

BARCELONA PRODUCCIÓ 2022-23

MÓNICA RIKIĆ *HIPERTELIA*

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Mónica Rikić's artistic practice falls within the field of creative programming and electronics. Her pieces, often inspired by games and robotics, reflect on the relationship between humans (as individuals and as a society) and machines, suggesting alternative ways of relating to the digital environment.

Two words have been on everyone's lips in recent years: artificial intelligence. Although Mónica Rikić's work employs algorithms – using computer code almost as if it were a raw material – she does not use artificial intelligence, but rather questions it critically. On the one hand, she challenges the supposed intelligence of these systems and, on the other hand, wonders whether 'artificial intelligences', as these entities replicating human cognitive functions have been dubbed, can gain independence and become one of the many species inhabiting planet Earth.

In order for this to occur, one needs to speculate on the possibility that machines (or software) will become aware of their existence and begin to evolve with their own autonomy and entity when this technology becomes so advanced and so refined. It is not surprising that against this backdrop of climate emergency and the depletion of natural resources, humans are questioning the ways in which we relate to other species and are looking towards non-human intelligences and sensibilities, whether natural or whose DNA comprises zeros and ones.

This leads us towards a shift of perspective in terms of what we consider 'the other species' with which we must coexist and relate. Among what we consider to be sentient organisms, it is no longer a question of remaining in the human/non-human dichotomy. It is a matter of no longer pretending that there is a separation between nature and culture, that we can distinguish between what exists without us and what we construct.

Hipertèlia is inspired by the concept of technodiversity, an idea popularised by the Chinese philosopher Yuk Hui. It argues that technological development occurs within a specific historical and cultural context, and that one needs to think about technology by including other cultural perspectives that are not the dominant one: that of Silicon Valley, Anglophone and with all the imaginary of entrepreneurship, victory and the forms of technological giants.

The exhibition also draws on the thought of Donna Haraway, who has reflected extensively on the relationship between humans and technology and has cast doubt on anthropocentrism.

In *Hipertèlia*, Mónica Rikić fills the large gallery space of La Capella with a populace of mechanical beings that may recall robots, although without any anthropomorphic features, instead assuming other organic forms, as if claiming their own way of existing in the world.

Like a theatrical device, the exhibition presents an ecosystem of handmade electronic objects in six acts: genesis, simulation, replication, creation, evolution and revolution. These acts simulate the six stages through which algorithmic systems pass through to be considered organic, without any other functionality or productive intent. Each of these acts is represented by creatures that assume a variety of forms and behaviours, inviting us to become aware of our role in the development of technology and to reclaim it as a culture with all its diversity of perspectives.

As if she were Doctor Frankenstein, Mónica makes us reflect on our responsibility for what we have created. Does a machine that we are endowing with biological qualities associated with living beings become a sentient being? Does it develop awareness and dreams? Must we then view it as a being with its own agency, and even rights? *Hipertèlia* suggests that we urgently need to address the position occupied by these artificial cognitive systems in the system of relations and type of society that artificial intelligence is beginning to outline. And what's more, to consider the utopia that this type of society will not become dominated by large technological companies.

Antònia Folguera and Pilar Cruz