

# Border

Art and Neuroscience  
in Dialogue.

# lands.

Roter Salon /  
Volksbühne Berlin  
28.09.2018

10 years of



**ASSOCIATION OF  
NEUROESTHETICS**

A Platform for Art and Neuroscience

What does art do to us? What role might neuroscience play in the understanding of artistic phenomena? How could a dialogue between neuroscientists and artists be heuristic and not reductive? Can art instill criticality in neuroscientific research? Borderlands and crossroads, as feminist Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa has been suggesting, even if painful and sometimes treacherous places, are sites for regeneration, nurture and growth.

We welcome you to a day of dialogues between artists and neuroscientists, a series of moderated discussions, artistic interventions, and celebrations on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Berlin-based Association of Neuroaesthetics (AoN\_Platform for Art and Neuroscience) founded by Alexander Abbushi in 2008.

**2pm - 3.15pm**

Bracketing the world. Poetry, Neuroscience, and Experiment  
*Eugen Wassiliwizky, James Wilkes, Uljana Wolf*

**3.30pm - 4.45pm**

Turning illness into a weapon. On madness, mental distress and resistance  
*Ulf Aminde, Ana Gomez-Carillo, Monica Greco, Bonaventure Ndikung*

**5pm - 6.15pm**

10 years of AoN\_Platform for Art and Neuroscience  
*Ivana Franke, Vittorio Gallese, Niklas Maak, Christine Macel, Daniel Margulies, Ida Momennejad, Warren Neidich, Ernst Pöppel, Jesse Prinz*

**8pm - 9.30pm**

The limits, and prospects of neuroesthetics  
*Beatriz Calvo-Merino, Alva Nöe, Alexandra Pirici, Ed Vessel*

**10pm - 2am**

Afterparty with Lamin Fofana:  
Open Set / Border-Crossing

**BRACKETING THE WORLD.  
POETRY, NEUROSCIENCE, AND  
EXPERIMENT**  
2pm – 3.15pm

What is poetry doing to our bodies while we read, listen and compose it? Neuroscientists have shown that reciting poetry can act as a powerful stimulus for eliciting peak emotional responses. We will engage with the writing of poet Uljana Wolf, psychologist Eugen Wassiliwizky will provide insight into compositional principles of poetry, while writer James Wilkes will reflect further on how both scientific and poetic world-making processes can allow us to 'bracket the world' and engage in experiment.

**Eugen Wassiliwizky** has studied Psychology with the main emphasis on Cognitive Neuroscience, as well as Classics and Musicology, at Philipps University in Marburg, McGill University in Montreal, and the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig. He holds a doctoral degree in psychology from the Freie Universität Berlin. His main research topics are aesthetic emotions – especially those experienced in response to poetry and films, with a particular focus on neural and physiological correlates of such emotional processes. Wassiliwizky has worked at the Neuropragmatics and Emotion Lab (McGill University), the Cluster of Excellence Languages of Emotion (Freie Universität Berlin), and is currently a member of the research staff at the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics in Frankfurt.

**James Wilkes** writes poetry and short fiction, makes work for installation and performance, and carries out archival and scholarly research. An enduring interest in 'experiment' as manifested in both artistic and scientific practice has led to a poetry residency at University College London's Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, collaboratively-written articles with neuroscientists and poets, and a commissioned performance for the exhibition 'This is a Voice'

(Wellcome Collection, 2016). From 2014–2016 he was Associate Director of Hubbub, an international collective of social scientists, artists, humanities researchers, neuroscientists, broadcasters and mental health experts funded by the Wellcome Trust's Hub Award. He is currently working on a collection of short stories, speculative fictions and prose fragments based on the archives of the Peckham Experiment, a health and social centre set up in South London in the 1930s to explore the conditions for human flourishing.

**Uljana Wolf** is a poet and translator based in Brooklyn and Berlin. She has published four volumes of poetry and numerous translations. Her work explores the poetics of translation, the ever-shifting border made material in the crossings between languages.

**TURNING ILLNESS INTO A WEAPON.  
ON MADNESS, MENTAL DISTRESS, AND  
RESISTANCE.**  
3.30pm – 4.45pm

Socialist Patients' Collective founded in Heidelberg in 1970 was believing that illness is a product of the capitalist system. With a twist they suggested to 'turn illness into a weapon', believing that the sick could form a revolutionary class struggling against oppression. Drawing upon this experience, together with artist Ulf Aminde, sociologist Monica Greco, psychiatrist Ana Gomez Carrillo, and curator Bonaventure Ndikung we engage in a discussion about normalization, sanitation, and resistance and look at the gendered, classed and racialized motors that produce what is called madness.

**Ulf Aminde** is an artist, filmmaker, and activist. His work focuses on social struggles, self-empowerment, strategies of subjectivation and anti-authoritarian collectives. His film works are characterized by experimental

collaboration, based on criticism of discrimination, exclusion, and power. He is a Professor at the Weissensee School of Art Berlin, where he initiated the foundationClass, a study program for refugees. He is part of Peoples Tribunal Unraveling NSU, to indict militant nazi network.

**Ana Gómez-Carrillo** is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Division of Social & Transcultural Psychiatry of McGill University. She is a psychiatrist and cognitive behavioral therapist with a background in cognitive neuroscience. She recently finished subspecialty training in immigrant and refugee mental health as a fellow clinical observer at the Cultural Consultation Service in the Jewish General Hospital. Dr. Gomez-Carrillo takes a special interest in the philosophy and anthropology of psychiatry, specifically how integrative frameworks can guide clinical assessments and interventions. Her current research focuses on integrating person-centered and precision psychiatry in the clinical assessment of depression. In her work, she also seeks to delineate the intersubjective nature of the diagnostic process and clarify the use of metaphors in the creation of illness narratives and meaning co-construction. As a side project, she works on tool development for cultural adaptation of psychological interventions and culturally responsive web-based mental health training resources. Dr. Gomez-Carrillo is currently funded by the Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship.

**Monica Greco** is Professor of Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London, and a research Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Her work addresses concepts in medicine and psychiatry and is broadly informed by the history and philosophy of these disciplines, as well as social studies of science and technology. Her current focus is on problems of explanation and their implications for questions of individual agency and re-

sponsibility, particularly in the context of neoliberalism. Monica specialises in the analysis of constructs in psychosomatic medicine, drawing – among others – on the vitalist philosophy of Georges Canguilhem and the philosophy of organism of Alfred North Whitehead. Across her work on a range of topics she has developed a distinctive, 'vitalist' approach to the analysis of the politics of health. Her publications include a monograph entitled: *Illness As a Work of Thought: A Foucauldian Perspective on Psychosomatics* (Routledge, 1998) and numerous peer-reviewed articles on topics including 'healthism' and the 'happiness agenda'; conceptualisations of the 'right to health'; life, vitalism and normativity; medical humanities; critique and speculative pragmatism in relation to contested illnesses and 'medically unexplained symptoms'.

**Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung**, PhD is an independent art curator, art critic, author and biotechnologist. He is founder and artistic director of SAVVY Contemporary Berlin and editor-in-chief of SAVVY Journal for critical texts on contemporary African art. He was associate professor at Muthesius University Kiel, and is currently guest professor in curatorial studies at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. He was curator-at-large for documenta 14, and was a guest curator of the 2018 Dak'Art Biennale in Senegal. As part of the Miracle Workers Collective, he will curate Finnish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2019. Recent curatorial projects include: *Whose Land have I Lit on Now? Contemplations on the Notions of Hospitality*, SAVVY Contemporary, 2018; *We have Delivered Ourselves from the Tonal – of, with, towards, on Julius Eastman*, SAVVY Contemporary, 2018; *Every Time A Ear di Soun – a documenta 14 Radio Program*, SAVVY Contemporary, 2017; *The Conundrum of Imagination*, Leopold Museum Vienna/ Wienerfestwochen, 2017; *An Age of our Own Making* in Holbæk, MCA Roskilde and Kunsthal Charlottenborg Copenhagen, 2016–17.

## 10 YEARS OF AON\_PLATFORM FOR ART AND NEUROSCIENCE 5pm – 6.15pm

We reminisce the last 10 years of AoN and look into its future. Oliver Abbushi (chairman AoN) and Dada Held-Poschardt (psychotherapist, Berlin) introduce some contributions of long-term followers and members of the AoN such as Ivana Franke, Vittorio Gallese (neuroscientist, Parma, video), Warren Neidich), Niklas Maak, Christine Macel (curator, Paris, video), Ida Momennejad, (neuroscientist, Princeton, video), Ernst Pöppel, Jesse Prinz (philosopher, New York, video).

**Ivana Franke** is a visual artist based in Berlin. Her investigations with light approach the interface between consciousness and environment, focusing on perceptual thresholds. Recent solo exhibitions include *Retreat into Darkness. Towards a Phenomenology of the Unknown* in Schering Stiftung Project Space in Berlin (2017) and *Perceptual Drift (Galaxies in Mind)* in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb (2017). Her other projects include *Disorientation Station* (11th Shanghai Biennale, 2016) and *Seeing with Eyes Closed* (Peggy Guggenheim, Venice (2011), Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, (2012). She represented Croatia at the 52nd Venice Biennale with the solo exhibition *Latency* (2007), at the 9th Venice Biennale of Architecture with collaborative work *Frameworks*(2004). Other exhibitions include *Manifesta 7* (2008), and *MoMA P.S.1*. (2001).

**Niklas Maak**, is the arts editor of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and an architecture theoretician working in Berlin. Since 2002, he has pursued parallel careers as a writer, educator, newspaper editor, architect, and visiting professor. Maak studied art history, philosophy and architecture in Hamburg and Paris. He completed a *maîtrise* in 1996, studying with Jacques Derrida, on the question of the thres-

hold, and his PhD on the work of Le Corbusier and Paul Valéry in 1998, with Martin Warnke at Hamburg University. Since then, he has undertaken continuous research on the history of mass housing, and models to re-engage with communal dwelling and collective housing. He was a visiting professor for the history and theory of architecture at Städel Schule, Frankfurt, and has taught and lectured at the Universities of Basel, Berlin and Buenos Aires.

**Warren Neidich** is Dr. Professor of Art at the Kunsthochschule Weisensee, Berlin, Founder and Director of the Saas-Fee Summer Institute of Art, Berlin, and founder of *Art-brain.org* and *The Journal of Neuro-aesthetic Theory*. His multidisciplinary art practice includes photography, drawing, painting and sculpture. His latest works include speculative diagrammatic works of neon light that concern the relationship of Fake News, The Attention Economy and contemporary forms of governmentalization which include the material brain as their focus. Selected awards include: The Fulbright Specialist Program, Fine Arts Category, University of Cairo, 2013, The Vilem Flusser Theory Award, *Transmediale*, Berlin, 2010. He has published over twenty books including recently in German, *Neuromacht*, Merve Verlag, 2017 and in English, *The Psychopathologies of Cognitive Capitalism*, Archive Press, 2017

**Ernst Pöppel** is one of the founding members of the Association of Neuroesthetics and a leading German psychologist and neuroscientist. In 1992 he became Member of Leopoldina, the National Scientific Academy of Germany. He is Professor at the Institut für Medizinische Psychologie and Humanwissenschaftliches Zentrum (HWZ). He has published extensively in peer-reviewed journals but also worked on the dissemination of science in several books. In recent years, he has developed a more global perspective on science and art, especially engaging with Eastern researchers from China and Japan.

## THE LIMITS AND PROSPECTS OF NEUROESTHETICS 8pm – 9.30pm

What can neuroscience tell us about beauty, pleasure, and the arts? How do we perceive human bodies in the performing arts and dance? Are there neural networks that are domain specific for our engagement with art? Leading proponents of neuroesthetics, such as these questions and discuss with the artist Alexandra Pirici and the philosopher Alva Noë in which ways neuroesthetics, art, and philosophy might intersect. The panel engages with the work of Alexandra Pirici, who addresses the re-mediation of objects and artworks via different forms of embodiments, contextual settings, or their implementation in public situations. Alva Noë addresses related questions as a philosopher and has been working extensively at the interface of philosophy and neuroscience. He has engaged critically with neuroesthetics from its very start, challenging its explanatory potential in recent, widely received publications.

**Beatriz Calvo-Merino** is a cognitive neuroscientist trained at University College London (UCL, London, UK) and Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM, Madrid, Spain). Her initial PhD work with Professor Patrick Haggard investigated neurocognitive mechanisms involved in action observation, expertise and dance, using neuroimaging methods (fMRI). She worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience on a series of studies investigating visual and motor mechanisms of body perception by means of transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS). Lately, she developed a line of research investigating the sensorimotor neural and cognitive underpinnings of aesthetic perception of performing arts (dance, in particular).

**Alva Noë** is a writer and philosopher living in Berkeley and New York. He is the author of *Action in Perception* (MIT 2004), *Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness* (FSG 2009), *Varieties of Presence* (Harvard 2012), and *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature* (FSG, 2015). He is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley, where he is also a member of the Center for New Media and the Institute for Cognitive and Brain Sciences. Noë is a 2012 recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a 2018 winner of the Judd/Hume Prize in Advanced Visual Culture. He has been a contributor to National Public Radio's science and culture blog *13.7 Cosmos and Culture*.

**Alexandra Pirici** is an artist with a background in choreography that works undisciplined, across different mediums, both in the gallery space and in public space. Her works have been exhibited within the decennial art exhibition *Skulptur Projekte Munster 2017*, the Venice Biennale - Romanian Pavilion at the 55th edition, Tate Modern London, New Museum - New York, The 9th Berlin Biennale, *Manifesta 10*, Centre Pompidou - Paris, Museum Ludwig Cologne, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, the Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, Museum of Modern Art - Warsaw among many others.

**Ed Vessel** is a Senior Research Scientist at the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics (MPIEA) in Frankfurt, Germany. His research group uses behavioral and brain imaging techniques to study the psychological and neural basis of aesthetic experiences, such as when a person is aesthetically moved by visual art, poetry, architecture, music, or natural landscapes. Through his work and service, Dr. Vessel aims to elevate the international profile of neuroaesthetics research: he is a board member of the International Association of Empirical Aesthetics, and recently hosted a conference on Visual Neuroaesthetics at the

MPIEA. He received his PhD in Neuroscience at the University of Southern California and is former co-director of the New York University Artlab.

### **AFTERPARTY WITH LAMIN FOFANA: OPEN SET / BORDER-CROSSING 10pm – 3am**

Immediately following the heady dialogues/discussions, immerse yourself in the forward-leaning sounds of a special 4-hour DJ set by artist and electronic musician Lamin Fofana. Blending organic and electronic sources, Lamin creates dynamic, evolving rhythmic patterns and grooves to offer a break from linearity and the dominant paradigm of straight repetition in dance music.

**Lamin Fofana** is an electronic producer and artist. His instrumental electronic music contrasts the reality of our world with what's beyond and explores questions of movement, migration, alienation, and belonging. He is from Sierra Leone, lived in Guinea, United States, and currently located in Berlin.

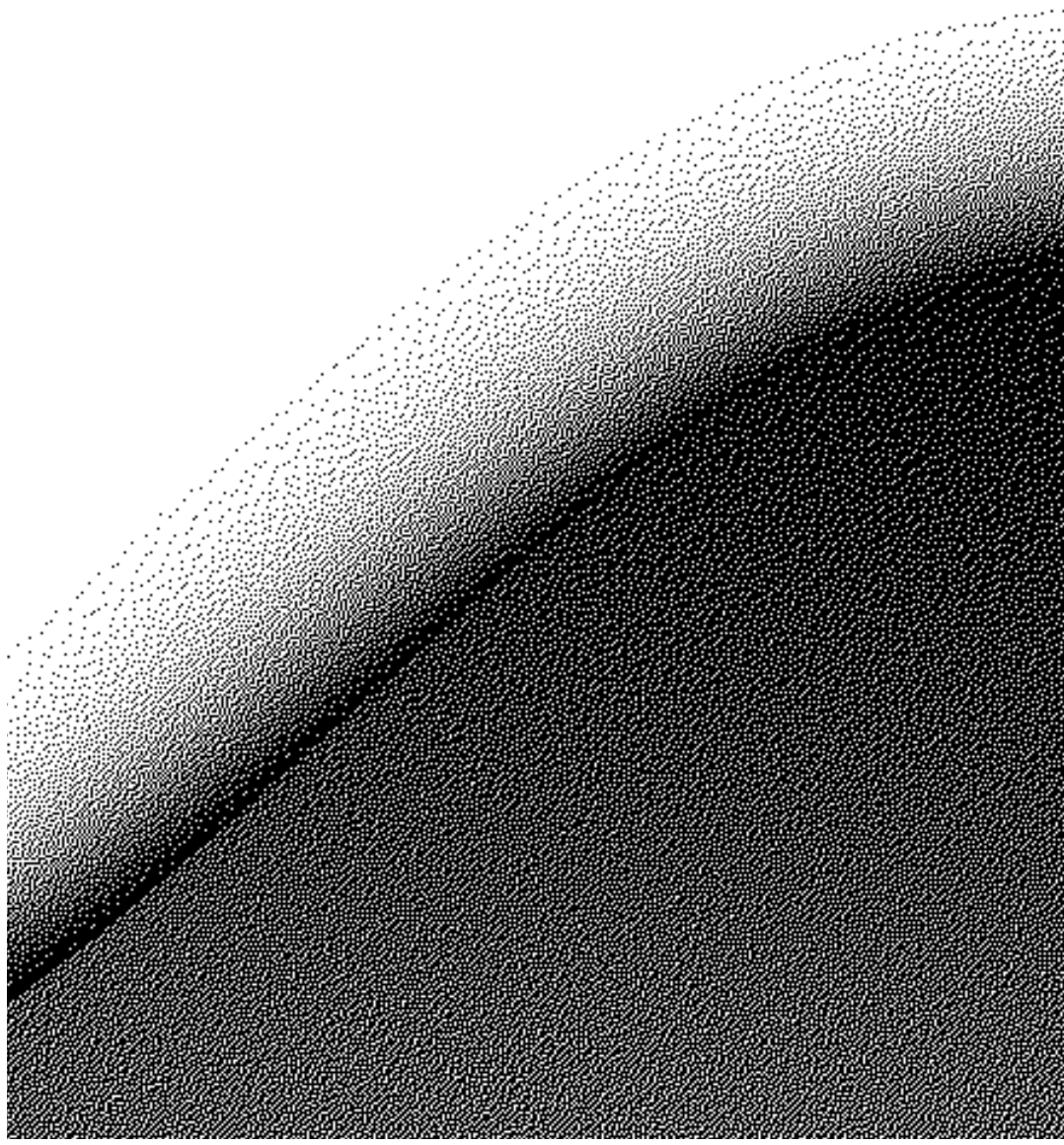
### **ORGANIZERS**

#### **Elena Agudio** (artistic director, AoN)

Elena Agudio is a Berlin based art historian and curator. Her research is focused on the sharing and exchange of knowledge and skills across disciplines and cultures. Joining the Association of Neuroesthetics (AoN) immediately after its foundation, Agudio serves the platform as artistic director since 2012. She organized and co-curated the AoN symposia on the occasion of the last five Venice Art Biennales, collaborating with artists Sissel Tolaas, Ivana Franke, Tino Sehgal, Clemens von Wedemeyer and Georges Adéagbo, among others, and establishing long lasting dialogues - as well as disputes - between artists and cognitive scientists.

#### **Joerg Fingerhut** (scientific director, AoN)

Joining the Association of Neuroesthetics for the 2013 Venice Symposium on Tino Sehgal, Joerg Fingerhut has been co-organizing the activities of the AoN for the last five years. He is a philosopher and principal investigator at the Berlin School of Mind and Brain (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) in a project on Consciousness, Emotions, Values. There he works on neuroscientific and psychological theories of what we value in cultural artifacts and art; conducting himself experiments on our engagement with architecture, visual art, and film.



### **PARTNERS**



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