



Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė, *Mouthless Part III*, 2023, Video Still.

Collective Worldbuilding - Art in the Metaverse

03.06. – 13.08.2023

Press tour: Friday, 02.06.2023, 11:00

Opening: Friday, 02.06.2023, 19:00

Extended opening times during Art Basel: Mon-Sun, 12.06.-18.06, 10:00-20:00

The group exhibition **«*Collective Worldbuilding - Art in the Metaverse*»** presents a selection of international artists who explore the possibilities of a decentralised Internet that promises more self-determination, democracy and transparency. The works on display encourage the exploration of more inclusive virtual spaces, a renewed sense of communality and the emergence of non-hierarchical structures in the digital realm.

Artists: LaTurbo Avedon, Eloïse Bonneviot & Anne de Boer, Ian Cheng, Simon Denny, Lea Ermuth, Sarah Friend, Dorota Gawęda und Eglė Kulbokaitė, Katharina Haverich, Holly Herndon & Mat Dryhurst, Ayoung Kim, Loopntale, Jonas Lund, Omsk Social Club.

Curators: Sabine Himmelsbach and Boris Magrini

The exhibition is supported by: **Vontobel-Stiftung, Novartis and Rapp AG**

Much buzz has been generated in recent years with the launch of a variety of virtual spaces. Game worlds like Fortnite or blockchain-based virtual worlds like Dezentraland, Sandbox or Cryptovoxels are staging exhibitions, concerts and parties. We speak of metaverses, virtual parallel worlds in which we can immerse ourselves in order to interact with others. Artists create their own virtual worlds, but they also appropriate existing worlds by playing and infiltrating these digital spaces with their projects. The exhibition will present artistic projects that use these spaces as opportunities for collaborative work and explore the creative use of virtual universes to tell stories, share experiences, and address issues related to the development of technologies such as Web3 and the future of inclusive and diverse metaverses.

From its very inception, artists have used the Internet not only as a medium, but as an infrastructure for building communities and developing non-institutional models of distribution. Decentralized technologies such as blockchain now offer new approaches to re-thinking systems for production, funding, and community building in the arts. This can include projects that revolve around value models based on one's digital identity, such as musician Holly Herndon's digital twin Holly+, whose AI-controlled voice can be used by others and whose projects are selected by a DAO (Decentralized Autonomous Organization), or La Turbo Avedon, a Digital avatar who is a non-binary art persona that exists only on the Internet or the Omsk Social Club's projects that use role-playing strategies in virtual worlds to develop collaborative storytelling. Questions of identity and the representation of emotional experiences in virtual worlds are also addressed by artists such as Lea Ermuth and Katherina Haverich. Narrative structures driven by AI algorithms are explored in Ian Cheng's generative videos, as well as in the interactive game designed by Looptale. The creation of multi-user virtual universes

is demonstrated by artists such as Dorota Gawęda & Eglė Kulbokaitė, or Eloïse Bonneviot & Anne de Boer, who create collective performances that oscillate between online and offline or Ayoung Kim, who generates experiences in the virtual world VRChat.

The exhibition *Collective Worldbuilding – Art in the Metaverse* presents phenomena that deal with the possibilities of decentralised communality and corresponding organizational structures, like the new work conceived for the exhibition by artist and Web3 pioneer Sarah Friend. Installations by Artist Simon Denny, in turn, show the market processes surrounding the hype of virtual land parcels. In this work questions about the storage of data, diversity and the promise of technological salvation are put up for discussion with a critical attitude. Considerations regarding the cryptocurrency market are also thematised by Jonas Lund, who created a decentralised autonomous organisation with a token that allows stakeholders to make decisions regarding the artist's activities.

With this exhibition, HEK wants to introduce a broad audience to these key technologies that may be shaping the future. This exhibition is part of the transformation project «HEK Connect», funded by the cantons of Basel-Stadt and Basel-Landschaft, which enables the HEK to position itself as an innovative cultural institution in a globally networked digital economy. This also includes the establishment of a blockchain-based circle of friends, which will be launched in June 2023.

An extensive outreach program is planned to accompany the exhibition, providing a critical context for the developments surrounding blockchain, the Web3, and the metaverses, their potentials and risks. This includes the «KryptoBrunch» workshop, which takes place every other month and is led by digital artists offering insight into how to open a crypto-wallet, as

Jonas Lund, *Cow (JLT Collectible)*, video loop, playable character, 2021





Omsk Social Club, *Unrealism*, 2020, Installation view

well as other necessary steps needed to participate in blockchain-based technologies.

A highlight will be the «Metaverse Dance Party» by Babusi Nyoni, which will take place during the exhibition opening and Art Basel. The public is invited to create unconventional avatars for dancing in the Metaverse using smartphones. Those who wish to further deepen the experience can participate in a workshop and learn how to use browser-based, open-source tools to create avatars and virtual worlds.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalog that will be published in the autumn of 2023, which will enrich the theme with several theoretical contributions by leading theorists.

Hashtags for the exhibition:

**#hek_basel #collective_worldbuilding
#art_in_the_metaverse**

Information:

HEK (Hous of Electronic Arts)
Freilager-Platz 9, 4142 Münchenstein/Basel

Opening Times:

Wed-Sun, 12:00-18:00
Art Basel: Mon-Sun, 12.-18.06.2023, 10:00-20:00
Entry: 12 / 8 CHF (reduced),
Happy Hour: Wed-Fri, 12:00-13:00, free exhibition entry
Exhibition Tour: Every Sunday at 15:00 in German

For more information: www.hek.ch/en

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About HEK (Hous of Electronic Arts)

HEK in Basel is Switzerland's national centre of excellence and museum dedicated to all art forms that employ or reflect on new technologies and media. HEK's interdisciplinary orientation offers a broad public insight into art production from different genres at the conjunction of art, media and technology. In a diverse program of exhibitions, smaller festival formats, performances and concerts, HEK addresses current social issues as well as technological-aesthetic developments. In addition to organising events and exhibitions, HEK is committed to answering digital art's specific demands in collection methodology and preservation.

The HEK is supported by the **Christoph Merian Foundation**, the **cantons of Basel Landschaft** and **Basel-Stadt** and the **Federal Office of Culture**.

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