

YOUR COUNTRY OF TWO DIMENSIONS IS NOT SPACIOUS ENOUGH. LIMITS OF PERCEPTION LAB

BY Ivana Franke

OPEN LAB, EXHIBITION, EXPERIMENTS 18.06.–28.06.2020
TUESDAY–SUNDAY 14:00–19:00

ONLINE INVOCATIONS 21.06.2020 18:00

WITH Taita Juan Martín Jamioy Juajibio Juan-Andres Leon Sangeetha Menon Ida Momennejad
Monica Narula Arlette Ndakoze Lisa Randall Tomas Saraceno Elisabeth Tambwe, and Sunčica Ostojčić

SATELLITE EVENT: DREAMSCAPE # 1 18.06.–28.06.2020

WITH Israel Lopez

Please check our website for registration!

WARNING Strobe lights are used during this exhibition which might trigger seizures and distort vision!

CURATOR Elena Agudio

CO-CURATOR Kelly Krugman

ARTISTIC DIRECTION Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

PRODUCTION Kimani Joseph

MANAGEMENT Lema Sikod

COMMUNICATIONS Anna Jäger

LIGHT DESIGNER Emilio Cordero

GRAPHIC DESIGN Lili Somogyi

LIVE-STREAM Boiling Head Media

LAB COLLABORATORS Israel Lopez Dora Sribar

The project is supported by the Ministry of Culture of Republic of Croatia, part of the program Croatian presidency of the Council of the European Union.

S A V V Y CONTEMPORARY
THE LABORATORY OF FORM-IDEAS

E.U.
20
HR

pe

I N F O R M A T I O N

AT A GLANCE - THE LIMITS OF PERCEPTION LAB:

OPEN LAB

Visitors are invited into an archive of scientific papers, literary pieces, filled questionnaires, sketched analysis of data, drawings and dreamscapes shared by subjects experiencing the exhibition. An exercise to probe the limits of our perception and imagination follow.

INSTALLATIONS

BY Ivana Franke

Within the installation *We close our eyes and see a flock of birds*: we sit in the middle of a cylindrical room and are invited to close our eyes. We are exposed to a flickering light which gives rise to a quasi-hallucinatory visual experience of moving images behind our closed eyes. A shimmering of colours, patterns, shapes, or figures in motion happen in our heads, making us see a stream of images: birds flying, people passing by, circles and spirals swirling and whatever else one can imagine. Each person “constructs” their very own “movie”, a possible reminiscence of something long forgotten or closeby.

We are also asked to enter *From The Faraway Past and From The Future*: we perceive a dark space where the only thing visible are thin curved lines floating in the air, at eye level. Slowly, circular shapes start to emerge, flowing in different directions. Decontextualized specular highlights move according to the viewer’s individual movements; the unknown “object” starts to overlap, merge, shrink, expand, appear and disappear, bustling in unexpected directions, changing its shape, size and position. These curious constitutions seem to extend deep into the space, only to come back towards us in rolling motion. Our brains cannot measure what they perceive, we can only guess, speculate, imagine and try to find the coordinates.

EXPERIMENTS

After being exposed to flickering light in the first installation, participants are asked to fill a version of 5D-ASC, *5-Dimensional Altered State of Consciousness*: a questionnaire to explore measures of subjective qualities of non-ordinary waking states. Following the experience of darkness in the second installation, participants are handed questionnaires inquiring about their perceptual experiences and cognitive processes – with focus on experience of spatial dimensions and interpretation of spatial concepts.

ONLINE INVOCATIONS 21.06.2020
14:00–20:00

WITH Taita Juan Martín Jamioy Juajibio, Juan-Andres Leon, Sangeetha Menon, Ida Momennejad Monica Narula, Arlette Ndakoze, Lisa Randall, Tomas Saraceno, Elisabeth Tambwe, Sunčica Ostojić and others

A number of thinkers will examine the concept of multidimensionality within their respective disciplines and reflect on its significance as a transformative force for production and dissemination of knowledge in unterritorialized, non-hierarchical, multidimensional future world.

SATELLITE EVENT: DREAMSCAPE #1 18.06.–28.06.2020

WITH Israel Lopez

Dreamscape #1 is an installation that aims to stage a dream. The installation works based on sensory manipulation, by which a flat is staged as a place to tune down, isolate, and calibrate the sensory system in preparation for the sleepstate. *Dreamscape #1* is a composition for closed eyes, is an offer of self space and an attempt to modulate the ways in which we create spatial relations.

The flat will be open for several visitors every day after a previous appointment, each occupying the flat alone.

C O N C E P T

...your country of Two Dimensions is not spacious enough to represent me, a being of Three, but can only exhibit a slice or section of me, which is what you call a Circle.

Edwin Abbott: *Flatland. A Romance of Many Dimensions*

At this moment of being confined to enclosed, often small spaces, and fixed in particular locations, our thoughts are frequently turning inwards, and we are reconsidering relations of external, internal, geographic, and mental spaces.

LIMITS OF PERCEPTION LAB invites us to extend the solitary experience of locatedness to extra dimensions, where “groundlessness,”¹ as Francisco Varela puts it, presents us with a possibility for mental expansion in multiple directions.

For one week, SAVVY Contemporary transforms itself into the LIMITS OF PERCEPTION LAB, a hybrid of an artist studio and a scientific laboratory, using multidisciplinary methodologies to study experience and as a means of knowledge disruption and production.² It is grounded in artistic practice within an extended context, drawing from and working with practitioners from the fields of cognitive and vision science, neuroscience, experimental psychology, mathematics and architecture, while being in conversation with critical practitioners from the fields of humanities, including but not limited to art history, history of science, and philosophy.

The project serves an experimental phase of a long-term platform for investigation of perceptual limits as potential sites of social transformation. This materialization of the open lab at SAVVY Contemporary focuses on perception and imaginations of extra dimensions.

Perception is a process of sensing and making sense of the environment. In perception, our experiential, subjective “reality” and “world” coalesce. Limits of our perception refer to experiences in which what is perceived does not correspond to already existing categories, and therefore urges and demands new

categories. At such thresholds lie the potential for expanding our sensitivity, where possibilities rest to make space for epistemological rupture, transforming what we habitually take for granted as our reality.

A plethora of factors, ranging from the limits of our own sensual apparatus, to past experiences, traumas, education, class, racism, gender, and collectively shared and even inherited ways of sensing and thinking the world affect profoundly particular cognition and perception. The way particular persons – and groups – perceive and make sense of their own experiences, reflect on them, and build ideas of what “the world” is, what is “me”, and what lies “in-between” is thus contested and critical. Perception, far from being a universally neutral technology for being in the world and making sense of it, actually produces worlds and selves. Perception is a porous membrane between beings and their contexts; it separates, but it also blurs boundaries. Critical perception, and the limits of perception, render us aware of the positionalities we inhabit as human beings in a planetary constellation of inanimate and animate beings, subjects, and objects.

The laboratory investigates the nature of mental images and spatial concepts, and their arising on a perceptual and cognitive level in our minds. It engages with the fundamental mechanisms that are involved in the moments of conscious experience, investigating our sensory resolutions – “windows of visibility”³ – and the interface between human and environment: between mental images and the world out there. The Lab will further inquire into the invisible – that which is present but cannot be seen, the unseen – that which is visible but skips our attention, and the hallucinatory – that which is seen but it is not there.

The SAVVY Contemporary iteration of LIMITS OF PERCEPTION LAB concerns itself with limits of perception by addressing epistemological categories, including the pervasiveness of Western definitions and how they shape the ways in which we are taught to think, feel, and rationalise our sensing of ourselves and the world. Ivana Franke’s work probes possibilities of approaching consciousness in “a multidimensional way,”⁴ seeking means of affirming our imaginations beyond already known categories and habituated ways of perceiving – going beyond what Harvard physicist Lisa Randall calls the “pervasive but quite possibly mistaken assumption that we live in a

¹ “When we widen our horizon to include transformative approaches to experience, especially those concerned not with escape from the world or the discovery of some hidden, true self but with releasing the everyday world from the clutches of the grasping mind and its desire for an absolute ground, we gain a sense of perspective on the world that might be brought forth by learning to embody groundlessness as compassion in a scientific culture.” (Varela, Francisco J., et al. *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. The MIT Press, 2016.)
² Artworks or artist-devised tools are employed to create settings for conducting experiments and developing questionnaires in collaboration with cognitive scientists for subjective reports – including verbal and visual descriptions, and quantitative measures. One of the installations at SAVVY Contemporary employs flickering light and standardised 5D-ASC rating scale.

³ Watson, Andrew. *The Windows of Visibility: Limits to Human Vision and Their Application to Visual Technology*. 2013.
⁴ Bayne, Tim, and Olivia Carter. “Dimensions of Consciousness and the Psychedelic State.” *Neuroscience of Consciousness*, 2018.

three-dimensional world.”⁵ The weeklong exhibition and laboratory installed at S A V V Y Contemporary materialises as a zone to provide experience in which to question the habitual ways of seeing and knowing in three-dimensional environments.

Drawing upon the hypothesis of multi-dimensional brane universes, Lisa Randall posits that “[w]e think we understand the world around us, but when we look really closely, we find things are very different than expected.” For her, “[w]hat we see is very limited, and there’s a big difference between what isn’t there and what we just haven’t observed yet.”⁶

Visitors are invited to navigate the gallery space transformed into an open studio, and to engage with spaces of darkness, epiphanies of lights, visual quandaries and thought experiments.

Rummaging into an archive of scientific papers, literary pieces, filled questionnaires, sketched analysis of data, drawings and dreamscapes shared by subjects experiencing the experiments, and artistic elaborations, we are asked to collaborate with an exercise to stretch our perception and our imagination.

To participate in the first experiment we are asked to enter *From The Faraway Past and from the Future*: we perceive a dark space where the only thing visible are thin curved lines floating in the air, at eye level. Slowly, circular shapes start to emerge, flowing in different directions. Decontextualized specular highlights move according to the viewer’s individual movements; the unknown “object” start to overlap, merge, shrink, expand, appear and disappear, bustling in unexpected directions. These curious constitutions seem to extend deep into the space, only to come back towards us in rolling motion.

Our brains cannot measure what they perceive; we can only guess, speculate, imagine and try to find the coordinates.

The second laboratory test happens in the installation *We close our eyes and see a flock of birds*: sitting in the middle of a cylindrical room, we are invited to close our eyes and we are exposed to a flickering light which gives rise to a quasi-hallucinatory visual experience of moving images behind our closed eyes. A shimmering of colours, patterns, shapes, or figures in motion happen in our heads, making us see a stream of images: birds flying, people passing by, circles and spirals swirling and whatever else one can imagine. Each person “constructs” their very own “movie”, a possible reminiscence of something long forgotten or closeby. Those experiences are reported in a quasi scientific manner. A discursive programme and a radio

broadcast address Western scientific assumptions about consciousness and the limits of perception. The project connects to and draws upon S A V V Y Contemporary’s programme *The Invention of Science* and its long-term explorations and challenges of the frailties and fallacies of objective scientific knowledge.

The laboratory problematizes the potential of “epistemological ruptures” that break with “normal science”⁷ and evokes experiences to challenge existing common modes of knowledge-production, to question the “hegemonic assertions of Enlightenment ideals of the liberal white male subject,”⁸ to crack open preconceived ideas of reality, and to lend it other dimensions that are decidedly fictitious, imaginary, and cosmic.

WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO EXPERIENCE? WHO CAN CLAIM THE TRUTH OF AN EXPERIENCE?

The series of experiments conducted center around the notion of subjective experience, on the ways it becomes, is expressed, gets to be known, and is shared, acknowledged (or not), and owned by others.

An experience is an event of first-person encounters with the world. Being in contact with our environment through our senses gives rise to our inner conscious life. This encounter shapes the fabric of our lives, our feelings, thoughts, and viewpoints of that environment in a co-dependent manner through our actions and faculties of processing.

We concern ourselves with a set of questions: What is an experience and what conditions it? How do we become aware of it, and how does the meaning arise from the experience itself? How does cultural embeddedness influence perception and cognition of experience?

An experience itself cannot be fully externalised. Sharing experiences happens through form-production, expressions of language, and physical manifestations of conveyance occurring by means of translation. The project is looking at how those forms are created. It is concerned with who owns or influences the language used to bring forth our lives from within. While speaking about our experiences, do we own them or have we already subsumed them to external powers? We challenge dominant modes of thinking, and inquire on how our own understandings of our experiences are shaped. Silences, and the impossibility of sharing certain experiences, due to the absence of voice or the choice to not share are ever present. How much is a communicated experience conditioned by a sense that

7 Kuhn, Thomas S., and Ian Hacking. *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. University Of Chicago Press, 2012.
8 Ibid 7.

what we can say perhaps cannot be grasped?

How can we expand our understanding of scientific analysis by being in conversation with those who are subjects, hearing about the particularities of their direct experience?

Every single view from within speaks the truth about its own reality. It is irreplaceable, so invaluable, and equally valid as all others are. Experiencer’s experience holds the power to subjective truth. Disrupting the Cartesian tradition of placing mind over matter, and interrupting the idea of the “liberal subject, represented as having a body, but not being a body,” as Alexander G. Weheliye states, the programme will also grapple with redrafting the hegemonic Western version of personhood, and will engage with “inscriptions of humanity” ... “that always incorporate their own multiplicities, as opposed to mere uncritical echoes of the white liberal humanist subject.”⁹

Challenging existing modes of knowledge and dominant epistemologies means asking where within us they have situated themselves. It requires delving into the core of our influenced experiences to bring forth other possible modes of thinking and knowing. As María Iñigo Clavo ponders in her recent article “Traces, Signs, and Symptoms of the Untranslatable” “if fixing and objectifying are our ‘ways of knowing’ in the West, we need to create other ways to relate to non-Western knowledges and learn to liberate ourselves of the compulsion to fix”. She explains: “Kwakwaka’wakw geographer Sara Hunt describes how knowledge in the West is inherently connected to fixing and specifically contradicts worldviews based on becoming. Unlike Western rationality, worldviews based on becoming posit a constant process of interlocution and inter-relation that cannot be apprehended.”¹⁰

This project engages with scientists alongside indigenous, non-Western and non-positivist modes of investigating human consciousness. It reflects on lived experiences, which combine first and third-person perspectives, while suggesting new ways of sharing them. This opens possibilities for producing and disseminating knowledge in an unterritorialized, non-hierarchical, multidimensional, and more-than-human future planetary imagination.

EXTRA-DIMENSIONS

Across time and space, human imagination has been taking into account different concepts of “extra” dimensions, such as “higher” dimensions and multidimensional spaces. Experiences of “higher” dimensions have occupied artists and spiritual

practitioners, and form a part of every person’s imagination. The lab inquires on how we explore such “higher” dimensions and asks, crossing thresholds of current research in neuroscience, physics and mathematics: How do we access them within our consciousness? How do we represent them? How do we problematize the mechanisms in Western culture and science that enforce narrow definitions and categories upon experiences?

A multiplicity of descriptions of experiences of “higher” dimensions exist. The absence of a dominant such description enables us to ask questions about hierarchical principles that organise our experiences, and which we tend to deploy in order to categorise and value them.

Experiences we recognize as including aspects of extra dimensions often coincide with so-called altered or ‘higher’ states of consciousness. However, the levels-based framework for conceptualizing global states of consciousness has been called into question as not adequate to account for the complexities of our minds.¹¹ *In Dimensions of Consciousness* and the *Psychedelic State*¹², psychologists Olivia Carter and Tim Bayne argue that, “the fact that psychedelics affect different aspects of consciousness in fundamentally different ways provides evidence against the unidimensional (or ‘level-based’) view of consciousness, and instead provides strong support for a multidimensional conception of conscious states.” Alongside investigating the possible experiences of extra dimensions within the exhibition through experiments and open discussions, we would like to, in this view, acknowledge that each possible interpretation is not unidimensional.

Some of the questions we would like to address include: Is the fourth dimension experience in a specific state of consciousness? Is our perceptual apparatus made for three spatial dimensions or can it stretch to imagine (and perceive) extra dimensions*?¹³ Can we think of consciousness itself as being multidimensional? Can we talk about altered states and ‘higher’ dimensions as subliminal or limit phenomena (at the edge or out of the range of our sensory resolutions)?

I V A N A F R A N K E is a Croatian visual artist based in Berlin. Her works, often investigations of darkness and light, focus on the interface between consciousness and environment, while addressing perceptual thresholds. Her recent projects include *Imminence*, an exhibition in the Museum of Modern

11 The notion of a conscious level plays an increasingly important role in the science of consciousness, but there has been little conceptual analysis of the notion and it is typically left unexplained. The standard conception of conscious levels identifies them with changes in a creature’s degree of consciousness, but this conception is theoretically problematic and fails to do justice to the multifaceted nature of levels. Global states of consciousness are multidimensional phenomena that capture the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of consciousness, such as the ways in which conscious contents are gated and their functional roles. (*Are There Levels of Consciousness?* by Tim Bayne, Jakob Hohwy and Adrian M. Owen, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S136466131630020X>)
12 <https://academic.oup.com/nc/article/2018/1/niy008/5103991>
13 Aflalo, T. N., and M. S. A. Graziano. *Four-Dimensional Spatial Reasoning in Humans*. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, vol. 34, no. 5, 2008

5 Powell, Corey S. *The Discover Interview: Lisa Randall*. Discover Magazine, 2019
6 Ibid. 4

and Contemporary Art in Rijeka in 2019 and *Time Slip*, a public project as a part of ECC 2020 Rijeka, both in collaboration with Gronlund and Nisunen. The installation *Lovers Seeing Darkness. Ubiety Unknown* has been shown in MACBA in Barcelona in 2018, as a more complex iteration of the solo exhibition *Retreat into Darkness. Towards a Phenomenology of the Unknown* in the Schering Stiftung Project Space in Berlin, (2017). Her survey-like show *Perceptual Drift* (Galaxies in Mind) took place in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb in 2017. Her other projects include *Disorientation Station* (11th Shanghai Biennale, 2016) and *Seeing with Eyes Closed* (Peggy Guggenheim, Venice (2011), Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, (2012)). She represented Croatia at the 52nd Venice Biennale with the solo exhibition *Latency* (2007), at the 9th Venice Biennale of Architecture with collaborative work *Frameworks* (2004). Other exhibitions include *Manifesta 7* (2008), and *MoMA P.S.1.* (2001). Her large scale outdoor installation will open in Yokohama Museum of Art in July 2020, as a part of Yokohama Triennale.

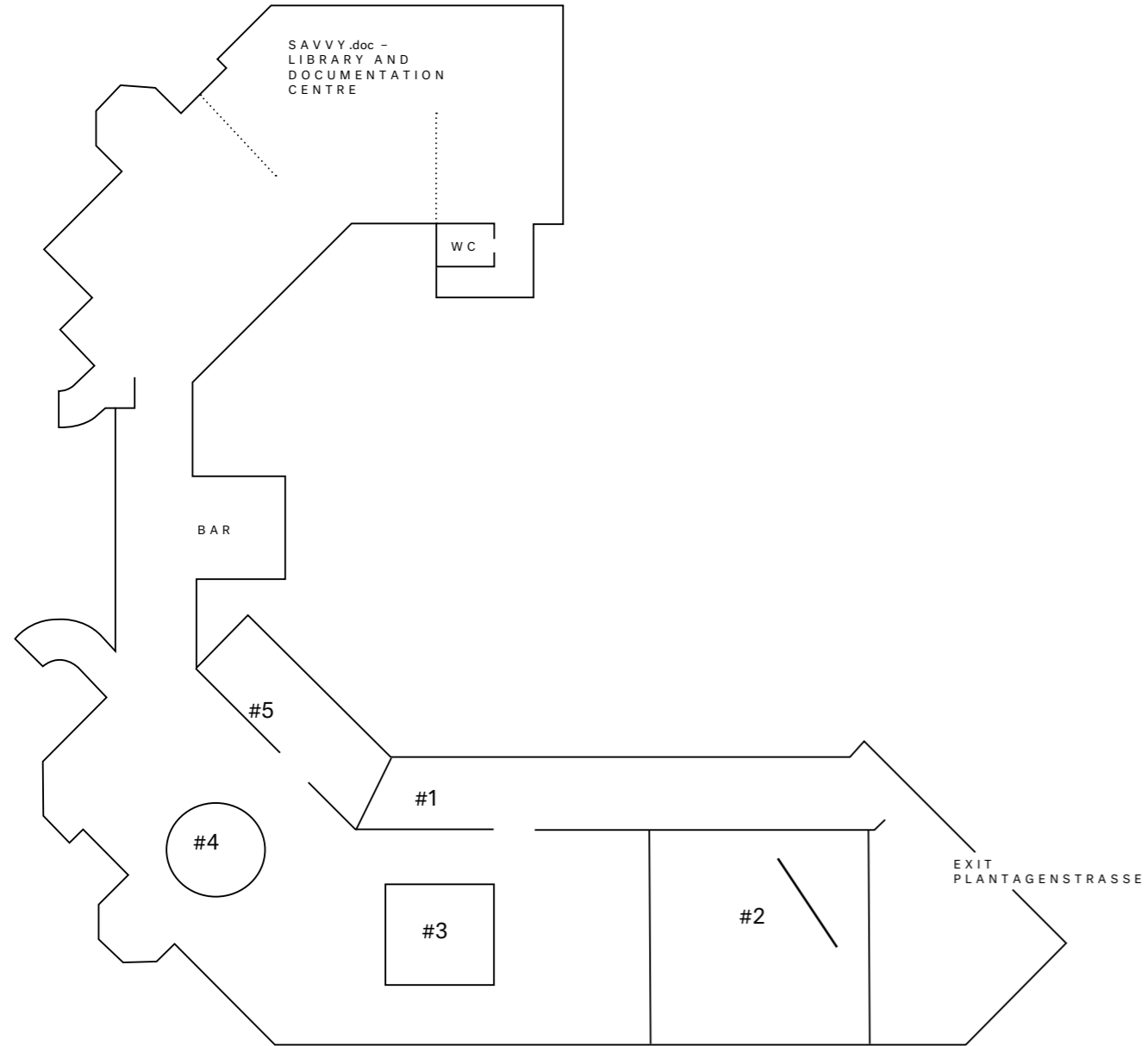
LIMITS OF PERCEPTION LAB

HISTORY The activities of the Lab (within Franke's artistic practice) date back to 2009 – when the first public experiment with stroboscopic light was organized by Kontejner Buro for Contemporary Art in Zagreb, as a part of the *Device Art* exhibition, curated by Suncica Ostojic, and have been since then taking place in various settings – in scientific, educational, cultural and art contexts. In 2009 and 2010 following experiments with flickering lights and related events took place at the Olafur Eliasson's Institute for Spatial Experiments, UdK Berlin as beginning of collaboration with neuroscientist Ida Momennejad. Among other activities in 2011, with the project *Seeing with Eyes Closed*, in collaboration with neuroscientists Ida Momennejad, Elena Agudio and AoN – platform for Art and Neuroscience-symposium in Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice took place with Elena Agudio, Olafur Eliasson, Jeebesh Bagchi, Semir Zeki, Moran Cerf, Vittorio Gallese. The event *Seeing with eyes closed – immeasurable realm of subjective experience*, with Ida Momennejad, Carsten Nicolai, Daniel Margoles, Francisco Vidal took place in Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin in 2012, *Waking Background* with Suncica Ostojic and Ulrich W. Thmoale in Lauba in Zagreb. The Lab has been operating within the Art Institute at the Department of Architecture in Braunschweig Technical University (2014-2015), where continuous experiments have been realized with students and Phillip Dreyer and Natalija Miodragovic. Hannah Hurzig's Mobile Academy Berlin has served as site for experiment with the installation *We close our eyes and see a flock of birds* in 2014. Lazareti Cultural Center in Dubrovnik has hosted round table with Bilge Sayim and Elena Agudio, talks and exhibition with monica Narula and Raqs Media Collective and the project *Mind Crossing* (2015), Installations and the results of the research have been presented at the European conference of visual

perception in Liverpool in 2014 and at the *Science of Consciousness* conference in Tucson in Arizona in 2016, together with Bilge Sayim. The project *Retreat into Darkness. Towards a Phenomenology of the Unknown* has been hosted by Schering Stiftung. It included an experiment and two symposia with, among others Jimena Canales, Anil Seth, Patricia Reed, Silvia Pont. Studio Ivana Franke in Berlin has served as a site of exchange and experiments since 2010. Publications documenting the projects *Seeing with Eyes Closed* (AoN 2011, Ed. Elena Agudio, Ivana Franke) and *Retreat to Darkness. Towards a Phenomenology of the Unknown* (Spector Books, 2018, Ed. Heike Catherina Mertens, Katja Naie) have been published.

FLOOR PLAN

- #1 Nebula Prints 1-6
- #2 From the Faraway Past and From the Future
- #3 LAB
- #4 We close our eyes and see a flock of birds
- #5 S A V V Y .doc extended



MORE INFORMATION

savvy-contemporary.com

facebook.com/savvyberlin

S A V V Y Contemporary – The laboratory of form-ideas is an art space, discursive platform, place for good talks, foods and drinks – a space for conviviality. S A V V Y Contemporary situates itself at the threshold of notions of the West and non-West, to understand and deconstruct them. S A V V Y Contemporary has realized a kaleidoscope of art exhibitions, performances, film screenings, lectures, concerts, readings, talks, dances. S A V V Y Contemporary has established a participatory archive on German colonial history, a performance arts documentation centre, a library, a residency program, as well as educational projects with schools. The art space engages in its neighborhood's history and socio-political realities which are entangled with the reflections and discourses of the project.

S A V V Y Contemporary is Elena Agudio Antonia Alampi Jasmina Al-Qaisi Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock Bona Bell Marleen Boschen Federica Buetti Pia Chakraverti-Wuerthwein Onur Çimen Olani Ewunnet Sagal Farah Eirini Fountedaki Billy Fowo Raisa Galofre Juan Pablo García Sossa Monilola Ilupeju Ahmed Isamaldin Anna Jäger Kimani Joseph Manmeet Kaur Laura Klöckner Cornelia Knoll Kelly Krugman Mahnoor Lodhi António Mendes Kamila Metwaly Wilson Mungai Arlette-Louise Ndakoze Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung Abhishek Nilamber Jeff Obiero Elena Quintarelli Jörg-Peter Schulze Lema Sikod Lili Somogyi Elsa Westreicher Ola Zielińska

D E S I G N Elsa Westreicher A S S I S T A N C E Lili Somogyi
F O N T S Grow (through a generous partnership with DINAMO Foundry, abcdinamo.com) Neutral (carvatho-berna.com)
S A V V Y Contemporary e.V. Amtsgericht Charlottenburg (Berlin) AZ: VR 31133 B Gerichtstraße 35 13347 Berlin