

## Saas-Fee Summer Institute of Art 2024 Paris (Paris, 30 Sep – 5 Oct 24)

Paris, Sep 30–Oct 5, 2024

Deadline: Aug 18, 2024

Keturah Cummings

Call for Application for the Saas-Fee Summer Institute of Art 2024 Paris.

Topic: "The Brain Without Organs: Planetary, Plasticity, and Eco-cosmotechnics in Cognitive Capitalism".

In cognitive capitalism, the brain and the mind are the new factories of the twentieth and twenty-first century. We are no longer proletariats using our muscular bodies to labor on assembly lines in industrial sheds to produce physical products, but cognitariats (or mental laborers) using our brains and minds in front of screens to produce data. In our post-pandemic era, characterized by excessive engagement with social media and corporate owned search engines, this accumulated data is not only passively collected and organized as statistics in order to mediate public opinion and encourage online shopping, but through siloed online engagement actively shapes the brain's materiality by sculpting its neural plastic potential and normalizing its innate variability; in turn, producing an easily governed people and subjugating the multitude. Instead of finger clicks, this late-stage of cognitive capitalism will focus on brain waves to surf the web and interact with social media. New cognitive-based technologies such as the "wired brain" and optogenetics will directly and indirectly act upon the brain's materiality and put both our conscious and unconscious thoughts to work. Like other resource extraction models, our basic mental capacities are insidiously externalized one by one by neural extractivism trending us towards a senile population. This technological escalation has repercussions for both our modes of individuation and forms of subjectification, and climate collapse is one consequence.

This year's Saas-Fee Summer Institute of Art in Paris, organized in collaboration with Maison Sugar and Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'homme, will convene to both understand these new forces of algorithmic tyranny as well as how we might participate in an ontological turn from Homo sapiens towards the production of Planetary Sapiens. We humans have coevolved with the biosphere and therefore must continue to embrace the deep ecological thinking that it requires. Instead of generating technologies that poison, destroy and ravage the environment, we must embrace technics (or anti-technics) that care for it. We must give up the Anthropocentric dyad of globalization and sustainability, with its historical relation to the acceleration of capitalism, and replace it with that of the planetary, which includes all species and epistemologies, and habitability, which focuses on what is best for the continued existence of complex and diverse life on this planet. As Achille Mbembe suggests, habitability is not concerned with power or might but with life and the possibility of a radical openness. Planetary requires decolonization and the production of cognitive justice.

Towards these goals, we will retrace the body without organs (BwO), a phrase originating in the writings of Antonin Artaud and expanded by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), upon a notion of the brain. The brain without organs (BrwO) is dependent upon two important epistemological frameworks: Jean Pierre Changeux's work on the epigenesis of neuronal networks by the selective stabilization of synapses and Bernard Stiegler's concept of exosomatic organogenesis which emphasizes the role played by the evolution of technics in the developing brain. The brain without organs releases the biological brain from the organizing capacities of the endosomatic genetic code subsumed by the despotic, exosomatic, capitalist-driven techno-socio-political milieu which secondarily sculpts the brains' neural plasticity as well as normalizing its variation creating a neurotypical population of citizens. BrwO rejects behaviorist and computational/cognitivist approaches to the mind and brain and understands it rather as a becoming intra-extracranial complex sculpted by the social, political, linguistic, cultural and ecological milieu in flux over deep time. Bernard Stiegler's theory of exosomatic organogenesis describes the expansion of the frontal cortex from *Homo habilis* to *Homo erectus* as a mirroring, or maieutics, through human time. In other words, our maieutics has been constituted by Anthropocenic technics over the past two million years and thus we are burdened with an Anthropocenic brain and its thoughts. Eco-agnosia, or climate denial, is one such result. In this way, cognitive-based technologies such as ChatGPT can be understood as the most recent Anthropocenic (and Capitalocenic) technologies to join fire, spear points, social hunting, slash and burn agriculture, the steam engine and the atomic bomb, that threaten our environment and ourselves.

The implications of this exploration are grand and broad. Through "The Brain Without Organs: Planetary, Plasticity, and Eco-cosmotecnics in Cognitive Capitalism," we aim to understand the potential of planetary and ecocentric transformers that adhere to the tenants of deep ecology, as understood by Arne Næss, to lead the charge against Anthropocenic logic including its inherent biases and the neural-material consequences so beautifully illustrated in the recent sci-fi movie *Don't Look Up* (2021). With this new thinking, we might discover the tools with which to devise these new methods and, as Isabelle Stengers has suggested, new forms of emancipating planetary governmentalities which together promote peaceful organs of cosmotechnical consciousness.

Warren Neidich, founding director  
Saas-Fee Summer Institute of Art

#### Faculty

Gabriel Alonso, Nicolas Bourriaud, Yves Citton, Emanuele Coccia, Igor Galligo, Agnieszka Kurant, Alex Taek-Gwang Lee, Anna Longo, Geert Lovink, Antonia Majaca, Amna Malik, Yann Moulier Boutang, Warren Neidich (founder/director), Sinziana Ravini, Laurent de Sutter, Jennifer Teets, Tiziana Terranova, Aline Wiame, and Charles Wolfe.

#### Applications

Applications for SFSIA 2024 Paris are open to students, practitioners and scholars from the fields of art (including video, photography, installation and multimedia), ecology, science and technology studies, philosophy, design, architecture, critical theory, cultural studies, film and media studies, and beyond. Please see our application guidelines for more information: <https://sfsia.art/2024-paris/2024-paris-application/>

## Application Information

Priority deadline: July 28

Final deadline: August 18

### Reference:

ANN: Saas-Fee Summer Institute of Art 2024 Paris (Paris, 30 Sep - 5 Oct 24). In: Arthist.net, Jul 15, 2024  
(accessed Jun 23, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/42300>>.