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Hito Steyerl: In Search of a Future Garden

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Abstract: The paper explores Hito Steyerl's mixed-media installation *This is the Future/Power Plants* (2019), which opens a broader discussion on the artificial intelligence (AI) industry and its impact on shaping a worldview that has political, ethical, and societal implications. Drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy's ideas on struction and general equivalence, I approach this installation as an experiential critique of entrenched power structures driven by the ideology of the future, which entangle beings, environments, and machines on the planetary scale. In the analysis of the work, I consider the growing reliance on predictive algorithms that deliver results based on past data and their implications for the present. While focusing on the technical aspects of the installation, I argue that this work invites us to contemplate how the present–future relationship is modeled around finality, which opens space to critique and defy the logic of profitability based on future predictions.

Keywords: predictive algorithms, struction, general equivalence, immersion, media art installation

Introduction

In this paper, dedicated to the analysis of the mixed-media installation *This is the Future/Power Plants* (2019) by German artist and scholar Hito Steyerl (b. 1966), I explore how this installation enables us to raise questions concerning the artificial intelligence industry that is invested in growing a dominant vision of the world, one based on the imperial and colonial gaze (Crawford). In the analysis of the work, I consider the growing reliance on predictive algorithms that deliver results based on past data and its implications on the present. While focusing on the technical aspects of the *This is the Future/Power Plants* installation, I argue that this work invites us to contemplate how the present-future relationship is modeled around finality, which opens space to critique and defy the logic of profitability based on future predictions. The unfolding narrative in the installation, which conflates the human and machine learning predictions of the near future, eventually distorts and ruptures the totalizing image of the future based on the logic of profitability and technological progress. I will address how, in this installation, the rupturing and glitching of future prediction—in its attempts to distort temporal axes—contributes to developing an approach to immersion as an experiential critique of the logic of profitability based on future predictions.

This interrogation of temporality questions the role of predictive algorithms that rely on past data to calculate risks and shape future and present realities. To explore this proposition, in the *Future Prediction* part, I will introduce Steyerl's installation as an example of artistic strategy, which utilizes AI aesthetics and predictive algorithms to critique the extractive AI economy by making the means of production visible. In the *Image Database: Towards a Total Vision* section, I will discuss how the images used to create the video element of the installation introduce another dimension—the biases embedded in the structures of databases, such as

ImageNet. By looking into these structural biases, the role of the AI industry in creating a totalizing and exclusionary vision of the present and the future becomes more prominent. In the *Against the Future?* part, the ideological notion of the future based on the logic of profitability will be explored in relation to the unfolding narrative, which unsettles linear projection of the future driven by technological progress. In the final part of this paper, *Recon/struction*, I will further elaborate on the present-future relationship by drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of struction to analyze the spatial arrangement of the installation as a critical reimagining of the future in the context of techno-utopianism and global crises. Drawing on this concept, I will develop the idea of recon/struction in relation to Steyerl's artistic strategy as a conceptual tool for navigating the catastrophic logic of general equivalence, which is produced by a configuration of capitalism and technology. For Nancy, general equivalence represents a regime, which "virtually absorbs, well beyond the monetary or financial sphere but thanks to it and with regard to it, all the spheres of existence of humans, and along with them all things that exist" (5). This logic also absorbs wars and natural disasters, exposing the interdependence between capitalism, technological development, and ecology (6). Drawing on Nancy's philosophical framework, I argue for the *This is the Future/Power Plants* installation's capacity to generate space for immersion as an experiential critique of this entangled logic of predictability and profitability. Therefore, this installation is explored as facilitating encounters to question algorithmic processes that shape reality through calculation, classification, and prediction based on past data.

Future Prediction

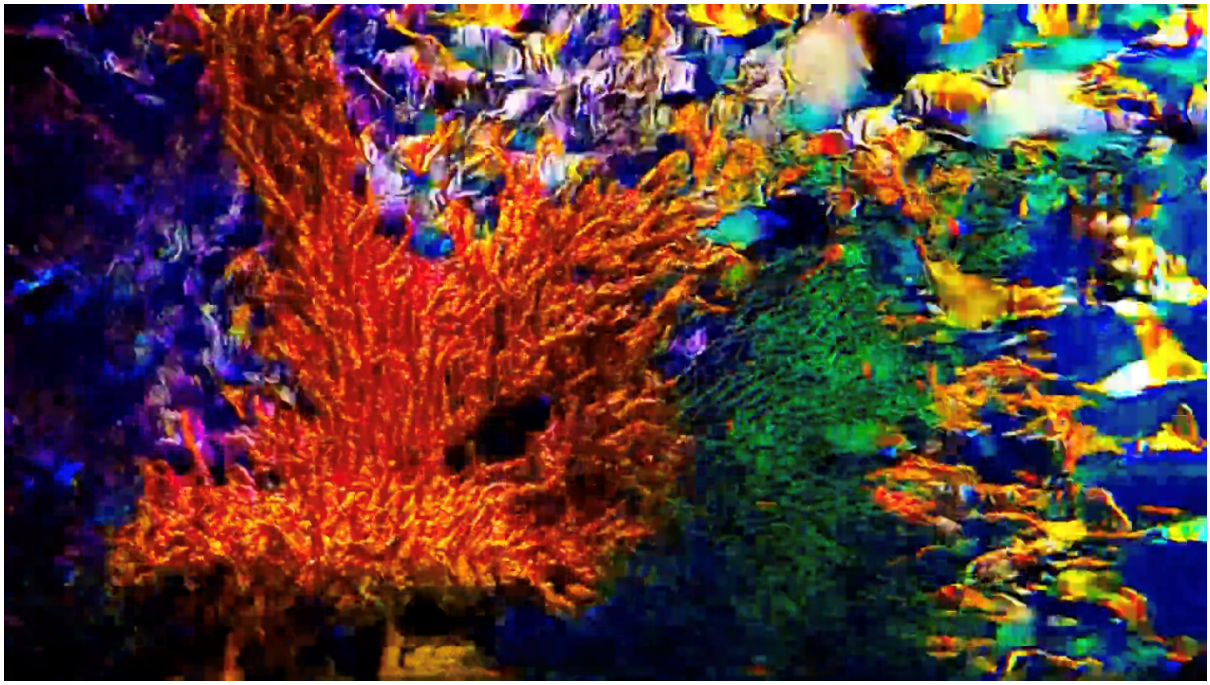

Fig. 1. Still from Hito Steyerl, *This is the Future/Power Plants*, 2019, HD video, colour, sound, 16 min. Image CC 4.0 Hito Steyerl. Image courtesy of the artist, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul.

The installation *This is the Future/Power Plants*, presented at the Venice Biennale in 2019, consists of raised passageways and scaffolding structures with attached screens dispersed across a darkened exhibition space. The exhibition design addresses the rising sea water levels and the future reality of a sinking city of Venice. In a more recent iteration of this installation, displayed as part of the *LUX: New Wave of Contemporary Art* exhibition at 180 Studios in London in 2021, the passageways were replaced with small pebbles covering the floor.[1] The pebbles—small grey pieces of a mineral called olivine and the primary component of the earth's upper mantle—were chosen by Steyerl because of their ability to trap carbon dioxide. As in the installation for the

[1] The exhibition was curated by Jiyoon Leen with *Fact* and sponsored by LG. It attempts to explore dissolving boundaries between the virtual and physical worlds in moving image installations that interrogate creative potentialities of innovative technologies.

Venice Biennale, a haunting atmosphere of future catastrophe is referenced in the use of elements such as olivine, which are currently being studied for mitigating the effects of carbon dioxide on the environment. Although *This is the Future/Power Plants* is adapted to specific locations, some elements remain consistent throughout, such as a sculptural construction of a digital "garden"—*Power Plants* (2019)—and the 16-minute-long video projection *This is the Future* (2019), which I will focus on throughout the paper. The installation *This is the Future/Power Plants* extends the initial sculptural structure of *Power Plants*, presented at the Serpentine Galleries in 2019.[2] In this later version, which consists of three sculptural constructions made of LED panels and LED text panels attached to the stainless-steel scaffolding structures, the installation also includes the main video work *This is the Future* (2019), projected on a novel screen technology—a Smart Glass panel programmed to shift between modes of transparency and opacity, which is usually used to create privacy partitions in the office environment ("Hito Steyerl"). The use of this screen technology introduces the screen not only as a carrier of the video projection but also as a "window," which at the end of the video reveals a sculptural part of the installation extending beyond the screen (figs. 2, 3).

The main narrative unfolding in the 16-minute-long video projection on the Smart Glass panel is made up of five parts: *Hêja's Garden*, *The Future: A History*, *Bambusa Futuris*, *Power Plants*, and *Hêja's Prediction*. They are narrated by the protagonist—a neural network that predicts and manifests images generated by Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs). This "prediction" produces images that escape representation and are situated in between the previous and the following frames. In this constantly "evolving" landscape, the other protagonist, Hêja,

[2] A twelve-channel video of growing plants runs looped on the LED panels and is accompanied by the soundtracks *Photo Sin Thesis* composed by Kojey Radical, and *This is the Future* by Hito Steyerl and Susumu Yakotathe.

looks for a future garden from which she seeks to retrieve the hidden plants that have the powers to heal the present. Although the reference to the garden immediately evokes biblical associations of the Garden of Eden and salvation narratives, it rather represents the idea of nature as a source of growth and power—an idea also referenced in the *Power Plants* part of the sculptural digital "garden," contrasting the technological and economic ideas of "growth" and "power" based on extraction.

With the installation *This is the Future/Power Plants* and her later works, such as *SocialSim* (2020) and *Animal Spirits* (2022), Steyerl entered a wider pool of contemporary artists who interrogate the creative and critical potentialities of converging realms of machine learning and art (Audry). Although this emerging field is attracting experimentations that explore intersubjectivity and open-endedness, many works concerned with machine learning aesthetics appear more often as a shimmering surface of visual effects. Joanna Zylinska notes in her book *AI Art: Machine Visions and Warped Dreams*, this tends to conceal significant and imperceptible processes implicit in machine learning developments and their wider applications across industries. However, I suggest that Steyerl's installation creates something more intriguing than playing with the aesthetics offered by machine learning applications. While considering the context of the artificial intelligence (AI) industry, I argue that the installation *This is the Future/Power Plants*, created using GANs, exceeds the visual spectacle associated with the aesthetics of computer-generated imaging (fig. 1). In this work, Steyerl raises questions concerning the impact of artificial intelligence on art and society, while creating space for optimistic future scenarios in which nature has the power to heal the present, thereby acting as a critique of the techno-capitalist paradigm. Drawing on both the spatial arrangement of the installation and the narrative unfolding in the main video projection, in the analysis of *This is the*

Future/Power Plants, I consider tensions between the two elements as a space for approaching immersion as an experiential critique of deterministic projections of the future embedded in the logic of prediction algorithms.

In the installation, *This is the Future/Power Plants*, the spatial arrangement of the screens and projection technology and the use of machine learning to create the images contribute to Steyerl's artistic strategy concerned with producing ruptures. Instead of utilizing digital technology to immerse a visitor in glistening virtual worlds, the artist exposes technical systems of imperceptible power structures that contribute to the extractive economy of the AI industry. Compared to other artistic strategies alluded to by Zylinska in her critique of AI aesthetics, Steyerl's approach makes the means of production behind the video visible. Through the ruptures it generates, the installation contributes to the debates on the societal implications of predictive algorithms and the technical systems that enable algorithmic predictions as part of a wider extractive economy. This resonates with Kate Crawford's argument on AI and its extractive economy presented in *The Atlas of AI*:

> There has been a general failure to address the ways in which the instruments of knowledge in AI reflect and serve the incentives of a wider extractive economy. What remains is a persistent asymmetry of power, where technical systems maintain and extend structural inequality, regardless of the intention of the designers (135).

While attending to these questions of extractive economy, *This is the Future/Power Plants* explores the role of algorithmic predictions that inevitably contribute to shaping present and future realities. This is a pivotal discussion in relation to the installation, which attempts to reverse temporal axes to open up space for engagement with the political and ethical aspects of

present–future relations. This installation also acts as a space for reimagining the future after the catastrophe of a present caught up in the logic of general equivalence.

Fig. 2. Installation view, Hito Steyerl, *This is the Future/Power Plants*, 2019, Venice Biennale, 2019. Photo: Andrea Rossetti. Image courtesy of the artist, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul.

Image Database: Towards a Total Vision

The opening subtitles state that the video comprises "documentary images of the future" (*This is the Future* 00:00:03), which refers to the past data used to predict future images. Here, the concept of the documentary image moves away from a discussion on indexicality in film studies and evokes a paradox in the video, which manifests in the neural network's attempt to document a future that is yet to become actual. Nevertheless, the neural network manages to record the future by manifesting its own predictions on screen, which renders the arrival of the future dependent on past data. After the introduction of Hêja, the main protagonist in the video who

engages in a dialogue with the neural network in Kurdish, a prediction of the future begins with colorful imagery of aquatic life accompanied by rhythmic electronic music. None of the "images of the future" reveal defined objects or scenes; we can only see the abstract shapes continuously shifting as if submerged underwater, pixels dissolving, evolving, and flickering between the video frames.

Fig. 3. Installation view, Hito Steyerl, *This is the Future/Power Plants*, 2019, Venice Biennale, 2019. Photo: Andrea Rossetti. Image courtesy of the artist, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul.

This loop between past data and future prediction output exposes the workings of interframe predictive algorithms generated by the machine-learning system class. Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) comprise two neural networks: the generator and the

discriminator.[3] The generator is responsible for producing plausible data, which the discriminator attempts to distinguish from the real data in the training dataset, forcing the generator to produce better results. The visuals in the video were generated from images classed under categories of "sea," "fish," "flower," and so on, contained in the ImageNet database. According to Antonio Somaini, in this way, "a perfect feedback loop is created, each output image becomes the input for the next step in the calculation" (40–41). This process produces visual effects that resemble a psychedelic journey of abstracted and rapidly changing colorful shapes that allude to deep learning processes. As Sabine Himmelsbach noted, the hallucinatory effect as a spectacle appears as such because of our incapacity (unless one is involved in the supervision of these processes) to "penetrate the learning processes in machine learning itself to all layers; the depth of the process remains opaque to us, although it is simply based on the evaluation of a multitude of data" (cited in Grau et al. 235). In the first instance, the video in question appears as nothing more than this psychedelic journey into the realm of deep learning. However, it is also structured around the critical space emerging from in between the video frames. It explores biases embedded in the algorithmic models that are designed to calculate predictions based on past data. For example, following the introductory part in the video, the voiceover (neural network) communicates how the images are made, with reference to the logic of a feedback loop (fig. 4): "This is the immediate future. I am a neural network. This is what I see. I can see one fraction of a second into the future. My predictions are based on extreme probability. In a second, something like a fish will wobble around the screen. See, I told you it would happen" (*This is the Future* 00:00:48). After a prediction of "something like a fish" appearing on the screen—which refers to

[3] To create these visuals, Steyerl collaborated with Damien Henry, formerly a Technical Program Manager at Google. Henry was a technical advisor for the project and a creator of the initial algorithm. The algorithm was rewritten by another engineer-artist, Jules LaPlace, who also built the AI tool to create images for the video.

the structure of the neural network as based on the training of datasets on how to emulate the real data—the neural network rapidly shifts to a prediction of the future reality, stating that "there is water all over" (*This is the Future* 00:01:35). It is followed then by a sequence of images of a distorted cityscape of Venice. While trying to grasp the edges of shimmering canals and buildings that are crumbling into a mass of data, we are told by the neural network that this is the immediate future where Hêja is looking for her garden.

Fig. 4. Still from Hito Steyerl, *This is the Future/Power Plants*, 2019, HD video, colour, sound, 16 min. Image CC 4.0 Hito Steyerl. Image courtesy of the artist, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul.

A further discussion on technical aspects of the video element in the installation *This is the Future/Power Plants* introduces the wider context of the ImageNet database and its classification system. While considering the implications of image databases on the production of total vision and their shaping of reality according to biases embedded in classification systems, I argue that this artwork challenges the AI production of the worldview based on extractive practices. Zylinska observes that "art that draws on deep learning and big data sets

[…] often ends up offering a mere psychedelic sea of squiggles, giggles and not very much in-between" (76). However, employing such aesthetics of a psychedelic spectacle, the artwork in discussion also highlights paradoxes embedded within algorithmic prediction systems.

It is pivotal to address database cultures and the changing status of the image to understand the complexity of Steyerl's work that interrogates algorithmic processes and their predictive modeling of the future. To create most of the abstracted content in this video, Steyerl and her team used the ImageNet database to extract images that are part of machine-learning training sets. This aspect introduces the complexity of database cultures that have radically changed the status of the image itself. According to Tomáš Dvořák and Jussi Parikka, "the horizon of blindness" in database cultures, defined as machine-to-machine communication, presents a shifting role of the image: "to see an image is by necessity to consider it as part of an extensive dataset or database" (4). In other words, as the authors argue, contemporary photography and digital archives require constant filtering and ordering; they are "no longer merely visual objects so much as quantified input for data [visualization] and pattern recognition" (13). For example, in 2009, ImageNet was created to tackle the exponential growth of digital images distributed on internet platforms such as Flickr, YouTube, and Google Image Search. It exemplifies how quantification relies heavily on the promises of measure and order that aim to master the multitude of shared data. The ImageNet database's developers believed "that a large-scale ontology of images is a critical resource for developing advanced, large-scale content-based image search and image-understanding algorithms, as well as for providing critical training and benchmarking data for such algorithms" (Deng et al. 1). They had a vision that it would serve as a training database for machine-learning algorithms because it closely resembles certain orderings of knowledge of the world based on word classifications (1). The ImageNet database is

structured around a semantic hierarchy—the backbone of WordNet (Crawford 136). Therefore, the video in the discussion, which is made of images taken from the ImageNet database, presents us with the shifting function of the image: from being considered merely a visual object to becoming a data source to train algorithms.

The changing status of the image and its function also directs attention to the fundamental organizational structure of any database that is used for training datasets to develop statistical models and predictive algorithms. The immense database of images structured around the semantic hierarchy introduces another issue that contributes to the shaping of a worldview. Such databases facilitate the continuous exclusion of objects, people, and environments that make up the world outside the semantic hierarchy or those that cannot be reduced to existing dominant categories. According to Crawford, "to create a training set is to take an almost infinitely complex and varied world and fix it into taxonomies composed of discrete classifications of individual data points, a process that requires inherently political, cultural, and social choices" (135–36). The logic of classification poses issues in terms of world-building and the shaping of a worldview, which is a political concern given many training datasets flatten complex relations into quantifiable entities (144). For example, Simone Browne observes that "facial recognition technology is calibrated to cull matches only from within specified racial and gendered groupings" (144), which excludes nonbinary, nonconforming, trans, and mixed-race in the algorithmic equation of facial recognition technology set to fix race and gender. The intricate architecture of the ImageNet database, which, through categorization, flattens relations, objects, and people into quantifiable data, demands another question: how does a semantically structured and classified worldview affect the arrival of the future?

Against the Future?

Having already discussed the role of machine learning in shaping future predictions based on past data, it is necessary to understand how this installation critiques the idea of a linear temporality driven by finality, which eventually contributes to the annihilation of the present. Steyerl's treatment of the present-future relation in the installation *This is the Future/Power Plants* offers an alternative proposition for thinking about present-future relations and as a demand to "heal the present" *now*. In this section, I focus on the spatial arrangement of projection and screen technologies used in the installation, which is part of an artistic strategy to produce ruptures as a critique of the logic of algorithmic prediction and the ideology of the future.

Fig. 5. Still from Hito Steyerl, *This is the Future/Power Plants*, 2019, HD video, colour, sound, 16 min. Image CC 4.0 Hito Steyerl. Image courtesy of the artist, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul.

In one of the final sequences of the video, *Power Plants*, which also refers to the sculptural part *Power Plants* in the installation, questions around technology and power are addressed in relation to the idea of the future. In this sequence, axes of temporality are reversed

to bring the future closer to the present as a mode of resistance to the ideological notion of techno-utopian futurity. Following the images of flowers, a new set of visuals appears: time-lapses of a sea view with the sunset that quickly transforms into rapidly moving clouds, eventually cutting to the scene of a view from outer space, then replaced by the streets of Tokyo in Japan (fig. 5). Colorful imagery of streets populated with billboards acts as a commentary on the 1980s, a time when the imagination of the future was sparked and driven by the economic boom, introducing neo-modernity and igniting the cult of electricity and electronics. Here, the significance of consumerism—specifically its role in the continued growth and connection to algorithmic predictions that perpetuate growth by generating an unrestricted demand for products, including electronic devices—refers to digital capitalism and the abundance of electronic waste deposited in former colonies. This urban dream of the Tokyo streets, the promise of future economic growth while drawing data from the past, is here presented as trapping society in the imagination of the future produced by algorithmic feedback loops. This scene further reflects the idea that the AI industry contributes to totalizing control of future societies because the predictive algorithms can only repeat past imaginaries in their predictions. Consequently, this could also be seen as a critique of the erasure of other reference points for imagining alternative future trajectories. As Marcella Lista observes: "Invasive predictive algorithms are now working blind—operating in the name of profitability in all different fields of human and posthuman activity—to predetermine a future where the space of the present and the multiplicity of what is possible are annihilated" (117).

This reference to the annihilation of multiplicity and space to think about the present is further emphasized by Hêja in relation to the idea of the future itself, which exposes a logic of profitability that drives a deterministic conception of the future: "The network is predicting I am

looking for my garden, I go looking for it in many colorful places that look like the future looking in the twentieth century. In this future, wealth trickles down, power comes from Fukushima, and technology is rational" (*This is the Future* 00:12:19). In this excerpt, it becomes clear that the future imaginary of the previous century delivered a different kind of reality than that predicted by the algorithmic logic. The violent background of climate, socio-economic, and political crises in the twenty-first century is suggestive of the trajectory of the infinite expansion of the global economy reaching its finality, touching the planetary boundaries. This part of the video engages with temporality as a form of resistance to evade the linearity of history. Instead, an infinite number of different temporalities unfold at the same time, destabilizing the measurement of time based on historical events and human experience. Here, the temporality of predictive algorithms, which predict the future based on past data, reveals an embedded idea of the future that has no reference to the future as arrival, contingency, and interruption but to the logic of profitability. In addition, in the installation, we are presented with the limitations of conceptualizations of the future, which are further explored in relation to the spatial arrangement of projection technology and LED screens that contribute to the rupture behind the logic of future predictions based on profitability.

Recon/struction

The installation title, *This is the Future/Power Plants*, collapses the now and what is yet to come, as is suggested by the literal and visual portrayal of the closest prediction—one located 0.04 seconds in the future—given the video is made entirely of images predicted by the neural network. The video might not be proposing a new conceptual model of temporality per se; however, it considers and brings the future closer to the present, both conceptually and practically. Steyerl's invitation to consider the future as here and now, rather than a projection

based on predictions fixing the future reality into a project or a point in time, resonates with Simon Critchley's call to resist "the ideology of the future" (175). By rejecting the ideological narrative of progress embedded in the notion of the future and bringing it into the present as taking place here and now, the installation simultaneously directs attention to the present as a site of resistance against future-oriented thinking.

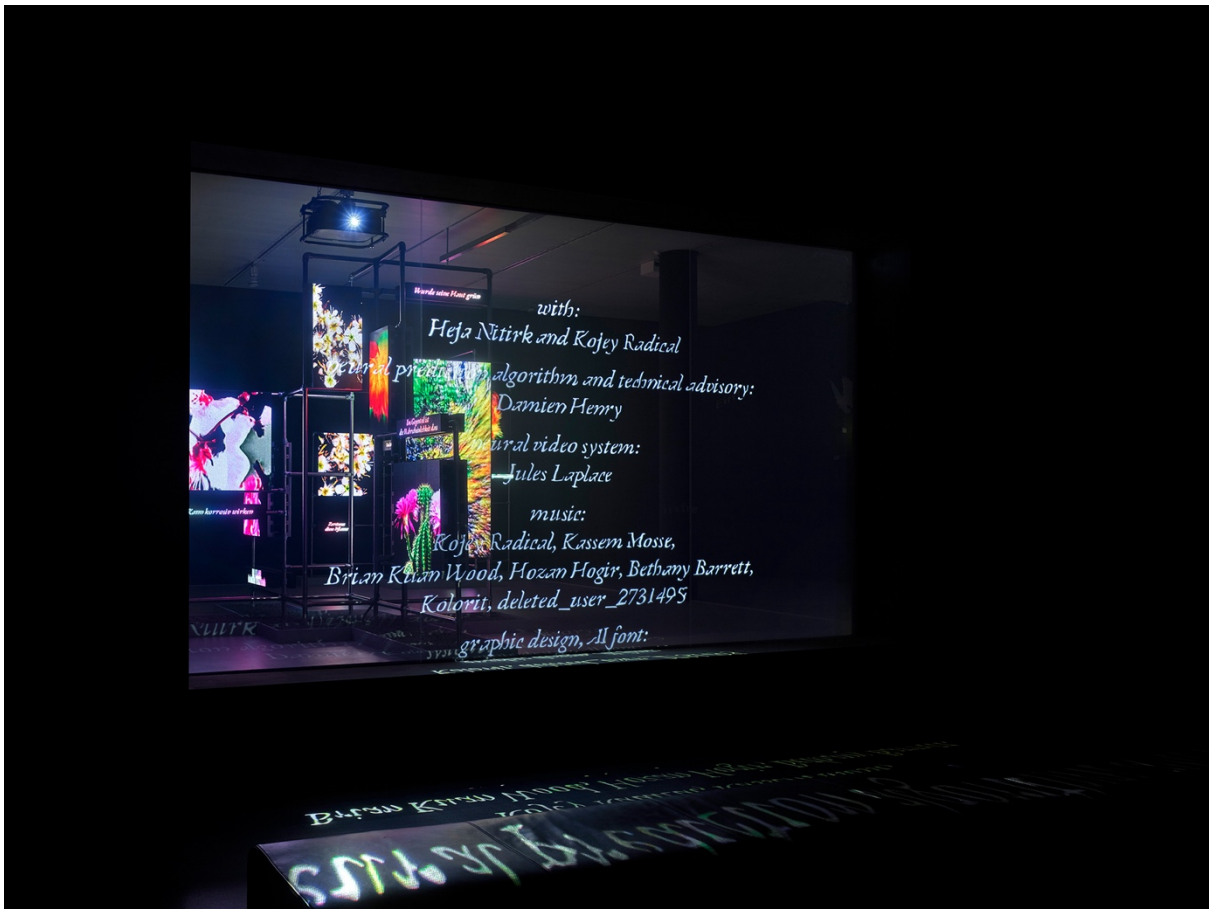

Fig. 6. Installation view, Hito Steyerl, *This is the Future/Power Plants*, 2019, K21 Kunstsammlung NRW, Düsseldorf, 2020–2021. Image courtesy of the artist, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul.

This aspect of resisting a future predicted by the algorithms is further emphasized in the final section of the video, *Hêja's Prediction*, in which Hêja begins by saying: "I will never enter the future to look for my garden. Because it is already here. Because whatever the future will be,

it always starts here and now. This is all I can say" (*This is the Future* 00:13:32). At this moment, the video presents another kind of prediction that is based on human experience, which reiterates resistance to the logic of profitability embedded in algorithmic predictions. Suddenly, the projection screen becomes a transparent glass sheet opening onto the structure of the future "garden" situated behind it, followed by Radical Kojey's voice saying, "This is the Future." The shifting from opacity to the transparency of the screen in the *This is the Future/Power Plants* installation introduces a spatial moment of rupture (fig. 6). At this point, the narrative unfolding in the video becomes part of the spatial arrangement of the digital "garden" structure. In this instance, the screen acquires the quality of an opening, which introduces the viewer to the installation environment behind the screen. This moment creates a link between the images of the "future" generated by the neural network and the digital "garden" installation of Hêja's healing "power plants" displayed on LED screens. This sudden shift from opacity to transparency extends the narrative into a physical space by revealing the future "garden" as taking place "here and now." However, the space of this "garden" does not imply religious promises or the arrival of a utopian or dystopian future. On the contrary, this visual effect adds another material layer to the narrative, which situates the visitor in the future reality—the figure of the limit that is pressing onto the present. It is further emphasized by a glitching, disintegrating voice repeating, "This is all I can say," after the screen becomes transparent. This sentence was recorded by Steyerl herself to train the neural network to predict the future and manifest it by repeating the recording in an artificially simulated voice. These words function as the only input of data from which it can make a prediction or a sense of what is coming next. This sound effect reiterates Steyerl's point that the future always starts in the present: the future is always now. Simultaneously, it reveals the limitations of technology; one otherwise considered

a reliable source for predicting future scenarios or calculating the risks of economic growth that the unknown brings.

Alongside Steyerl's treatment of the future as taking place "here and now," Nancy's conception of the present helps to further conceptualize temporality in the installation. Nancy considers the present in terms of proximity to the world and the arriving future. This idea is discussed in his book on the Fukushima nuclear disaster, which took place in 2011 when an earthquake created a tsunami, causing incalculable devastation. In the context of this event, Nancy writes that this disaster calls for a recognition of the end of future goals, thus forcing us to consider other futures always in relation to the ever-renewed present (37). His approach considers the present in terms of arrival, open-endedness, and rejection of the logic of finality. This approach toward the present is the opposite of the general equivalence produced by a configuration of capitalist logic and technology. Furthermore, Nancy views this approach as a demand for the equality of incommensurables: "To demand equality for tomorrow is first of all to assert it today, and by the same gesture to reject catastrophic equivalence. It is to assert common equality, common incommensurability: a communism of nonequivalence" (41). For Nancy, as it is for Steyerl, thinking about "tomorrow" necessarily relies on giving attention to the ever-renewing present, which can determine "tomorrow" by demanding the opposite of general equivalence.

This attention to the ever-renewing present in *This is the Future/Power Plants* lends itself to Nancy's concept of struction and the possibility of mapping modes of rupture that critique the logic of finality embedded in the ideology of the future. Drawing on Nancy's idea of struction and Steyerl's active engagement with practices of reconstruction, I propose to consider this installation as a site of recon/struction. Recon/struction here alludes to a process of continuous

creation in common. The prefix *re-* refers to repeating an action again and in a better way, *con-* signifies being-in-common, and *struction* a continuous creation. Although the construction of the world is inevitably linked to the process of extraction—of materials, resources, or data—for Nancy, it also refers to the logic of the "Supreme Constructor," which signifies the constructionist paradigm in general. Nancy's approach to technology as "the mode of our existence" with "no more ends or means" acts as a call to rethink the contemporary condition in terms of the idea of struction (37). The latter comes from the Latin word *struere*, which here is considered "in the sense of heaping up [amoncellement] without putting together [assemblage]" (35). It is representative of the disordered contemporary world, which, according to Nancy, appears as "the crumbling of the constructivist paradigm under its own weight, the collapse of a building that has literally become unsupportable" (Nancy and Barrau 83). Over-construction, signifying technological innovation and modernity as progress, has eventually led to struction: an opening of the ecotechnological planetary landscape with no more ends or means. Nancy's idea of struction thus allows us to approach the process of rebuilding the world outside the order of the "Supreme Constructor," even if we are navigating and living in a time of fragmentation, ruin, and perpetual crises (11). An invitation to consider the contemporary condition from the point of view of (dis)order introduces the idea of struction as a conceptual device to navigate the ruins of the catastrophe of the present.

This idea of struction leads us to consider the present moment, which converges with the approaches explored in Steyerl's installation, such as the digital "ruderal garden," presented as a space of recon/struction. Ruderal plants that grow only in places affected by environmental disasters or human activity (building sites, war zones, extraction sites) are, in this installation, directing us toward imagining and creating alternative future pathways after the catastrophe of

the present. Thus, when considered as a site of recon/struction, the installation functions as a mode of resistance in its attempt to rethink present–future relations. In this process, it also attempts to configure the world in terms of creation rather than construction. This leads to a critique of the logic of construction embedded in the architecture of databases that facilitate the idea of a total and dominant vision of the world—an idea rejected by *This is the Future/Power Plants*. In the installation, the "predicted" and healing plants of the future are transformed into elements that contribute to creating alternative worlds of more-than-human entanglements that disrupt the logic of absolute identity and sovereignty. Thus, Nancy's approach to ecotechnics as constituted of "elements" that escape the constructionist paradigm allows us to consider struction as "their assemblage [that] does not refer to a first or final construction but to a kind of continuous creation where what is constantly rekindled and renewed is the very possibility of the world—or rather the multiplicity of worlds" (52). This multiplicity of worlds resonates throughout the narrative and the installation space of *This is the Future/Power Plants*, opening toward a present where nature and technology are not thought of separately but together, as a disruption of the logic of construction, which is based on extraction, appropriation, and abstraction—the catastrophe of the present. Steyerl's installation offers a critique of existing past data treated as a resource for future predictions, which affects all spheres and industries, as well as the arrival of the future that is not modeled around finality.

Throughout this paper, I have discussed how Steyerl's installation critiques the desire for objectivity, which proliferates ingrained political and ideological assumptions observed in AI language, which is fast becoming a universal lens through which the world and the future are perceived, calculated, managed, and owned. As noted earlier with reference to Himmelsbach's observation, the imperceptibility of the processes in algorithmic calculations and machine

learning—which are based on the evaluation and approximation of data—is often seen as a "magic trick" because of the inaccessible black box of neuro nets. This approximation of hallucination, magic, or the alchemy of calculation also limits our understanding of the power relations embedded in such structures. As a result, these invisible technical processes produce calculated results that are perceived as objective knowledge, "truth," or an accurate prediction of the future. Steyerl's critique of the data-driven society immersed in the "mirages" of algorithmic "magic" throughout the video is contrasted with Hêja's personal search for a future garden. In so doing, the search brings us back to the present, which is explored as a tangible and material relation with the world, where the notion of the future itself becomes uncertain—shaped by computational propaganda, past data, and fake news. The installation performs an opening onto the present by disrupting the "mirage" of the approximation of the future in 0.04 seconds and situating the ruderal garden made of "digital plants" as a space for planting the seeds of resistance, which begins with the acknowledgment that the future is taking place here and now.

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