SAHEJ RAHAL
अतिथि ATITHI

ENTER THE HYPER-SCIENTIFIC
HALOS
6.6.—29.6. 2025

The proliferation of technological intelligence across every facet of reality threatens to subsume the fundamental faculties of thought, feeling, action—and all conscious experience. The planet comes to appear as a computable clockwork device, with everything that lies upon it a standing stockpile of resources waiting to be ossified into its machinic movements. Codified, categorized, and cut away from the whole. This computational model of the world deceives us into believing that everywhere and every when it is always already the same. Encroaching upon the faculty of touch, techne promises to make the world conjurable, at our fingertips—transforming its infinitude into a sequence of interfaces, interred within touchscreens navigable by tapping, pinching, and pressing a black mirror.

Tactility, however, affords us an uncertain agency. Allowing us to both receive and respond to the world we find ourselves in, touch can be assertive, aggressive, aching, averse, affectionate, adoring, and aimless. Its extra-sensorial capacity has given rise to a subversive thread of inquiry among philosophers across history. Aristotle speculated that touch is the seat of sentience, housed across all life forms. Buddhist doctrines argue that while the perceived world of Maya is an illusion to be transcended, the felt world is real, for it reveals itself to us in its coldness, heat, warmth, and wetness.

Probing the bond between touch and thought, अतिथि Atithi invites visitors into a strange ritual of extra-human cognition among a contingent of AI-driven tentacles wandering the remains of an abandoned temple. Atithi is the Hindi word for visitor or guest, although more literally it suggests a being that occupies an uncertain temporality, ungoverned by deterministic origins or ends. In each of the work's AI appendages, brain and body are enmeshed and indistinguishable from each other, collectively forming a quasi-sentient cluster of mind-limbs. Roaming the temple grounds, they become responsive to audience presence when visitors move their hands across conductive plates placed within the installation. Every haptic gesture performed on the plates becomes an utterance to which the creatures react by swirling, swaying, and scattering—engaging in an extra-linguistic dialogue of touch and movement across the porous boundaries of myth, machine, mind, and memory.

अतिथि Atithi, 2025

Audio Reactive AI Simulation, Installation, Brass plates

Commissioned and produced by the EPFL-CDH Artist in Residence Program: *Enter the Hyper-Scientific* 2025, EPFL Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne.

Sahej Rahal, born in 1988 in Mumbai, is primarily a storyteller. He weaves together fact and fiction to create mythological worlds that unfold within the present and take the shape of sculptures, performances, films, paintings, installations, and AI-simulation programs in which indeterminate beings emerge from the cracks between the real and the imagined. Rahal's participation in group and solo exhibitions includes Manifesta 2022, the 2021 Gwangju Biennale, Liverpool Biennial, the Kochi Biennale, the Vancouver Biennale, the MACRO Museum Rome, Kadist SF, ACCA Melbourne, and CCA Glasgow. He has received the Cove Park/Henry Moore Fellowship, the Akademie Schloss Solitude Fellowship, and the Sher-Gil Sundaram Arts Foundation Installation Art Grant, and won the Forbes India Art Award for best debut show for Forerunner at Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai. Most recently he has been awarded the Digital Earth Fellowship and the Junge Akademie Human Machine Fellowship.

Curator: Giulia Bini
Production Manager: Alison Carré
Graphic Design and Identity: Lamm & Kirch

ENTER THE HYPER-SCIENTIFIC

Initiated by the EPFL College of Humanities (CDH), amplified by EPFL Pavilions, and in partnership with the City of Lausanne, the EPFL – CDH Artist-in-Residence (AiR) Program *Enter the Hyper-Scientific* reflects the CDH mission of fostering transdisciplinary encounters and collaborations between artists and EPFL's scientific community. The program invites professional Swiss and international artists for three-month residencies to realize innovative and visionary projects at the intersection of art, science, and advanced technologies.
Curator & Head of Program: Giulia Bini
Program Administration: Christine Farget
Communication and Production Manager: Alison Carré

EPFL PAVILIONS

Pavilion A

PLACE COSANDEY
1015 LAUSANNE

TUESDAY-SUNDAY
11AM-6PM

EPFL | ■ College of Humanities

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Soleil·s
Solar Biennale 2

EPFL Pavilions Amplifier for Art, Science and Society Lausanne

Ville de Lausanne