

THE CAMILLE DIARIES Symposium



26 September 2020, 10:00 – 19:45 CET Time Zone

Online conference, with livestream (<http://www.artlaboratory-berlin.org/home.htm>)

Latest update: 18 September 2020

The *THE CAMILLE DIARIES Symposium* will discuss new artistic projects by eleven international women and non-binary artists (installations, video, objects, performance), currently exhibited in our show *The Camille Diaries. Current Artistic Positions on M/otherhood, Life and Care* (until 4 October 2020).

Reflecting on the current conditions of our world (environmental changes, gender aspects, biopolitics, etc.), the artists' positions propose an 'aesthetics of care' as the basis for inter-species coexistence. Here, the planet is understood as a symbiotic web in which we are all entangled with one another (humans, plants, animals, environment) – on molecular, organic, ethical and biopolitical levels. The artistic positions investigate reproductive mechanisms, biochemical connections between humans and nonhumans, and refer to alternative biomaterials as "source of life" in future times of scarcity and crisis. The title "The Camille Diaries" alludes to the "Camille Stories" the final chapter of "Staying with the Trouble" (2016) by philosopher and biologist Donna Haraway, a speculative future where a dwindling human population replaces births with care between species. Each "Camille" cares for the genetic material of an endangered species (the monarch butterfly) by storing parts of that material in their own DNA.

The one-day symposium will bring the artists together with researchers from the humanities and natural sciences into a critical dialogue. In different panels we will discuss alternative concepts of m/others, wombs and placentas, fluid inheritance and modes of care. We will reflect on genetic and biochemical exchanges between human and nonhuman, both part of and remedy for the Anthropocene. Here the theme of biotechnological transfigurations of human bodies places the human being on the periphery and rather directs our full attention to other living beings – a basic understanding of other species and organisms from a feminist perspective. On the basis of the exhibited works, we will discuss concepts of "Collective survival" and "Arts of noticing" (A. Tsing), "Staying with the Trouble" (D. Haraway), and in particular "Bodies of water" connected to hydrofeminism (A. Neimanis).

Concept of Symposium: Regine Rapp & Christian de Lutz

Information about the exhibited works with images: <http://www.artlaboratory-berlin.org/html/eng-Camille-Diaries.htm>

Program | Timing (CET Time Zone)

10:00 – 11:20 CET

Introduction into *The Camille Diaries*

Regine Rapp (Art History, Curatorial Research, Art Laboratory Berlin)

Christian de Lutz (Curatorial Research, Art Laboratory Berlin)

Introductory Talk | Q&A with Exhibiting Artists

Moderated by Regine Rapp

Astrida Neimanis (Gender and Cultural Studies, University of Sydney)

11:45 – 13:15 CET

Panel A | M/others, Wombs and Placentas

Moderated by Tuçe Erel

Cecilia Jonsson (Artist, Amsterdam) – *HAEM*

Rodrigo Leite de Oliveira (Biomedicine, Netherlands Cancer Institute, Amsterdam)

Margherita Pevere (Artist, Berlin/ Helsinki) – *Wombs*

Ai Hasegawa (Artist, Designer, Tokyo) – *I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin...*

14:15 – 15:45 CET

Panel B | Fluid Inheritance

Moderated by Christian de Lutz

Špela Petrič (Artist, Biochemist, Amsterdam/ Ljubljana) – *Phytoteratology*

Mary Maggic (Artist, Vienna) – *Milik Bersama Rekombinan*

Laura Benítez Valero (Philosophy, Autonomous University of Barcelona)

Naja Ankarfeldt | Baum + Leahy (Artists, Copenhagen/ London) – *Mammalga*

16:10 – 17:50 CET

Panel C | Modes of Care

Moderated by Regine Rapp

Sonia Levy (Artist, London) – *For the Love of Corals*

Stefan Helmreich (Anthropology, MIT Anthropology, Cambridge/ US)

Nicole Clouston (Artist, Ontario) – *Mud (Berlin)*

Tarah Rhoda (Artist, New York) – *Ourglass*

India Mansour (Plant Ecology, Institute of Biology, Free University Berlin)

18:15 – 19:45 CET

M/others and Future Humans

Moderated by Christian de Lutz

Ida Bencke (Curatorial Research and Practice, LABAE, Copenhagen)

Eben Kirksey (Anthropology, Alfred Deakin University, Melbourne)

Final Discussion

Regine Rapp and Christian de Lutz (Art Laboratory Berlin)

Abstracts | Biographies

Introductory Panel

Astrida Neimanis is feminist writer and teacher interested in bodies, water and weather, and how they can help us reimagine justice, care, responsibility and relation in the time of climate catastrophe. Her most recent book is *"Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology"*. With Jennifer Mae Hamilton, she is co-convenor of the *Composting Feminism and the Environmental Humanities* reading and research group (<https://compostingfeminisms.wordpress.com>). She currently works as a senior lecturer in Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney on Gadigal Land, in Sydney, Australia.

Panel A | M/others, Wombs and Placentas

Cecilia Jonsson | Abstract

Extracting iron from the blood contained in human placentas and turning it into a metallic compass needle conveys the outline of the project *Haem* by artist Cecilia Jonsson and researcher Rodrigo Leite de Oliveira. *Haem* not only explores the transformation of iron but also alludes to the challenge of personal orientation by looking in histological detail into the labyrinth of connections in the universe between mother and fetus. In this lecture Jonsson will share insight into their art/science collaboration to the formulation

of the concept and the practical execution behind the work.
#Compass #Labyrinth #Placenta

Cecilia Jonsson (b. 1980, Stockholm) is an artist whose work combines artistic observations of phenomena and the search of poetry in the factual through a lens of scientific and cultural knowledge. Jonsson holds a MA in Fine Arts from the Bergen Academy of Art and Design and the Nordic Sound Art program. Her artistic work has been shown internationally in numerous solo and group exhibitions and has received awards such as VIDA 16.0 Art and Artificial Life International Awards (2nd price, 2014), Bio Art & Design Awards (2016), Prix Ars Electronica, Hybrid Art (honorary mention, 2017) and COAL Art and Environmental Prize (nominee, 2018).
www.ceciliajonsson.com

Rodrigo Leite de Oliveira | Abstract

Science-Art collaborations revisit scientific processes without the usual limitations of the scientific method. Questions can still be asked with an open-minded setting, but now they can be answered almost limitless. HAEM is a perfect example of such a process. Our dialog started with the intention of isolating iron from human provenience and assembling an iron object that carried meaning. Without realizing, the borders of both disciplines were pushed forward and, over time, started to overlap. The final result was as surprising as inspiring, both for the project and on a personal level.

Rodrigo Leite de Oliveira is a scientist with a Ph.D. in biomedicine. He has published several scientific papers on the topic of tumor angiogenesis (the growth of blood vessels in tumors) and currently researches novel anti-cancer therapies based on drug repurposing at the Netherlands Cancer Institute in Amsterdam. Although his expertise is in the scientific realm, his personal interests go well beyond scientific boundaries to also explore the connections between science, art, culture and human interaction.

Margherita Pevere | Abstract

Margherita Pevere's practice-based research unfolds through bioart works such as *Semina Aeternitatis* and *Wombs*. Rooted in posthuman feminism, it borrows the concepts of "non/living", "leaky bodies" and "vulnerability" to unpack how concerns like transience and sexuality exceed a human-only experience and reveal a radically open embodiment. In her work, the act of dealing with biological matter helps attune to the agency of other-than-human beings. Any living matter, in fact, is equally bound to death.
#bio art #vulnerability #uncontainable life #toxic embodiment

Margherita Pevere (DE) distinguishes herself on the contemporary bioart scene for her unique visceral signature: her arresting performances and installations intertwine poetics and controversy, critique and desire. Bacteria, animals and plants are her allies in the exploration of ecological complexity, which she pursues with sophisticated bodily aesthetics. She is PhD candidate (Artistic Research) at Aalto University, Helsinki. She is a member of the Finnish Bioart Society and recently founded the artists group *Fronte Vacuo* with Marco Donnarumma and Andrea Familiari. Recent accolades include the Digital Art Award of Romaeuropa Festival (with Donnarumma), the Honorable Mention at the Share Prize, and the EMAP/EMARE grant.
www.margheritapevere.com

Ai Hasegawa | Abstract

This project approaches the problem of human reproduction in an age of overcrowding, overdevelopment and environmental crisis. With potential food shortages and a population of nearly seven billion people, would a woman consider incubating and giving birth to an endangered species such as a dolphin? In this talk, the artist will explain how she came to create this kind of work.
#Eat #Reproduction #Ethics

Ai Hasegawa produced many works putting emphasis on subjects relating to technology and people with employing techniques such as Bio Art, Speculative Design. Ai produces provocative work and incites discussion, continually seeking answers to questions on ethical barriers. Ai's signature projects are related to reproduction and eating and power: *(Im)possible Baby*, *Shared Baby*, *Human X Shark*, *I wanna deliver a Dolphin...*, *Alt-Bias Gun*, and so on. Ai published a speculative design work book "Revolutionary20XX" in 2020. She obtained degree of MA in 2012 from Design Interactions Course, Royal College of Art in Britain; worked as researcher at Design Fiction Group, MIT Media Lab from 2014 to fall of 2016; took degree of MS in 2016; serving as Project Researcher at The University of Tokyo since April 2017. <https://aihasegawa.info>

Panel B | Fluid Inheritance

Špela Petrič | Abstract

Mother by Proxy: From my desire to conceive and mother a trans-plant to *the vegetariat* – bodies caught in the eye of the algorithm; the talk will highlight the mutations of intimacy that spawned from my precariously close engagement in threesomes with plants and (bio)technological machines.

#Ectogenesis #Vegetariat #Plant-human monsters

Špela Petrič, BSc, MA, PhD, is a Slovenian new media artist and former scientific researcher currently based between Ljubljana, SI and Amsterdam, NL. Her practice is a multi-species collaborative endeavor, a deviant composite of natural sciences, wet media and performance. She tries to envision artistic experiments that enact strange relationalities in hopes of enriching our adjacent possible. Much of her recent work has focused on plant life. Festivals and exhibitions: Abandon Normal Devices (UK), Today'sArt (NL), Zone2Source (NL), Venice Biennial of Architecture (IT), Touch Me Festival (CRO), Pixelpoint (IT), European Conference on Artificial Life (IT), Playaround (TW), Harvard (ZDA), Ars Electronica (AT), National Center for Biological Sciences (IN), HAIP (SI), Galleries de la Reine (BE). www.spelapetric.com

Mary Maggic | Abstract

While water is the key to all life, it is also one of the primary carriers of toxic industrial molecules. How do citizens living in heavily polluted landscapes reconcile with their toxic fate? Can we lean on various feminisms (xenofeminism, hydrofeminism) for new frameworks of shapeshifting that are necessary for our collective survival?

#Hormones #Plastic #Environmental toxicity

Mary Maggic is an artist and biohacker working at the intersection of biotechnology and cultural discourse. Their work spans documentary filmmaking, DIY science, and public intervention. They have a BSA in Biological Sciences and Art from Carnegie Mellon University and a Masters in Media Arts and Sciences from MIT Media Lab (Boston), and have exhibited at the HKW for Transmediale and the OK Center for Ars Electronica. More Maggic can be found at <http://maggic.ooo>

Laura Benítez Valero | Abstract

Trans(hack)feminist practices can be triggered that challenge response_ability as collective agents capable of making transitions between multiple levels of the political, material, and conceptual organization, re-politicizing feminism through (bio)practice. Understanding research as potency to perform (some aspects/ or phenomena) of what we call in general terms "world". Different ways of touching and being in touch, staying in touch with the material-affective dimensions of doing and engaging (bio)practices. Proposals that which may be thought of as a continuous weaving, as generative mediums and as *worlding* laboratories.

Laura Benítez Valero, PhD in Philosophy, is an independent researcher whose research connects Philosophy, Art(s) and Technoscience(s). Her current research focuses on Bioart, Biohacking, processes of bio-resistance, bio-civil disobedience and non-human agents. Lecturer in Critical and Cultural Studies in Massana (Art & Design Centre) and external lecturer in Technology, Elisava Barcelona School of Design and Engineering. Guest researcher at the Ars Electronica Centre and MACBA's documentation centre. She has been invited as a visiting lecturer and guest researcher at different international institutions such as Interface Cultures Kunstuniversität Linz, Sónar Festival (Bcn/Hong Kong), the Royal Academy of Arts London or the University of Puerto Rico. Currently she is the director of Biofriction.

Ankarfeldt and Baum & Leahy | Abstract

In algal family patterns we find inspiration in ways of m/othering or making kin. Red algae is a polyphyletic group – a diverse family of relating organisms defined through shared characteristics but without one common ancestor or lineage. How can the multispecies concept of polyphyly, meaning 'many species', guide our thinking in whom and what we consider to be our kin?

#Algae #Multispecies #Kin

Baum & Leahy is an Earth-based symbiotic practice exploring how sustainable futures can be grown between environmental ethics and multispecies aesthetics. With a multimodal approach, they translate intangible phenomena and complex ecological dynamics into sensorial experiences, whilst collaborating with experts across

disciplines, from microbiologists to quantum computer scientists, architects to cosmologists. Through research-led worldmaking and material storytelling, their work allows the beholder a proximity to alternative realities, melting between the feasible and fantastical. Since meeting at the Royal College of Art, Baum & Leahy have exhibited at internationally renowned venues, including the Royal Academy of Arts, Tate Modern, Victoria and Albert Museum, Wellcome Collection, Somerset House (UK), The National Gallery of Denmark, Medical Museion (DK), MU Hybrid Art House (NL), Prairie (US), Vega Scene (NO), and Sonar +D (BCN).

<https://www.baumleahy.com>

Naja Ankarfeldt researches how life abounds with similar forms found in different species, or on different scales. Naja has an enduring interest in these resonances, and the connections they reveal. Resonances between brain and gut; skin and grass; rock and cell wall. Drawing attention to our intimacy with other species and spaces, by inviting us into a strange kind of mediated intimacy with her body. Naja has exhibited her artworks at venues including The National Gallery (DK), Waag Society (NL), ArtZone Roskilde Festival (DK), Mediamatic (NL), Nikolaj Kunsthal (DK). Working with exhibition development, production and dissemination Naja has been employed by the Frederiksberg Museerne (CPH), Medical Museion (CPH) and currently by the Copenhagen Municipality. www.mediamatic.net/en/page/87610/naja-ryde-ankarfeldt

Panel C | Modes of Care

Sonia Levy | Abstract

For the Love of Corals is a cinematic inquiry that focuses on the daily labour of caring for endangered beings to resuscitate them from their imminent human-induced extinction. The film looks at coral restoration project 'Project Coral' located behind-the-scenes at the Horniman Museum, London. By mirroring the climatic conditions of the Great Barrier Reef within custom-built mesocosms, the team has become the first in the world to induce corals to spawn in a laboratory.

#Ecologies of becoming-with #Imagination of consequences #Corals as makers of worlds

Sonia Levy's research-led practice considers shifting modes of engagement with more-than-human worlds in light of prevailing earthly precarity. Her work operates at the intersection of art and science, a co-becoming of practices tending to the reweaving of multispecies worlds. She is a 2020 commissioned artist at Radar Loughborough and has exhibited in the UK and internationally including exhibitions and screenings at Centre Pompidou, Paris; Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, Paris; Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris; ICA, London; BAL-TIC, Gateshead; Obsidian Coast, Bradford-on-Avon; Goldsmiths, University of London; The Showroom, London; Pump House Gallery, London; Verksmiðjan á Hjalteyri, Iceland; and The Húsavík Whale Museum, Iceland. She presented her research at the Iceland Academy of the Arts, The Oslo School of Environmental Humanities and AURA: Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene. <https://sonialevy.net>

Stefan Helmreich | Abstract

This paper, in dialogue with Sonia Levy's *For the Love of Corals* proposes that coral reefs can attune their human visitors and inquisitors to empirical and epistemological questions of ecological scale, care, and context —where "context," drawing upon a once-upon-a-time literal, but now more figurative, textile-connected meaning, refers to a "weaving together." Which earthly and oceanic entities and agents might be woven together through reefy bones and bodies is, of course, a polymorphous question, now shifting radically with climate change. This paper looks to Levy's *Love of Corals* along with writings on coral from Donna Haraway, Irus Braverman, Malcolm Shick, Ann Elias, and Eva Hayward to seek out new patterns for thinking and acting in a time of ocean crisis.

Stefan Helmreich, Professor of Anthropology at MIT, examines how biologists think through "life" as a category of analysis. [*Alien Ocean: Anthropological Voyages in Microbial Seas*](#) (University of California Press, 2009) is a study of marine biologists working in realms usually out of sight and reach: the microscopic world, the deep sea, and oceans outside national sovereignty. [*Silicon Second Nature: Culturing Artificial Life in a Digital World*](#) (University of California Press, 1998) is an ethnography of computer modeling in the life sciences. [*Sounding the Limits of Life: Essays in the Anthropology of Biology and Beyond*](#) (Princeton University Press, 2016) asks after changing definitions of life, water, and sound (and features [a soundtrack](#)). He is at work on a book about wave science, in domains from oceanography to cosmology to medicine to acoustics to social theory. His essays have appeared in *Critical Inquiry*, *Representations*, *American Anthropologist*, *Cabinet*, *The Wire*, and *BOMB*.

Nicole Clouston | Abstract

In my ongoing practice-based research into microbial life I have been exploring bodily borders, responsible human/non-human collaboration, and our connection to a broader ecology. In my most recent project, I collaborated with microbes, mud, and bodies of water in Berlin to expose the vast array of life in soil and the ways we are connected by it. In this talk, I will discuss my struggle to collaborate responsibly with microbes through acts of care.

Nicole Clouston is a practice-based researcher who completed her Ph.D. in Visual Art at York University in Toronto and currently practices in Burlington, Ontario. In her practice, she asks: What happens when we acknowledge, through an embodied experience, our connection to a world teeming with life both around and inside us? Nicole has exhibited across Canada in Montreal, Victoria, Edmonton, and Toronto, as well as internationally in New York City, Buffalo, and most recently Santander, Spain. <https://nicoleclouston.com>

Tarah Rhoda | Abstract

The survival of flesh is bound to the function and fate of flora. The metabolic collaboration between photosynthesis and respiration not only makes the world livable, but this transformation of elements connects moments of production and consumption across scales and species. *Ourglass* is a tribute to this remarkable and vast alliance, but also a timely warning of our extractive solutions and reductive confusions.

Tarah Rhoda is an artist and educator based in NYC, where she runs the School of Visual Art's BioArt Lab, a BSL-1 laboratory that provides artists with the tools of biotechnology and fosters creative applications. Her recent art practice explores the physical principle of wetness as a metaphor for empathy, social permeability and the challenge of recognizing our fluid selves blurring at the edges. She received her BFA (2010) and MFA (2020) from SVA and also studied at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. Her work has recently been exhibited in New York, Denver, Detroit, Toronto, Mexico City, Lisbon, Berlin, Amsterdam, Eindhoven and featured in National Geographic, the Guardian, and CBSNews. <http://tarahrhoda.com>

India Mansour | Abstract

Biospheres, like Earth, are matter-closed, energy-open systems supporting life. Using model biospheres, we can ask: What is the balance of components, traits and processes needed for life to persist? Last century, the possibility of maintaining extraterrestrial life was studied in large biosphere facilities. Miniature versions, like microbial assemblages sealed in a flask, can serve as an ecological tool to better understand life in our own (increasingly threatened) biosphere.

India Mansour, postdoctoral scholar and lecturer at the Free University Berlin, researches how microbial communities shape and are shaped by their environment and their interactions. She completed her PhD in River Science in Germany and the UK, investigating soil and river microbial ecology. This, in part, involved conceptual development of the [community coalescence](#) concept: collisions of previously disparate microbial communities. Her current research focuses on communities within matter-closed, energy-open systems, known as microbial biospherics. India is a member of [DIY Hack the Panke](#), an interdisciplinary artistic research group exploring natural and anthropogenic elements of the Panke River.

Final Panel – M/others and Future Humans | Final Discussion

Ida Bencke holds an MA in Comparative Literature. Her curatorial work spans experimental exhibition formats, interdisciplinary methodologies and speculative feminist aesthetics. Her recent projects investigate fermentation as domestic-revolutionary apparatus, queer home-building and interspecies care, various im/possibilities of multispecies narration, and insurgent m/otherhood within the reproductive regimes of necropatriarchy. Research interests include radical practices of mourning and pleasure, more-than-human affect, and revolutionary experiments on co-habitation, collectivity and regenerative alliances. She is co-founder of the Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology. <http://www.labae.org/about>

Eben Kirskey | Abstract

Feminist science fiction offers a rich archive for speculating about the future of reproductive technology. Profit-driven ventures are bringing some dreams closer to reality. Mutant futures are on the horizon. As tools like CRISPR enters the clinic, the basic facts of life are under revision.

Eben Kirksey is an American anthropologist who specializes on science and justice. Duke University Press published his first three books: *Freedom in Entangled Worlds* (2012), *Emergent Ecologies* (2015), and an edited collection called *The Multispecies Salon* (2014). As a curator of *The Multispecies Salon*, he worked with a swarm of creative agents on exhibits in San Francisco, New Orleans, Sydney, and New York City. As artists, biological scientists, and anthropologists experimented with different tactics and methods, this salon became a key site where "multispecies ethnography" emerged. Later this fall, St. Martin's Press, is publishing *The Mutant Project*—an insider's account of the CRISPR experiment that led to the world's first genetically modified children. <https://eben-kirksey.space/> | <https://www.multispecies-salon.org/>

Regine Rapp is an art historian, curator and director of Art Laboratory Berlin. Her current research interests include installation art, artist books, hybrid art, and art & science collaborations. As co-founder and director of Art Laboratory Berlin, she researches, curates and publishes on 21st century art at the interface of science and technology and conceived the international conferences [Synaesthesia. Discussing a Phenomenon in the Arts, Humanities and \(Neuro\)Science](#) (2013) and [Nonhuman Agents](#) (2017). In the project [Mind the Fungi](#) in collaboration with the TU Berlin she works at the interface between artistic and scientific research. Recent publication: [Über Kunst, Wissenschaft und das Ende der Natur](#) (2019); *Hybrid Art* (in: *Kunstchronik*, 73/7, Juli 2020). <http://www.artlaboratory-berlin.org/html/eng-team.htm>

Christian de Lutz is co-founder and co-director of Art Laboratory Berlin, where he has curated over 40 exhibitions. His curatorial work focuses on the interface of art, science and technology in the 21st century, with special attention given to Bio Art, DIY Science initiatives and facilitating collaborations between artists and scientists. Among his projects have been the exhibition and event series: *Time and Technology* (2011-12), *Synaesthesia* (2012-13), *[macro]biologies & [micro]biologies* (2014), and *Nonhuman Subjectivities and Nonhuman Agents* (2016-18); as well as *DIY Hack the Panke* (2018-ongoing) and *Mind the Fungi* (2018-20). He is currently a researcher affiliated with the Institute for Biotechnology, TU Berlin in context of the interdisciplinary Art & Science Project "Mind the Fungi".

Moderator

Tuçe Erel is a Berlin-based curator, cultural manager and art writer. In 2017 February she co-curated "Now You are Here" with Seval Sener at Arte Sanat (Ankara) and curated "Fabric/ate" at Schneidertempel (Istanbul). In 2019, she co-curated "Roots and Growth: Traditional and Contemporary Art from Turkey" with Sharon Laor-Sirak at Museum of Islamic Art and Near Eastern Cultures in Be'er Sheva (Israel) and curated "Hactivate Yourself" in 1a Space in Hong Kong. Since 2017, she is a member of TOP Transdisciplinary Project Space (Berlin) that she facilitates artists' talks, exhibitions and reading group. Her curatorial interests are archival artistic practices, posthumanism, anthropocene, ecocriticism, and post-digital theories.

Associated project partners:

The project *THE CAMILLE DIARIES* arose from a generous invitation to take part in the international curatorial swarm for the open call »M/others and Future Humans«, initiated by Ida Bencke (LABAE, Copenhagen, DK) and Eben Kirksey (Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, USA).

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