

## ZKM Exhibitions and Research Projects in 2021

At the ZKM 2021 will be shaped predominantly by research and the productive symbiosis of artificial intelligence, sustainability, and Data Art. Highlights will be the exhibition *BioMedia (BioMimetic Media)* and the project *The Intelligent Museum*.

With the exhibition *Critical Zones*, which opened in spring 2020 and has now been extended until August 8, 2021, and our call for a new Earthly politics the ZKM has demonstrated it is one of the »Guardians of Gaia« (Peter Weibel). In 2021 the ZKM's biophilic program continues with the exhibitions *BioMedia* and *The Artwork as a Living System* as well as the project *Driving the Human*. The unanticipated Covid-19 crisis has brought home to us in a drastic way how very necessary this biophilic program is: as artists, scientists, art lovers, and philosophers (friends of wisdom) we shall all become friends of life (biophiles) more intensely than ever before.

»In a hundred years the question will be asked: What happened in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The answer will be: The 21<sup>st</sup> century began with a global pandemic in 2020, the Covid-19 virus crisis.« (Peter Weibel, December 2020)

Last year was dominated by Covid-19. For the ZKM this meant moving even more of its activities into the digital realm. It was already envisaged in 1989 when the ZKM was founded that it would lead the arts into the digital age. The museum of the future will not be a museum of objects, it will be hybrid. This was demonstrated by last year's digital formats: beginning in April 2020 with the four-week festival *Feminale*, which each day presented two female composers from the last five centuries, and the exhibition *bauhaus.film.digitally.expanded*, which quickly followed up with 60 films and a series of talks online. The high point of the year came only a few weeks after the first closure of the museum: the live streaming of the opening festival (May 22–24, 2020) of the exhibition *Critical Zones: Observatories for Earthly Politics*, which in only five weeks had been turned into a digital twin that enabled exhibition visitors to participate for the first time in virtual space. The entirely online events *Driving the Human Festival* and the *Giga-Hertz Award* in November as well as the festival *inSonic 2020: Syntheses* in December then followed in the digital footsteps of these events which by then had become a tradition. The ZKM does not confine itself merely to digitizing analog content and putting it online, but has created own, new digital content, such as its presentation for the Digital Art Gallery of ZDF television.

In 2021 the ZKM will grow further into virtual space. Accordingly, it began the New Year with a virtual Open House event on January 6. The live stream reached 12,000 people and there were around 6,700 website visits. New and different digital doors provided a view behind the scenes and opened onto concerts, workshops, and discussion groups in live stream, in Zoom, in Chats, as well as in videos on demand. Program:

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<https://zkm.de/en/tatü>

## Outlook

As a continuation of the exhibitions *Exo-Evolution* (2015–2016), *Open Codes* (2017–2019), and *Critical Zones* (2020–2021), the research and practice-oriented exhibition *BioMedia* (*BioMimetic Media*) explores current developments in biogenetic, algorithmic, and AI-based art, in robotics, quantum information science, and the life sciences, which engage with computer-simulated organisms, artificial life, and artificial intelligence. Conceived by Peter Weibel as a further participative learning laboratory, he curates the exhibition together with Anett Holzheid, Daria Mille, and Sarah Donderer. *Critical Zones* will continue to sound out the terrain for new, responsible, symbiotic, terrestrial ways of living until **August 8, 2021**, and from **November 27, 2021** *BioMedia* will examine the artificial media systems and machines created by humans which exhibit viable behavior. After the wheel-based motion machines of the nineteenth century such as railways, automobiles, and bicycles, and the twentieth century's motion machines like film, television, and video, art's emphasis in the twenty-first century will be on BioMedia. The exhibition will show what answers artists, scientists, and philosophers, using technical and anorganic tools, give to questions about the future of organic, biological life.

In order to look forward it is necessary to have looked back, because it is history that writes the future. Until **January 9, 2022** the ZKM is presenting the exhibition *Writing the History of the Future*, which features seminal works of media art from its world-wide unique collection. Instead of the usual genealogy of styles, which became redundant at the end of the twentieth century, this exhibition of the collection introduces a new model for looking at art history: the migration of media from painting to photography, film, video, and the computer. *Lazy Clouds*, the first solo show in Germany of artist *Soungui Kim* (\*1946), which is supported by the Korea Foundation, also shows media art history: from **September 25, 2021** 80 selected works by the artist from the 1970s to the present will be on view. Kim's life's work is, similar to her contemporaries Nam June Paik, John Cage, or Frank Gillette, pioneering work: from the deconstruction of painting to video and multimedia art to participation-oriented Interventions. Also beginning on **September 25, 2021** the exhibition *Electronic Art* will showcase a pioneering achievement from Baden-Württemberg in apparatus art. From electronic components *Walter Giers* (1937–2016) constructed complex light and sound objects and sculptures: touching them or merely moving closer triggers sudden optical and acoustic effects. On the threshold to an era in which computerized systems largely control all areas of life, Giers' works provide a glimpse beneath the opaque surfaces of contemporary electronic and communication technologies. Our third presentation focuses on the path of two artists in the contemporary media age: *Christa Sommerer & Laurent Mignonneau*. From **October 23, 2021** *The Artwork as a Living System* tells the story of their thirty years of creative collaboration at the interfaces of reality and virtuality, technology and art, in 14

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media installations. The artist duo engages with the possibilities offered by artificial life, amongst other things by simulating interactive evolutionary growth processes as, for example, in their well-known work *Interactive Plant Growing* (1992) which is in the ZKM | Collection. The exhibition is a coproduction with the LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial, Gijón, Spain and the OÖ Landes-Kultur GmbH in Linz, Austria, and is curated by Karin Ohlenschläger, Peter Weibel, and Alfred Weidinger.

One project in particular at the ZKM | Hertz-Lab is committed to processing past elements in futurities, of material and intangible heritage: the international, interdisciplinary EU project *BEYOND MATTER* supported by eight project partners addresses itself to resurrecting and documenting past exhibitions in virtual space using innovative software and virtual reality technology. The project's work, which is based on research and augmented by seminars, conferences, and artist residencies, will provide the foundation for museological and technological developments and build the digital museum of the future.

**Project website:** <http://beyondmatter.eu/>

New directions in digital art, digital curating, and AI-supported museum communication and learning are also pursued by the 2020–2024 project *The Intelligent Museum: An Artistic and Curatorial Testing Ground for 'Deep Learning' and Visitor Participation*, which is supported by the Digital Fund of the Federal German Kulturstiftung des Bundes and carried out by the Deutsches Museum in Munich and the Fraunhofer Institute of Optronics, System Technologies, and Image Exploitation (IOSB) in Karlsruhe under the direction of the ZKM | Hertz-Lab. The museum thus becomes a laboratory, a place of knowledge production and a forum for critical dialog. Through own developments like those of Bernd Lintermann and of guest artists new AI-based artworks will be created, which will be embedded in an exhibition concept that is also AI-based.

**Project website:** <https://zkm.de/en/project/the-intelligent-museum>

The first artistic presentation became available online from **January 6, 2021** and as soon as the pandemic situation allows it, visitors will be able to visit on site the exhibition *CRAWLERS* by composer and media artist *Alexander Schubert* (\*1979). *CRAWLERS* are an anonymous collective of social bots that crawl the Web collecting data from users which they use to build a parallel social network of warped truths and stolen personal information. These seemingly coherent alternative worlds are generated and expanded using AI-supported deep learning models. The exhibition raises awareness of the ubiquitous practice of automated data theft on the Web and reflects on the impact of autonomously operating agents on our digital identities.

The epistemological and aesthetic effects of the new digital data world will be on show from **May 1, 2021** with the network visualizations by physicist and famous network theorist Albert-László Barabási and his research lab — the result of two decades of work — in the exhibition *BarabásiLab: Hidden Patterns*. Visualizing networks entails creating new epistemic models for information extraction. The

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visualization of characteristic nodes, relations, and networks, of parameters and patterns in a vast world of data, which our natural sensory organs cannot cope with but mathematical methods and network thinking can, reveals hidden cultural and social phenomena. These hidden connections and constantly repeating patterns in nature, society, language, and culture cannot only be explored but also made visible, and are thus controllable — otherwise our civilizing systems threaten to collapse. The exhibition is in collaboration with the Ludwig Múzeum in Budapest where it was shown previously.

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## ANNEX

Overview

[New Exhibitions in 2021](#)

### **Crawlers: Alexander Schubert**

Wed, 06.01.21–Sun, 27.06.21

Online + Museum Balcony

The virtual exhibition: <https://crawl3rs.net/>  
<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2021/01/crawlers>

### **Elenia Diana Elia & Theodoulos Polyviou. Fanstastic Confabulations**

from Thu, 08.04.21

The virtual exhibition of the July 2021 on-site exhibition *Drifting, Browsing, Cruising* online hereunder: <https://beyondmatter.eu>

### **Spatial Affairs. Worlding**

from Thu, 29.04.21

online hereunder: <https://spatialaffairs.beyondmatter.eu/>

### **BarabásiLab: Hidden Patterns**

Sat, 01.05.21–Sun, 09.01.22

Atrium 1+2, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2021/03/barabasilab-hidden-patterns>

### **Jean Remy's Talking Tubes**

Sat, 08.05.21–Sun, 04.07.21

Opening: Fri, 07.05.21

Subspace

### **digilog\_lounge**

Opening: Fri, 14.05.21

Atrium 9, ground floor

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**Elenia Diana Elia & Theodoulos Polyviou. Drifting, Browsing, Cruising**

July 2021

Museum Balcony

<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2021/07/drift-browsing-cruising>**Soungui Kim: Lazy Clouds**

Sat, 25.09.21–Sun, 20.03.22

Opening: Fri, 24.09.21

Atrium 1+2, 1<sup>st</sup> floor**Walter Giers: Electronic Art**

Sat, 25.09.21–Sun, 20.03.22

Opening: Fri, 24.09.21

Atrium 1+2, 1<sup>st</sup> floor**Christa Sommerer & Laurent Mignonneau: The Artwork as a Living System**

Sat, 23.10.21–Sun, 20.03.22

Opening: Fri, 23.10.21

Atrium 1+2, ground floor

<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2021/10/christa-sommerer-laurent-mignonneau-the-artwork-as-a-living-system>**Exhibition highlight****BioMedia (BioMimetic Media)**

Sat, 27.11.21–Sun, 11.09.22

Opening: Fri, 26.11.21

Atrium 8+9, ground floor

The exhibition *BioMedia (BioMimetic Media)*, conceived by Peter Weibel and curated together with Anett Holzheid, Daria Mille, and Sarah Donderer explores dynamic systems in art and science which through utilizing interactive, immersive, and digital methods exhibit viable behavior resembling that of living organisms. Since the advent of the computer the medium of the image has changed into a biomedium. The simulation of motion, which began in art with the talkies in color, was the first step in the direction of simulating life, and culminated in neural networks for self-learning machines and systems in the last century. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century media systems are approaching simulation of life that is nearing perfection. In collaboration with universities and research institutions *BioMedia (BioMimetic Media)* will address current developments in algorithmic and AI-based art as well as in robotics and quantum information science, as well as the biotechnological processes taking shape as media, and render these comprehensible. In view of life during a pandemic, the thought experiment *BioMedia* offers its visitors the latest scientific information through presenting new technologies as well as interaction with innovative research facilities such as the

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Fraunhofer Institute, the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design (HfG), the High Performance Computing Center in Stuttgart, the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), and the ZKM | Hertz-Lab which opens perspectives on future life forms.

With the exhibition *BioMedia (BioMimetic Media)* the ZKM again leads research on image media and puts on view the coming transformation of the motion media of the 20<sup>th</sup> century into the BioMedia of the 21<sup>st</sup>. The ZKM will again metamorphose into a participatory laboratory in which works are not merely presented, but used and experienced in a multitude of ways: visitors become actors. There will be plenty of opportunities for this with the extensive complementary program featuring lectures, workshops, screenings, and symposia; there will also be a scientific publication on the subject of BioMedia and an online platform to communicate and disseminate the exhibition's contents.

#### Current Exhibitions 2020/2021

##### **The Morning Line's Yello**

Fri, 06.11.20–Sun, 31.01.21

Forecourt

<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2020/11/the-morning-lines-yello>

##### **Stephan von Huene: What's wrong with Art?**

Sat, 26.09.20–Sun, 14.03.21

Atrium 1+2, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2020/09/stephan-von-huene-whats-wrong-with-art>

##### **Ed and Urs Kiender: Roll-Objects: From Space-Pictures to Rolling Spaces**

Sat, 26.09.20–Sun, 14.03.21

Atrium 1+2, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2020/09/ed-and-urs-kiender-roll-objects-from-space-pictures-to-rolling-spaces>

##### **Seasons of Media Arts 2020**

Fri, 11.09.20–Spring 2021

Karlsruhe urban space

<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2020/09/seasons-of-media-arts-2020>

##### **Critical Zones: Observatories for Earthly Politics**

Sat, 23.05.20–Sun, 08.08.21

Atrium 1+2, ground floor + 1<sup>st</sup> floor

<https://critical-zones.zkm.de>

<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2020/05/critical-zones>

<https://zkm.de/en/activation-program-of-the-exhibition-critical-zones>

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### **Computable — Incomputable**

Fri, 30.10.20–Thurs, 30.09.21

<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2020/10/computable-incomputable>

Digital Art Hall of ZDF television: <https://digitalekunsthalle.zdf.de/index.html>

### **Writing the History of the Future**

Sat, 23.02.19–Sun, 09.01.22

Atrium 8+9

<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2019/02/writing-the-history-of-the-future>

### **zkm\_gameplay: the next level**

Sat, 29.09.18–Sun, 30.01.22

Atrium 1+2, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2018/09/zkmgameplay-the-next-level>

[New external exhibitions 2021](#)

### **Open Codes**

Thurs, 01.07.21–Sun, 24.10.21

Nam June Paik Art Center, South Korea

### **Works from the ZKM Collection [working title]**

Sat, 20.11.21–end of March 2022

Gwangju Museum of Art, Gwangju, South Korea

### **Art in Motion: Masterpieces with and through Media**

Sat, 18.12.21–Sun, 27.02.22

CAFAM Techne Triennial, CAFA Art Museum, Beijing, P.R. China

[External exhibitions 2020/2021](#)

### **Peter Weibel: (Post-)Europa?**

Sat, 03.10.20–Sun, 31.01.21

Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie Regensburg

<https://zkm.de/de/ausstellung/2020/10/peter-weibel-post-europa>

### **We=Link: Sideways**

Sat, 21.11.20–23.05.21

Digital exhibition in the Chronus Art Center, Shanghai, P.R.C.: <http://we-link.chronusartcenter.org/>

<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2020/11/welink-sideways>

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