Time and Technology
- a conversation between artists Rebecca Krasnik,
Sophia Ioannou Gjerding &Mark Tholander.
Moderated by Magdalena Tyżlik-Carver.
March 6th, 2021

On the last day of the exhibition Time Times
Three by Rebecca Krasnik, the four met in the
exhibition at Galleri Image. Their conversation
reflects on the experience of walking through the
exhibition. They touch on themes such as
computer-generated visuals, the digital space, the
materiality of time and endlessness. The following
is an excerpt of their conversation.

MT-C: Due to current regulations, your exhibition
never opened to the public, and since the theme of
the exhibition is time, I was thinking that you
could say that it has existed in a kind of negative
time. Could you talk about the theme of the
exhibition and the objects that are in it?
RK: Yes, in my exhibition a bodily experience of
time is challenged by a more fluid and indefinite
time. The time it takes to walk through the rooms,
is a part of the exhibition itself. So the lack of
visitors has definitely created some lost time, or, as
you describe it, negative time. The first thing you
see, when you enter, is one of the stairs that
emerges from the ceiling, and continues into the
wall on the right. I like to think of the stairs as the
narrator that leads you through the rooms of the
exhibition. Along the way, there are two artworks
of steel – they both speak to the fact that
everything in this exhibition is merely an illusion or
an imitation. In the end you meet the
hippopotamus. It is a computer simulation shown
on two big screens. It lives in a world I made out
of numbers and a code creates its life, making
random outcomes over time. The two big screens
almost act as windows into the world, where the
hippo lives.
MT-C: What is the motivation behind the title of
the exhibition, Time Times Three?
RK: To me it sounds like the beginning of a riddle.
It alludes to the idea that time can be multiplied by
any number, which hints at the possibility of
multiple universes or co-existing parallel timelines.
MT-C: When I entered the exhibition, the two
stairs immediately pulled me in – the way they
emerge from the walls and the ceiling and
continues through the walls. They introduce a
distortion of the perspective. It is almost like the
space is breaking up and it feels like a stage, which
prepares me for the final artwork with the hippo.
What was your experience entering the exhibition?
SIG: From the pictures I had seen of the stairs
beforehand, I had the sense that they were
somehow distorted. But when I entered the
exhibition I was surprised by the scale of them in
relation to my body – they are big, and distorted in
a way that seems like their perspective change as
you walk around them. I experienced this contrast
between the wooden stairs and the two screens.
But what I also noticed, was how both the stairs
and the work on the screens invited me to dwell –
to just be here with the artworks.
MT: There is a lot of different work here, created
with different materials, but I sense that the
negative space around them makes them come
together. Even though they reflect different
approaches – the stairs, the computer simulation
and the steel work – they all are made up of
divisions, or numbers. To me, that is closely
related to time and I really sense that they are part
of the same conversation, and the theme of time
brings them together.

MT-C: But time is so unfathomable - what is the materiality of time, or how do you work with time as a material?

RK: When you work with a time-based medium, you inevitably are working with time – time is part of the material you work with.

SIG: I think the different artworks in this exhibition points at different ways of seeing and experiencing time. There is this strong sense of dividing and measuring time and space in all the artworks – except the computer simulation. It cannot measure time in the same way. Because it is not a loop, that follows a rhythm, but a code that creates the hippo's movement at random, something else is going on here, right?

RK: Yes, exactly. There are no equal intervals between the hippo's movements, like there would be if it was a film playing in a loop. Also, normally when you make a film, there is a beginning and an end – like a unit for measuring time. But with a computer simulation there is no beginning and end – theoretically it can run forever. In that way, it can represent a time that is more fluid — a time that stands in contrast to my own bodily time.

SIG: Besides the computer simulation, you have artworks in the exhibition that are made of wood and steel. Do you think they tell different things about time?

RK: Yes, definitely. Each material has its own timeliness embedded in it, and that becomes part of the work too. I like to work with wood because it is alive, it warps and bends and reacts to the temperature and humidity of its surrounding. It also has its own visible way of measuring time – counting the seasons that have past – you know, the way each line in the wood indicates a year in the life of a tree.

MT-C: I know you've made the hippo with open-sourced software, but it mimics the aesthetics of the CGI (computer generated imagery) that has been popularised by big companies. So I wonder how you chose that particular aesthetic for your work?

RK: I see that the medium mimics photography and video, and that it is often used and understood in the same context. But it originates from completely different technical and theoretical concepts. Photography and video have a direct link to reality, while CGI is completely detached from our physical world. So I wanted the hippo to look real, in the same way I think popular CGI looks real. I tried to work with this "realness" by letting somethings reveal, that nothing about it is real. The sound, for example, it doesn't really match the waves in the water – it is just slightly off, and that makes the whole scene seem surreal while it still feels coherent.

MT-C: It is almost like you interrupt the digital space – it becomes part of the specificity of the medium, in a sense.

MT: Part of the hippo's material – what it is made of – is the algorithm that determines its movements. But I also see this algorithm as a mechanism for calculations. So in some way, this algorithm and its randomness is another kind of really strange measuring device.

RK: Yes, I like to also think of the work as a measuring device, that, through its numbers and calculations, can show us hypothetical truths. The hippo shows us that in theory it can run forever, even though we know that it will not – at one point the software will crash or the hardware will break. In our world, and with our decaying bodies, we know nothing can run forever. But the numbers allow us to imagine this endlessness.

MT: Is there a fascination of this endlessness in your work? All the dividing, and counting and

measuring in your work – it all somehow points to this idea of infinity too.

RK: I think a lot of my work is somehow a failing attempt at trying to measure time, and all the dividing and counting is part of that. With this exhibition I wanted to find the timeliness within CGI — how time is expressed and experienced through it. I found that the endlessness of it, is how it differs from other media. So this exhibition is a way for me to try to grasp the endlessness I find in CGI.

MT-C: In the discourse of technology there is so much magic put upon computers. The way you talk about the computer space, it is mystic almost. But in fact, it comes from logic, right? And from a desire to define things in a way that seems finite.

RK: To me, it is not the medium itself that is magical, but it is the way we interact with it, that seems surreal or mystical. A lot of computer animations mimic photography and video, and within the software I use to create it, all the terminology is borrowed from lens-based media. But I also see it in the way it is used in commercials or in architecture – I see that it is accepted as representing something real. To me, it is still not clear how the medium relates to our world and how that effects how we relate to it.

MT: It seems like the hippo is conscious about the specificity of its own medium – it does not hide it, it is a part of it. The hippo exists in the space of the medium and it shines through it, or the hippo embodies it rather. It seems like the whole exhibition is about real time and abstract concepts of time, and how these clash. But I sense that your work mostly revolves around a personal experience of time and not real time – whatever that is.

RK: Yeah, definitely. I think it always comes down to the personal experience of time. In the end, it seems like, that is the only thing we are left with. Time is mostly used to connect people – a measuring tool, that we all agree to use, so that we can be on time together. But often time also makes me feel very alone.

MT-C: When you are talking about time, it is impossible not to consider the space, which it is in, too. The way you have organised – or almost choreographed – the objects in the space, and the way it moves me through the rooms, it is clear that you have had that in mind, when making the exhibition.

RK: I am happy that is how you experienced it! I wanted to pull what is happening behind, and on the screens, out into the space. As you walk through the exhibition it should feel like one coherent experience.

Biographies

Artist Rebecca Krasnik bases her work on the technological inventions at the turn of the 20th century, and how they influenced general perceptions of time and space. Working across media, from photography to 3D computer animation, texts and sculptural installation, Krasnik explores how technological developments continue to change how we use and create images. Krasnik graduated from School of Visual Arts (US) in 2018. Her work has been shown at ilyd.nu (DK), a.m. (UK), Endless Editions Biennial (US), A.I.R Gallery (US), Nowolipki Gallery (PL), and AXW at Anthology Film Archive (US). Her books are available at Bladr (DK), TiPiTin (UK) and Printed Matter (US). Krasnik is the founder and curator of Lazed Leaves.

Artist Sophia Ioannou Gjerding draws on popular culture, critical theory, as well as historical sources in her research-driven work. She examines how image production affects us both culturally and politically. Her works reflect upon the underlying power structures that characterise today's image production, for example, the degree of fiction found in the retelling of historical events, or the representation of gender, nature and other species. Gjerding graduated from The Jutland Art Academy in 2018. Gjerding has previously shown her works at ARoS Art Museum (DK), Kunsthal Aarhus (DK), Korea Foundation Gallery (KR), Click Festival (DK), Slamdance Film Festival (US), Oxford Film Festival (US) and Imago Lisboa (PT).

Artist Mark Tholander works interdisciplinary in a mixed media field. He works with narratives that revolve around a disorientation or that, which is "out-of-sync". It is in the intersection that occur when the normalised is on shaky ground, that his interest lies. Tholander graduated from Jutland Art Academy in 2019. He has previously shown his work at Rencontres Internationales, (FR), Seattle Transmedia & Independent Film Festival (US), Korea Foundation Gallery (KR), Kunsthal Aarhus, (DK) Ung Dansk Fotografi 17 (DK), FILE — Electronic Language International Festival (BR), Bideodromo, Bilbao, (ES), Beijing International Short Film Festival (CN) and INCA Institute (US).

Magdalena Tyzlik-Carver is an independent curator, a writer and an assistant professor in the Dept. of Digital Design and Information Studies at the School of Communication and Culture at Aarhus University. She is also an Associate Researcher with Centre for the Study of the Networked Image at the London South Bank University, a member of Critical Software Thing group and on the editorial board for Data Browser series. Her curated exhibitions and events include ScreenShots: Desire and Automated Image (2019), Movement Code Notation (2018), Corrupting Data (2017), Ghost Factory: performative exhibition with humans and machines (2015). Tzylik-Carver is co-editor of Executing Practices (2018).