Open Call

Laura Cugusi & Nada Zanhour – Everything is Computer

Technical Realisation and Artistic cooperation
for developing a project
between media installation and interactive gaming

Beyond Gravity Festival and what is the call about?

Beyond Gravity is a transdisciplinary platform and a festival at the intersection of digital media, performance and speculative technologies. Launched in 2023 with a focus on dance and virtual realities, the festival emerged from a preceding residency hosted by Theater im Depot, during which three prototype projects were developed and later presented as coproductions. The inaugural edition featured eight artistic positions, alongside a symposium that brought together artistic-scientific collaborations and scholarly contributions through lectures and presentations. This first festival was a cooperation between Theater im Depot and the Academy for Theatre and Digitality.

The upcoming 2025 edition marks a new phase in the festival's evolution, presented by the two previously mentioned institutions and Kulturforum Witten in addition. Centered around the theme Decolonizing the Digital, the new residency program invites critical engagement with power structures and imperialist tendencies embedded in technological development, representation, and (artistic) infrastructures.

The residency program unfolds from an intial invitation of three international curators working in different focus regions – Viviane Maghela (Central & West Africa), Marlon Barrios Solano (Middle Americas/USA, working on Migrating Forms and Nomadic Knowledges) and Laura Cugusi (Southern Mediterranean). They have been invited to conceptualize a new project in collaboration with artists from their region – Eric Takukam (Cameroon), Maria Luisa Angulo (El Salvador/France) and Nada Zanhour (Lebanon). These curatorial tandems are now in the development phase, and we are issuing an open call for collaborators preferably from Ruhrgebiet/NRW to join the development of these works. We encourage applications of artists, developers and technologists who are open to co-create experimental, critically engaged and cross-disciplinary digital artworks that will be presented as part of the festival program from October 1st-5th 2025.

The Artists

Laura Cugusi
Laura Cugusi is an artist, writer, researcher and producer. Her practice is nomadic across languages, disciplines, and media. Her recent work focused on mapping media ecologies, tech literacies, governance infrastructures and institutional world-building strategies that shape and consolidate the imagination (or lack thereof) about the future.

Nada Zanhour
Lebanese, living on the internet n¢×3 aka machine yearning aka Nada Zanhour works across sound, video, 3D and interactive media. She has many other monikers, selves and multiplicities.

The Project

The project explores how AI aesthetics, predictive simulations, and strategic scenario planning shape dominant narratives of the future—narratives that tend to align with corporate, military-industrial, and colonial logics. Drawing from speculative design, critical infrastructure studies, and decolonial theory, the project investigates how emerging technologies perpetuate or challenge the dominant imagination of the future..

We are particularly interested in the role of game design and interactive fiction as narrative models that diverge from linear storytelling. The form of the project is a "game essay"—an exploratory digital experience in which players navigate a constructed environment and encounter fragments of text, voiceovers, archival materials, and algorithmically generated content. The final piece will encourage reflection and immersion over completion, open-ended navigation over resolution.

What's the plan?

We are a researcher-writer and an artist currently developing a collaborative project that interrogates the politics of future-making through the lenses of planned obsolescence, algorithmic control, and technologies of life and death. This work will unfold over the coming months as part of a research-based digital art residency and culminate in a hybrid exhibition (digital and spatial installation).

The project engages with game engines, machine vision, and generative AI, both as tools and as conceptual material, in order to examine dominant techno-scientific narratives and speculate on parallel trajectories around the future of science and technology.

THEATER IM DEPOT

What are we looking for?

We are seeking a creative technologist / developer / computer scientist who is interested in co-developing the digital environment. The ideal collaborator would be interested in experimental storytelling and critical engagement with technology.

We're especially interested in collaborators who are open to experimental forms of world-building that resist traditional gameplay settings while opening up potentialities of the medium.

What we offer

• Participation in an artistically and transculturally very relevant project

• Exchange with international artists and experts

• A fee for joint development work for 10 weeks in total

Required expertise

• Unreal Engine (blueprints and C++)

• Interactive technologies (sensor-based and AI models)

• Experience with implementing branching narrative logic, evolution simulation , and open world systems

• Comfort collaborating across disciplines and engaging with complex conceptual frameworks

Timeline

• Collaboration begins in the coming weeks and runs across 2,5 months, with a final output presented as part of the program of Beyond Gravity Festival from October 1st - 5th.

• You will work closely with us to develop the environment, integrate content and interaction structures, and shape the player's journey.

How to Apply

If this resonates with your work and interests, we'd love to hear from you. Please send us:

• A short introduction to yourself and your practice

• A portfolio, GitHub or relevant links to past projects

• A few lines on why you're interested in this project, and any initial thoughts or questions

Please send a short application outlining your motivation, your technical expertise and previous projects by April 17th to soeren.meffert@theaterimdepot.de
(not more than 2 DinA4 pages).

We're especially excited to collaborate with individuals who bring perspectives from outside traditional tech pipelines, and we welcome inquiries from early-career practitioners as well as those with more experience. If you have questions before applying, feel free to reach out.

We look forward to your application!

Akademie für Theater und Digitalität

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