

Press release 20.08.2017

**Feedback: International Symposium**

‘Moment of Truth: for a Reasonable Ecology between the Media’

2-day Symposium ‘Feedback’: Thursday 28 and Friday 29 September

West @ Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, Prinsessegracht 4, 2514 AN Den Haag

With Jasper Bernes (USA), Josephine Bosma (NL), Florian Cramer (NL), Richard Cavell (CA), Dmytri Kleiner (CA), Ganaële Langlois (CA), Geert Lovink (NL), Willem van Weelden (NL) and others.

The recursive exhibition project Marshall McLuhan and the Arts is a series of exhibitions and symposia examining the changing role of literature and the arts as guides in times of accelerated technological progress.

In the electronic age, where our sciences have produced machines of extreme precision and complexity, we observe with irony, especially in political spheres, that the edifice of disinterested reason is crumbling. Several fundamental questions arise from this. To what extent does it still make sense to rationally criticise or analyse our condition? Regarding the techno-environmental crisis, do we find a way out or a way in? How to cultivate autonomy in an automated social sphere, a ‘society of control’? Has art been sublimated into the production of cyber-society or can it still push us out into the space where all probabilities have not already been calculated? In our symposium we would like to help tease out the potential for synthetic aesthetic practices to help us address the urgent concerns of our time, when mere reason seems to falter.

Marshall McLuhan was exemplary for his synthetic practice. He was a thinker of technology, a historian of literature and a publisher of the present. He eschewed peer-review to get his ideas, ‘probes’, out into the public for debate as part of a radical experimental media-arts practice.

The crisis of the status of Truth today calls us to retrieve the dialogic forms of the pre-Socratics all the while remaining cognisant of the tradition of disinterested reason which got us here. The academy itself seems to be undermined by the technologies it helped bring into being. The meaning of ‘culture’ can no longer be thought in opposition to ‘nature’, but rather, to borrow a concepts from Karen Barad, culturenature is a locus of ‘intra-action’.

Building on our experimental colloquia of last year: [www.westdenhaag.nl/exhibitions/16\_04\_Flusser](http://www.westdenhaag.nl/exhibitions/16_04_Flusser)

in the frame of our project on the thinking of Vilém Flusser, we have brought together experts from the communication studies, aesthetics, art history, IT, literature and transdiciplinary practices to join a colloquium format designed to work out useful meeting points where we work out strategies to engage with the transformations brought on by rapid technological change.

Despite the promises of an open technological society with industrial bounty equal opportunities for all, our age still struggles gravely with problems that it seemed we were on the verge of surpassing 50 years ago. How is such an apparent stalemate still possible in the age of supercomputers and AI? Is it a question of, in Benjamin Bratton’s phrase ‘all computation along the wrong curve’? How are we to know? And who are ‘we’ anyway? Increasingly apparent since McLuhan’s time is that a society is not a stable construct but rather consists of emergent relations, relations conditioned by economic concerns. McLuhan proposed a research path towards a ‘reasonable ecology between the media’, which would allow us to preserve the techniques we still need from the past, such as critical reason and literacy, allowing these to take on new purposes and roles within a apocalyptic planetary household of anthropogenic effects.

If you have any questions, please contact MJ Sondeijker: info@westdenhaag.nl / +31(0)70.3925359

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Huis Huguetan is owned by the Rijksvastgoedbedrijf and is temporarily managed by ANNA Vastgoed & Cultuur. West’s programme has been made possible thanks to the municipality of The Hague and the Ministry of OCW.