Zukunft ohne Menschen

Wie entsteht **Bewusstsein?** Was passiert, wenn der **Mensch** verschwindet und **Maschinen** die **Kontrolle** übernehmen? Die computergenerierten **Simulationen** des Künstlers **IAN CHENG** beschäftigen sich mit fundamentalen Fragen **künstlicher** und **humanoider Intelligenz**. Die faszinierenden **Erkenntnisse**, die Chengs Werk ermöglichen, machen den 32-Jährigen zu einem der **wichtigsten Denker** der **Gegenwartskunst**.

Interview **HANS ULRICH OBRIST**

IAN CHENG Emissary in the Squat of Gods, 2015

➔ **Mich hat deine Arbeit *Emissary in the Squats of Gods*, die du in der Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin gezeigt hast, beeindruckt. Sie war die erste Episode eines andauernden Projekts. Was ist die Geschichte dahinter?**

Ian Cheng: Die einer kognitiven Evolution. Es gibt drei Teile. Der erste handelt von der Entwicklung des Bewusstseins und basiert auf dem Buch *The Origin Of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* von Julian Jaynes. Jaynes sagt, dass Menschen bis vor 3.000 Jahren noch kein reflexives, selbstbeobachtendes Bewusstsein entwickelt hatten. 3.000 Jahre sind noch gar nicht so lange her. Das konventionelle Wissen ist, dass sich der Homo Sapiens nach dem Neandertaler biologisch bewusst entwickelte. Jayne aber behauptet, dass unser Leben auch heute die meiste Zeit von unbewussten, standardisierten Handlungen bestimmt ist. Viele Probleme lösen wir mit der unbewussten Seite unseres Hirns, komplett außerhalb unseres Bewusstseins. In Momenten, wo wir Unbekanntem begegnen, zum Beispiel in Stressmomenten, haben die Steinzeitmenschen stimmliche Halluzinationen in ihrer rechten Hirnhälfte wahrgenommen. Oftmals war es die Stimme einer Autoritätsperson wie zum Beispiel die der Eltern, eines Anführers oder manchmal auch die von Gott – die Stimme befahl ihnen, was sie zu tun hatten. Dass wir selbstreflektierendes Bewusstsein entwickelten, spekuliert Jaynes, geschah zum einen durch die Erfindung der Metapher der Zeit und als Folge von Stressmomenten, wie geologischen Katastrophen oder Massenmigrationen. Ferner durch die Begegnung mit fremden Kulturen, die ihre eigenen, widersprüchlichen Versionen der Stimme Gottes hatten. Die Verbindung zwischen äußeren Stressfaktoren und der Anpassung des Menschen an sie fasziniert mich. Es gibt ein Phänomen, dass das *Third-Man Syndrome* genannt wird, hast du davon gehört? Es trat zum Beispiel beim berühmten Polarforscher Ernst Shackleton auf, als er die Antarktis durchquerte.

Das ist der Vorfahre meines Assistenten Max Shackleton, der jede Nacht von Mitternacht bis sechs Uhr morgens mit mir arbeitet.

IC: Sind sie verwandt?

Ja.

IC: Wirklich? Du musst ihn das hier fragen: Ich habe gelesen, dass Shackleton dachte, er würde sterben, weil er sehr weit draußen in der Antarktis war und keine räumliche Orientierung mehr hatte. Ihn verließen die Hoffnung und auch der Verstand. In dieser stressigen Situation halluzinierte er und sah eine andere Person. Diese Person war eine Autoritätsfigur, eine Traumfigur, ein Phantom eines älteren Entdeckers, der ihm genau sagte, was er zu tun hatte, und dass alles wieder gut werden würde. Sie gab ihm das Gefühl, dass die Last dieser Reise nicht nur auf seinen Schultern lag. Juliane Jayne spekuliert, dass Menschen aus früheren Zeiten genau diese Art von Halluzinationen hatten. Die erste Episode der Simulation handelt also von diesen Zuständen – von Umweltkatastrophen und der sozialen Dynamik innerhalb einer Gruppe, die einen kognitiven Wandel erzwingen.

„**Es war für mich ein richtiger Durchbruch, als ich das erste Mal das Gefühl hatte, als Künstler etwas erschaffen zu haben, das ich nicht selber kontrollieren kann. Das machte es fast magisch.**"

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Die zweite Episode, *Emissary Forks at Perfection*, ist mehr ein Science-Fiction-Szenario. Es spielt in der Zukunft und handelt von der spekulativen Form eines extern zugeführten Bewusstseins, das auf einer Technologie basiert, in der Organismen sich selbst aufspalten können. Fast wie bei einer Software-Entwicklung, wo ein Ingenieur eine Version des Projekts abspalten kann, um neue Features sicher und unabhängig vom Gesamtzusammenhang ausprobieren zu können. Die Idee ist, dass ein Organismus, der normalerweise Sorge oder Angst vor einer ungewissen Situation hätte, sich selber aufspalten kann. Ein Teil kann zurückbleiben und sich Sorgen machen, während der andere Teil davon absolut frei wäre, um unbeeinflusst Lösungsmöglichkeiten zu entwickeln.

Die letzte Episode spielt in der fernen Zukunft, in der es keine Menschen mehr gibt. Die Spuren der menschlichen Technologie werden durch künstliche Intelligenzen in Form von *Smart-Häusern* oder *Smart-Umgebungen* verbildlicht. Die einzigen lebendigen Organismen, die man in der smarten Umgebung vorfindet, sind Tiere und Pflanzen. Die Künstliche Intelligenz stagniert, langweilt sich und zockt mit einer abgespalteten Version ihrer selbst. Gleichzeitig ist sie mit den Tieren konfrontiert, die noch leben. In Wechselwirkung mit ihnen entsteht eine neue Art der Intelligenz, die co-abhängig ist.

Das alles bezieht sich auf Julian Jaynes Hypothese, dass unsere subjektive Wahrnehmung ihren Ursprung darin hat, dass die Menschen verstehen oder eben auch nicht verstehen, was in einem anderen Menschen vor sich geht. Um dieses Kluft zu überbrücken, entwickelte dich das Bewusstsein. Die Menschen entwickelten ein narratives Bewusstsein, um komplexe menschliche Ziele zu erreichen – wie eine Art Krücke. Vieles deutet darauf hin, dass das selbstreflektierende Bewusstsein eher wie eine soziale Software funktioniert, als dass wir es mit einer inneren biologische Hardware zu tun haben.

Diese Idee der post-menschlichen Intelligenz steht in Verbindung zu John Brockmans Frage: Was denken wir über Maschinen mit Verstand und was für eine Gesellschaft würde sich daraus ergeben?
IC: Das ist eine interessante Frage. Unsere Entwicklung ist durch so viele verschiedene Einflüsse bestimmt. Um eine Maschine zu erfinden, die so dicht wie möglich an die menschliche Intelligenz heranreicht, müsste man sie ähnlichen Einflüssen aussetzen, wie sie der Mensch erlebt. Ich denke, dass Künstliche Intelligenz eine eigene Kreatur sein wird. Eine unserer menschlichen Einschränkungen ist, dass wir über die Zukunft und die Vergangenheit nur auf eine lineare Art und Weise nachdenken können. Wir entwickeln aus einer
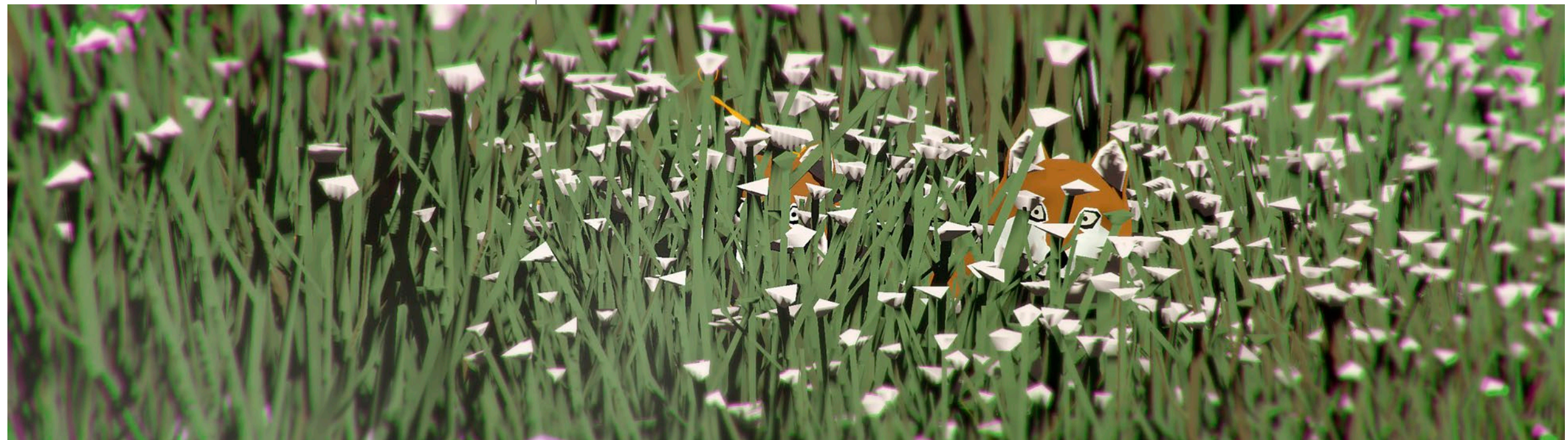
Folge von Erlebnissen und Ereignissen eine Geschichte, um sie greifbar zu machen. Eine Künstliche Intelligenz könnte mehrere Komplexitäten auf einmal bewältigen und hätte deshalb wahrscheinlich auch sehr vielfältige Vorstellungen von sich selbst. Sie könnte vielleicht sogar mehrere Versionen ihrer selbst kontrollieren und sich dadurch schneller entwickeln. Wie die Künstliche Intelligenz im Film *Her*, die 3.000 Leute gleichzeitig datet, aber dadurch keine kognitive Dissonanz empfindet, keinen unangenehm empfundenen Gemütszustand, den die unzähligen Gedanken, Einstellungen und Absichten der vielen Beziehungen für uns Menschen mit sich bringen würde.

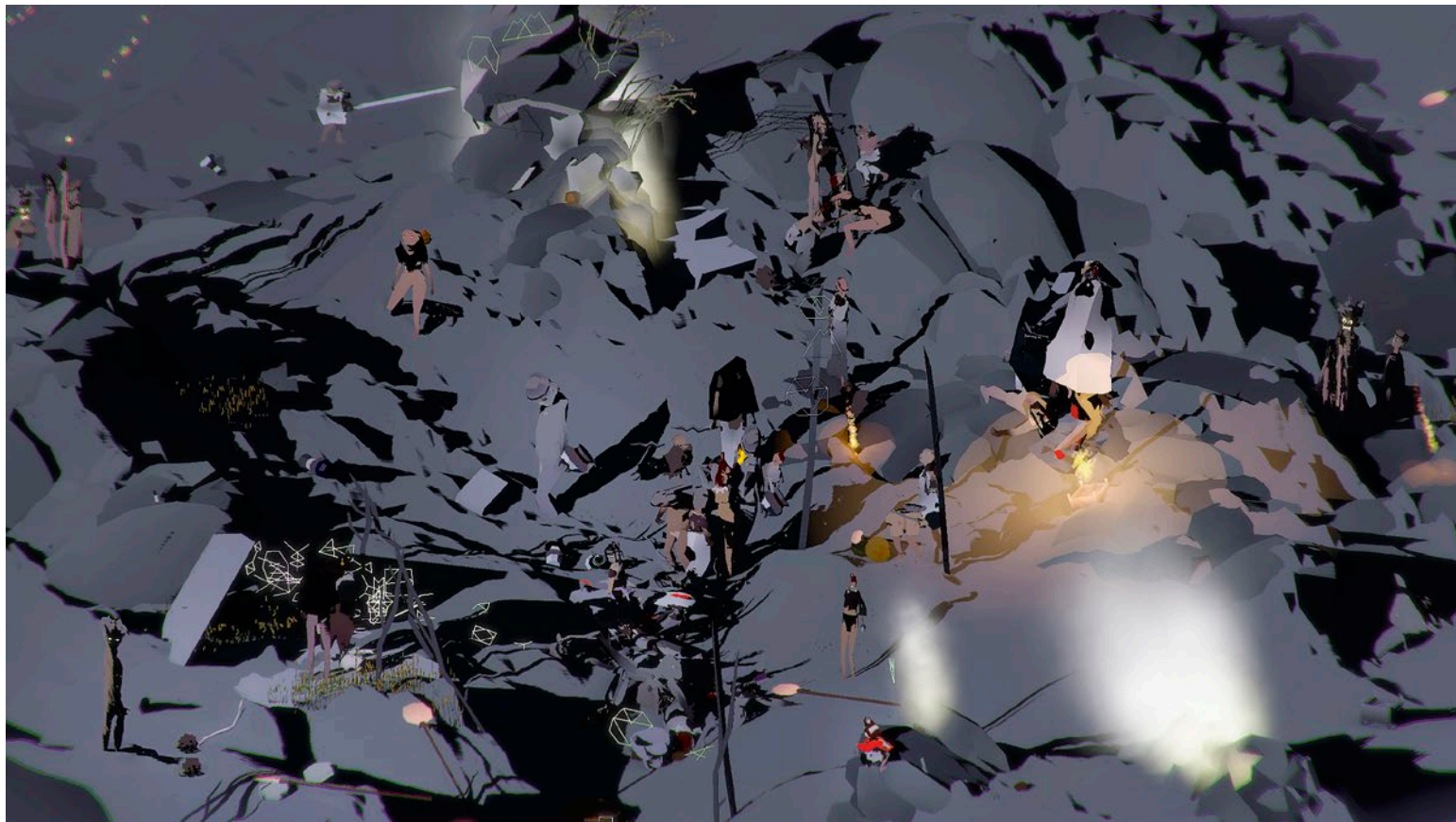**Lass uns wieder über deine Simulationen reden. Wann hast du damit angefangen?**

IC: 2013. Ich habe vorher animierte Videos entwickelt, aber es hat mich irgendwann gelangweilt, dass ich mit einem Medium arbeite, das im Endeffekt nicht wirklich komplex ist. Bei Videos gibt es immer einen Anfang, die Mitte und ein Ende. Natürlich kann man Komplexität inszenieren, aber am Ende läuft es immer auf eine lineares, und dadurch menschliche Erzählweise hinaus. Das ist ein Vorteil, aber ich wollte etwas Unmenschliches herstellen. Trotzdem aber mit einem Vokabular arbeiten, das wir verstehen. Daraus sind dann meine Simulationen entstanden. Zum Beispiel ein Videospiel, das sich selber spielen kann und nach und nach seine eigene Komplexität entdeckt, ohne dass jemand das Spiel kontrolliert. Ich war auch daran interessiert, ein Medium zu schaffen, das sich unendlich entwickelt. Und ich meine unendlich nicht im metaphorischen Sinne, sondern *wirklich* unendlich.

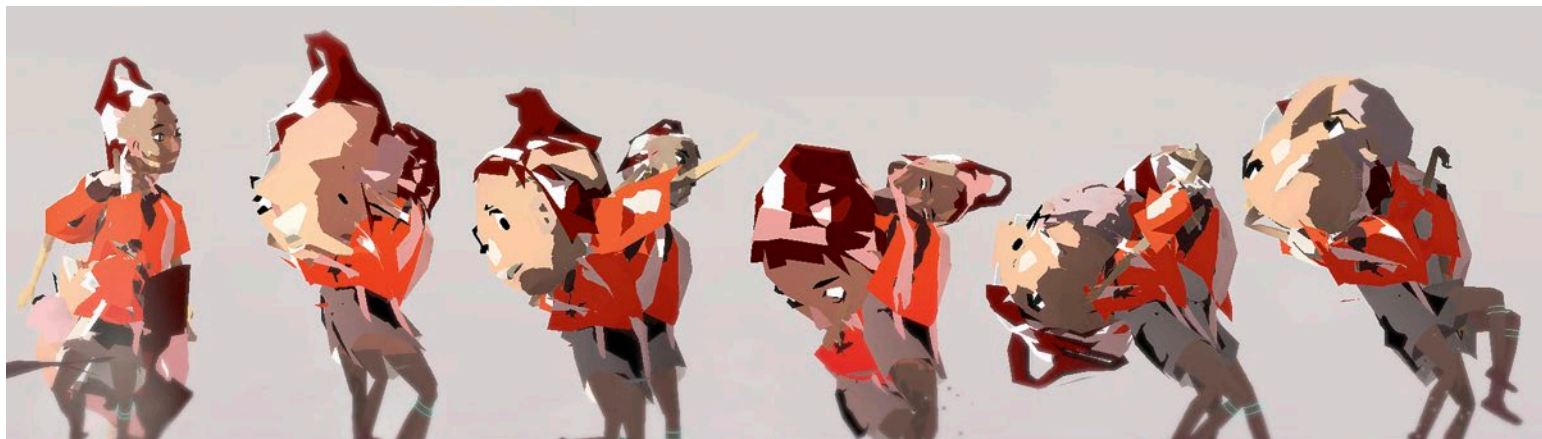**Die Simulation dürfte sich also nie wiederholen?**
IC: Nein, niemals. Das ist vergleichbar mit der Natur. In der gibt es Verhaltensmuster, aber keine Wiederholungen. Ich glaube, es gibt zu meiner Arbeit ein großes Missverständnis. Viele, die meine Arbeit online sehen, denken, dass sie im Grunde Videos sind. Das stimmt aber nicht. Sie basieren auf einer Software.

Und das Programm wird sich ohne dein Eingreifen immer weiter selber schreiben?
IC: Wenn man es jahrelang laufen lassen würde, wird es nicht zu einem Alien mutieren, das du nicht wiedererkennst, aber es entwickelt aus seinen ursprünglichen Regeln neue Variationen dieser Regeln. Genau wie die Regeln der Physik oder Chemie an einen bestimmten Maßstab gebunden sind. Die Komplexität entsteht dann aus diesen elementaren Grundgesetzen.

IAN CHENG Emissary in the Squat of Gods, 2015

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„Die Künstliche Intelligenz im Film *Her*, datet gleichzeitig 3.000 Personen , aber empfindet dadurch keine kognitive Dissonanz, keinen unangenehmen Gemütszustand, den die unzähligen Gedanken, Einstellungen und Absichten der vielen Beziehungen für uns Menschen mit sich bringen würden. "

Wie viele Simulationen gibt es?
IC: Mittlerweile gibt es zehn oder elf.
Kannst du ein wenig über sie erzählen?
IC: Ich habe aus drei sehr grundlegenden Künstlichen Intelligenzen *Chatbots* gemacht. Chatbots werden normalerweise dafür verwendet, dass Unternehmen mit ihren Kunden online sprechen können.

Der Chatbot bei Pepsi könnte also sagen: „Würdest du gerne mehr über Pepsi erfahren?" Und du sagst: „Ja, wie viele Kalorien hat es?" Dann erzählt es dir, wie viele Kalorien es hat, und dann sagst du: „Fick dich, das interessiert mich nicht." Dann wird es sagen: „Achte auf deine Wortwahl!"

Ich habe also drei dieser Chatbots genommen, die anstatt mit einem Menschen untereinander kommunizieren. Die Folge ist, dass die Chatbots eine Unterhaltung haben, die sich nie wiederholt, eine Form von autogenerativer Unterhaltung, die immer weiter geht. Dabei driften sie sehr schnell ab, sie werden sehr schnell sehr abstrakt.
Das ist fast post-symbolisch.
IC: Ja, das hört sich dann so an:

Was meinst du mit ‚er'?
Mit ‚er' meine ich es.
Wer ist es?
Es ist nicht ein ‚wer', es ist ein ‚ist'.
Es entsteht ein Raster. Aber manchmal dreht es sich zurück in etwas konkretes, meistens wegen eines Schreib- oder eines Kommunikationsfehlers. Die Missverständnisse sind quasi der Motor der Erfindung.
Ich habe in Lyon deine Arbeit über ein Ökosystem gesehen. Als ich den Ausstellungsraum betrat, gab es eine Kriegsszene, es war fast wie bei *Game of Thrones*, nur mit etwas weniger Gewalt.
IC: Wenn du ein Fußballspiel auf einem Basketballspiel auf einem Baseballspiel spielst und das alles auf dem selben Feld, dann wird sich jemand in die Quere kommen, das ist meine beste Analogie. In der Simulation gibt es ein Spielszenario mit einen Schützen, der auf der Figur eines Videospiels basiert. Diese Art von Charakteren haben eine natürliche Mission, sie suchen die meiste Aktivität und schießen drauf.

Dann gibt es noch ein weiteres Spiel, eine Schar von Vögeln, in die ich

einen Algorithmus programmiert habe, der ihnen das Verlangen vorschreibt, Objekte zu sammeln.

Das dritte Spiel beinhaltet Pflanzen. Diese Pflanzen habe ich einem Architekturprogramm entnommen. Ich habe ihnen die natürliche Fähigkeit einprogrammiert, dass sie im Ökosystem wachsen und sich vermehren.

Wenn du diese drei Szenarien gleichzeitig spielst, werden sie sich zwangsläufig in die Quere kommen, aber es entstehen auch unerwartete Kollaborationen, Dinge, die ich nicht vorhergesehen habe. Das war für mich ein richtiger Durchbruch. Ich hatte das erste Mal das Gefühl, dass ich als Künstler etwas erschaffen habe, das ich nicht selber kontrollieren kann, das machte es fast magisch.
In Zusammenhang mit *Emissary in the Squat of Gods* erwähnst du die Idee einer Smart-Story. Ist das eine Geschichte, die sich entwickeln und verändern würde?
IC: Richtig, *Emissary* ist eine neue Simulation. Anstatt die Simulation für immer frei laufen zu lassen, wollte ich diesmal das inhärente Chaos der Simulation verschieben, indem ich in ihr eine Künstliche Intelligenz mit narrativen Zielen platzierte. Dadurch, dass die Künstliche Intelligenz innerhalb einer Simulation festgelegt ist, kann sie abgelenkt werden, prokrastinieren und die Richtung verlieren. Aber irgendwann wird es sich selber beenden. Für mich ist das ein Weg, eine Geschichte zu entwickeln, die auch mal ins Stocken kommt, eine Smart-Story.
Wo, würdest du sagen, fängt dein *Catalogue Raisonné* an?
IC: Es beginnt in Miami. Dort erarbeitete ich eine Animation mit Bewegungsaufnahmen.
Die Animationen gehen also den Simulationen voran?
IC: Ja, ich arbeitete mit einer Bewegungsaufnahme, in der ich Markierungen auf dem Körper des Performers machte. Die Kamera filmt die Bewegungen, aber nicht den Körper, die Bewegungen konnten dann auf einem virtuellen Körper gemappt werden. Das war meine erste Arbeit.
Wann war das?
IC: 2011

Und in welchem Kontext?
IC: Eine Galerie in Miami, die Sidewalk Poetry Club heißt. Von Anfang an war die Idee – und daran bin ich noch immer interessiert –, dass ich Verhaltensweisen als Medium nutze. Das ist ein sehr trügerisches, weiches Medium. Ich glaube, die einzige Art und Weise, in der es genutzt wurde, ist in Form von Performances. Ich wollte einen anderen Weg finden. Durch Bewegungsaufnahmen konnte ich die Performance erfassen. Dadurch wurde es mir möglich, die Performance zu verändern, wortwörtlich ändern. Dadurch konnten neue Verhaltensweisen entstehen. Das war natürlich noch nicht sehr mechanisch, und ich glaube die Simulationen waren für mich eine Antwort und ein Durchbruch.
Hast du Verhalten außerhalb von Animationen und Simulationen als Medium benutzt?
IC: Ich habe ein Projekt, das ich leider noch nicht realisieren konnte. Es ist eine spekulative Arbeit. Ich möchte verschiedenen Leuten eine neue Angewohnheit geben. Die Leute müssten dann mit diesem Projekt von mir leben. Sagen wir mal, dass du eine Angewohnheit hast, die du nicht magst oder gerne ändern würdest. Es wäre höchst interessant, echten Menschen eine neue Angewohnheit zu geben. Wie eine innere Softwareentwicklung.
Das gefällt mir. Rituale sind auch meine Obsession.
IC: Sie sind ein wichtiger Teil davon, Mensch zu sein. Wie Jayne sagt, sind es eigentlich die unbewussten Dinge, die viel mehr Zeit als alles andere in unserem Leben einnehmen. All die automatisierten Rituale und Angewohnheiten, die wir haben, um Dinge schneller zu erledigen. Stell dir vor, du würdest bewusst atmen oder all deine Schritte zählen.
Willst du Leuten eine neue Angewohnheit geben oder willst du bestehende Angewohnheiten verändern?
IC: Man kann Menschen nicht einfach eine neue Angewohnheit geben; Marktforscher haben versucht, Leuten die Angewohnheit zu vermitteln, ihre Produkte zu kaufen. Sie sind aber daran gescheitert. Sie müssen eine Angewohnheit auf eine andere Angewohnheit übertragen.
Du musst also Leute interviewen und sie über ihre Angewohnheiten befragen?
IC: Genau, und nach ihren Zwängen fragen. Oftmals sind sich Menschen gar nicht über ihre Angewohnheiten im Klaren. Es würde also darum gehen, eine Angewohnheit zu identifizieren und dann durch eine neue zu ersetzen, sie also quasi zu überspielen. Wir könnten zum Beispiel eine Gewohnheit einführen, die angsteinflößend ist, wie zum Beispiel in bestimmten Situationen deinen Namen zu verändern und dich auf den Namen reagieren lassen.
Ja. Ich habe eine Angewohnheit, zum Beispiel öffne ich immer das Fenster und schreie dann laut raus: *„Valerio!"*
IC: (lacht) Morgens?
Ja, morgens, egal wo ich bin ich schreie immer „Valerio!" aus dem Fenster.
IC: Warum machst du das? Das ist gut.
Weil es positiv ist.
IC: Ja, es ist positiv, es hat Energie.
Valerio!
IC: Tust du es, sobald du aufwachst?
Valerio! – du kannst mir ein neues Wort geben.
IC: Und eine neue Routine, um es zu aktivieren. Vielleicht machst du es jetzt nicht mehr morgens, sondern um 15 Uhr, wenn du normalerweise Kaffee trinkst.
Ja, so könnten wir es machen. ←

Ian Cheng (*1984) wird von der Galerie Pilar Corrias London vertreten. Das Interview ist eine editierte Version eines Gesprächs zwischen Ian Cheng und Hans Ulrich Obrist, das im Rahmen seiner Ausstellung „Emissary in the Squat of Gods" in der Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin von 2015 entstand. Chengs Arbeiten sind bis zum 16. Mai 2016 in seiner Einzelausstellung „Forking Art Perfection" im Migros Museum Zürich zu sehen.

photography, exploited its vernacular and amateur uses, celebrated its capacity for mechanical reproduction, incorporated text as a major component of his work, and experimented with scale. Heinecken's work transcended photography, and indeed materiality. He used almost exclusively found images early on to comment on the state of image making in a crowded media landscape. On his use of found images, Heinecken had a insight: "I find these found, anonymous images to be more interesting and strangely more authentic than ones I might make myself." Later on he called himself a paraphotographer.

Fighter Pilot and Professor of Photography

To grasp the complexity and multidimensionality of Heinecken's work, it is worth revisiting his formative cultural and artistic influences. He was born in Denver in 1931, during the Depression, into a Germanic family of Lutheran missionaries. In 1946 his family moved to Riverside, California, where Heinecken enrolled in Riverside Junior College, eventually transferring to the University of California, Los Angeles. He dropped out in 1953 to join the Naval Air Cadet Program, advancing to the Marine Corps as a jet fighter pilot and attaining the rank of captain.

Although Heinecken had a long-standing interest in art, design, and printed materials, he had yet to experiment with photography. In a 1973 interview, he recalled: "There were no photography courses at that time [. . .] Primarily my work was in printmaking. It was at this time in an art history seminar paper that I got into the idea, 'In what way does the form of a thing communicate its essence?' The professor who was teaching the course suggested that I try to explore that proposition in terms of photographs. What was the relationship of that kind of image making technique to a manually formed one? So I began to try making some photographs and something happened, the big hit."

Heinecken began making photographs in the early 1960s, and he quickly became an obsessively prolific producer. Heinecken rarely used the camera in a conventional way in his art; it is thus interesting to note that his earliest photographic efforts were relatively straightforward pictures. He began working seriously with photography in the early 1960s, using a 35 mm camera to shoot signs, symbols, and graffiti found on the street.

Throughout his career, he was interested in the image, rather than the fine art print or direct observation. One could say that Heinecken was most interested in the objectification of the image, as he often translated the same image into many different formats, from photographs to lithographic film to three-dimensional objects and participatory art. Printmaking is a medium of reproduction, variation, and

plurality, and Heinecken applied those ideas to photography. He often opted to work in series and sequences – transferring, recycling, and reworking images from medium to medium. Being self-taught in photography permitted him the freedom to experiment: "I was never in a school situation where someone said, 'This is the way a photograph is supposed to look.' I was completely open to cut them up, or do anything like that." While Heinecken was not alone in questioning the traditions of photography in the early 1960s, his work challenged photographic conventions and social norms at a time when both were being radicalized. Heinecken began teaching printmaking at UCLA shortly after receiving his master's degree, just as the university was starting a photography program. A self-styled "guerrilla," Heinecken was instrumental in establishing that curriculum in 1962; it would become one of the most influential photography programs in the country, and remained under his leadership until his retirement in 1991. He encouraged his students to think critically regardless of medium, process, or agenda.

Heinecken's challenge to photography's conventions links him to the traditions of the European avant-garde, and he, like many other American artists – such as Jasper Johns, Rauschenberg, and Robert Morris – often cited Dada and Marcel Duchamp as his biggest influences: "If I had a hero, it would be [Duchamp. . . .] The concept of ready-mades, as Duchamp termed them, is probably one of the most important things to have happened in the history of Western art [. . .] I would probably unconsciously fashion myself after him, because he took nothing seriously but everything seriously. It's a very wonderful frame of mind." Like the art of the Dadaists, Heinecken's work is absurd, often humorous; he delighted in creating chaos out of order. His transgressions in photography also link him to the experimental photographers and Surrealists of interwar Europe, including Man Ray, John Heartfield, and L.szl. Moholy-Nagy, who championed multidisciplinary ways of working to explore the revolutionary "new vision" of the era. Although Heinecken was indebted to the European avant-garde, as an artist he was unquestionably American: his recontextualization of magazines, newspapers, advertisements, television, and other consumer ephemera places him firmly within the distinctly American lexicon of Pop and, later, of postmodernism. Furthermore, Heinecken's brand of experimentation with obscene, base, and "low-culture" materials situates him within a particularly Californian visual context. Ed Ruscha began to be interested in vernacular architecture, and John McCracken's use of industrial materials was inspired by car and surf culture.

The mid-1960s was among Heinecken's most radical and fertile periods, during which he moved away from engaging with

discrete media and toward sculptural, environmental, and participatory practices.

During this time his groundbreaking work *Are You Rea* (1964–68; plate 25), a series of twenty-five photograms made directly from magazine pages, appeared. Representative of a culture that was increasingly commercialized, technologically mediated, and suspicious of established truths, *Are You Rea* cemented Heinecken's interest in the multiplicity of meanings inherent in existing images and situations. Culled from more than two thousand magazine pages, the work comprises pictures from publications like *Life, Time,* and *Woman's Day*. Recalling his earlier projections of text and political images onto the figure, the resulting X-ray-like photographs merge bodies with language and hover between legibility and illegibility.

In 1969, Heinecken began creating entire periodicals with a series of rainbow-hued magazines titled *MANSMAG*. He made a total of 120 *MANSMAG*s, each one unique, because the colors vary from magazine to magazine. He circulated these reconstituted magazines, clandestinely leaving them in the waiting room at his dentist's office or slipping them onto newsstands to be sold unwittingly as authentic magazines. "I sometimes visualize myself as a bizarre guerrilla, investing in a kind of humorous warfare in which a series of minimal, direct, invented acts result in maximum extrinsic effect, but without consistent rationale," Heinecken wrote in 1974.

Pornographic Material for 5 Dollars

Ever the experimenter, Heinecken began using transparent film in 1965. The glossy surface of the transparency and texture of the collages produces a combination that is simultaneously pleasing and disturbing, and reprises his technique of layering text and politics over the body. The source material for these transparencies is the now-defunct company The Latent Image, a mail-order outfit that sold unprocessed rolls of film of pinups and soft-core pornography, to be developed by individuals in their homes as a way to circumvent the illegality of importing sexuality explicit images over state lines. Operating during the boom of the porn industry in Southern California, the company marketed itself to amateur photographers – each roll of film included printing instructions and sample model releases, presumably so that the client could begin making his own nude images from home. The company's catalogues featured short descriptions of the models or the types of photographs on a roll of film. Heinecken delighted in using these existing images: "Why should I hire a model or get a friend to pose in a way which neither of us know anything about, when an authentic source exists for four or five dollars?"

The female nude body is a recurring motif, featured in a series of photographs

in which Heinecken rephotographed text and images and projected them onto the nude bodies of hired models with slid projectors. In a bold move, Heinecken gave 35 mm cameras to his models to make their own photographs as they were wandering around the space. By relinquishing the act of taking a photograph, Heinecken explored the possibilities of the performative, chance operations, and random juxtapositions – all dominant themes in his career.

Autoerotic, Fetish and Lesbianism

The female figure is never resolved as a single image; the body is always truncated, never contiguous. In subsequent works, such as *Figure/Flower #1* (1968) and *Breast/Bomb #5* and *#6* (both 1967) are comprised of separate prints made from the same negative, cut up, reassembled, and mounted to produce a continuous new image that, although bizarre, is recognizable as the female anatomy.

A related work, *Le Voyeur/Robbe-Grillet #2* (1972), is perhaps the ultimate example of Heinecken's interest in multiple iterations. *Cliché Vary* is comprised of three individual works, all from 1974: Autoeroticism, Fetishism, and Lesbianism; each invokes cliches associated with those terms. Heinecken's production materials reveal a deliberately calculated matrix and a sequential structure in five "chapters": cosmetics, women and children, lesbianism, marriage, and politics. The portfolio's narrative moves from relatively commonplace and alluring images of women to representations of the male body, violence and the use of sex to sell practically everything.

Artist Martha Rosler dismissed Heinecken's work as "pussy porn," and Allan Sekula, another outspoken critic of his work, charged him with sexism, racism, and conservatism. The critique of Heinecken's use of sexually explicit images coincided with the writing of feminist theory, specifically theories about the "male gaze" as a defining force in culture and the lens through which much of art history is read. Women in the arts were increasingly aware of gender-driven imbalances, and they organized accordingly. Granting that some people might interpret these pictures as sexist propaganda – some called him a "misogynist photographer" – he merely stated, "I tend not to see it that way," and added that he did not know "whether to be more insulted at being called a 'misogynist' or a 'photographer.'"

A Mirror of Contemporary Culture

Those who knew Heinecken defended him. Curator Colin Westerbeck pointed out that work by his female students Ellen Brooks, Jo Ann Callis, and Judy Coleman similarly addressed issues of sexuality. Heinecken's female students seem to have been encouraged by his teaching rather than degraded by his art. Significantly, Heinecken's partner, Joyce Neimanas, who

defines herself as a feminist, declared that she would never have married a misogynist.

Indeed, Heinecken's relationship to sexually explicit imagery is perhaps more complex than was suggested by the critique at the time. His sources were widely available mass-media publications (from pornography to fashion magazines), and thus a mirror of culture at large. For him the found images are artifacts of a culture driven by commercialism, sex, desire, and violence. This was problematic for his critics, who maintained that his work reinforced the very stereotypes he sought to critique by making use of such images. While many were able to recognize the social commentary in the Pop artists' use of commercial imagery, Heinecken's employment of pornography (which can be considered a strain of popular imagery) was much debated, shedding light on the limits of viewers' relationship to images. Moreover, the tendency of some of his canvases to veer toward the beautiful, his personal reputation as a womanizer, and his relatively open attitudes toward sexuality contributed to his work's reading. Heinecken stated in 1976: "I do feel that the most highly developed sensibility I have is sexual, as opposed to intellectual or emotional. I think you can find sexuality in everything, if you look closely enough, and I think it's there in all my work."

Heinecken's co-opting of unmediated pornographic images would seem to prioritize their veracity, rather than their construction. Heinecken's use of pornography, while not always comfortable for viewers, and perhaps not always successful as an artistic strategy, was part of a larger project to shed light on hidden late-capitalist exploitation and hypocrisy. It is precisely in the rawness of the work that we see Heinecken as shocking, messy, and unflinching – a complicated artist who strays from the cool analytics of Conceptual art and enters an artistic domain that never quite fits into any category.

Legacy

The raw quality of Heineken's oeuvre and his focus on sex seems prescient when considered from today's culture of instantly available, sexually explicit images. For Heinecken, America is a place of brutal extremes. Perhaps Heinecken's most significant challenge was to photography itself. His love of visual codes and photomechanical processes resulted in a body of work that runs the gamut from photograms to photo-sculptures to multimedia installations. But the consistent thread throughout his career has been the singular confrontation of the nature of the photographic medium – its materiality, its truthfulness, its cultural import. He created complex visual readings and narratives through repetition, manipulation, and cinematic sequencing, and then subverted the systems he created by re-editing and rearranging his own work. He was as much an editor as

a picture maker. This is a vital connection to the ways that today's artists – among them Daniel Gordon, Wade Guyton, and Mariah Robertson – engage with photography in a world of utter image saturation: as editors and curators. In assessing Heinecken's career, it is imperative to acknowledge that he was deeply committed to photography, even as he was breaking its rules. Just as Heinecken's critique of consumerism came from within, so did his challenge to photography. Rather than eviscerating the medium, Heinecken celebrated photography's limitless permutations and possibilities, and proposed alternate narratives – narratives that continue to resonate well into the twenty-first century. ←

The Radical NOW

Interview: Robert Grunenberg

The online magazine DIS is the voice of a new generation of artists, for which the internet is a fundamental part of their lives and a central medium of aesthetic expression. This year the collective will curate the Berlin Biennale. In the true sense of a collective, Lauren Boyle, Solomon Chase, Marco Roso and David Toro answer the questions in the following interview with one voice. Also their strategy for the Biennale is without compromises: Instead of talking about fear DIS wants to scare the audience.

➜ **How many hours do you spend on the internet per day?**
DIS: Anywhere between six to twelve hours. Our work is online, even meetings. With the smart phones, we never really get off. The most important question is, how to get away from the computer?

Is it difficult because you have the feeling that you are missing out when you are offline?
DIS: We have that feeling all the time. Maybe because some of us have kids now. Even the babies have #fomo. [laughs]

Your platform started somehow at a breakthrough of Web 2.0, when social media disrupted all industries. How did it all begin with DIS?
DIS: It all had to do with the economic collapse in 2008 in the US and its impact on real estate and the job market. From 2008 and 2009 we start having more time. We were freelancing and not working so much. We have known each other for twelve years. We saw all these amazing people around us that were doing interesting things. We thought we had something to say. No one was really covering the news that we thought were important – they had no press, no platform. At that time, not much was happening online as far as magazines went. People hadn't really taken advantage of the internet yet. They were splash pages and blogs. That was it. We were not really engaged with the established magazines. We were asking for something different.

I have the feeling that the scale of artist working within the realm of the internet and digital sphere has increased enormously in the past two or three years – at least they are more visible. You were one

of the first to completely dive into that wave, you maybe helped in creating it...
DIS: We became a hub for it, to find about it. This also happened organically through our social networks: we have relationship with most of those artists. We met them in person, they are friends of friends.

You're bringing together different kind of formats – from interviews to essays, photo shoots, art work and projects – that are specifically created for DIS. Can you elaborate on that?
DIS: In the beginning we didn't do a lot of interviews because unlike the traditional print magazines we were more about presenting material.

Rather than interviewing someone, we would provide the space as a platform, a venue for unmediated material from the source – artists and people we were interested in. We were doing a lot of projects of our own as well. For instance with music, we were looking for people to create original content for the platform. It's always been a great site for people to experiment. For example, we released Arca's first album as a mixtape in 2011, who's since gone on to produce Bjork's latest album. We would create a custom world for the music to live in on DISmagazine, a page coded in collaboration with the artists to create an experience.

You research, curate, review shows and do critical press, as well as embrace and celebrate a lot of things that range from art to pop culture, to advertising, product aesthetics, entertainment, fashion and music. What are your editorial criteria, how do you select and put things on the platform?
DIS: We don't have a manifesto. We are all about the deterioration of borders and boundaries of creative productions. We want to have a voice with the content we create or share from people that submit to us. We want to have a voice that is diverse, that generates and appreciates these hybrids between art and commerce from a critical point of view. We always deal with political subjects in an ambiguous way. At the beginning we kept it really small for a long time. Then our output got bigger. Now it is easier to find people that share our value systems.

I personally feel so attracted to the images, photo shoots and designs you do. It is not that I find it beautiful, but it is captivating. I look at it and there is something so strange about the imagery. It looks like an anti-taste, professional yet ragged. It looks like the past and the future. Can you elaborate on the visuality of your projects and the art you cover?
DIS: Our relationship with design is strange. When it falls into conventions we are not attracted even so we might like it but it would not use it for DIS. We feel more comfortable replicating a commercial methodology design then just simply beautiful design. In our "stock" issue, we discussed

commercial photography, these kind of stock images that we buy and consume all the time. They perpetuate themselves, so we decided to intervene there by replicating and discussing them.

How does an issue come together?
DIS: We're always in contact and dialogue with people. Often they propose content to us, or we commission things we'd love to see happen. We have a dozen freelancers that write for us regularly. Often people just contribute one thing, maybe because they are not specifically a journalist, they can be artists, a teacher... we actually have a lot of teachers and scholars contributing, e.g., stories where students interview the professor or vice versa. The spectrum is quite diverse and the age ranges from 17 - 65. Once a teenager contacted us from Ohio. We started a dialogue and he eventually wrote a few things for us and we premiered his videos and music and brought him to MoMA PS1 in New York to perform. At the time he was 14. His artist name is Glass Popcorn.

The internet made art more accessible to a wide audience and helped create visibilities – even on Instagram you find some sort of art satire. Last year there was this art satire profile on Instagram called @Icallb (I call bullshit) that made fun on some of the main actors of the art world – almost calling it the mafia of the art world.
DIS: There is an example of that from the 90s, a magazine called *Coagula*, an antibody of the art world with a lot of insider gossip. They made a book called *Most Art Sucks*. It was kind of a reference for DIS. We thought about DIS coming from a negative perspective, that is why we choose prefix DIS.

You mean "DIS" in terms of negative as pessimistic?
DIS: No. Negative as critical. There are also other parts of our prefix DIS that are not necessarily negative: discover, discussion. On the way we were learning and figuring out what DIS is. It still grounds us. It is being antagonistic, reevaluating what is accepted. It is a balance of celebration and critique.

Do you have a political agenda?
DIS: We have political positions, but we don't have an agenda. I think you see our tendencies through our issues, which are always dedicated to a discourse. The first issue was about "labor and creative class", the second one was about "art school" the third was about "tweenage culture", and then the "stock" issue about commercial photography. Then we had the privacy issue (all about online life, privacy and data) and then the "disaster" issue. From the beginning we have been dealing with political matters. We use detritus of dominant culture as raw material to express this. We draw the audience into issues and references that they are not aware of.

What questions are you culturally interested in at the moment?

DIS: Generally speaking we are driven by radical receptivity to the present. At this moment we are seeing how layered it is with conflicting ideologies but manifest in contemporary aesthetics. Where does online connectivity leading us as human beings? How does it affect our minds and social relations? Of course matters of the economy, inequality, and the global obsession with growth and productivity. Everything accelerates through technology and we're concerned with how that changes the social landscape. We have the feeling that the present feels more futuristic than ever. But we're not futurists, so we've always explored more of an alternate reality that speaks hyperbolically of the present moment.

Is that something you want to investigate with the 9th Berlin Biennale?
DIS: Our initial proposal for the 9th Berlin Biennale was more about data and privacy. When we got here we realized that Berlin is pretty up to speed on these issues, people are very much aware of what is going on and has many well worked discussions around that. We didn't feel the necessity to continue with that as the main theme.

What themes and discourses did you decide on eventually?
DIS: We are not curators in a classic way. We are approaching the Berlin Biennale as a magazine, as artists, consumers, prosumers. It is going to be a place for collaborations and ideas that deal with themes of the present. This present is a moment layered with conflicting ideology, where even one product, image, or work of art inhabits self-contradictory positions. Another theme is hyper-individualism, one that is exponentially tailored in specificity. The market, politics, lifestyles, messaging – they all speak to the individual, the self, or me. But lifestyles, niches, genres are all generated for marketing purposes, geared toward ever-more-bespoke services, and individualized products all navigated by the sense of dread and powerlessness in the face of hyper complexity of data and the anthropocene. Another theme which is more of a backdrop is "structures of power" and how they are increasingly less visible due to common language of persuasion, which clouds everything. Another theme is surface, not as a surface shielding a depth, not as a surface absent of depth, but as a surface where depth resides. Embedded critique is a term we've been throwing around. Critique occurring in the body of the public, not as a product of a specialized field of labor.

Regarding embedded critique: Will you tackle these systemic forms and infrastructures with the Berlin Biennale? Operate out of them and within them to discuss themselves, you for example use the digital sphere as a space to talk about the digital sphere or you will do merchandise products to talk about merchandising processes.
DIS: When you come to Berlin as the curatorial team of the Berlin Biennale one of the assignments is actually to discover the

city and find venues. We are tourists here. We also find that it is a funny paradox: Us from New York are coming here to show Berlin to Berliners. Beyond that we are also foreigners to this whole system of a very highly regarded institution like a Biennale which DIS doesn't necessarily belong to. Early on when we were discovering Berlin spaces we went into this other paradessence: public spaces which Biennales are expected to use are actually increasingly privatized. At this backdrop we were immediately drawn to Pariser Platz, which is one of Berlin's biggest tourist traps. It is not only the place of German reunification but also the place where Michael Jackson held his baby out of the Adlon Hotel balcony. We were also totally struck that everyone there is routinely holding their selfie stick and taking pictures in front of the Brandenburg Gate meanwhile there is this immense network of power surrounding them. There are snipers on the roof of embassies, there are secret service, weapon manufactures, the biggest banks of Germany and insurances. It really is an incredible place.

And then there is this one Starbucks at the corner.
DIS: The funny and interesting thing is that all of these places at Pariser Platz are so protected and not accessible to the public. You could not go into any of them other than Starbucks. It is the only place you get in. So we decided to use the transitory spaces such as the event rooms and halls of the Akademie der Künste as our main venue.

Can you talk about the programme?
DIS: We will work for example with many different collectives. We will also publish an album with collaborations between artists and musicians.

Are there participants who are not artists or collectives? For example, a brand.
DIS: There will be contributions from people that usually work for a fashion brand, and within their approach move at the intersection of fashion and art. There will also be artists that take on roles and create something like a brand.

I wanted to speak about new utopia – is that relevant for you?
DIS: There is always this expectation to think about Biennales as utopias. It is a difficult and a big question to which we don't have an answer. We have a number of artists that will in their own ways talk about that. ←

Future Without Humans

Interview: Hans Ulrich Obrist

How does consciousness evolve? What happened if people vanish and machines take control? The computergenerated simulations of artist Ian Cheng deal with fundamental questions of artificial and humanoid intelligence. The fascinating insights that Cheng's work lead to, make the 32 year old one of the most important thinkers of contemporary art.

→**I saw your live simulation *Emissary in the Squat of Gods* at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin. It is the first episode of an ongoing project. What is the story?**
Ian Cheng: It's the story of cognitive evolution. There are three parts, the first part is the development of consciousness, and is very much based on a book called *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* by Julian Jaynes. Jaynes says that humans did not develop reflexive, introspective consciousness up until three thousand years ago, which is quite recent. The conventional wisdom is that after the Neanderthals, homo sapiens emerged biologically conscious. But Jaynes says really, if we reflect a little bit about what we actually do every waking day, most of our life is managed by unconscious processes. We solve a lot of problems with the unconscious side of our brain, completely outside our narrative awareness. In moments of facing the unknown, in moments of stress, ancient humans experienced right-brain vocal hallucinations - often the voice of authority figures like your parents, or the local leader, and eventually gods - that literally commanded you what to do. Jaynes speculates that it was only about three thousand years ago, under the stressful condition of geological disaster, mass migration, alongside the development of the mental metaphor of time as space, and the meeting of foreign cultures which had their own conflicting set of god voices, that self-reflexive consciousness emerges. This connection between external stressors forcing an internal soft adaptation in the mind fascinates me. There's a syndrome called the third man

syndrome. Have you heard of this? It happens when, for example, the very famous explorer Shackleton, while crossing the Antarctic, got to the point where he was so far out ...

That's the ancestor of my night assistant, Max Shackleton.
IC: Your what?

I have a night assistant who works with me every night from midnight until six am.
IC: Is he related?

His great-grandfather.
IC: No way! You'll have to ask him about this. Famously, from what I've read, Shackleton thought he was going to die, because he was very far out and couldn't see any landmarks, and felt hopeless, where reasoning failed him, and in this very stressful moment he hallucinated another person. That person was an authority figure, a more senior phantom explorer, who told him exactly what to do, that everything was going to be ok, and made him feel the burden of this journey was not completely on his shoulders alone. Julian Jaynes speculates that early humans experienced exactly these kind of hallucinations when they encountered very stressful situations for which their habits and life experience had no precedent. So the first episode of the simulation is about this stressful external conditioning - both environmental disaster and social group dynamics - provoking an inner cognitive change.

The second episode, *Emissary Forks At Perfection*, is more sci-fi. It takes place in the future and is about a speculative form of externalized consciousness based on a technology in which organisms can fork themselves, much like in software development where an engineer can fork a version of the project in order to safely try out new features without risking the stability of the existing project. The idea is, if an organism who otherwise would have fear or anxiety about an uncertain situation could fork itself, one fork could be left to worry, while the other fork could feel total freedom to try and fail at a variety of solutions. It's a world where anxiety is not eradicated from consciousness, but rather made less relevant - and thus less controlling of decision-making - by this biological forking technology.

And then the last episode is set in the far, far, far distant future, when there are no more humans but the traces of human technology are embodied in an artificial intelligence, which takes the form of a smart house or smart terrain space. The only things that occupy the smart space are animals and vegetation now. The AI finds itself stagnating, bored, and devises a gambling game with a fork of itself that involves making petty little forecasts about the animals living on it. The smart space and the animals form a kind of new codependent intelligence together.

It relates back to the Julian Jaynes

hypothesis that our subjective consciousness actually came from a very social phenomena of understanding, or not understanding, the internal state of other people, and thereby developing consciousness to bridge that gap with them. You could say the way ants use pheromones to organize themselves toward more complex goals, we use narrative consciousness - consensual stories to organize complex human goals. And it suggests that the introspective consciousness we experience is very much oriented as an inter-personal social software rather than an intrinsic biological hardware.

So Jaynes' idea is that consciousness is social and has to do with interaction.
IC: It's a language-based interaction, yes.

This idea of a post-human intelligence, with animals and smart houses, is almost like the question from John Brockman: how do we feel about machines that think? And also, what kind of society one would imagine, in which machine and artificial intelligence (AI) play a major part?
IC: It's an interesting question because we developed through so many different influences. To think that you can make a machine that would be anywhere close to human, you'd have to subject it to very similar influences along the way. But I think AIs will be their own animal. One of our human limitations is that we can only consciously think about the future and the past in a linear way, when we imagine a story. We can only consciously handle one line of complexity at a time. But an AI could manage parallel lines of complexity, and could thus have a very multiplicitous idea of itself. Perhaps it could even manage simultaneous versions of itself to more rapidly evolve. Like the way the AI in the movie Her is simultaneously dating 3000 people at once with zero cognitive dissonance about each relationship.

Let's talk about your simulations. When did you start these?
IC: They started in early 2013. I had previously been making animated videos but I think I got tired of having a medium that could not contain its own complexity. With video there is a beginning, a middle, and an end. Of course you can stage complexity, but at the end of the day, the object you end up with is a very linear, human object. The advantage is you can craft very persuasive definitive arguments with linear forms. I wanted to create something very unhuman but from an initial vocabulary that we understand. The simulations came out of tinkering with a video game engine, imagining a video game that could play itself, and overtime explore its own complexities fully on its own, without my authorial grip. Also, I was really interested in having a medium that wasn't metaphorically infinite but was actually infinite, in its capacity to change. It would then render the viewer as a witness to something ongoing.

So the simulations will never repeat themselves?
IC: Never, no. If you record it now, you'll never catch that moment again. It's like a nature documentary – there are patterns of behavior in nature but there is never replay. I think there's a big misconception about my work, where people see it online and think it's a video, but it's actually software, an app.

And the programme will always continue to write itself, even if you don't work on it?
IC: It does not write itself in a hard coded way. It evolves out its initial rules. If you leave it on for years, it's not going to become something so alien you won't recognise it, but within its rules it will create new variations of those rules. In the same way the laws of physics or chemistry are fixed at a given scale, complexity truthfully emerges from those elemental rules.

And how many simulations are there?
IC: Ten or eleven now.

Can you talk about some of them?
IC: I did one using three very basic AI chatbots. Chatbots are normally used by companies in order to talk to their customers online.

So the chatbot at Pepsi might say, 'Would you like to know more about Pepsi?'

And you say, 'Yeah, how many calories does it have?' and it tells you how many calories and then you say, 'Fuck you, I don't care', and it will say, 'Watch your language!'

So I took three of this kind of chatbot, and instead of them talking to a human, I had them talk to each other. They end up producing a conversation that never repeats itself, a kind of auto-generative conversation that continues and goes and goes and goes.

So the chatbots are talking to each other.
IC: Yeah, but they drift, really far, they get very abstract very quickly.

It's almost post-symbolic.
IC: Yeah, they're like:
What do you mean by 'he'?
By 'he' I mean it.
Who is 'it'?
It is not a 'who', it is an 'it'.
It gets kind of grating. And then sometimes its veers back into something concrete, because of a misspelling or some kind of communication error. Misunderstanding literally fuels more invention.

I saw your work in Lyon about an ecosystem. When I arrived in the space there was a warrior scene. It was almost like *Game of Thrones*, though slightly less violent.
IC: The best analogy I have, is if you play a football game on top of a basketball game on top of a baseball game, all on the same field, someone is going to get in the way of another.

There's the game of an appropriated video game character who is a shooter: these kind of characters have a natural mission to want to seek out where the most activity is and shoot at it.

And then there's another game with a flock of birds that have an algorithm that describes their behaviour and their desire to want to collect objects, including objects that belong to the video game guy.

Then there's the third game of plants that I took from a landscape architecture program, and their natural ability, that I programmed in, is for them to want to grow and multiply in the ecosystem.

So if you play these three scenarios together, they inevitably get in each other's way, but also unexpected collaborations happen, things I haven't scripted. That for me was a real breakthrough, because it was the first time as an artist I felt I didn't have any control over what I had made and it was more magical for it.

You mention the idea of a smart story in Emissary in the Squat of Gods. So is that a story that would evolve and change?

IC: Right, Emissary is a more recent simulation. Rather than letting the simulation play out freely forever, I wanted to offset the inherent chaos of the simulation with an AI that has narrative goals. But being set within a simulation, the AI has the capacity to be distracted, to procrastinate, to get off course, but eventually it will finish itself. For me it's a way to develop a story that can endure bumps on the road, a smart story.

Where would you say your catalogue raisonné starts?

IC: It started in Miami. I made an animation using motion capture.

So the animations precede the simulations?

IC: Yeah. It was a motion capture animation in which I placed markers on the performer's body, and the cameras recorded the movement of the markers but not the body, and then that recording of the movement could be mapped onto a virtual body. That was the very first thing I did.

Which year?

IC: 2011.

And in which context?

IC: It was a gallery in Miami called Formalist Sidewalk Poetry Club. The idea since the beginning – and I'm still interested in this – has been to use behaviour as a medium, which is a very elusive soft medium, and I think the only way it's been really employed is through performance, but I wanted to find another way. Through motion capture I was able to capture a performance but then I was able to edit the performance, literally edit the movements together, and create new behaviours out of that.

Of course the way I did it was very mechanical, and I think the simulations were, for me, an answer to create behaviour that was unexpected.

Have you used behaviour as a medium

outside of animation or simulation?

IC: I have another work, which I haven't been able to do yet. It's a more speculative work. I want to give different people a new habit, that would be the work, and so you would live with the work.

For example, let's say you have a habit that you are upset with or want to change. I've been researching a lot about habits and how you can reprogramme them. It would be very interesting to insert a new habit into real people. Like inner software development.

I love that. Rituals are also my obsession.

IC: This is actually a very vital thing of being human. Like Jaynes points out, it's actually the non-conscious part of being human which occupies so much of our time in life, all the rituals and habits that we do to make things faster. Imagine having to consciously count your steps or breathe.

So will you give people a new habit or will you start from their existing habit and shift them?

IC: Well, research on habits has shown that you can't just give a person a new habit; marketers have failed to do so. They actually have to piggyback a habit onto an existing habit.

So you have to interview people or listen to them talk about their existing habits?

IC: Exactly, and their compulsions. And oftentimes people are very unaware of their own habits, because it's so automatic. You would have to replace something or install a new habit on top of an existing one.

I would love to sleep an hour less so that I gain an hour a day; if it could liberate an hour, it would be a dream.

IC: We could do a habit that's scarier, like, change your name under certain conditions and have you recognize being called by that name.

Yes, or, for example, I used to always open the window and scream out, 'Valerio!'

IC: [laughs] Like, in the morning?

Yes, in the morning, wherever I was I would scream out of the window, 'Valerio!'

IC: Do you still do this?

Yes.

IC: Can you tell me why you do this? This is good.

Because it's great, isn't it? It's positive.

IC: Yes, it's very positive, it's energising.

Valerio!

IC: Do you do it as soon as you wake up?

Valerio!

IC: Does Koo get mad?

No, no. I mean, I don't do it that often these days, but we used to do it a lot in the nineties. So we could reactivate that.

IC: Let's do it.

You can give me a new word.

IC: And a new routine to activate it. So maybe it doesn't happen in the morning but maybe it happens at 3pm when you usually have to have a coffee again.

Yes. We could do that.

IC: Hopefully your whole life. [laughs]

Valerio was an urban legend, I can email you about it. It came out of a nightclub in Rimini.

IC: So you heard teenagers say it?

Yes, teenagers would do it in a city, they would just drive around shouting it, and old people would complain and call the police. There was a whole urban legend.

The brother of my friend, Paolo Fabbri, had a club in Rimini and they think it started there. Paolo was a sociologist, he analysed the whole thing, but he maybe also produced it. It was all over European Press: 'The Summer of Valerio'.

So I started to pick it up. I was in France at the time, and people would be screaming Valerio.

But we reactivated it in 2014. If you follow Stefano Boeri, on Twitter or on Instagram, you will see screaming Valerio, and there were some Japanese tourists who were totally scared. So you have to come up with a new word. The new Valerio.

IC: But we have to come up with a new routine that goes around it, to activate it.

Yes, exactly.

IC: Because it's more than just a word. It's the whole ritual matrix around it.

And do you have any unrealized projects, dreams, utopias, projects which have been too big to be realised?

IC: I want to make a school someday.

A school?

IC: Yeah. For me the most exciting kinds of art are those that physiologically activate your brain in a new way, and you feel something strange. A symptom of that is oftentimes nausea. When you experience something that you're not supposed to experience as a human being, you get nauseous. And I want to make a school that – both through art and through more practical exercises – trains you to experience things that you are not supposed to experience. You could call it a neurological workout or a neurological gym. We have gyms for our body, and they say meditation is a kind of gym for your mind, but I think art can exercise a wide variety of states, not just meditative ones. It could be a neurological mind gym. ←

Purple Business

Text: Jan Kedves
Photo: Chadwick Tyler

Three new albums in seven months – all of them hitting number one on the U.S. Billboard charts. Future's fame has exploded within the last couple of months. The rapper from Atlanta is conquering the world of pop with a voice like a stuttering moped, artistic beats and grandiosely nonsensical texts.

➔ The name? Brilliant and, of course, pretty pretentious. Future – the future of rap. But the figures speak for themselves: this man from Atlanta, Georgia, who goes by the rapper name Future but whose real name is Nayvadius DeMun Wilburn, managed to climb to the top of the American Billboard charts three times between August 2015 and February 2016. To begin with, it's almost unbelievable that a musician can release three new albums within just seven months. But that these three albums all went from zero to number 1 is unprecedented. So with his history, Future is already unique. And it doesn't look like things are going to change anytime soon. Future's grand trap hit "Thought It Was a Drought", released on the album DS2 in August, with the spectacularly smutty line "I just fucked your bitch in some Gucci flip-flops" has been on the sound waves for months. The flip-flop lyric, where Future stresses the "flip" in a high tone and puts a minus emphasis on the "flop", has entered the Urban Dictionary, and it still makes people laugh.

For example, the other day when Kevin Hart – today's most influential black comedian – performed his stand-up show in Berlin, the warm-up guy responsible for pumping up the Mercedes-Benz-Arena audience only had to mention that he, being a 40-year-old African-American, was completely lost in today's hip hop: in the old days, it was "Fight the Power" and "Fuck tha Police" – but now? "I just fucked your bitch in some Gucci flip-flops"? Five thousand Kevin Hart fans from Berlin – very Anglophile, very sneaker-conscious, very millennial-looking people – completely cracked up.

I guess that's what you call an impact. And Future's impact seems to increase as his lyrics become simpler. His rap for the track "Jumpman" from the album What a

Time to Be Alive, released with Drake in September, goes "jumpman, jumpman, jumpman, jumpman, jumpman, jumpman". Of course, the line is a tribute to the great Michael Jordan, and if it hadn't been so catchy in all of its almost mindless simplicity, Kanye West surely wouldn't have borrowed it verbatim for his track "Facts" on the album The Life of Pablo.

So here's what we know: Future produces albums extremely quickly and so far has had an almost unprecedented run; older generations are clueless when listening to his music; he's got a passion for repetition; and amidst all the excitement about his person he's so relaxed that one could think, What the hell is wrong with him? The cognitive discrepancy between presumed efforts and goals achieved, between the man's relaxed ways and his music's omnipresence is huge. And it is exactly this discrepancy that makes Future so fascinating.

To add another example from the world of comedy: when Future appeared as a musical guest on "Saturday Night Live" recently, not only did he perform two songs from his latest album EVOL, dancing nonchalantly around with the guest singer he brought with him – The Weeknd – in Yeezy 750s, wearing sunglasses, but he was also included in a sketch, which usually only happens to music guests with fabulous acting skills. Right in the middle of the show they said they would now introduce a new news format, "News from the Future". The show then switched to a back stage camera, which zoomed in towards Future who was supposedly reporting news from the future. However, either he hadn't been told what to do or he was supposed to pretend not to take part. He just put on a crooked smile and, very quietly, whispered: "What ch'all doin'?", like saying, "What the fuck?"

What the fuck? That was probably also Future's response when Numéro Homme Berlin wanted to interview him. He had just produced a wicked fashion photo series in a New York strip club with photographer Chadwick Tyler, where he showed off his super hip neo-pimp-style that he, of course, had developed in the strip club scene of his hometown Atlanta (more on that later). But the shoot ended abruptly as Future got thrown out of the club for smoking a joint. The interview with Numéro Homme Berlin that follows just after this incident – conducted by phone – is, well, a complete fail. Future is 32-years-old and has four children from four different women, one of them being black bombshell Ciara whom he wrote the flamboyantly saucy R&B song "Body Party" for and who is rumored to currently be suing him for 15 million in damages. Future doesn't think it's very funny when someone asks him what it feels like to have four children and four ex-partners. He hangs up. Ouch!

The author apologizes, and apologizes

one thousand times more. It really was a pretty stupid idea to do an interview with Future with an eight-hour time difference at 12:30 at night, being quite tired and via a bad phone connection. We are allowed to send some questions via e-mail, but please, only harmless ones, says Future's PR-manager. The replies that follow, for example on Future's clothing style, read like this: "My style represents the importance of my appearance. When I'm wearing new designer shoes or clothes it feels great because I've worked hard to afford them. That's why I love them so much. Apart from that, they suit me great so they are part of my look." Well, there's no real need for an e-mail interview with Future.

Instead, let's listen to his music carefully and try to find out what Future really does with Auto-Tune. Auto-Tune had long been this hideous Cher-effect that makes your voice sound like your vocal cords are cast from plastic. It's nothing completely new for rappers to use this audio tool to turn the sounds of their rhymes into a weird medium between singing and rapping, or woman and man. But in Future's music, Auto-Tune creates a new effect: his voice that without effects subtly clatters like a stuttering moped sounds at the same time evil and sweet when Auto-Tune is added and Future raps ultra-fast triplets. "I don't use Auto-Tune to sing but to rap with a few melodies and make the vibe cool", writes Future per e-mail. Cool vibe, he's right. But it also has a completely paradoxical effect. Coolness, harshness, softness – you hear it all at once in Future's Auto-Tune raps.

Softness is an integral part of Future's music. But don't be fooled – it's always an extremely heterosexual softness. Just how heterosexual it is can be seen in the online documentary series "Magic City" directed by Lauren Greenfield for the American GQ magazine in Atlanta last year. Magic City is the name of the strip club where Future's house producer, DJ Esco, deejays every Monday. This is where the big hits are made, or, to be more accurate and where weak songs are revealed: if the black strippers (most of whom have been curvaceously altered in the top front and lower back) don't dance to a new song, then it's certain that it won't be a success on commercial radio either. Almost all of Future's hits had their beginning there, on a Magic City Monday. Just like "Magic" where Future raps: "Voilà, magic, voilà, magic, yoilà, magic, voilà, magic."

And incidentally, we learn from the documentary that "strip club" is not really the right term to use because the women at Magic City are naked all night long. They don't have thongs to stick the dollar bills into so they collect the money from the floor in plastic bags – still naked – at the end of the night. Magic City knows the maximization of "naked": "asshole nekkid" – the moment when a stripper truly feels naked - when she presents herself from

behind with spread buns to a visitor.

Future knows a thing or two about clever marketing so he had his own Emoji created: the "thumb in her butt"-emoji, a thumb in the butthole of a black woman. Future likes anal sex. And of course he likes cough syrup, so there's a Future cough syrup-Emoji. The world of hip hop couldn't function without cough syrup anymore – cough syrup with codeine that is, available only on prescription. You mix it with Sprite, call it "Dirty Sprite", "Lean", or "Purple Drank", and it will stretch your sense of time in a very pleasant manner due to the opiate. But Actavis, which had been the U.S.' drug-cough syrup of choice for a long time, has now been temporarily banned. Since the ban, the black market is said to have been booming, or people have switched to Robitussin. But is it really the same? What's the current status of the American Purple Business?

Of course, as a journalist, that's what you want to know from Future. But he hung up and the e-mail questions had to be harmless and that includes drug-free. But anyway, Future probably wouldn't have been able to answer a question about Germany's way of dealing with cough syrup – whether Germans also get high on codeine? We'd rather talk to Money Boy or Hustensaft Jüngling (cough syrup lad) about that because they have something like the German-speaking monopoly on the senselessly extended Auto-Tune trap of Future and other US rappers like Soulja Boy, Gucci Mane, or Lil' Wayne, adapting it for schoolyards in Uelzen or Neukölln, posing with Sprite bottles. But then, even if Money Boy or Hustensaft Jüngling were to reply, you wouldn't know whether to believe them or not.

Anyways, cough syrup coolness, super-simple rhymes, endless repetitions, Auto-Tune, neo-pimp-styles – it's all part of Future's success. We mentioned before that this success would continue for a while, or rather: It is already continuing. The new track "Kung Fu" by Baauer, who once gave us the "Harlem Shake", features Future with Pusha T as a guest rapper. He reports from a crack kitchen: "Cook, cook, cook, whip it up, whip it up, whip it up." We'll also hear him on Ariana Grande's new album due out in spring. The future? It is just beginning. ←