

Press release

Museum Folkwang

Science Fiction and Pop Culture at Museum Folkwang: Exhibition *I was a Robot* opens on 11 October

Essen, 10.10.2019 – *I was a Robot: Science Fiction and Pop Culture* (11 October 2019 to 15 March 2020) marks the first exhibition in Museum Folkwang's autumn focus on the relation between humans and machines. The exhibition was developed in cooperation with the science fiction museum Maison d'Ailleurs: more than 250 pop culture exhibits from the Swiss museum's significant collection position robots as both friends and helpers, on the one hand, and as enemies and destroyers on the other. Highlights include film posters for *Metropolis* and the *Terminator* series as well as cover designs from Japanese manga, Isaac Asimov books and the *Perry Rhodan* series.

Robots are mechanical or virtual entities that are controlled by a computer programme or an electronic circuit. Despite this rather prosaic definition, the figure of the robot has inspired people's fantasies ever since its first appearance, with the imaginative world that first emerged out of literature expanding across disciplines and different media as the genre of science fiction. This world has captured people's imaginations from the early 20th century right up to the present day, with robots having since morphed into cyborgs, artificial creations and AI. First conceived of as mechanical servants and sidekicks, robots soon came to occupy a diverse range of roles in books, films, music videos, comics and computer games, in stories which reveal visions of unbridled progress on the one hand and dystopian and apocalyptic scenarios on the other.

Spread over some 800 square metres, *I was a Robot* provides a glimpse into the evolution of science fiction, from its beginnings to the present. In eight themed rooms, various visions of the future unfold in all their complexity: In addition to posters and magazines, book and record covers as well as action figures show the robot in dystopian and humorous ways as a reflection of the human being.

The Maison d'Ailleurs collection is one of the most significant science fiction collections in the world. As early as 1967/68, curator Harald Szeemann had conceptualised a show on the theme with collector Pierre Versins, founder of the Swiss museum, and dedicated an entire section to it at documenta 5 (1972). Over 50 years later, together with Maison d'Ailleurs and its current director Marc Atallah, Museum Folkwang has produced an overview of the visual interpretations of the robot spawned by science fiction. Through this, the exhibition offers visitors the chance to see the past's visions of the future alongside those emerging from the present.

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I was a Robot provides fascinating insights into pop-cultural products and phenomena related to the topic of man and machine. The exhibition *The Assembled Human* (starting 8 November 2019) will further explore the artistic dimensions of the theme.

An exhibition by Maison d'Ailleurs, developed in collaboration with Museum Folkwang.

Funded by Sparkassen-Kulturstiftung Rheinland and Sparkasse Essen

Information

I was a Robot

Science Fiction and Pop Culture

11 October 2019 to 15 March 2020

Opening: 10 October, 7 p.m.

Curators: Marc Atallah and René Grohnert

Admission: 5 / 3.50 € (incl. *Shin Matsunaga. Made in Japan – Posters*)

Combined ticket with *The Assembled Human*: 10 / 7 €

A catalogue accompanying the exhibition will be published by Folkwang / Steidl:

I was a Robot. Science Fiction and Pop Culture

Museum Folkwang (ed.), 144 pages, 106 reproductions

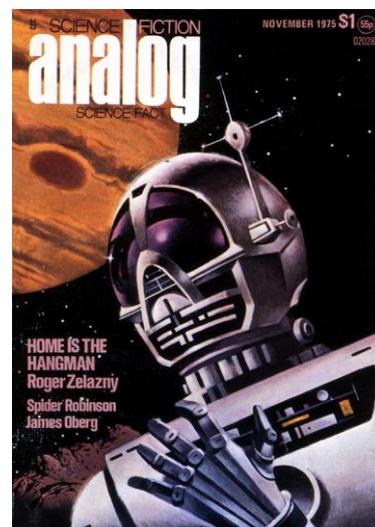
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Vincent Di Fate

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Download press images at www.museum-folkwang.de

Opening times Tuesday–Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursday and Friday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., closed Mondays