

**Julius von Bismarck, Ximena Garrido-Lecca, Ayesha Hameed, Anne Duk Hee Jordan, Berenice Olmedo, Meret Oppenheim, Simon Speiser***Kin Is Not Kind*

Jan 17 – Feb 15, 2025

Opening: Jan 17, 6-9pm

*Kin is Not Kind* explores the connections between humans and non-humans, focusing on the interactions between bodies, technology and nature. It sheds light on how historical experiences and memories, shaped by colonialism and exploitation of humans and environment, shape our understanding of identity, ecology and coexistence. The works in the exhibition address the construction of kinship and its intricacies.

In her practice, Ximena Garrido-Lecca examines the ecological, social and cultural consequences of the exploitation of natural resources, with a particular focus on how technologization and urbanization historically have influenced the relationship between humans and the natural world. A recurring theme in Garrido-Lecca's work is the impact of copper mining in rural Peru. Colonial extractive practices, their inception and afterlives leave behind not only destroyed landscapes, but also serious health consequences for local communities. All the while investors and consumers from the Global North continue to profit from the land. The use of copper in the work *Signal Restorations: Air, Flame, Rain and Soil Sensors* points to the central importance of the metal for technical innovations of modernity, which stands in contrast to the ritual and spiritual uses of the material in indigenous Andean societies. The relationship with nature in pre-Hispanic civilizations is based on a concept of reciprocity: if one removes elements from nature, they are to be returned through rituals. The work is reminiscent of 20th century telephone switchboards, however in place of cables and electrical connections are natural elements such as stones, copal and soil. The title refers to the four elements, earth, water, air and fire, whose connected balance is restored in the work. Garrido-Lecca questions colonial patriarchal narratives and the dominance of Western science, which often devalues and excludes alternative forms of knowledge.

In her works, Berenice Olmedo addresses the social construct surrounding the body and the human pursuit of creating and conforming to standards. Through the use of prostheses and medical materials, she questions notions of wholeness and perfection. Her work examines the rigidity of corporeal forms that have emerged in the wake of colonial and patriarchal object-subject structures and proposes alternative futures that reject these expressions of power and their normative patterns of destruction. The dissolution of corporeal shapes is thereby of particular relevance: technical objects become fragile bodies, bodies become objects and devices. In her work *Canek*, Olmedo combines orthopaedic prostheses, suction valves for prostheses and other medical aids. The artist makes casts of various prosthetics and fuses these fragments together. The chrome-plated fixture that connects the mold to the wall appears sterile and clinical and stands in stark contrast to the curved forms of the bodies. The binary categories that serve to separate and dictate who is considered a subject in the hierarchies of norms, beauty or wholeness are addressed and redefined in her works. Berenice Olmedo thus proposes alternative ways of looking at fragmented identities and fragility as forms of strength and resistance.

In Anne Duk Hee Jordan's works non-human beings take center stage, allowing for post-anthropocene scenarios to unravell which reflect on intersections of art, science, society and identity. Jordan examines the impact of technology on nature and questions how it shapes our

relationship to earth, other living beings and each other. Upon entering the gallery, visitors encounter “Slippy Slimy Slug”, an installation of kinetic robot leaves, glass sculptures, bark mulch, tree trunks and branches. In the midst of this hybrid landscape of organic and artificial elements, and crawling glass slugs, we encounter their reproductive behavior. Jordan questions Western, patriarchal norms of our understanding of sex and draws attention to the diversity and survival strategies of the non-human world. Snails, which have male and female reproductive organs and telepathic and electromagnetic abilities, become symbols of alternative forms of kinship and connection. The installation invites us to experience life at a “snail's pace”, to develop a sense of mutual care and to understand our existence as part of a larger network of relationships.

Jordan's motorized leaves sculptures from the *Artificial Stupidity* series juxtapose efficiency driven modern technology with the concept of “artificial stupidity”, which sees unproductivity as an opportunity to re-evaluate our relationship to reality. The work series *Radicchio* makes use of a fashionable produce, radicchio, symbolic of monocultural agriculture, to expose our exploitative relationship to nature. Jordan's installations look at the interactions between humans, technology and nature, creating points of contact between different forms of life and kinship.

Julius von Bismarck's works are characterized by the in-depth exploration of phenomena of perception and constructions of reality. The negotiation of nature as a socially constructed fiction is a core focus of his work. The photographs of the series “We Were All Naked”, taken in biodiverse Madagascar, show landscapes alienated by the artist's intervention: plants and soil are wrapped in plastic foil and vacuum-sealed, cutting them off from all essential oxygen. The shiny surface of the film, which is stretched over nature like a spider's web lends the environment an eerily sterile atmosphere. The context of the desolate motif is scarcely unfathomable. The photograph's machine-milled aluminum frame reinforces this sensation by drawing the gaze to another world as if through a spaceship window. Embodying Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto, von Bismarck's series confronts us with the reality that non-human lifeforms cannot adapt quickly enough to the conditions of an environment transformed by human technological advancements. So, while humans can manipulate and isolate their environment, the majority of non-human creatures are unable to do so.

In his artistic practice, Simon Speiser explores the relationship between nature, technology and fiction, creating new narrative realms that interweave physical and digital worlds. He opens up imaginary cosmos that stage nature as a hybrid constructed dimension. In his series on the Matuhi – artificially devised bird creatures with telepathic abilities - a narrative universe unfolds redefining our idea of nature as an artificial concept arising from memory and technological imagination. The VR work *In a Young World of Resplendent Glitter* is the 5th chapter of this narrative and describes a world in which the Matuhi are born into a reality dominated by technology without ever having experienced a natural habitat. Humanity uses the birds' telepathic abilities as a communication network, alienating them from their original existence. In search of a sanctuary, the Matuhi create an imaginary forest - an idealized version of nature based on collected knowledge of the natural world. This vision of a hypothetical paradise itself as a parallel dimension in which nature is no longer a physical reality, but a product of technological longing. The work addresses the human tendency to idealize nature as a projection surface for inner peace and balance. It draws subtle parallels to modern reflections on AI as a human-made system that could aim for autonomy and its own existence. The VR work is complemented by a woven tapestry that translates the digital aesthetic into analog, thereby introducing a tactile layer. In doing so, the work refers to the visionary concepts of Ada Lovelace that laid the foundation for computer technology.

At the back of the exhibition, we encounter the work “An Untalas of Coconut” by Ayesha Hameed, created after a research trip through Sri Lanka and India. In this work, Hameed explores the multi-layered history of the coconut, a witness to colonial exploitation and migration along the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The work evidences how profoundly interwoven narratives and memories are inscribed in nature and culture. The installation consists of 67 square screen prints that visualize a fragmented narrative of the coconut in black and white. Beginning with at the tip of the palm tree, the viewer's gaze descends along the trunk to find strewn coconuts on the ground. However, the visual sequence is repeatedly interrupted by gaps, resulting in a sense of fragmentation - a metaphor for lost and abruptly interrupted narratives. The work is complemented by fragments of text positioned directly on the floor beneath the screen prints, telling a story of the coconut. In their portrayal of the circulation of resources and the exploitation of people and nature the prints are reminiscent of colonial landscapes.

On the opposite wall *Diana on the Magpie Hunt* by Meret Oppenheim is presented. Oppenheim developed a comprehensive understanding of human existence by delving into the human subconscious and the transformative powers of nature. In embracing the transience and vulnerability of life, the artist made the principle of metamorphosis a central artistic strategy. The changeability and transformation of her own identity enabled her to free herself from (social) constraints and instead connect with the natural transformation processes of the world.

Text by Lydia Ahrens

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