

[macro]biologies II: organisms

Suzanne Anker
 Brandon Ballengée
 Maja Smrekar

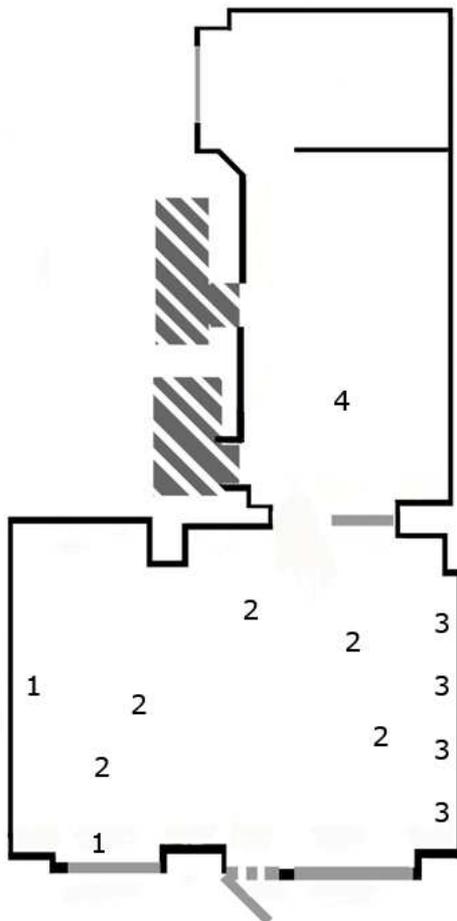
31 May – 20 July 2014, 2-6pm (and by appointment)

Tour with the Curators: 6 July, 3 PM

Children Workshop: 19 July, 2-4pm (upon registration!)

Instead of a unified conception of existence, such as "world" or "nature", today, in the post-anthropocentric era, we find ourselves confronted rather with a multiplicity of structures and a blurring of boundaries. This show is part of a series of exhibitions - *[macro]biologies* and *[micro]biologies* - dedicated to artistic reflection on current drastic changes to how we connect, relate and interrelate to the worlds around us.

This exhibition highlights the works of artists dealing with multi-celled organisms. Noteworthy is both the relationship of these organisms to us, as well as their roles as independent actors. The exhibition focuses on the works of three remarkable, internationally recognized artists whose work deals with multicellular organisms: Suzanne Anker (U.S.), Brandon Ballengée (U.S.) and Maja Smrekar (SI).

Exhibition space 1: Prinzenallee 34

The American artist and theoretician **Suzanne Anker (1-3)** has been one of the key figures working at the border between art and biology for several decades. Her work combines inquiry into science and the newest technologies with a keen aesthetic sense.

At Art Laboratory Berlin Anker shows several series of works: the installation ***Astroculture (Shelf Life) (1)*** from in 2009, consists of three plant chambers with installed LED panels. By means of the red-blue UV lights the plants – peas, and beans, oregano and mint – all appear fuchsia. The work manifests the possibility of growing herbs in any light deprived space.

Remote Sensing (2) is a series of work produced through rapid prototyping technology. The three dimensional working software program converts the image into an object. The resultant sculpture shares resonance with pictorial maps and landscapes employed by remote sensing.

In the series ***Vanitas (in a Petri dish) (3)*** Suzanne Anker reflects the concept of *vanitas* by employing a Petri dish as the site

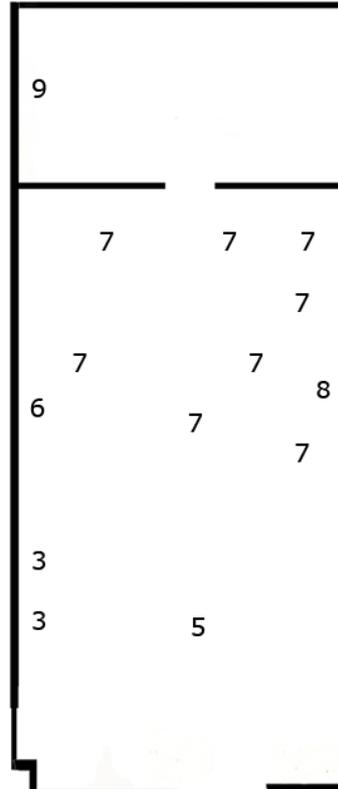
of laboratory life in which the Petrie dish changes from an object of science to an object saturated as art.

Maja Smrekar (4) is an emerging young artist from Ljubljana, Slovenia, connecting the intersections of humanities and natural sciences with her main interest in the concept of life.

In 2012, working together with biologists in Ljubljana/Slovenia, Smrekar built the installation *Crustacea deletur* (an Aksioma Production). This inter-disciplinary project explores the problem of invasive species, for instance the interaction of European (indigenous) and non-European (tropical, invasive) crayfish. An architectural housing contained a two part aquarium, one part containing the local Slovene crayfish, the other - the Australian *red claw crayfish* (*Cherax quadricarinatus*) which recently has settled in the thermal Lake Topla in Slovenia and multiplied in great numbers. The two parts were connected by a ladder allowing the crustaceans the possibility of crossing over and confronting each other.

For the exhibition at Art Laboratory Berlin Smrekar has continued to develop this project and will present the installation *Crustacea deletur* in a different form as ***BioBase: risky ZOOographies (4)*** focussing on the female marble crayfish (*Procambarus fallax forma virginalis*). These, Six of whom are in the left aquarium, reproduce asexually, a process called parthenogenesis. In the other aquarium males of a related species (*procambarus clarkii*) have been placed. Since the spring of 2013, as part of this project, there has been an intensive exchange between Smrekar and Prof. Dr. Scholtz from the Institute of Biology (Humboldt University of Berlin), one of the leading specialists in the marble crayfish worldwide.

Exhibition space 2: Prinzenallee 58



Suzanne Anker has works present in both spaces. Here she has produced an installation especially for this exhibition: ***Petri's Panoply (5)***. "I consider the petri dish as a signifier", notes Anker, who is currently researching the history of the petri dish. Over 100 petri dishes combine both organic and synthetic materials and the intense density of objects and colours produce a post-baroque table – similar to the modernist "Objets trouvés", transforming the petri dish into an object of the biological sublime in the 21st century.

The American artist **Brandon Ballengée (6-8)** pursues a sustainable form of artistic research in his metier as a visual artist in the field of bioart, and as a biologist in the field of herpetology.

Art Laboratory Berlin he shows video documentation of his ongoing project ***Malamp UK (6)***, on which Ballengée has worked in various forms since 2001. The project's aim is to investigate the potentially unnaturally high occurrence of

morphological deformities among wild amphibian populations.

The exhibition also presents two other works of Ballengée developed in the course of his artistic and scientific research of the last few years: The video installation ***The Cry of Silent Forms (7)***, made up of eight monitors arranged on the floor, offers the viewer a unique microscopic view of life in water. All works were made in laboratory or research situations created to replicate natural stresses on amphibians (predators, parasites etc.) Images include 'Consume' in which toad tadpoles unexpectedly start to cannibalize one another and 'Origine du Monde' where a leech fans oxygen to its young. The works, coming from biological research, capture surprisingly charged moments that offer the viewer a set of unique and intimate views of life.

Danse Macabre (8) is a limited edition print produced by Ballengée to raise funds for saving the Dutch Fire Salamander, which is currently under serious threat of extinction. The print is an example of Ballengée's own development of the process of clearing and staining which beyond its aesthetic merits also shows the development of bone and cartilage in amphibians. Prints can be purchased upon request, the profits going to the charity SOS Vuursalamander in the Netherlands.

The video projection ***Requiem pour Flocons de Neige Bléssés (A Requiem for Injured Snowflakes) (9)*** shows images of deformed frogs and tadpoles from Ballengée's research and were collected in southern Quebec. Each image is of an animal, which died due to its deformities – in this requiem life's fragility is manifested.

Regine Rapp & Christian de Lutz (Curators)

Press: Olga Shmakova

Cooperation partners:

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