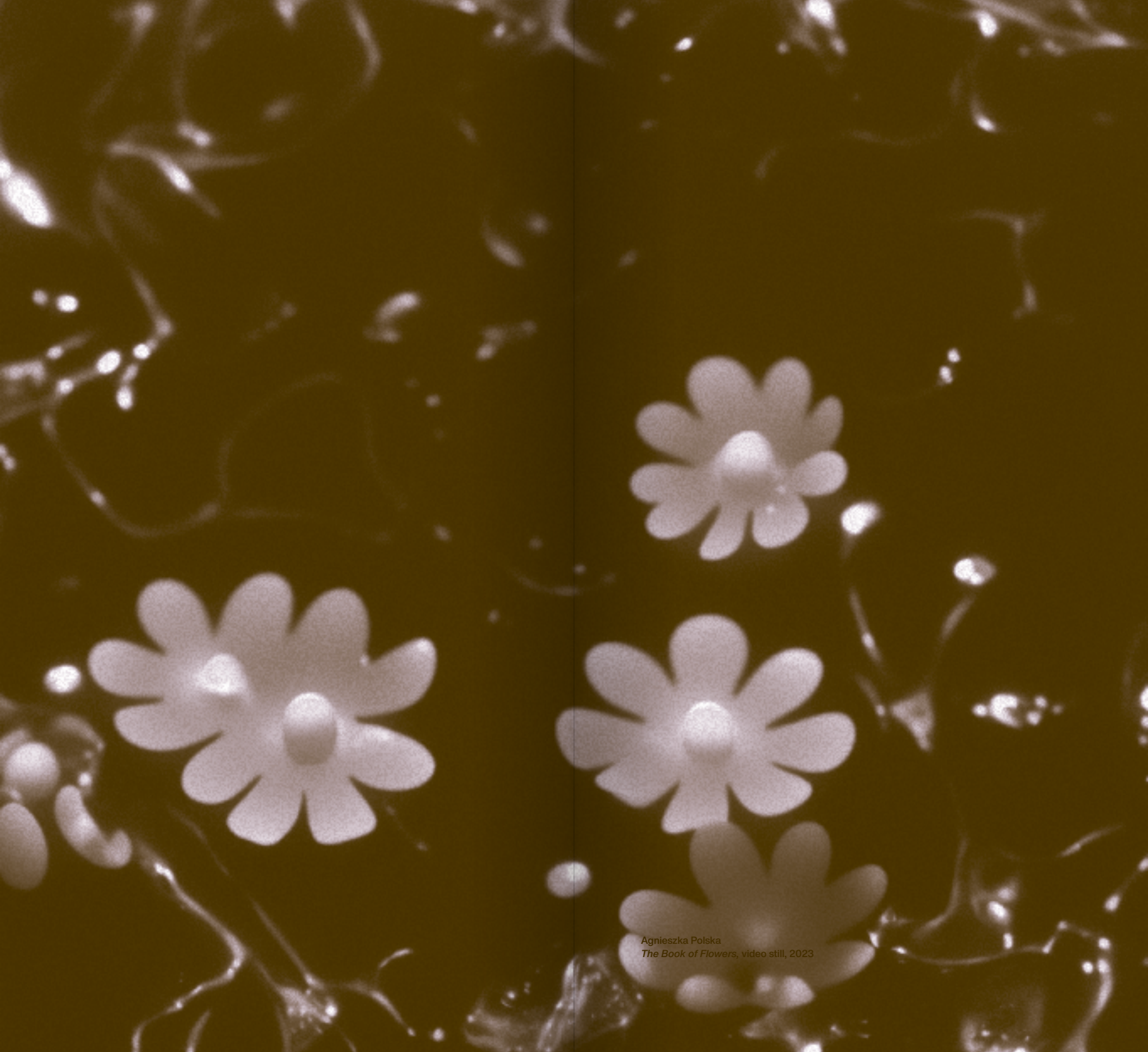


The Monkey and the Clay

EXHIBITION READER



Agnieszka Polska
The Book of Flowers, video still, 2023

The Monkey and the Clay

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Contemporary ecological thought overturns the hierarchy among species and encourages humans to redefine their place within the ecosystem. To better coexist within a 'more-than-human' world, some artists are embracing the role of collaborators with nature: this paradigm shift lies at the heart of the exhibition *The Monkey and the Clay*. Just as the title evokes a fable and embodies an interaction between animal and mineral, the intertwining of living beings extends to plants and the elements, describing a complex, interconnected network.

Working to repair these bonds, the artists featured in the exhibition engage in attentive research and immersion. Their works are influenced by the avant-garde positions of Land Art, environmental activism, and non-Western holistic thought. By exploring more horizontal relationships, they venture into co-creation with the non-human. But these relationships prove complex and unpredictable; how can one be certain of their reciprocity in the absence of a common language?

The uncertainty and long-term perspective that characterise ecology inspire artists to turn to fiction. Ancient or alternative narratives foster new representations and shape an ecological imagination; rather than offering solutions, artists present attempts to think differently. Moreover, some works extend this speculative inquiry through technological tools, revealing a parallel between our dependence on machines and on natural resources.

The visitor's journey through the exhibition is guided by a scenography designed by CRAFT studio: an artistic response to the exhibition, the winding path, traced by the 'skin of trees', encourages exploration and dialogue between the works. In harmony with this environment, graphic designer Théo David Gehin has used the typeface *Occlusion Grottesque* to infiltrate the exhibition texts. This evolving typeface is inspired by research conducted by Bjørn Karmann, in collaboration with a living tree, focusing on letters formed by the healing of incised bark.

Tania Candiani

Fox, Bobcat, Jaguar, Javelina, Mexican Grey Wolf, Ocelot, 2020
Six diptychs in two parts: graphite and ink on 180 gsm watercolour paper.

Percutor, 2020
Non-activated musical instrument: custom sound mixing console, solenoid array, effect based on amplification circuits, modular piezoelectric microphones.

First Concert, 2020
2-channel HD video with sound,
8 minutes 2 seconds.

Courtesy of Tania Candiani Studio.



6



Tania Candiani's work operates at the intersection of language, sound, and technology, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations between art, literature, music, architecture, and science. Her practice is conceived as an act of translation, juxtaposing ancestral techniques with contemporary technologies and exploring their intersections, frictions, and transformative potential. Candiani has a long-standing interest in acoustic ecology - the study of the relationship between living beings and their environment mediated through sound.

7

For the Animals brings together a body of work developed across multiple stages in close collaboration with geologists and engineers from Arizona State University. Using scientific instruments, the artist recorded atmospheric data at Hole-in-the-Rock, a geological formation in Papago Park, Arizona (Sonoran Desert). The site holds particular significance, not only as a striking geological formation sculpted by wind and time, but also as a place historically used by the Hohokam people as a solar calendar. These data sets were subsequently translated into tones and electronic musical structures through processes of sonification developed in collaboration with Leslie Garcia and Baltu Studios.

Candiani then returned to the desert to perform a live concert for animals whose migratory paths have been severely disrupted: the fox, bobcat, jaguar, javelina, Mexican grey wolf, and ocelot. These animals are portrayed in the series of accompanying drawings, rendered by Valentina Díaz.

Percutor, is both a sculpture and a performative instrument, a speculative tool conceived to activate interspecies dialogue.

Tania Candiani

AKI INOMATA

8



Passing her a piece of cloth, 2022
4K video installation, 36 minutes 21 seconds.
Courtesy of the artist and Maho Kubota Gallery (Tokyo, Japan).

9

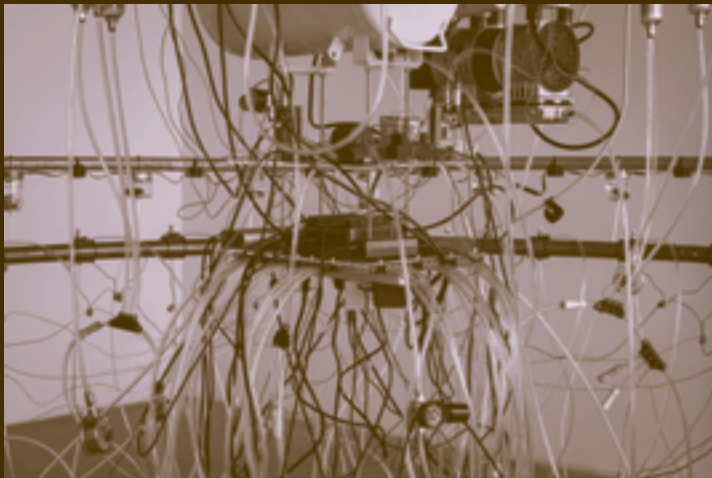
AKI INOMATA'S **practice** directly addresses the concept of 'collaboration' with the non-human world. For several years, she **has** developed works in co-creation with hermit crabs, beavers, and pearl oysters. In the video installation *Passing her a piece of cloth*, the artist collaborated with a Shibori dyeing workshop in Arimatsu, Japan, to produce hybrid objects. She combines the traditional craft of tie-dyeing with the techniques used by *Psychidae* larvae, commonly known as 'bagworms', to create their cocoons.

INOMATA is intrigued by the formal similarity between the transforming chrysalis and the knotted fabric, which reveals unique patterns and colours once unfolded. She commissioned master drapers to produce small fragments of dyed cloth, which she then offered to the larvae to use as raw material for the construction of their protective cocoons.

AKI INOMATA

Bagus Pandega

10



Hyperpnea Green, 2024

LED lamps, extracted minerals, oxygen concentrator, mini-computer, biofeedback detector, plants, galvanised pipes, distilled water, air hose, grow lamp, modular synthesiser, pneumatic system.

Programming: Coune Labworks; Vase: Isa Poterie.

Courtesy of the artist and ROH Gallery (Jakarta, Indonesia).

11

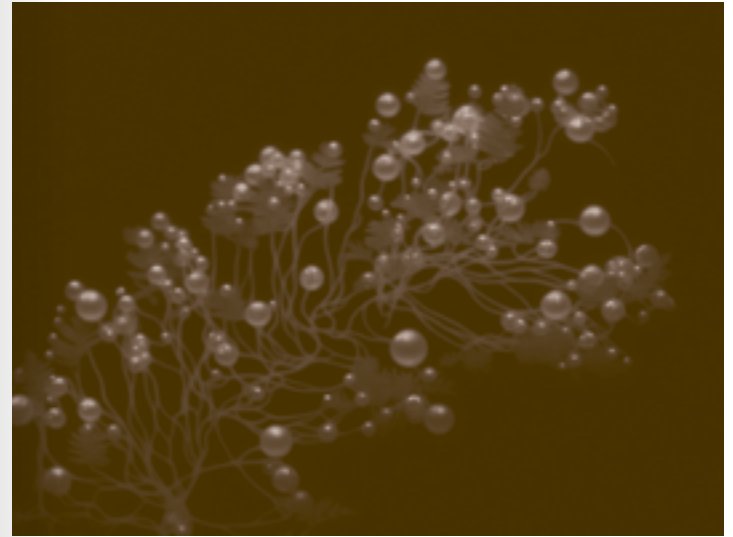
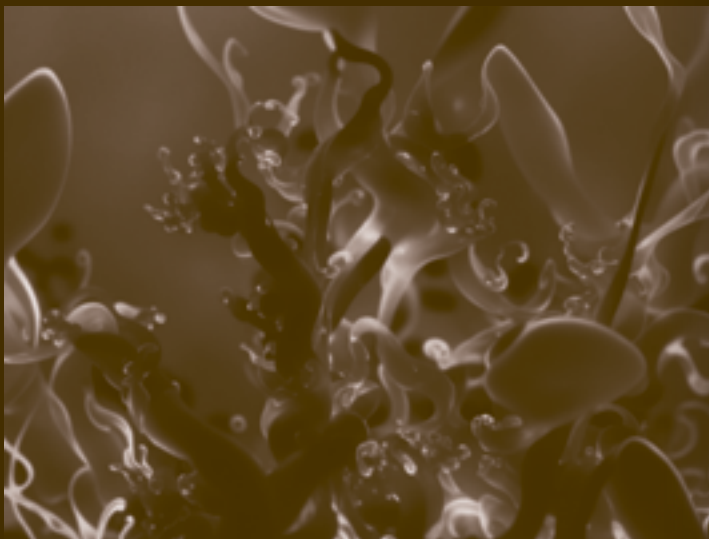
Bagus Pandega's work explores the extraction of natural resources in Indonesia, offering new perspectives on the links between technology and the environment. Adopting the ethos of a 'hacker', Pandega constructs modular systems from everyday electronics, natural materials such as plants and rare minerals, and musical instruments. His installations are programmed to trigger mechanical and chemical reactions that generate sound or movement.

'Hyperpnea' refers to an increase in the depth and rate of breathing. The project emerged in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which left patients with respiratory distress and caused global oxygen shortages. The work functions as a machine that produces and releases oxygen, regulated by the plants' biofeedback (through the observation of their physiological signals) and the presence of visitors within the space. *Hyperpnea Green* highlights our dependence on the natural world, the resources of which we are simultaneously exhausting.

Bagus Pandega

Agnieszka Polska

12



The Book of Flowers, 2023
HD video, 9 minutes 38 seconds.
Courtesy of the artist.

13

Agnieszka **Polska** employs cinematic narrative to explore the perpetually negotiated relationship between humans and technology, and the porous boundary between the real and the virtual. Her work addresses historical memory and the environmental crisis, experimenting with new formats within our constantly evolving, information-driven societies. A vital aspect of her current practice involves constructing a 'prehistory' of a global cybernetic consciousness.

The animated film *The Book of Flowers* examines the mechanisms of reproduction and interspecies co-dependence. Continuing the artist's interest in alternative narratives, this speculative fable depicts a patently fictional past - a millennia-old symbiotic relationship between humans and flowering plants. To conjure this strange and wondrous flora, Polska utilised artificial intelligence tools trained on archival footage from the 1940s and 1950s (notably time-lapse films). The resulting surreal flora is frequently imbued with animalistic or mechanical textures. The artist adopts a critical approach to AI, harnessing its capacity to generate paracosms - intricate imaginary universes typically originating in childhood.

Agnieszka Polska

Lin May Saeed

Alfil Relief/Elephant Relief (V03), 2021
Polystyrene, acrylic paint

Ghazal Relief (V3), 2022
Polystyrene, acrylic paint,
plaster, ceramics,
plastic mesh, cotton

Enkidu and Jackal, 2007
Polystyrene, steel, acrylic paint

The Liberation of Animals from their Cages XI, 2012
Steel, lacquer

Courtesy of the Estate of Lin May Saeed and Jacky Strenz (Frankfurt am Main, Germany).



The work of Lin May Saeed bears witness to her long-standing commitment to the animal rights movement. Her sculptures, reliefs, gates, and installations function as visual fables, addressing animal exploitation, liberation, and the utopia of a peaceful coexistence with humans.

Saeed's recurring use of polystyrene is ambivalent. Despite its toxic composition and the resistance it poses to fine detail, Saeed salvaged this quintessential pollutant second-hand, opting for the material because of its malleability and ease of carving. *Alfil Relief/Elephant Relief (V03)* depicts a landscape of converging realities: two elephants stand amidst vegetation and a beehive, while the stark silhouette of a factory looms in the distance. The elephants' gaze is fixed directly upon the viewer, as if to hold humans to account for the destruction of natural habitats. In a similar way, *Ghazal Relief (V3)* reveals a gazelle's apparent bewilderment, in the middle of a landscape engulfed by a wave of debris.

The sculptural duo *Enkidu and Jackal* draws upon the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, one of the earliest known works of literature (c. 1800-1600 BC). A central figure in ancient Mesopotamian myth, Enkidu embodies the transition from a state of nature to civilisation. Fashioned from clay by the goddess Aruru, he initially lived as an animal. Here, Enkidu, who frequently appears in Saeed's work, is depicted alongside Jackal whose internal organs are visible. The heart, lungs, liver, and intestines are depicted through coloured shapes and lines. These organs, common to both humans and many animals, aim to highlight the equality of living beings.

Saeed often remarked that her practice was enriched by her discussions with activists. Gates are a signature format in her oeuvre, serving as a structural reference to the cage while highlighting the artist's draughtsmanship through delicate line work. This gate, in particular, contains others - those of cages being opened by two masked figures to release captive birds.



Shimabuku

16



The Snow Monkeys of Texas: Do snow monkeys remember snow mountains?, 2016
HD video, cacti, vinyl text, 20 minutes.
Courtesy of the artist, Collection Fondation Louis Vuitton.

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Shimabuku's work is underpinned by a deep empathy for his environment, often centering on encounters with people and animal species. Through performative actions, he reveals the absurdity of human behaviour with a blend of humour and tenderness.

This work documents the acclimatisation of Kyoto's 'snow monkeys' to their new environment, an animal sanctuary in the Texan desert. The history of this unusual displacement dates back to the 1950s and a scientific study of wild monkeys in the Arashiyama bamboo forest. By 1972, primatologists had become overwhelmed by the growing population and decided to relocate 150 of the monkeys to Texas.

Intrigued by whether the 'American' descendants of these Japanese monkeys retained a memory of their ancestral landscape and of snow, Shimabuku visited them in 2016. He placed a mountain of crushed ice among them and filmed their reactions. The resulting video captures moments of curiosity, boredom, and authoritarian interactions, highlighting the shared traits between monkeys and humans.

Shimabuku

Jessica Warboys



18

River Painting, Charente, 2026, 2026
Diptych: canvas, beeswax,
mineral pigments.
Courtesy of the artist and
Galerie Gaudel de Stampa
(Paris, France). Produced by
Fondation Martell.



River Painting, La Resurgence, 2025
Installation view *Layers of Wildnes*
at CRAC Alsace, France
Photo © Aurélien Mole

Production image, *Sea Painting, Rotøy,*
Norway, 2025, 2025

19

Jessica Warboys' practice exists at the intersection of painting, performance, and the moving image. Drawing on landscape, local history, and myth, she incorporates the immediacy of gesture and site directly into the surface of her work. Warboys has developed a pictorial language shaped through collaboration with natural elements, particularly bodies of water — seas and rivers — making the fluidity and movement of water perceptible within the canvas itself.

In the creation of *River Painting, Charente, 2026*, the artist prepares her canvases with liquid beeswax, recalling the Indonesian Batik technique, and traces an imagined line across the surface. The canvas is then submerged in the river, where the work evolves through the force and movement of the water, subject to its currents and rhythms. Warboys subsequently scatters and applies mineral pigments onto the canvas. These pigments are in part directed by hand, water, wax and wind. Once the work is dry the wax motifs are lifted away, revealing areas left untouched by pigment.

Through this malleable and permeable process, the work approaches performance. By establishing her studio outdoors, Warboys choreographs and ritualises her movements in dialogue with the surrounding environment. The resulting monumental, unstretched canvas becomes a record of elemental exchange, extending the experience of the landscape beyond the exhibition space. As reflected in the title, this diptych was created specifically for the exhibition on the banks of the Charente River.

Trevor Yeung

20



Earth to Earth (Terres-de-Haute-Charente), 2026
Unfired clay tiles.
Courtesy of the artist and
Galerie Joseph Allen (Paris,
France). Produced by
Fondation Martell.



Earth to Earth, 2024
Lahore Biennale
Photo © Amna Zuberi

21

In his work, Trevor Yeung draws upon botanical ecology, horticulture, and aquariums, treating these as metaphorical devices that translate the logics of control, interdependence, and vulnerability, shaping our social and emotional structures.

Created specifically for this exhibition, the installation consists of two identical sets of unfired clay tiles sourced from the region. One set is kept inside the climate-controlled gallery, while the other is sited outdoors and exposed to the elements. The clay remains malleable, whereby the tiles become sensitive barometers of fluctuations in humidity and atmospheric pressure. The divergent evolution of the two parts of the installation over the course of the exhibition offers a real-time illustration of environmental entropy and the inevitable return of all things to nature.

Trevor Yeung

Robert Zhao Renhui

22



23

Conditions of Life, 2026
Photographs, videos (13:35, 10:29, and 22:30 minutes), and vinyl texts.
Courtesy of the artist and ShanghART Gallery (Shanghai, China).
Produced by Fondation Martell.

Robert Zhao Renhui critically examines the preconceived ideas of what he terms the 'zoological gaze' - the way in which humans perceive animals and the natural world. In his work, he rejects the objectivity of scientific classification and the dualistic separation of human and non-human spheres. Instead, he observes the emergence of a concept he calls 'New Nature': the ways in which animals reclaim and inhabit spaces long dominated by humans, giving rise to new forms of cohabitation.

Zhao Renhui appropriates the conventions of documentary photography and museum displays to construct narratives reflecting his long-term field research and collaborations with scientists. His new installation (born from a 2026 essay published in the journal *TE Editions*) takes the form of a visual essay. In it, he revisits several projects investigating ecological disturbances and imbalances, the fluid boundary between human settlements and wildlife occupation, and the behavioural shifts that emerge within human-altered landscapes.

Robert Zhao Renhui



Lin May Saeed
Ghazal Relief (V3), 2022

Artist Interviews

Conducted by email by Emilie Villez during March 2026, unless stated otherwise.

Emilie Villez

Tania Candiani

Can you explain the origin of your interest in acoustic ecology, and how it manifests in your work?

My interest in acoustic ecology comes from a sustained curiosity about listening as a form of knowledge, but more specifically from a fascination with how different species perceive and navigate the world through sound. Listening is not a single, stable sense—it is radically different depending on the body that listens.

What interests me is that for many animals, hearing is not only about detecting sound, but about orientation, survival, pleasure, communication—it is a spatial and relational sense. Thinking through those differences opens up a field of questions: what does it mean to listen as a bat, as a deer, as a canine? What kind of world is constructed through those auditory ranges and sensitivities?

For me, this becomes a point of connection. Expanding our understanding of listening allows us to imagine a shared ground—a kind of provisional language—between species. This project was the first time I approached listening in that way: as a tool to extend perception and to attempt forms of communication with other beings.

How would you describe collaboration with the more-than-human in your practice?

Can you give a bit more details on how things happened in the desert: Did the animals react to the music?

Was there some interaction?

Collaboration with the more-than-human in my work takes the form of attunement and co-presence. In the

desert, the piece unfolds as a sonic offering placed within a specific environment, where sound moves through the landscape and intersects with multiple forms of life.

The response from the animals becomes visible in *For the Animals (Video)*¹. For that piece, I worked with the Mexican artistic collective *Inter-specifics* to develop *Scouting Station*, a sculptural system combining sound, video, and data collection.

The device emits calls within frequency ranges that different mammals can perceive, using compositions derived from the data gathered at *Hole-in-the-Rock*. It is also equipped with cameras, thermal sensors, and a machine learning system capable of identifying species. When an animal is detected, the system activates specific lullabies and records both video and environmental data. In those recordings, animals approach the device, remain close to it, lie next to it, or stay in its proximity for extended periods of time. These gestures—subtle but persistent—became a way to understand how the compositions were being received. The interaction unfolds through attention, duration, and presence rather than through immediate or explicit response.

In your work, you occasionally collaborate with scientists. What is the reaction of your non-artistic collaborators towards your works?

Working with scientists is one of the most enjoyable parts of my process. There is a shared ground in curiosity—artists, scientists, and researchers are all engaged in asking questions, speculating, and imagining ways to approach what we do not yet fully understand. That space of speculation is very alive, and very generous. It allows different forms of knowledge to coexist without collapsing into a single explanation, and that is where I feel the work really opens.

1

This specific video is not featured in this exhibition.

AKI INOMATA

Could you tell us a little more about the process behind the work featured in the exhibition?

Bagworms have long been familiar insects in Japan, and they appear in *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shonagon², written around the year 1001, as well as in haiku by Matsuo Basho, who lived from 1644 to 1694. There has also long been a traditional children's activity in Japan involving the making of "mino," or bagworm cases.

When humans provide bagworms with small pieces of fabric, the insects produce strong silk and use it to join the fragments together, creating their own cases. They attach the fabric pieces around their bodies with silk secreted from their mouths, stitching them together to form a portable case. Because they move while wearing it, I consider the mino to be a kind of clothing. At the same time, because it protects their bodies, it can also be understood as a mobile dwelling.

Could you explain the form of "interspecies collaboration" in your work?

In my work, "interspecies collaboration" does not mean a one sided relationship in which humans control other living beings. Rather, it is a process of creating work together while respecting the ecology and behavior specific to each species.

One of my main approaches is to communicate with living organisms through mediating elements. Each species has its own unique habits, and many live by using things such as nests, traces of feeding, or materials produced by other organisms.

For example, focusing on the ecology of hermit crabs, which move from one shell to another as they grow, I created shells and offered them to the crabs. However, the choice of whether to enter them or not was entirely the hermit crabs' own. Of course, there were cases in which they did not accept them, and I realized the work only through extensive trial and error in the design of the shells.

In the case of beavers, it is well known that they gnaw wood, but the kinds of trees they prefer vary from individual to individual, and they do not gnaw constantly. I design the conditions and environments that may encourage such species specific actions and decisions, but the final result is ultimately left to the animals' own choices and behavior.

In that sense, the work is not something completed in advance, but something that emerges

through the relationship between humans and other living beings. It includes unpredictable elements and developments that exceed human intention, but I believe that this is precisely the essence of engaging with other species. Through this kind of process, another important aspect of my practice is to relativize a human centered point of view and to reconsider how we might relate to beings of other species.

What kinds of challenges do you face, and are there any ethical concerns?

When creating works in collaboration with living organisms, one of the constant challenges is that the process cannot be controlled entirely according to human intention. One must engage patiently with the unpredictability of nature.

As for ethical concerns, because this is a practice involving living beings, I always work with guidance from specialists. In terms of method, I also take an approach that avoids direct intervention in the bodies of the organisms themselves, instead engaging through mediating forms such as nests, shelters, or other intermediary structures.

This is important not only for the organisms, but for humans as well. In the past, when I wove a cape from dog hair, I developed an allergic reaction, which also led me to reflect on the difficulty of relationships across species.

Do you collaborate with scientists or biologists? How do they respond to your work?

Yes, I always work in collaboration with specialists. I am a member of metaPhorest, a bio art platform based in the laboratory of Hideo Iwasaki at Waseda University. metaPhorest is a space for experimentation, research, and production in art and aesthetics related to life. It brings together members from many different fields, including biological researchers, artists, students, and philosophers.

Within this environment, I regularly exchange ideas with scientists and biologists, and for specific projects I also collaborate with researchers who have specialized expertise. The process of making the work itself becomes a site where different perspectives and methodologies intersect. Specialists from various fields have told me they feel that my work contributes to making the ecology of living organisms more widely known to the general public.

Bagus Pandega

In the exhibition, we are **presenting** the 4th version of *Hyperpnea Green*. **What is your approach to experimentation and trial and error in your work?**

It's **not exactly** the fourth version of *Hyperpnea Green*, but the **fourth iteration** of my DIY oxygen machine. *Hyperpnea Green* is the current form of **that** development. **Each version builds from** the previous one. **There are always improvements**, whether in the system, the **behavior**, or the configuration of the structure. The form also **changes depending** on what I learn from **each** iteration. I see **this process** as ongoing. Each result produces a different kind of feedback, and that **feedback informs** the next step.

In the future, I **imagine** this system becoming **something** closer to an **instrument**, something that could perform and even **collaborate with humans**. **So** trial and error is not separate **from** the work. It is how the work develops.

What is the importance of interaction with visitors in your **installations**?

My work is not directly interactive with **the audience**. It **relates** more to the ambient conditions in the space created by visitors and **their activity** around the work. You can think of it as a system of **giving and receiving**. **The presence of visitors is** not only visual. It **affects** the environment through movement, heat, and **carbon dioxide**. **The** system responds to those **changes**.

So the **audience** is **not just** observing. **They** become part of the **conditions** that influence **how the work** operates. This **makes** the system less fixed. It depends **on** what is **happening in the space**.

Yet, **you** evoke the idea of combining nature and technology **without humans**. What is your **take** on ecology and technology, friend or enemy? Do you **believe** in techno-solutionism?

I don't **see** technology as **either** a friend or an enemy. Technology is **part** of how we **operate** as humans. The question is **how it is used** **and** what kind of **systems** it supports. I'm **not** fully convinced by techno-solutionism. Many technologies are **presented as solutions**, but they **still** depend **on** extraction and resource use. In my work, I'm more **interested** in showing that relationship. Technology and ecology are **already** connected, but often in an **imbalanced way**. So **instead** of proposing a solution, I try to **create** a situation where that **connection can be observed**.

Do you consider your work to be based on **interspecies collaborations**? Since the machines depend on a set of **reactions** **between different** natural and **mechanical** elements.

I think "**collaboration**" can describe it, but I **approach** that term **carefully**.

The system depends **on** interactions between plants, machines, and **environmental conditions**. Each **element** influences the behavior of **the whole**. But it's not an equal **collaboration**. There is **still** a structure that I **design**.

What I try to **do** is create a **condition** where **non-human** elements **can** influence the system, rather than **being** fully **controlled**. So it's less **about** collaboration, and more **about building** a system where **different elements** interact and **affect** each other.

Agnieszka Polska

(A collage of quotes from the artist)
About the relation **between** technology and **storytelling** in her work:

"I'm **interested in** **storytelling** as a **cultural concept**, and as **something** that I consider one of the **first** technologies that humanity invented in order to **store** data and information. So I'm **not only** working as a storyteller – many of my **works** are **actually** about **telling stories**. I think that we are so **blinded** by the rapid pace of recent **technological** changes that we **tend to forget** that **technologies** like oral **storytelling** endure the most, **and** that they **can outcompete** any contemporary **technology** of information storing. It's well-documented that **there** are still **circulating oral stories** containing information about geological events that **took** place more than 7,000 years ago. There is **no way** of **storing** information that is **safer** than **drinking** it as an exciting **story** and singing it to your child. **Because** your child will **sing it** to their child. It **outcompetes** **handwriting**, **electronic** storage, even carving in **stone**, as Cixin Liu would like it. The only more durable data storage **technology** is RNA and DNA."³

"I think that most of the **works** I created in the last **few** years are **science-fiction** works. *The Book of Flowers* is a fantasy that **contemplates** our relation to **technology**, and in **this sense**, it is a science-fiction **work** as well. I think that, **especially** in the **information**

age, **this question** of how we think about history is particularly important. In *The Book of Flowers*, I'm presenting a narrative that is focused on the storytelling itself —and I think of storytelling as one of the crucial technologies that **humanity** developed: a **technology** that created a situation where we could preserve information. [...] **This work** is commenting on **this** ability of stories to shape history."⁴

About the use of AI:

"[...] To me, stable diffusion models are just another tool I use in filmmaking and image production. But when it comes to their philosophical aspect and the question of reflecting on truth—the arrival of the first generated image automatically eradicated any possibility of a "true image" existing again, because unquestionable "truthfulness" ceased to exist. Ursula K. Le Guin wrote on how the telephone is not a medium of human communication; similarly, Artificial Intelligence is **not** a medium of human knowledge."⁵

About drawing from different disciplines, and her role as an artist:

"There are certain sciences that I'm interested in. I am interested in social history, cybernetics, and economy, but the economy of affect, not really economy, as such. And I try to combine these different disciplines to make a case for why I'm an artist. Like, what does it bring to society that I am an artist?"

"[...] When I talk about economies of affect, I'm thinking about what Sarah Ahmed proposed in her work: the idea that emotions circulate in societies much like capital does, and that we can think about emotions and affect as entities that operate under laws similar to economic ones. Emotions can be quantified and stored. To me, an artwork is a unit of emotions. So when you think about how emotions such as love, fear, empathy, or hate circulate and regulate societies, and when you consider an artwork as a unit of emotions, then suddenly, art becomes crucial to society. In recent years, I've been developing this concept – rooted in an understanding of how systems function – as a way to justify my role as an artist."⁶

4 Transcribed from a video interview recorded in Florence in November 2024 by Carolina Cappelli, on the occasion of the 17th Schermo dell'arte - Cinema and Contemporary Art Festival.

5 In *Emotion Pictures: A Conversation*, June 2024, e-flux Notes, online: <https://www.e-flux.com/notes/613497/emotion-pictures-a-conversatio>

6 From a conversation with Tosia Leniarska, August 2025 in *Flash Art*, online: <https://flash-art.com/article/agnieszka-polska/>

Lin May Saeed

(A collage of quotes from the artist)
About Styrofoam's ugliness and using it as a material:

"It bothers me sometimes, especially as I was brought up in the theater, that in the visual arts everything has to be made so genteel. Or to put it another way: art tends to ennoble everything, to valorize it. [...] Plaster, cardboard, and paper have already long been entailed. Even Rodin declared plaster a valid artistic material. That never seemed possible for polystyrene or Styrofoam; they're just too trashy. It isn't easy to like this material. [...] I think it's a good thing when you can make something different out of something that is complete and utter trash. That's a genuine transformation. Carving a relief out of a beautiful piece of fruitwood makes no sense. Having ugliness as your starting point is far more interesting."⁷

"There is an additional reason why I like working with Styrofoam. Most animals have fur, feathers, scales or an exoskeleton, and depicting that sculpturally is a challenge. Every living thing moves almost constantly, and motion blur and vividness go together. Likewise, there is a blurriness when working with Styrofoam because of the materiality. Styrofoam is, first of all, block material and on closer inspection it has a smallest visible unit, namely small spheres. The fact that the naked eye can see the smallest unit I feel has a poetic quality. I like to imagine that they are atoms. I look for the productive interplay of these two blurs, the granularity of the material and the living things that emerge from it. And perhaps most crucially: I understand my works not as objects, but as subjects."⁸

About the fables she has written:

"For lack of a better term, I have always called the texts fables. The logic of fables is usually that they deal with human themes that are negotiated through animal figures. My fables are about animals."⁹

7 From a conversation between Lin May Saeed and artist Jochen Lempert (unpublished, Berlin, June 2017), quoted from: Robert Wiesenberger, "Speciesism. On the Work of Lin May Saeed", in *Lin May Saeed, Arrival of the Animals*, catalogued published by the Clark Art Institute, 2020, p.14

8 From a conversation between the artist and Antonia Lagemann, online: <https://thenew.institute/en/media/the-freedom-of-bees>

9 Quoted from: Robert Wiesenberger, "Speciesism. On the Work of Lin May Saeed", in *Lin May Saeed, Arrival of the Animals*, catalogued published by the Clark Art Institute, 2020, p.13

"I like the idea that stories and fables can be used to imagine a kind of time travel with a focus on the human-animal relationship. And I believe that looking into the past can help us to think about our common future."¹⁰

About the relation between humans and nature and the environmental crisis:

"The way I first perceived the relationship between man and nature in a larger context was influenced by the environmental disasters of the 1980s, such as Chernobyl in 1986. This was 1,200 miles from the city where I grew up. People were told to stay at home. I was personally not affected or frightened, but it made me think. Why do we call what animals do natural, and what humans do or make artificial, be it plastic bags or nuclear power? This thinking process turned into an alienation from the concept of humanity and from the results of human labor. Then, there was the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989. Later, I did a sculptural piece about this, *Cleaner/Reiniger*, a figure holding an oil-smearred animal in her arms."¹¹

10 From a conversation between the artist and Antonia Lagemann, online: <https://thenew.institute/en/media/the-freedom-of-bees>

11 Conversation with Biborka Beres, February 2021, online: <https://artistsandclimatechange.com/2021/02/08/coexistence-of-cultures-and-species-an-interview-with-lin-may-saeed-part-ii/>
The artist is referring to the work *Cleaner / Reiniger*, 2006.

Shimabuku

Can you explain the forms of interspecies collaborations that you develop in your work?

I sometimes work alongside curators at aquariums and zoos. Recently, I collaborated with a university that is developing a special type of water in which marine and freshwater fish can coexist, and we were able to create an exhibit featuring sea turtles and Japanese carp living together.

What are the challenges that you face? Are there ethical questions that arise?

When exhibiting living creatures, it is naturally a concern if they die or fall ill; for this reason, we work closely with specialists and take the utmost care.

What is the reaction of the scientists or biologists you meet, to your work?

I recently had the opportunity to speak with a neuroscientist. One of the most interesting points she raised was that, whilst Neanderthals and *Homo habilis* also existed, the reason why only we, *Homo sapiens*, have survived is that our frontal lobes are highly developed. She explained that we possess an aesthetic sense—as evidenced, for example, by our habit of collecting shells that are not edible. In other words, she suggested that this might be because we possessed something akin to art.

Jessica Warboys

Can you describe the process that usually takes place during the making of *River Paintings*?

The process follows a rhythm. I often start by spending time in the area of the river, walking it, getting a sense of its route, its shape, its source, its name and character. I'm also influenced by local histories — this starts to shape the work before I begin painting. I also use the idea of the river as a way to explore something current or perhaps latent in my visual language. In a sense, the river becomes a character, and a way to communicate this, whilst performing itself. I use beeswax to define this, through painting with melted beeswax. I love the smell, and the way it shifts so quickly from solid to liquid and back again. There's something

about **how** each gesture holds time — **you can** really see it. Sometimes I'll add **mineral pigment** to the wax, but **more often** I just use natural **beeswax** — it's **there**, but only just visible.

After the **beeswax painting**, I **submerge** the **canvas** in the river. At **first**, it floats, then gradually sinks **under its own weight**. **Once** it's drenched, I **pull it back to** the riverbank and scatter **mineral pigments** directly **onto** the **wet surface**. **Folds and pools** in the **canvas catch the pigment**, and the **painting wax** gesture **begins** to reveal itself.

When the painting is **dry**, I **melt the wax away**, and a **kind of ghost space** appears between the **fields of pigment colour**.

What is the balance between **control and surprise** in the making?

I **think of** the work as something that reveals itself in stages. For **most of** the process, I **can only partially see** what's happening — it only **really becomes** clear at the end, when the **wax is** removed and this **negative space** defines the composition.

I **guide certain things**, like **where** I place the pigment, but at the **same time** I'm not **always fully** conscious of how the **canvas** is folding or twisting, or how the wind might carry **the pigment**, so **there's** a lot that escapes control and is **left to chance**.

Towards the end, I **start making more direct gestures**, once there's something to respond to — the **balance keeps** shifting throughout the process. I'm definitely more drawn to the unexpected.

Where does your interest in bodies of water come from?

It really started **during my time** at art school, when I made a work **where** I installed my **mother's bright** red sari, **on a beach** in Falmouth, Cornwall, hung on a line and catching the wind, I then filmed it. I made several films in Cornwall, by the sea (and in **gardens**), and through **these works**, the sea became more than just a **setting or a backdrop** — it became a character, a collaborator, and also **this kind of** in-between, liminal space, where my imagination **and visual language** could play out in **collaboration with the elements and landscape**.

After art school, when I **didn't have a studio**, it felt **quite natural to go** back there and **start making work directly** in that environment — working with the shoreline, the sea, the weather, the **place itself**, and **now more recently** the riverbank and river.

I've **always been** interested in recording traces — rhythms, emotions — **and working with bodies of water** makes that **possible**. As I **mentioned**, I also make films, often in **and of nature**, through a **theatrical lens**. I like the **idea that the sea or river is telling** a story, or recalling a **myth**, and in a **way**, I'm telling **one too**, in **parallel** — through **water, beeswax, and colour**.

Do you consider it a form of interspecies collaboration?

Beeswax comes from a **collective, natural** process — it's how **bees build** their hives. I'm **extending** that **ecological** journey in a **sense**, taking **that material and animating it** through melting and painting (**something that's been done for thousands of years**). **Maybe** it's more of a **material continuation than interspecies collaboration**.

Although, as the river is **something living**, in that sense it does feel like a **kind of collaboration with a complex ecosystem**. A couple of years ago, I **worked with a dying river** in England, River Dove, and I think that was very much captured in the painting itself.

Do you expect any specific reactions from visitors? What is your experience with the audience?

I hope the work creates a **space** for people to look, to stay, to **contemplate**.

The **audience tends to move between** trying to **navigate what they're seeing** and quietly absorbing it. Imagination and **curiosity can** focus on the details, for example the location, and when this **resonates with the viewer in a personal way**, I think that's **very special**.

There's a **quality in the painting's surface**, mirroring the river — a **potential to remember** histories that **have sunk to** the riverbed, and something of what they have carried or still carry, **both poison and benign**, the paintings **propose a space** for this reflection.

Trevor Yeung

In your studio you are surrounded by plants and aquariums, but in your work, the presence of nature can be either authentic or artificial, sometimes imitations of nature. What is the role of these elements and the relationship to nature in general in your work?

As I grew up in Hong Kong, nature for us is always related to planning or equipment: indoor plants or aquariums that require lots of caring, and equipment to keep them alive. So my relationship to nature is always going through artificial methods. That's the way I use equipment or materials in my practice, to convey this feeling of communicating with nature. Those things are like a bridge to connect, because direct contact with nature is not that easy in Hong Kong. To bring nature closer to you—that's the idea of gardening—and allow the audience to see the relationships among these objects.

Do you consider these natural elements as collaborators?

I always consider the materials that I use as collaborators, in particular with plants. In this exhibition, we don't have plants, but clay, so it's another version of collaboration. The work is actually a ground to show the collaboration. The installation is in two parts, one is outdoors, one is indoors. The aspect of collaboration is more about how I use the material outdoors to reveal the interaction with the natural conditions, like rain, dryness, seeds flying and dropping into the soil, if they grow or die because of lack of water... So these happenings really rely on the fact that the objects are outdoors. When I studied science in high school, we always made experiments, and had one part as a controlled reference that would not change. So it's a kind of a compare and contrast situation: inside, we think of museums and exhibition spaces as a "good" environment to protect artworks.

In a way the work is a mediator between you and the natural elements, and reveals the more or less invisible processes.

Yes. In particular, this work holds a different position. For some work I like to do things by myself, for others I work with a contractor to make something. In this project, the work becomes the media, and my contribution (apart from the concept) is more about the arrangement of the tiles and their placement, that will provoke a certain

result. Depending on the arrangement of the tiles, the result will be different. I made a previous version of this work in the Lahore Biennale in 2024 (Pakistan), so reflecting on that experience, I know that different ways of placing the clay objects will have different ways of collapsing when the material softens.

Because you are using industrial but unfinished ready-mades, this work evolves over the duration of the exhibition, and is ultimately ephemeral. What are you pointing at in terms of production logics and environmental issues?

I have to say that when I engaged for the first time with terracotta, they were not the most industrial things: when you study ceramics, you are making your own objects, so everything is unique because it is made by hand. Then, in South Asia, they make and use earthenware because the material is very close to them, but it wears out and they don't keep the objects forever. So I changed the way I considered ceramics, especially when I saw factories where they make thousands of objects by hand. It changes our relationship to objects. In Lahore, they are still producing by hand, so it's a bit different from our project here, where we are using tiles produced by a manufacturer. For me it's a test. They look identical, but when they will dissolve, affected by nature, each of them will be different, according to whether they are on top or protected by other tiles. So everything starts by being identical, and at one point they start to become unique. It's interesting to me that when we build a roof, we need the tiles to be identical, and it used to be that humans would have to shape the tiles or stones by hand to build a house. Here, in the garden, the tiles will dissolve and go back into the soil.

Interview conducted during a videocall,
March 20, 2026

Robert Zhao Renhui

Can you explain the concept of “New Nature” that you develop in your work, while some theories are inclined to abandon the notion itself?

In my work, “New Nature” refers to ecological conditions that emerge from long-term human intervention — secondary forests, disturbed landscapes, abandoned infrastructures, and hybrid environments where distinctions between natural and artificial no longer hold. Rather than a pristine or original nature, these spaces reveal how life reorganizes itself within constraint. While some theories propose abandoning the concept of nature altogether, I am interested in observing how these altered environments still generate complex, autonomous systems of life. “New Nature” is therefore not a nostalgic idea, but a forward-looking one: it acknowledges that the ecosystems of the future will be shaped by past human actions, yet remain fundamentally beyond human control.

You often collaborate with ecologists and biologists. What is the reaction of the scientists towards your work?

I work closely with only a small number of scientists — perhaps two or three with whom I remain in regular conversation. They tend to be individuals driven less by institutional agendas than by a sustained curiosity, returning repeatedly to the same subjects while searching for new ways to engage with them. Our exchanges are grounded in fieldwork and shared observation rather than in illustrating scientific conclusions. Where science often seeks clarity and explanation, my practice is more concerned with attention, ambiguity, and the limits of knowledge. In this sense, the relationship is less a formal collaboration than an ongoing dialogue between different modes of inquiry, shaped by a mutual willingness to remain attentive to what is not yet fully understood.

In your practice, you are interested in how non-humans appropriate traces of human activity, and the daily negotiations with the natural world. How does your work translate their perspective? Is there a form of collaboration between you and the non-humans you record?

I am interested in how animals and plants adapt to, inhabit, and reinterpret human-made environments. Rather than attempting to represent their viewpoint

directly, the work creates conditions in which their presence, behavior, and agency become perceptible through long-term recording, patient observation, and minimal intervention. Any collaboration with nature is necessarily asymmetrical, but one still tries. One does not impose a system on the work, but allows one to emerge in relation to existing modes of living. Non-humans are not subjects to be directed but participants whose actions shape the work unpredictably, often determining the duration, framing, and structure of the project. I do not build gardens; I try to make space for an unruly web of being. What emerges is not a translation of their perspective, but a space in which viewers can encounter the world as organized by non-human priorities.



Robert Zhao Renhui
Conditions of Life, detail, 2026

The Monkey and the Clay

'In human parlance,' the parrots clarify, 'this is called symbiosis, or a community of interests: everyone gains in the association.'¹

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Vinciane Despret, *Le chez-soi des animaux* [The Home of Animals], Arles: Actes Sud, 2025, p. 35

Living entanglements

'We must help one another; it is the law of nature.'
La Fontaine, *The Donkey and the Dog*.

My first encounter with the notion of interspecies relations dates back to a project in 2014. I had invited the Chilean curator Camila Marambio to conceive an exhibition¹ arising from a research project she had been leading for several years in Tierra del Fuego, conducted alongside the Karukinka Natural Park management centre. Marambio regularly organised residencies for a versatile research group composed of artists, historians, sociologists, and scientists. One of their focal points was the management of the park's beaver population. Considered invasive, the species was the target of a brutal culling project. Nevertheless, scientists tolerated the presence of art within this group, viewing it as a way to step back and imagine alternative solutions to deter the beavers.²



Christy Gast & Camila Marambio, *Castorera*, video still, 2014

The exhibition notably featured a video of biologists disguised as beavers, mimicking their behaviour - literally 'inhabiting their skin' to gain a better understanding of their perspective. This video emerged from a collaboration with artists.³ In this project, the boundaries between art and science were blurred; it appeared that collaboration and transdisciplinarity offered a more open, albeit experimental, way to navigate such complexities.

Nature has long served as a common trope in art history, yet today it often remains a mere motif of representation. With the advent of the Anthropocene - the identification and recognition of a period of time of a human-induced environmental crisis - long-standing assumptions regarding human exceptionalism and interspecies hierarchies have been overturned. Human beings are learning to redefine their place within the ecosystem, seeking a more balanced cohabitation within a 'more-than-human' world.⁴ This term, widely adopted in the social sciences and humanities, encapsulates this rupture and proposes equality between all entities, including humans. Drawing from theoretical debates and concrete experiments, certain contemporary artists are increasingly moving away from the role of the conqueror to adopt that of the collaborator.

This paradigm shift is central to the exhibition *The Monkey and*

1 *Beyond the End*, KADIST Foundation, Paris, 2014.

2 Further elaborated in my interview in S. Delacourt, K. Schneller, V. Theodoropoulou (eds.), *Le chercheur et ses doubles*, Editions B42, 2016.

3 The artist Christy Gast and the curator Camila Marambio.

4 This term first appeared in David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (1996).

the Clay at the Fondation d'entreprise Martell. Mirroring its title, which orchestrates interaction between the animal and the mineral realms, the exhibition is animated by the notion of interspecies interdependence, following ecological currents of thought that seek to de-centre the human.

In the work of theorist Donna Haraway, the notion of cohabitation is articulated through her *Companion Species Manifesto*.⁵ This 'interspecific sociality' is not confined to our pets; it encompasses 'every organic being to which human existence owes its very pulse', from bees to our own gut flora. This entanglement - animal, plantal, mineral, atmospheric - describes a complex web of relations where no entity is ever isolated, and where every action ripples through a multitude of interconnected beings. The very evolution of the term 'ecology' mirrors this: scientists originally defined the term as the study of the interactions of living beings with one another and their environment. Gradually, ecology evolved into a concern for the conservation of territories and species, before becoming distinctly political in the 1970s.

Discourses surrounding trans-species entanglements transcend theoretical debate to swiftly engage with the realm of ethics and law.⁶ Recent years have seen a flourishing of literature concerning the rights of animals or rivers,⁷ following in the footsteps of Bruno Latour's work (for instance, his *Parliament of Things*), and a shift toward a perspective that is not only non-anthropocentric but also non-Western. Indeed, many non-Western cultures maintain a

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5 Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (2003).

6 For further insight, see The Nonhuman Rights Project: <https://www.nonhumanrights.org/>

7 Recent examples include: Camille de Toledo, *Le fleuve qui voulait écrire - Les auditions du Parlement de Loire* [The River that Wanted to Write - The Loire Parliament Hearings], Manuella Editions, 2021; Yenny Vega Cárdenas and Daniel Turp, *Une personnalité juridique pour le Fleuve Saint-Laurent et les Fleuves du monde* [Towards a legal status for the St. Lawrence River and other rivers of the world], JFD Éditions, 2023; François Sarano and Marine Calmet, *Justice pour l'étoile de mer: Vers la reconnaissance des droits de l'océan* [Justice for the Starfish: towards the recognition of ocean rights], Mondes Sauvages, Actes Sud, 2025.

However, it was in 1972 that Christopher Stone, an American professor of public law, published the movement's seminal text, *Should Trees Have Standing?* Written to contest a Walt Disney Company project that threatened a redwood forest, Stone's essay proposed extending legal agency to the trees themselves. This set a precedent for later constitutional shifts: in 2008, Ecuador became the first country in the world to recognise its ecosystem as a political entity, enshrining its right 'to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycle' within the constitution. Nine years later, the New Zealand Parliament passed a landmark act granting the Whanganui River - held sacred by the Māori - the status of a legal person in its own right. (Cf. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Inclusions: Aesthetics of the Capitalocene*, Sternberg Press, 2022, pp. 17-18) [Originally published as *Inclusions. Esthétique du Capitalocène*, PUF, 2021]]. A similar ontological shift occurred in 2014, when the Criminal Court of Cassation in Buenos Aires granted 'non-human personhood' to Sandra, a female orangutan. By recognising her right to *habeas corpus* - the protection against unlawful imprisonment - the court affirmed her fundamental right to life and liberty, marking the first time such status was accorded to an animal.

relationship with nature that stands in stark contrast to the one dominant in Europe, which stems from the nature/culture divide created during the Enlightenment. For example, in Quechua, a language widely spoken in the Andes, the word *ayllu* describes a network (a weaving) that unites humans and more-than-humans (animals, mountains, plants, etc.), connected by ties of kinship.

Nature as artistic material

Can art raise awareness of environmental issues? In art history, Land Art was a watershed moment in redefining the relationship between human creation and nature. Its ambition was to move the work beyond the confines of the gallery, placing it in a direct, critical dialogue with the modern world. Artists sought to sublimate nature by underscoring and redirecting its inherent phenomena. Today, these site-specific works have become historical heritage, occasionally creating friction with the very ecosystems they inhabit. The American artist Robert Smithson theorised the notion of entropy as the inevitable transformation of society and culture, echoing that of nature. There is a profound irony in the fact that his iconic *Spiral Jetty* (1970) - a 457-metre-long coil of basalt rocks rising from the shores of the Great Salt Lake in Utah - was recognised as a National Historic Landmark in late 2024. It must now be meticulously conserved to prevent its disappearance - the very entropy Smithson championed.

Another case, Walter De Maria's *The Lightning Field* (1977), highlights the correlation between cultural and environmental protection and the way in which the conservation of a Land Art work becomes a matter of land preservation. Located in a remote region of the high desert of western New Mexico, the work consists of 400 polished stainless steel poles arranged in a grid over an area of one mile by one kilometre. To protect the work and maintain its intended isolation, the Dia Foundation - the institution responsible for the work's conservation - curbs property development and land exploitation, finding itself compelled to purchase surrounding plots of land:

*'The Lightning Field [...] is not only a famous work of Land Art, steeped in the masculine tradition of monumental landscape intervention. It is also a surprising potential model for subversive land-use practices in the United States. In an unexpected twist, De Maria's isolationist fantasy - using land as a large-scale backdrop for a work of art - now offers a glimmer of hope by bringing land conservation to the fore.'*⁸

A contemporary re-evaluation of Land Art exposes a certain paradox: its relationship is often 'authoritarian', transposing the characteristics of the museum onto the landscape to

create an outdoor cultural industry, even while claiming to critique the art market. Furthermore, while the era of Land Art was born alongside early ecological movements, the works themselves were not always 'green'. Nevertheless, what remains striking about these works are the ways in which they allow us to experience time, whether through the performative experience of *The Lightning Field* or the evolution of *Spiral Jetty*. Conversely, many works that have sought to bring nature into the museum also testify to a form of visualising the temporality of the living. It is perhaps here that art succeeds in mediating a mode of attention, awakening a deeper consciousness of the environmental challenges of our era.

A Community of interests

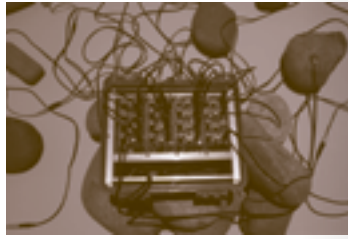
'We cannot remain neutral, neither in the forest nor in the city. The sooner we understand that we are part of this ecosystem, the sooner we can find our place within it and embrace the roles that are already waiting for us.'

Robert Zhao Renhui

This shift in perspective, which de-centres the human, necessitates the practice of acute observation. Whether it is anthropologist Anna L. Tsing's study of the matsutake mushroom and its resilience in damaged landscapes⁹, or Donna Haraway's exploration of the concept of *companioning*, inspired by her relationship with her dog, Cayenne¹⁰, these have become seminal references in contemporary art. For artists, this observational rigor is often rooted in research-led methodologies, where the work unfolds over the long durational time of a study - frequently

in collaboration with scientists or scholars from other disciplines. The objective is to merge art's visual and sensory approach with a rigorous expertise in the non-human.

In this exhibition *The Monkey and the Clay*, Mexican artist Tania Candiani presents a series of works that map the stages of fieldwork linked to non-human



Tania Candiani, *Percutor*, 2020

observation and the geological specifics of a site. Her practice is acutely attuned to human-induced disturbances, particularly the impact of migration controls along the US-Mexico border. Collaborating with scientists and composers, she staged a concert for animals (*For the Animals* being the overall title of the project) in Arizona's Papago Park, tailoring the composition to frequency ranges associated with pleasure or well-being in various different species. Her work thus frames cohabitation as an act of conciliation.

This notion of addressing the other is also central to the work of Japanese artist Shimabuku, whose practice frequently features animals to highlight the absurdity of human behaviour through a mirror effect. By documenting monkeys encountering a mound of ice inexplicably air-dropped into the desert, he underscores the adaptability of a species displaced from its natural habitat by human intervention.

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Robert Zhao Renhui, meanwhile, presents several projects structured as visual essays that challenge the conventions of traditional zoology. He observes what he terms 'New Nature' - the ways in which animals reclaim spaces long occupied by humans. These forms of cohabitation call into question the rigid binary between the natural and the artificial. To realise these projects, the artist spends extended periods of time in the field, working in total immersion; he utilises night-vision photography and camera traps, adopting the patient gaze of a biologist or a wildlife documentary film-maker.

Rather than exhibiting living beings among the artworks, the exhibition examines the relations within the living world, specifically through the prism of collaboration and non-human co-production.

Co-creation

'A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts many an architect to shame through the construction of its honeycomb cells.'
Karl Marx¹¹

Many philosophers have analysed human labour by measuring it against the ingenuity of nature. The spider, in particular, is a recurring figure across eras: the ancient philosopher Democritus believed it taught humans the art of weaving - a sentiment echoed by Montaigne: 'Most of the arts have been taught to us by animals... the spider to weave and sew, the swallow to build, the swan and nightingale music, and many animals, through imitation, the art of medicine.'¹² This transmission from animal to human is revisited with a touch of wit by philosopher Vinciane Despret, this time from the perspective of the creatures themselves - bees: 'Is it not said of us that we are nature's true architects? Was it not we who taught humans architecture?.' As for wasps: 'We can teach humans a thing or two. Some have said it was we who taught them the art of pottery.'¹³ This idea of human creation inspired by natural forms finds modern resonance in the very notion of biomimicry, which consists of modelling solutions to sustainable development on nature - a lineage stretching from Leonardo da Vinci's flying machines to contemporary architecture.

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In this exhibition, artists engage in direct dialogue with natural creative processes, informed by observation of these productions. Several works are co-created with the non-human, be it animal, plant or even the elements themselves: water, wind and so on.



AKI INOMATA
Passing her a piece of cloth,
video still, 2022

Japanese artist AKI INOMATA has dedicated her practice to interspecies collaboration (working with beavers and hermit crabs). She treats this unlikely relation as a collective creative process that respects the specific behaviours of each species. For INOMATA, this is not a unilateral relationship where humans control other living beings; rather, it is made possible through 'mediating elements' - often the animals'

11 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1, edited by Frederick Engels, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co., 1887.

12 Michel de Montaigne, 'An Apology for Raymond Sebond' [Apologie de Raimond Sebond], in *The Complete Essays*, 1580.

13 Vinciane Despret, *Le chez-soi des animaux* [The Home of Animals], Arles: Actes Sud, 2025, pp. 29-30.

own habitats - which allow for communication while avoiding direct human interference. In her work *Passing her a piece of cloth*, the artist provided pieces of fabric to bagworms, which they then wove into their protective cocoons. Typically, these larvae glean elements from their environment such as leaves and twigs, binding them with silk. The filmed bagworms integrated these fragments of human manufacture into their biological architecture.

Jessica Warboys' sea or river paintings always begin with contextual research into a specific body of water, encompassing its geography, topography, and mythology. For this exhibition, she produced a new work on the banks of the Charente, treating the river as the lead protagonist in the creative act. This form of animism aligns with ecological thought inspired by non-Western philosophies, where the process takes on the quality of a ritual. Warboys' method is deeply sensory, linked to scent and texture. She primes the canvas with beeswax to create patterns before submerging it in the river, surrendering the work to the agency of the current. Once pulled onto the bank, pigments are added while the fabric is still damp and once the canvas is dry, the wax is removed to reveal motifs amidst expanses of pigment. Suspended in the gallery, the monumental yet ethereal canvas becomes a site-specific recording of the landscape. The unpredictability of the process manifests the notion of collaboration - a form of creation that eludes the artist's total control, contingent as much upon her gestures as the agency of water and wind.

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In a similar vein, Trevor Yeung relinquishes the final form of his work to natural elements, evolving over time in response to shifts in atmospheric conditions. His installation *Earth to Earth (Terres-de-Haute-Charente)* brings together unfired clay tiles produced in the region. One portion of the tiles is displayed within the gallery, while the other is placed in the foundation's outdoor patio. The exterior iteration of the work, installed before of the opening of the exhibition, will have already begun to weather through exposure to the elements (sun, wind, rain). The control sample inside the gallery provides a point of comparison, a kind of before and after that resists definitive forecast.

Whether through Smithson's concept of entropy or Robert Zhao Renhui's idea of re-wilding developed in his research (the concept of 'New Nature', defined above), the more-than-human is never a static backdrop, but an entity in perpetual flux.

Questioning collaboration

'Species, all species, are constantly reshaping the world, perpetually drawn into dialogue and forced to strike pacts with one another.'

Emanuele Coccia¹⁴

While the notion of collaborating with the non-human is both seductive and poetic, the exhibition also serves as an invitation to approach this possibility with caution. Collaborative relationships (generally, even among humans) are complex, occasionally unpredictable, and can verge on instrumentalisation. How can we be certain of their reciprocity?

At first glance, humans clearly depend on non-humans far more than the reverse. The artists in this exhibition are under no illusions: 'Any collaboration with nature is necessarily asymmetrical, but one still tries,' Robert Zhao Renhui notes in an interview within this booklet.

And what of the indifference of the non-human? Lin May Saeed was perhaps the artist who probed this question most extensively, being herself a dedicated animal rights activist.

Although she shared her studio with rabbits, she rarely engaged in direct collaboration with the non-human. Instead, her work advocated for a form of reconciliation, crafting an alternative narrative of inter-species relations. Regarding the silence of animals, one of the artist's fables addresses this very topic: 'Another possibility

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Lin May Saeed
Alfil Relief/Elephant Relief (V03), 2021

would be that the animal is actually capable of speech, albeit very slowly. Centuries might pass before an animal utters the phrase "Please, don't kill me!", in an almost infinite succession of syllables. Rather like someone writing their name on the surface of the Moon. Depending on the species, it could take hundreds of thousands of years.¹⁵

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Interview in *Le Nouveau Magazine Littéraire*, Thursday 28 March 2019.

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'The Silence of the Animals', in Lin May Saeed, *Arrival of the Animals*, exhibition catalogue, Clark Art Institute, 2020. See also: Lorenzo Giusti in a collective conversation, a tribute to the artist Lin May Saeed, *Mousse Magazine* n°87, April 2024. Accessed online: <https://www.moussemagazine.it/magazine/lin-may-saeed-jochen-lempert-melanie-bujok-lorenzo-giusti-lorenzo-giusti-2024/>

Indeed, the difficulty in assessing relationships and collaboration lies largely in the absence of a common language.¹⁶ In Saeed's work, humans and non-humans are depicted side-by-side, sometimes as twins (the sculptural duo *Enkidu and Jackal*), or in scenes of liberation, where masked figures release animals from their cages (*The Liberation of Animals from their Cages XI*). For Saeed, the empathy and solicitude of interspecies relations were long absent from art history, overshadowed by the 17th-century tradition of hunting scenes and still lifes.¹⁷ One need only look to the singularity of a universe like that of Rosa Bonheur in the 19th century, whose work was instrumental in establishing animals and nature as political subjects in art.

Saeed, who studies speciesism through the lens of racism against other species, develops a practice that is reconciliatory rather than divisive, focusing on liberation rather than suffering.¹⁸ She creates a reparative representation of resistance, firmly believing that her art can heighten collective consciousness more effectively than her activist interventions.

In 2021, philosophers Antoine Chopot and Léna Balaud catalogued forms of interspecific activism linked to the concept of 'third nature'. Defined by anthropologists like Anna L. Tsing, this refers to that which manages to resist and weave spontaneous, unexpected relationships.¹⁹ By contrast, 'first nature' is the autonomous world which precedes us; 'second nature' denotes the way the capitalist economy has transformed ecosystems into working environments designed to generate profit.²⁰ Chopot and Balaud draw specifically on the example of agrarian communities in Argentina fighting Monsanto by wildly sowing 'super-weeds' that invade GMO crops, and naturalists blocking a construction project on the Loire by fostering a habitat for a pair of ospreys. These alliances recall the notion of mutual aid mentioned at the opening of this text.

16 There are, however, numerous documented cases of communication between humans and animals. To cite two prominent examples: Koko, a female gorilla raised by ethologist Penny Patterson, utilised over 1,000 signs from American Sign Language (ASL) to express her needs, convey emotions, and comment on her surroundings. She was capable, for instance, of requesting a pen to draw, or expressing sadness and joy. Koko also understood approximately 2,000 words of spoken English.

Alex, a celebrated African Grey parrot, studied by researcher Irene Pepperberg, demonstrated the ability to answer simple questions. His responses proved that rather than merely mimicking human speech, he grasped the link between the word and its corresponding object or quantity.

17 Interview with Lin May Saeed, *Arterritory*, January 2020.

Accessed online: https://arterritory.com/en/visual_arts/interviews/24501-why_havent_animals_revolted_against_humans_yet/
Mousse Magazine, *ibid*.

18 Léna Balaud and Antoine Chopot, *Nous ne sommes pas seuls : politique des soulèvements terrestres* [We Are Not Alone: Politics of Terrestrial Uprisings], Éditions du Seuil, 2021.

20 See also: 'Léna Balaud et Antoine Chopot : Alliances interspécifiques' [Interspecific Alliances], *Mouvement*, November 2021. Accessed online: <https://www.mouvement.net/societe/lena-balaud-et-antoine-chopot>

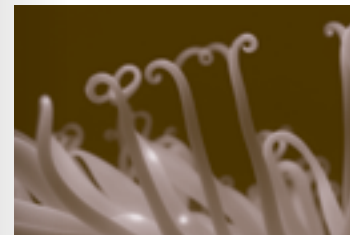
These forms of subversive resistance, which ally with the living to enact change, also echo ancestral modes of more-than-human cohabitation. Ancient and alternative narratives converge in the artists' work, combining to create a new imaginary, forming new representations to enrich collective thought and broaden the ecological imagination.

Fiction, technology and futurability

'Stories are both affirmative and interrogative. I believe the act of storytelling is vital to cultivate a mutual presence, a necessary step in learning to pay attention.'
Donna Haraway²¹

For the American philosopher and primatologist Donna Haraway, speculative fabulation is linked to everyday storytelling and the imagination. She insists on the form of the fable, the inspiration for the title of this exhibition and for several of its artists, such as Lin May Saeed, who wrote six fables in the early 2000s.

Vinciane Despret's *The home of animals*, is a fable told from the perspective of its animal protagonists. In the preamble to this narrative (originally a talk for children), Despret draws on a story by Ursula K. Le Guin - renowned for her use of science fiction. In 1985, Le Guin proposed a counter-history of Genesis: in this version Eve invites the animals to discard the names Adam had given them and rename themselves as they pleased. This tale exemplifies the use of fiction to critique dominant, authoritarian discourses regarding non-humans. By writing an alternative version of this mythic tale, Le Guin and Despret expand the reader's imagination and their ecological consciousness. This turn to narrative, and specifically to an alternative history of the past, mirrors Le Guin's 'carrier bag theory of fiction',²² which allows her to explore



Agnieszka Polska,
The Book of Flowers, video still, 2023

21 Donna Haraway, *Récits pour notre temps* [Stories for our time], PUL / La manufacture d'idées, 2024, p. 70

22 Ursula K. Le Guin, 'The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction', in *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places*, Grove Press, 1989 [First published in 1986].

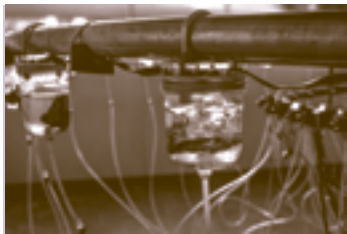
other possible narrations, notably feminist ones. She reminds us that the Neolithic revolution marks the beginning of the Anthropocene, the first substantial impact of human activity on nature, as it represents the moment when humans began to organise the exploitation of other species, notably through livestock farming, to produce food.

The primordial moment of interspecies equality is framed as a pre-history by Lin May Saeed who refers to the character of Enkidu, who lived among animals until he realised he is human, in the Epic of Gilgamesh.

Similarly, Agnieszka Polska's work, *The Book of Flowers*, presents a fictional history of the symbiosis that long ago united humans and flowers. This narrative upends traditional power dynamics, ending with an emancipation where humans no longer need flowers to reproduce. To flesh out this paracosm (a detailed universe linked to childhood), the artist mimics the style of a 1940s-50s scientific documentary, complete with a voice-over. Furthermore, she uses artificial intelligence to process archival botanical images, giving them surreal, textured apparitions. Technology here augments creative potential while situating the work in an indefinite time.

The speculative nature of ecology, with its vast timescales and deferred results, encourages artists to turn toward fiction. The de-centring of the human that we discussed finds a new locus in technology, where the dialectic between machine and living exposes our dependence on both machines and natural resources. Bagus Pandega's installation proposes a nexus between technology and the environment; the human is merely an intermediary, a 'hacker' who diverts the conventional exploitation of resources to denounce extractivism. *Hyperpnea Green* is a machine built by the artist that produces and releases oxygen, governed by the biofeedback and physiological signals of its constituent plants. The artist's intention is to highlight the interaction of the machine's components and the autonomy of these non-human interrelations.

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Bagus Pandega,
Hyperpnea Green, detail, 2024

Evoking the rhythm of respiratory movements, the project was born in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, which left patients with respiratory distress and caused oxygen shortages worldwide.

The relationship between technology and ecology remains ambivalent. For eco-Marxists, technology is largely responsible for the environmental crisis, whereas techno-solutionism maintains that technology will solve all problems related to global warming. This divergence of perspectives complicates the debate, particularly as technological innovation remains a site of immense economic contestation, further entrenching human domination and weakening attempts at alliances with the living. Other creative forms, however, can subvert this vision of technology, such as the Solarpunk science-fiction movement, which imagines a harmonious relationship between technology, nature, and society.²³

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Adam Flynn, *Solarpunk Manifesto*, 2014. Accessed online via Republic of the Bees: <https://www.republicofthebees.org/solarpunk-manifesto/>.

Rather than seeking solutions, the exhibition *The Monkey and the Clay* foregrounds the potential of artistic creation and its narrative forms to cultivate a new ecological imaginary. It centres on the premise of collaboration to illustrate the concept of interrelation, which resonates throughout ecological thought. From a profoundly optimistic perspective, it echoes theorist Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's concept of 'futurability', a poignant reminder that it is precisely at the heart of our current crisis that a better world lies dormant.²⁴

Emilie Villez, March 2026

Peripheral and legal notes: Barbara Villez

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Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *Futurability: The Age of Impotence and the Horizon of Possibility*, Verso Books, 2017.

Biographies

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Artists

TANIA CANDIANI

Born in 1974, Tania Candiani lives and works in Mexico City.

Her practice expands the idea of translation across visual, sonic, textual, and symbolic languages, with a sustained focus on sound and the politics of listening as tools for re-attuning human and more-than-human perception to the histories, ecologies, and technologies of communication.

Grounded in community-based, embodied processes, her work mobilizes collective and ritual experience while engaging histories of making and fabrication—bringing together craft traditions, oral knowledge, and interdisciplinary collaborations across art, literature, music, architecture, science, and labor. Through installations, performances, and research-driven projects that often take the form of interlaced, assembled, and sonified systems, she juxtaposes ancestral techniques with contemporary technologies to challenge linear narratives of progress and to surface overlooked epistemologies.

Candiani represented Mexico at the 56th Venice Biennale and has recently realized commissioned projects for major international biennials, including the 15th Shanghai Biennale and Helsinki Biennial (both 2025), and PAAD/Public Art Abu Dhabi Biennial (2024).

Her work is held in collections such as Tate, SFMOMA, LACMA, Pérez Art Museum Miami, and MUAC, and she has received fellowships including Guggenheim, Smithsonian Artist Research, and Arts at CERN.

AKI INOMATA

Born in 1983 in Tokyo, Japan; Aki Inomata lives and works in Tokyo.

Graduated with an M.F.A. from Tokyo University of the Arts, Department of Inter-Media Art, 2008, her works focus on how the act of “making” is not exclusive to mankind. She develops the process of collaboration between living and non-human creatures into artworks.

Recent exhibitions include “Bangkok Art Biennale 2024” (BACC, 2024), “Aichi Triennale 2022” (House of Oka, 2022), “Broken Nature” (MoMA, 2020), “The XXII Triennale di Milano” (Triennale Design Museum, 2019), “Thailand Biennale Krabi 2018” (Krabi city, 2018), “AKI INOMATA, Why Not Hand Over ‘Shelter’ to Hermit Crabs?” (Musée d’arts de Nantes, 2018). Her works are in the collections of MoMA, AGSA (the Art Gallery of South Australia), Castello di Rivoli Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, the National Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto, the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, and the Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art etc.

BAGUS PANDEGA

Born in 1985 in Jakarta, Bagus Pandega lives and works in Bandung, Indonesia where he received his Bachelor of Arts, majoring in sculpture and his Master of Fine Arts from the Faculty of Art and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology in 2008 and 2015 respectively.

Working primarily through the medium of installation, Bagus Pandega often challenges pre-conditioned relationships between objects and their viewer. In his works, Pandega assembles various electronic systems as ‘modules’ and explores objects such as voice

recorders, cassette and record players, lamps and electronic circuit boards— among others—to construct his works. Many of his artworks become activated through the interaction of movement, sound and light.

Pandega’s recent solo exhibitions include *Daya Benda*, Swiss Institute, New York, USA (2025); *Sumber Alam* at Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland (2025); *○* at ROH, Jakarta, Indonesia (2024); *A Pervasive Rhythm* at Yamamoto Gendai, Tokyo, Japan (2018). Selected group exhibitions include *Poets of Physics* at Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila, Philippines (2026); *Nafasan Bumi* at Singapore Art Museum, Singapore (2026). Pandega frequently collaborates with Kei Imazu, previous exhibitions including *Alien Shores*, White Cube Bernardsey, London, UK (2025); Bangkok Art Biennale: *Nurture Gaia* at Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, Bangkok, Thailand (2024); Frieze Seoul, COEX Convention & Exhibition Center, Seoul, South Korea (2022); *WAG/WAG!* at documenta fifteen, Hübner areal, Kassel, Germany (2022); *Declaring Distance: Bandung — Leiden* at Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung, Indonesia (2022). Furthermore, Pandega also participated in The 10th Asia Pacific Triennial at QAGOMA, Brisbane, Australia (2021-22); *Tiger Orchid* presented at Art Basel OVR: Miami Beach (2020); *Condo London* at Project Native Informant, London, UK (2020); Amsterdam Light Festival, Amsterdam, the Netherlands (2017).

After winning third place at Bandung Contemporary Art Awards #2, Pandega completed his first residency at Le Centre Intermondes, La Rochelle, France in 2012. A nominee of the 2016 Sovereign Art Prize, Pandega had also collaborated with Adi Purnomo and Irwan Ahmett in presenting *Freedome*, Indonesia Pavilion at the London Design Biennale: *Utopia by Design* in 2016.

AGNIESZKA POLSKA

Born in 1985 in Lublin, Poland, Agnieszka Polska is a visual artist and film director who lives and works in Berlin.

She uses computer-generated media to reflect on individuals and their social responsibility in the context of environments driven by the flow of information. She renders the ethical, political and societal challenges of our time into immersive, meditative films and installations, using cinematic storytelling and affective technologies to address the perpetual negotiation between humans and technology. Often constructed from affective sound and visual stimuli, Polska’s works examine processes of influence and legitimization in the fields of language, consciousness and history.

She presented her works in international venues, including the New Museum and the MoMA in New York, Centre Pompidou and Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Tate Modern in London, and Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC. Her solo exhibitions were organized by Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, Frye Art Museum, Seattle, Nottingham Contemporary, Salzburger Kunstverein, among others. She also took part in the 57th Venice Biennale, 11th Gwangju Biennale, 19th and 24th Biennale of Sydney, 14th Shanghai Biennale, and 13th Istanbul Biennial. In 2018, she was awarded German Preis der Nationalgalerie.

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LIN MAY SAEED

German-Iraqi artist Lin May Saeed was born in 1973 in Würzburg, Germany. She grew up in Wiesbaden within a multicultural family, with a German background on her mother's side and an Iraqi background on her father's side.

From 2001 until her death in 2023, Lin May Saeed lived and worked in Berlin. She studied sculpture at the Düsseldorf Art Academy from 1995 to 2001. It was there that she became interested in animal rights, studied the animal rights philosopher Tom Regan and took part in corresponding actions (e.g. protests against the fur trade). She has lived vegan ever since.

Lin May Saeed has been dealing for almost two decades with the relationship between humans and animals, the destruction of the habitat of the animal world by humans, beginning with the settling down in the Neolithic period.

Her sculptures, reliefs, gates and installations with silhouette deal with the exploitation of animals, their liberation, the utopia of a peaceful coexistence between animals and humans, and the self-seeking meanness of the latter.

Saeed works are mostly made of so-called "poor materials" such as Styrofoam, cardboard or tool steel. Her iconographic frame of reference includes Egyptian statuary, Greco-Roman sculpture and natural history museum displays, among other things.

Saeed's works are not doctrinal at all nor they have a moralizing undertone. They are rather narrative and humorous.

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SHIMABUKU

Born in 1969 in Kobe, Japan, Shimabuku currently lives in Naha, Okinawa and works around the world.

Since the early 1990s, he has traveled to many places, both in Japan and abroad, and his site-specific works are related to the places and the lives and cultures of the people living there. He produces performances, films, sculptures and installation works related to new forms of communication. His work sometimes extends to the relationship between creatures and humans. His style, which is full of poetic sentiment and humour, provokes us in a metaphorical way, and has been acquiring international acclaim.

Shimabuku has participated in many major international exhibitions, including the 57th Venice Biennale (2017), 14th Lyon Biennale (2017), 12th Havana Biennale (2015), 9th Taipei Biennale (2014), 11th Sharjah Biennial (2013), the 27th São Paulo Biennial (2006), the Liverpool Biennial (2006) and the 11th Biennial of Sydney (1998).

Major recent solo exhibitions include Centro Botín, Santander, Spain (2024); Museion: Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Bolzano, Italy (2023); Wiels Centre for Contemporary Art, Brussels, Belgium (2022); National New Museum of Monaco, Monaco (2021); Credac Contemporary Art Centre of Ivry, France (2018); Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland (2014) and Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, U.K. (2013).

JESSICA WARBOYS

Born in 1977, Jessica Warboys lives and works in Bergen, Norway and Suffolk, UK.

Graduated with a Master of Fine Art in Sculpture from the Slade School of Fine Art in London, her practice exists in the space between ritual, painting, performance and film. Working with pigments, beeswax, and costume, Warboys' materials and methods are shaped by bodies of water, landscape, histories and myth, whilst pertaining to the present. The immediacy of gesture and the place of making are inscribed into the surfaces of her work, exploring themes of nature, identity and the poetic.

Recent group exhibitions include Layers of Wildness, Centre Rhénan d'Art Contemporain, Altkirch, France (2025); Dialogues with Turner: Evoking the Sublime, Museum of Art Pudong, Shanghai, China (2024); and the solo exhibition ANTIGONES NET, Kunstnersenter Bergen, Norway (2024).

TREVOR YEUNG

Born in 1988 in Guangdong Province in China, Trevor Yeung graduated from the Academy of Visual Arts at Hong Kong Baptist University in 2010. Yeung currently lives and works in Hong Kong.

In his work, Trevor Yeung uses botanic ecology, horticulture, aquarium systems and installations as metaphors that reference the emancipation of everyday aspirations towards human relationships. Yeung draws inspiration from intimate and personal experiences, culminating in works that range from image-based works to large-scale installations. Obsessed with structures, he creates different scales of systems which allow him to exert control upon living beings, including plants, animals, as well as spectators.

In 2024, he represented Hong Kong at the Venice Biennale. He recently presented solo exhibitions at M+ in Hong Kong and at the Kestner Gesellschaft in Hanover. In 2026, for his first museum exhibition in Europe, Trevor Yeung has been invited to take over the nave of the CAPC to unfold his magical and mysterious universe

His artwork is held in the collections of the Centre Pompidou, Paris; M+ Museum, Hong Kong; Stiftung Skulpturenpark Köln, Cologne; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Kadist Art Foundation, Paris and San Francisco and FRAC Alsace.

ROBERT ZHAO RENHUI

Born in 1983, Robert Zhao Renhui is a Singapore-based artist whose practice examines the shifting relationships between humans and non-human species across altered landscapes.

Working primarily with photography, video, and long-term ecological observation, he investigates how ecosystems absorb disturbance and reorganise around human infrastructure, abandonment, and classification. His projects often unfold over several years and across multiple sites, tracing patterns of adaptation rather than singular events. Recent bodies of work have focused on secondary forests in Singapore, the red crab migration on Christmas Island, deer populations in the United Kingdom and Japan, and sloth bears in Hampi, India.

In 2024, he represented Singapore at the Venice Biennale with *Seeing Forest*, a project centred on long-term observation of urban forest ecologies. His practice continues to explore how ecological systems persist, mutate, and stabilise within landscapes shaped by extraction, urbanisation, and neglect.

Artistic crew

EMILIE VILLEZ

Curator of the exhibition

Emilie Villez is a curator based in Paris. Her projects explore the entanglement of historical narratives with current socio-political issues. For over fifteen years, she has been supporting and mediating decolonial practices, by working with practitioners of different generations and geographies. She has recently curated projects about the traces of war in landscapes and memory, and is developing research around interspecies relations as an entry point into environmental issues in contemporary art.

In 2026, she is working on two exhibitions at Frac Ile-de-France (Paris) opening in 2026: *Le Syndrome de Bonnard*, a group exhibition in two venues curated with Le Bureau/, and a solo exhibition of artist Chloé Quenum.

Emilie Villez is an advisor to the KADIST collection, after directing the Paris space from 2013 to 2023, where she developed a local program and international institutional collaborations. In particular, she presented the first exhibitions in France of Zhou Tao, Shoosie Sulaiman, Haig Avazian, Aslı Çavuşoğlu and Xaviera Simmons.

Emilie Villez has curated exhibitions at Contemporary Art Centre Vilnius (Lithuania), KADIST Paris, Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Beaux-arts de Paris, V-A-C Foundation and Museum of Modern Art Moscow, Clark House Initiative, Bombay (India).

ATELIER CRAFT

Scenography

Located in Saint-Ouen, in a former rag factory that has been thoughtfully rehabilitated, Atelier CRAFT cultivates a dynamic hybrid practice that blends design and craftsmanship. The studio is dedicated to creating sustainable visions in design and architecture by challenging our perceptions of materials, gestures, and production processes.

By integrating design offices with construction workshops, the studio ensures comprehensive management of each project, with a clear objective: breaking down barriers between disciplines. Every project becomes an opportunity to craft a shared narrative and pioneer innovative collective approaches.

Committed to experimenting with circular economies, the studio places a strong emphasis on the materials used and their potential for reuse.

THÉO DAVID GEHIN

Graphic design

Théo David Gehin, an independent graphic designer based in Paris, navigates the multidisciplinary realm of graphic design, seamlessly blending visual identity creation, publishing, imagery, and signage. Regularly collaborating with cultural institutions, artists, and scenographers, Gehin strives to transcend traditional design by embedding it into the physical world. Driven by the belief that production processes themselves generate meaning, he pushes the boundaries of printing techniques, repurposes materials, and meticulously attends to shaping methods, infusing his work with genuine materiality.

From overarching artistic direction to the design of editorial works, each

project breaks free from the conventional confines of graphic design. Theo is dedicated to imbuing the visual narratives he crafts with a tangible, artisanal, and sensitive dimension, inviting viewers into a rich sensory and narrative experience.

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

Created in 1917, the Fondation d'entreprise Martell, located in the heart of Cognac, is a unique venue dedicated to contemporary creation and innovation. It empowers designers, artists, and researchers engaged in reflecting on the major issues of our time, such as ecological transition and complexities of modern life. Through its residences, workshops, exhibitions, and cultural programs, the Foundation fosters interdisciplinary collaboration and encourages experimentation. Grounded in Cognac's rich ancestral heritage, it connects local roots with a global perspective, creating ripples of change that extend far beyond the region.

Open to everyone, the Foundation invites visitors to discover original works, participate in workshops, and explore a space where creativity and dialogue shape the future.

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The Monkey and the Clay
from May 30, 2026 to January 3, 2027

Concept & curatorship: Emilie Villez

Artists Tania Candiani, AKI INOMATA, Bagus Pandega, Agnieszka Polska, Lin May Saeed, Shimabuku, Jessica Warboys, Trevor Yeung, Robert Zhao Renhui

Scenography Atelier CRAFT

Graphic Design Théo David Gehin (exhibition)
Dove Perspicacius (Kid's Book)

Translation & proofreading Sadie Fletcher

Press & communications L'art en plus

Galleries & institutional Estate de Lin May Saeed & Jacky Strenz

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Trevor Yeung,
Earth to Earth, detail, 2024
Lahore Biennale. Photo © Amna Zuberi

Fondation d'entreprise Martell
16 avenue Paul Firino Martell
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May 30, 2026 — January 3, 2027
Wednesday — Sunday: 2-7pm
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