

Curatorial statement

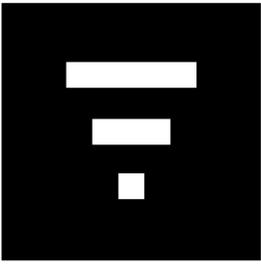
How does hope manifest itself when ‘the future is canceled’?

When the cultural theorist Mark Fisher stated almost a decade ago that “the future is canceled,” he meant that we had reached a point of permanent present where it seemed almost impossible to imagine anything new as we were perpetually haunted by past or lost futures. He felt the continuous production of newness had run its course and cultural time had “folded back on itself,” as the “focus shifts from the Next Big Thing to the last big thing.” A major part of his writing was dedicated to the question of how this one feeling could spread so widely that there was no alternative and that it seemed easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. As a potential way out, he focused on “the weird” as a critical sense of disturbance or the intrusion of something external into this world that questions the hierarchical relationship between fiction and reality.

With *HOPE*, we seek to focus on this Xeno (i.e. Science-Fiction) to re-activate hope as a critical practice of imagining alternative pasts and futures to be written and experienced beyond an obsolete linear understanding of time. By exploring present-day human conditions at the interfaces of technology, ecology, and economy, as well as new models of institutional practices in the spirit of the *TECHNO HUMANITIES* research project, the museum is reflected as a pivotal space of worldbuilding, time travel, and becoming alien.

Ever since it opened its doors exactly 15 years ago, the current Museion building has repeatedly been described as alien, a kind of UFO that has landed in the center of Bolzano. And yet, it is also intrinsically linked to a program of urban and future-oriented re-imagination following the local area’s de-industrialization from industrial production to a service economy. This makes the building in and of itself a hope machine that points the collective imagination towards new futures. So, *HOPE* imagines the Museion as a spaceship, a time capsule, or a portal.

The exhibition marks the third installment in the *TECHNO HUMANITIES* program. It follows the initial chapter *TECHNO* in 2021 that used the techno club as a practical model for imagining broader forms of social solidarity and coexistence, and the second chapter *Kingdom of the Ill* that questioned

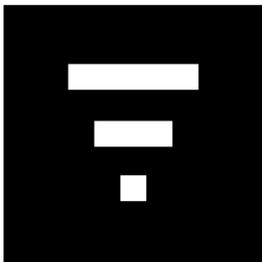


socially developed standards of the "healthy" body and focused on the ethics of care. *HOPE* concludes the exhibition trilogy with an acknowledgment and relocation of the humanities and museum practice between science and fiction by focusing on different artistic, poetic, and speculative ways of collecting, archiving, researching, preserving, and historiography.

HOPE brings together an intergenerational cohort of artists whose works create spaces of wonder on a micro and macro level. They are engines for emancipation and empowerment, worldbuilding, or more personal time machines. Each of the exhibition floors therefore becomes an immersive time traveling platform that draws inspiration from either conventional or futuristic spaces of knowledge(s), experience, curiosity, or astonishment, like an observatory, arcade, or archive. The exhibition reflects on historical or imaginative understandings of museums as custodians of artifacts and cultural heritage or passages between distant points in spacetime.

Techno remains a source of inspiration for rethinking the museum as a hope machine. In this spirit, the musician, theorist, and writer DeForrest Brown, Jr. joined the research team as co-curator. DeForrest Brown Jr. produces digital audio and extended media as Speaker Music and is a representative of the Make Techno Black Again campaign. In his first book *Assembling a Black Counter Culture*, published in 2022, he researched and wrote the history of techno, reconsidering its origins in Detroit and its context within African American history and Afrofuturist thought. His long-time collaborator and artist AbuQadim Haqq has, for decades, visualized the potential narratives and cultures underpinning the mythic Black Atlantic civilization of Drexciya, envisioned in the early 1990s by the eponymous Detroit-based Afrofuturist techno duo of James Stinson and Gerald Donald. Drexciya can be understood as a "Black Exodus Technology" for overcoming colonial violence through a futurist and warrior spirit. The Drexciya mythos follows a science fiction timeline that spans centuries and generations, beginning at the end of the future.

To what extent can techno serve as an emancipatory and solidarity-based model for the humanities and as an exodus technology for looking at "Spaceship Earth" from other perspectives? A circular and political understanding of time and an awareness of the diverse dimensions of worldbuilding—both violent and healing—can lay the groundwork for an ethical practice of partial repairs carried out in museums as the engine rooms of the humanities. Hope can be reactivated therein as a social engine for change that goes beyond an either/or of regression versus progress, science versus fiction, human versus technology. Some things need to be unlearned, and yet, if we understand the museum as a world receiver, a



landing site and platform for time travel, an astoundingly regenerative power can be found in collecting, archiving, and exhibiting, so that we can collectively write histories through the projections of alternative futures—and re-enchant the world.

HOPE is curated by Bart van der Heide and Leonie Radine in collaboration with DeForrest Brown, Jr.

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