Noorderlicht

Machine
Entanglements

Noorderlicht

platform for photography
& lens-based media

Machine Entanglements

30th Noorderlicht International Photo Biënnale
12 July—7 September 2025

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MACHINE ENTANGLEMENTS
Introductie / Introduction
Roosje Klap

MACHINE ENTANGLEMENTS

Since 1990, Noorderlicht has created space for images that provoke, astonish, and connect. What began as a photography festival has grown into a platform for photography, lens-based media, and visual imagination. Rooted in the north of the Netherlands, but with a global outlook. Through exhibitions, education, our own publishing house, and a professional print lab, Noorderlicht brings together makers and viewers around the pressing questions of our time. *Machine Entanglements* marks the thirtieth edition of the Noorderlicht Biennale—a milestone that once again sharpens our focus on the age we live in.

Welcome to a world where everything is entangled: human, machine, plant, animal, history, and data. In this 30th edition of the Noorderlicht Biennale, more than seventy artists and three writers explore how technology is deeply woven into nature, society, and imagination. The exhibition unfolds across six locations in the northern Netherlands: in two beautiful Frisian museums, a former tobacco factory in the city, a centuries-old horticultural school on a UNESCO World Heritage site, a tilted glass pavilion, and a climate-neutral brewery in the dunes.

Technology is everywhere: in our food, our words, our bodies. It enables growth, measures, regulates, connect, but it can also exclude, accelerate, pollute, or erase. In *Machine Entanglements*, artists reveal how these systems shape agriculture, climate, language, and memory. Some works show the resilience of nature and community: insects that turn waste into food, or plants that bloom digitally. Others confront what we prefer to ignore: mountains of e-waste, an algorithm that doesn't recognize your face, a disappearing landscape.

This biennale does not ask for answers. It asks for attention. What touches us? What rustles? What is forgotten? In the knots of our time also lies a

possibility: to see differently, to care differently, and to live differently.

With *Machine Entanglements*, Noorderlicht takes a next step in building a living network between art, technology, and society. No overview, no grand statement—but an invitation to reflect, to wander and to slow down. Because it is exactly where things catch, glitch, and resist, that something begins to glow.

My deepest thanks goes to all who helped shape this entanglement: to co-curator Rosa Wevers, with whom the thinking started to rustle and which later became solid ground. To advisor Wim Melis, who dedicated a significant portion of his working life to Noorderlicht and continues to lend us his patient and critical eye. To the artists, who entwined imagination with infrastructure, and ideas with machine. To designer Loes Claessens, who gave this web its form with quiet precision and graphic care. And to our partners at the six extraordinary locations: museums, brewery, factory, school, and pavilion—who gave space to the experiment.

We are grateful to the municipalities of Groningen, Leeuwarden and Westerveld, and the provinces of Groningen, Fryslân, and Drenthe for supporting our effort to explore technology not only as a tool of control, but as care, encounter, and entanglement.

And finally, to the Noorderlicht team—staff and volunteers alike: thank you for being the silent engines, the human infrastructure that keeps this whole thing humming.

Roosje Klap
General & Artistic Director Noorderlicht

Roosje Klap & Rosa Wevers

co-curators Machine Entanglements

eeft iets op. Iets dat zich niet laat reduceren
ets stokt, waar je even moet blijven hangen
et in de code past. Een ruimte. Een adem.
ck Clarke vangt precies die momenten in
ie pagina 34). In *Under Boom* wordt het
erdrukte trillingen van mijnexplosies, ruimte-
nstitutionele censuur resoneert hier als
dt weggefilterd, omdat het niet esthetisch
rdt hier voelbaar en onafwendbaar. Die
bewijs. Elke hapering is een opening naar
s gebleven. Elk verkeerd ingeschat profiel is
gt informatie. Maar alleen als we bereid zijn
systeem niet alleen gebruiken, maar begin-
het te ontkennen, maar door het te ver-
l te behandelen, maar als actief materiaal.
neren met het politieke. Door de storing als
en onderzoeker Trevor Paglen noemt dit
ge als openbaring. In zijn visuele strategieën
node.³ *Glitchen* als vorm van onthullen. Een
gezichtsherkenning, is niet 'mislukt', maar
tastroom die vastloopt, is geen falen, maar

en in *Machine Entanglements* functioneren
maar als open loops. Ze vragen niet om
gische 'quick fixes', maar om langdurige
ken, blijven haken, en blijven hopen
technologische en organische soorten
hleven. Ze leggen systematische ongelijk-
e veerkracht die in mens en natuur
n van Sabrina Ratté (pagina 106 & 218)
s transformeert. Haar immersieve video-
gisch afval de mens zal overleven. Elk
stof, vormt een nest voor een toekomstig
krachtig monument gebouwd voor de
waard.

UT
len wat we wel en niet te zien krijgen, is
acht een noodzakelijke systeemfout in
d. Met verbeelding wordt het mogelijk om
enken van code, en voorspelbare waar-
rengen. Wat wordt dan wél zichtbaar?
oopleveren. Machines die dromen van verlaten
sen die terrein terugwinnen *Machine Entanglements*
kunstenaars uit *Machine Entanglements*
en van macht zichtbaar, en geven vorm
telen zich in de pixels die niet geladen
derd. In de stilte tussen twee frames.
t als revolutie, maar als vegetatie. Als
y (pagina 164), die uit een internetkabel
plantensoorten, die door Nina van
entie (AI) worden teruggeplaatst in ons
). In de video-installatie *Matter Gone*
che met elkaar vervlochten zijn die
ontwaken we in een queer ecosysteem
gereedschap, maar een tuinman die

verhalen zaait buiten de grenzen van identiteit, tijd en soort. Planten groeien uit code, vloeibare lichamen vervormen de ruimte en de machine droomt ons een ander verleden toe: één dat niet vastligt, maar steeds opnieuw gekweekt wordt. Er zijn alleen maar verbindingen, feedback-loops en bodemlagen van meervoudige betekenis.

Het is tijd om opnieuw te leren kijken. Niet vanuit afstand, maar vanuit verstrengeling en betrokkenheid.
    Misschien is dit de les van de machine: dat alles wat je aanraakt, jou óók aanraakt. Dat technologie, hoe autonoom ze ook lijkt, altijd door ons stroomt. En dat we samen een netwerk vormen dat kwetsbaar is, poreus, en open voor verandering. Deze verstrengeling betekent dat je niet buiten het systeem kunt staan: je bent al verbonden. Maar in plaats van te streven naar controle, biedt deze positie ook iets anders: hier is ruimte voor zorg, wederkerigheid, nabijheid. Niet uitzoomen, maar inzoomen. Beweeg mee en verbind met de verstrengeling.
    Want dat is de les van de machine: dat alles wat je aanraakt, jou ook aanraakt. Dat technologie, hoe autonoom ze ook lijkt, altijd door ons stroomt. En dat we samen een netwerk vormen dat kwetsbaar is, poreus, en open—voor verandering.

Welkom in de knoop. Je bent precies op tijd.

Machine Entanglements: welcome to the knot

What if we no longer wanted digital systems that know everything about us, but systems that help us to be different and to reinvent ourselves over and over again? What if those systems wouldn't try to make everything more efficient or better, but rather ask questions and give space to what happens unexpectedly? What if we don't always want to go faster, but slower? And what if we learn to see sites of friction and discomfort not as a mistake, but rather as a valuable opportunity to give them another look? In *Machine Entanglements*, we don't think of technology as a tool, but as a habitat. Not as a means, but as an integral part of the landscape in which we live, breathe, and get lost. We reveal a world of entanglement between birds, algae, and data streams, as well as between people, hidden volcanoes, and mythical figures. Everything touches everything. Glass fibers crawl under our feet like roots. Satellites repeat patterns in space that were once written in seas as old cartographic traces. Bluetooth signals fill the room with invisible noise.
    The artists who are part of the ecosystem of this third Noorderlicht Biennial show us places and perspectives that are inaccessible to the human eye. Using an analogue or digital camera as an eye-witness, they reveal areas where the human eye falls short. Here, noise is no longer a disturbance, but something to us. *Glitches* are made visible, not only as flaws in a system, but also as a form of counterforce to the norms that are intertwined with the digital world.[4]
    Because what seems obvious is often the result of repetition, of systems that have so often projected their logic onto us that we have come to regard it as a law of nature. In the apparent self-evidence of interfaces that respond fluently, algorithms that select "appropriately", and networks that function invisibly—lies the most incredible illusion: that technology is neutral. The works exhibited in *Machine Entanglements* often interrupt that automatic thinking. They are like unwanted disturbances in a seemingly flawless system. These disturbances do not require immediate interpretation, but proximity.

They invite us to slow down and to [...] again at what seems too obvious to us. A pause in the system, a breath in the code.

Friction is not a flaw in the experience. It's the experience itself. Without friction, you become contactless, as Luna Maurer and Roel Wouters write in *Designing Friction* (2024).[5] Because every attempt to make humans friction-less is an attempt to reduce humanity to binary data points. Doubts, memories, and cultural contexts support every decision you make. And it is precisely this complexity that is often overlooked in our digital culture, as it does not align with the default logic of software.

That is why the work *The A-Symmetrical Imperialistic Data Server* (page 117), by Sara Sejin Chang (Sara van der Heide) is so meaningful within *Machine Entanglements*. Instead of speed and control, her hand-painted silk data server offers a slow, fragile alternative to digital precision. No lens-based media work. Not an optimized flow, but a breathing structure in which the binary system appears as a visual ritual, connected to oceanic movement and a history of female labor. Her installation distorts the image of techno-logy as neutral or universal, and makes visible how inequality, imperialist extraction, and pace are unevenly distributed worldwide.
There, in those residual categories, something is alive. Something that cannot be reduced. Where we lose time, where something stalls, where you have to linger for a while. In those breaks, something grows that doesn't fit into the code. A space. A breath. A different way of looking.
Louis Braddock Clarke captures exactly those moments in his sonic landscapes (see page 34). In *Under Boom*, the inaudible becomes audible: the suppressed vibrations of mine explosions, space debris, and seismic threats. Institutional censorship resonates here as interference. What is usually filtered out—because it is not aesthetic, not useful, not relevant—becomes tangible and inevitable. The noise is no longer defective, but evidential. Every hitch is an opportunity to explore a perspective that has been underexposed. Every misrecognized profile reveals a crack in the system. Every silence carries information. But only if we are willing to listen differently. If we not only use the system, but also start to influence it. Not by denying it, but by disrupting it. By treating noise not as waste, but as active material. By combining the aesthetic with the political. By reading the disturbance as poetry. The artist and researcher Trevor Paglen calls this adversarial aesthetics: sabotage as revelation. In his visual strategies, he uses confusion as a method. *Glitching* as a form of revealing. A face that is illegible to facial recognition is not a "failure", but an embodied protest. The data flow that gets stuck is not an error, but a form of resistance.
The artworks in *Machine Entanglements* do not function as definitive statements, but rather as open-ended loops. They do not seek fast answers and technological "quick fixes," but rather long-term involvement. To keep on looking to keep on being stuck, and to keep on hoping for a different future in which technological and organic species live together in equality. They expose systemic inequalities, but also reveal the resilience that lies hidden in people and nature, as seen in the images of Sabrina Ratté (page 106 & 218), transforming e-waste into post-digital ruins. Her immersive video installations show how techno-logical waste will survive humans. Each object, floating between data and dust, forms a nest for a future ecosystem. As such, she builds a resilient monument for the future, one that is forever preserved in pixels.

IMAGINATION AS A SYSTEM ERROR

Now that algorithms increasingly determine what we do and do not see, the use of imagination mobilizes a necessary system error in a world of predictability. Through imagination, it becomes possible to move beyond the binary thinking of code and to imbalance predictable probabilities. What becomes visible? Words that a have no search result. Machines that dream of new natural species. Mosses reclaiming ground on abandoned mountains of waste. That is why the artists in *Machine Entanglements* are so important: they make systems of power visible and give shape to alternative spaces. They nestle in the pixels that are not charged. In the datasets that have been deleted. In the silence between two frames. It is precisely in these spaces that something new is growing. Not as a revolution, but as vegetation. Like Steven Maybury's buds (page 164) that spring from an internet cable. As the extinct plant species, which are placed back into our collective consciousness by Nina van Tuikwerd via artificial intelligence (AI) (page 290).

In the video installation *Matter Gone Wild* by Josèfa Ntjam (page 86), we awaken into a queer ecosystem in which the digital and the organic are intricately intertwined. Here, the machine is not a distant tool, but a gardener who sows stories beyond the boundaries of identity, time, and species. Plants grow from code, liquid bodies distort space, and the machine dreams of a different past for us—one that is not fixed, but can be cultivated over and over again. There are only connections, feedback loops, and layers of soil with plural significance.

It's time to learn to look again. Not from a distance, but from entanglement. Not from control, but from involvement.

Perhaps this is the lesson of the machine: that everything you touch, also touches you. That technology, no matter how autonomous it may seem, always flows through us. And together, we form a network that is vulnerable, porous, and open to change. This entanglement means that you cannot stand outside the system: you are already connected. But instead of striving for control, this position also offers something else: here, there is room for care, reciprocity, and proximity. Don't zoom out, but zoom in. Move along and connect with the entanglement.

Because that is the lesson of the machine: that everything you touch, also touches you. That technology, no matter how autonomous it may seem, always flows through us. And that together we form a network that is vulnerable, porous, and open to change.

Welcome to the knot. You're right on time.

1   Russell, Legacy. *Glitch Feminism. A Manifesto.* London: Verso, 2020.
2   Maurer, Luna, Roel Wouters, en Alexandra Barancová. 'Designing Friction: A call for friction in digital culture'. *Designing Friction*, 2024. https://designingfriction.com
3   Trevor Paglen, "On Artificial Intelligence, UFOs, and Mind Control," interview by Sarah M. Miller, *Aperture*, December 5, 2024, aperture.org/editorial/trevor-paglen-on-artificial-intelligence-ufos-and-mind-control/.
4   Russell, Legacy. *Glitch Feminism.* A Manifesto. London: Verso, 2020.
5   Maurer, Luna, Roel Wouters, en Alexandra Barancová. 'Designing Friction: A call for friction in digital culture'. *Designing Friction*, 2024. https://designingfriction.com
6   Trevor Paglen, "On Artificial Intelligence, UFOs, and Mind Control," interview by Sarah M. Miller, *Aperture*, December 5, 2024, aperture.org/editorial/trevor-paglen-on-artificial-intelligence-ufos-and-mind-control/.

Mens en machine /
Human and machine

Noor Boiten, Sophie Gerrard, Hendrik Hantschel, Thomas Kuijpers,
Steven Maybury, Livia Ribichini, Sasha Rudensky, Sylvia Sánchez,
Sebastian Schmieg, Martine Stig, Katja Stuke.

In Drachten, als stad verbonden met de avant-garde van De Stijl en industriële innovaties, verkent *Machine Entanglements* hoe technologie ons denken, leven en werken fundamenteel verandert. Kunstenaars laten hier een wereld zien waarin glasvezels groeien, als netwerken van wortels onder onze voeten. Hoe digitale ruïnes ontstaan in rivierbeddingen van beton en hoe het menselijk lichaam wordt herleid tot datapunten en algoritmes.

In de getoonde werken klinken centrale vragen door: hoe beïnvloedt technologie onze relatie met onszelf? Hoe verandert zij onze manier van waarnemen, herinneren en handelen? Sommige werken maken zichtbaar hoe technologie ons denken en voelen aanstuurt, anderen leggen bloot hoe consumptie en afvalstromen fysieke en ecologische schade veroorzaken.

De tentoonstelling laat zien dat de grens tussen mens en machine steeds verder vervaagt. Tegelijkertijd groeit de bewustwording dat technologie ons niet alleen verlengt, maar ook kan vervreemden van ons lichaam, onze omgeving en elkaar. *Machine Entanglements* nodigt uit om stil te staan bij de vraag: welke toekomst bouwen we met technologie—en voor wie?

In Drachten, a city connected to the avant-garde of De Stijl and to industrial innovation, *Machine Entanglements* explores how technology is fundamentally transforming the way we think, live, and work. The artists here present a world in which fiber optics grow like root networks beneath our feet, in which digital ruins emerge in concrete riverbeds, and in which the human body is reduced to datapoints and algorithms.

Throughout the works on display, central questions echo: how does technology shape our relationship with ourselves? How does it alter the way we perceive, remember, and act? Some works reveal how technology steers our thinking and feeling; others expose how consumption and waste streams inflict both physical and ecological damage.

The exhibition shows how the boundary between human and machine is becoming increasingly blurred. At the same time, a growing awareness emerges: technology not only extends us, but can also estrange us—from our bodies, our surroundings, and one another. *Machine Entanglements* invites us to pause and reflect: What kind of future are we building with technology—and for whom?

Livia Ribichini, *Perpetua Performance*, installatie met motors en pruiken, 2025

In *Perpetua Performance* laat Livia Ribichini een bijzondere machine zien die lijkt te leven. De installatie maakt geluid en beweegt langzaam: een pruik wordt ritmisch heen en weer bewogen door kleine motortjes. De pruik lijkt op iets levends, alsof het ademt, ook al zit het vast aan een harde metalen structuur. Het werk laat zien hoe mensen blijven geloven in vooruitgang en productie, maar ook hoeveel verborgen werk daar vaak achter zit. Tegelijkertijd laat Ribichini zien hoe krachtig en flexibel het lichaam kan zijn, vooral dat van vrouwen. De pruik staat symbool voor verandering en overleven. Het is alsof iets zachts blijft bestaan binnen een wereld vol machines. Zo ontstaat een spannend beeld van hoe mensen en technologie met elkaar verbonden zijn. *Perpetua Performance* was te zien tijdens PROSPECTS op Art Rotterdam, een tentoonstelling voor jonge kunstenaars die steun krijgen van het Mondriaan Fonds.

Livia Ribichini (2000, IT) is een in Nederland gevestigde kunstenaar uit Rome die werk maakt op het snijvlak van digitale technologie, lichamen en zintuiglijke ervaring. In haar performatieve installaties onderzoekt ze hoe interfaces, avatars en algoritmes invloed uitoefenen op identiteit, emotie en collectiviteit. Ribichini creëert speculatieve ruimten waarin het fysieke en virtuele met elkaar vervlochten raken. Haar werk werd getoond op festivals zoals Art Rotterdam, Rewire en Transmediale, en ze is verbonden aan de Italiaanse academie voor schone kunsten in Perugia als docent digitale media.

In *Perpetua Performance*, Livia Ribichini presents a machine that seems strangely alive. The metal sculpture makes noise and moves slowly: small motors gently swing a wig back and forth. The wig feels like a breathing creature, even though it is connected to a cold, hard structure. The work shows how people keep believing in progress and production, but also points to the hidden labor behind it. At the same time, Ribichini shows how strong and flexible the human body can be—especially the female body. The wig becomes a symbol of change and survival. Something soft continues to exist within a mechanical world. This creates a powerful image of how people and machines are deeply connected. *Perpetua Performance* was shown at PROSPECTS during Art Rotterdam, an exhibition for emerging artists supported by the Mondriaan Fund.

Livia Ribichini (2000, IT) is a Rome-born artist based in the Netherlands, whose practice merges digital technology, sensory perception, and embodied performance. She explores the intersection of code and affect, constructing speculative environments where avatars, algorithms, and organisms entangle. Her work examines the blurred boundaries between presence and mediation, often engaging with live coding, glitch aesthetics, and immersive narratives. Ribichini has exhibited at venues such as Art Rotterdam, Rewire Festival, and Transmediale, and teaches digital media at the Academy of Fine Arts in Perugia.

p. 167 Livia Ribichini, *Perpetua Performance*, installation with motors and wigs, 2025

Drenthe, DE PROEF

Tuinbouwtradities en technoteelt /
Horticultural traditions and technocultivation

affect lab, Crystal Bennes, Ioana Cîrlig, Umberto Diecinove,
Diana Gheorghiu, Heleen Haijtema, Susanne Kriemann, Michael Najjar,
Špela Petrič, Polymorf (Marcel van Brakel & Hazal Ertürkan),
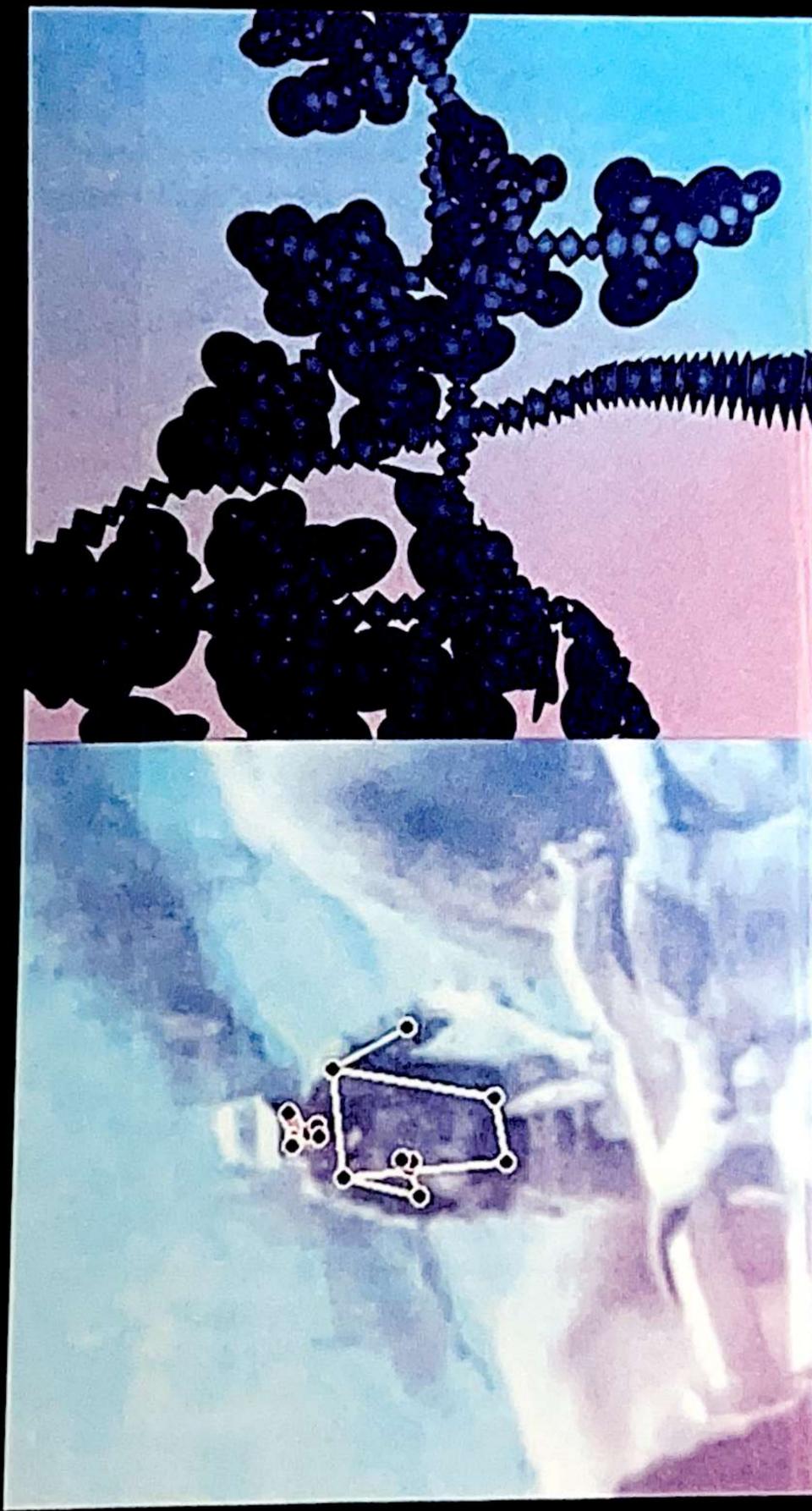Livia Ribichini, Nina van Tuikwerd, Henk Wildschut, Lorenzo Zerbini.

Livia Ribichini, *Kinesintesi*, video, 2022

Kinesintesi laat zien hoe technologie en natuur met elkaar kunnen samenwerken. In deze video-installatie worden oude bewegingen uit de landbouw zoals ploegen en zaaien, vertaald naar een digitale wereld. De handelingen worden herkend en nagedaan door een slim systeem, dat daarmee een virtuele plant laat groeien. Een L-systeem—een wiskundige manier om groeipatronen van planten na te bootsen—wordt gebruikt om die groei vorm te geven. Het werk laat zien dat tradities uit de landbouw niet verdwijnen, maar een nieuwe vorm kunnen krijgen in de digitale wereld. Door deze oude rituelen te verbinden aan technologie, ontstaat een nieuwe manier om naar onze relatie met natuur, voedsel en machines te kijken. *Kinesintesi* nodigt uit tot reflectie op hoe we met technologie onze zorg voor de aarde kunnen vernieuwen door innovatie en traditie samen te brengen.

Livia Ribichini (1994, IT) is een in Nederland gevestigde kunstenaar uit Rome die werkt op het snijvlak van digitale technologie, lichamen en zintuiglijke ervaring. In haar performatieve installaties onderzoekt ze hoe interfaces, avatars en algoritmes invloed uitoefenen op identiteit en collectiviteit. Ribichini creëert speculatieve ruimten waarin het fysieke en virtuele met elkaar vervlochten raken. Haar werk werd getoond op festivals zoals Art Rotterdam, Rewire en Transmediale, en ze is verbonden aan de Italiaanse academie voor schone kunsten in Perugia als docent digitale toepassingen.

Kinesintesi explores how technology and nature can work together. In this video, traditional farming movements—like plowing and sowing—are translated into a digital world. These gestures are recognized and repeated by a smart system that uses them to grow a virtual plant. The growth follows an L-system—a mathematical method used to simulate how plants develop. The work suggests that farming rituals don't have to disappear, but can find a new form through digital tools. By linking ancient actions to technology, Kinesintesi offers a fresh view on our connection to nature, food, and machines. It invites us to think about how we can care for the planet using both tradition and innovation.

Livia Ribichini (1994, IT) is a Rome-born artist based in the Netherlands, whose practice merges digital technology, sensory perception, and embodied performance. She explores the intersection of code and affect, constructing speculative environments where avatars, algorithms, and organisms cohabit. Her work examines the blurred boundaries between presence and mediation, often engaging with live coding, glitch aesthetics, and immersive narratives. Ribichini has exhibited at venues such as Art Rotterdam, Rewire Festival, and Transmediale, and teaches digital media at the Academy of Fine Arts in Perugia.

Co-curatoren / Co-curators
Roosje Klap & Rosa Wevers,
Wim Melis (advies/advice)

Productie / Production
Jedidja Smalbil, Hanne van
der Velde & Ike de Zeeuw

**Marketing en communicatie /
Marketing and communication**
Esther Bolt, Cashmyra Rozendaal

Educatie / Education
Mirjam Dijkema

Kantoor / Office
Monika Balukevičiūtė

Texten / Texts
Roosje Klap & Rosa Wevers

Essays
Lilian Anneloes, Roosje Klap &
Rosa Wevers, Christoph Miler,
Tjesse Riemersma

Grafisch ontwerp / Graphic design
Loes Claessens

Druk / Print
Damen Drukkers

Papier / Paper
Emotion Touch

Productieteam / Production team
Severi Aaltonen, Igor Bobeldijk, Lisa
Bommerson, Kamilė Česnavičiūtė,
Leonie van den Ende, Marek Hrubý,
Michael Karr, Radina Kordova, Nils
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Mohr Instituut), Kunstpunt, DE PROEF

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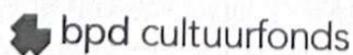
Wat betekent het om te leven in een omgeving die tegelijk natuurlijk én technologisch is?

De 30e editie van de Noorderlicht Biënnale brengt het werk samen van meer dan zeventig kunstenaars uit binnen- en buitenland. In foto's, installaties, video's en sculpturen laten zij zien hoe mens, landschap, algoritme en machine niet naast elkaar bestaan, maar in elkaar grijpen. Van zelf-lerende netwerken tot ondergrondse glasvezelkabels, van landbouwrobots tot digitale vulkanen: deze catalogus laat zien hoe technologie ons niet alleen omringt, maar ook vormgeeft.

Dit is een uitnodiging om anders te kijken. Om stil te staan bij wat er onder het oppervlak beweegt. En om de knopen te leren lezen als verhalen over macht, zorg, frictie en verbeelding.

What does it mean to live in an environment that is both natural and technological at the same time?

The 30th edition of the Noorderlicht Biënnale brings together the work of more than seventy artists from the Netherlands and abroad. Through photographs, installations, videos and sculptures, they show how humans, landscapes, algorithms and machines do not merely coexist, but actively intertwine. From self-learning networks to underground fiber-optic cables, from agricultural robots to digital volcanoes: this catalogue reveals how technology not only surrounds us, but also shapes who we are.

It is an invitation to look differently. To pause and consider what moves beneath the surface. And to read the knots we live in, our entanglements, as stories of power, care, friction and imagination.