Press Release

ARTIFICIAL TEARS Singularity & Humanness— A Speculation

An exhibition at the MAK

Exhibition Venue	MAK Exhibition Hall MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	21 June – 1 October 2017
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Free admission on Tuesdays from 6–10 p.m.

The exhibition *ARTIFICIAL TEARS. Singularity & Humanness—A Speculation* quotes from a chapter of human history yet to be written. Thirteen artistic positions open hypotheses, pose questions, and provide impetus for a confrontation with the era of singularity as envisioned by American futurist Ray Kurzweil. Transhumanist scenarios predict a world wherein humanity achieves immortality through self-optimizing artificial intelligence, and fundamental human characteristics such as forgetfulness could disappear. The exhibition focuses on human emotions and ethical considerations about Digital Modernity in order to simultaneously stimulate intellectual and emotional associations.

The works on display evoke a gloomy mood—with the goal of awakening feelings of apprehension that can serve as an engine for reorientation and progress. The title of the exhibition is also intended to raise awareness that every utopia represents a speculation, that our future is yet to come and there is potential for agency. The question arises of whether we human beings want to escape our increasing marginalization through technologies controlled by capitalist and political systems and whether we will work up the courage to fight for our freedom as a society and as individuals— in fact mainly against ourselves: When our utopias fail, we will have to unlock the potentialities in our dystopias.

With the optimization of the human organism through wearable or implanted computer technology, nanotechnology, memory-enhancing drugs (nootropics), and life-prolonging measures, ideas from science fiction are already approaching a realm worthy of serious scientific consideration. These technological achievements influence our life plans down to the last detail; it appears that even our concept of dying might

soon require an update. While complex organs have already become interchangeable and the margin between animate and inanimate substances is blurring through phenomena such as cyborgs and avatars, one facet in particular does not lend itself to artificial imitation: humanness itself—in all its poetic inefficiency.

Not only utopian and dystopian novels like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) presupposed that technology primarily served to establish and reinforce power structures; this premise is also reflected in the concept for *ARTIFICIAL TEARS. Singularity & Humanness—A Speculation*. In their form or content, several of the objects and installations on display tie back to science fiction movies and their concomitant dystopias. These works concentrate on the fine line between reality and fiction and deliberately bring citations from science fiction for comparison to reality. Other artworks emphasize archaic aspects, which stand for an exit from a "clean" and highly technologized world. The "wild" or "magical"—thought of as being in opposition to progress—here is viewed as a promising counterpoint to the overregulation and manipulation of the masses through technology. The archaic bespeaks of the individuality and autonomy of an "old" unrestricted world; it finds expression in the representation of hypnotic or mind-expanding states of consciousness, which cannot be technologically imitated: The dimension of "humanness" that resonates in the exhibition title.

The exhibited works distinguish themselves through the many different techniques and materials: deliberately chosen traditional media like sculpture and forms with contemporary connotations like video and installations come together with future-oriented artistic methods such as 3-D printing or chemically synthesized and thus wholly new flavors.

ARTIFICIAL TEARS. Singularity & Humanness—A Speculation is intended as a plea for humanity: the resilience and variability of the human condition and the significance of remembering and forgetting.

Curator: Marlies Wirth (MAK)

Participating artists:
Jean-Marie Appriou, Dora Budor, Mariechen Danz, Genghis Khan Fabrication Co., Aleksandra Domanović, Cécile B. Evans, Daiga Grantina, Matt Mullican, Sean Raspet, Sarah Schönfeld, Jeremy Shaw, Kiki Smith, Clemens von Wedemeyer

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