

A NEW SHOW IN BASEL QUESTIONS ART IN A DATA-DRIVEN AGE

AUTHOR:

[Justin Quirk](#), 23 June 2015



Rafael Lozano-HemmerZero Noon, 2013 Photo Courtesy: bitforms gallery, New York.

When the history of this decade comes to be written, it may well be that the key term will be an apparently innocuous one: data. With the digitization of day-to-day life, the transformation of our every transaction and communication into digital material has become so widespread it almost seems banal. And yet while this goes on around us constantly, the political and legal ramifications of this new world are dizzying. A few flashpoint cases have drawn attention to the uncharted waters we are operating in – those of Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, Aaron Swartz – but for each of these high profile incidents, there are a host of smaller, more insidious conflicts arising every time we give away our geo-location, or send an email through Google, or hand our personal information to another ‘free’ site.

Art is only really beginning to grapple with this issue. Perhaps the most spectacular show in the UK so far this year has been [Ryoji Ikeda's SUPERSYMMETRY](#), which saw the black expanse of a disused indoor car park filled with the churning hum of power electronics and the blinding flashes of multiple, data-processing screens. The effect was immersive, disturbing and hypnotic.

A further exploration of this world is now on view at Basel's House of Electronic Arts with the show, "[Poetics and Politics of Data](#)," which "addresses the paradigm of a data-driven society and reflects life in an increasingly datified world." Contributing artists include [Christopher Baker](#) (USA), [Moniker](#) (Netherlands), [RYBN](#) (France) and [Elle Harrison](#) (UK) with collaboration on the project coming from the Institute of Experimental Design and Media Cultures of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland FHNW, the Centre for Technology Assessment TA-SWISS and [Opendata.ch](#), the Swiss chapter of the Open Knowledge Foundation.

This show is an attempt to orientate modern society, as a rising tide of data brings new challenges to bear on the human condition – the erosion of privacy, the constant urge to create autobiography, what it means to live under surveillance, how to exist at a time when your information is worth more than your labor. The future isn't something to be scared of – but it's something to be aware of, and this show gives artists the chance to explain it for us.

"Poetics and Politics of Data" is on view at [HeK \(House of Electronic Arts Basel\)](#) through August 30, 2015.