

Loops of Wisdom

Kunstuni Campus at the Ars Electronica Festival

"Understand well as I may, my comprehension can only be an infinitesimal fraction of all I want to understand."

Ada Lovelace

"The fact that the decisive shrinkage of the earth was the consequence of the invention of the airplane, that is, of leaving the surface of the earth altogether, is like a symbol for the general phenomenon that any decrease of terrestrial distance can be won only at the price of putting a decisive distance between man and earth, of alienating man from his immediate earthly surroundings."

Hannah Arendt

"I believe you are very good-natured." "So I am, (said the monster,) but then, besides my ugliness, I have no sense; I know very well that I am a poor, silly, stupid creature." "This no sign of folly to think so, (replied Beauty,) for never did fool know this, or had so humble a conceit of his own understanding."

Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont

We see it, we feel it and we hear it: our world is changing. And we are changing with it. We see the urgency with which the future of our planet — as we know it — rests on our shoulders. But how do we manage to become active here and create space to move forward? What do we need to do so that we can leave behind fear and, with it, frightened rigidity, so that we can confidently and respectfully take the next steps towards a benevolent society and support the healthy functioning of the Earth's ecosystems?

LOOPS OF WISDOM is not a solution but a possible guide to action: a well-conceived set of inspiring exhibitions, presentations, performances, interventions, workshops and lab settings and a discursive platform, all by students and faculty of the University of Art and Design Linz on the occasion of the Ars Electronica Festival 2021.

With *LOOPS OF WISDOM*, we question how knowledge is generated, and what this means for wisdom. We're collecting actions, thoughts and, especially, ideas based on our own experimentation. Practice-based knowledge is by no means alien to artistic fields of research. On the contrary, the tools and materials used are diverse, the methods tried and tested, and the approach to them highly playful and experimental.

In the exhibition project *LOOPS OF WISDOM*, however, we focus not only on tools, materials and methods, but above all on the thinking that underlies knowledge about our world. We ask how technical thinking determines our lives, describes them, measures them, makes them comparable, standardizes and controls them; always with the deeply human goal of generating more and better knowledge of ourselves. But knowledge does not equal wisdom, and as more and more knowledge is accumulated, the question arises: how does it become wisdom? The fact that this does not require thinking alone, but that wisdom develops primarily in connection with actions and their corresponding behavior, leads us to the assumption that wisdom cannot be created, only cultivated.

If knowledge is the surface of the water, wisdom is the riverbed, slow and full of sediments from past times. Its cultivation takes time, because every sand grain of wisdom is turned over and over again. And this looping motion is found everywhere: the fractal patterns of romanesco broccoli, algorithms that loop through code, pendulums and musical loops. But artistic and academic practice also works

in a similar way: through repetitive experiments and citations, paradigms are reevaluated and problems redefined. Connections to the past in the form of theories, experiments, but also rituals or songs, are omnipresent. And like a harmonograph that slowly changes its pattern over time, the loops of wisdom are not closed, but break out of the old ones in slow, divergent movements. Thus, cultivating wisdom implies looping through and applying knowledge, questioning and doubting, and being willing to learn from it all. It implies people, their knowledge, and their responsible, wise actions.

Last but not least, all this learning, reflecting and repeated practicing requires a corresponding attitude and openness towards what is to come: what one does not yet know and cannot yet see. In **LOOPS OF WISDOM**, we describe how to walk together, how to recognize important deviations and, less so, how to arrive at the destination. We also want to encourage that we have to find ways to distance ourselves from ourselves to be able to recognize ourselves in the world. We see the fact that technological achievements can help us distance ourselves as an advantage. However, the reflection on distancing can only be done by people, together, who can recognize the complex interweaving of past and future, experiences, wishes and dreams. *LOOPS OF WISDOM* is therefore a winding path that is never recognizable in its entirety. There is no orientation in left or right, in above or below, in inside or outside. There is only the path with its spontaneously occurring twists and deviations, and the question of how we want to transform it together.

Text: Manuela Naveau, Julia Nüsslein

Loops of Wisdom Program Team: Manuela Naveau, Julia Nüsslein, Sylvia Leitner, Giacomo Piazzi

Text Editorial Team: Andrea Hörndler, Stefanie Rasouli