technosexual reading circle in Beirut presents: "technosexuality – an introduction"

10 public sessions organized by Ashkan Sepahvand and guest collaborators
hosted at marra.tein residency space
April – June 2015

MANIFESTO

"*Sex* x *Technology* = *The Future*" – In 1981, dystopian sci-fi novelist J.G. Ballard would pen this equation, predicting the phenomenon of "technosexuality" as not only a concern of the future, but the content of the future itself. Thirty-five years later, it seems we might already be well on our way. Most of us would not deny that the intricate procedures of biopolitics with developments in science and technology together affect our everyday lives, social relations, and sense-perceptions. This era of "tech sex" can be synchronized to developments in the Western socio-economic order since the end of World War II. And this order – a capitalist mode of life – has undoubtedly accelerated since the beginning of the 21st century, subtly diffused and firmly implanted across the entire globe. Capital is no longer around us, in the market – it is inside us, in our bodily fluids.

We are technosexual, whether we want to admit it or not, and its implications operate *outside* of the bedroom. Gilles Deleuze's pressing question, "what can a body do?", seems to have been given a tentative answer by the combined forces of the pharmaceutical-medical industries and the pornographic-media apparatus: it cannot do much on its own, yet it must perform, it must be enhanced, it must be supplemented. "You" are not enough. You need a substance, a gadget, a profile, a pill, to realize "yourself". Technosexuality thus raises questions and concerns about who and how we imagine ourselves to "be" in the world, and particularly, how we perceive and practice our capacities. How are our desires mediated within today's sensual cultures? How does the global colonization of thought, a result of neo-liberalism's micropolitical PR strategies, find itself embodied, incorporated, and materialized? What transformations has the "subject" - the individual self, the "I" - undergone in our generation? To what material entities do we find ourselves attached, addicted, or even governed by, as hybrid creatures or automaton slaves?

These are just some of the questions that we will ask over the course of our meetings. Starting with an introduction to the complex subject as charted by Beatriz Preciado in her book *Testo Junkie*, we will explore variations on the future-now that the equation 'sex multiplied by technology' may yield. Our readings will traverse a wide spectrum of fields, considering historical studies of the body and gender, biological and psychological models of the organism and the self, sociological analyses of civilizational formations, as well as the work of philosopher-activists who present us with both radical diagnoses of our times, as well as distinct articulations of projects whose utopian aims strive for nothing short of a complete transformation of the *cosmos* – the order whereby a world makes sense to its inhabitants.

INFORMATION

The **technosexual reading circle** is an informal coming-together of friends and friends of friends to read, discuss, and in many ways process a variety of thematically-related documents concerning sex, technology, and the future. Initiated in November 2013 in Berlin, the group has been meeting semi-regularly, shifting its interests, members, and matters along the way. Anyone is welcome to join in, take part, go away for awhile, come back again, or not. What characterizes the group is a loose configuration of individuals interested in pursuing reflection and experimentation together and apart, and eager to have a space within which thoughts, observations, criticisms, and breakthroughs can be openly shared, without any predominant rhetoric or style. We welcome positions that combine the mundane and everyday to the abstract and theoretical: from creative practice, academic research, and activist politics to self-experimentation, street smarts, skepticism, or even, casual curiosity. The group shares its materials – films, articles, related events – on a private Facebook page, an ongoing platform for all things tech-sex. The goal of this initiative is to activate the diverse experiences we have in our own lives and within our own bodies, the stimulus for tangential and highly-personal discussions that ask questions from the contemporary sensual regimes within which we all take part.

For the period of April to June 2015, marra.tein residency space will host a special edition of the technosexual reading circle in Beirut. This iteration of the circle is organized by writer, researcher, and translator Ashkan Sepahvand, with guest collaborators from the reading group in Berlin also visiting occasionally to contribute with their respective practices in the form of short workshops, screenings, and performance-based events. A private Facebook page will be set up for the group, acting as a communication board for our activities and a site to exchange interest, debate, and share further material.

Our meetings are the core of the project: a weekly gathering at marra.tein to reflect, discuss, and exchange energies around a selection of texts. There are a total of 10 sessions, each according to a specific theme. All texts will be provided in advance on the Facebook page as individual PDF documents, as well as in the form of a full "Reader" for download. Though the majority of texts are "academic", participants need not have any formal education or training to take part – our discussions aim for a variety of languages and approaches, theoretical jargon co-existing with personal observations and, even, simple incomprehension. The sessions are open to the public, so friends can bring friends and pass the word. As each session is thematically oriented, participants may come and go, choosing sessions that interest them – though some of you may want to attend the whole duration. There is a loose narrative "argument" that the totality of sessions puts forward, and certainly interconnections exist between each theme, yet single sessions also function as independent units. Group dynamics naturally create a "core" of more active members, with others dropping in as momentum radiates – and that's totally OK! All interested in participating will be added to the private Facebook page – there you can find event announcements, share your own materials, download the readings, invite your friends, or just pen your thoughts. Obviously doing the readings in advance, even in part, is beneficial, but also trust the flow of spirited conversation – even if you didn't manage the readings! – around topics that we all have opinions about and experiences with: sexuality, technology, the future.

Please register in advance and by April 2 with your name and your Facebook "persona" to assepahvand@gmail.com. The first session will convene on Wednesday, April 8, at an early evening hour to be confirmed.

SCHEDULE

Below you will find a listing of the 10 sessions that make up the technosexual reading circle in Beirut. We gather on a weekly basis at the marra.tein residency apartment in Rmeil/Geitawi, with our meetings tentatively scheduled for Wednesday evenings. Sessions are public, so you can bring your friends, and also, please bring drinks and snacks!

Each session opens with a short introduction to the topic and the readings, led by Ashkan Sepahvand. An open group discussion follows. If you want to share any audio-visual material for a specific session, please let us know in advance so we can set up the basics (projector & speakers).

Guest collaborators from the group in Berlin will be passing through the entire time, so additional events may be scheduled every now and then – workshops, screenings, performances. These will be announced on the Facebook page.

One final note: some sessions below have multiple suggested readings. The first listing is always the primary text – anything that follows is secondary and complimentary. If you are pressed for time, make sure to have a look at the first text, at least. Alternatively, just dive in to the secondary text(s) instead – this way, we can all fill in each other's gaps during the discussion.

SESSION 1 – Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics

- Beatriz Preciado, *Testo Junkie*
"The Pharmacopornographic Era", "Testo Gel", "History of Technosexuality"

SESSION 2 – Unofficial Histories of the Early Modern Body

- Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*
"The Great Caliban: The Struggle Against the Rebel Body"

- Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East*
"The Body Sexual: Medicine and Physiognomy"

- Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*
"Scientia Sexualis"

SESSION 3 – Biology, Ontology, Technology

- Georges Canguilhem, *Knowledge of Life*
"Machine and Organism"

- Kurt Goldstein, *The Organism*
"On Life and Mind", "Knowledge and Action", "Concluding Remarks"

SESSION 4 – Cyborgs and 'Dividuals'

- Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*
"A Cyborg Manifesto"

- Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on Societies of Control"

SESSION 5 – The Body and Data, or, How To Live (and Work) Forever

- Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*
"The Soul at Work", "The Precarious Soul", "Conclusion"

- Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*
"The Body, or the Mass Grave of Signs"

SESSION 6 – Capitalism and Psychology: The Emergence of 'Psy-'

- Nicolas Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood*
"Introduction", "Governing Enterprising Individuals", "Assembling Ourselves"

- Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*
"The Desiring Machines"

SESSION 7 – A Brave New World of Tomorrow, Today

- Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, *The New Way of the World*
"Manufacturing Neoliberal Subjects", "The Performance/Pleasure Apparatus"

SESSION 8 – Substance and Identity

- Kane Race, *Pleasure Consuming Medicine: The Queer Politics of Drugs*
"Preface", "Pleasure Consuming Medicine", "Prescribing the Self", "Recreational States"

SESSION 9 – Virtual Sex, or, What Is Love?

- Shaka McGlotten, *Virtual Intimacies*
"Coda: On Not Hooking Up"

- Beatriz Preciao, *Testo Junkie*
"The Pornographic Imperative: Fuck You Yourself"

SESSION 10 – Against the Phallic Social Order

- Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*
"Capitalism, The Family, and The Anus"

- Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark*
"Power-Over and Power-From-Within", "Thought-Forms: Magic as Language", "Circles and Webs: Group Structures", "Sex and Politics"