

τέχνη

Ulrich Bernhardt

Tyler Coburn &  
Ian Hatcher

Annabella Spielmannleitner  
& Benjamin Köder

and

This Light

Andrew Norman  
Wilson

the  
Dēcēncy  
of Méans

12 November 2017 – 21 January 2018

## *Techne and the Decency of Means*

Ulrich Bernhardt, Tyler Coburn & Ian Hatcher, Annabella Spielmannleitner & Benjamin Köder, This Light and Andrew Norman Wilson

12 November 2017 – 21 January 2018

Künstlerhaus Stuttgart  
Reuchlinstraße 4b  
70178 Stuttgart  
kuenstlerhaus.de  
techne-stuttgart.de

Wednesday–Sunday, 12–6pm

# Introduction

*Techne and the Decency of Means* extends from a long-running collaboration and production platform conceived by Künstlerhaus Stuttgart and Theater Rampe. The project, which has developed and formulated itself through newly realised works by artists working across exhibition space and stage, draws on the ancient Greek understanding of 'τέχνη' as a methodology and attitude.

In its original classical usage, *techne* is a looping term, a description of making understood as material and functional, as well as immaterial and uncontainable. It is a term proposing a unity and interdependence of two forms of knowledge – theoretical and practical, without internal separation or hierarchy.

Many of the works in *Techne and the Decency of Means* inhabit multiple and simultaneously held roles and functions. From Andrew Norman Wilson's *This Light*, operating as a sculpture, a cinema and a prototype, to Ulrich Bernhardt's part-oven, part-sculpture and performance, *Die Schrecklich Gute Mutter*. These multi-form works are realised as settings, environments that are stepped into, a quality extending to the sculpture park and events space of Annabella Spielmannleitner and Benjamin Köder's *Setting Sculpture*. The video works, performances and structures in this exhibition have shared the production platform which is *Techne*, a framework focused on the conditions and movements between intention and material. What recurs in the works developed, is a curiosity and commitment to a process of thinking through materials, and of arriving at an understanding of form-content that involves an active attention to what making as a process *reveals*. This question of following both an original intention, but also attuning to the ways in which a technology or materiality shapes processes back, involves a reflection on conditions of alienation. How we come to understand an ecology of a practice suggests an attention not only to an isolated production, but to forms of making which by nature and necessity have to be negotiated and situated.

The ancient notion of *techne* is no longer in active use. And yet, this process has been one of staying put, for a longer period of time and through the realisation of multiple projects, with a term that oscillates, loops and negotiates between what is and what isn't (yet). This exhibition is one point in these conversations, exchanges and productions, a process of introducing *techne* to doubt, ecological dread, and alienation, as well as to the pleasure and delight of bringing something into being.

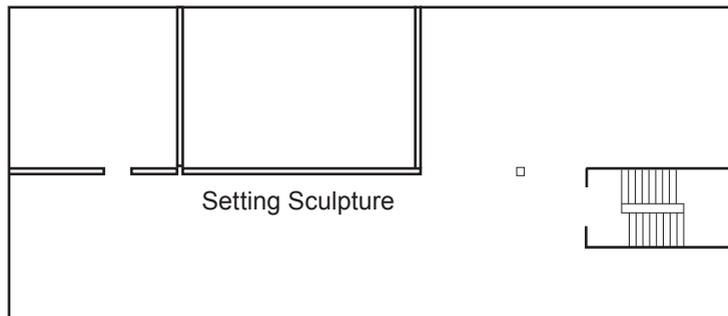
This booklet contains an overview of the works in the exhibition, of the associated events and a series of excerpts from conversations reflecting on some of the core dialogues that constitute this project.

*Techne and the Decency of Means* is curated by Fatima Hellberg and Johanna Markert (Künstlerhaus Stuttgart) with Marie Bues and Martina Grohmann (Theater Rampe). The title is a homage to poet, writer and filmmaker Stefan Themerson, for whom the decency of means was the "aim of aims."

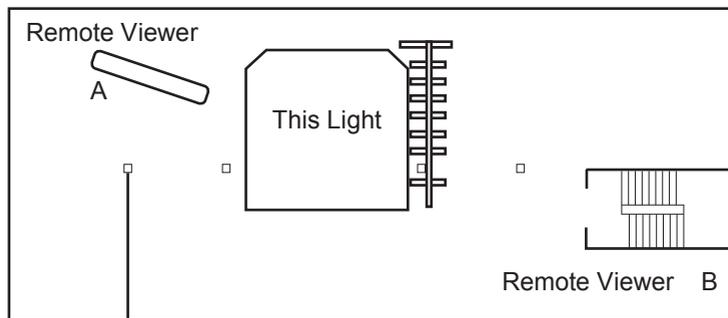
Yard

### Die Schrecklich Gute Mutter

Level 2



Level 4



A Sculpture B Projection

Yard

Ulrich Bernhardt, *Die Schrecklich Gute Mutter*, 2017, social sculpture

*Die Schrecklich Gute Mutter*\* extends Ulrich Bernhardt's long-running engagement with ancient myths, ritual and technology. Taking the form of a site-specific sculpture, doubling up as a wood-fired oven, the project follows a collaborative process, developed with ceramicist Yvette Hoffmann and the Künstlerhaus' ceramics workshop, Lukas Ludwig, Siggie Kalnbach and Paul Nowozimski. The sculpture focuses on the most important technological invention of the Neolithic Era, the oven, as a formerly public site and sacred tool. The project conjures up some of the key concerns and etymological roots of 'téchne,' from a move between skill, craft and artistic production to a focused inversion of the public and domestic spheres. *Die Schrecklich Gute Mutter* will remain as a social sculpture for common use.

\*The terrible-and-terribly good mother

Level 2

Annabella Spielmannleitner & Benjamin Köder, *Setting Sculpture*, 2017, environment

*Setting Sculpture* is an events setting and sculpture park by Annabella Spielmannleitner and Benjamin Köder. The environment contains a number of narrative and figurative elements, from cats and caves, to puddles and cars. Some of the recurring features in this narrative involve a doubling and layering of the function of objects, and a flattening between the hierarchy of importance of these roles: the tipped over car is at once an evocative and figurative sculpture (post-accident?), a prop, and a lamp. The approach suggests a simultaneous presence of isolated motifs, which together evoke a sense and spirit of the everyday, containing its characteristic layering of the functional, the accidental and the absurd.

The users of this staged setting include Hans-Joachim Irmiler (*Faust*), Ulrich and Laura Bernhardt, Bonnie Camplin and the visitors to *Techne and the Decency of Means*.

Level 4

Andrew Norman Wilson, *This Light*, 2017, cinema

This sculpture and screening space is an attempt to describe a free cinema that emerges out of a desire to make private viewing habits public. The cinema goes by the name *This Light*. At a time when public space is rapidly dissolving into private property and attention is dissolving into the monetised distraction of streaming content in solitude, the cinema activates the possibilities offered through networked technology and opens the domestic up to what could be called anybody. In *This Light* hundreds of moving image

works are screened. The daily playlists are approached as material intimately connected with Andrew Norman Wilson's own artistic practice, but also as conversation pieces. That is, This Light considers how method and process can be reflected on through a continuous flow of edited moving image content. It proposes a mode of thinking through film and video, speculating on the material conditions of its making as well as mechanisms of distribution and reception. Playlists as part of This Light include, *Object Relations / Special Effects*, *3D Antimodels* and *Hope*, to mention a few.

Tyler Coburn, *Remote Viewer*, 2017, sculpture

*Remote Viewer* is a sculpture at Künstlerhaus and an associated workshop at Theater Rampe. In its sculptural form, the work is conceived, in dialogue with architects Bureau V, as a floor-based form, which performs the dynamics of projection and condensation that Coburn sees to be operative in remote viewing.

Remote viewing was originally employed by the CIA and the Stanford Research Institute between the 1970s and the mid-1990s. These organisations trained people with supposedly exceptional psionic abilities to mentally travel to covert sites and describe what they saw and experienced, using a pen, paper, and sometimes a mound of clay.

In the development of the sculpture and the workshop – the latter a collaboration with poet Ian Hatcher – Coburn has drawn on a distinctive practice, with a highly charged set of histories, to reflect on and move between multiple positions: the material and the contingent, that which is known and that which is sensed to be known, and the status and power of information.

#### *Remote Viewer*

A training workshop conducted by Tyler Coburn & Ian Hatcher at Theater Rampe

Friday 17 November 6.30 pm, 8.30 pm and 10.30 pm

Saturday 18 November 1.30 pm, 3.30 pm, 5.30 pm and 7.30 pm

Each workshop lasts approximately an hour.

To reserve a spot, e-mail [tyler.coburn@gmail.com](mailto:tyler.coburn@gmail.com)

## Events programme

Saturday 11 November  
Opening

5 pm  
*Die Schrecklich Gute Mutter*  
with Ulrich Bernhardt, Yvette Hoffmann and the ceramics workshop, Lukas Ludwig and Paul Nowozimski, Künstlerhaus' Yard

8 pm  
Concert by Hans-Joachim Irmiler (Faust), Level 2

10 pm  
*Elegy on Pharmakon*  
Performance by Boris Ondreička, Level 4

from 10 pm  
After party, DJ Flora, Level 2

Sunday 12 November  
3 pm  
*This Light: Stuttgart Announcement*  
A film screening presented by Andrew Norman Wilson with works by Darren Bader, Mary Helena Clark, Alice Coltrane, Anthony Discenza and Andrew Norman Wilson

Thursday 16 November  
7 pm  
*Phase IV*

The second screening of This Light presented by Andrew Norman Wilson with *Phase IV* (1974) by Saul Bass

Saturday 18 November  
7 pm  
*Object Relations / Special Effects*  
The third screening of This Light presented by Andrew Norman Wilson with works by Jean-Paul Goude, Kevin Jerome Everson, Joan Jonas, Mark Leckey, Daria Martin, Steve Reinke and Madelon Vriesendorp

Friday 24 November  
7 pm  
*Some Thoughts on the Invented Life*  
A conversation and screening with artist Bonnie Camplin

Saturday 13 January  
5 pm  
A conversation with Ulrich and Laura Bernhardt

Sunday 21 January  
5 pm  
Publication launch and closing event

# Some notes and reflections on Techne

We have been talking a lot about this question of effort. In an early conversation with anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli, she described techne as effort. This is an interesting proposition, because at the end of the day, it's a word as much rooted in trying to shape something, trying to get it where you want it to be, and that gap and contingency which suggests that your effort will never lead to mastery. And that is a good thing.

Intuition is not something you just have. It's trained and practiced, exercised to a point where you start getting a "feeling" for the thing at hand. And within this intimacy, that is built up with another entity, be that human or non-human, you also start a negotiation which involves a process of getting to know. As dialogue extends and repeats, this intuition about the other and its characteristics – what it can do and what it will allow you to do, starts shifting. This is also a space of ethics.

That is an interesting position – because it is never you and the technology or the tool. Instead, you create this third space, or interface, which is this mode where you shape the technology, and it shapes you right back. In describing techne as a process and negotiation between the material world, through making, the question of ethics came up multiple times. This is the hardest to grasp and to deal with. It is not a return to, or the access to some sort of "better" set of rules of how to live together, or co-exist. Techne doesn't propose yet another set of rules or ideals, but unfolds as particular ways of negotiating a situation in time.

It's interesting to see the degree to which each individual project, evolving out of a long-running dialogue, is responsive to its respective conditions. Those conditions have multiple facets and extend across scales, they might include the architecture of the exhibition spaces, but also the social side of things: relationships between that which one makes, the material and the immaterial. Within the working process, hierarchies shift, and through these movements, they also resist, are put into place and affirm the order of things.

The elephant in the room in a sense is that of ecology. Because we all deal with a sort of ecology. The stuff we make and how this generates an environment in which it makes sense and which we can manage. This does not mean that an equilibrium is always the state to be desired. But as soon as you really think about practice, and the negotiation with the material world, this question of what you are using, taking, making and using up, is looming. How exhibition making, with daily deliveries of material, and precarious labour connect, is still something which is undigested and incomplete.

All myth is an enriched pattern,  
a two-faced proposition,  
allowing its operator to say one thing and mean another,  
to lead a double life.  
Hence the notion found early in ancient thought that all poets are liars.  
And from the true lies of poetry  
trickled out a question.

What really connects words and things?

There is an urge to make works easily describable, to put a label on them. To create a logic in which each element has its designated role and function. Could it be that meaning can be generated from an inner logic, a close and intimate dialogue, filled to the brim and overflowing. Enough to say that the communicativity seeps out, not only out of the subject matter but also the materiality of that thing.

I used to think when I was younger and writing that each idea had a certain shape and when I started to study Greek and I found the word *morphe* it was for me just the right word for that, unlike the word shape in English which falls a bit short *morphe* in greek means the sort of plastic contours that an idea has inside your all your senses when you grasp it the first moment and it always seemed to me that a work should play out that same contour in its form. So I can't start writing something down til I get a sense of that, that *morphe*. And then it unfolds, I wouldn't say naturally, but it unfolds gropingly by keeping only to the contours of that form whatever it is.

# Biographies

We've been talking a lot about translation. And this is not only a practice based in language. There are also the multiple and shared moments of production that are deeply rooted in practices of translation, from one material to another, one understanding to another. From the first Skype and the site visit, in which the ideas start forming, and that gradual understanding of the project starts coming into shape. In the beginning, you said that the idea was under water, and we could sort of see the outlines, but had to keep with it, for it really to become something final and fully formed. From the process of finding the means, and then trying to produce, a shared intuition is built up, between the various people who make something happen, and then again, the people who are with it later on. The whole process has a lot to do with intuition, yet one which has to be translated at various points, and which inevitably will change in the process. Sometimes with blatant, and in moments fortuitous misunderstandings.

There is something maddeningly attractive about the untranslatable, about a word that goes silent in transit.

Ulrich Bernhardt is an artist, living and working in Stuttgart. He initiated the founding of Künstlerhaus Stuttgart and served as its first artistic director. The reflection on issues of technology in conjunction with Greek mythology and current political and social developments have been recurring themes in his photo and video installations since the 1980s.

Tyler Coburn is an artist and writer based in New York, working in performance, installation, writing and sound. His work has been presented at the Whitney Museum, New York; South London Gallery and Kunstverein Munich. His writing has appeared in *frieze*, *e-flux journal*, *Mousse*, *Art-Agenda* and *Rhizome*, amongst others.

Ian Hatcher is a writer, sound artist and programmer whose work explores cognition in the context of digital systems. Recent projects include the publication *Prosthesis* (Poor Claudia, 2016), the record *Drone Pilot* (cOsmOsmOse, 2017), and numerous animated and interactive works, including the iOS app *Abra*. Hatcher lives and works in New York.

Annabella Spielmannleitner and Benjamin Köder are artists living in Karlsruhe. Their work unfolds between painting, sculpture and set design. In 2016 they collaborated on the set design for *Hamlet*, Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (2017) and for Annika Eriksson's exhibition *The Social* at Moderna Museet, Malmö, Sweden (2017).

Andrew Norman Wilson is an artist from suburban Massachusetts. After studying journalism and communications, he worked on various activist and documentary projects while employed as a commercial video producer. Since 2008 his work has been exhibited at the Whitney Museum; MoMA PS1, New York and Centre Pompidou, Paris. He has lectured at Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge University.

Extracts from conversations with the artists, between the curators, and selected literature, including Anne Carson's *Eros, the Bittersweet* and *Grief Lessons – Four Plays by Euripides*.

# Thank you

This exhibition and its associated events are realised with the support of Kulturstiftung des Bundes and the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts, Baden-Württemberg (MWK) as well as SV SparkassenVersicherung, pbb Stiftung Deutsche Pfandbriefbank, Hypo Kulturstiftung, Ritter Sport, ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen), Regierungspräsidium, Bezirksrat West and Breuninger Stiftung.

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