

Introspection-Performance "The Robot is Present" at Volkstheater Vienna

by/with transdisciplinary research group H.A.U.S. (Humanoids in Architecture and Urban Spaces)

What do you feel when you experience the presence of an artifact? Can a robot or an artificial intelligence actually have presence? The performance *The Robot is Present* presents questions not only the materially perceptible existence of technical-machinic things, but also the possibilities and impossibilities to perceive their presence. The piece refers to the legendary performance *The Artist is Present* by Marina Abramović at the MOMA, in which the artist presented herself as an exhibit. *The Robot Is Present* inverts the performance of Abramović in several ways: from a museum's white cube to the sub stage of a theater; from being seen while waiting for the performance to a labyrinthine walk for two that tells the story of the pathway; from the sensation of the presence of the ingenious artist to the question of the presence of an AI-controlled robot.

This T.R.I.P. (*The Robot Is Present*) leads as much into the spatial depths of the machine Volkstheater, as into the depths of our relations to technologies: Every 10 minutes one walks from the theater's reception, together with a collaborator, through labyrinthine corridors down to the basement of the Volkstheater in the large sub-stage. On the way into the depth one gets told the background of the performance. There, in the midst of props and equipment, visitors encounter the humanoid robot – to experience presence.

Visitors take a seat opposite the robot. They watch it and are watched by it. While looking at the human-shaped machine, they may notice that they are sitting opposite a mirror that invites to introspection as it throws back questions: Do I feel presence? Whose presence? Can the humanoid robot or its artificial intelligence actually possess, radiate or at least convey presence? What part of my feeling has my counterpart, which one do I have?

In times when presence is almost fetishized, the performance asks about the possibilities of a technically reproduced presence. Is it, as the philosopher Jacques Derrida has written, that any kind of presence is always already merely mediated, hence represented? The performance offers the possibility to explore these questions as easily as directly, to experience the possibilities and limitations of presence itself.

Then, accompanied by a collaborator, you climb up from the sparsely lit lower stage through the labyrinth of aisles to a cloakroom.

Here you are invited to speak with the philosopher of technology, Christoph Hubatschke, about your experience, to inform yourselves or to discuss the performance. Does the reflection on the encounter with the robot change the view of the possibilities and impossibilities of a technically mediated presence? What do we really mean when we speak of presence? How did this unusual encounter with a robot change or amplify your idea of robotics?

A collaborator will then bring you back to the reception.

Volkstheater Vienna, festival "#digitalnatives19"

Fr. 31.5., 13-14:45

www.volkstheater.at/stueck/the-robot-is-present/

Robot programming

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Philosophy of technology discourse

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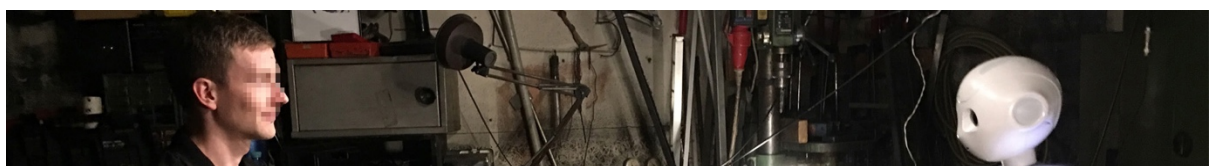
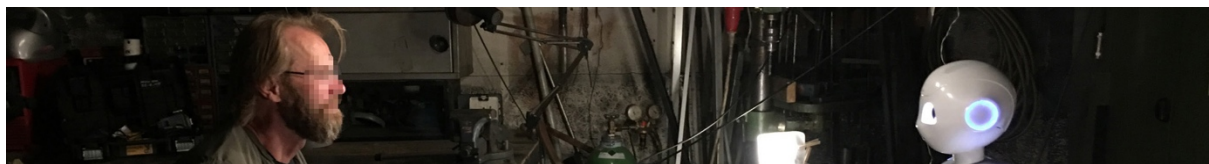
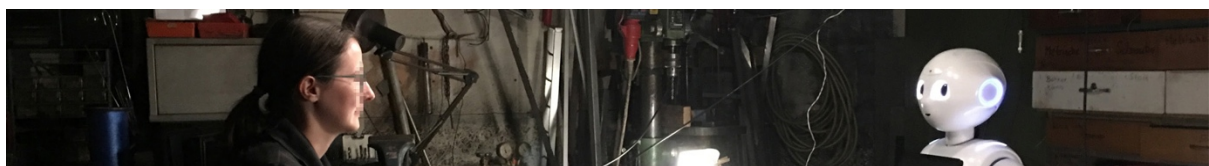
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H.A.U.S. (Humanoids in Architecture and Urban Spaces) is a research group of experts from automation technology, AI research, architecture, human-robot-interaction, performance art and philosophy doing research in science and arts. Its developments, findings and insights will not only be evaluated according to sociocultural or technical objectives, but brought into open lifeworld contexts by means of public experiments and performance art.
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Visitors performing *The robot is present* with humanoid robot model pepper. H.A.U.S. at the ARS electronica/Stadtwerkstadt 9/2017. Copyright Oliver Schürer