially with Sylvia Eckermann and the Technopolitics working group. He holds a PhD from the Centre for Research Architecture in London, where he was a researcher at Forensic Architecture. His work has been exhibited, published, and discussed internationally.

HOTHOUSE, the fifth season of the art series, is realized in collaboration with the Heinrich Böll Foundation – Global Unit for Human Security, Tactical Tech, Berlin; and the Lisbon Architecture Triennale.

Participating groups and initiatives:
adO/Aptive (Vienna), Disintegrator Podcast (Online), Forensic Architecture / Centre for Research Architecture (London), Stop Killer Robots Coalition (Global), Technopolitics (Vienna), Territorial Agency (London)

Full list of contributors:
https://thefutureofdemonstration.net/hothouse/credits.html

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