

Un-Earthing (pharmakon), 2021 Digital video 4K with sound, 14 min. Still: Ralo Mayer / Bildrecht

Schedule: 20th March – 24th March from 10.00 – 16.00 hours

There's always so many things.

Within the workshop we will approach a plethora of objects, and we will try to weave stories around them as much as between ourselves. How can we, as artists, tell stories that present multi-subjective perspectives on a complex world, and how can we tell stories about things and their relations without playing into the hands of conspiracy theories? No definite answers are to be expected, but perhaps we will begin with each of us bringing along an object of interest.

The workshop integrates several aspects and modes of working with stories in art: a reflection on modes of investigation, the translation of research into storytelling, for instance as spatial settings or in time-based media, and a certain inclination towards speculative fiction and outer space.

These aspects – and their questioning – are also key elements of my own practice.

The term “plot”, for instance, is quite a wondrous word. It radiates ambivalence and contradiction. Against the rather location-based and territorial concept of site (and artistic approaches towards it), plot can refer not only to a piece of land and its intended economic use, but also invokes geometry, various shades of scheming, or story lines in fiction.

When an object is used as a prop in a performance, on stage, or on screen, a peculiar transformation takes place, interplay of script, story and other actors allows for new and playful ways of interacting. Through performative research, we can make use of this playfulness for artistic storytelling.

Against a common conception, space, as in outer, is not an empty vacuum, but quite full of things. Space is at the same time scientific reality and imaginary backdrop, it is the place of countless plots for speculative fiction and the plot of future interplanetary colonial speculation. Thus, the third notion I would like to bring to our table is that of unearthing / un-Earthing. It proposes a narrative framework that involves a spectrum of meaning, including archaeological and artistic practices, extractivist logic, or the transformation of humans / non-humans by leaving Earth.

The workshop will begin with an introduction to possible working methods and approaches,

followed by a discussion of its themes and their relevance for your own work. We will look into hopefully inspiring material, including, but not limited to, theory, and will sketch out specific lines of common interests. Sketching includes writing and performing scripts. There will be time and space to informally discuss your existing works and ongoing projects.

To get ourselves going, I'd like to visit local sites and a museum, not necessarily linked to art.

Some of our fabulations will be presented in the end: we will find an ephemeral format that transforms the usual artistic limitations – economic, personal, epistemic, political – into methods of storytelling.

An optional reading list will be made available before the workshop. It might include texts by Ursula K. Le Guin, Benedict Singleton, Alice Gorman, or Jon McKenzie.

BIO

Oscillating between art, filmmaking and research, Ralo Mayer's work delineates "ecologies of contemporary history". By exploring concepts such as space settlements, artificial ecosystems, or asteroid mining, he creates artistic storytelling about pasts, futures and the science fiction of everyday life, on and off Earth. Mayer has studied art at republican and royal art academies in Vienna and Copenhagen and has co-founded the self-organized Manoa Free University. His work has been presented at exhibitions, film festivals, theaters and conferences. In his artistic PhD about "Space Un·Settlements" Mayer has investigated the relation between scenarios of human life in outer space and rather earthly realities here, on our planet, through the concept of un·Earthing. His current interests include licking meteorites, kids in space and clouds on exoplanets.

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