

# FEMINIST HARDWARE FESTIVAL





Between May and June 2022, queer, non-binary and female-identified media artists came together to rethink the notion of hardware from a feminist perspective. They extended the ethics of feminist hacking to ecological circuits. Using decentralised, fairly traded, modular, renewable, non-toxic materials, they speculated about future alternative technologies: they created hardware made from water, air, bubbles, waste, body liquids, microbes, glass, soil or plants. In collaboration with Mz\* Baltazar's Lab, we proudly presented a diverse selection of local and international artists who generate empathic, eco-sentient and anti-racist soft/hardware. They investigated the use of organic, biodegradable, microbial matter to create ethical technology that helps to unpack the late capitalist industrial complexity of the high tech.

Building their artistic circuits, the artists learnt from biocultural, reciprocal restoration, feminist data science and environmental movements. By doing so, they prototyped models of generative and subsistent commons with human and non-human agents. Through workshops, talks, performances and exhibitions, we debated artistic, anti-colonial alternatives to sexist, toxic and extractivist commodity chains. In this way, we proposed the term 'feminist hardware' as a vehicle to diffract gender equality with sustainable and healing ecologies.

The first Feminist Hardware Festival was a synergetic extension of Feminist Hacking: Building Circuits as an Artistic Practice (PEEK AR580), conducted by Stefanie Wuschitz, Patrícia J. Reis and Taguhi Torosyan at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, in collaboration with Mz\* Baltazar's Laboratory in Vienna, Austria. Next, we present a summary of all the events and participating artists from the festival.

Electronic Pirouettes: sound as movement in circuitry, by Ioana Vreme Moser. Lecture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and Workshop at Mz\* Baltazar's Lab. This lecture followed the pathway of an ex-ballerina through fluid computers, plant es-

pionage, cosmetic synthesisers and electronic lollipops. Vreme Moser tackled the seductive side and hidden narratives of circuitry in relation to natural systems, salty fluids and beauty rituals, and discussed the importance of alternative hardware in the context of a global electronic shortage. During the workshop, participants explored the multifaceted history of semi-conducting materials, their presence in electronic devices and environmental decay. Going back to the advent of communication technologies, they looked at early radio devices, both transmitters and receivers built from raw stones. By transmission, we understand the modulation of a carrier signal, a sinusoidal oscillator. The aim of the workshop was to explore the possibilities of building such oscillators as tone generators out of galvanised scrap metal and radio-receptive stones. The participants were guided to produce negative resistance oscillations to understand the methods of reinforcing communication networks out of leftovers.

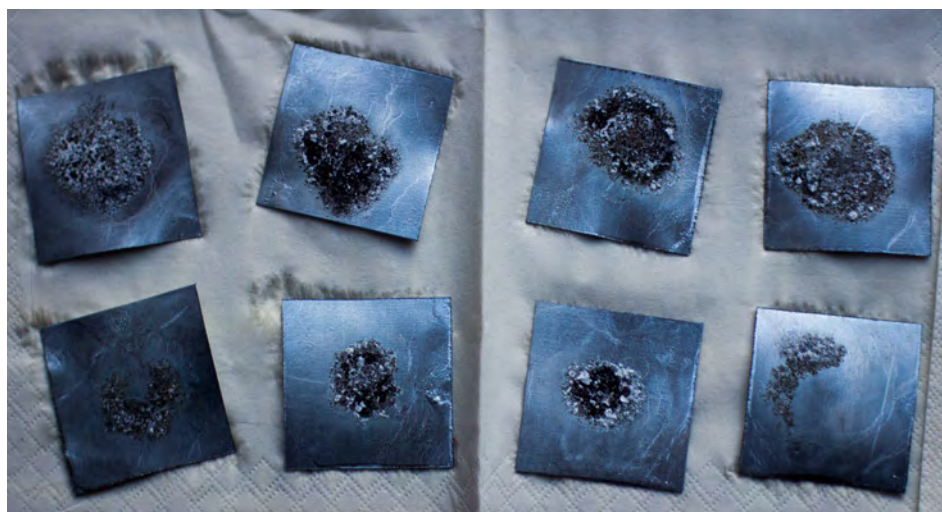




Lecture Electronic Pirouettes:  
sound as movement in circuitry,  
by Ioana Vreme Moser at the Academy of  
Fine Arts in Vienna, May 2022  
Photo © Stefanie Wuschitz



Workshop Electronic Pirouettes:  
sound as movement in circuitry, by Ioana  
Vreme Moser at Mz\* Baltazar's Laboratory,  
May 2022  
Photo © Taguyi Torosan



# *PINK. GLITTER. VIOLENCE.,*

## *by Mirjana Mitrovic*

This exhibition at Mz\* Baltazar's Laboratory last summer explored two separate cases of minors who had reported being raped by police officers in Mexico City. A 16-year-old girl said it had happened during her internship at the Archivo de la Fotografía museum. And a 17-year-old girl testified that she had been raped on her way home at night by four police officers in their patrol car, just two streets from her home in the north of the city. No proper procedure was followed to record the evidence, preventing a proper trial. And the girl's name was leaked to the press. These were not isolated cases, but they were pivotal. Initially, women gathered in front of the Municipal Security Building in Mexico City to demonstrate against police violence, demanding that the perpetrators be investigated and punished. Pink glitter and the shards of a smashed door collided. Spontaneous and decentralised protests were called for the Friday evening in over thirty cities in Mexico. Pictures of glittering pink fists were sent out and hashtags such as 'They're not protecting me, they're raping me' and 'We want justice!' accompanied the call to action. On the evening of 16 August 2019, shards of glass and pink glitter shone on the asphalt of Mexico City on a completely different scale. The mayor of Mexico City, Claudia Sheinbaum, called the protests a provocation. The connotation of pink glitter changed drastically, and a discussion about violence broke out in society.

On the one hand, it was about the deadly violence in the country, which has cost the lives of several women on average every day for years because of deeply rooted chauvinistic structures in the population, media and state institutions. On the other hand,

the public discourse focused on the destructive violence of the protesting women that evening, which was unleashed at bus stations, monuments and police stations. The predominantly young women, with bags of pink glitter in their hands, smashed every social expectation of them. How can this protest, between pop feminism and destructive violence, be documented, perceived, represented and remembered in both public and private spaces?

## *Digital Violence as Affective Disciplining after Feminist Protests,*

*by Marcela Suárez and Mirjana Mitrovic*

*Lecture at Mz\* Baltazar's Laboratory*

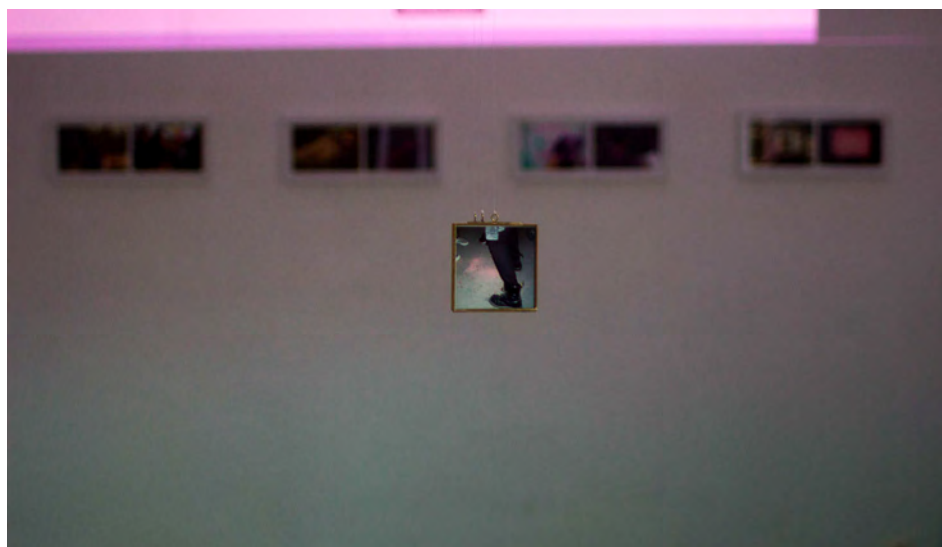
The aim of the presentation was to analyse the aesthetic and political practices that emerged during feminist protests in 2019 in Mexico City, sparked by the cases of two young women who had been raped by policemen. The great diversity of aesthetic–political actions accompanying the protests render visible the evocation of rage as a shared collective subjectivity, and thus a renewed feminist agency that is verbalised in the slogan ‘Somos malas, podemos ser peores!’ (‘We are bad, we can be worse!’). The affective interventions, permeated with fury, anger and despair over the devastating situation of gender violence, created shared ways of sensing and being affected by violence. For example, by painting red circles simulating blood outside the police station or graffiti with the slogan #Femicidestate on historical monuments. We argue that intertwining affects and political practices in these performances and protests (characterised by bringing their affects to the political arena) transgressed the hegemonic aesthetic and political imaginary of how women should protest and what kinds of affect they are allowed to bring to public spaces. The response to the protests in the media and social networks resulted in practices





Exhibition PINK. GLITTER. VIOLENCE.  
By Mirjana Mitrović at Mz\* Baltazar's Lab,  
May 2022  
Photo © Olivia Jaques

of disciplining their affects – and thus their bodies – as women were condemned for being violent and even irrational. However, the protests showed new repertoires of doing affective feminist politics. In this presentation we reflect on the potential of the affective–political practices emerging from these protests to disrupt current cycles of impunity as a form of resistance.



# *Exhibition Louisa Speaks: intimate dialogues on language, technology and bio-hacking,*

*by Giulia Tomasello, curated by Arianna Forte*  
*Exhibition at Mz\* Baltazar's Lab*

Who is Louisa? Louisa is every woman who has to deal with issues concerning her body and her intimacy every day. How many difficulties does she face in her everyday life, from social stigma to medical bias? How well is she able to find information on her own, or thanks to networking and sisterhood? Can technology, platforms or new tools help her? Louisa is one and more archetypes of people identified by designer Giulia Tomasello and medical anthropologist Isabel Farina during their user research studies and educational processes regarding the contested field of intimate care. Louisa becomes the narrative device for investigating two of Giulia's main projects: Future Flora and ALMA. Both focus on overcoming the taboos related to the female body, its functioning, its genitals and its fluids, creating new tools for claim and exploration in health and (self-) care. The former uses microorganisms and DIY practices, and the latter uses inclusive wearable technologies, both of which imagine new solutions to empower women in relation to their own bodies and are based on research and community care.





Exhibition Louisa Speaks, by Giulia  
Tomasello at Mz\* Baltazar's Lab,  
May 2022  
Photo © Janine Schranz





# *Artist talk, The wetness of Hacking: a trans-hacking-feminist perspective,*

*from wetlab Barcelona, by Gaia Leandra and Ce Quimera  
at AIL – Angewandte Digital Innovation Lab,  
at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna*

Gaia Leandra and Ce Quimera, at the time resident artists at Hangar's wetlab in Barcelona, presented their artistic work and the projects developed within the well-known bioart laboratory. Since 2021, they have been carrying out Bioxeno, a project designed to generate new narratives in the intersection between science and art using different tools, techniques, disciplines and practices. They understand bioart as a place of strength, taking a critical perspective on the movement of knowledge and its production by science. The project is inspired by Lynn Margullis, who for several years studied microorganisms located in the ecosystem of the Catalunya territory.

Initially establishing interspecies relations with bacterial communities, specifically the cyanobacteria of the Ebro Delta (Catalunya, Spain), taking into account our human limitations and the need for technology to mediate interspecies relations, they asked: What artistic formats could show/translate this type of link without reproducing anthropocentric or colonial views? How do we account for biodiversity and the extractivism that is present in the ecosystems we inhabit? How do we think of the bio as life? How do we think of our lives? Or rather, how do we live them?

In these times, in which catastrophe and disaster seem to be the only possible scenarios in the near future, these times in which the visible eco–social alternatives seem to have come to an end, they found it crucial to generate new narratives, new stories about possible liveable futures able to challenge our present ways of living and how we relate to one another and the other living beings that inhabit planet Earth.



# *Workshop, Coded Biophilia,*

*by Giulia Tomasello at Mz\* Baltazar's Lab*

Coded Biophilia is a workshop designed for learning the basics of soft wearables and the exploration of biological textiles. During the workshop, participants explored the potential of bacterial cellulose for textile futures in terms of growing living materials and creating speculative scenarios for second skins, sensors and adaptive, responsive structures. They learnt new methods of making sensory surfaces for wearables and to envision how biotechnology and new materials will shape our environment. At the end of the workshop, participants were able to identify state-of-the-art soft wearable and bio-textile applications.

Technology is getting closer and closer to our skin. What we wear today will soon be forgotten and replaced with biological technologies that are changing and challenging not only how we consume and experience design and fashion but also how we relate to and work with nature, instead of against it. Through Coded Biophilia and within this space, we have the opportunity to rethink the relationship between technology, design and society.



Artist talk, by wetlab at AIL – Angewandte  
Innovation Lab, University of Applied Arts  
Vienna, May 2022  
Photo © AIL

# *Workshop, Bioxeno,*

*by Gaia Leandra and Ce Quimera at Mz\* Baltazar's Lab*

In this workshop Ce Quimera and Gaia Leandra proposed to collectively explore the diversity of organisms in an ecosystem. Through biological and artistic practices, they questioned how different microorganisms live and co-exist, interacting with the environment. They addressed ecological communities: how to define an ecosystem; how different communities maintain and generate themselves; and why the human body is an ecosystem and not an individual. They shifted our anthropocentric vision, conditioned by the belief that humans are the measure of all things, to a worldly outlook that introduces the invisible: all surfaces are covered with life.



Workshop, Bioxeno, by Gaia Leandra and  
Ce Quimera at Mz\* Baltazar's Lab, Vienna,  
June 2022  
Photo © Patrícia J. Reis

# *Workshop + Performance, Molecular Queering Agency,*

*by Mary Maggic in a public garden opposite  
Mz\* Baltazar's Lab*

The Molecular Queering Agency is responsible for the industrial alienation of the human, non-human and the planetary. The molecular colonisation of endocrine-disrupting compounds asks us to acknowledge our bodies as changeable, mutable and responsive to the environment. The Molecular Queering Agency invited participants to join a 10-person (socially distanced) disobedience ritual designed to neutralise our eco-heteronormative fears around our collective alien becoming. They asked participants to be loyal representatives of the MQA and to carry out this performance with a sample of their own urine. Participants were also dressed in MQA uniforms and guided through simple choreography that was part-science, part-witchcraft.



Workshop + Performance, Molecular  
Queering Agency, by Mary Maggic at Mz\*  
Baltazar's Lab Vienna, June 2022  
Photo © Verena Tschner

# *Artist talk, by Irene Agrivina*

*at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna*

Open systems advocate, technologist, artist and educator Irene Agrivina is one of the founding members and current directors of HONF, the Yogyakarta-based arts, science and technology laboratory. Created in 1998, HONF, or the House of Natural Fiber, arose from the social and political turmoil surrounding the nepotism and corruption of the Suharto regime. In 2013 Agrivina co-founded XXLlab, an all-female collective focusing on arts, science and free technology as a second generation of HONF's spin-off communities. One of XXLlab's projects, SOYA C(O)U(L)-TURE, was awarded [the next idea] Art and Technology Grant voestalpine by Ars Electronica in 2015. In 2019 Agrivina was chosen by Asialink, Australia, as one of six women pioneers from South-East Asia and Australia.



Artist Talk by Irene Agrivina at the  
Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, June 2022  
Photo © Stefanie Wuschitz

# *Workshop, Eco-Print on Bio leather,*

*by Irene Agrivina at Mz\* Baltazar's Lab*

We got hands-on experience making our own eco-prints using readily available materials such as flowers and leaves. Participants had the opportunity to print on SOYA C(O)U(L)-TURE, a bio leather derived from soy production. SOYA C(O)-U(L)TURE is a project that seeks to combat water pollution and poverty in Indonesia using an innovative process that takes the toxic residues and polluted water – by-products of Indonesia's intensive soy production – and uses them as inputs to manufacture edible cellulose, as well as biofuel and biologically tanned leather.



Workshop, Eco-Print on bio leather, by  
Irene Agrivina at Mz\* Baltazar's Lab  
Vienna, June 2022  
Photo © Stefanie Wuschitz