

SOS

STANDS FOR

SALON OF

OPEN

SECRETS

NOW  
WHAT  
DOES  
THAT  
MEAN?

We began our research project, *Feminist Hacking: Building Circuits as an Artistic Practice*, on 1 March 2020. Sixteen days later, the Austrian government announced several measures designed to contain the spread of coronavirus, including temporarily closing down all universities in the country. We, the core project members at the time (Patrícia J. Reis, Taguhi Torosyan and Stefanie Wuschitz), were terrified and clueless about the future, just like everybody else around the world. Before we could even settle into our beautiful new office at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, we found ourselves swiftly moving our books, materials and instruments back home. We were incredulous, emotionally disturbed, confused and also busy making sure that our friends, family and community would be safe. However, we considered ourselves fortunate to be in good health and privileged to be able to stay at home, while others had to go outside to secure the essentials for survival during confinement. Today, at the beginning of 2024, it feels like a lifetime ago, but we still remember that 'time' back then had a totally different meaning.

While trying to adjust to the future challenges, we made sure that we met online every day. Our first job was to identify national and international hardware manufacturers that could become partners in our project. We wanted to look at the whole hardware production cycle and commodity chain through critical and feminist lenses, decolonising by revealing the exploitative conditions of the processes (from mining to consuming) and also the labour conditions of its employees. One of our main hardware manufacturers was Seed Studio, and our goal was to visit them in Shenzhen, China, to foster a closer collaboration between our feminist hardware open source project and their hardware production cycle. This didn't happen, because of the worldwide travel restrictions that were in place; and with that in mind, we had to adjust our research methodology to the new reality. We thought that, instead of reaching out to manufacturers (which were, in any case, shut down), we should reach out to peers, artists, researchers, feminist hackers, who, like us, were

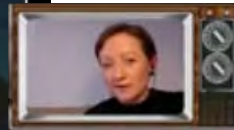
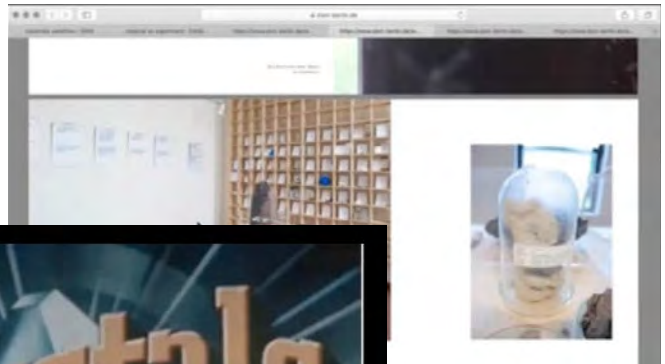
confined to their home offices. And that is how the Salon of Open Secrets interviews began. From our own homes, we wanted to virtually re-enact our cosy hackerspace studio/gallery at Mz\* Baltazar's Laboratory by creating a safer space, a conversation, a happening and a relationship with our peers around the world. Our Salon would reconnect everyone out there who was making and creating, succeeding and failing to do things and to think with things, managing to stay fascinated through the promise that technologies always held: to create a better and more liveable future for all.

What are open secrets? The elephants in the room? Gossip? Publicly censored and stigmatised topics? Everything at the same time, but not exclusively. We define open secrets as situated, niche and embodied experiences, know-how and fun – of being female\*, of bending binaries with/through/in art, technologies, engineering and materials science, and of connecting in the most unexpected and life-affirming ways. Our basic format was an open online conversation with an artist, feminist, hacker, maker and scientist on the existing challenges and the solutions – weaving an interconnected web of materials, components, ecologies, economies, labour, hardware, geographies, ethics and politics of becoming in our more-than-human world. Later, when it was finally possible, we switched the format to our physical gallery space. The interviews were recorded in video and published openly on the Mz\* Baltazar's Laboratory website. A summary of each episode follows.

# *Lilo Viehweg,*

in conversation with  
Barbara Huber, Patrícia J. Reis,  
Taguhi Torosyan and  
Stefanie Wuschitz

What is a piezo? How can we read it historically and from a feminist viewpoint? We talk to Lilo Viehweg about the unknown history of piezo-electrics and her new materialist artistic practice with crystals.



# *Karin Reisinger,*

in conversation with

Patrícia J. Reis, Taguhi Torosyan and  
Stefanie Wuschitz

A mining town in the very north of Sweden, architecture, feminist and creative strategies and prolonged coloniality. We talk about feminist ecologies and mining from an architectural and community perspective, and the complex relationship between margins and the centre in terms of material flows and forced migration.



# *Cornelia Sollfrank,*

in conversation with

Patrícia J. Reis and Stefanie Wuschitz

We talk about Sollfrank's groundbreaking work, from cyberfeminism in the 1990s up until today. We discuss the dynamics of collaboration. What does it entail to share experiences and knowledge, and autonomous infrastructures – structures, spaces and platforms of visibility? How can we open up resources running on independent servers for common use? And other topics. What challenges does the digital represent for traditional aesthetics, what new forms of authorship, and what definitions of artwork emerge in the condition of reworking, modification, distribution and sharing? How can we define digital aesthetics today? How does the creation of artworks and collaborations play with these notions of the seemingly possible? We also discuss Sollfrank's research on net art, her work on the OBN and cyberfeminist international archives, and the ontological difference between cyberfeminist and techno-feminist phenomena and movements.



# *Paula Pin,*

in conversation with

Patrícia J. Reis, Taguhi Torosyan and  
Stefanie Wuschitz

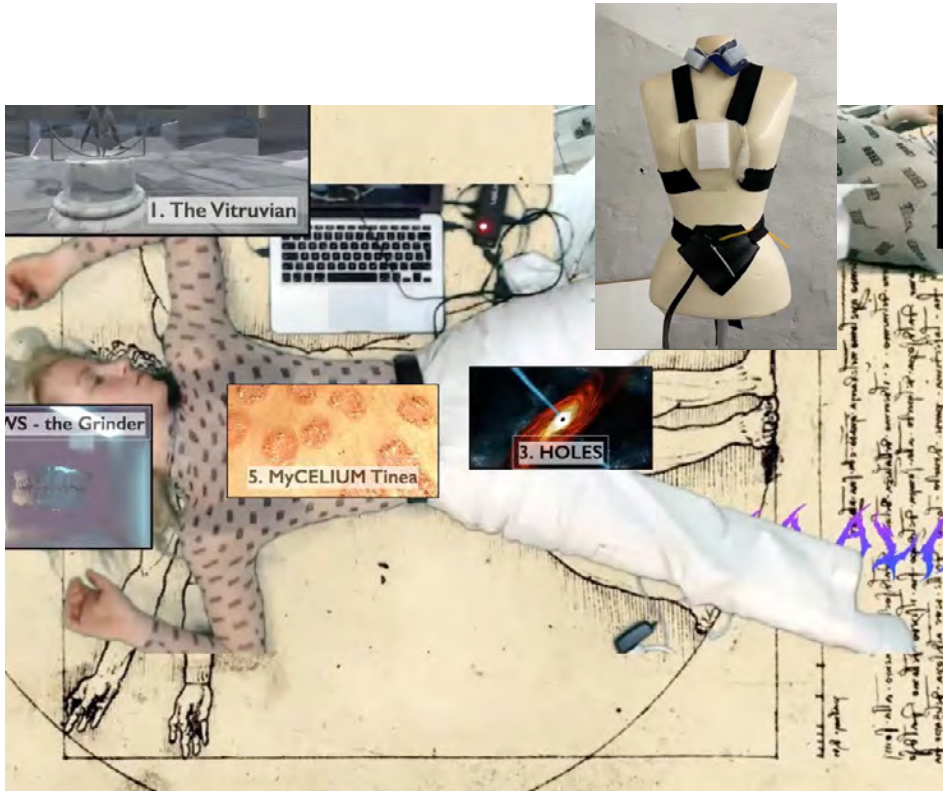
Paula Pin talks to Mz\* Baltazar's Laboratory about her pioneering work in the field of trans-feminism\*biohacking. We talk about 'building' science fiction and hacking everything – incorporating technologies with bodies and biology – what Paula Pin terms the 'expanded body'.



# Janne Kummer,

in conversation with  
Patrícia J. Reis, Taguhi Torosyan and  
Stefanie Wuschitz

We talk about Kummer's hacking practice in embodied interfaces. We discuss how, and which, bodies are represented and what that representation does to our bodies – both digital and analogue. What are the inscriptions of living in a neoliberal system as a female-read body?



# *Gaia Leandra and Ce Quimera,* in conversation with Patrícia J. Reis and Stefanie Wuschitz

We discuss the individual and collective definitions of trans-hack feminism. In particular, we talk about two distinct, but intertwined, approaches – that of hacking the sex, gender, sexuality, bodies, identities, bacteria and hacking; and the practice of transdisciplinarity and horizontal learning. In both cases, the questions of mutual care and building safer spaces for individuals with different sensibilities are important. Hence, the praxis of feminism is central to this particular fusion of art and science.



# *Giulia Tomasello and Arianna Forte,* in conversation with Patrícia J. Reis and Stefanie Wuschitz

We discuss speculative fiction breaking the taboos, stigmas and culture of shaming around female bodies, and we talk about methods of building self-empowerment and knowledge about intimacy through art, science and technologies.



