

Batycka, Dorian, 'Techno', **ARTFORUM**, Critics' Picks, March 2022 2022

ARTFORUM



Sandra Mujinga, *Spectral Keepers*, 2020, tulle fabric, cotton fabric, nylon thread, threaded rods, wire clamps, cellular concrete, dimensions variable. Installation view. Photo Luca Guadagnini.

BOLZANO

“TECHNO”

MUSEION OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART BOLZANO

Piazza Piero Siena Platz 1
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Fall into the cultural vortex of becoming bigger, better, faster, stronger; Enter the world of Sandra Mujinga's *Spectral Keepers*, 2020, a dystopian

take on techno, the musical genre that has spawned countless subcultures. Popular understanding holds that techno was forged in the mid-1980s in semilegal warehouses in Detroit, and then later, in the 1990s, it proliferated within the temporary autonomous zones across East Germany. No one asked for a permit, nor for approval. From Ford plants to Chernobyl, amid the spilt oil and atomic junk of postindustrial wastelands, techno reigned.

Curated by Bart van der Heide, the sprawling group show “TECHNO” recognizes myriad variations of this culture, touching on everything from industrialization and technology to computing, dance and performance, identity, community, ecology, and economy. There is a neologism for this aesthetic: *Morestalgia*, 2019, the title of Ricardo Benassi's media sculpture, which addresses the hauntology of techno's connection to cybernetic culture and language. Within Yuri Pattison's *True Time Master*, 2019–20—a pulsating sonic sculpture that amplifies elements from the Chip Scale Atomic Clock (CSAC), which was developed by the US through DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency)—techno figures as a metronome of war, conquest, navigation, and extraction. This leads us to a sinister subplot in the history and cultural impact of techno. While many have likened newer strains of techno to hyperdub and genres like footwork, and its pseudo-anonymous producers, like Burial, to hacker groups like Anonymous and anticapitalist thinkers like Mark Fisher, it could very well be that, rather than the rigid, mechanoid lines of electronic music bolstered by digital technology and early rave culture, techno was actually derived from military hardware and engineering. From the dawn of Black Futurism to the mood boards of Balenciaga, the exhibition ultimately begs us to question many of the popularly held assumptions about this genre-defying subculture.

— Dorian Batycka