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Off the Shelf. Post-Consumerist Imageries When the Business Left the Building

18.-27. October 2024

Maribor, Slovenia

Festival website <https://www.mfru.org/mfru-2024>

Participating: Xcessive Aesthetics, Simon Browne, freštreš, Dasha Ilina, Rok Kranjc, MFRU30 team, Kaja Pogačar, Pablo Somonte Ruano, Alice Strete, Elena Tammaro, Undoing.Studio, Piet Verkleij, Borut Wenzel, Inari Wishiki

Curated by: Davide Bevilacqua, Lara Mejač

Off the Shelf. Post-Consumerist Imageries When the Business Left the Building

This year's edition of MFRU, the International Festival of Computer Arts, titled *Off the Shelf. Post-Consumerist Imageries When the Business Left the Building*, explores the positioning of digital and media art towards sustainable and social forms of living economies and the commerce of goods.

Observing the global poly-crisis and the growing discussions about abandoning capitalist logic raise the question of what this future would look like and how we could achieve it. The festival program combines economies, ecologies and intermedia discourse by focusing on fundamental areas, such as real estate and urban regeneration, nourishment and basic needs, fashion and beauty, technologies and entertainment, as well as nostalgia and rituals, generally critiquing a lifestyle linked to individual wealth. The invited artistic positions reflect on these dimensions proposing newly produced works that take a critical stance on common value systems and at the same time exploit their contradictions in order to develop visions and tools for a social life that is not centred merely on consumption.

Pablo Somonte Ruano's project *pocas* invites us to engage with the situatedness of community stores – the places of hyperlocal economy where the business is only one aspect of shops embedded in the weaves of a community. Through Pablo's installation, we not only explore several existing models of them but are invited to conceptualize new ones, based on personal and societal mutualist values and ideological stands, as well as minority needs and urbanistic possibilities. **Rok Kranjc's** board game and installation project explores the fundamental approaches we want to build our futures with, a realist capitalist or a utopian communist one. The work questions what are the Game Changers of such a total reorganization of the economies within society, and invites the audience to chip in, purchase and trade market ideologies as a way to explore their relations and contradictions. Similarly, **Alice Strete & Simon Browne** address what is necessary for a healthy and satisfactory nourishment of society – what are we actually hungry for? In their workshop and installation, the participants will contribute to a discussion about food and its role in building communities, as well as the different strategies of construction and liberation of desire.

The expert in (un)making **Inari Wishiki** knows well the ties that connect consumerism to object production and distribution according to artificial needs and necessities for objects. Our ability to survive a post-consumerist future heavily relies on training our automatism to find exactly what we need without falling into the need of searching; he therefore built a machine to train our premonition sense to catch that moment. **Dasha Ilina** explores similar connections with technical devices,

stressing the dependence of our lives on digital technologies. Such interdependence is so deep that folkloric imagery emerged to explain the non-legible behaviours of computers and other gadgets with more immediate, non-technical metaphors and traditions. Beware the startup-style tech-solutionism while envisioning the future! The experimental collective **freštreš** warns us though from the naive certainty that once capitalism is defeated, we have won once and for all. The subtle, persuasive, sneaky business will try to come back, inviting us to join a perfectly idealistic corporation of absolute opacity, constantly longing for extraction and optimization, being once more tied to the invisible strings pulled by the capital.

Finally, two collectives delve into more nuanced tones, while looking at a remote consumerist past and nostalgically remembering, finally dissecting ourselves from the commercial and recognising other values we thought were lost. **Xcessive Aesthetics** unpacks the teenage girls’ rituals of spending afternoons at the malls. Their work examines the routines of testing beauty products with a group of young peers as an important phase for the development of their own personality, awareness of their own body and in general, an intimate friendship moment that disappeared with the general move to online shopping. The tension between the longing for a nostalgic consumerist past and the push for an unknown post-capitalist future is finally solved by **Undoing.Studio**, whose work is grounded on vaporwave aesthetics and irony. Their obscure Mariborwave music label is a proposal on how to conceive a liberatory mashup between a past hypercapitalist dreamland and a maximalist reappropriation.

Instead of looking for pre-packaged solutions, the festival calls for unconventional thinking, experimental settings and community-centred processes while imagining how a post-consumerist world could be structured and how it could function. *Off the Shelf* explores viable alternatives for low-impact, regenerative and community-oriented projects and contributes to envisioning a radical reorganization of society in the context of the climate emergency.

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1. [interview with Radio Student](#)
2. <https://www.artribune.com/progettazione/new-media/2024/10/30-edizione-festival-computer-art-maribor-slovenia/>

documentation

1. video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUMD_dY-9pU

Colophon

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