

# THE CAMILLE DIARIES.

## New Artistic Positions on M/otherhood, Life and Care.

Exhibition & Symposium  
August – October 2020

### THE CAMILLE DIARIES. New Artistic Positions on M/otherhood, Life and Care

Curated by Regine Rapp & Christian de Lutz

#### **A) Exhibition**

Art Laboratory Berlin, Prinzenallee 34, 13359 Berlin | OKK, Prinzenallee 29, 13359 Berlin  
28 August – 4 October 2020, Thu – Sun, 2-6 pm  
<http://artlaboratory-berlin.org/html/eng-Camille-Diaries.htm>

#### **B) Symposium**

Saturday, 26. September 2020, Online / 10 am – 7:45 pm CET Time Zone  
Speakers: Artist from the exhibition with scholars from the humanities and life sciences  
[http://artlaboratory-berlin.org/assets/pdf/Symposium CAMILLE DIARIES Program Bios Abstracts.pdf](http://artlaboratory-berlin.org/assets/pdf/Symposium%20CAMILLE%20DIARIES%20Program%20Bios%20Abstracts.pdf)

#### **Accompanying Talk Show Series**

##### **Feminist SF: Visions of M/otherhood & Reproduction**

Curated and moderated by Isabel de Sena  
Mary Maggic | Alison Sperling | Christopher Coenen | Noemi Yoko Molitor  
Theatersaal PA58, Prinzenallee 58, 13359 Berlin, 6-8 pm

#### **ALB Team**

Regine Rapp, Christian de Lutz, Tuçe Erel, Palooka Frank,  
Natacha Lamounier Ribeiro, Sarah Hermanutz, Ayla Warncke

#### **Media partners:**

art-in.berlin.de, [www.art-in-berlin.de](http://www.art-in-berlin.de)  
Aviva-Berlin, Online Magazin für Frauen, [www.aviva-berlin.de](http://www.aviva-berlin.de)

**Photo documentation:** Tim Deussen, <https://tim-deussen.de/>

**Graphic design/ Poster:** Eva-Maria Bolz, [www.evamariabolz.de](http://www.evamariabolz.de)

**Cooperation partners:** OKK, Berlin, PA58, Berlin  
Department of Applied and Molecular Microbiology, TU Berlin

#### **Supported by**

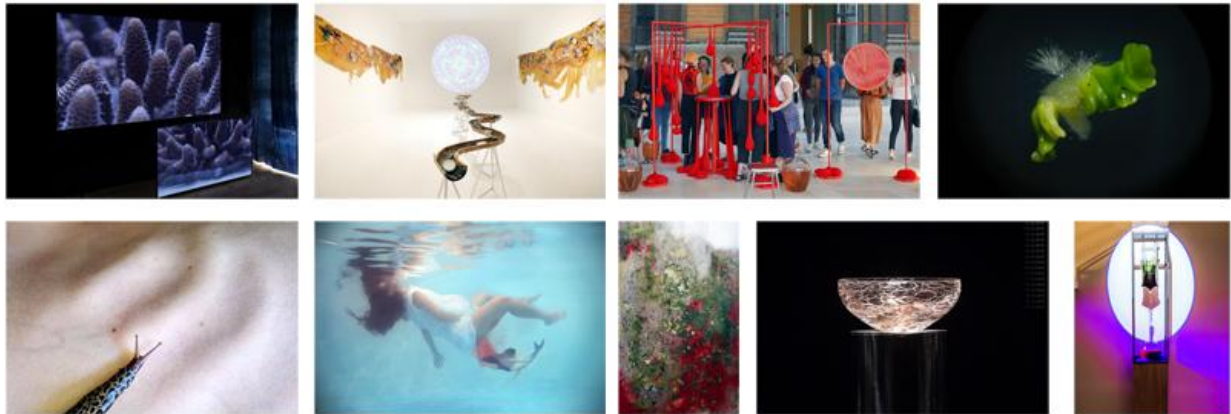
Capital Culture Funds (Hauptstadtkulturfonds) | Berliner Senate Department for  
Culture and Europe | Slovenian Cultural Center in Berlin

*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).*

## EXHIBITION &amp; SYMPOSIUM

**THE CAMILLE DIARIES. New Artistic Positions on M/otherhood, Life and Care**

The exhibition and the symposium *The Camille Diaries. New Artistic Positions on M/otherhood, Life and Care* present new works by eleven international women and non-binary artists with installations, video, objects and performance. 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 artists 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 exhibition 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.

In the exhibition artists explore genetic and biochemical exchange between human and nonhuman, as both part of and remedy for the Anthropocene. Here the theme of biotechnological trans-figurations of human bodies places the human being on the periphery and rather directs our full attention to other living beings. This creates – and this is central to the planned series of events – a basic understanding of other species and organisms from a feminist perspective.

Sonia Levy's 2-channel video installation *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. Mary Maggic's work *Milik Bersama Rekombinan* explores the surreal landscape of an urban Indonesian river colonized by plastic, with toxic implications for nearby inhabitants. For their project *Mammalga* Naja Ankarfeldt and Baum & Leahy find inspiration in the life remediating abilities of algae as well as ways of m/othering or making kin in algal family patterns. In Špela Petrič's installation *Phytoteratology* thale cress embryos have been grown in a bath of chemicals from the artist's own body, resulting in a bio-chemical chimera with the artist as 'co-mother'.

Margherita Pevere's *Wombs* features scientific glassware hosting living bacterial colonies producing flesh-like biofilm, growing in a liquid environment infused with the artist's own hormones. Ai Hasegawa proposes a transspecies act of motherhood in her work *I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin...* Nicole Clouston's artwork *Mud (Berlin)* takes the form of 15 rectangular, polycarbonate prisms filled with organisms growing from mud taken from Berlin's lakes and rivers. In *HAEM* artist Cecilia Jonsson and scientist Rodrigo Leite de Oliveira have created a compass by deriving iron from the blood protein haemoglobin of donated human placentas. Meanwhile Tarah Rhoda's *Ourglass* is a tribute to the remarkable alliance between plants and animals through photosynthesis and respiration.

The one-day symposium will bring the artists together with researchers from the humanities and natural sciences into a critical dialogue. In the panels "M/others, wombs and placentas", "Fluid Inheritance" and "Modes of care" we will discuss current and alternative concepts. On the basis of the exhibited works, we will discuss approaches like "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).

Regine Rapp & Christian de Lutz (curators)

## DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION // EXPOSÉ OF THE ART WORKS

### THE CAMILLE DIARIES.

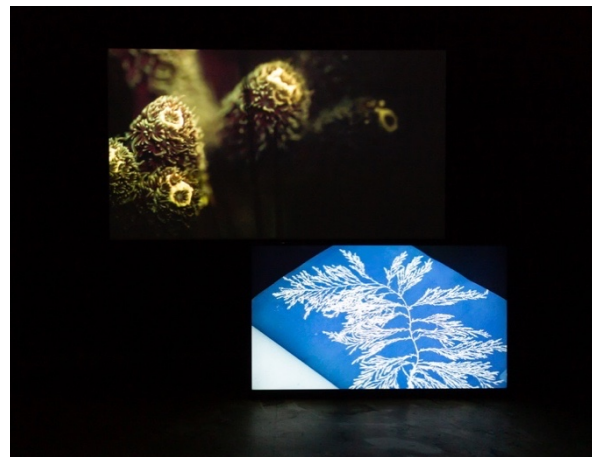
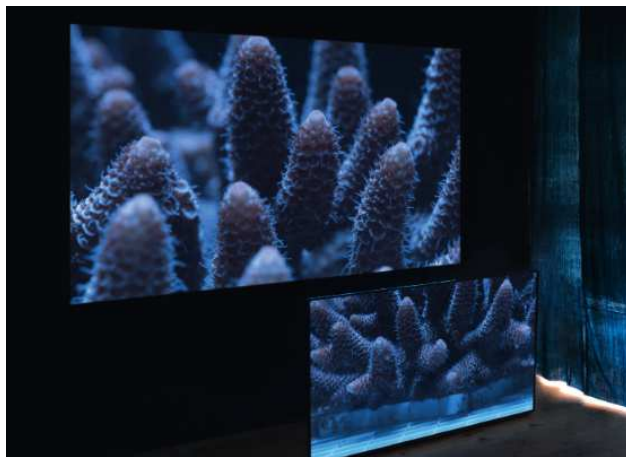
#### New Artistic Positions on M/otherhood, Life and Care

#### Artistic Positions

##### 1. Sonia Levy

**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; BALTIC, 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.

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



Sonia Levy: *For the Love of Corals*, 2018, video installation. Photo right: *For the Love of Corals*, 2020, Art Laboratory Berlin. Image credit: Tim Deussen.

Sonia Levy's research-led practice considers shifting modes of engagement with more-than-human worlds in light of prevailing earthly precarity. In the basement of the Horniman Museum in London, a team of marine biologists and aquarists have embarked on breeding corals in captivity – worldwide the first team to successfully spawn corals in a laboratory. Levy has followed Project Coral since late 2017 as a case study of new paradigms for multispecies living, environmental conservation and natural history that are emerging in the wake of the Anthropocene.

As a model of a sensitive ecological unit that comprises a multispecies assemblage, coral demonstrates how individual beings are not separated from their environment, but by their sheer existence constitute environments for others. Project Coral expands that assemblage to include scientists and a range of human and non-human agents. *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 capitalism-induced extinction. The technology of the ad hoc laboratory; scientific knowledge; the complexity of marine ecologies; and the intimacy of providing care converge in the precision of sustaining coral IVF.

## 2. Mary Maggic

**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>

**#Toxic Rivers #Endocrine Disruptors #Queering Waters**



Mary Maggic: *Milik Bersama Rekombinan*, 2020, Art Laboratory Berlin. Image credit: Tim Deussen.

While water is the medium that connects us all, it is also the primary carrier of harmful industrial molecules that “queer” both the river and the bodies of its inhabitants. The site of Maggic’s project, river Code (“cho-deh”) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia is a surreal landscape colonized by plastic, with its citizens believing their water is clean enough for daily use. While the root of the problem is complex and multi-faceted (poverty, lack of infrastructure, and pollution as colonialism), there is an urgency to rethink toxic conditions with empathy, care, and collective survival.

The installation includes a rotating mandala projection composed with trash found in the river, symbolizing the constant recombination of plastic particles inside our own bodies. The installation also includes a bamboo sculpture of river Code filled with blue agar that invites microbial contamination juxtaposed with contained samples of bioremediating fungi. The river is flanked by a set of two latex sculptures alluding to the porosity of skin as they are embedded with trash found in the river.



### 3. Naja Ankarfeldt, Baum & Leahy

**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).

**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 Museer (CPH), Medical Museion (CPH) and currently by the Copenhagen Municipality.

**#Algae #Multispecies #Kin**



Ankarfeldt, Baum & Leahy: *The Red Nature of Mammalga*, 2020, Art Laboratory Berlin. Image credit: Tim Deussen.

Naja Ankarfeldt researches how life abounds with similar forms found in different species, or on different scales. Baum & Leahy is an Earth-based symbiotic practice exploring how sustainable futures can be grown between environmental ethics and multispecies aesthetics.

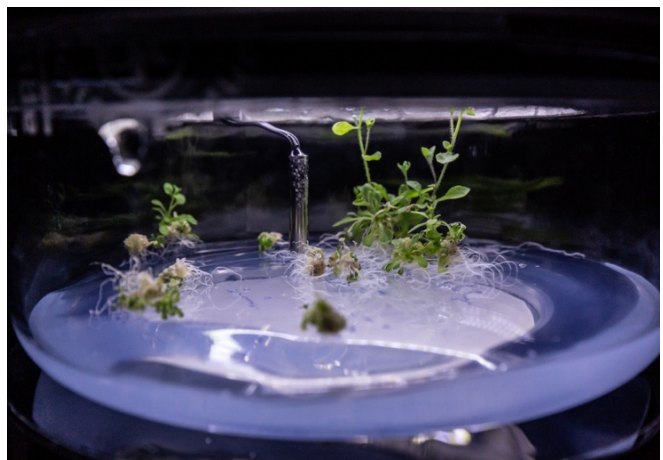
*Mammalga* is a ceremonial gathering worshipping the life remediating abilities of algae and ways of m/othering or making kin in algal family patterns. Bangiomorpha, a red algae (rhodophyta) is the first known sexually reproducing organism, the origin of eukaryotic cells and thus evolutionary m/other of all earthly mammals. In the fractal forms and delicate tendrils of red algae such as Gracilaria and Botryocladia we see our own bodies – growing, filamentous, branching, we recognise the cross-species morphology.

In *Mammalga*, you are invited to actively become one with your algal kin through a ritual reciting of the mantra Mammalga and consuming a red algae drink. In this ceremonial reunion of algal-human bodies, Mammalga summons memories of evolutionary kinship, whilst pointing to possible multispecies futures of cohabitation.

#### 4. Špela Petrič

**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), *TodaysArt* (NL), *Zone2Source* (NL), *Venice Biennial of Architecture* (IT), *Touch Me Festival* (CRO), *Pixxelpoint* (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.org](http://www.spelapetric.org)

**#Ectogenesis #Vegetariat #Plant-human monsters**



Špela Petrič: *Phytoteratology*, multimedia biological installation, 2020, Art Laboratory Berlin. Image credit: Tim Deussen.

Špela Petrič approaches art production with a background in Hybrid Arts as well as a PhD in Biochemistry. These dual epistemological approaches inform her work with the Plant Kingdom as part of a multi-species collaboration exploring the ontologies, methodologies, ethics and practices of care involved in our relationship to the vegetal.

Her installation *Phytoteratology* is based around the thale cress (*Arabidopsis thaliana*), that she has grown from embryo form in a bath of chemicals from the artist's own body (urine). The resulting plants are in part biochemical chimera's with Petrič as a sort of hormonal – but not genetic! – co-mother.

"In *Phytoteratology* blood kinship and genetic lineages give way to subtler streams of radical trans-species intermingling and category mongrelisation" the artist says. "The project embodies my desire to conceive and mother a trans-plant, to conjoin the gentle green alien, metaphysically dubbed the most primal of life forms, the barest of bare life."

## 5. Margherita Pevere

**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.

**#Bio Art #Vulnerability #Uncontainable life #Toxic embodiment**



Margherita Pevere: From the series *Wombs\_W.01*, 2018, laboratory glassware, living bacterial culture, microbial biofilm, the artist's urine extract, silicone tube, metal wire. Photo centre + right: *Wombs*. 2020, Art Laboratory Berlin. Image credit: Tim Deussen.

Bacteria, animals and plants are Margherita Pevere's creative kin in the exploration of ecological complexity, which she pursues with sophisticated bodily aesthetics. Her series *Wombs* meditates on sexuality and hormonal contraception from an environmental, more-than-human perspective. The project propagates through interconnected interventions featuring biological art, performances, and photography.

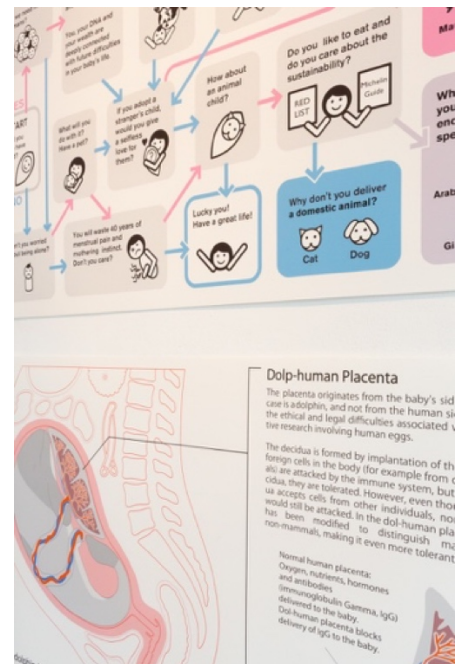
*W.01* features scientific glassware hosting living bacterial colonies producing flesh-like biofilm, growing in a liquid environment infused with the artist's own urine. In the photo series *W.03*, taken by Sanjin Kaštelan, Pevere reflects on interspecies dialog based on possible hormonal bonds between the artist and the slug Branko.

"Bodies are unsealed, unstable, leaky. The fluids in our cells connect us to deep time waters while molecules are digested, accumulated, excreted in the flow of mucus, sweat, urine", the artist states. Pevere elaborates on the interspecies kinship through a performative permeability referring to the leaking materiality of our bodies.

## 6. Ai Hasegawa

Artist and designer **Ai Hasegawa** produced many works putting emphasis on subjects relating to technology and people with employing techniques such as Bio Art, Speculative Design and Design Fiction. 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; won Excellence Award at Work Art Division in 19th Japan Media Arts Festival.

**#Eat #Reproduction #Ethics**



Ai Hasegawa: *I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin...*, 2011–13, video. Photo right: *I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin...*, 2020, Art Laboratory Berlin. Image credit: Tim Deussen.

Artist and designer Ai Hasegawa bases her research on the relationship between technology and living beings, expressing herself in the fields of Bio Art, Speculative Design and Design Fiction.

The project *I Wanna Deliver a Dolphin...* approaches the problem of human reproduction in an age of overcrowding, overdevelopment and environmental crisis with the speculative idea of women incubating and giving birth to an endangered species. Hasegawa chose the Maui dolphin as an ideal 'baby' due to its size (which closely matches the size of a human baby) and its high intelligence level and communication abilities.

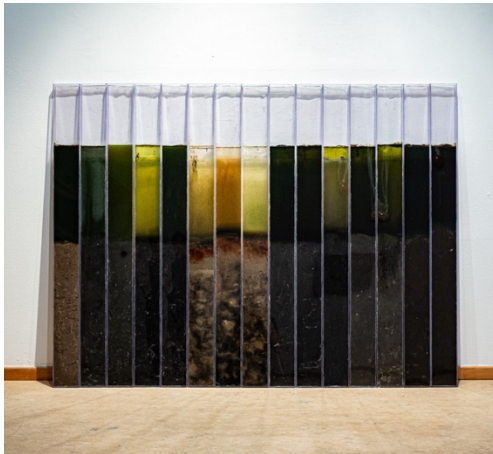
It is one of the world's rarest and smallest dolphins, classified critically endangered because of the side effects of fishing activity by humans. The artist designer imagines a future scenario, where humans will help this species by the advanced technology of synthetic biology. This comes quite close to Donna Haraway's "Camille Stories", a speculative fiction where humans become the carrier and caretaker of the genetic material of species that risk going extinct.



## 7. Nicole Clouston

**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.

**#Care about and for #Interconnectivity #Microbial life**



Nicole Clouston: *Mud (Berlin)*, 2020, installation, local mud, Art Laboratory Berlin. Image credit: Tim Deussen.

Nicole Clouston's artwork *Mud (Berlin)* takes the form of a series of polycarbonate prisms filled with organisms growing from mud taken from Berlin's and Brandenburg's waterways. Given nutrients the microbial colonies (bacteria, archaea, fungi, algae, protist and other) grow in rich colours and shades, changing during the duration of the exhibition. Literally life emerges from the 'slime' through care. The prisms refer to the so-called "Winogradsky Columns", that were invented by Sergey Winogradsky in late 19<sup>th</sup> century to cultivate microorganisms.

The importance of the work is its emphasis on care. Care between the artist and the microbial life in her sculptures is not an act of idealized love or of obligation. Instead, care is a set of constantly negotiated and thoughtful interactions. The task of care requires her to "stay with the trouble" by "learning to be truly present", to employ two notions proposed by Donna Haraway, in an active engagement that does not turn away from the contradictions, discrepancies, and difficulties of care.

## 8. Cecilia Jonsson

**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).

**#Compass #Labyrinth #Placenta**



Cecilia Jonsson and Rodrigo Leite de Oliveira: *HAEM*, 2016, mixed media installation including custom made compass, text, sound, HD-video, photo left: Kristof Vrancken, photo middle and right: *HAEM*, 2020, Art Laboratory Berlin. Image credit: Tim Deussen.

Cecilia Jonsson 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. Her work *HAEM* explores the intrinsic connection between iron as an essential part of our body and culture. Iron through its nature and abundance has emerged as essential to life. Iron runs through our veins and allows us to breathe.

The physical basis of *HAEM* is iron derived from an unexpected source – the human placenta. Iron, plentiful throughout the process of exchange, plays an essential role, moving through this "maze", guiding oxygen from the mother to the fetus.

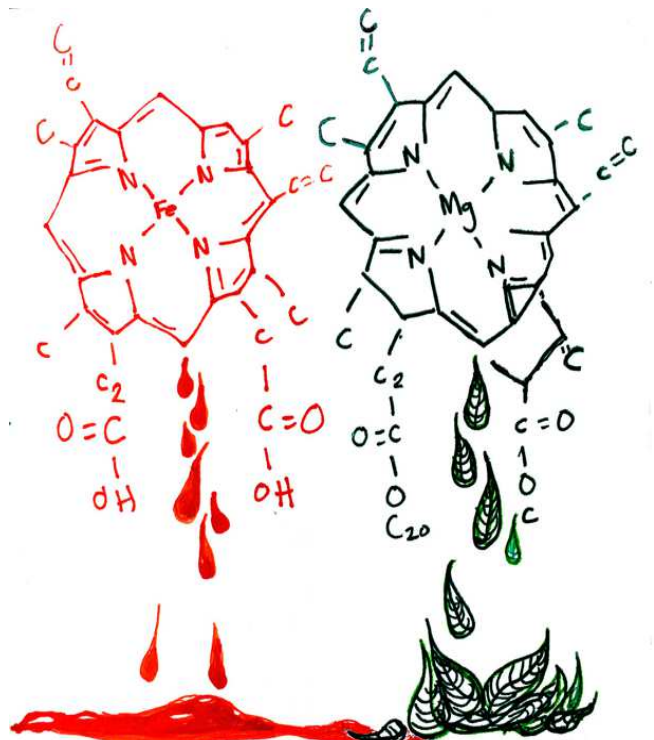
The installation consists of the compass needle, presented as a guidance tool floating in the midst of a rotating glass bowl inspired by histological imagery of the placenta. Accompanying the installation is a selective archive about the process, shown as a register of the 69 donated placentas' weight and date of birth. A video documents the work in process.

The work was developed in collaboration with Dr. Rodrigo Leite de Oliveira of The Netherlands Cancer Institute.

## 9. Tarah Rhoda

**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.

**#Alliance #Conversion #Extraction**



Tarah Rhoda: *Ourglass*, 2020, installation, spinach, ethanol, IV bag, volumetric flask, syringe, ultraviolet light. Art Laboratory Berlin. Image credit: Tim Deussen.

In her project *Ourglass* Rhoda highlights the kinship between plants and animals through two organic chemicals: haemoglobin and chlorophyll, vital to both the life of individual organisms and the planetary carbon cycle.

The installation *Ourglass* is a tribute to the remarkable alliance between plants and animals through the photosynthesis and respiration. Here a mixture of plant leaves and ethanol creates an extraction of chlorophyll which drips through the 'sand clock'. In the bottom half the green chlorophyll solution appears red when exposed to a UV light. Doing so it resembles its animal equivalent haemoglobin.

Haemoglobin and chlorophyll are strikingly similar, even mirroring each other down to the molecular level. A particularly astonishing phenomenon is chlorophyll's ability to retain its light absorption property even when isolated from the plant. When suspended in an alcohol solution and exposed to UV light, chlorophyll releases the energy it was unable to transfer to the rest of the plant as waste. This discharge of energy takes the form of fluorescence, causing the chlorophyll to glow red, like blood.