

HMKV

Hartware MedienKunstVerein

EN

**JANA
KERIMA
STOLZER**

**LEX
RÜTTEN**

**WE
GROW
GROW
AND
GROW**

**11.3.-30.7.
2023**

**WE'RE GONNA BE ALRIGHT
AND THIS IS OUR SHOW**

WORK DESCRIPTIONS + FLOOR PLAN

IMPRINT




Exhibition

Jana Kerima Stolzer & Lex Rütten –
We grow, grow and grow, we're gonna be alright and this is our show
11 March – 30 July 2023

HMKV

Hartware MedienKunstVerein

An exhibition by
HMKV Hartware MedienKunstVerein,
Dortmund

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This multimedia exhibition embodies a radical change of perspective, observing the world through the eyes of non-human organisms to which we usually attribute no consciousness. The artists give these beings a voice: They speak to us of the technosphere and the central role of symbiosis in evolution (**Micro**), of deep time, extractivism, coal mining and sorcery (**Xtract**), of pioneer plants, invasive species and neophytes (**Pionea**), of carbon dioxide, warm and cold periods, superplants and sedimentation (**Azolla**), of the dream of using geoengineering to save the world (**Symbiotechnica**), of the technically mediated resurrection of extinct species (**Extinct**), and of corals, immortality, budding, cloning and the dream of eternal life (**Hydra**).

The artists speculate on past, present and future symbiotic relationships between microorganisms, plants, animals, bacteria, fungi and technical objects as they ponder innovative cycles and alliances in nature, all in the age of the Anthropocene and beyond.

Hosted by the HMKV, *We grow, grow and grow, we're gonna be alright and this is our show* is the first institutional solo exhibition by artistic duo Jana Kerima Stolzer and Lex Rütten. Both are based in Dortmund. — IA

Micro

symbiosis
technosphere
evolution

Starting with the bacteria, fungi and other microorganisms that populate the smooth surfaces of our smartphones, **Micro** imagines an innovative kind of superorganism that lives in a close symbiotic relationship with our technical devices. Given their exponential multiplication, with cell division occurring every 20 minutes, bacteria are able to evolve and adapt very fast to new conditions. Here, the resulting superorganism feeds on human sweat, absorbs radiation and electrosmog, and derives heat from the power circuits contained in the device. At the same time, it organically influences the inorganic technosphere and transforms it into a liveable habitat, a technological biosphere. The possibilities for connections and interdependencies are endless.— IA

Xtract

deep time
extractivism
coal mining
Ruhr area
sorcery

Xtract tells of the laying down of history in rock strata and of the extraction of rock, and how this process has changed our experience of nature. This virtual reality installation brings us back to a time when coal was still biomass in the form of plants. Coal, a solid sedimentary rock, was formed through the coalification of plant biomass between about 323 million years ago (hard coal or black coal) and 2.5 million years ago (lignite or brown coal). The journey runs from the genesis of coal through to its discovery in the Ruhr area, where it is thought that coal mining began around the year 1510 at Muttental (Witten). **Xtract** imagines a parallel between the start of local coal mining and the conviction of the sorcerer Bottermann, thereby chronicling how the exploitation of resources that began in the Age of Enlightenment led to the expulsion of the magical, the incomprehensible and the supernatural.— IA

Pionea

pioneer plants
invasive species
neophytes
invasion biology

A pioneer plant is a plant species with particular adaptability for the colonisation of new, vegetation-free spaces. Such pioneer habitats may be of natural origin (e.g. as a consequence of fires or volcanic eruptions) or may arise through human activity (in mine pits, opencast mines and abandoned spaces). Neophytes, on the other hand, are invasive plants that have become established in areas where they are not indigenous, with human help. This is the case of a great number of plant species found in Germany today which did not originate in Central Europe. The butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*), for example, was introduced to Europe from Central China by a French missionary in 1869. A „garden escapee“, it subsequently established itself in the wild and can now be found along railway lines, on embankments and in industrial wasteland. The problem is that it displaces indigenous plants on a large scale, but caterpillars cannot eat its leaves.— IA

Azolla

carbon dioxide
interglacial
ice age
superplant
sedimentation

A symbiosis of an aquatic fern and a cyanobacterium, the water fern (**Azolla**) was responsible for the „Azolla event“ some 49 million years ago, when mass blooming of the plant occurred in the Arctic Ocean (‘We grew and grew and grew’). Following its death and sedimentation, it sequestered and bound very high levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide on the ocean floor, thereby cooling the Earth in the Eocene to such an extent that the global climate switched from a warm interglacial period to the ice age that still persists. The mockumentary-style **Azolla** saga relates how some of the sedimentary layers of water ferns gradually formed the fossil fuels oil and coal over millions of years, and these release the sequestered carbon dioxide when they are burned, thereby contributing once again to climate change. The Azolla we see in the aquarium is considered an invasive species in Europe, while it is also hailed as a kind of mascot for CO2 capture and storage technologies.— IA

Symbio- technica

greenhouse
Biosphere 2
geoengineering
Ruhr area
pumps

Set in the small, artificial biosphere of a greenhouse, **Symbiotechnica** speaks of delusions of grandeur and a belief in the technical feasibility of producing synthetic nature. Geoengineering aims to adapt nature to the circumstances of climate change, from growing climate-resistant corals to darkening the atmosphere with micro-particles to reduce solar radiation on Earth. However, this installation also tells of species that can only survive in certain places thanks to the use of technology. One such species is humankind in the Ruhr area. Without the pumps that remove rising groundwater from the mineshafts, the area would be permanently uninhabitable due to the irreparable damage caused by mining activity. Technology keeps the groundwater from coming into contact with toxic substances, and keeps the surface, which has sunk up to 30 metres in some parts, from becoming flooded. **Symbiotechnica** poses the question, 'Can nature integrate technology and run it itself?' — IA

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Video installation, video (12:39 min.), printed floor fleece, greenhouse, LED light, small objects, 2023

Extinct

species extinction
sixth mass extinction
will-o'-the-wisp
last generation

Extinct considers extinct species and their continued existence as restless spirits. There have been five mass extinctions in Earth's history to date. In the last one, 66 million years ago, an asteroid collided with the Earth, causing the disappearance of the dinosaurs. We are now said to be in the sixth mass extinction, this time caused by human activity. This installation imagines extinct species as mythological beings and will-o'-the-wisps. These "ghost lights" are suddenly appearing and short-lived phenomena that are sometimes observed in marshes, moors or dark forests and may be caused by the spontaneous combustion of naturally occurring gases or by bioluminescence. The phenomenon is described as small flames that move to and fro above the ground. In folklore, will-o'-the-wisps are associated with the spirits and souls of the dead and departed, who may lead the observer to their doom or bring bad luck. 'We hear the calls, back to matter, de-extinction.' — IA

Video installation, video (7:18 min.), printed floor fleece, small objects, 2023

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Hydra

corals
immortality
budding
cloning
dream of eternal life

Corals are sessile (immobile) colony-forming polyps of the phylum Cnidaria. ‘Tropical coral reefs [are] the largest structures on our planet to have been created by living organisms’ (Bernhard Kegel). They can be seen from space, and are now increasingly under threat from climate change (coral bleaching). **Hydra** imagines corals as a collective, many-headed organism that can regenerate indefinitely, e.g. through budding or cloning. This type of immortality is possible because coral polyp cells are simple and largely undifferentiated, each one functioning as a stem cell that can reproduce the whole organism. This is why biologists and medical scientists are so interested in this undying creature. ‘This little thing’, say Stolzer and Rütten, ‘holds the key to the dream’: the dream of eternal life.— IA

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