

Heinz von Foerster Lecture '17

# Bill Seaman

## Towards A Dynamic Heterarchical Ecology Of Conversations

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19:00 Uhr

Hauptgebäude der Universität Wien  
Hörsaal 47  
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1010 Wien

**heinz von foerster  
gesellschaft**

am Institut für Zeitgeschichte  
Altes AKH, Spitalgasse 2-4  
A-1090 Wien

**in Kooperation  
mit dem**

**Institut für Zeitgeschichte der Universität Wien**

As the head of the Biological Computer Lab (BCL), in both his theory and scientific practice, Heinz von Foerster exhibited a holistic multi-perspective approach to the body and knowing. This took form through an overarching embodied attitude toward knowledge production. Von Foerster, through conversation, collaborative research, advanced publication, and focused symposia, functioned as an exceptional organizational vehicle for knowledge production across a series of widely differing domains. He sometimes did this by playing the “contrarian” – exploring language inversions, humor and playful linguistic game strategies. He was deeply interested in metaphor and the ideas of Wittgenstein concerning language. He thus became a living nexus for conceptual dances that played out across a multiplicity of conversations.

This paper will function as a springboard for recouping many of the ideas that have become lost and/or displaced over time, yet are still potentially essential to the development of new forms of computation, circular causal relations, as well as human interaction and Understanding Understanding. According to Gordon Pask’s Conversation Theory Seaman points at conversation as a means to shared understanding and learning. A heterarchical approach to these conversations allows forming a dynamic compendium.

Bill Seaman

Media Artist and Researcher Bill Seaman is professor at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

He co-directs The Emergence Lab with John Supko, Media Arts + Sciences at Duke University where he teaches in the department of Art, Art History & Visual Studies. He gained a master of Science in Visual Studies from MIT, working in the then new Media Lab, The Center for Advanced Visual Studies, and in particular worked with others to invent aspects of interactive media in the Film/Video Department. He has a PhD from CAILA – The Center for Advanced Inquiry in Interactive Art, University of Wales, where he explored the creation of generative virtual environments. He is currently working on a book on Ranulph Glanville, multiple new music albums and an experimental generative Opera with John Supko called *The Oper&*, commissioned by the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation. See [Billseaman.com](http://Billseaman.com)

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