

Regionale 25 | Fr. 29.11.2024 – So. 12.01.2025

### Screening: *Artificial Life and Death*

The curated video series *Artificial Life and Death* explore the complex connections between life, death and the artificial. The artists examine the boundaries between naturality and artificiality and question social norms, particularly with regard to reproduction, gender identities and physical norms. In doing so, they address the role of technology and artificial intelligence (AI) in the perception of physicality and interpersonal relationships.

Central motifs are the surveillance and censorship of (parts of) the body and the way in which death can be seen as the basis of life. The works show how the artificial transformation of bodies, emotions and natural processes creates new meanings and challenges traditional notions. These artistic explorations offer a deep insight into the changing relationships between life and death in today's technologically driven world.

#### 10. Angelo Custódio, *QueerAble in/stabilities*, 2021, 39:49 min

In *QueerAble in/stabilities* other embodiments are translated into sound through a wireless electro-acoustic interface assembled to the body. The upright posture movement is transformed into a continuous spiraling motion. *QueerAble* is an inquiry into notions of encountering and systemic surveillance. Subjectivities undergo processes of in/stability with the norm body, the norm movement, the norm behaviour, the norm morals (...) — a process continuously reinforced by the surveillance of the

gaze. Committing to the vulnerability of this conflict can potentially de/stabilise hegemonic narratives.

#### 11. Anan Fries, *Ecto Bag (commercial)*, 2024, 4:28 min

*Ecto Bag* was originally conceived as a mixed-media installation that transforms a speculative design object into a physical object. *Ecto Bag*, a fictional company invented by Anan Fries, produces artificial wombs in the form of trendy high-fashion handbags. The work questions the restrictive possibilities and normative politics of human reproduction as well as the prevailing ideal of the heteronormative family. The video work, shot in the style of a commercial, also poses the question of how a revolutionary idea can be branded and whether there is such a thing as a 'good', i.e. ethically justifiable, technology at all.

#### Valie Winter, *Transparent Fig Leaves*, 2023, 5:14 min

*Transparent Fig Leaves* is a proposal for an aesthetic intervention in which censorship is emphasised with shiny fetish objects. Fig leaves, normally used to cover 'shameful' body parts, are opaque by nature. In this installation, however, transparent and reflective fig leaves are used, revealing more than they conceal. The work is about invisibility in general, but specifically about the invisibility of the diversity of gender identities. In her video, the artist Valie Winter chooses well-known sculptures from classical antiquity, such as the depiction of a hermaphrodite being raped by a satyr, or that of the Barberine faun, a drowsy satyr in the guise of a young, muscular man. Through the ongoing debates about the censorship (of intimate areas) in works of art, such as the recent controversy surrounding Michelangelo's statue of David, she

stimulates the relevance of a societal discussion on censorship, both in the analog and digital realms, a discussion that is far from over.

**Johanna Mangold, *Palm and Cheek*, 2023, 4:16min**

The work *Palm and Cheek* combines animated image sequences, synthesiser sounds and vocals. The visual material was created using text-to-video AI models from Runway. The first part shows hands touching or merging. The inability of the AI to create realistic hands is used here as a metaphor for the complexity of relationship, emotion and touch.

In the second part, distorted faces and heads appear that are touched or caressed by hands. Here too, an “uncanny-valley aesthetic” symbolically points to inadequacies in the expression of emotion and intimacy. Accompanied by heavy synthesiser beats and artificial vocals, the sung text describes shared emotional experiences between human and artificial entities.

The integration of AI tools creates a meta-level of reflection that particularly addresses the role of artificial intelligence in relation to the perception of physicality and interpersonal closeness. In particular, it raises the question of how the use of AI shifts the boundary between human and artificial intimacy.

**Margarit Lehmann, *Feeding life*, 2024, 4:00 min**

Life has been eternal ever since death came into the world. From the smallest plants to the largest animals and humans, we all live thanks to death. A hidden world after death constantly surrounds us, nourishing what will one day nourish us and connecting death to life.

In her video work with wasps, Margarit Lehmann documents how death nourishes life. Unlike bees and bumblebees, which live on pollen, wasps are hunters. They hunt to feed their offspring. They catch insects such as caterpillars, flies and other wasps to feed them neatly dissected, chewed and salivated as protein-rich baby food. They feed their larvae with the meat of dead and captured animals. If wasps are allowed to eat meat, as in the video, they constantly cut small pieces out of the prey and carry them away. Sometimes the pieces are as big as the wasps themselves, so that it takes a real effort to lift them off. Margarit Lehmann observes and investigates the behaviour of insects that keep their young alive with the flesh of dead animals. This work illustrates how death nourishes life and how there is a constant connection between the dead and the living.