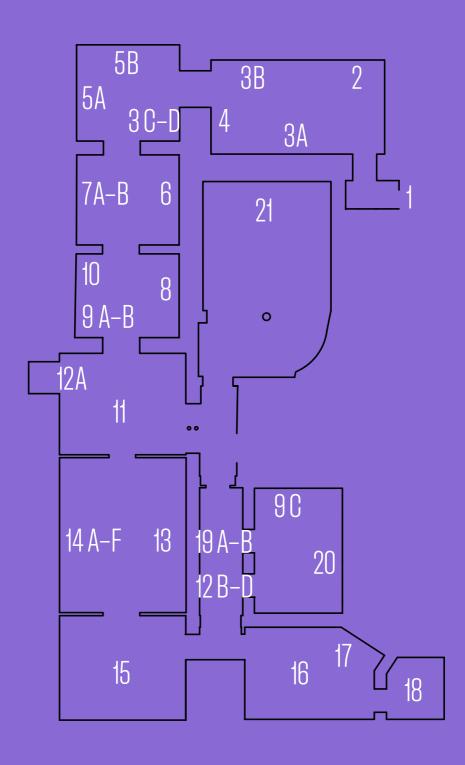
# THE EARTH ELAT AGAIN



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a metaphor, a thought experiment, and a belief falsely ascribed to the past, serves as a point of departure for reflecting on the changing roles of science and communication. The artists featured in this exhibition analyze seemingly contradictory worldviews and identify political apparatuses, technological infrastructures, and social relationships that affect our knowledge and interpretation of reality.

The show's title holds at least two meanings. Firstly, it references the historical myth according to which, until the travels of Christopher Columbus, Europeans believed the Earth was disc-shaped. While in fact mediaeval scholars knew the Earth to be spherical, this oft-repeated cliché has taken hold in the collective imagination, spawning a false vision of an ignorant

past. Secondly, in the twenty-first century, the phrase "the world is flat" has acquired new meaning. It has come to denote a globe levelled by the dominance of neoliberalism, the mobility of capital, and the rise of the Internet, a global information-distribution network that promised universal access to knowledge and equal opportunities for a better life. This promise has not been fulfilled, and now capital and power wield information technologies as tools of unprecedented scale.

The excess of information, data,

and signals that surround us mean that although we know more and more about the world, it is increasingly difficult to understand. The age of information has turned into an age of disruptions. The resulting sense of confusion fuels the rise of conspiracy and magical thinking, as people search for simple analogies, connections, and solutions for overly complex issues. In a "flat"

world founded on faith in constant scientific and technological progress, we are increasingly searching for esoteric, mystical knowledge and alternative tools to help us create meaning.

All these come together in an exhibition that shows the interconnections between communication, cartography, and the history of science. It confronts different ways of exploring reality, examining how they clash, but also how they weave and complement each other. The artists on display also challenge the limits and constructs of "scientific truth": they look at maps, models, and theories that claim to be objective, but are in fact shaped by systems of power. Though the artworks featured in this exhibition do not resemble didactic exhibits, they serve as tools to navigate among oppositions, questions, and doubts.

The venue housing the exhibition—the palace rooms of the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź—is not without significance. Historically, museums have been sites devoted to educating and shaping citizens' tastes, but also their consciousness; spaces serving to classify, define, and rule the surrounding world through names, movements, or categories. The Łódź museum is a thoroughly modern institution, born in an age that, like none before it, focused on separating the traditional and primitive from the progressive; the rational from the irrational; nature from civilization.

And perhaps the abyss seen from the edge of the flat Earth is the same one Boaventura de Sousa Santos identifies as a foundation of Western modernity? This foundation is a system of visible and invisible boundaries dividing social reality and knowledge into two spheres.

Everything that does not fit the model of modern Western science is relegated to the abyss. This thinking, Santos writes, consists in "granting modern science a monopoly on the universal distinction between true and false." The exclusive nature of this monopoly is, to his mind, the basis of epistemological disputes between scientific and non-scientific forms of truth. Looking at this abyss, we are inclined to ask: How to critique, expand, and challenge scientific paradigms without playing the part of denialists?

Today, the divisions introduced by modernity must undergo examination, or even, as Sandra Harding postulates, scientific exorcism. According to Harding, Western science and philosophy need a thorough rethinking if they are to contribute to the social progress of most of our planet's inhabitants.

We might well reverse the historical situation and transform the museum, as a space of classification, into a space where differences can coexist. Navigating between opposites may turn out to be art's most pivotal task at a time when concord in a polarized world and a hopeful view of the future can be hard to imagine.

## Carolyn Lazard

## Conspiracy

**2017** Dohm white noise machines

courtesy of the artist and Maxwell Graham/ Essex Street, New York

This piece by Carolyn Lazard (b. 1987, USA) is a collection of white noise machines placed on the ceiling. These devices are commonly used for calming listeners, dampening external noise and improving sleep quality in homes, hospitals, and public institutions alike. In this work, the great number of the devices turns the relaxing sound into disturbing noise. Lazard's work often addresses themes of health, chronic illness, and their political and existential aspects. This work indicates how therapeutic tools and methods can, consciously or unconsciously, be used in destructive and oppressive ways. In this exhibition, Conspiracy also recalls a situation where a multitude of messages makes it difficult to understand them, and to distinguish truth from fiction.

## 2 Superstudio

Supersurface: An Alternative Model for Life on the Earth

**1972** video, 9 min.

courtesy of Gian Piero Frassinelli

This visionary film collage presents a society of the future inhabiting the Supersurface, a fictional structure that stretches across the whole planet. The narrator describes a world where inhabitants' possible movements are limited to their connection with the network. All they need is delivered to their location via a network that provides energy, information, and the rational distribution of raw materials. As in much of Superstudio's work, this film offered a new vision of architecture and its progress; it also anticipated the rise of the Internet. Superstudio was an Italian collective working at the intersection of theory, design, and architecture, founded in Florence and active between 1966 and 1978. Although it did not design a single building, it has earned a place in the history of radical design.

## ິງ ປ່ **Mark** Lombardi

Gerry Bull, Space Research Corporation and Armscor of Pretoria, South Africa, c. 1972–80 (4th version)

1999 pencil, paper

Untitled (UPI Saga: Pat Robertson/Beurt Servaas/Middle East Broadcast)

1999 pencil, paper

Global International Airways and Indian Springs State Bank, Kansas City, c. 1977–83 (3rd version)

1999 pencil, paper

Middle East
Broadcasting Centre
(London)

c. 2000

pencil, paper collection of Professor Robert Tolksdorf

## 4 Katja Novitskova

## Mamaroo (Swarovski crystals)

**2017** electronic baby swing, robotic bugs, plastic hoses, lasers, epoxy clay, digital print, polyurethane resin, aluminum folding stand

collection of Muzeum Sztuki

The artistic practice and meticulous research of Mark Lombardi (1951–2000, USA) demonstrate the role of information in understanding the structures and abuses of power. His works show how public information, when properly used, can become a currency, a tool for emancipation, and a political weapon. Starting from 1994, Lombardi worked on Narrative Structures, sociogram-style graph drawings visualizing ties between politics, the banking system, and media, intelligence, and military organizations entangled in a web of crime and private interests. Each of those works required painstaking research and large amounts of information about particular institutions or groups. Precise diagrams preceded by numerous sketches show transactions, arrangements, and influences, divided into different categories. The emergence of the diagram as a visual form is linked to capitalism and the banking system, but in Lombardi's hands it became a tool to expose connections kept from public view. For scientific and financial systems, the human body is a set of constantly changing data, information, and signals. The work of Katja Novitksova (b. 1984, Estonia) addresses the process of transforming organic bodies into digital representations. The artist juxtaposes visual representations of data that are constantly, yet imperceptibly collected by the sensors, cameras, and other devices that surround us. In a work from the Mamaroo series, Novitskova combines electronic baby swings with representations of data and the data-gathering devices into a single form. The modified, rhythmical work also speculates on an undefined future inhabited by hybrid organisms, and on an emerging machine consciousness.

## Г Ĵ Michael Stevenson

A Drum Shield
Affordance
Extension 1.2
Philanthropy 101

Drum Shield Affordance Extension 1.1 Extravehicular Activity

**2020** vitrines, objects

courtesy of the artist, Fine Arts Sydney, and Michael Lett Gallery Auckland The works of Michael Stevenson (b. 1964, New Zeland) navigate an assembly of historical artifacts, real and fabricated documents, and evidence. Drum Shield Affordance Extension 1.2 Philanthropy 101 draws on conspiratorial convergences, real and otherwise, between the media ecosystem, technology, globalization, pop culture, and ideological disparity. The work revolves around Hulk Hogan's 2016 celebrity lawsuit, which the pro-wrestling star filed against Gawker Media, an online publisher of various news/gossip sites. The case involved a sex tape, a secret billionaire third-party backer, and an interpretation of Hogan as two distinct people—a celebrity and a private citizen-each entity holding a different legal status. In a trial by jury, as this case was, the burden of proof inevitably rests upon belief. In Drum Shield Affordance Extension 1.1 Extravehicular Activity the bifurcated life of astronaut and evangelist James Irwin draws out a parallel tension. A pilot of the Apollo 15 and the eighth person to walk on the moon, he collected probably our most significant lunar rock sample, which proved to be more than four billion years old. After returning to earth, Irwin founded an evangelical organization supporting a biblical worldview in which the creation narrative builds the world in six days and later drowns it in a global flood some 4,500 years ago.

## Tabita Rezaire

#### **Premium Connect**

2018

video, 13 min. 35 sec.

courtesy of the Artists and Goodman Gallery, South Africa

Premium Connect explores a contemporary space blending the organic, technological, and spiritual worlds. Taking an eclectic look at information technology systems, Tabita Razaire (b. 1989, France) analyzes contemporary communications by juxtaposing modern technology, African astrology, the underground world of mycelium, and metaphysical contact with ancestors. As presented here, IT systems are similar to the organic world: they can heal or harm, depending on how they are used. Razaire looks at power systems embedded in technological tools and their effect on our inner life. Could spirituality be a key to understanding omnipresent technology and finding your way in a networked world?

# Dayrit

We Move **Among Monsters** 

**2020** embroidery on textile (collaboration: Henry Caceres)

Monuments of the Great Divide

**2019** wood (collaboration: Felman Bagalso), acrylic, print courtesy of the artist and NOME, Berlin

While maps are usually perceived as an objective visualization of the physical world, they are also a way of shaping it. Historically, they have served not only as a navigation aid, but also as a means of governing, disciplining, and controlling peoples and societies. Particular visualizations simultaneously entrenched the vision of a world dominated by colonial powers and marginalized entire regions. In his practice, Cian Dayrit (b. 1989, Philippines) uses the method of *counter-cartography*: producing new maps and altering existing ones, he reclaims the power to create an image of the world and challenges the imperial order. He also organizes workshops where the participants draw their own maps, thus regaining a sense of agency. Dayrit studies how colonialism has defined the boundaries of the contemporary world and how we can reimagine the different territories and divides.

## Micol Assaël

#### I Would Prefer Not to

**2013** wood, ceramic insulator, bee hive, sand

> courtesy of the artist and Sprovieri Gallery, London

> > The works of Micol Assaël (b. 1979, Italy) are often based on outdated scientific apparatuses and theories. They are also inspired by unpredictable natural phenomena, such as the behavior of bees. This installation evokes a reoccurring theme in Assaël's practice flow and vibration. The visual side of the piece also recalls the loss of technological functionality with the passing of time. The title of the work is a quote from the short story Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street by Herman Melville. The protagonist refuses to do any task required of him, replying simply "I would prefer not to." Today, this phrase might direct our attention to the potential of refusal in a world that demands constant innovation, communication, and efficiency.

## 0 Zuza Piekoszewska

A Something
That Once Existed

2019 UV print on PCV foil, mirror

Future Traveler

2020 bioplastic, acrylic

Future Traveler

2020 bioplastic, acrylic

courtesy of the artist

These objects by Zuzanna Piekoszewska (b. 1996, Poland) explore the storage and loss of data. As digital technologies develop at an increasing pace and backup versions quickly become obsolete, much of our information could very well disappear. What happens to forgotten data on tapes, disks, and devices that have gone out of use? Data with no analogue equivalent is at risk of becoming unreadable, or being irrevocably lost-a situation described as a "digital dark age." The insect-like objects on the walls (Future Traveler) allude to attempts to use insects in surveillance technologies. They remind us of the relationship between the digital and the organic, as well as attempts to create new forms of life and forms of control.



## The Toaster Project

**2009** video, 13 min. 39 sec., photographs

courtesy of the artist

photo credit: Daniel Alexander

> Toaster Project attempts to recreate the production chain whose end product is an object of everyday use. In a local supermarket, Thomas Thwaites (b. 1980, Great Britain) purchased a toaster produced in China, and disassembled it into its multiple components. He then attempted to recreate the toaster using components he had sourced or manufactured himself: plastic, steel, nickel, mica, and copper. Thwaites documented the process to construct an equivalent toaster using artisanal methods, thus confronting the nature of mass production. The project highlights the complexity of everyday technologies, and how they are not understood by their users. It also draws attention to the invisible supply chains in a globalized economy that enable cheap production.

## Jakub Woynarowski

Templum

2021 vinyl, objects

courtesy of the artist

This work, by Jakub Woynarowski (b. 1982, Poland), makes reference to the form of a ritual diagram delineating a place of worship, and at the same time, the convention of the synthetic infographic, which may serve as a point of departure for conspiracy theories. Its geometric structure remains closely connected to the exhibition space, eclectically combining a decorative salon with a modernist white cube. The installation at the Poznański Palace emphasizes the symbolic connection between unrelated aesthetic idioms. This is also reflected in the iconography of the installation itself, which inscribes the achievements of modern art in the context of archaic religious practices. A reflection on how historical knowledge is constructed, the work is part of an artistic research project titled Novus Ordo Seclorum, identifying associations between the achievements of the twentieth-century avant-garde and art of times past.

## Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven

A Maybe This Time I Win

**1989** video, 6 min. 15 sec.

courtesy of the artist

Observations Saturniennes

2008-11

collage, drawing, paper collection of Muzeum Sztuki

J Problèmes Saturniens 2008–11

> collage, drawing, paper collection of Muzeum Sztuki

Electrisch Gegeven

2011

collage, drawing, paper collection of Muzeum Sztuki The interdisciplinary practice of Anne--Mie van Kerckhoven (b. 1951, Belgium) has its roots in the counterculture, as well as feminist theory and practice. The interest in mysticism and the years the artist collaborated with the Laboratory for Artificial Intelligence at VUB in Brussels have also left an important mark on her art. Maybe This Time I Win is an animated work in which key words from a lecture on artificial intelligence are displayed alongside illustrations of faces of patients suffering from heart disease. The work, which also contains references to places of worship and rituals, is part of the artist's visual investigation into the relationship between progress and diseases of civilization. These pieces on paper continue other themes explored by the artist. Electrisch Gegeven consists of gendered media representations juxtaposed with the development of space travel and new technologies. Observations Saturniennes and *Problèmes Saturniens* are inspired by Paul Verlaine's first poetry collection, *Poèmes* saturniens (1866), and provide a counterpoint to the artist's scientific and technological interests.

## Szymon Kobylarz

A Man Who Did Not Live Through the End of the World

**2021** wood, synthetic leather, upholstery sponge, light tubes, PVC cables courtesy of the artist

This installation by Szymon Kobylarz (b. 1980, Poland) deals with social paranoia and concerns pseudo-scientific theories that can circulate in the depths of the Internet and have an impact in the outside world as well. The work is a new commission combining two of the artist's previous long-running projects. The first of those, The Man Who Survived the End of the World (2011), composed of disassembled parts of a space capsule, was inspired by the "preppers" subculturepeople who expect an imminent global catastrophe and share ways to prepare for it. The other parts are works from the Fibonacci Chaos series (2014–17), informed by a fascination for fractal geometry and the Fibonacci sequence, examples of which can be found in the natural world. Connecting the two threads in one space, the artist calls attention to the persistent search for patterns in everyday life and to the thin line separating critical thinking from obsession.

## Kameelah Rasheed

A	Method < Why?
В	Sum Follows
C	Everyone Will Be Saved Through the Algebra
D	There Is Never Enough Awful Arithmetic
E	The Suspense That Gathers Is the Code
F	2020 Connect the Dots 2018 archival print, paper

courtesy of the artist

and NOME, Berlin



#### Summit of Gods

2018

two-channel video. installation, 11 min

courtesy of the artist

Kameelah Janan Rasheed (b. 1985, USA) is an artist whose practice draws on her professional experience as a teacher and her interest in the methodology of knowledge transfer. Her work includes excerpts from slogans, poems, instructions, and academic papers. Rasheed takes a poetic approach to mathematical formulas and other ways of measuring the world, contrasting them with the subjective, the personal, and the political. She rearranges words and recontextualizes them, disrupting the apparent clarity of academic expertise. The artist considers the role of language in the context of marginalized groups' contemporary political struggles for their rights, as well as black intellectual history. The collage-like structure of the works is an invitation to an intellectual exercise, which values the role that both personal experience and randomness play in learning.

Summit of Gods is a trip to the Hawaiian volcano Mauna Kea, where indigenous beliefs meet Western science. The video installation by András Cséfalvay (b. 1986, Slovakia) references a dispute between the native Hawaiians and the astronomers who build telescopes on the mountain, which the former consider sacrilegious. For scientists, Mauna Kea is one of the world's best sites for astronomical observation; for some of the native inhabitants, the dormant volcano, the highest peak of Hawaii, is sacred territory. Cséfalvay's work presents religious and scientific worldviews and conflicting approaches to reality. He shifts the perspective between different paradigms, seeking tools to better understand the present or imagine the future.

## Luiza Prado de O. Martins

The imaginary becomes complete on the margins of every new linear projection

**2018** tree branches, acrylic paint, water, teacups, plant irrigation system, wood

courtesy of the artist

The tree branches that drip water into the cups once a day resemble the outlines of three Brazilian rivers: the Maracanã, the Pedras, and the Guedes. This installation by Luiza Prado de O. Martins (b. 1985, Brazil) concerns the ayoowiri-a plant that was used in colonial Brazil as an abortifacient and a form of female resistance. The sculpture analyzes the plant's presence on the shores of rivers that were significant to the artist's mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. The drip and flow of water point to the moment where the plant body and the human body meet. Focused on biopower, history, and colonialism, the artist's practice shows how it is possible to decolonize the medical sciences or create versions thereof based on indigenous knowledge, passed from generation to generation.

## 7Diana Lelonek

from the Zoe-therapy series

2015

paper, epoxy resin, colonies of fungi, mold, and bacteria courtesy of the artist / private collection

These works by Diana Lelonek (b. 1988, Poland) are a selection from the *Zoe-therapy* series-a collection of microbial, fungal, and bacterial colonies growing on portraits of canonical thinkers from the intellectual history of Western Europe. The selection on display includes images of Descartes, who described animals as living machines unable to think or feel, Francis Bacon, the father of the scientific method, and Herbert Spencer, famous for his theory of Social Darwinism. Lelonek, who is interested in relations between humans and other organisms, questions historical taxonomies and symbolically reverses the hierarchical structure for creating and transmitting of knowledge that has prevailed through the centuries. Such molds as Serrati, Aspergillus niger, and Geotrichum candidum cover the faces of prominent figures, dissolving the power structure built on a long history of the domination and marginalization of human and non-human others.

## |0 |0 Jessika | Khazrik

QAAR

2021

6-channel sound installation, steganographic print on vinyl courtesy of the artist The multi-vocal practice of Jessika Khazrik (b. 1991, Lebanon) transcends disciplines and language. *QAAR* is part of the artist's long-term investigations that challenge Western histories of science and circulation in relationship to place. The work begins as an impossible journey into the inner depths of the Earth, an imagined inner core that, as the artist describes it in the piece, "remembers the future instead of the past."

"رعق" in Arabic, which can be roughly transliterated to "qaar" means: "the lowest part of something" as well as "the inner part of a sphere." "נَّعْق" as a verb can also mean: to deepen, to excavate, and to hollow out. Right before the advent of the printing press, Arabic was the lingua franca of science and philosophy. Between the 9th and 13th centuries several treatises were written in this language on the shape of the sphere, the core of the Earth, and subterranean cosmography. These treatises, written by polymaths such as Al-Kindi (801-73) and Al-Khawarizmi (750-850), were deeply influential for the European Enlightenment in ways that remain mostly ignored and unacknowledged. Through recalling the history and the imminent transformation of the earth's magnetic sphere, the artist asks questions about voice and place in science and metaphysics. The project also derives from Khazrik's multifaceted work on agnotology-the study of the production of ignorance and uncertainty.

# 

A Hexen 2.0
Historical Diagrams
2009–11

collection of Muzeum Sztuki

D Hexen 2.0 Tarot 2009–11

collection of Muzeum Sztuki

Suzanne Treister (b. 1958, Great Britain) creates projects that draw on new technologies and fictional worlds. Hexen 2.0 is a series of diagrams that reference the tarot card system. However, it is only a pretext for creating treatises to describe the complex web of the intertwined history of counterculture and mechanisms of control after the Second World War. In the center of this story are the Macy Conferences held between 1946 and 1953, where topics such as human brain activity and cybernetics were discussed. The work's narrative culminates in the creation of the Internet. Combining cybernetics, psychedelics, and astrology, Treister's sprawling project presents an alternate view of twentieth-century history, in which everything is connected.

## Doão Maria Gusmão & Pedro Paiva

Darwin's Apple, Newton's Monkey

**2012** 16mm film, 1 min.

collection of Muzeum Sztuki

João Maria Gusmão (b. 1979, Portugal) and Pedro Paiva (b. 1977, Portugal) are interested in moments where rational thinking encounters the mysterious and impenetrable. The topics explored and the titles of their works suggest an account that resembles a documentary film. However, the brief activities are extended in time, lending them monumental weight. Gusmão and Paiva question the scientific categories of rationality and objectivity. They return to the moment where myth and science were inseparable. The two artists' methodology is informed by their manifesto, Abyssology: Theory of the Indiscernible (2012), whose eponymous "science" does not seek definitive truths, but rather emphasizes the instability of such categories. Darwin's Apple, Newton's Monkey also calls attention to animals and their exploitation in the name of scientific progress throughout history and in the present.



## Electromagnetic Brainology

**2017** video, 13 min. 33 sec. courtesy of the artist

Lu Yang's (b. 1984, China) works are inspired by neurology, and their aesthetic side draws from Japanese pop culture, Buddhist and Hindu iconography, and computer games. These works share a recurring character: a gender-neutral avatar of the artist. Electromagnetic Brainology also features four characters of deities, which also correspond to the four types of pain perceived by the nervous system in the brain. Each deity has a Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) device. DBS technology, explored by Lu Yang in a series of works, involves implanting thin stimulating electrodes into deep parts of the brain; it is used to treat mental disorders or Parkinson's disease. These medical procedures inspire the artist to reflect on transcending the limitations of the human body and mind.

## THE EARTH IS FLAT AGAIN

Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź ms¹, Więckowskiego 36 msl.org.pl

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