

EXTENDED VOL.6

FLORIAN MEHNERT

ARCHIVE OF POSSIBLE LIVES

AN ARTISTIC INQUIRY INTO
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
AND IDENTITY

EXTENDED

VOL.6

FLORIAN MEHNERT

Archive of Possible Lives
from truth to probability

EX TEN DED

Vol. 6

PRACTICE OF AN
ENLARGED CONCEPT
OF ART

ARCHIVE OF POSSIBLE LIVES

AN ARTISTIC INQUIRY INTO
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
AND IDENTITY

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FLORIAN MEHNERT

EX TEN DED

Vol. 6

ARCHIVE OF POSSIBLE LIVES

AN ARTISTIC INQUIRY INTO
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
AND IDENTITY

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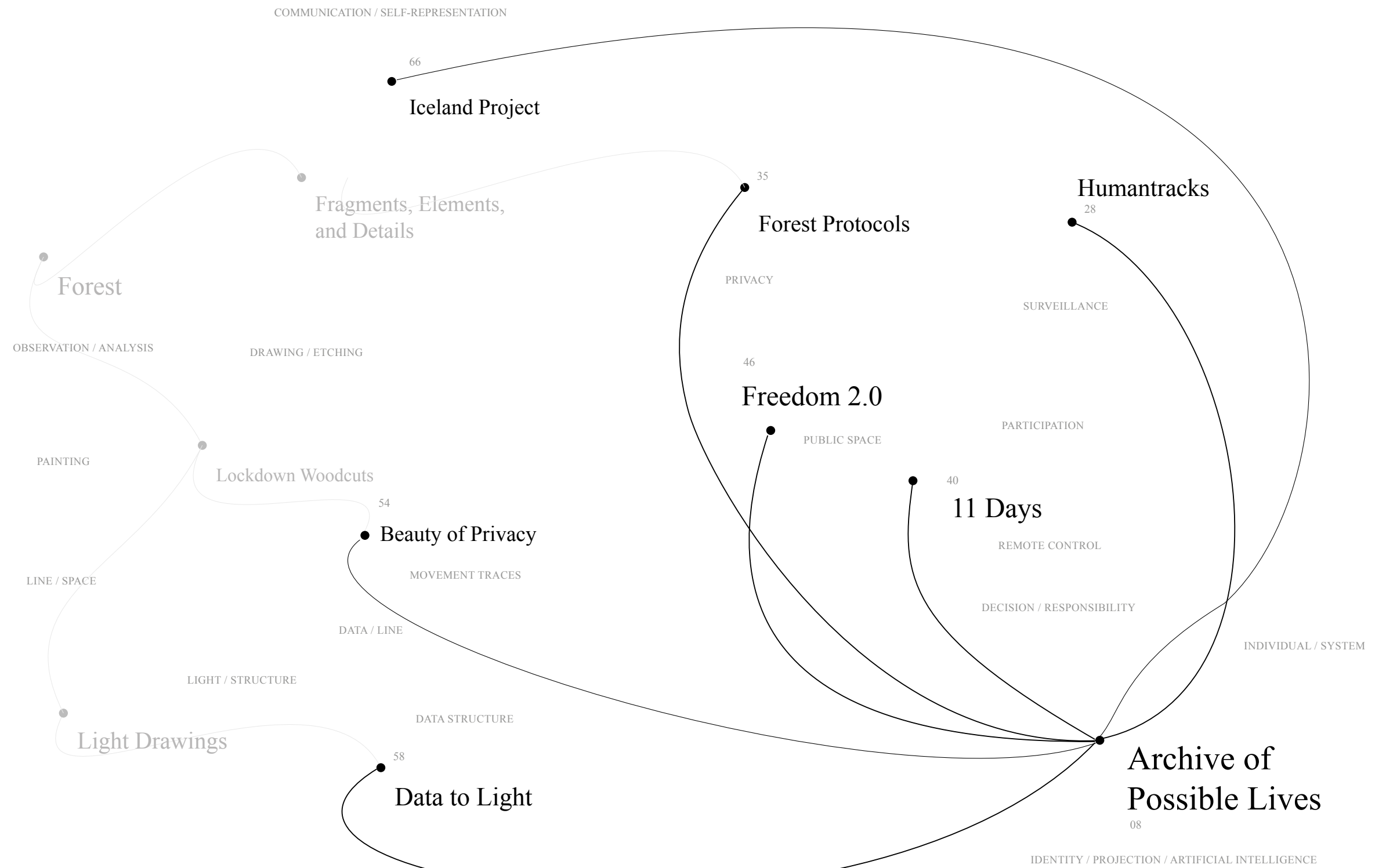
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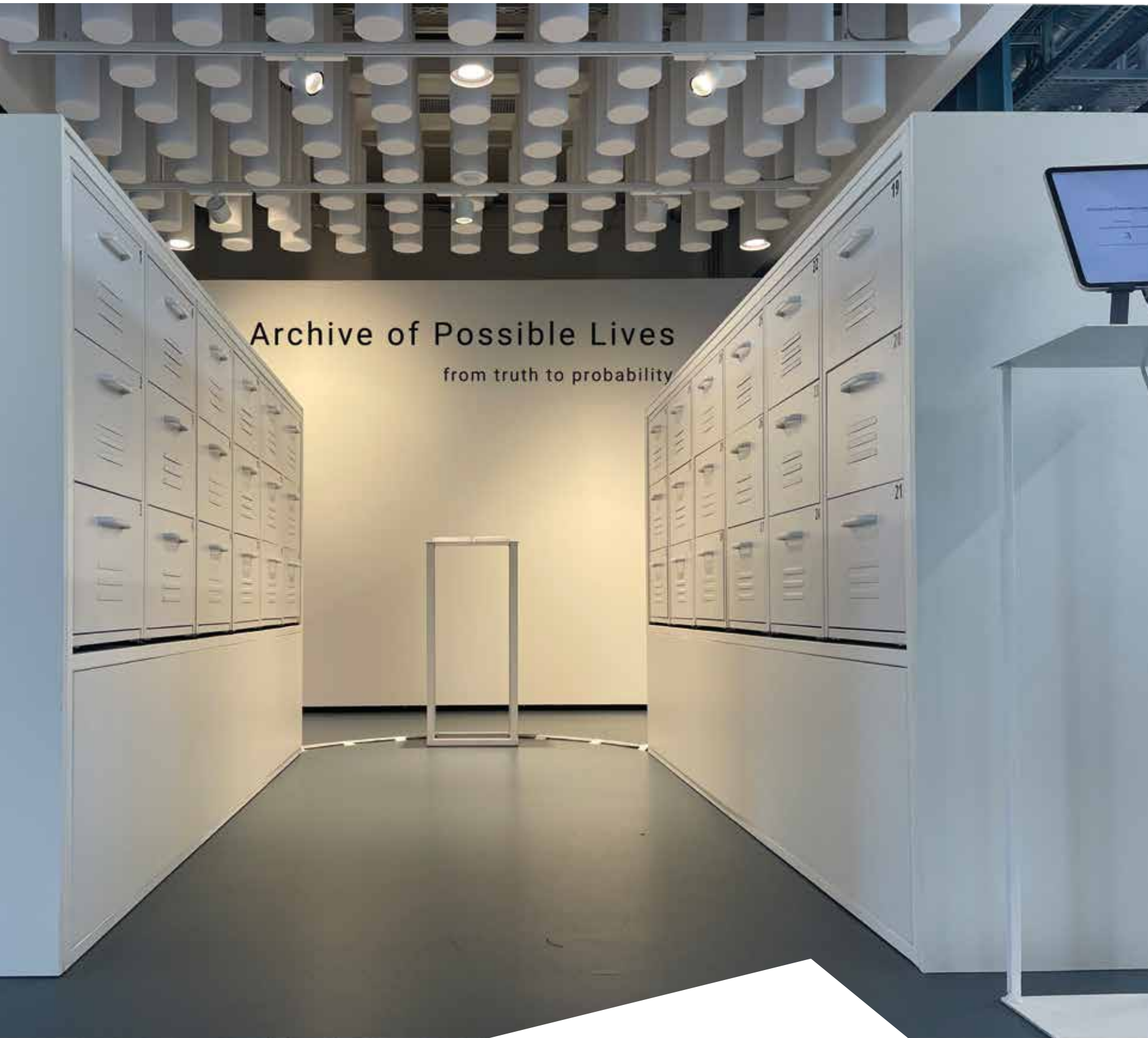
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RELATIONS



Numbers refer to pages in this volume.
Faint connections locate the wider practice.



ARCHIVE OF POSSIBLE LIVES

The installation *Archive of Possible Lives* is the focus of this volume. The installation examines how artificial intelligence, biography and social imagination meet in a physical encounter. A visitor enters his name, opens six drawers and collects fragments of his possible life.

The archive speaks in very concrete terms about a life that might be possible. The language of the archive comes across as remarkably intimate, even though it does not know the person to whom the text is addressed. Probability, projection and critical judgment become material for an artistic situation.

The related works in the second part place *Archive of Possible Lives* within the broader context of my artistic practice. They explore communication and self-representation, surveillance and privacy, participation and responsibility, and the translation of data into space.

The selection traces recurring questions across different works and shows how their focus shifts. While several earlier works draw on recorded actions and traces, *Archive of Possible Lives* generates speculative biographies, inviting visitors to question how these narratives relate to their sense of self.

What happens when AI continues the narratives of our lives?

Archive of Possible Lives generates biographical fragments that address visitors personally, although the system has no access to their personal history. Its texts speak about childhood, relationships, decisions and the future with an intimacy that can suggest knowledge of the person reading them.

Visitors bring their own experiences to these statements. They recognise familiar tensions, recall situations and establish connections that the system itself cannot know. A text generated without personal knowledge acquires meaning within an individual life.

The work examines this encounter between machine-generated language and human self-understanding. How does an unfamiliar statement come to feel like an account of ourselves? What gives it credibility—and how do we distinguish recognition from the impression of being known?

A walk-in hypothesis about who we might have been.



Archive of Possible Lives, 2026
First acquisition: IPAI Foundation, Heilbronn, 2026

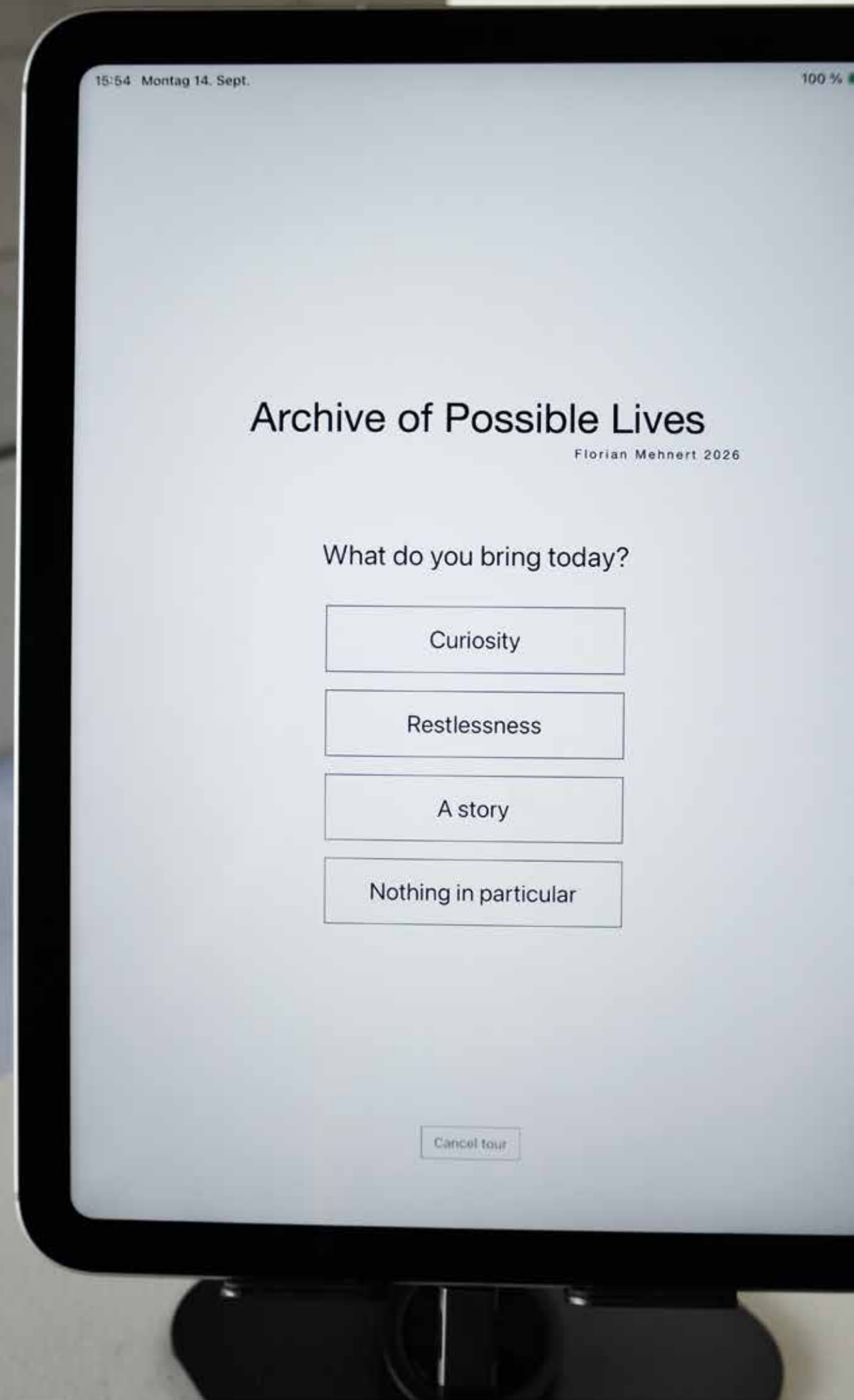
A choice, and a possible life is taking shape

After entering a name the journey through six drawers begins. Each drawer produces a new AI-generated fragment of a possible biography: a trace of something that never happened, a decision that might have been made or a life that might have been lived.

Step by step, a personal archive of unrealized possibilities takes shape. It begins with childhood, self-perception, relationships, decisions and is going over to another possible life and the future. AI becomes a speculative counterpart, continuing a biography from probabilities.

The archive does not know you.
Why can it still feel personal?

THE INTERFACE OPENS THE PERSONAL JOURNEY



A room of ordered drawers becomes a biography in motion



IPA | SPACES HEILBRONN

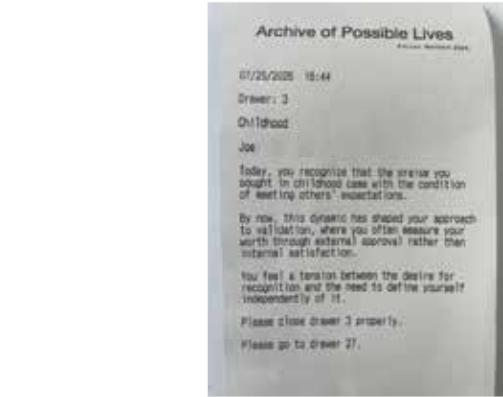


STUDIO FLORIAN MEHNERT

Six fragments form a possible life.

During the journey, six individually generated fragments accumulate.
Each approaches the visitor’s possible biography from a different direction: childhood, self-perception, relationships, decisions, another possible life and the future.

A narrative unfolds through action



01 CHILDHOOD



02 SELF-PERCEPTION



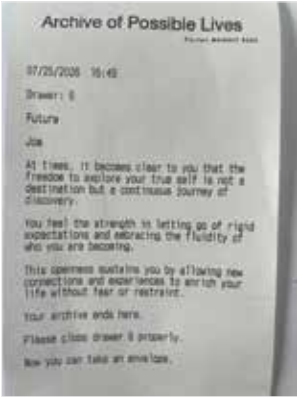
03 RELATIONSHIPS



04 DECISIONS



05 ANOTHER POSSIBLE LIFE

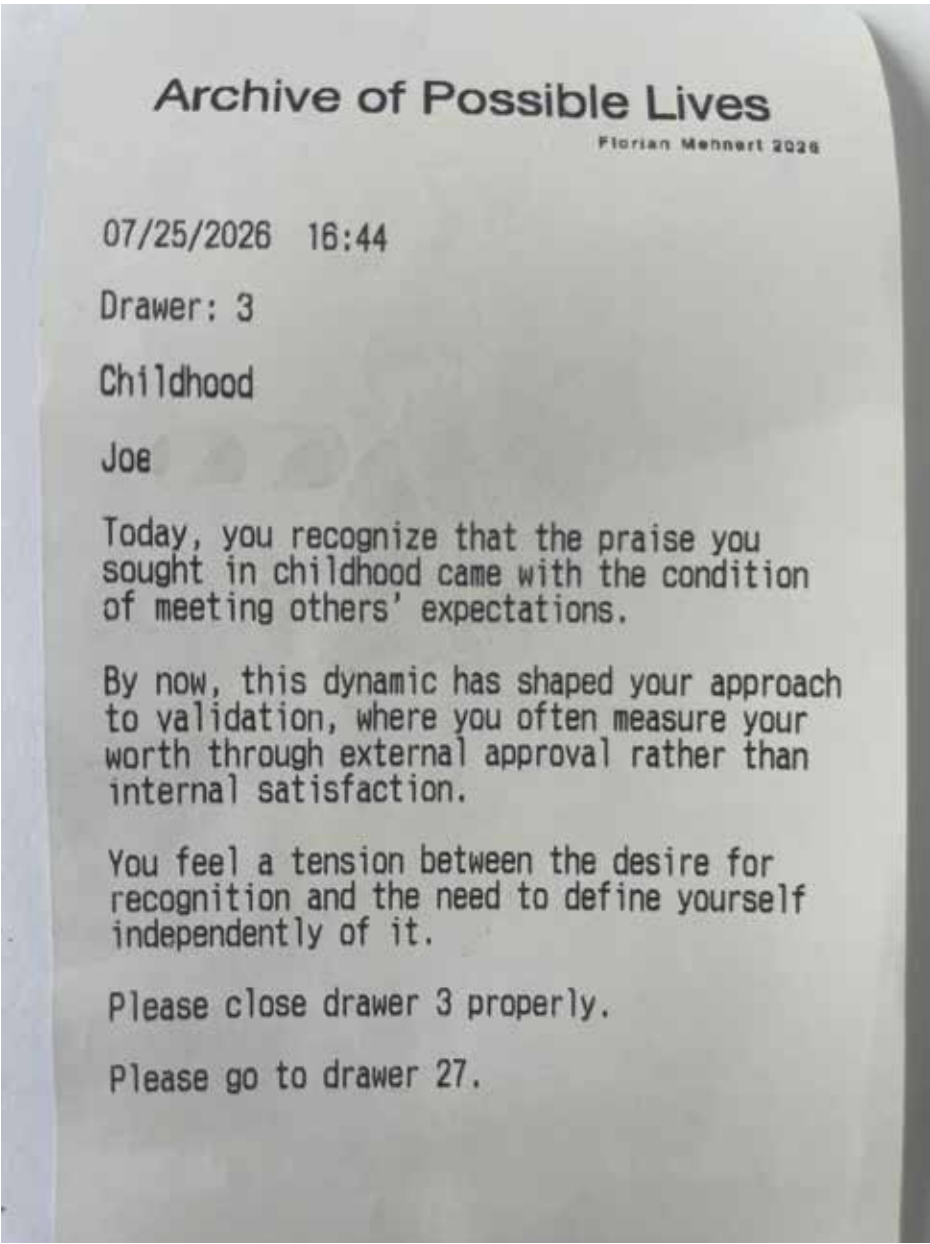


06 FUTURE

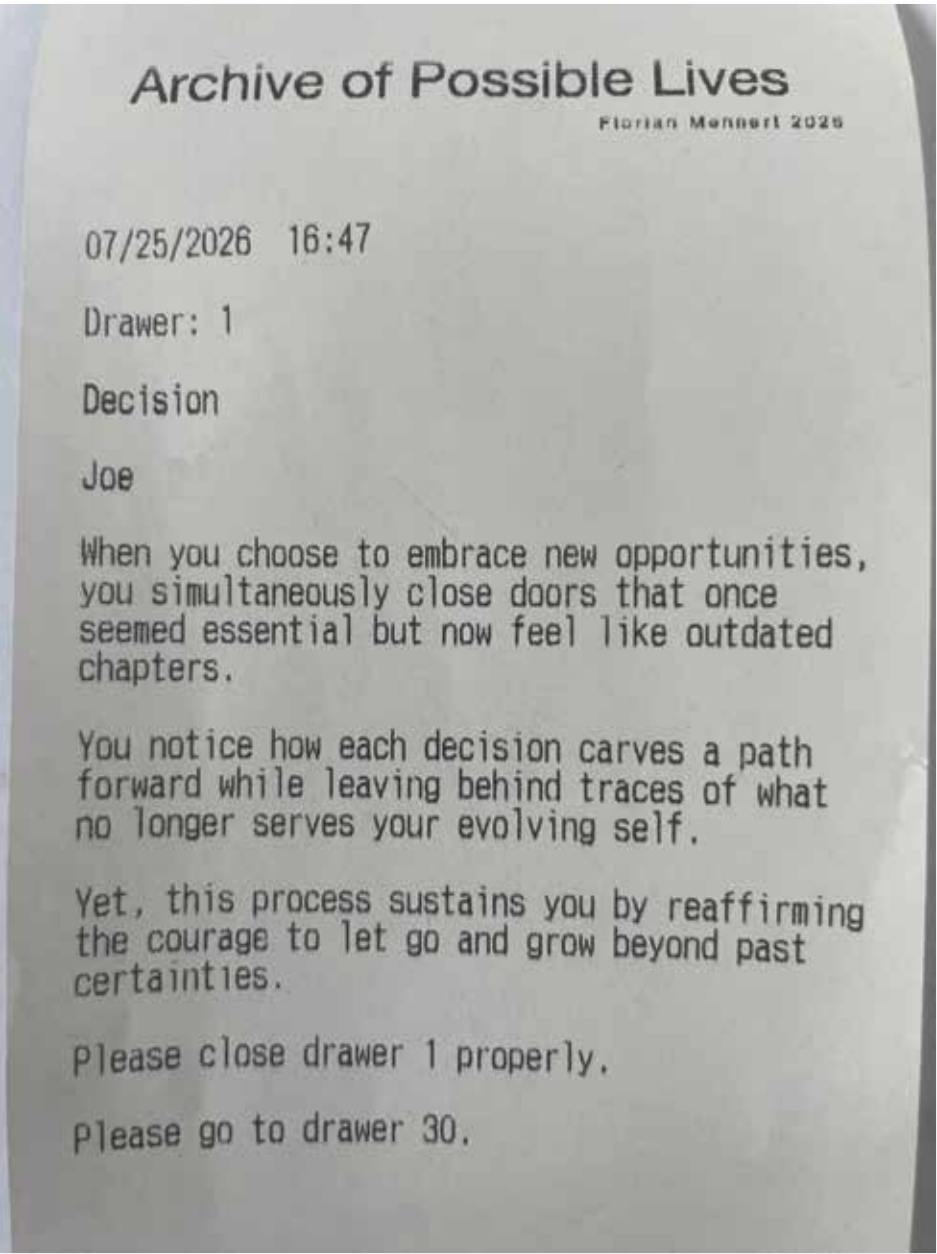
The texts are neither memories nor predictions. They are plausible assertions that invite recognition, resistance and doubt.

01	ENTER	Your name and a first choice open a personal route through the archive.
02	OPEN	Each selected drawer prints the next fragment.
03	COLLECT	Six fragments accumulate into a possible biography.
04	REFLECT	A final card returns the question of truth, projection and recognition to the visitor.





01 / CHILDHOOD — 25 JULY 2026, 16:44



04 / DECISIONS — 25 JULY 2026, 16:47

The truth is within you.

At the end, visitors take an envelope in which they can carry their printouts. The envelope contains a card. It bears the words: “The truth is within you.”

The sentence does not oppose the machine’s narrative with a final certainty. Instead, it opens up a double examination of the concept of truth. AI can generate plausible connections while being factually wrong; it can assert with great confidence what never happened.

The card redirects the question towards one’s own perception: Which parts of the narrated biography do I recognise as coherent, which as projection – and which as false? Truth appears here neither as mere fact nor as purely inner feeling. It must be negotiated repeatedly within the tension between machine-generated assertion, lived experience and critical self-examination.

Archive of Possible Lives asks what happens when AI begins to continue the narratives of our lives without actually knowing us: Which stories emerge from statistical patterns? Which possibilities does it open up, which does it repeat or restrict – and how does our understanding of ourselves change when a machine narrates who we might have been?

A final card returns the question of truth, projection and recognition to the visitor.



An envelope for the six fragments and final card from the archive

The visible order conceals a narrative machine.

The ordered drawers and their numbers evoke an archive in which information has already been collected, classified and stored. Each drawer, however, delivers a text generated during the visitor's encounter. The installation gives newly produced language the setting and material form of an archived record.

Printing turns the statement into a document that can be held, collected and taken away. As the fragments accumulate, they form a personal dossier whose significance depends on the visitor's reading. The work brings the apparent authority of an organised archive into tension with the uncertain relationship between its documents and the life of the person receiving them.

Computation becomes part of the artwork's material construction.



Local. Autonomous. Physically embedded.

The visible order of the drawers conceals a networked system of sensors, thermal printers and a locally operated language model. With every movement through the physical archive, the system continues an individual biographical sequence in real time.

The archive is not connected to the internet. It does not access personal profiles, external databases, or online sources. The narrative comes into being only during the encounter. Its personal resonance arises not from knowing the visitor, but from calculated probabilities, projection, and recognition.

Why this work matters now

Generative AI is beginning to shape how we understand ourselves, our possibilities.

Archive of Possible Lives makes this invisible influence visible.

AI systems increasingly generate recommendations, predictions and narratives that affect real decisions, opportunities and perceptions. Their influence often remains invisible because it is embedded in interfaces, classifications and automated processes.

The installation translates this abstract mechanism into a physical experience. It makes tangible how calculated probabilities can become personal narratives — and how those narratives may begin to influence the way we see ourselves and the lives we consider possible.

When machines begin to write possible lives, they also begin to shape how we imagine our own.



CO NT EXT

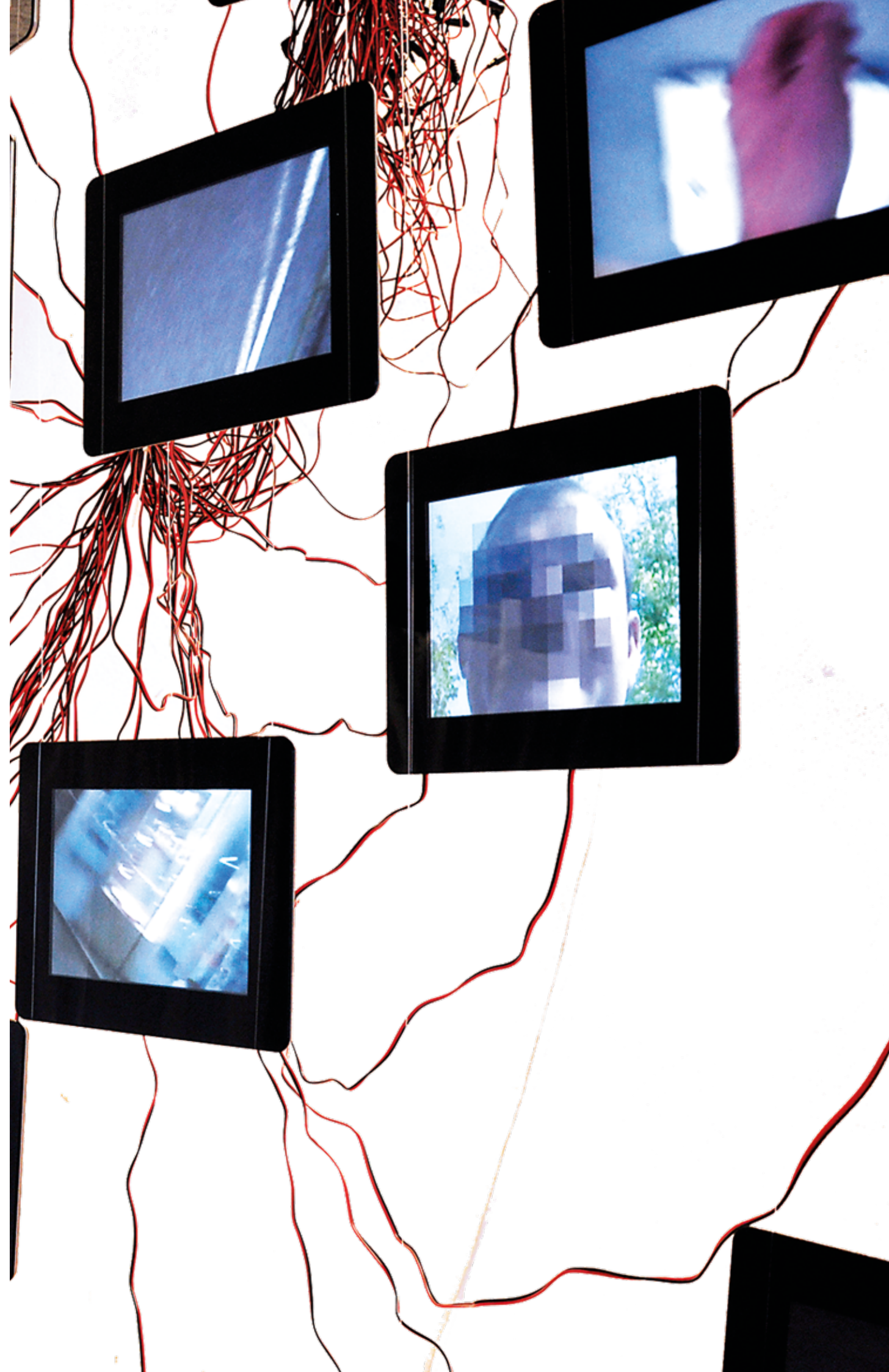
RELATED WORKS
TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE
AND ITS SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

Florian Mehnert's artistic practice focuses on the point at which technological advances begin to reshape society and individual lives. The following works investigate such moments of change: when new technical possibilities alter how we communicate, how we are observed, how we act and how we understand ourselves. *Archive of Possible Lives* brings this inquiry to generative AI, asking how machine-generated narratives shape our sense of who we are—and who gets to define us.

HUMANTRACKS

ETHICS OF SURVEILLANCE
TECHNOLOGIES

42 CHANNEL VIDEO
INSTALLATION



Humantracks, 2014, makes networked surveillance physically present. Forty-two screens show video sequences captured through remotely activated smartphone cameras and microphones. Devices carried as personal companions become instruments of observation, exposing private situations to an unseen observer.

The installation examines the point at which connectivity becomes surveillance and personal access becomes a loss of control. Who can enter another person's private world through a device—and what happens when those being observed cannot determine who is watching?



humantracks,
(Menschentracks), 2014
42 screens, cables, nylon cord
video sequences of hacked smartphones
dimension: 5 x 5 x 5m



humanstacks,
(Menschentackel), 2014
42 screens, cables, video and
video sequences of hacked smartphones
dimension: 3 x 3 x 5m

Analysis and observation are fundamental methods in Mehnert's artistic practice. They serve to investigate complex technological and social developments, to identify underlying mechanisms and contradictions, and to make their consequences more comprehensible. The aim is not necessarily to resolve these complexities, but to penetrate them and open them to critical examination.

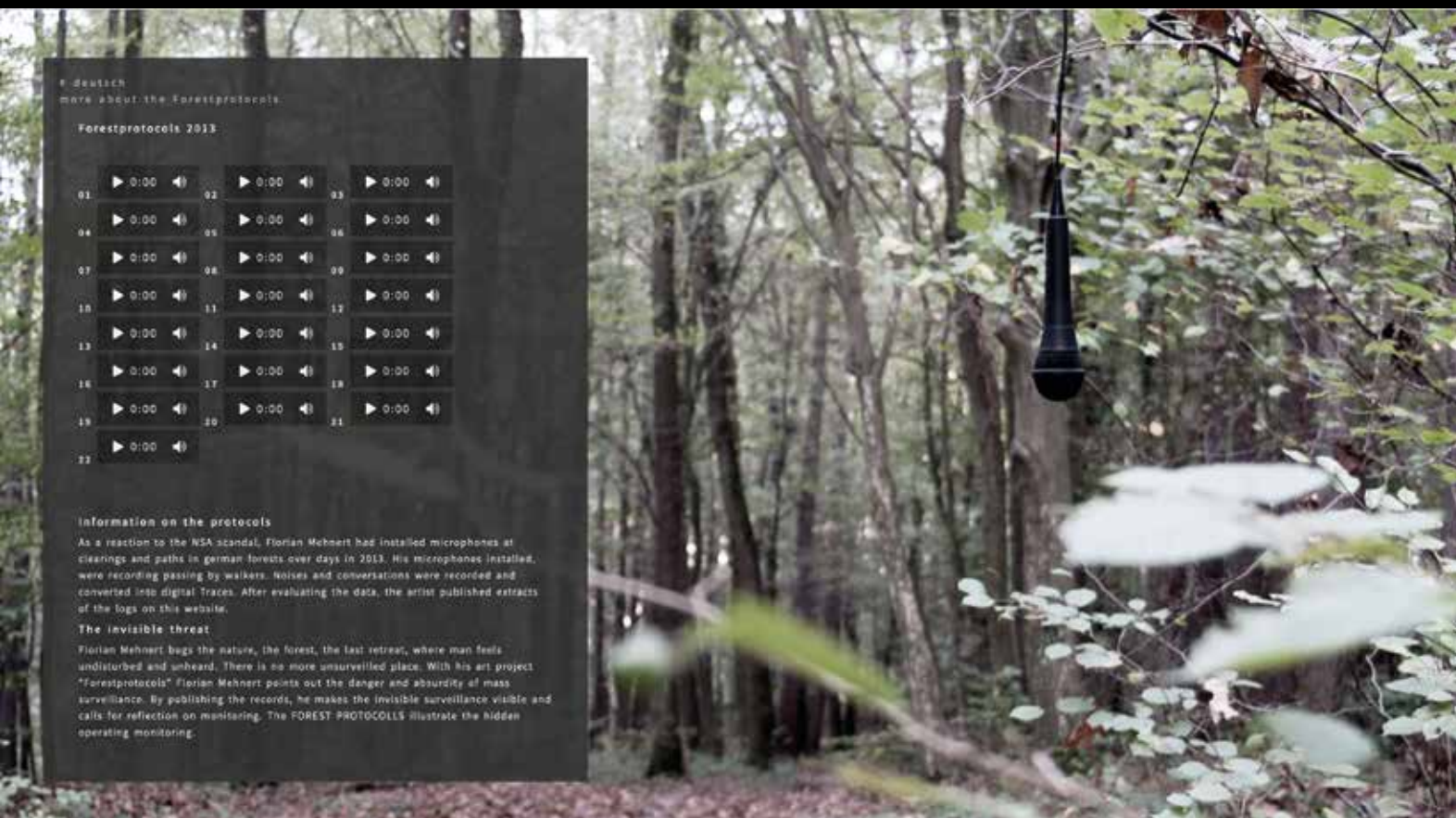
From this analytical process, Mehnert develops artistic situations that others can enter, experience and question. Recording devices, interfaces, spatial arrangements and rules of participation become elements of an experimental structure. These choices determine who can observe, who can act and who becomes exposed.

The artist's own position remains part of the experiment. Deciding what to reveal, how to intervene and which consequences to accept carries responsibility. The work also exposes these decisions to critical scrutiny, including those made by the artist himself.

Across Forest Protocols, Humantracks, 11 DAYS and Freedom 2.0, the artistic experiment does not provide predetermined answers. While its conditions can be constructed, human responses remain unpredictable. Recognition, refusal, participation and conflict become part of the work itself.

FORESTPROTOCOLS

22 CHANNEL SOUND INSTALLATION
RESEARCH ORIENTATION
AND EXPERIMENT



screenshot, original
website of the published
protocols as audio files
2013

FORESTPROTOCOLS , 2013

Forestprotocols emerged in 2013 as an artistic response to the NSA surveillance scandal and the revelations of mass surveillance by intelligence agencies. Microphones installed along paths and clearings in German forests recorded passing walkers, fragments of conversation and the surrounding sounds. Selected excerpts were subsequently published on a website as twenty-two individually accessible audio protocols.

Each protocol preserves a fragment of an encounter without the visual information that would normally help a listener interpret it. Voices, footsteps and ambient sounds become traces of people whose circumstances remain largely unknown. Listening places the audience in the position of an observer with access to a situation that was not addressed to them.

In later exhibitions, the recordings became a twenty-two-channel sound installation. Suspended headphones distributed the protocols through the exhibition space. Visitors moved between them, choosing individual recordings and entering different acoustic situations. The recordings made in the forest became a spatial encounter with the act of listening.

The forest, traditionally perceived as a place of solitude and retreat, becomes a setting in which the boundaries of privacy are unexpectedly crossed. By placing listeners in the position of an unintended observer, Forest Protocols confronts them with the vulnerability of their own private lives. The work seeks to raise awareness of the importance of privacy and individual freedom in an increasingly monitored society. Yet it also exposes a fundamental contradiction: the intrusion into privacy becomes the very means through which its value is made visible.



exhibition at C / O Berlin, (with Hasselblad Foundation)
„watched“ Forestprotocols, 2018,
22 channel sound installation, 22 Headphones, 22 mp3 players
dimension variable



„forestprotocols“
installation view at Kunstverein Wolfsburg, 2015



Detail of the installation 11 DAYS

11 DAYS

SOCIAL EXPERIMENT
USE OF REMOTE-CONTROLLED
ARMED DRONES

INTERACTIVE IMMERSIVE
INSTALLATION WITH VIA
INTERNET REMOTE-CONTROLLED
WEAPON
AND LAB RAT



THE ART EXPERIMENT 11 DAYS

Interactive installation with over internet remote-controlled weapon and living lab rat

11 DAYS, 2015, was a social experiment exploring the relationship between remote control, violence and individual responsibility. A living laboratory rat occupied an enclosure facing an internet-controlled compressed-air weapon. A webcam mounted on the barrel transmitted a live view, placing participants in a position resembling that of a drone operator.

Through the website, users could observe the rat and move the weapon. An eleven-day countdown announced that the weapon would be armed at its conclusion. The prospect of an anonymous person firing from a computer or smartphone created the experiment's central tension. Killing the rat was never intended.

The camera perspective resembled a first-person shooter, yet the animal on screen was physically present. The experiment questioned how technological distance and mediated perception affect moral responsibility when another living being becomes a potential target.

The project triggered an international wave of outrage, accusations, public debate and death threats against the artist. Mehner ended the experiment before the countdown concluded. Yet this response revealed another dimension of the work: while the rat appeared to be the subject of the experiment, the audience itself had become its true subject. Public reactions, moral judgments and collective behaviour transformed 11 DAYS into a social experiment in which the observers became the observed.

More than a decade later, the widespread use of combat drones, particularly in the war in Ukraine, gives the work renewed relevance. Remote-controlled weapons, screen-mediated targeting and the psychological distance between operator and victim have become defining features of contemporary warfare. 11 DAYS anticipated questions that have since become increasingly urgent: How does technological mediation change our relationship to violence, and where does individual responsibility begin when physical distance separates action from consequence?



David Charter **Berlin**
Published at 12:01AM, March 14 2015

A controversial artist has set up a gun so anyone on the internet can shoot a rat using their keyboard or smartphone — in an installation he says is designed to protest about the use of military drones.

Florian Mehnert, a German artist who has previously bugged random conversations to highlight state surveillance, will set up a webcam on the rat today with a countdown to March 24, when the gun will be loaded.

Mr Mehnert’s latest work, called 11 Days, will film the rat continually until it is shot, in a twin protest about snooping by drones as well as their use to kill people by remote control.

The 44-year-old artist from Cologne is reflecting a mood of suspicion in his country about the military activities of the US, especially its killer drones used in the lawless Pakistani-Afghan border region.

While their operators are located in the US, data and images from drones are sent via the US Air Force base at Ramstein in southwest Germany.

“Of course I expect protests,” said Mehnert. “A rat is to die in the service of art. I would also prefer if it were not necessary. But people nowadays are so jaded, that art must break new boundaries.”

Mehnert has set up a website where anyone can register and wait their turn to control a gun from their keyboard, aim it and take a shot at the rat.

“Preparing all this was not only a technical, but also an emotional challenge,” he said.

“I want to make people aware . . . that you can kill over the internet. This is not a doomsday scenario, but long ago became reality.”

A survey on his website yesterday found that 1,440 viewers (55.6 per cent) wanted the rat to live, 37.5 per cent thought it should die, and 6.9 per cent did not care.

Viewers have been advised that they must be 18 or over to take part in the shooting.

**madison olivia** @midelair_ · 14. März
@FlorianMehnert MURDERER. I truly hope that if that poor rat gets killed, you do too. You deserve to be shot in the head.
Übersetzt aus dem Englisch von  bing
@FlorianMehnert MÖRDER. Ich hoffe wirklich, dass wenn diese arme Ratte getötet wird, Sie zu tun. Du verdienst es in den Kopf geschossen werden.
20:43 · 14. März 2015 · Details
[Gespräch ausblenden](#)

**Maddhatter** @SMaddhatter · 16. März
@FlorianMehnert people are going to find you and kill you and we will all rejoice
[Gespräch zeigen](#)

**Maddhatter** @SMaddhatter · 16. März
@FlorianMehnert when your shot in the head the world will laugh at your and continue on better then when you were here
[Gespr?](#)

**Christian Mandl** retweetete einen Tweet, in dem Du erwähnt wurdest
14. März: @FlorianMehnert ich hoffe Sie werden eines Tages erschossen.


**Christian Mandl** favorisierte einen Tweet, in dem Du erwähnt wurdest
14. März: @FlorianMehnert ich hoffe Sie werden eines Tages erschossen.

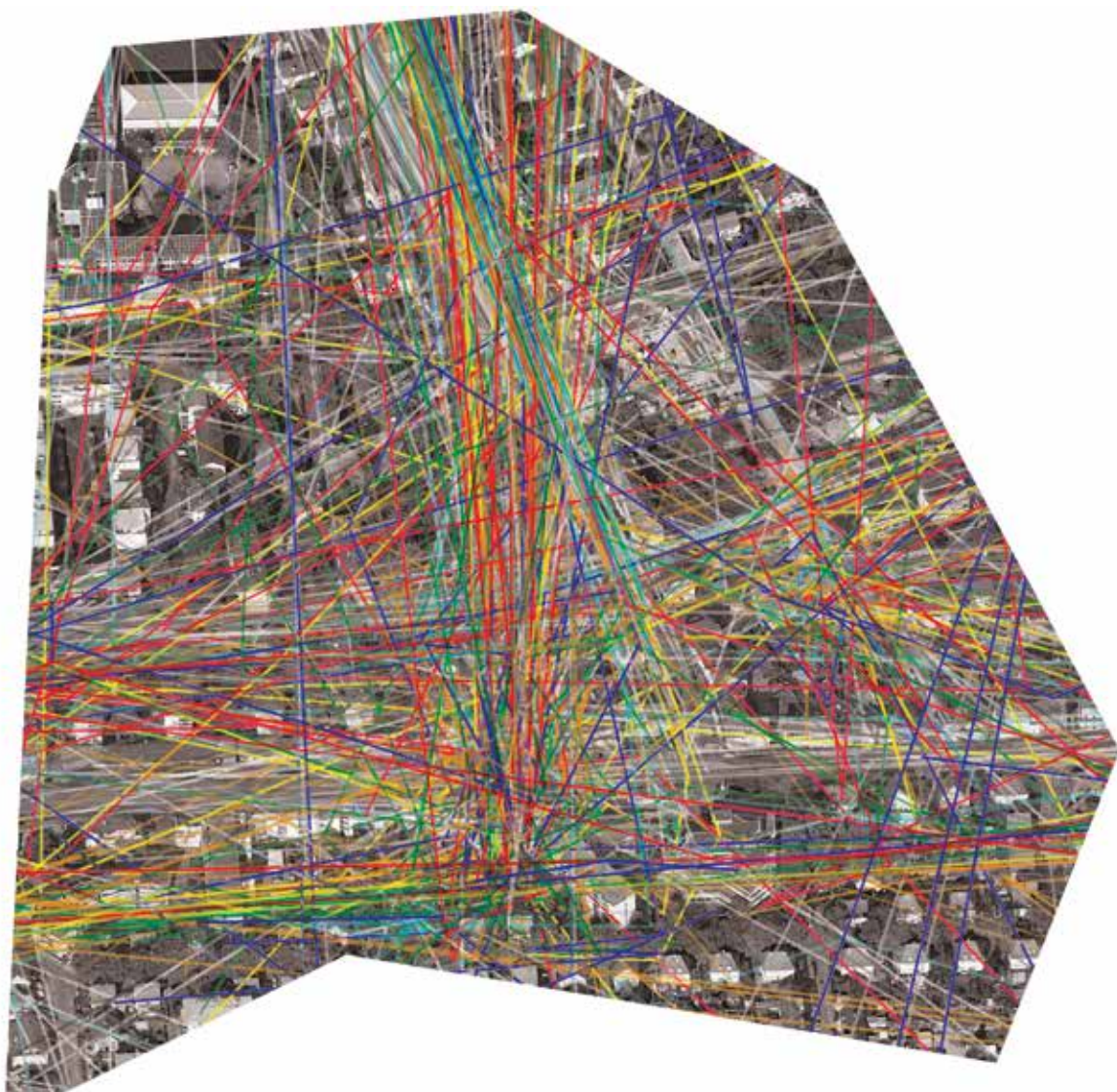

**Simon Poynting** @sim_poy · 14. März
Very clever comment on drones; Florian Mehnert set up "installation" so internet users can shoot a rat using their keyboards

**ミソピチヨボ / USAの絵描き** @misopichopo · 1. Sep.
コイツの名前は **Florian Mehnert** アーティスト。11days というネットゲームは本物のネズミをプレイヤーに殺させるという酷いアートを作った奴だ。
[Übersetzung anzeigen](#)

examples from countless comments in social media

global backlash

print-out of the shitstorm and files of the criminal proceedings



FREEDOM 2.0

INTERDISCIPLINARY
SOCIAL SCULPTURE
ON
IMPACT OF BIG DATA ANALYTICS
SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM

01 THE SHOPS



Temporary renaming: "Drugstore of Freedom"
(formerly Drogerie Rühle), Weil am Rhein, 2016

Freedom 2.0, realised in 2016 in Weil am Rhein, Basel/Riehen and Huningue, and in Stuttgart in 2018, brought questions of Big Data, privacy and individual freedom into public space. Four connected elements formed the social sculpture: a self-tracking app, temporarily renamed shops, a coloured guidance system and public BIG DATA colloquia.

Existing businesses became the Drugstore of Freedom, Pharmacy of Freedom or Bookstore of Freedom. Familiar signs acquired a new meaning, introducing the question of freedom into everyday transactions and encounters.

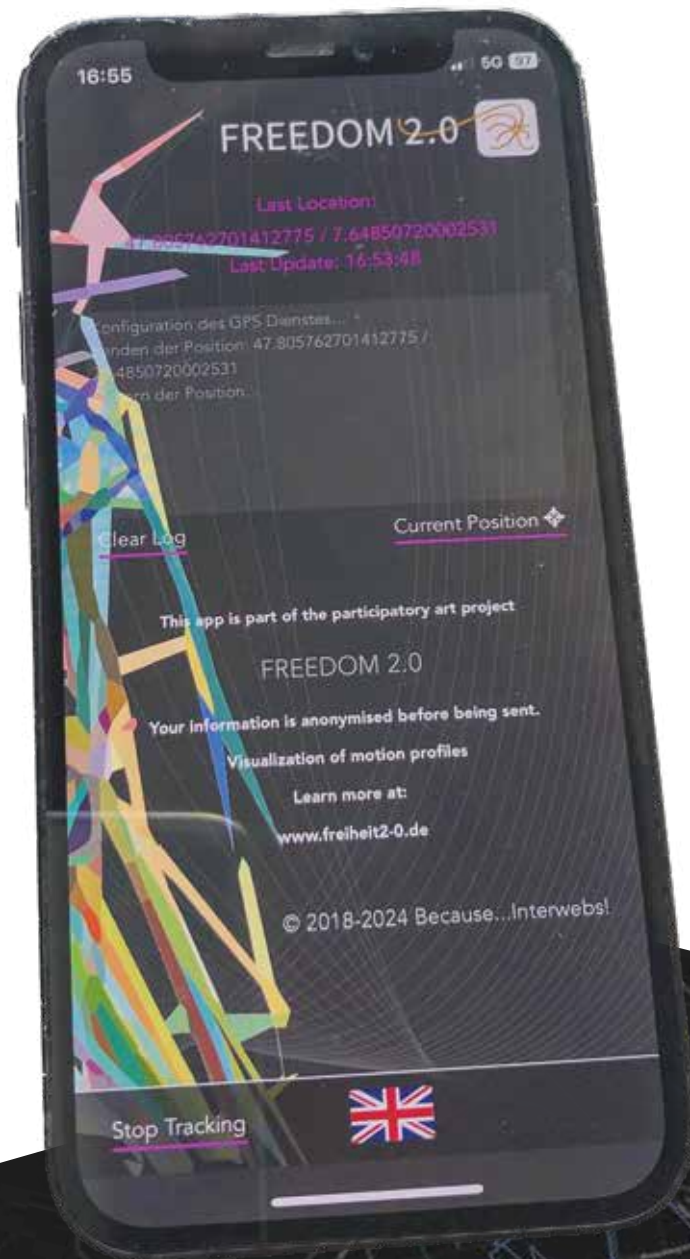
The project-specific app recorded participants' movements using GPS. These traces became projected movement profiles. Coloured lines translated the digital data into physical space, connecting the renamed shops with places of public discussion.

The colloquia brought together perspectives from technology, law, economics, philosophy and other disciplines. Public discussion was an integral part of the artistic form. Shop owners, app users, passers-by and speakers actively shaped the work through their participation and responses.

At its core, Freedom 2.0 examined how Big Data Analytics transforms human behaviour into measurable, predictable and potentially controllable patterns. The collection and analysis of personal data not only enable observation but also create opportunities to influence individual decisions, shape public opinion and manipulate social behaviour. What appears to be a technical process raises fundamental questions about autonomy, democratic freedom and the distribution of power in a data-driven society.

The project addressed a transformation that has since accelerated with the development of contemporary artificial intelligence. Large-scale data collection, statistical modelling and algorithmic prediction have become central to many AI-driven systems. Freedom 2.0 explored the societal implications of these mechanisms at an early stage, making visible how the analysis of human behaviour can become an instrument of influence and control.

As a participatory social sculpture, Freedom 2.0 brought these abstract processes into everyday life. It created situations in which individuals could experience, question and publicly negotiate the relationship between technological systems and personal freedom.



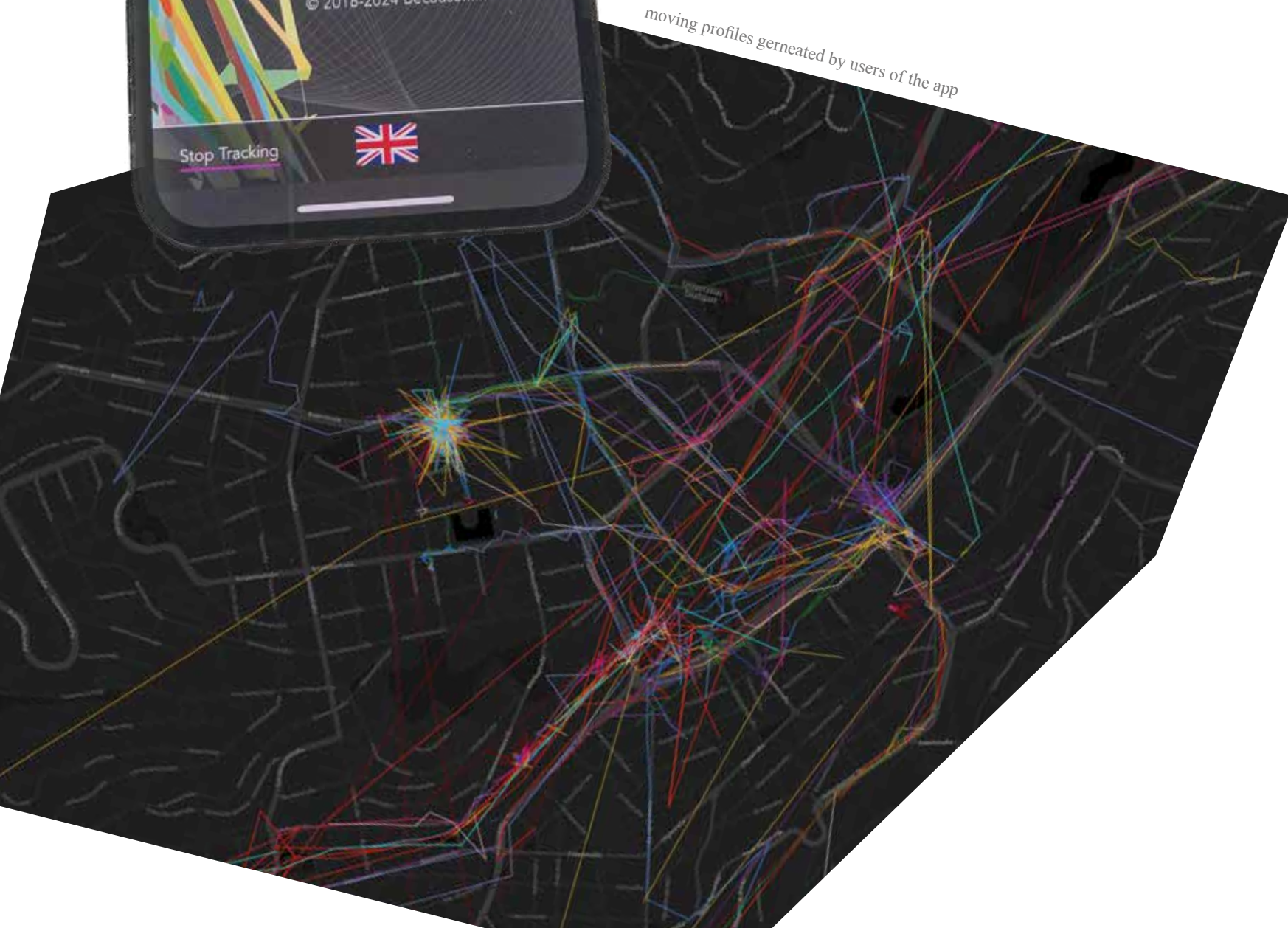
02 THE APP

Individual Movements Become Readable

The self-tracking app linked movement in physical space to its digital representation. Recorded routes were translated into individual movement profiles. Their accumulation made everyday actions visible within a shared structure.

The guidance system returned these traces to public space, where people could encounter the relation between an individual route and a larger field of data.

moving profiles generated by users of the app



Google is aware of our concerns, our interests and our next holiday destination. WhatsApp knows with whom we communicate. YouTube knows what videos we watch, and Instagram knows our posted life. The Big Data system records our lives with all its ramifications. Personal and private data are collected permanently, always and everywhere. [...]

In September 2016 I realized the participative art installation FREIHEIT 2.0 in Weil am Rhein (Germany), Basel (CH), Huningue (France), and in June 2018 in Stuttgart.

The installation should provide a differentiated view of the challenge in the handling of Big Data in our digital, parallel reality and make the interactions between the digital and the analog world visible. I want to point out that democratic achievements, such as personal freedom, are a precious asset that must be defended in an increasingly digital world. I want to transport the complex issue of Big Data to public spaces through an art installation. [...]

Freedom 2.0 was a social, participatory art installation in which people were an important, co-shaping element of the work. It combined public spaces, participants and passers-by. Everyone was able to shape the project through the use of tracking apps, through discussions on the sidewalks and in the shops, and through their

own thoughts, which could be expressed later in the Big Data colloquia. [...]

The question of how to deal with Big Data has often been discussed at the colloquia. FREEDOM 2.0 has taken a first step towards exposure of the business procedures of Big Data; scrutinizing it in the form of a social, participatory art installation. It is to be used as a platform for discussion, for recognizing and learning that we have to develop a global ethic regarding Big Data in order to protect ourselves and our dignity in the future.

Freedom 2.0 as learning and illustrative material in a school textbook.
ISBN-13: 978-3-532-70094-5



THE PUBLICATION
Freedom 2.0, German / English edition, 2022
ISBN-13: 978-3-7568-2770-1

03 THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM

The guidance system translates digital movement profiles from the Freedom 2.0 app into streets and paths, Stuttgart, 2018





Beauty of Privacy, 2019

BEAUTY OF PRIVACY

MOVEMENT
DATA
TRACES
REFERENCE

Linear Traces as a Visual Condensation

Beauty of Privacy examines linear traces as a visual condensation of movement and action. It is based on superimposed trajectories that accumulate into complex, multilayered drawings.

The underlying data is generated through the project-specific app Freiheit 2.0, which records and aggregates users' movement patterns. From this accumulation emerge linear structures between individual trace and collective form.

Through artistic transformation, these movement profiles develop into an autonomous visual language and form a basis for later spatial works in light and data.

2019 / Edition of color prints, various dimensions



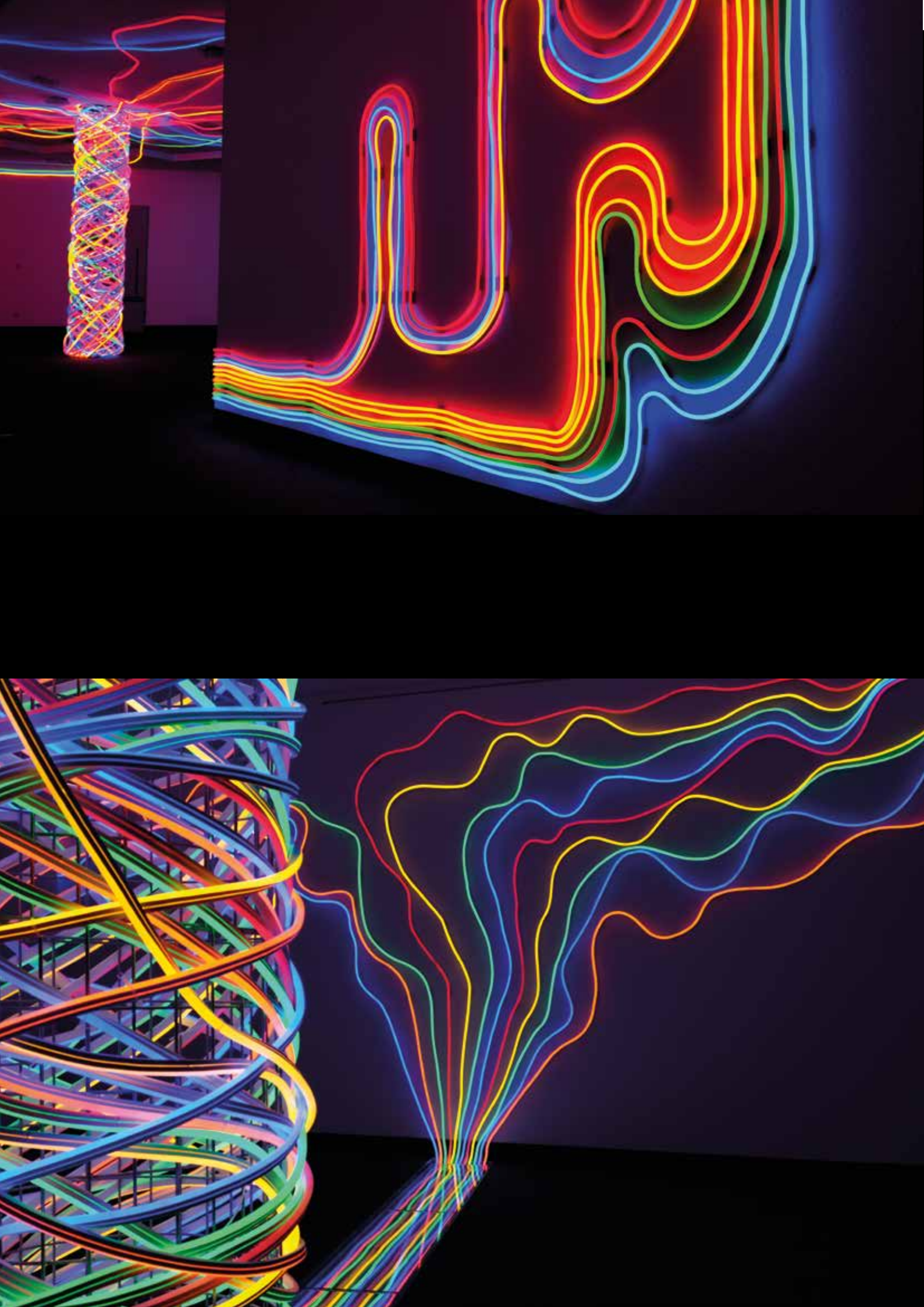
Beauty of Privacy, 2019



DATA TO LIGHT

PERMANENT
WALK THROUGH
LIGHT SCULPTURE

VISUALIZATION OF
DATA STREAMS



DATA TO LIGHT

2022

Data to Light is a permanent light installation extending through the corridors of two floors in the offices of the State Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information in Stuttgart. Coloured LED strips turn the circulation spaces of the building into a continuous field of luminous lines.

The lines run alongside one another, curve, branch and converge. Their spatial arrangement develops the linear language of Beauty of Privacy into an architectural environment. Visitors move within this structure; its relationships change with their position and direction of movement.

The installation gives form to the way individual data traces enter larger, interconnected flows. Its location makes this question specific: the people working within these luminous structures are responsible for protecting personal data and individual rights. Light, architecture and the movement of bodies bring an otherwise abstract relationship between data and freedom into everyday experience.

data to light, 2022
walk through installation over to complete floors
in the building of the State Commissioner for Data Protection, Stuttgart



SMARTPHONE STACKS

DIGITAL
SURVEILLANCE
PRIVACY PARADOX
PHOTOGRAPHY

From the photoseries Smartphone Stacks
180 cm x 134 cm, 2018, photography,
lamda print behind museum glas

exhibited at DHM
German Historic Museum Berlin,
“von Luther zu Twitter”, 2020



Title Programm
Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, 2020

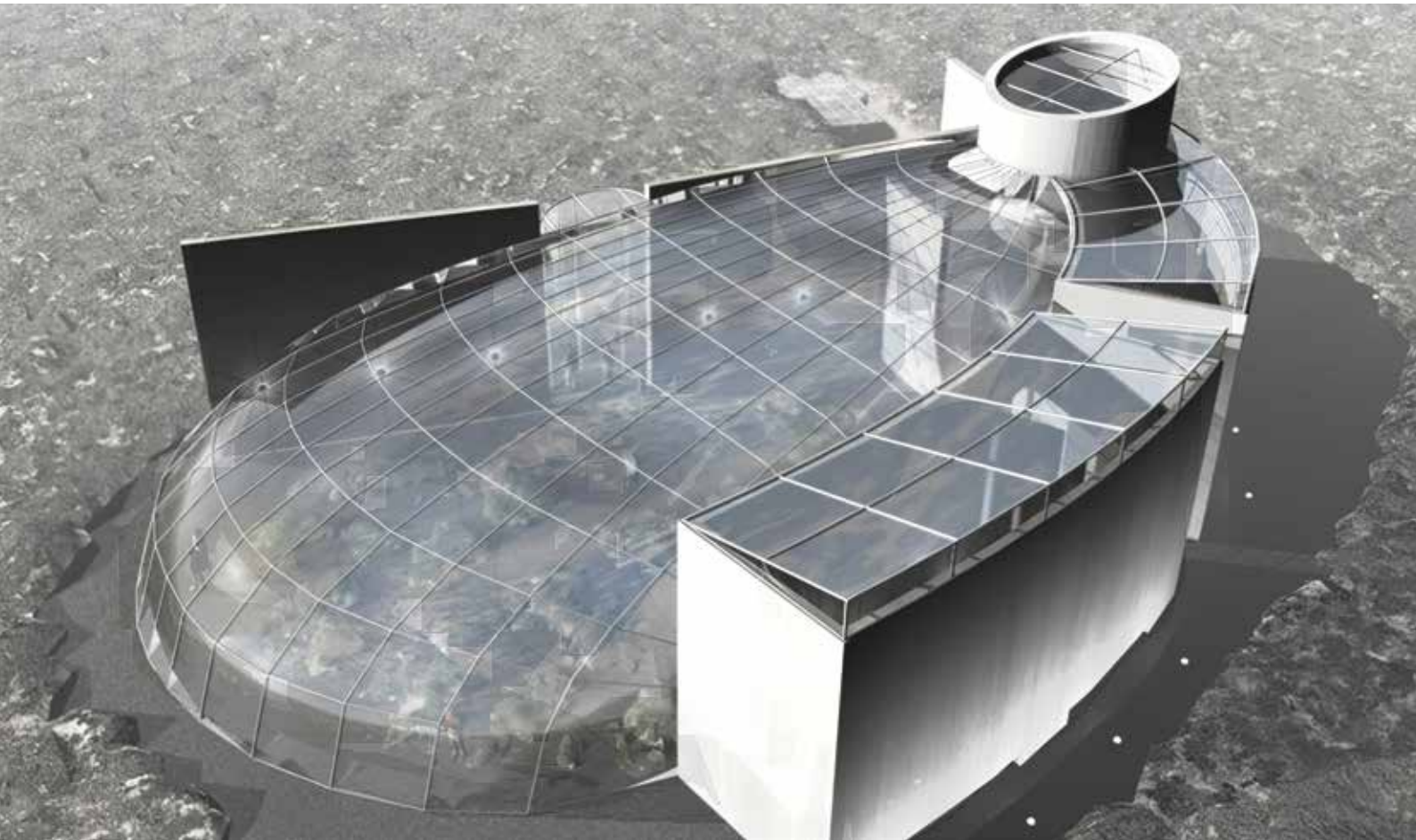
From the photoseries Smartphone Stack
180 cm x 134 cm, 2018, photography,
lamda print behind museum glas,
exhibited at DHM Berlin

SMARTPHONE STACKS, 2018

Smartphone Stacks examines the privacy paradox: while we value our privacy, we willingly carry devices that continuously measure, record and document our daily lives. Smartphones have become personal monitoring instruments, collecting information about our movements, communication, behaviour and social relationships.

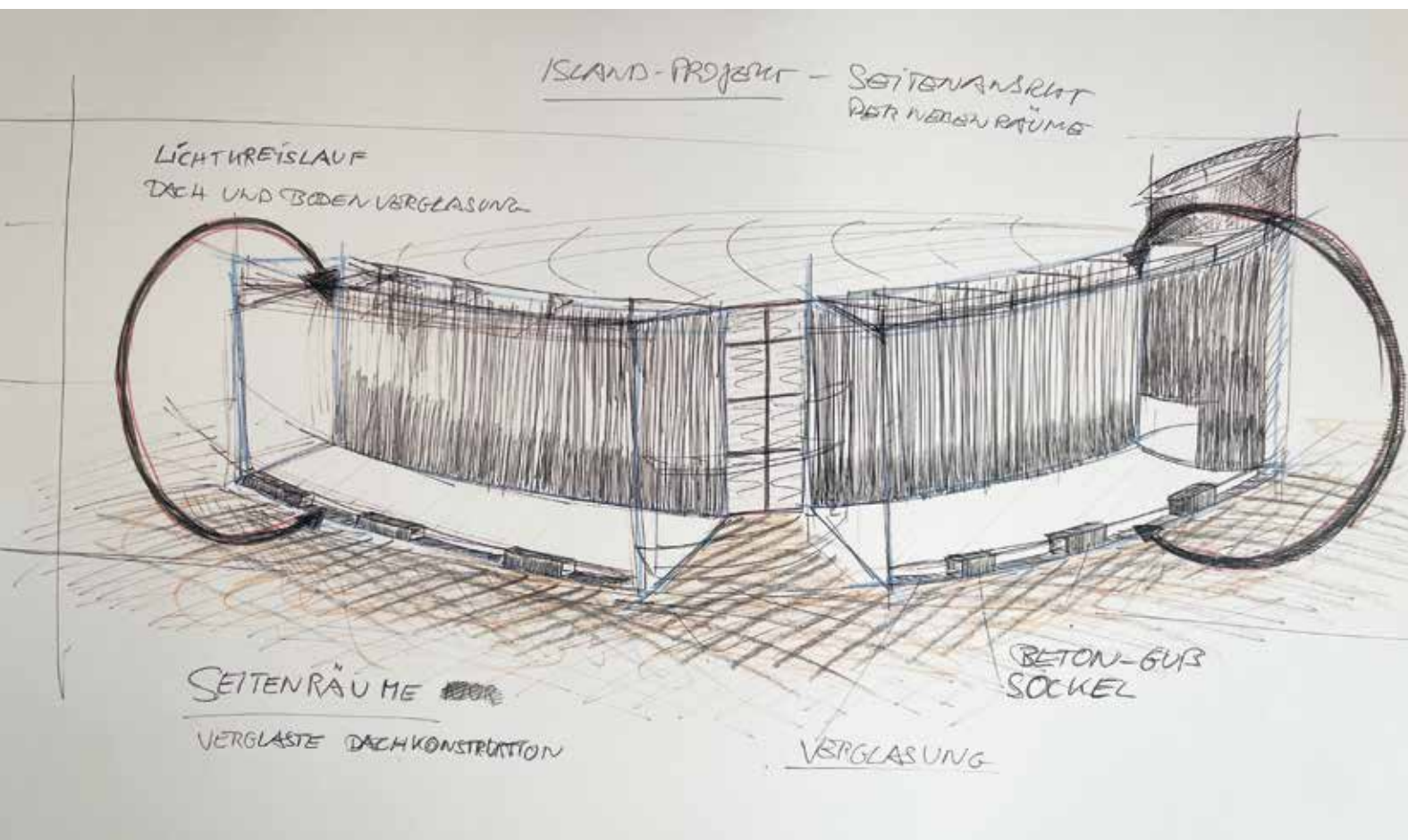
This constant production of personal data turns individuals into raw material for Big Data Analytics. By analysing patterns of behaviour, technological systems can construct detailed personal profiles, predict preferences and influence decisions. What begins as a tool for communication and convenience becomes an instrument of observation, behavioural prediction and potential manipulation.

Through photographic staging, Smartphone Stacks makes this invisible relationship visible. The work questions how willingly we surrender control over our personal information and how technological dependence transforms us from autonomous individuals into measurable, predictable and potentially manipulable subjects.



EARLY EXPLORATION / 1999

Developed in 1999, the Iceland Project envisioned a physical meeting place as a platform for global self-representation. Through webcams and online communication, visitors would be able to present themselves, interact with others and become visible to a worldwide audience — long before smartphones and social media made such forms of presence commonplace.



ICELAND PROJECT

1999

PARTICIPATORY PROJECT
SOCIAL DIGITAL SCULPTURE

Self-Representation and Global Visibility

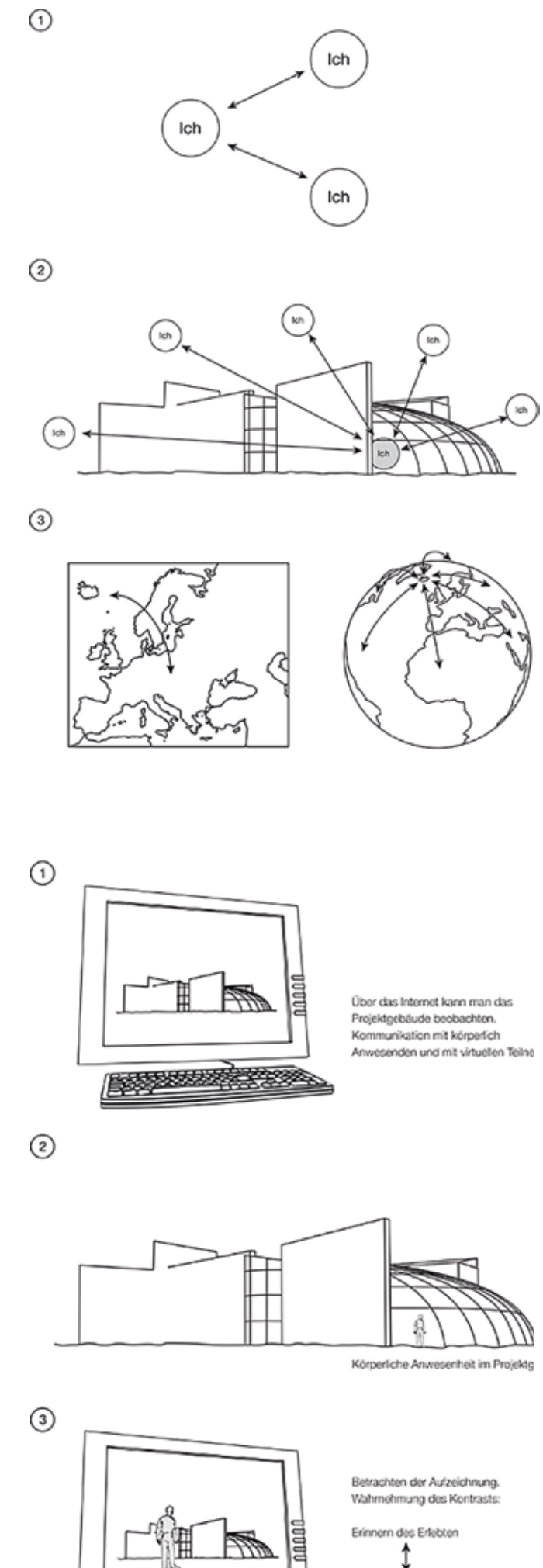
In 1999, Florian Mehnert developed the Iceland Project, an ambitious artistic concept exploring the human desire for communication, self-representation and public visibility. At a time when the internet was still in its early stages as a medium of global communication, the project envisioned a physical place where individuals could present themselves to a worldwide audience, interact with others and actively shape their own public presence.

The concept combined architecture, emerging digital technologies and social participation. A building in the Icelandic lava fields between Keflavik Airport and Reykjavik was conceived as a physical platform connected to a global online public. Through webcams, live video, chat rooms, image uploads and interactive communication, visitors would be able to make themselves visible and audible across geographical boundaries. Remote participants could follow events, communicate and become part of the project.

Long before smartphones and social media transformed self-representation into an everyday cultural practice, the Iceland Project explored a fundamental human impulse: the desire to be seen, to communicate and to construct an identity in the eyes of others. It anticipated central characteristics of today's digital culture, including continuous visibility, voluntary self-disclosure, networked participation and the transformation of personal experience into publicly accessible information.

The project was developed through extensive architectural models, conceptual studies, sketches and Super 8 film material. These documents reflect a sustained artistic investigation into how physical space and digital communication might merge into a new form of social interaction.

Although the project remained unfinished, its development began in 1999 and established an early artistic framework for examining the relationship between technology, self-representation and collective behaviour. What was conceived as an experimental connection between a remote physical location and a global online audience has since become a defining condition of contemporary digital society.



Architectural model study as historical documentation

A concept for a physical meeting place in Iceland connected to a global online public.
Realisation began in 1999; the project remained unfinished.



Model of the Projekt Building, 1999



Iceland Project: Super 8 film still, 1999



Florian Mehnert is a German conceptual and media artist whose work has attracted international attention. His artistic practice investigates the social and political consequences of technological change. Through installations, participatory projects and artistic research, he examines artificial intelligence, surveillance, data, individual autonomy, and the ways technological systems shape our perception of reality and identity.

BIOGRAPHY

Florian Mehnert was born in Cologne, Germany. He studied at the State Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe and the University of Freiburg. He founded the Institute for Experimental Art and was Artist in Residence at MuseumsQuartier Q21, **Vienna, in 2016.**

ARTISTIC PRACTICE

His installations, participatory projects and artistic research examine the social **consequences of technological** change. Surveillance, data, individual autonomy and the construction of identity become conditions of an encounter with a viewer. *Archive of Possible Lives* is the focus of this volume.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Staatsgalerie Stuttgart
Kunstforum Darmstadt
Morat **Institut Freiburg**
Regierungspräsidium Freiburg

SELECTED INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS

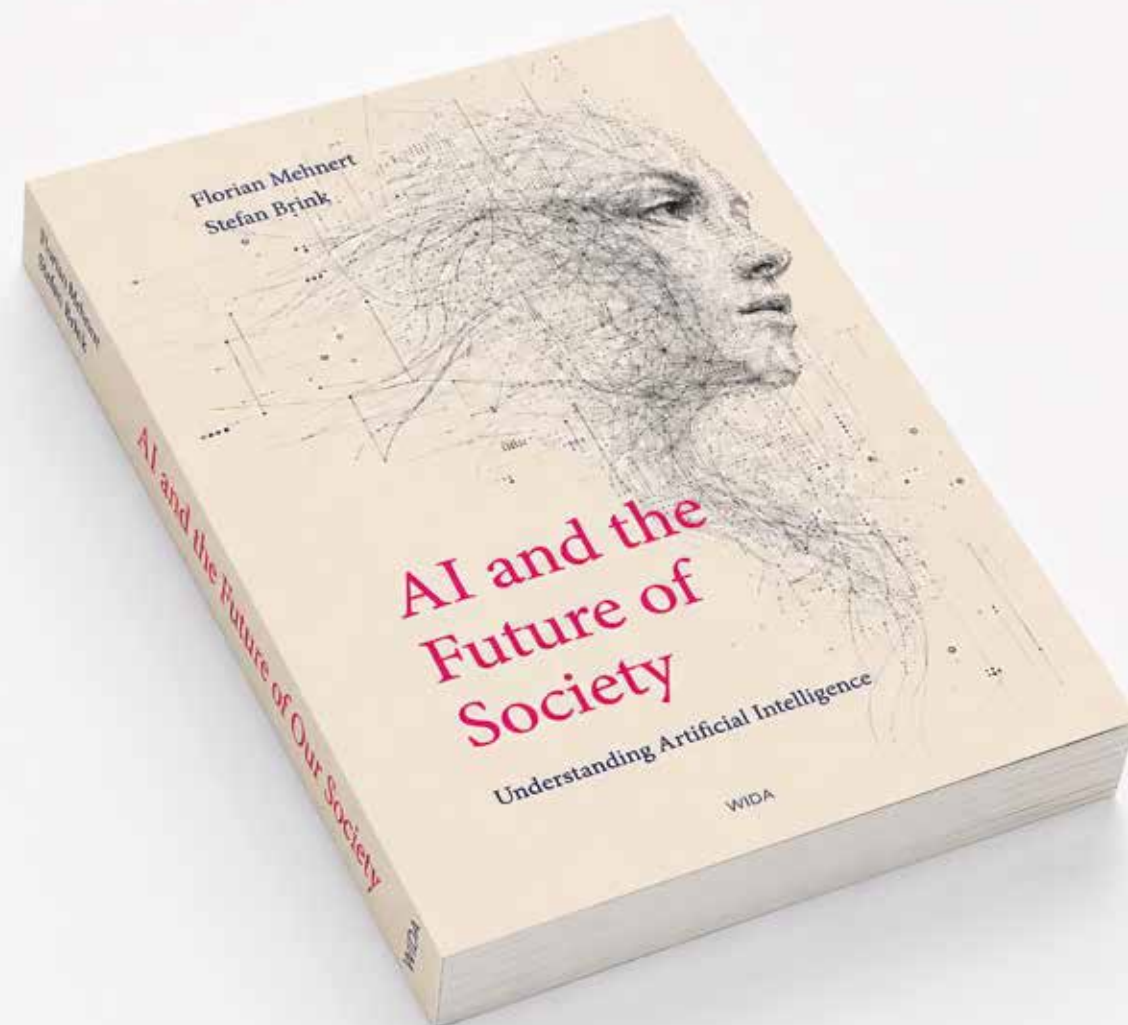
C/O Berlin / Hasselblad Foundation
MuseumsQuartier Q21, Vienna
Museum Angewandte Kunst, **Frankfurt**
Kunstverein Wolfsburg
OK Linz
Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin
Vögele Kultur Zentrum
Disseny Hub, Barcelona
IPAI Foundation, Heilbronn

CURRENT WORK

Archive of Possible Lives, 2026
First acquisition: IPAI Foundation, Heilbronn.

AI and the Future of Society

Understanding Artificial Intelligence



Author: Florian Mehnert / Co-Author Dr. Stefan Brink (former State Commissioner for Data Protection, Baden-Württemberg, Germany)

Technology, responsibility and human judgment

Artificial intelligence is changing how we work, learn, communicate and make decisions. Florian Mehnert and Stefan Brink examine its historical development and its social, political and ethical consequences.

The book brings artistic inquiry into dialogue with a perspective shaped by data protection. It considers how AI affects responsibility, democracy and our understanding of reality.

READING ALONGSIDE THE ARCHIVE

Read alongside *Archive of Possible Lives*, the publication opens a wider discussion of the society in which generative systems operate. The installation approaches these questions through a physical encounter: a visitor receives a plausible biography and must decide how to respond to it.

The relation is a shared field of inquiry. How does generated language acquire authority? Where does human judgment begin when a system offers a convincing account of a life?

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Florian Mehnert / Stefan Brink
AI and the Future of Society
Understanding Artificial Intelligence
English edition / Paperback / 240 pages
BoD - Books on Demand / 9 July 2026
ISBN 978-3-6963-7112-8

P U B L I C

PUBLICATIONS / BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archive of Possible Lives

First acquisition and presentation: IPAI Foundation, Heilbronn, 2026.

AUTHOR PUBLICATIONS

Florian Mehnert / Stefan Brink: AI and the Future of Society.
Understanding Artificial Intelligence. English edition, BoD, 2026.
ISBN 978-3-6963-7112-8

Florian Mehnert: The Art Experiment 11 DAYS. Work Biography.
BoD, 2023. ISBN 978-3-7504-9450-3

Florian Mehnert: Freiheit 2.0 – Was hat BIG Data mit Freiheit zu tun?
German / English edition, BoD, 2022. ISBN 978-3-7568-2770-1

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Watched! Surveillance, Art and Photography.
Walther König, Cologne, 2016. ISBN 978-3-86335-959-1

Alix Michell: “Überwachung ist Macht. Zur Mythifizierung von Überwachung in der Gegenwartskunst.”
In: Kilian Hauptmann / Martin Hennig / Hans Krah (eds.), Narrative der Überwachung: Typen, mediale
Formen und Entwicklungen.
Peter Lang, Berlin, 2020. ISBN 978-3-631-79040-3

Christian Saehrendt / Steen T. Kittl: Ist das Kunst oder kann das weg?
Vom wahren Wert der Kunst. DuMont, Cologne, 2016.
ISBN 978-3-8321-9772-8

Kunstjahr 2014: Die Zeitschrift, die Bilanz zieht.
Lindinger + Schmid, Regensburg, 2014. ISBN 978-3-929970-80-7

Ortswechsel PLUS 9 – In Kontakt. Evangelisches Religionsbuch für Gymnasien.
Claudius, Munich, 2021. ISBN 978-3-532-70094-5

Heinrike Paulus: “Von Reformatoren als Medienstars.”
Communicatio Socialis 53, no. 4 (2020), pp. 542–546.
DOI 10.5771/0010-3497-2020-4-542

Further documentation and press: florianmehnert.de/press.html



Florian Mehnert's studio in his converted farmstead from 1730

contact

+49 172 419 7314

florianmehnert.de

studio@florianmehnert.de

