

INFORMATICS COLLOQUIUM

Speaker:

Prof. Dr. Christopher L. Salter, Immersive Arts Space, ZHdK

Art in the Age of Immersion

Abstract:

In 1968, the Polish born curator Jascia Reichardt opened a landmark exhibition at the ICA in London entitled *Cybernetic Serendipity* in which all manner of sensor-augmented devices, objects and sculptures stood ready to usher art into a new technological age. Remarkably, while ever more complex sensors, algorithms and devices have steadily increased in the 54 years since Reichardt's show, essentially the same goal has remained: using artificial sensing as an integral part of an artwork in order for the work to "make sense" about its "world" and respond to it. This phenomenon perfectly aligns with the long sought-after imaginaries of artists, designers and technologists to create seamless computational links between our bodies and the larger environment and thus, reorganize the human senses in order for them to act as input for such works. But if the history and practices of "immersion" in the arts has long focused on the senses being transformed through melding them with technologies embedded into the actual physical world, the next wave of immersion seeks the opposite: to capture the senses in order to render a synthetic world that is "realer" than the physical one. In the words of computer graphics pioneer Ivan Sutherland from 1965, the new "ultimate display" (a harbinger of later VR/AR head mounted devices), would need to "serve as many senses as possible." Thus, contrary to the idea that the senses are simply to be replaced by the prosthetics of artificial sensors, a different story seems to be emerging. Our senses are needed to drive and feed ever-new immersive experiences by being increasingly "coupled" or linked to the simulated. This talk will careen through TeamLab's immersive environments installed in the landfill islands of Tokyo, through the visions of artists in the 1960s to create new kinds of "reactive environments" and our now just emerging "metaverse" age of Extended Reality in order to give a critical historical and socio-technical picture of our present and future visions of art in the age of immersion.

Bio:

Chris Salter is Professor for Immersive Arts and Director of the Immersive Arts Space at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). He is also Professor Emeritus, Design and Computation Arts at Concordia University in Montreal and former Co-Director of the Hexagram network for research-creation in arts, cultures and technology in Montreal and Co-Founder of the Milieux Institute for Arts Cultures Technologies at Concordia. He studied philosophy and economics at Emory University and completed his PhD in theatre studies with research in computer music at Stanford University. His artistic work has been seen all over the world at such venues as the Venice Architecture Biennale, Barbican Centre, Berliner Festspiele, Wiener Festwochen, ZKM, Kunstfest Weimar, MUTEK, Musée d'art Contemporain, Muffathalle, Are Electronica, EXIT Festival and Place des Arts-Montreal, among many others. He has given over 100 academic and artistic talks worldwide. He is the author of the single authored monographs - *Entangled: Technology and the Transformation of Performance* (2010), *Alien Agency: Experimental Encounters with Art in the Making* (2015) and *Sensing Machines* (2022), all from the MIT Press.

Date and time:

Tuesday October 3rd, 2023, 5:15 pm

Location:

Pérolles 21, room A230, Bd de Pérolles 90, Fribourg

Contact person:

Prof. Denis Lalanne, Prof. David Bozzini, Dr. Anna Jobin

The colloquium is free and open to the public.