FREI
Q21
RAUM
EXHIBITION SPACE

ON
MOOD POLITICS,
SENTIMENT DATA,
MARKET SENTIMENTS
AND OTHER
SENTIMENT
AGENCIES

EN

Mood Swings

On mood politics, sentiment data, market sentiments and other sentiment agencies

Antoine Catala* (FRA)
Xavier Cha (USA)
Florian Göttke (GER/NLD)
Femke Herregraven (NLD)
Hertog Nadler* (NLD/ISR)
Micah Hesse* (USA)
Francis Hunger (GER)
Scott Kildall (USA)
Barbora Kleinhamplová (CZE)
Tom Molloy (IRL)
Barbara Musil (AUT)
Bego M. Santiago* (ESP)
Ruben van de Ven* (NLD)
Christina Werner (AUT)

*Q21/MQ artist-in-residence

Mood Swings

On mood politics, sentiment data, market sentiments and

Realities are increasingly generated through moods, and it is moods rather than facts that determine perceptions, decisions and courses of action to an ever greater degree. Mood data, in turn is a sought-after subject for analysis. Emotions are being quantified and simulated. The more complex the system, the greater the influence of affective signals that can influence moods and thus behaviour—or at least initiate them and set them in motion. This raises the question of the domain of influence that moods have particularly in the face of the societal upheavals that we are witnessing at present.

As complexity increases, so too the difficulty of understanding political, financial and technological processes, along with the paradoxes associated with them. Orchestrations are perceived as authentic, data evaluations presented as fact, financial interests accepted as a necessity with the authority to guide policy, social media misinterpreted as social, and so on. In this indeterminate zone between reality and fiction, the influence of mood signals is greatest when the receiver is set to the emotional information channel. Moods are a prerequisite for developing conscious motives for action.

The exhibition investigates the importance, the radius as well as the areas of application and functions of sentiments in politics, economy, technology, media and art. What impact do manipulation and simulation of moods have when moods attain independence and become actors themselves? The show therefore addresses the question of how and why moods are analysed, generated and exploited, and to what pur-

pose. On the one hand, electoral, investment and purchasing behaviour are influenced by moods, with social media channels often acting as amplifiers. On the other hand, emotions are being quantified for data mining and affective computing processes in order to evaluate emotional reactions for economic, marketing strategy and criminological purposes and for surveillance agendas, or to make mashines more emotional.

The artistic works shown in the exhibition address manipulative techniques of ideological mood politics, deal with the emotionally charged struggle for definition authority between reality and fiction, analyse the influence and impact of moods on financial markets, or confront technological developments that exert a direct or indirect influence on human behaviour, concepts and social relationships through emotional analysis. Starting with current downturns and upheavals, along with the factors that influence our reality to the most radical degree—the financial market and digitalisation—the exhibition examines the operating modes, influence and significance of moods, both in relation to socio-political developments and with respect to the shift towards quantification of people that we are presently witnessing.

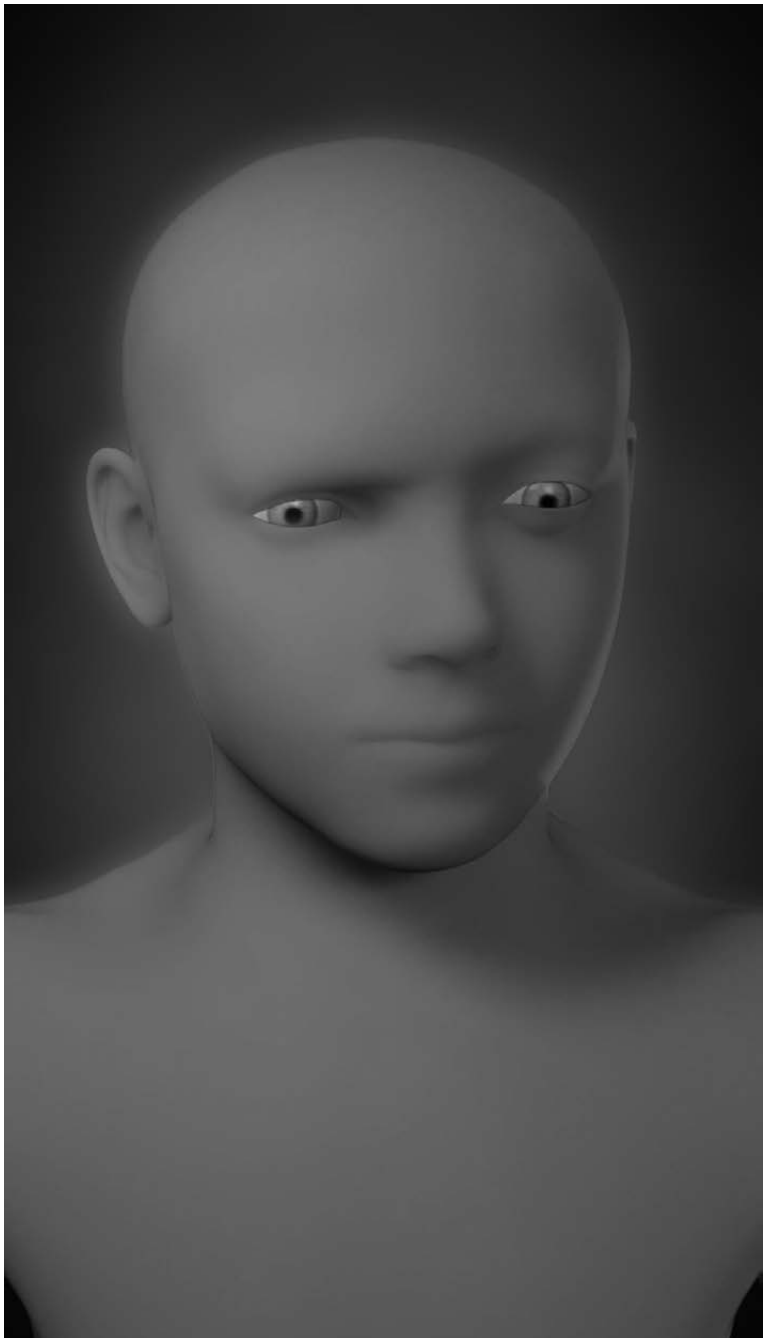
With the revival of authoritarian structures, mood analysis can be understood as a form of ideological critique, a way of countering this development.

Curator
Sabine Winkler

Antoine Catala

Emobot (Teacher)

Video animation, 12:40, 2014



Antoine Catala's work is concerned with the relationship of images, language and symbolism in the day-to-day use of technology. The artist addresses associated changes in emotional domains, both concerning the status as subject as well as the interaction between humans and technology. For his work *Emobot*, Antoine Catala transferred expressions and their associated feelings from an 11-year-old boy to a Telenoid robot. These telepresence robots were developed to represent in a "bodily" manner persons currently located elsewhere. A certain type of software not only transfers to the local robot the voice but also the gestures and facial expressions of the partner communicating with it at the other end of the line. Its minimalist design provides a kind of abstract surface capable of representing any- and everyone. *Emobot* shows staged emotional states of an eleven-year-old boy, whose moods were transferred to this neutral facial surface. The emotional states of *Emobot* shift between anxiety, despair, inner calm, emptiness, etc., occasionally grimacing in a way that defies categorisation, breaking the smooth surface and making it seem at once vulnerable and eerie. These grimaces are an expression of the unease that can result from the observing gaze of the camera. It is these moments of insecurity and vulnerability which, in conjunction with the child's voice, create the impression of a certain kind of humanity, but this humanity soon turns uncanny.

Antoine Catala analyses simulation and transmission processes of emotions. He is dealing with artificial intelligence, with analogies between children who learn and self-learning systems engaged in the recognition of self and others, but also with authoritarian programming systems and ways to resist them.

In the future, will we outsource unwanted or secret emotions to emobots, for them to attain independence or be put on file in a Bad Bank? How will emotional simulations generated by algorithms alter our perception of feelings and/or empathetic behaviour?

Antoine Catala was born in 1975 in Toulouse; he lives and works in New York.

www.aaaaaaa.org

Xavier Cha

Abduct
HD video, 12:13 min, 2015

Xavier Cha investigates the impact of digital image communications on our emotional perception and behaviour in the post-Internet era. In a laboratory situation she shows a range of emotional test subjects whose faces register emotional impulses in quick succession—anger, joy, grief, mania, disgust, surprise and shock. The triggers for these emotional perceptions, however, remain unclear, so too the reasons for experiencing these mood swings, as well as their context. The lack of context and the rapid succession of mood shifts makes it impossible for the viewer to identify with the emotional states of the actors. This representation of emotions and moods without reference and context thus brings to mind emoticons. How do we use emotions, how is emotional behaviour trained or simulated, what are the stereotypes at work here? Are expressions of feelings identical throughout the world, and thus biologically determined, as Paul Ekman (Facial Action Coding System) claims? Emotion recognition programs are being used to interpret one's own feelings, or those of one's counterpart, in the pursuit of economic, marketing or criminological interests, extending right into the realm of monitoring. The emotional states shown in the video range between advertising aesthetics and drama, and function like algorithmic emotional masks undergoing constant change. Swinging between narcissistic projection and insecurity, emotions are isolated and represented in an exaggerated form as abstract sequences of signs without reference or narrative.

Xavier Cha was born in 1980 in Los Angeles; she lives and works in New York.
xaviercha.com

Florian Göttke

A Protester in Homs, Syria

Video, 13 min, 2013

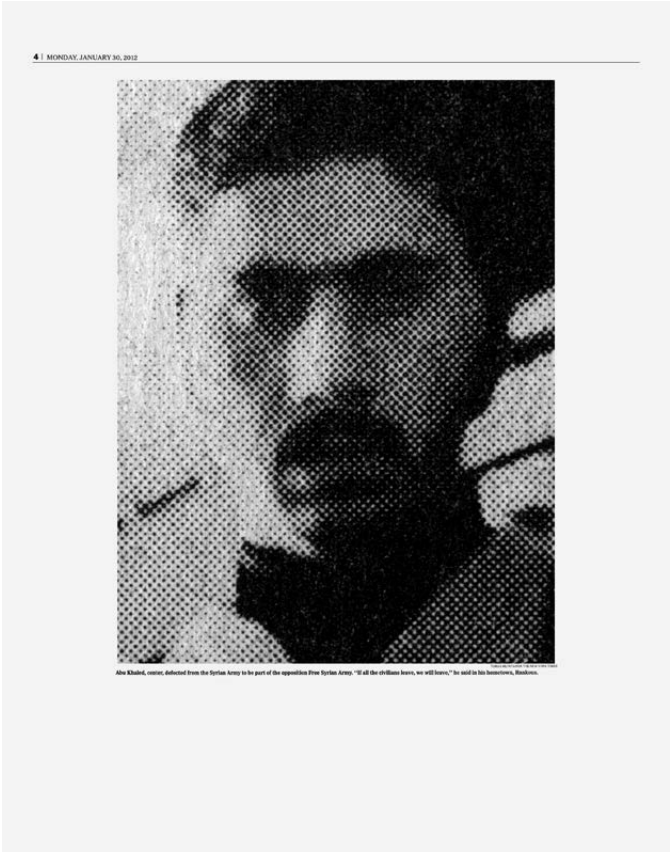
In his installation Florian Göttke is concerned with analysing the politics of image in the context of the Syrian war. He investigates how images are used in media and social media, how emotions are evoked through photographs, how visibility demands reactions and responsibility. Florian Göttke is interested in the relationship between action and image in the context of media and social media, the way moods are channelled and how moods can be activated through the politics of image. What signals, symbols and signs are used to achieve the greatest possible impact among the public—and what are the expectations associated with this? In the work *A Protester in Homs, Syria*, Florian Göttke analyses the photograph of a Syrian protester in the *Herald Tribune*. An activist wearing a patterned face mask is holding a heart-shaped cushion toward the viewer which is inscribed with the Arabic word for "freedom". The image is an individual statement, posted to be shared and/or liked, to attract attention, allies, like-minded people and sympathisers. The image is intended to function as an appeal, to provoke a response and is addressed directly at the target audience. This visibility demands response and responsibility; emotionally charged images can directly or indirectly produce a call for action in multiple directions. Behind the photo posted here lies an (un)conscious hope for support, a basic right is claimed through an emotionally loaded symbol. However, the response that this visibility calls for is in turn contrasted by the transparency of the surveillance perspective, by which action, emotion and reaction are blocked. While the camera zooms in on the picture to pixel resolution, we hear reporting from the image research; the story behind the photograph is reconstructed and the image is analysed in the context of both image politics and social politics.

Florian Göttke was born in 1965 in Gelsenkirchen; he lives and works in Amsterdam.

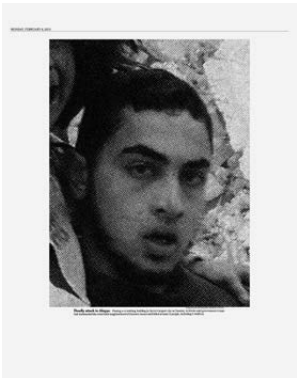
www.floriangoettke.com

The Gaze from Syria

Series of digital prints, 33 × 42 cm, 2017



Abu Khaled, center, defected from the Syrian Army to be part of the opposition Free Syrian Army. "If all the civilians leave, we will leave," he said in his hometown, Rankous.



The Gaze from Syria stands in direct dialogue with the video, representing an extension and deepening of the analysis of medial image politics in the Syrian war. Florian Göttke researched newspaper reports in the *New York Times International edition* and selected photos where one of the persons depicted is looking directly into the camera. He enlarges the faces of these figures and so intensifies the gaze that is then directed right into the eyes of the reader, establishing a personal connection between the person in need and us, who read about the horror and suffering. These resigned gazes are also directed at the media and its means of dissemination and their failure to assist in conflict resolution. Here the trust in visibility, pre-condition for conflict resolution, is lost. Often it is not those who are in the centre of the image who (perhaps only coincidentally) meet the gaze of the camera, but are aware of the presence of the camera and perhaps also of the media apparatus that stands behind it. Many of these people may no longer be alive, but we may well encounter some of them as refugees in the streets of our cities and with their presence they once again compel us to an adequate response to the crisis in Syria. Both reading about this suffering and viewing images of the suffering raise the question of individual and societal responsibility, just as encounters and experiences in real life do.

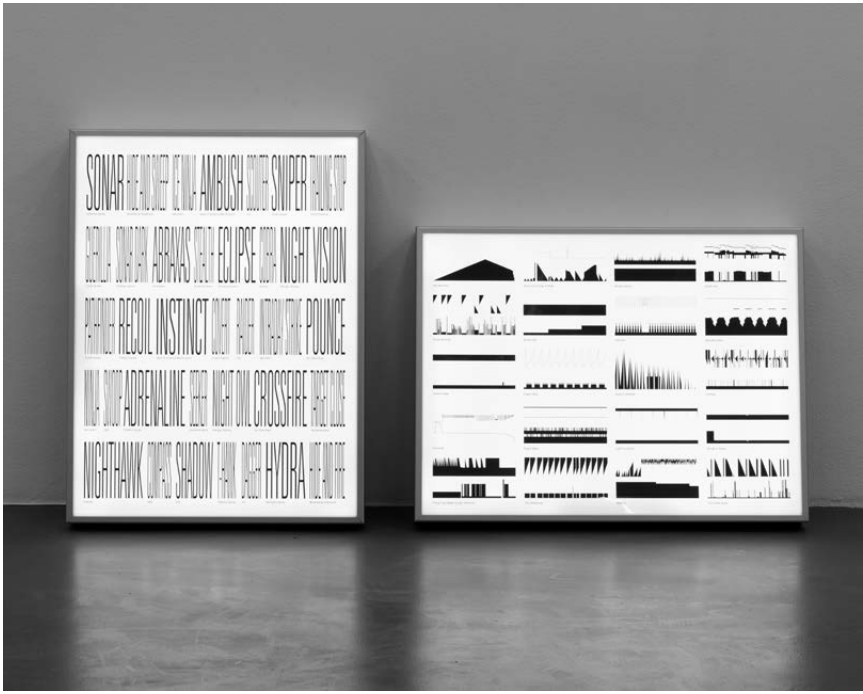
Florian Göttke's works are concerned with the emotional utilisation and function of medial image politics and question the significance of moods and emotions as a motive for action within the creation of discourse and responsibility.

Femke Herregraven

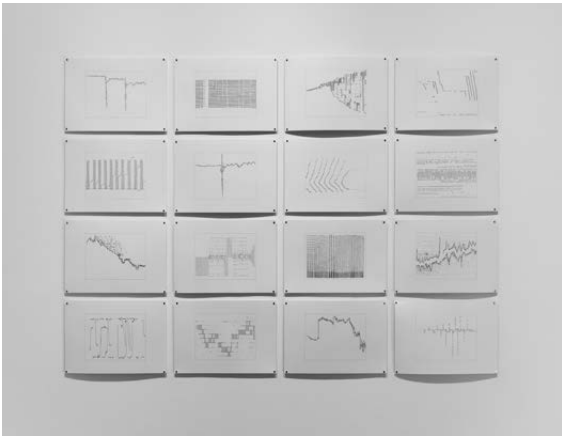
A timeframe of one second is a lifetime of trading I/II

2 llight boxes, 60 × 80 cm, 2015

Series of 16 drawings, ink on paper, 2013



A timeframe of one second is a lifetime of trading II, 2015



A timeframe of one second is a lifetime of trading I, 2013

In her works *A timeframe of one second is a lifetime of trading I and II,* Femke Herregraven explores the specific names given to different trading algorithms to depict high-frequency trading processes as graphic profiles and patterns. These trading algorithms were given descriptive names from military contexts, such as *guerrilla sniper, crossfire* etc., while the patterns of processes happening behind the screens were given film titles, like *Eraserhead* and *Watchtower.* Femke Herregraven is interested in these emotional, cultural and symbolic references as well as processes of abstraction in finance and art. In the financial realm, the combination of abstraction and risk leads to dehumanisation, particularly in the loss of reference and transfer of risk, which also results in a shift of values at an emotional level. This is associated with the question of meaning and value of materiality—a question that arises both in relation to the digital society dominated by the financial market and in relation to the art.

In concrete terms, Femke Herregraven is referring here to the 2010 *Flash Crash*, when the Dow Jones Industrial Average Index lost more than 1000 points within a few minutes. This crash was triggered by the fraudulent use of automated cancellation of purchase agreements with the aim of generating a drop in value of the securities in question. Share indexes react like seismographs to symptoms of change and moods, to then once again generate profit from precisely these gaps in sentiment.

Femke Herregraven was born in 1982 in Nijmegen; she lives and works in Amsterdam.
femkeherregraven.net

Hertog Nadler

Stimmt

Installation: Norbert Nadler election campaign,
poster, photos, self published newspaper "The Monograph", 2004—2016
Public participatory installation: "Read My Lips", 2017

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Nobert Nadler election campaign Beelitz:

1 Distribution of the election posters
2 Visit to the Brandenburg shooting fair
3 Official opening of the football season in Brandenburg photographies, 2004

4 Norbert Nadler comes to The Netherlands: photography, 2006

3

In 2004 Nir Nadler stayed in Beelitz, a small town in the German state of Brandenburg, as part of his participation in the *EEA (European Exchange Academy)* program. During that period local elections took place, and the campaign posters spread across public spaces inspired him to launch his own electoral campaign, as the fictional candidate Norbert Nadler. Norbert befriended the mayor, shook hands, appeared at campaign events, held speeches in English and gained approval for his campaign slogan, "Stimmt" (meaning: "that's true", but also "vote")—which was, in fact, the essence of his political agenda. Despite, or maybe even because of this, the electoral campaign worked. Hertog Nadler staged appearance habitus and postures as emotional signals and symbolic rhetoric that are meant to suggest representation of interests and sense of community. The campaign continued in the Netherlands in 2006 in the form of public appearances, the publication of Norbert's own newspaper *The Monograph* as well as a hyper-realist sculpture of Norbert.

Chaja Hertog and Nir Nadler staged Norbert as politician devoid of ideology who instead adapts to the ideologies at hand, to the mood of his environment and, in line with Ernesto Laclau's "logic of equivalence", represents an "empty signifier" which functions as a projection surface for all manner of frustrated hopes precisely because of its indeterminacy.

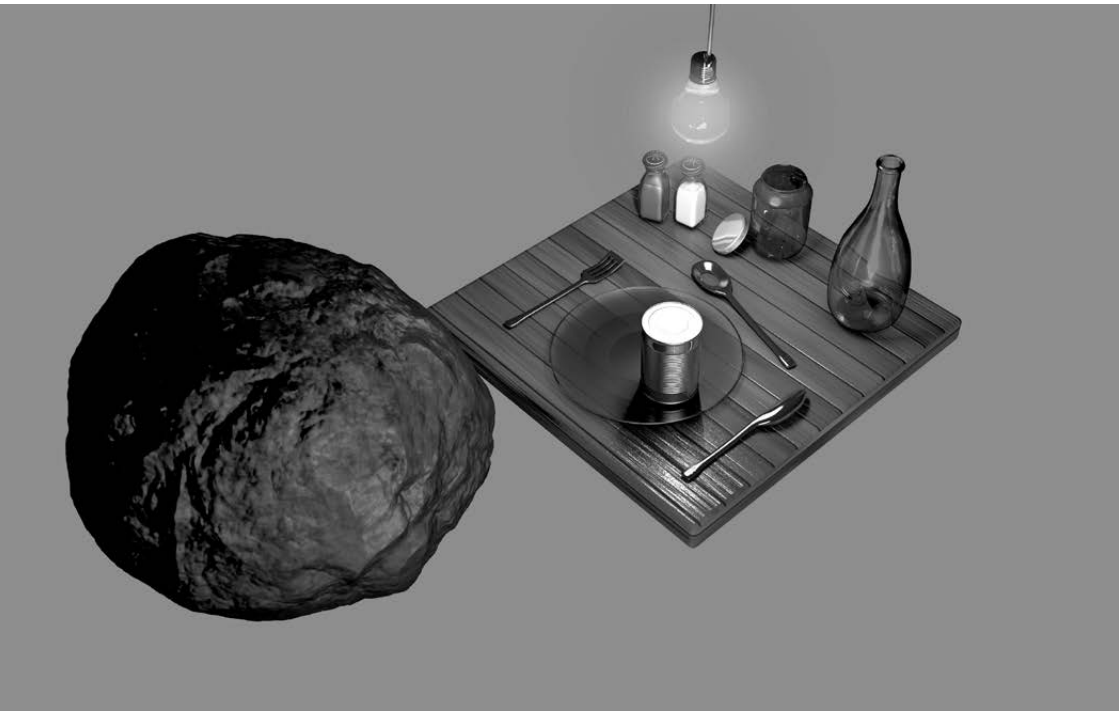
For the exhibition Hertog Nadler created a new piece to correspond with the current political climate of 2017, (more than ten years after the *Stimmt* campaign in Germany). The work *Read My Lips* is a jukebox politician, press play, and he'll dance to the ideology of your choice.

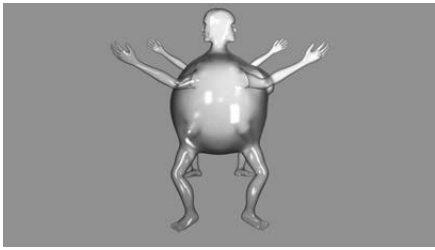
Chaja Hertog was born in 1978 in Amsterdam, Nir Nadler in 1977 in Haifa.
They live and work in Amsterdam as an artist duo.
www.hertognadler.com

Micah Hesse

Lonely without a company

HD video animation, 7:36 min, 2015





In his 3D video animation, Micah Hesse focuses on the metaphor of the bubble in a financial market context. Bubble moods form the basis for financial market activities and economic agendas that keep the markets running. Micah Hesse establishes links between the bubble metaphor and the economy (the art of budgeting), by for example tracing the etymology of words such as "salary"—the bonus that was once granted soldiers to buy salt—all the way back to antiquity. In chains of free association he investigates and compares value systems in relation to reference objects, meanings and connections, contrasting material, fictive and ideal values. He researches the relationship between coins and bubbles, the economy and the financial market, and is interested in system analogies and differences in the relation of one to the other. He highlights the moods and rhetoric associated with objects, materiality and stories in order to make functions of empty signs/speech bubbles visible in an economic context through the reconstruction of meanings.

In his visual language pictures this can mean, "coins are propaganda masked as payment" or "language begins as metaphor". Micah Hesse creates discursive analysis in the form of analysis of metaphor. It is about figurative speech, intended and unintended analogies, and the moods that develop around it/the moods it elicits. It is this indeterminate zone that harbors the possibility of the imaginary. Their content lost, signs are newly animated with emotion.

Micah Hesse was born in 1991 in New Mexico; he lives and works in New York.
http://micahhesse.com

Francis Hunger

Deep Love Algorithm

Video installation: HD video, 32:33 min, 2 photographies, 2 wood objects, 2013

Deep Love Algorithm, HD video, 2013

Francis Hunger presents his work *Deep Love Algorithm*, which is concerned with the history and evolution of databases in the bio-political context of post-Fordism. Francis Hunger is primarily interested in databases in connection with technical developments that offered the conditions for new, flexible production forms beginning in the 1970s. He investigates this development process and associated changes and repercussions in society. In *Deep Love Algorithm*, the history of databases is reconstructed as the story of journalist Jan's unrequited love for the writer Margret. Margret, a cyborg, embodies historical development processes from a position of resistance. She is shown as a young woman, although in reality she is over 80 years old. She joins Jan on a kind of journey through time, visiting locations relevant to the invention and development of databases. They analyse algorithmic functions, the consequences of abstraction and unpredictability as well as the impact of algorithmic optimisation on conditions of production and life. This includes investigating the transformation of analogue filing systems and management into the digital file system of the database and examines the impact of invisible file structures on the individual within socio-political developments. The relation between the two represents an algorithmic form that seeks ideal implementation, and fails.

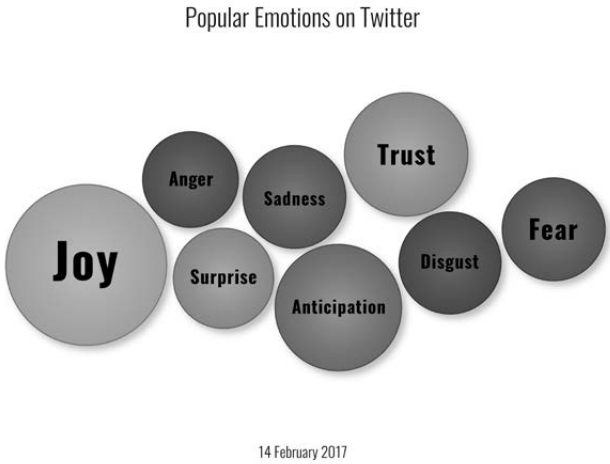
Francis Hunger looks at the impact of databases both at a functional and emotional level and questions the influence that databases have on overall moods, and how they can promote mood swings.

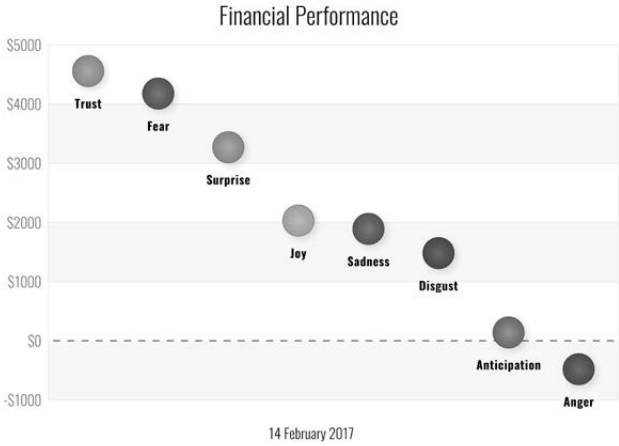
Francis Hunger was born in 1976 in Dessau; he lives and works in Leipzig.
www.irmielin.org

Scott Kildall

EquityBot

Installation: video, vinyl prints, data visualisations, software, 2015





EquityBot is a share-trading algorithm that invests in emotions such as anger, joy, disgust and surprise. During exchange opening hours *Equitybot* evaluates the prevailing moods on Twitter. *EquityBot* associates these emotions with actual shares and invests through a simulated brokerage account. The trading strategy is based on having the emotions circulating on Twitter influence certain share prices. When an emotion trends upward, increases in other words, *EquityBot* chooses a share whose development resembles that of the emotion. Seeing this as an appropriate investment, it buys the shares. By contrast, if an emotion falls on Twitter, meaning the price drops, *EquityBot* searches for a similar investment scenario and sells these shares if they are among its portfolio. Under its own steam, *EquityBot* generates simple data visualisations which use the market performance of emotional shares to illustrate the overall mood or the course of mood shifts. *EquityBot* represents an automated system which shows the influence that emotions can have on trading and share prices, but also how emotions can become a value factor, and a commodity.

Scott Kildall was born in 1969 in Monterey/CA; he lives and works in San Francisco.

kildall.com

Barbora Kleinhamplová

Reliable Relationship

HD video, 20 min, 2015

Using six actors, Barbora Kleinhamplová stages an NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) course to which managers were invited without being informed of the staged nature of the event. Barbora Kleinhamplová investigates how the rational and the irrational interfere in the economy and in art, examining manipulative and economic influences in both systems. Artistic practices have long been pervaded by economics, while the functioning of the financial market has always been based on instinct and driven by irrational moods, reacting to symptoms. In the staged NLP training hypnosis is presented as manipulation technology, as a method how to subdue opponents. For Barbora Kleinhamplová, it is about showing that irrational and esoteric aspects of manipulative techniques are part of economic practice, to which we traditionally ascribe rational means. In business and coaching courses, these manipulative techniques are presented as basics that promise efficiency and success, emotional influence is sold as the key to success. Barbora Kleinhamplová deconstructs these techniques of submission that are ascribed magical properties, and unmasks control-oriented performance strategies as manipulative orchestrations.

NLP courses arose in the 1980s in parallel with neo-liberalism and are an expression of the obligation to self-optimisation and competitive relationship structures that in this way receive esoteric emotional compensation, or a boost.

Barbora Kleinhamplová was born in 1984 in Liberec; she lives and works in Prague.
www.cjch.cz/en/year/2015/barbora-kleinhamplova

Tom Molloy

PROTEST

Cut-out figures from demonstration photos/online prints, wooden board, 2011

Courtesy Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin/Texas, © Genevieve Hanson

On an eight-metre long shelf, Tom Molloy shows prints of cut-out figures from online media. The figures are illustrations of actual protesters, who represent a particular attitude or opinion. Decontextualised at both the actual and medial level, the protesters embody an accumulation of often contradictory views and statements but whose adherents, despite these differences of meaning, correspond in the form that their actions of resistance take. Tom Molloy assembles this diverse potential for resistance in a demonstration as text-image-collage-performance, in which individual concerns are formulated as headlines and represented by the citizenry. This work reflects the desire to position oneself in public, to be visible and effective as an actor, and reflects a certain overall mood of protest. Tom Molloy raises issues such as the emotional relationship between subject and society amid performative staging and linguistic representation. But the demonstration, with its varying statements and demands, also points to the hotly contested field of definition power between information, disinformation, propaganda and censorship. The competition for information authority is conducted in an emotional way through image and wording regimes. Fake news is not a new phenomenon, but the current variety and extent of its distribution are. Differentiation can be difficult; the non verifiablility of information sources, the spread of speculative information as well as the overlap of fact and opinion make this process more difficult still.

Tom Molloy was born in 1964 in Waterford; he lives and works in Rouen.
www.rubicongallery.ie/tom-molloy

Barbara Musil

market sentiments

Video animation, 4 min, 2007

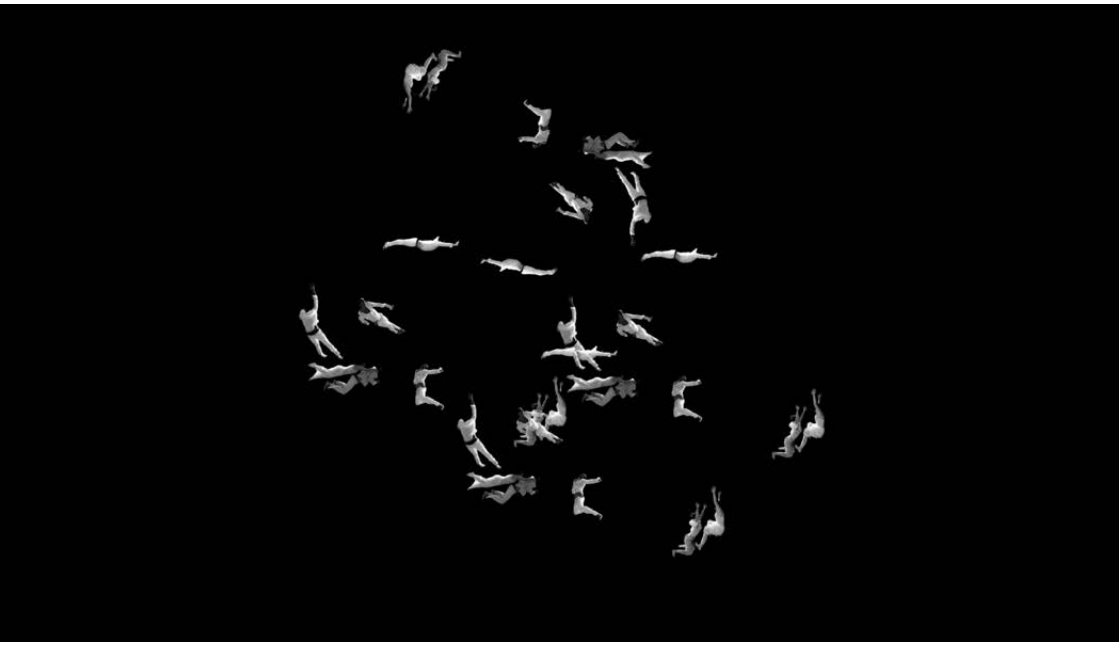
As a moving image from the period of the Estonian property boom, *market sentiments* contrasts the jubilant mood of investors and speculators with emotions from the other end of the scale of sentiment, conveying melancholy, sadness and sentimentality through the animated collage of orthophotos and land registry maps of land plots offered for sale. Barbara Musil makes the abstract movement flows of appropriation and sale graphically visible as a constantly changing pattern and disrupts collective mood behaviour/herd mentality *(animal spirits)* with poetic counterpoints. As far back as 1936, John Maynard Keynes saw irrational methods, unthinking instincts, emotions and herd behaviour as additional risk factors in markets, along with speculation. The melancholic music that accompanies the video, by Arvo Pärt, lends it an accelerated dramatic mood, one contrasted by the visual representation of the buoyant mood. As we now know, the positive investor mood was followed by the finance market crash in 2008. The mood shifted after the 2008 crash, but practices in the financial markets didn't. No longer do rapid sequences of mood swings distinguish the financial markets and share prices alone, but in a kind of accelerated inconsistency they extend to every area of life.

Barbara Musil was born in 1972 in Salzburg; she lives and works in Vienna.

Bego M. Santiago

Follow the Path

Video installation: projektion on water, 3:33 min, corten steel vessel, 2017



In her video installation, Bego M. Santiago shows men and women dressed in white swimming in groups on their own or in pairs. The swimming arrangement changes from a loose framework into a complex network-like structure. Bego M. Santiago is interested in the relations of the individual to the community and how certain triggers can cause emotional infection (meme theory) and how patterns of behaviour can form in social networks.

In the echo chambers of peer groups formed and propelled by algorithms, we know that there is a danger that the calculated insularity of the system (bubble filter) will result in emotional radicalisation. The behavioural pattern of permanent self-affirmation with the simultaneous compulsion to respond can lead to standardisation in manifestation and movement through automated pseudo-logic. *Follow the Path* can be seen as a metaphor for streams or waves of mood in social networks, with algorithms defining both the structure and behaviour without being seen, a fact which lends them their unpredictability. When emotions and the simulation of emotions merge in a flow of movement, we can assume that this will result in an increase in loneliness. If the status of the subject follows from the status of the user, then assigned subject positions become assigned user positions, which in turn can be mistaken for our own. Bego M. Santiago shows the patterns of standardisation through which this categorisation occurs.

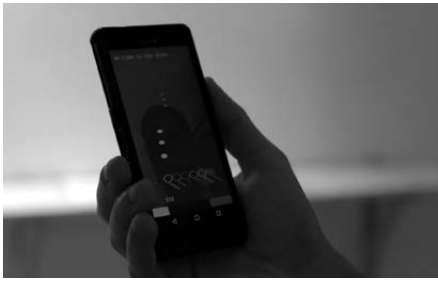
The illusion of personal proximity, participation and empathy as well as authenticity all contribute to a state of affairs where, for example, tweets from individual persons are accorded more credibility than established media. The loss of trust in institutions that we have seen has led to emotions being perceived as authentic, because they appear to be directly expressed (direct speech) and paradoxically seem less calculated and manipulated.

Bego M. Santiago was born in 1980 in Santiago de Compostela; she lives and works in Berlin.
www.begomsantiago.com

Ruben van de Ven

Emotion Hero

Installation: video game, smartphones, projektion, 2016



In his work, *Emotion Hero,* Ruben van de Ven explores the functional processes and paradigms of emotion recognition programs: Such programs are used to "objectively" measure and evaluate emotions, but they are also deployed as a technological tool to train people in how optimally to represent emotions. As such, human resources departments and employment agencies use emotion analysis programs to find out whether someone is sincere or not—but at the same time they train their own employees with the help of the same program to make them appear sincere.

The installation consists of two parts: a video game app for Android smartphones that can be downloaded for free. The program provides detailed feedback about facial actions and expressions, evaluates these and sets optimization guidelines. The game seeks to train players to display emotional expressions designated ideal. Its aim is to optimize the representation of emotions. Ruben van de Ven renders visible the compulsion to evaluate, standardize and optimize, which is based on competition and contributes to define and intensify stereotypes. Opposite the video game, Ruben van de Ven sets up a screen that reflects the way in which corporations collect and process emotion-based data. The screen shows, how the facial expression data collected and analyzed by the video game is systematically organized and assigned to a grid.

Ruben van de Ven was born in 1989 in Lelystad; he lives and works in Utrecht.
www.rubenvandeven.com

Christina Werner

The Boys Are Back

Installation: 4 videos, 3 photographs, poster, map, Neues Europa magazine, curtains, 2015/16

Christina Werner, PiS, inkjet print, 66 × 110 cm, 2015/16

© Bildrecht Wien/Christina Werner

In her installation *The Boys Are Back*, Christina Werner focuses on right-wing European networks and their pop-cultural media representation and presence. Christina Werner analyses contradictions, analogies, gestures and orchestrations of right-wing populist politicians in media appearances, investigates campaign elements and media strategies through which moods, fear of loss are generated and ressentiment stoked.

Christina Werner is interested in the aesthetic means used by the populist eventification industry, how its protagonists are presented and how emotional scenarios are drawn out through orchestration and performance. This is associated with the question of how symbols are used, and the way in which public space is marked and/or occupied. The videos *Unsere Freiheit* and *Unser Kampf (Our Freedom, Our Battle)* show short extracts from a speech by Geert Wilders during his appearance at Vienna's Hofburg in 2015. He was there at the invitation of the training academy of the right-wing populist party, FPÖ. The struggle conjured by Wilders for the freedom that he propagates reveals itself to be a superiority complex. Christina Werner contrasts Wilders' appearance with two photo collages that depict the club quarters of the Identitarian movement in Vienna's 3rd district, as well as flags featuring the lambda symbol that they use for their logo. Christina Werner uses image overlays and gaps as an indication that history is repeating itself. The photograph entitled PiS depicts a microphone in front a of close-up of a flag at an event staged by Poland's right-wing Law and Justice Party, which has been in power since October 2015. The stage is empty; we see symbols of representation and national identity. Then there is a map that shows the *Europe of Nations and Freedom*, a parliamentary group of right-wing parties at the EU level. A poster quotes lyrics from the 1976 song *The Boys Are Back in Town* by Irish pop band *Thin Lizzy*, from which the installation derives its name. Here Christina Werner is referring to the emotional impact of music in the context of pop cultural practices of the kind utilised by right-wing populist parties. In the magazine *Neues Europa* she contrasts the orchestration scenarios of right-wing populism with the sites of extreme right-wing violence to open up an area of meaning between ideological seduction as bogus normality, idyll or protest, and extreme right-wing violence, such as that of Germany's National Socialist Underground, and to allow nuanced points of view.

Christina Werner was born in 1976 in Baar; she lives and works in Vienna.
www.christinawerner.com

Mood Swings

On mood politics, sentiment data, market sentiments and other sentiment agencies

Mood politics

Sabine Winkler

The question of mood is tied in with the increasing and partly overlapping ideological power struggle between neo-liberalism and right-wing populism which is currently escalating in the conflict around definition authority going on between propaganda and censorship. The relations between neo-liberalism and right-wing populism are diverse and contradictory. In one sense, right-wing populism can be seen as a reaction to neo-liberalism, but at the same time as a radicalised version of it. So at one and the same time there is alliance and opposition, positions between nationalistic authoritarianism and its financial equivalent, patriarchal and gender-liberal politics. There is, however, agreement on the rejection of the welfare state, on reducing taxes for the rich, privatization of state assets, reducing of governmental tasks, protecion of private property. The de-politicization of the past 20 years is finding its radical expression in the growing acceptance of authoritarian political figures. This is a development that has been particularly driven by the economisation of every area and at the same time the defamation of the social. One of the consequences arising from this are populist politicians who either continue to gloss over the widening gap between rich and poor, or populists who present themselves as the nationalistic representative of the "little man". This raises the question of whether this isn't reducing citizens to the status of audience, where social and legal restrictions are presented as promises of freedom, for example. The neoliberal background of rightwing movements is often denied so as to conceal the fact that what predominates are not only nationalist, but also neo-feudalist interests, such as the refusal of the concept of equal rights and the deconstruction of government institutions.

Politics of disinformation between propaganda and censorship

Disinformation may not be a new phenomenon, but the possibility that everyone can potentially be a protagonist of reinterpretation (agenda setting), as long as s/he understands how to present him/herself as an authentic sounding, entertaining voice through social media channels, has contributed to new forms and a new effective range of disinformation. The idea that messages transmitted via social media are more credible because they are unfiltered reflects not just a loss of trust in political institutions and established media, rather it also simulates communication with politicians and public figures at the same level, and sharing in their lives. However, campaigns are conducted on all channels. What's new, however, is the possibility of connecting with one's own repertoire of outrage and feeding this into public circulation.[1]

There is currently heated debate around the difference between fact and fake, and about who holds decision-making power. In the well-known echo chambers of social media channels, there is a reduction of information and an ideologisation taking place which is constantly reproducing itself. Eventification and tabloidisation of political events, as well as the inflation of single, often decontextualised reports, also make it increasingly difficult to differentiate between fake news and facts. It is above all disinformation which is not self-evidently bogus, but which uses the factual as a component in an invented narrative, provides facts with ideological subtext or represents opinion, that is often not apparent at first glance. Recently announced steps towards "Ministries of Truth"[2] as protection against fake news are an expression of the fear of a loss of control, fear of losing definition authority, leading to measures being announced in the name of security—more surveillance, data retention—and further leading to a restriction on civil rights, as always. But also social media is coming under increasing pressure to halt the spread of fake news, hate speech, etc. The blocking of user accounts, partly performed by algorithm and partly manual—often seems arbitrary or politically motivated, as one can see from the example of Turkey and the blocking of Erdoğan's critics. The power of differentiating between what

[1] Bernhard Pörksen: Der Standard, 20 January 2017, Interview with Olivera Stajic. http://derstandard.at/2000051189069/Medienwissenschafter-Poerksen-Medien-muessen-Interpreten-der-Wut-werden

[2] The "Countering Disinformation and Propaganda Act", draft legislation to create a "centre for information, analysis and reaction" in the USA, initiated by Barack Obama, to say nothing of Donald Trump's quest for news monopoly and propaganda through Breitbart. But Germany, too, is considering a centre of defence against disinformation.

is true and what is false is outsourced, transferred to ostensibly independent organisations for them to decide. In Germany, for instance, Facebook selected journalists from the online portal CORRECTIV for this task. CORRECTIV refers to itself as a "non-commercial research centre", "non-profit" and "independent". A glance at the portal's sponsors reveals another picture—they include Deutsche Bank (50,000 euros), George Soros's Open Society Foundations (25,000 euros), the German Interior Ministry through its "Federal Agency for Civic Education" (20,000 euros), broadcaster ZDF (5,000 euros), the CDU-affiliated Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (4,000 euros) as well as broadcaster RTL, and Google (10,000 euros each)[3]. It is in this context that Paul Schreyer raises the question of "how the definition of 'fake news' should be differentiated from speculative and unconfirmed reports of the kind that often appear even in the mainstream media."[4]

Mood and data

It is not just fake news that is charged with moods, but facts are sometimes also exploited for the sake of mood through the omission or alteration of context to provide legitimacy for economic decisions, for instance. Frequently the objectivity and neutrality of statistics and computer programs is unquestioned, figures and data appear credible, and there is no suspicion of manipulation. But we could well doubt this assumed objectivity; the selection and composition of data alone can influence the data that is used for analysis, and thus how the results are interpreted and in which presumed framework, and the institutions and persons carrying out the analysis. Statistics/data evaluation seen as models representing reality can be utilised to drive moods in certain directions.

This, in turn, is connected with the question of which data is kept secret in order to keep moods from turning. At which point in time is the data/information published, who has a say in it and which moods are targeted in the process? This issue is revealed on the one hand in the way whistle-blowers are dealt with, figures like Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, but also Julian Assange, who are punished for disclosing data that reveals the illegal acts of state authorities and organs, being criminalized as traitors to their

[3] Paul Schreyer, Facebook, "Fake News" und die Privatisierung der Zensur, Telepolis, 18 January 2017, Figures are rounded, www.heise.de/tp/features/Facebook-Fake-News-und-die-Privatisierung-der-Zensur-3599878.html
[4] ibid.

country. On the other hand, it is the tabloid media in particular that generates moods, with their campaign strategies adopted in social media and attaining independent life, from euphoric to panicked or even hate-filled. The communication of individual outrage as a form of faux-participation seems to carry within it the danger of outbreaks of mass hysteria. People are circulating data on their emotional states in order to feel real or because they want to feel socially connected. The loss of the social is offset by social media among other things, which promises to end loneliness through networking. However Mark Zuckerberg's promise that "you'll never be alone again" sounds more like a threat when you think of quantification and surveillance.

Simulating the social

The reduction of the social to networking of data and data exchange accompanied by the defamation of the social in the sense of solidarity and the welfare state is an expression of neo-liberal politics. The mood against social agendas and social actors has been promoted by such factors as austerity policies, competition, the mania for optimisation and the lone wolf doctrine of personal responsibility. The social has become individualised with the idea that each person forms their own group, which in turn is open to all. However, it is clear that Facebook and Google, for example, fine-tune the channels that target data at user profiles, and are thus self-referential (bubble filter).

With signals, comments, feedback, followers etc. digital status becomes a societal factor by which significance or its loss can be defined. At the same time, user behaviour is evaluated behind the scenes and the data used to create consumer profiles, that in turn define social status through consumption. The loss of social significance finds a outlet in social media, in which community is suggested and the social simulated. Distribution radius, the number of followers as well as unforeseen responses and linkages can function as a kick, just like the unpredictable/the not-knowing and risk in financial market speculation. The speculative can represent a factor of longing and addiction in both systems and here as there lead to far-reaching real-life consequences.

Speculative moods

The undeniable influence of financial markets on politics extends into day-to-day life, something that is particularly seen in crisis conditions. Speculation brings the future into the present, realities are thus created with ever higher stakes and risks which are then socialised, in contrast to profits, which are privatised. Moods are part of the operating system of speculation that one may either employ manipulatively or respond to. John Maynard Keynes took note of irrational behaviour in economic activity as far back as the 1930/40s, referring to *animal spirits*, by which he meant the instability that arises from unthinking instincts, emotions and herd mentality. According to Keynes, this further intensifies the instability that underpins speculation.

Speculative systems are based on the not-knowing how markets, stocks and prices are going to develop, or on the incalculability of these values, while simultaneously everything is done to produce calculability and predictability: Value is created from this very condition of not-knowing conceived as a space of possibility and risk. On the one hand, the intuition of traders is mythologised, coming into play along with the impact of moods, through which comes the attempt to influence developments in certain directions. Trends, and particularly bubbles, keep markets going through speculative assumptions of value development or loss, and through automated trading algorithms. Algorithms are used on the one hand as an attempt to avoid, to calculate or to control the unforeseen, and thus possible mood swings, on the other hand to generate speculative moods in order to influence share prices and currency rates. A good mood on one side creates a depressive state on the other. A good investment mood in financial markets draws capital and employees from the real economy in the long term, with known consequences. When markets function largely through bubbles and their potential for infection, the risk factor grows for society. But markets also respond to moods as communicated in social media. But these mood barometers are highly speculative because they are controlled by bots or because they can be marked by permanent fluctuations.

The value of mood data: profiling and prediction

Moods and patterns of behaviour are subject to investigation in the behavioural economy, they are the economic data object of desire, enabling manipulative intervention and impact. Mood data is gathered by market research agencies, companies and governments to identify, analyse and evaluate moods. Both the invisibility of data systems and algorithmic acceleration prove to be supporting factors here, at the same time they need to be constantly enriched with new data to ensure that everything remains in flux in marketing, control and prognosis.

Moods are being designed to influence economic and political developments, to make use of unpredictable variables/knowledge gaps through the access provided by moods. Emotional levels or signals are instrumentalized to convey security, stability, reforms, etc., to investors or voters; to establish anxieties or to win sympathies, sometimes by lobbying, sometimes by staging of privacy/proximity. Advertising campaigns have shown the way, while new methods are constantly being developed, such as micro-targeting, which seeks to purposefully influence individuals. The price for being able to take part in the great communication games or to gain access to portals and receive their services is the disclosure of personal data. Through collected data and user movements, profiles are created in order to draw conclusions about workplace, residence, social relations, preferences and habits, health and sickness, electoral behaviour, etc., with the evaluation of friends and contacts seen as an additional informative source. To gain personal data, necessities are staged and moods are simulated and at the same time, moods are manipulated through data analysis. What does the quantification of moods and emotions mean for people?

The measurement of feelings[5]

The transformation of emotions into data is associated with the simulation and transferability of emotions to technical systems. When emotions are digitalised, stored, assessed and utilised, control of emotions isn't far behind—particularly through reduction as an informational value. For example, failure to smile might not just be interpreted as suspected depression, but also stored

[5] Ulrich Schnabel, Die Vermessung der Gefühle, Zeit Online, 27 October 2016

in personal files and impacting negatively on job applications. It is possible to imagine an ideally determined algorithmic expression of certain feelings by which people as well as robots will orient themselves in the future. Standardised simulation templates for emotions might then be perceived as ideal, authentic facial expressions. However, simulation of emotions represents an empty form in which emotions is not felt, empathy not perceived, only imitated. Emotion recognition programs such as *Affectiva* are based on Paul Ekman's Facial Action Coding System (FACS)[6] and on the evaluation of collated emotional data. The intention is to both interpret one's own actual mood and read the emotional reactions of one's counterpart. The merest movement of a facial muscle can be assigned to certain emotions, computed and used in an interpretive system. This raises the question of the extent to which stereotyping is reinforced in that way. Emotional data is increasingly becoming a unit of value. The aims pursued in its use and exploitation—this is an issue that will preoccupy us in the future, not least the perspective of what authentic feelings are, or will be.

Affective computing is concerned with the digital recognition and interpretation of human emotions that allow computers to differentiate between, say, a shout of joy and an outbreak of anger, and respond appropriately. Data analysis and interpretation of the results is a precondition for the desired reaction. Is this work driving at an emotional adaptation of human and machine? Quantification represents a process of abstraction in which qualities such as reference and meaning can be lost. Algorithms are then used in an attempt to counter this loss. Quantification of emotions is used to measure responses to commercials, say, or to conduct micro-targeting or make prognoses. The consequences of these and other potential areas of application are difficult to foresee, and they will influence emotional behaviour in our own species as well as to other species.

Both post-humanism and transhumanism proceed from the idea of the hybrid form rather than the unified subject. Transhumanism calls for a technically and genetically optimised human who will enter into a new phase of development, algorithmised and automated, adapted to the machine, while computer programs become more human. Technological singularity, super intelligence, biotechnology, expanded bodily functions, immortality, etc., are seen as the next, stage of evolution—managed and exponentially expanding.

[6] Facial Action Coding System developed in 1978 by Paul Ekman.

In posthumanism, on the other hand, all living beings are regarded as having equal value. Sentiments and relationships to other living beings are assumed to be speculative. The view that the human is no longer the centre and the measure of all things, a view found in both theories, can inspire both insecurity and confidence. Emotions were long regarded as the key point of difference between humans and technology. Unambiguously species-specific, rational, emotional as well as ideological categorisations seem to be blurring.

Mood swings

For decades, such programming of machines to emulate human behavior has had its counterpart—at the centre of neo-liberal politics—in the programming of people to become more automatized and self-disciplined. Above all, competitive moods, competition, efficiency, self-optimisation and automated functioning have been defined as all-powerful attitudes. Mood mantras and imperatives like "be yourself", "be creative", "be flexible", "it's all up to you", "motivate yourself", "function for performance", etc., all exemplify this attitude.

On the one hand, ideologies, economic and political agendas are transferred and communicated through moods, necessities invented, fears stoked, while on the other hand the recognition and interpretation of moods has become a benchmark not just for technology but also the economy and politics. Florian Rötzer points out that "politics, parties and politicians, (have to) respond rapidly to changing political moods in order to survive in an intensified competitive struggle." [7] Here passing moods assume greater momentary impact, sometimes with long-lasting consequences. On the other hand, this response to momentary moods often represents a mere simulation of political action, functioning as a kind of compensatory action intended to distract from social inequality and a lack of future planning. Simulation of action and emotion plays a part in both politics and in artificial intelligence development. "What is real is what 'goes over well' and can trigger a response." [8] This is connected with the fear of mood swings that could bring about a loss of sympathy, attention, or power, which produces the temptation for permanent virtual activity. What is real is what can

[7] Florian Rötzer, Auch in Berlin dürfte eine Große Koalition nicht mehr möglich sein, Telepolis, 09.09.2016, www.heise.de/tp/artikel/49/49375/1.html

[8] Georg Seeßlen, Donald Trump: Populismus als Politik, Telepolis, 20 January 2017, Interview by Dominik Irtenkauf, www.heise.de/tp/features/Donald-Trump-Populismus-als-Politik-3600997.html

trigger a response, according to Georg Seeßlen. This may well be the reason why the cables are running so hot. Simulation, orchestration and the triggering of one's own state of outrage online, etc. can be seen as methods by which one attempts to find one's feet in a kind of global reality. This is bound up with both expectation and hope, such as threat scenarios and fears. The decisive thing is the response that is meant to be triggered in order to shape reality. Presently it seems to be primarily about the response in itself, when you think of populist movements and their practices of pushing scandal, spectacle and extremes, re-reestablishing nationalist realities and traditional gender roles.

Authorisation

The revival of authoritarian organisational forms and politicians can be seen as a consequence of neo-liberal politics, in domestic, transnational and global senses—from the deregulation of financial markets to the dismantling of the welfare state, from the submission of the state and its citizens to corporate interests, to the politics of fear. Right-wing parties and groupings counter this with a national idyll and neo-feudalist ideas that are extolled as new and authentic, as true models. Potential voters are addressed at an emotional nationalistic level with no place for arguments or facts, left-wing vocabulary is occupied and redefined by right-wing groupings, freedom is promised, as long as this means freedom of markets, privatisation, separation and traditional gender roles.

However the question still remains why mood-makers like Donald Trump, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Vladimir Putin and the party heads of right-wing European parties reach voters. Patriarchal, neo-liberally determined structures are channelled into the nationalistic, orchestrated through either heroisation or victimisation, military and economical power signalled. Right-wing groups and religious fundamentalists see eye to eye, at least in part, by sharing a viewpoint defined by the patriarchal and feudal ideational patterns shaping families and society; they are committed to reactionary, conservative notions of identity and act in an authoritarian manner in accordance with nationalist and/or religious ideas.

One can also define the dominance of the financial market and investors as authoritarian, determining governmental forms and ways of life, when one thinks for example of the Greek crisis and the way debt was used as a means

of subjugation. In its radical form, the much-vaunted free market calls for increasingly authoritarian structures in order to function more effectively. "Free" here means nothing more than unregulated room to manoeuvre for corporations and finance market actors. What all authoritarian systems have in common is that they promote mechanisms of exclusion that reduce the freedom of the press and foment scenarios of fear and threat.

And so the circle closes, between finance markets acting hysterically and authoritarian governments acting hysterically—bubbles and bubble moods are everywhere. Both profit and hegemony are legitimised and usurped through moods in the name of supposed necessities. The beneficiaries are only ever the few, but what's at stake are the social and democratic achievements of the 20th century.

Mood Swings—On mood politics, sentiment data, market sentiments and other sentiment agencies

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Director of MuseumsQuartier Vienna: Christian Strasser
Artistic Director, frei_raum Q21 exhibition space: Elisabeth Hajek

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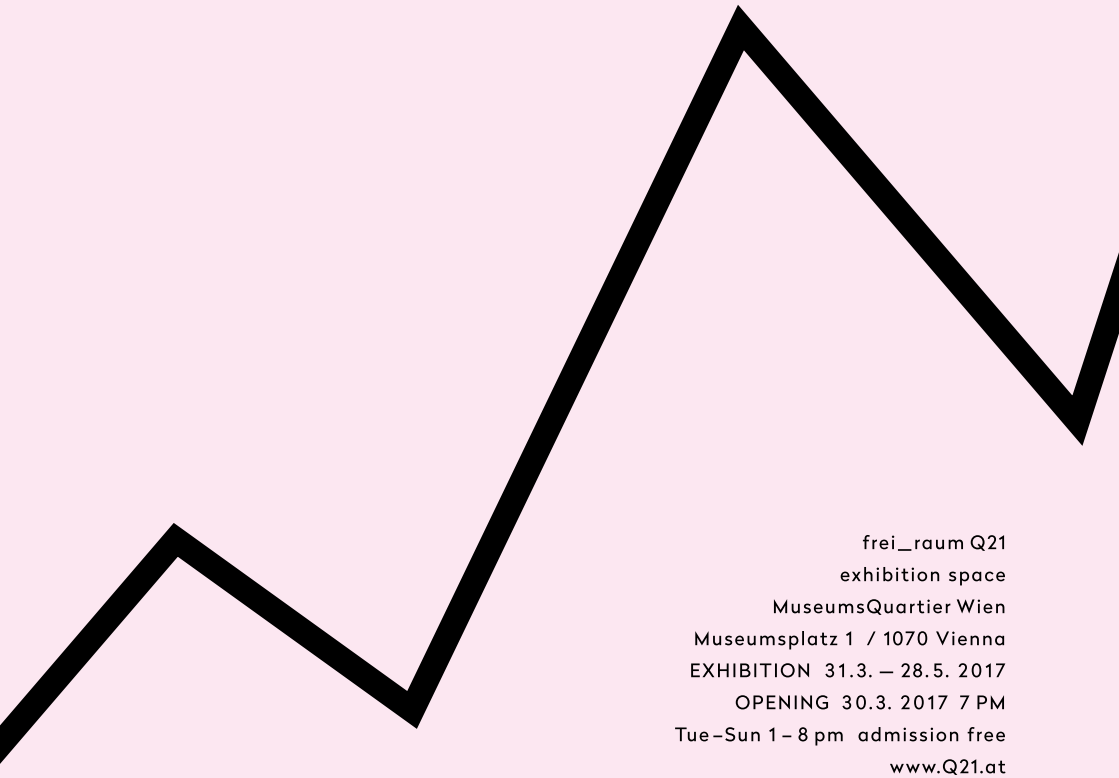

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