

Piercing the Bubble: Entanglements with Fictional Life Forms

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Submission to AR@K26: Reclaiming art! Creative expression as a building block in our social foundations

Abstract

In line with the motto of your call, I want to discuss ways of creating empathy with our environment, our landscape, and non-human others with interactive media artworks. I will focus on works of my series “Epizoons” that are part of my artistic PhD dissertation (University of Arts Linz, 2025) and will analyse how they create a direct and emotional access to our environment using assemblage theory, particularly N. Katherine Hayles’ concept of “cognitive assemblages” and conceptions of cuteness as well as Jakob Johann von Uexküll’s *Umwelt*-concept.

“Epizoons” are fictional life-forms made from ceramics and electronic sensors. They make changes in our environment audible through sonification; measurements that we humans can sense – like temperature, brightness – but also those that we cannot sense even if they affect us – like particulate matter or CO₂ concentration. I will argue that “Epizoons” can create meaningful relations with the environment and non-human others by forming “interactive human-computational collectives” (Hayles). And that it is not simply the “Epizoons” posing as life forms, and that they share an environment with us, that make such a relationship likely, but specifically that they create an emotional bond with spectators by evoking a sense of care through their cute aesthetics and their emotional address with sound. I will further speculate on how to extend that form of sonification to make landscapes active agents in artworks and transcend not only the human immediate sensorium but also human time-frames.

Keywords

sound art, post-humanism, new materialism, interactive media art, environmental art

Disciplinary field

Artistic research, Media art, Film

Format of Presentation

The presentation can be held as a paper presentation, but I could also install one of the artworks at the conference, depending on the premises and whether or not we can secure support for transport and setup.

CV

Jürgen Buchinger is an artist and researcher in the field of media art and sound. He holds a Master of Arts in Film from University of Applied Sciences and Arts Lucerne (CH) and an artistic PhD degree from the University of Arts Linz (AT). His works have been exhibited in numerous exhibitions both in Switzerland and abroad. Buchinger has co-founded the activist video collective *Umkämpftes Basel* in 2021. He teaches Master Students in Design and Film at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Lucerne (CH) and is lecturer for theory at Kunstschule Liechtenstein (LI). He lives and works in Basel.