# Reader Costs of Dis(Connecting

Symposium 05.12.2025, 10:00-21:00 at HALLE 14—Centre for Contemporary Art Leipzig

Introduction	3
Timetable	5
Main Program	5
Side Program	8
<b>Content and Biographies</b>	9

Digital connections have long been sold to us as an unalloyed good: seamless, frictionless, universal. Yet the infrastructures that knit us together are also infrastructures of extraction, dispossession, and psychic attrition. To connect is to pay—with attention, with intimacy, with the disassembly of common worlds. To disconnect is likewise costly, casting individuals into isolation, precarity, or invisibility.

In this symposium, we ask: what are the costs of (dis)connecting in the digital present? How do platforms, feeds, and models organize not only what is seen but also what can be imagined? And how might artists, theorists, curators, gallerists and mediators invent gestures of resistance, refusal, or subversion in the face of these algorithmic orders?

The program brings together diverse practices that respond to these questions from different vantage points: Günseli Yalcinkaya discusses internet folklore and explores the relationship between emerging technologies and the myths embedded within these systems. Writer and cwurator Shumon Basar reflects on the psychic toll of the feed and the fragile solidarities of what he calls The Axis of Posting. Mark Mushiva adresses the decolonial affordances of technology and explores the material, forensic, and poetic dimensions of African accelerationist technological imaginaries. With their dialogical lecture-performance Daily Disobedience, Shusha Niederberger and Heiko Schmid show how small glitches, refusals, and ambiguities can subvert the demands of compliance in digital systems. Franziska von Hasselbach, Senior Director at Sprüth Magers, situates Cyprien Gaillard's Retinal Rivalry within the shifting role of galleries as mediators of perception and memory—and as reluctant sites

of discourse in an era of shrinking welfare states and resurgent fascisms. And in their speculative workshopperformance, Orhun Mersin aka kekik and Yağmur Uckunkaya queer machine learning architectures through practices of unlearning the model and dragging the latent, exposing the algorithmic unconscious that encodes normativity and fantasy.

These contributions refuse the myth of frictionless online connection. They trace how digital infrastructures shape memory, trauma, and imagination, while staging forms of speculation and subversion that unsettle the logics of surveillance and control. Running parallel, the side program expands these topics into moving image and exhibition formats. The screenings bring together works that probe digital subjectivities, algorithmic vision, and the politics of care: Gala Hernández López's The Mechanics of Fluids (2022) traces the networked solitude of online masculinities: Lydia Marx's Little Pictures (2025) turns a drone's unreliable memories into a study of machinic narration; and Alex Bartsch's Imitation Machines (2025) examines the entanglement of Al, automated suicide prevention, and the afterlives of colonial violence. The exhibition The Will to Change by HALLE 14—Centre for Contemporary Art gathers works by Christa Joo Hyun D'Angelo, Marc-Aurèle Debut, Jakob Ganslmeier & Ana Zibelnik, Kubra Khademi & Daniel Pettrow. and Eric Meier.

# Main Program

# 10:00-21:00

#### 10:00-10:15

**6 Welcome and Introduction**Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig
HALLE 14 — Centre for Contemporary Art

#### 10:15-11:15

 Lecture
 TECTONIC SHIFTS

Günseli Yalçınkaya 7

Meme theory, folklore, internet youth culture and the myths inside AI systems

Following Q&A

Leipzig

#### 11:15-12:15

Digital Lecture

THE AXIS OF POSTING—PRESENT TRAUMATIC SCREEN DISORDER

Shumon Basar 7

Screenshotting as survival, platform fatigue and the New New Normal

○ Following Q&A (online)

#### 12:15-13:30

© Lunch Break

#### 13:30-14:30

• Lecture Performance

FREQUENCY—ON THE DECOLONIAL AFFORDANCES OF TECHNOLOGY

Mark Mushiva *¬* 

Material, forensic, and poetic dimensions of African accelerationist technological imaginaries

○ Following Q&A

#### 14:30-15:30

Lecture Performance

ARCHIVE OF DAILY DIGITAL

**DISOBEDIENCE** 

Shusha Niederberger, Heiko Schmid Zeveryday digital resistance tactics, refusal, and platform sabotage

Following Q&A

#### 15:30 – 16:00

#### Input Talk THE GALLERY INTERFACE

Franziska von Hasselbach 7

On Cyprien Gaillard's Retinal Rivalry as a study of vision, memory, and decay—and on how galleries navigate the fractures of digital (dis)connection

#### 16:00 - 17:15

#### \* Panel Discussion

WHO GETS TO (DIS)CONNECT?

Shusha Niederberger, Heiko Schmid, Franziska von Hasselbach, Günseli Yalcinkaya Moderation: Quincey Stumptner

On economies of attention, artistic strategy, and who holds power online/offline

#### 17:15-17:45

#### Short Break / Transition

#### 17:45-18:45

#### Performance

DRAGGING THE LATENT, UNLEARNING THE MODEL

Orhun Mersin aka kekik, Yağmur Uçkunkaya ¬ A drag and sound performance with visuals building on workshop outcomes

19:00-21:00

Closing DJ Sets dots and lines, Marek Novaq

# Side Program

# 10:00-19:00

10:00-19:00

Screenings

#### THE MECHANICS OF FLUIDS

#### LITTLE PICTURES

Lydia Marx *对* 2025, 27 min

#### **IMITATION MACHINES**

Alex Bartsch 7

2025, 3-Channel Video, 22 min (total running time)

10:00 - 19:00

[] Exhibition

#### THE WILL TO CHANGE

With works by Christa Joo Hyun D'Angelo, Marc-Aurèle Debut, Jakob Ganslmeier & Ana Zibelnik, Kubra Khademi & Daniel Pettrow, Eric Meier

free to visit

# Content, Biographies

#### **TECTONIC SHIFTS**

This discussion will explore Yalcinkaya's ongoing practice of internet folklore, which can be defined as the study of emerging technologies, online culture, and the myths embedded within these systems. She will delve into recent developments in Al and quantum mechanics. In particular, how these are contributing to the pervading sense of unreality felt within society today such that Western science—or, at least, the technology supporting it—appears to be on a spiral path back to its mystical origins.

Günseli Yalacınkaya is a writer, researcher and critic based in London, whose work explores how technology shapes myth. As Contributing Editor at Dazed Magazine and former External Research Associate at Moth Quantum, Günseli investigates internet folklore, tracking how emerging technologies—from Al to quantum computing—give rise to new ideologies, digital superstitions and collective fantasies. Her writing moves between analysis and artistry, mapping the hidden emotional life of our networks. As a member of the multidisciplinary audiovisual project *The Talk*, she collaborates with musicians James K and Heith, and architect Andrea Belosi, transforming research into immersive performance.

● Lecture ○ With following Q&A 10:15 – 11:15

## THE AXIS OF POSTING PRESENT TRAUMATIC SCREEN DISORDER

In his essay *The Axis of Posting,* Shumon Basar describes how screenshots, feeds, and posts turned into fragile acts of witnessing when traditional media fell silent. He connects our current moment to a wider condition he terms *Present Traumatic Screen Disorder*—a state where hyperconnectivity, algorithmic "slop" and collective trauma collide.

Shumon Basar is a writer, editor, and curator whose work moves between art, architecture, media, and the cultural logic of the contemporary world. He has recently helped to establish Ibraaz, a space for art, ideas and culture from the Global Majority, in the heart of London. He's been Commissioner of the Global Art Forum in Dubai for over 15 years and was Curator of Public Programme at Art Week Riyadh in 2025. He also works with Prada and Miu Miu and was a founding member of the Fondazione Prada Thought Council. Together with Douglas Coupland and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Shumon co-authored *The Age of Earthquakes: A Guide to the Extreme Present,* co-curated *Age of You* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Toronto and Jameel Arts Centre, which went onto become the book The Extreme Self. Some of his viral neologisms include "Endcore" and "Lorecore".

● Lecture ○ With following Q&A 11:15 – 12:15

# FREQUENCY ON THE DECOLONIAL AFFORDANCES OF TECHNOLOGY

His ongoing project *The Institute of Decolonial Technology* introduces the concept of African Accelerationism, a framework for reimagining computational and energetic systems through the lens of liberation rather than optimization. Mushiva's practice spans spoken-word performance, hip hop, electronic prototyping, and 3D simulation, tracing how histories of extraction and surveillance continue to shape the architectures of the present. Recent works explore wireless technologies that linked genocide and global communication in early 20th century Namibia, thermodynamics as a counter-metaphor for anti-Black gravity, and practical design invocations that turn instruments of control into tools of resistance.

Mark Mushiva is a Berlin-based Namibian technologist, writer, and researcher whose work moves between code, poetics, and the decolonial affordances of technology. Trained as a computer scientist and artist, he holds a PhD in Human-Computer Interaction from the University of Trento and works with Forensis/ Forensic Architecture developing forensic methods for counterinvestigation and environmental justice.

# ARCHIVE OF DAILY DIGITAL DISOBEDIENCE

In Daily Digital Disobedience, Shusha and Heiko stage resistance in the digital everyday. Between lecture and performance, they interrogate how trivial acts of disobedience—data leftovers, algorithmic misalignment, refusing visibility—expose the cost of connectivity. Their work asks: what does it mean to be "present" in a network that demands compliance?

Shusha Niederberger is an artist, educator, and researcher in the field of digital art and culture. She studied fine arts and digital art in Zurich and Vienna and designed and directed the educational program for the HEK (House of Electronic Arts Basel). Her research focuses on activist artistic practices in the context of digital commons and in data-driven infrastructures, exploring the interplay of the aesthetic with the political. She has just completed her dissertation on users and their position in the current digital condition. She lives and works near Zurich, Switzerland.

Heiko Schmid is an art and media scholar, curator, and author, specializing in the intersection of art, media, and cultural history. His work explores themes such as the science fiction genre, digital popular culture, and educational strategies that emphasize complexity in the arts. Heiko is also the president of the KiöR (Kunst im öffentlichen Raum) commission in Zurich. He currently lives and works in Zurich, Switzerland.

#### THE GALLERY INTERFACE

Drawing on her collaboration with Cyprien Gaillard's Retinal Rivalry, Franziska von Hasselbach reflects on how perception, memory, and decay intertwine in an age of hyperconnectivity. She outlines the gallery's role in mediating these layered practices, asking how institutions can subvert the seamless flows of digital circulation to create new forms of encounter between artists and audiences. At a time when welfare states shrink and fascisms rise, corporate cultural spaces increasingly serve as sites of discourse and critical negotiation.

Franziska von Hasselbach is a curator, art historian and senior director whose work moves between contemporary art, institutional strategy, and cultural sustainability. She is Senior Director at Sprüth Magers in Berlin, one of Europe's leading global galleries for contemporary art. She helped establish the Berlin branch of the Gallery Climate Coalition, an initiative advocating for more sustainable practices in the art world.

She has contributed to exhibitions and publications exploring photography, digital aesthetics, technology and feminist perspectives in visual culture. She has spoken widely on the evolving infrastructures of galleries and museums and collaborates with artists and curators across Europe and the United States. Her current focus lies on rethinking how institutions can support experimentation and long-term artistic dialogue.

Input Talk 15:30 – 16:00

#### ORHUN MERSIN aka KEKIK, YAĞMUR UÇKUNKAYA

## DRAGGING THE LATENT UNLEARNING THE MODEL

Through their proposed methodologies of dragging and unlearning, Mersin & Uçkunkaya work with contemporary AI technologies from the inside, inhabiting its imaginaries while refusing their closures. They treat uncertainty as a generative force, while drawing on disidentificatory strategies and drag practices. Through shared narration and hands-on experimentation with deepfake technologies, their workshop and performance open space for queer play and the ongoing reimagining of artificial imaginaries from within.

**○** Performance 17:45 – 18:45

Orhun Mersin, better known as Kekik, is a Turkish drag artist, Al researcher, and dancer based in Berlin. Trained as a contemporary dancer and holding a Bachelor's degree in computer science, they have been part of the research platform New Practice in Art and Technology at TU-UdK Berlin. Active both in queer academics and queer nightlife, they facilitate lectures and workshops—in drag on drag—and they have obtained their MA with a thesis proposing and exploring "dragging" as a speculative methodology rooted in queer failure, creating alternative images in which the future can be lived. Currently, they are a research fellow at the University of Freiburg, and their works have been showcased in Maxim Gorki Theater Berlin, Sophiensæle, HEK Basel, Schauspiel Dortmund, Ars Electronica, b3 Biennale Frankfurt.

Yağmur Uçkunkaya works with Al technologies across artistic and interdisciplinary contexts, focusing on its emergent imaginaries, societal implications and operational processes. Holding a Bachelor's in Medieninformatik, she spent several years at a creative Al agency, contributing to projects ranging from anarchic speech instruments to intelligent irrigation prediction systems for Berlin's urban trees. Her current practice centers on research-driven, critical perspectives on Al applications, informed in part by her Master's studies in Design & Computation at TU–UdK Berlin. Recent projects have been presented at Ars Electronica Festival, GAK Bremen, and the Frankfurt Biennale. She is currently a lecturer at Universität der Künste Berlin and Folkwang Universität der Künste.

#### **OUINCEY STUMPTNER**

Quincey Stumptner is an experienced conference host, discussion moderator, facilitator and researcher. Drawing on his background as a political advisor, he now independently designs and leads conferences, workshops and dialogues on key political, technological, economic and cultural issues. He adopts a dynamic approach to moderation, seamlessly integrating academic rigour with accessible and engaging conversation. This ability allows him to cultivate open and inclusive spaces for dialogue. His research focuses on the development of inclusive digital ecosystems, integrating futures thinking with decolonial perspectives.

**\* Moderation of the Panel Discussion** 16:00 – 17:15

#### THE MECHANICS OF FLUIDS

In 2018, an incel called Anathematic Anarchist posted a suicide letter on Reddit entitled "America is responsible for my death". The Mechanics of Fluids is an attempt to find answers to his words. A virtual drift through the internet in search of his digital traces that ends up being an inner journey between our connected solitudes.

Gala Hernández López is an artist, filmmaker and researcher. Her interdisciplinary practice combines filmmaking with the creation of video installations, performances, and publications. More specifically, her work critically analyzes new modes of subjectivation produced by computational capitalism. Her works are based on research, combining materialist analysis with poetry, intimacy, and dreams with the aim of dissecting fantasies of unlimited techno-scientific control over reality. Her work has been presented at international festivals and institutions such as Cannes, Berlinale, DOK Leipzig, IDFA, Cinéma du Réel, Curtas Vila do Conde, IndieLisboa, Berlinische Galerie, Palais de Tokyo, Sarajevo Film Festival, Vancouver Film Festival, Festival du Nouveau Cinéma, Camden Film Festival, Reykjavik Film Festival, transmediale, Kurzfilmtage Winterthur, FRAC Île-de-France, among others. Her film La Mécanique des fluides won the César for Best Documentary Short Film in 2024.

Screening 10:00 − 19:00 Duration 38 min

#### LITTLE PICTURES

In the video work *Little Pictures*, a camera drone guides the viewer through its own memories using recorded data and images. The drone acts as sister, brother, and friend simultaneously, functioning as actor, image producer, and narrator of the film. However, in its various roles, it increasingly acts as an unreliable narrator, resulting in misleading contradictions in its statements and images: Hanna reads a book upside down, Lilli plays the piano with her toes, typing on a keyboard is described as playing the piano, and a radio is mistaken for a dog that is destroyed, buried, and interred.

Lydia Marx (born 1995, lives and works in Berlin) is an artist and filmmaker. Her work encompasses video pieces, photography and installations, in which she explores collective and individual memories as well as technological developments. In her practice, she constructs complex narratives and visual worlds, synchronizing them with processes of human emotions and the shifting of time periods in historical and fictional contexts. Her work has been shown at G2 Kunsthalle (Germany), Q Gallery Copenhagen (Denmark), MdbK Leipzig (Germany), Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz (Germany), Woman's Video Art Festival New York (USA), Sameheads Berlin (Germany), Official Selection—Video Club Glitteriana Art Factory (Mexico), and the European Media Art Festival Osnabrück (Germany).

Screening 10:00 −19:00 Duration 27 min

#### **IMITATION MACHINES**

Imitation Machines (3-channel video) documents the 'training' of an Al system for automated suicide prevention in prisons and examines the history of suicide prevention on slave ships and plantations within the transatlantic colonial system.

Alex Bartsch works at the intersection of documentary, essay and video art. His work deals with colonial extraction logics in discourse and technology. Studies at the HGB Leipzig with Peggy Buth, Clemens von Wedemeyer and Mareike Bernien.

**⊙** Screening 10:00 − 19:00 Duration 22 min

#### **Infos and Updates**

- hgb-leipzig.de/en/study/-un-learning digitalities
- ¬ instagram.com/
   unlearningdigitalities\_hgb/
- ¬ hgb-leipzig.de/en/teaching/photography/
  photographyinthefieldofcontemporary
  artclass
- ¬ instagram.com/klasse.ehrenstein/

The symposium is organized as part of *(Un)*Learning Digitalities of the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig with Prof. Anna Ehrenstein, Photography in the Field of Contemporary Art Class with the Büro für Digitale Lehre (Eliza Goldox, Juness Beshir and Fabian Lehmann) and hosted by HALLE 14—Centre for Contemporary Art. The project is co-financed by the European Union and is co-funded by public funds on the basis of the budget approved by the Saxon state parliament.







