

CHANGING

THE

GROUND

A TALK SERIES TO RECONSIDER OUR POST COVID WORLD

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ABOUT: The JRC SciArt project is pleased to announce its upcoming series of conferences Changing the Ground to reconsider the post-covid worldview, which, in our opinion, requires a closer collaboration between art and science amongst other urgent changes that are needed to confront the challenges before us. The pandemic has put reality on hold for long enough to incite humans all over the planet to rethink humanity's role and effects on the deep ecology. "Deep" refers here to a deeper integration of people of all cultures, creeds, and socio-economic status, with not just 'nature' but life itself and with being in all its forms. The emerging scientific and technological evidence of quantum physics that all reality is entangled at the sub-atomic level, is supporting this vision. Changing the ground means opening oneself to this comprehensive integration.

Inspiring talks by artists, engineers, designers, philosophers, human scientists and scientists can help change the outlook of Europe for the better. The ground – the fundamentals on which we stand – that is changing is that humanity cannot continue to survive as a community by taking for granted its unlimited control and possession of Planet Earth. Science and technology have endowed people with powers that most 'users' still do not fully utilize or even understand. But neither science nor technology have been capable of anticipating, let alone preventing a global viral attack. On its own, the art community is powerless to deal with major threats. SciArt has been created specifically to put science, technology, art and society together to question existing paradigms and to instil a new understanding of the interdependence of everybody with everything.

Hosted by the European Union's School of Administration, the talks will be aired by videoconferencing as part of the EUSA Lunchtime Conferences. The series will run from September 2021 to June 2022, with one talk a month. The closing lecture aims to resume all contributions within the framework of SciArt, pointing out the opportunities of change opened up by Covid-19.

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Contact: adriaan.eeckels@ec.europa.eu

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CHANGING THE GROUND

Speaker: Derrick de Kerckhove

Date: 28/10/2021

Topic: Quantum Ecology

We live in fragile times – not only environmentally, socially, politically, but also epistemologically. The ground of it all is shaking, as governments, institutions and 'the people' are caught between traditional human values and algorithmic decisions and hidden motivations. The digital transformation has been creeping upon us without forewarning. While it is beneficial in many ways, it has created a global epistemological crisis by introducing automation not only in our communication, management, administration and transportation tools, but also in our minds. Derrick de Kerckhove, former professor at University of Toronto, will share his view on this topic.



Dr Derrick de Kerckhove, PhD, is retired from the Department of French at the University of Toronto (Canada), where he was also formerly the Director of the McLuhan Program in Culture & Technology (1983-2008). He has participated in global art projects, such as Solstizio and ArtComTec. His research and publications have dealt with psychology, culture, art and communication technologies. His books have been translated into various languages and include: The Alphabet and the Brain (Springer Verlag, 1988), Brainframes: Technology, Mind and Business (Bosch&Keuning, 1991) and The Skin of Culture (Somerville Press, 1995). His next book, The Quantum Ecology, in collaboration with Stefano Calzati, is to appear next year at MIT Press.

Speaker: Michael John Gorman
Date: 16/12/2021
Topic: Museum Science/History of Science

WHAT NEXT FOR SCIENCE COMMUNICATION IN TIMES OF PLANETARY CRISIS?

The Covid-19 pandemic and climate discussions around COP-26 have demonstrated that we face unprecedented challenges in science communication due to the “infodemic” of misinformation through social media. Beyond cases of deliberate misinformation, we are experiencing a growing divide between accelerating scientific and technological developments transforming society and increasingly fragmented wider public discourse. Legal scholar and social psychologist Dan Kahan coined the term „identity protective cognition“ to describe the way identification with different political and social groups determines whom we come to consider to be experts on contested matters of fact. My talk will explore how we need to reinvent our traditional approaches to science communication for the post-pandemic era, with a special focus on the role of place-based, embodied and social forms of science engagement.



Prof Dr Michael John Gorman PhD; Founding Director of BIOTOPIA museum, a communication platform between sciences, culture and people (Munich, Germany). Founding Director of the Science Gallery at Trinity College Dublin; founder and CEO of Science Gallery International. He was previously a Lecturer in Science, Technology and Society at Stanford University, and postdoctoral fellow at MIT and Harvard.

WHO IS AFRAID OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE? POSTHUMANISM, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Speaker: Francesca Ferrando
Date: 20/01/2022
Topic: Posthumanism, Technology and Society

In the 21st century, a spectre is haunting humans – the spectre of technology. From algorithmic predestination to internet addiction, from the technosphere to super-intelligent AI: technology is here to stay. This realization is not a neutral statement, nor does this entail an uncritical acceptance of the ways these technologies are being actualized. Instead, it is a wake-up call to be aware of where we are at – as individuals, as a society, and as a species. We can no longer think of technology in separation from humanity and ecology; its material production has to be taken into consideration as well. In order to understand technology in the era of the Anthropocene, we need a radical change in people’s worldviews. Anthropocentric and human-centric values that are still ingrained in many societies, in and outside of Europe, are serious obstacles towards this shift, which is urgently needed in the rise of global catastrophes. In this talk, we will approach the human condition through the philosophies of posthumanism, by addressing humans as part of a planet, nets of ecological and technological emergencies, expressions of cosmic phenomena. We will understand together how each of us can help in tracing new horizons. This will be a journey of self-inquiry and self-discovery: into technology, into society, and most importantly, into ourselves...



Francesca Ferrando, Ph.D in Philosophy, M.A. in Gender Studies, teaches Philosophy at New York University-Liberal Studies. Founder of the Global Posthuman Network, she is a leading voice of Posthumanism, which recognises human diversity in relation to ecology and technology. She has received numerous honours, including the Sainati prize, with Acknowledgement from the Italian President. She has published extensively on these topics; her latest book is Philosophical Posthumanism (Bloomsbury 2019).

Speaker: Alexander Wendt
Date: 10/02/2022
Topic: Quantum Physics

QUANTUM THEORY AS CRITICAL THEORY: ENTANGLEMENT AND THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL PHYSICS

Society is based on the world described by physics. But which physics? The orthodoxy is that our minds are just complex machines that follow the laws of classical physics. Teaching this materialist worldview has naturalized an understanding of ourselves as fully separable individuals, for whom conflict is natural and cooperation is a problem (Hobbes). But what if people actually have quantum minds? In that case our individuality would be intrinsically relational rather than separable, entangled non-locally in socially shared wave functions of meaning. The classical worldview would be a social mis-construction of our nature, creating false consciousness of who we are. Social science would be complicit in sustaining unjust, classical institutions, and producing universal alienation – from the world, each other, and ourselves. In such a world, quantum pedagogy offers not just better social science, but in the long run, better people – consciously entangled individuals for whom cooperation is the norm and conflict the exception.



*Dr Alexander Wendt, PhD, Mershon Professor of International Security and Professor of Political Science at The Ohio State University. His book *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge UP, 1999) has become a widely used text in the study of international relations. His recent work, *Quantum Mind and Social Science: Unifying Physical and Social Ontology* (Cambridge UP 2015), explores the concept of humans as quantum wave functions.*

BEYOND BLACK SWANS. EDUCATING TO UNPREDICTABILITY TO INHABIT HYPERCOMPLEXITY

Speaker: Prof. Dominici PhD
Date: 17/02/2022
Topic: Hypercomplexity

We will debate the illusions of the hypertechnological, hyperconnected civilization and its ongoing anthropological transformation. Including: 1) the “tyranny of concreteness” and “great mistake”: the belief that all problems can be solved by delegating solutions solely to technology, and that (hyper) complexity can be measured, managed and predicted through data, algorithms, formulas and statistics. 2) The fracture between the sciences and the humanities, and between the natural and the artificial represented by “false dichotomies”. 3) The illusions of social control and elimination of error. 4) The vision of an ordered, regular society occasionally interrupted by “black swans”, without recognizing that emergency, error, uncertainty and unpredictability are intrinsic to all complex adaptive systems, which follow an irreversible arrow of time.



Sociologist, philosopher and researcher. Fellow of the World Academy of Art & Science (WAAS), Scientific Director of CHAOS - International Research and Education Program. Professor of Public Communication, Sociology of Social Complexity, Sociology of Cultural and Communicative Processes and Intelligence, Complex Systems and Networks at the University of Perugia. His areas of expertise include (hyper)complexity, interdisciplinarity in education, technology, citizenship and communication. Author of numerous scientific articles and books; working on international scientific committees and projects, including Horizon (EU-funded project, 2020-2023).

Speaker: Nicola Triscott
Date: 17/03/2022
Topic: Art/Art activism

RE-THINKING RACE, IDENTITY AND MIGRATION: CULTURAL INQUIRY AS CURATORIAL STRATEGY

When many people think of an art gallery or museum, they picture a serious place where visitors stand quietly contemplating rows of paintings on white walls. But art institutions are far more than containers and displayers of art objects - they are complex reflections of the cultures that produced them and continue to produce them. Directors of art institutions are increasingly aware of their role within the broader social, political, and cultural landscape, and the responsivity that is needed to serve the intellectual, cultural and social needs of their diverse communities. Most also struggle with issues of social relevance, elitism, and ownership. My talk will explore an approach to directing a contemporary art institution in which 'curating' is centred in developing cultural collective inquiries that involve artists, scientists, researchers, audiences and participants in addressing an important societal topic. In this case study, the topic is our shifting perceptions of race, identity and migration



Nicola Triscott PhD is a curator, researcher and writer, specializing in the intersections between art, science, technology and society. Since 2019, Nicola has been Director/CEO of FACT (Centre for Film, Art & Creative Technology) in Liverpool, UK, where she curated the exhibition *And Say the Animal Responded?* in 2020. Previously, Nicola was the founding Artistic Director/CEO of Arts Catalyst (from 1994 to 2019).

PLANT RIGHTS: TIME TO OPEN A DEBATE

Speaker: Alessandra Viola
Date: 21/04/2022
Topic: The Rights of Plants

Why do we name animals and talk to them and don't do the same with plants? This happens because we all share the same 'disease': plant blindness. We are deeply convinced that plants are an inferior form of life, that they are 'less alive' than animals and less important than them for our life. A belief that originates from the past, but which scientific research contradicts. Plants are sensitive, social, intelligent beings. This, now, we know for sure. Why then do they not deserve rights? Who has decided and in what way that men, women, children, animals deserve rights, while plants do not? Two countries have already introduced the „Rights of Nature“ in their Constitutions. But the environment we call „Nature“ is made up of 90% green living being. I wrote the first „Universal Declaration of Plant Rights“, arguing that we must recognize the rights of plants to build a more equitable, just and beautiful world for all living beings. Are you ready to open a debate on this issue for the first time in thousands of years? This will be the real Green new deal.



Alessandra Viola is a writer, science journalist, documentary director and television producer. She holds a Ph.D in Science Communication and one in Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. She collaborates with a number of major Italian newspapers and has been awarded „Best scientific journalist of the year award“ by the Armenise-Harvard Foundation. Alessandra has written several scientific essays including *Brilliant Green. The surprising History and Science of plant intelligence* (Island Press 2013, with Stefano Mancuso. First edited in Italian and translated in 17 languages) and *Flower Power. Plants and their rights* (Einaudi 2020) where she discuss for the first time ever a possible 'Declaration of Plant Rights'. Alessandra is currently visiting student at the Center for the Humanities and Social Change of the Ca' Foscari University in Venice and in 2022 she will teach Environmental Communication at San Raffaele University in Milan.

Speaker: Ariane Koek
Date: 19/05/2022
Topic: SciArt

THE MAGIC OF MAKING SENSE - THE FUTURE-NOW OF ART, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The COVID pandemic continues to expose the fault-lines in human society - including lack of diversity, equity, and mutual understanding. In this age of hyper-flux, what role can art, science and technology play in helping society ride the waves and shifts? Why is ecology often left out of this discussion? And what are the implications of all four working together in sharing and shaping our world and humanity? Drawing on the work of theorists Karen Barad, vital materialist Jane Bennett, philosopher Timothy Morton and indigenous scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer this talk will be illustrated by key international artists whose work shows the way.



Founding director and designer of the Arts at CERN programme (2009-2015), Ariane is an independent specialist consultant, curator and producer in art science and technology. She works for example as creative partner to the Cavendish Arts Science programme, (Cambridge University UK), curator and creative producer of Earth Water Sky, environmental arts science residency (Ca' Foscari University, Venice, Italy). She is on the Advisory Board for the JRC SciArt project and in 2021 was a Creative Director at the Venice Biennale.

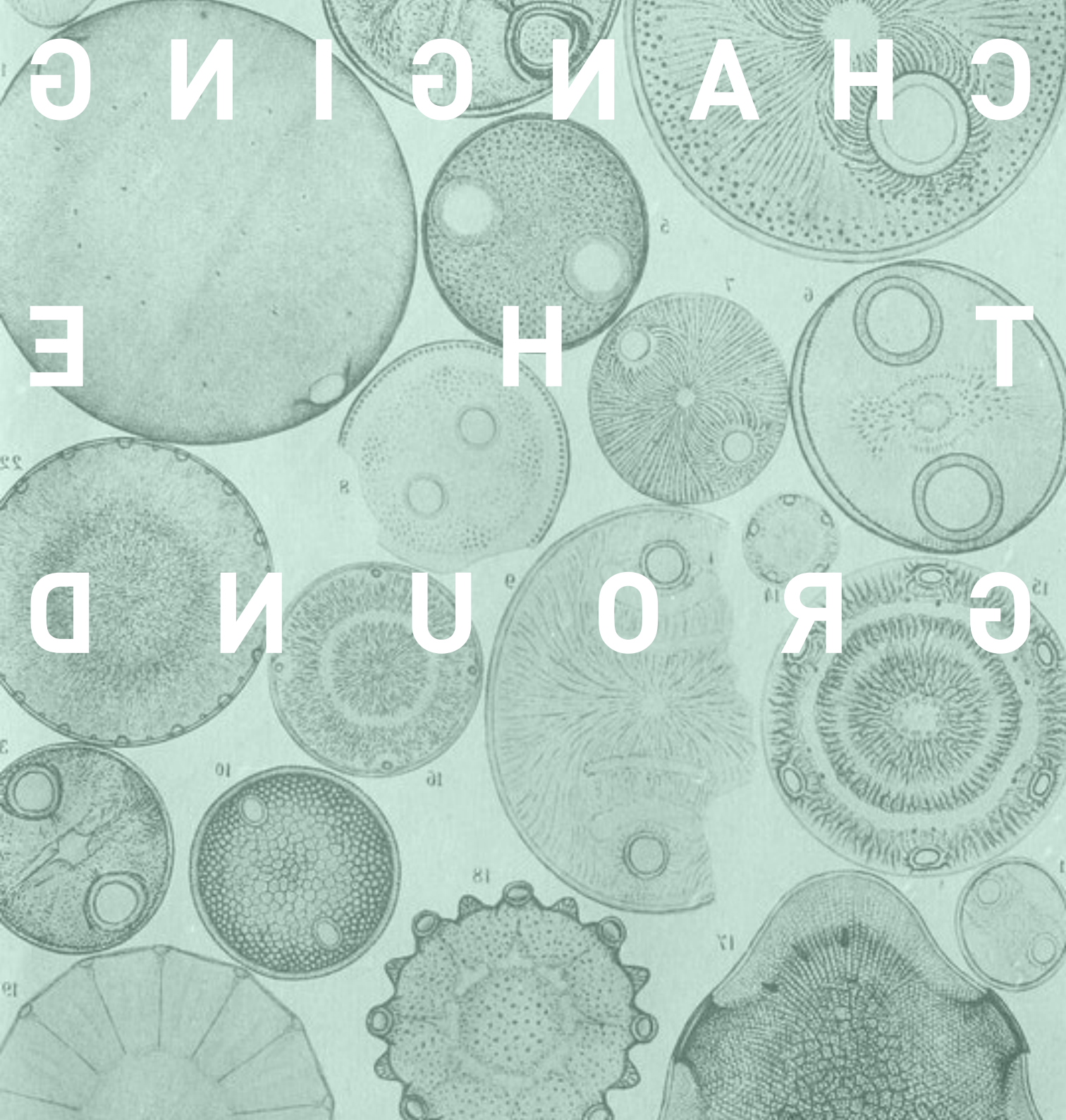
RENEWING OUR MENTAL MODELS WITH MICHEL SERRES

Speaker: Christopher Watkin
Date: 23/06/2022
Topic: Post-structuralism

As our understanding of the world changes over time, our mental models and philosophical categories must also change. No-one has done more to challenge out-of-date mental models and engineer new, creative, and practical alternatives than the late Michel Serres (1930-2019), member of the prestigious Académie Française. This talk explains how Serres helps us to rethink three fundamental oppositions that structure almost all Western thinking across the sciences and the arts: nature and culture; knowledge and myth; the subject and the object. The effort constantly to renew our conceptual toolbox is not just a dry philosophical exercise: the complex problems that we and our children will face in the future cannot be solved with the rusty old intellectual implements invented by our great grandparents.



Australian Research Council (ARC), Future Fellow and Senior Lecturer in European Languages at Monash University, Melbourne Australia. He writes on philosophy, theology and society, and his recent books include Michel Serres: Figures of Thought (Edinburgh UP, 2020) and French Philosophy Today (Edinburgh UP, 2016).



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