

Press Release

Basel, 17.01.2023

Anne Duk Hee Jordan

I must alter myself into a life-form which can exist on this planet

19.01.-19.03.2023

Opening: Wed., 18.01.2023, 19:00

Press Tour: Wed., 18.01.2023, 11:00

Special opening times during Museumsnacht: Fri, 20.01.2023., 12:00-02:00



Anne Duk Hee Jordan, *Atmospheres of Breathing*, 2020

With *I must alter myself into a life-form which can exist on this planet*, we are the first Swiss museum to show a solo exhibition by the German-Korean artist Anne Duk Hee Jordan. Jordan's artistic universe is populated by humorous robotic machines with which she explores connections to other species and ecosystems. In her installations, the artist creates experimental and futuristic scenes in which she questions the conventional attributes of nature, culture and technology. In her imaginative and immersive installations, Jordan addresses ecological and socio-political issues in equal measure, creating enthralling arrangements of intertwined environments in which she makes visible the small things that are usually hidden from perception. She translates the complex ecological problems of our time into visually experienceable, pleasurable worlds and does so with a tongue-in-cheek humour that makes new perspectives and approaches to solutions possible. Her works refer to the theories of a post-anthropocene in which humans are no longer the centre of attention but part of networked ecosystems. In this sense, Jordan's works are both inspiring and evocative.

With her cautionary exhibition title *I must alter myself into a life-form which can exist on this planet*, Anne Duk Hee Jordan refers to the imperative of our time: to harmonise with the environment and nature to avoid endangering our planet even further. To this end, she creates experimental and futuristic scenarios, working with sculptural, biological and kinetic elements to address a changing environment in which humans and non-human beings can evolve together. Her worlds have something sensual and playful about them and open up a new view of our environment, propagating new models of community between all living beings. Jordan sensitises us to a "togetherness with our environment" in the spirit of the theories proposed by Donna Haraway, philosopher of science and cyberfeminist pioneer, regarding the kinship of species. "Making Kin", a term that finds expression in many of Jordan's works, is a maxim coined by Haraway that calls for symbiosis between species.

In her artistic practice, Jordan often combines existing works into new constellations that, in the context of an exhibition, create a form of Gesamtkunstwerk that addresses her inquiry into the ecological in new and inspiring ways. Transience and transformation emerge again and again as questions and themes. For instance, biological processes of decay and transformation are made vivid in time-lapse. Her works are compelling due to their unique aesthetic, which is nourished by a combination of documentary motifs and artistic imagination. Jordan directs our gaze to the details, allowing us to experience the world from both a micro and macro perspective in her works.

Curator: Sabine Himmelsbach

HASHTAGS #hek_basel #dukhee

PRESSE IMAGES are available on hek.ch/press or [here](#)

The exhibition is supported by the Ernst and Olga Gubler Hablützel Foundation and BLKB Stiftung Kultur & Bildung.



Anne Duk Hee Jordan, *Olavius*, 2021



Anne Duk Hee Jordan, *Clapping Clams*, 2018

Exhibited Works

«Making Kin» is a term that finds expression in many of Jordan's works. It comes from the eponymous postulate of the science philosopher Donna Haraway, who calls for a symbiosis between species. In recent years, Jordan has realised a pond installation with the same name that celebrates an inter-species community between actual and fictional landscapes. For a worthwhile future, we need to connect with the environment, to make new connections with other living things. With *Making Kin*, the artist created a habitat populated by various of her motorised creatures. Back in 2016, she began developing a series of robots with the title Artificial Stupidity. We encounter the robotic creatures as humorous and often cynical machines whose functionality is not focused on efficiency. One of them is the *Water Crab*, which appears to function like a marine robot, searching the pond basin for bits of human waste. Even if its efforts are not very successful, it stands as a prototype for an idea and the call to make the world a better place. Nevertheless, it also represents the principle of failure and non-intelligence. The *Robotic Waste Crab* tirelessly searches the exhibition space for waste. The *Clapping Clams* are a group of shells that seem to applaud themselves. A robotic teapot and a construction helmet are also part of the ensemble of absurd and surreal figures in Jordan's universe. The *Teapot* contributes to a soundscape that begins as a gentle breeze and escalates to the harsh clatter of a storm, symbolising the changing climate of our planet. The *Helmet*, on the other hand, seems strangely lost as it rides uncontrollably on the ground. Through her robotic creatures, Jordan experiments with the principle of the hybrid and the imperfect. Although they fail in their function, the robotic beings find a humorous presence in Jordan's universe and invite us to engage with them. For example, the *Water Crab* in the exhibition can be piloted by the public for one hour a day, from 3 to 4 pm.

***Making Kin*, 2020**

Site-specific pond installation

***Water Crab*, 2017**

Material: motors, mechanics
70 x 40 x 35 cm

***Robotic Waste Crab*, 2016**

Material: motors, mechanics, waste
17 x 90 x 180 cm

***Clapping Clams*, 2018**

Material: motors, mechanics, aluminium, clams
7 x 1,5 x 25 cm

***Teapot*, 2019**

Material: motors, mechanics, aluminium
50 x 50 x 60 cm

***Helmet*, 2022**

Material: motors, mechanics, aluminium
40 x 30 x 30 cm

A framing setting for the entire exhibition is the 3-channel video projection *Auf Erden sind wir nur kurz fabelhaft* (*On earth, we are fabulous only briefly*). In it, we experience the wonder world of nature, observe nocturnal animals, immerse ourselves in the paradisiacal cosmos of primeval forests with their abundance of birds, insects, reptiles and plants. The work offers a detailed micro- and macroscopic view of the world and celebrates the beauty of all things and the life and abundance of nature. However, the title also refers to the impermanence of all life and so the work ends with a view of a volcanic lava landscape - the symbol of a world in which nothing thrives or is in the process of being created again.

***Auf Erden sind wir nur kurz fabelhaft*, 2022**

3-channel video projection, 13:10 Min.

A glimpse into the microcosm of Earth is offered by the video *The Worm: Terrestrial, Fantastic and Wet* and the inflatable sculpture *Olavius*, created within the same context. The sculpture transforms the otherwise inconspicuous creature hidden in the deep sea into an oversized and colourful being, which makes it stand out as a magical creature. *Olavius* is a reference to «*Olavius algarvensis*», a girdle worm that survives in extreme situations in the deep sea, but can also be found in shallow waters. These worms are only 12 to 25 mm in size and have no intestines. Marine biologist and director of the Max Planck Institute in Bremen Prof. Dr. Nicole Dubilier writes about this extraordinary creature: «No mouth, no guts, and yet happy.» Researchers in the field were also able to discover that the deep-sea worm can produce energy with the bacteria in its body. In addition, it serves as an important example of symbiosis in nature. The video *The Worm: Terrestrial, Fantastic and Wet*, a combination of found footage and the artist's own footage, is a tribute to the worm itself and their central importance to the ecosystem of our planet. It was created in cooperation with Pauline Doutreluingne.

The Worm: Terrestrial, Fantastic and Wet,
2022
Video, 12:52 Min.

Olavius, 2021
Inflatable sculpture
2 x 9.08 x 2.61 m

At the centre of the room you will find the work *Atmospheres of Breathing*, a complex installation that deals with the meaning of respiration as a life-giving mechanism that connects us all. In this multi-layered kinetic installation, Jordan explores the question of how the vital function of breathing can be experienced both visually and haptically. The installation presents itself as a complex system in which a multitude of life forms and animated beings appear. It consists of a breathing apparatus with six blue balloons that rhythmically fill with air. This apparatus is connected to two reclining chairs on which we can sit down to enter into a meditative state of relaxation and serenity with the breathing environment. The sounds of the mechanical breathing machine mix with the sounds of a robotic Singing Saw and the minimalist composition of the video *Unruhig Bleiben / Staying with the Trouble*, which uses extreme close-ups to immerse us in an ecosystem of monarch butterfly cocoons, amphibians, bacteria and fungi and experience a fascinating world of other species. The breathing apparatus itself is titled *Don't Panic*, and refers to the 4-7-8 breathing technique based on the traditional yoga practice pranayama, which allows conscious control of breathing. It is also used to cope with stressful situations.

For the 4-7-8 breathing technique, you breathe in deeply for 4 seconds, then hold your breath for 7 seconds and exhale for 8 seconds.

Another element of the installation is the kinetic sculpture *I Am So Ashamed*, a 3D-printed crab that exhales soap bubbles. The title refers to the name of the shame crab. "Shame-faced" goes back to the anthropomorphising paraphrase of its behaviour when its claws are brought together as if to hide its face. At last, the installation *Sea Cucumber* refers to the extremely slow metabolism and the associated 'virtual immortality'^a of the sea cucumber.

Atmospheres of Breathing was created at the beginning of the pandemic, when the breathing difficulties caused by the virus put the world into a state of shock. May 2020 also saw the murder of George Floyd in the US state of Minnesota committed by a white police officer who suffocated the African-American man lying on the ground with his body weight kneeling on his neck, despite his numerous cries that he could no longer breathe. The crime shocked the world and sparked numerous protests in the US. In her sensitive installation, Jordan showcases the vulnerability of life.

***Atmospheres of Breathing*, 2020**

Multi-Media Installation
Dimensions variable

***Unruhig Bleiben / Staying with the Trouble*, 2019**

Video, 11:02 Min.

***Don't Panic*, 2020**

Breathing apparatus
Dimensions variable

***I Am So Ashamed*, 2020**

Kinetic sculpture
30 x 60 x 50 cm

***Singing Saw*, 2018**

Material: motors, mechanics, hand saw, wood, resin
80 x 60 x 25 cm

***Sea Cucumber*, 2020**

Material: Plaster, tadelakt, polishing soap, punice wax, liquid sodium silicate glass
70 x 70 x 180 cm

The video *Brakfesten / La Grande Bouffe* was created in collaboration with the curator Pauline Doutreluingne. The work was produced in the Södra Hällarna nature reserve in Sweden and consisted of a sculptural installation and the video. The elms growing there were infested with bark beetles. The artists brought the felled and debarked elms back to their original location in order to reintroduce them into the ecological cycle. They arranged the deadwood in a form that is based on how the larvae of the bark beetles usually eat their way through a tree.

The title of the work also refers to the 1973 movie *La Grande Bouffe*, in which a group of friends gather for an orgiastic feast dominated by overeating and sexual excess. In the movie, the feasting concludes in the deaths of some of the protagonists, which can however be read as representing decadence and a thirst for life. This cycle of becoming and passing, of joie de vivre and death is celebrated in Jordan and Doutreluingne's film in the exuberant liveliness of nature.

Anne Duk Hee Jordan und Pauline Doutreluingne

***Brakfesten / La Grande Bouffe*, 2022**

Video, 28:13 Min.



Anne Duk Hee Jordan, *Atmospheres of Breathing*, 2022

Biography of Anne Duk Hee Jordan

Anne Duk Hee Jordan (*1978, South Korea) lives and works in Berlin. She studied at the Weissensee Kunsthochschule Berlin and continued her studies with a Master in Fine Arts at Institut für Raumexperimente in Berlin with Olafur Eliasson. Her work explores the interwoven relationships between humans and other living beings. Driven by her fascination with marine animals, technology, sexuality, food and ecosystems, she creates installations that fuse organic materials and robotic creatures, enabling reflection on socio-political issues between the living and the non-living.

Her work has been exhibited in numerous galleries, museums and institutions. Her recent solo exhibitions include *La Grande Bouffe (Brakfesten)* in collaboration with Pauline Doutreluingne at Baltic Art Center and Public Art Agency Stockholm in Gotland/Sweden (2022), *Sensing Nature: Intimacy With Strangers* at *MOMENTA Biennale de L'image*, Museum of Fine Arts Montréal/Canada, curated by Stefanie Hessler, Camille Georgeson-Usher, Maude Johnson & Himali Singh Soin (2021) and *Making Kin 3. 0* at KIOSK, Ghent/Belgium, curated by Simon Delobel. She has also participated in a number of group exhibitions including Georg-Kolbe-Museum, Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin (Germany), Kunsthau Hamburg (Germany), Moderna Museet Malmö (Sweden), as well as art events such as Beaufort Triennial of Contemporary Art (Belgium), Lofoten International Art Festival (Norway) and Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art (RIBOCA) (Latvia).

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Anne Duk Hee Jordan, *The Worm: Terrestrial, Fantasy and Wet*, 2022, Video Still, Courtesy of the Artist



Anne Duk Hee Jordan, *The Worm: Terrestrial, Fantasy and Wet*, 2022, Video Still, Courtesy of the Artist

Informationen:

HEK (Haus der Elektronischen Künste)
Freilager-Platz 9, 4142 Münchenstein/Basel

Opening Times: Wed-Sun, 12:00-18:00

Special opening hours during the Museum Night: Fri, 20.01.2023, 12:00-02:00

Entry: 9 / 6 CHF (reduced), Wed-Fri 12:00-13:00 Happy Hour (free exhibition entry)

Public Guided Tour: Every Sunday a 15:00 in German

For more information: www.hek.ch

Instagram: @hek_basel



Discord: (Qr Code)

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About HEK (Haus der Elektronischen Künste)

The HEK in Basel is Switzerland's national centre of excellence for all art forms that express and reflect on new technologies and media. With its interdisciplinary orientation, HEK enables a broad public to gain insights into art productions of different genres in the confrontation of art, media and technology. In a diverse program of exhibitions, smaller festival formats, performances and concerts, the HEK addresses current social themes and issues as well as technological-aesthetic developments. In addition to its event and exhibition activities, the HEK is concerned with collection methodology and the preservation of digital art.

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