Artist Interviews

5 Questions with Mario Pfeifer

1. What does the idea of a non-human world mean to you? Do you see it as an inspiring artistic proposition or as a real possibility for the near future?

I would say it's a rather scary proposition. Therefore it can be an inspiring idea for an artist. In my case, I find it more inspiring to think about how to avoid such a scenario and wonder what would the conditions for a non-human world be: war, disaster—or an outlook on a better habitat than we currently live in. How realistic is it? Well, it's more realistic with world leaders who use language like, “We are going to bomb the shit out of you,” or, “Climate change is a hoax,” than with more progressive thinkers who want to make sure we live a sustainable life on earth. Another aspect is that innovators preparing for civilian space travel might conquer another habitat and make it unattractive to stay on Earth for a certain group of civilians, namely the rich, the smart, and the biologically most advanced human beings. It's inspiring to think critically about these conditions, but I am more in favour of making life on Earth more equal and sustainable.

2. What role does social, ecological and economical sustainability play in your artistic practice?

I would describe my works as based on social interaction with geopolitical dynamics that define the cultural situation I produce my work in. For me, the collaboration with protagonists is key. The ecological conditions of my artistic production are potentially problematic, asI board quite a lot of flights. However, in a current project I am trying to learn more about the future of energy by speaking to experimental and innovative thinkers about their concepts for sustainable, fairly produced, and distributed energy. The economy of artistic practice is certainly very complex to phrase. We talk about symbolic value and an art market that is very dynamic. I don't consider the market and the production value of an art work important. What is important to me is the symbolic value an art work carries and how much impact it can generate in the social, ecological, economic, and political sphere. I am interested in if and how art has a educational value, and I don't mean art is necessarily an educational tool per se.

3. On which level do you think could art contribute to social and ecological changes?

I believe that art, or in a larger context culture, has immense power to advocate social and ecological change. Because it speaks symbolically, it is larger than any campaign and has potentially longer-lasting effects. But all those ideas I mentioned are bound to individual performance, both from the producer and the one who reflects upon it. If you can reach a symbiosis between the two, it might generate a huge impact.

4. During the last decade the liaison between art and science has been a topic frequently discussed. In this context, art has often been considered a successful tool for the production of alternative forms of knowledge. What do you think about this idea?

Sure, I do agree that artists often think out of the box and therefore can help to develop alternative forms of knowledge. It all depends on who one references, since we must admit a lot of artists do also cater to standard forms of experience and knowledge production. Anyhow, I personally would focus more on how somebody thinks, feels, reflects, and rather not focus on the profession of artist or scientist. When an issue is of of tremendous importance, I guess these labels disappear and once joins forces to be innovative.

5. What is one of your favorite YouTube videos that deals with a certain aspect of the exhibition (e.g. the non-human scenario, environmental factors or sustainability)?

Maybe not a classical YouTube video, but let's try this: Spike Lee's documentary on Hurricane Katrina: When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12xj1sHvIWA). It’s a realistic scenario that might result

in a non-human world ...