



FEBRUARY 01 — MAY 13, 2023



MORE THAN HUMAN

Ursule Biemann / Lindsey french / Grace Grothaus /
Dolleen Tisawii'ashii Manning + Mary Bunch / Suzanne
Morrissette / Joel Ong / Rasa Smite + Raitis Smits /
Jane Tingley with Faadhi Fauzi + Ilze [Kavi] Briede

CURATED BY Jane Tingley



ONSITE
GALLERY

This publication
accompanies
the exhibition,
more-than-human,
presented at
Onsite Gallery,
OCAD University,
Toronto.

EXHIBITION

more-than-human
February 1 to May 13, 2023
Onsite Gallery
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Toronto, ON M5V 0H4

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Jane Tingley

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more-than-human

WRITTEN BY: Jane Tingley

The concept of animacy hierarchy, introduced in Mel Y. Chen's book, *Animacies*, describes a worldview that divides those that seem to be alive from those that are deemed to not be living: birds, trees, rocks.

This hierarchical organization effectively privileges human life over all other lifeforms—including vertebrate and invertebrate, insect, and vegetal. An underlying source of this animacy hierarchy view, as argued by ecofeminist and philosopher Val Plumwood, is the strongly dualistic structure of Western thought: man/woman, mind/body, individual/surroundings, culture/nature. This bifurcating mindset includes the human-nature dualism, a conceptual schism that has rendered those that do not look like us, nor speak like us “as an insignificant Other, a homogenized, voiceless, blank slate of existence . . .”¹ It is a “perception of nature” that has given rise to economic and societal structures that see the natural environment as nothing more than a resource for exploitation, and certainly not part of our sphere of moral consideration. In short, it is a way of thinking that underwrites and justifies the “domination of the Earth.”²

It is important to recognize that many cultures, including Indigenous Peoples worldwide, have neither these conceptual schemas nor a divisive worldview, but rather see nature as possessing more-than-human intelligence, consider plants and trees as individuals, and understand that plant, animal, and human realms interpenetrate, sharing both heritage and substance. There are many commonalities between recent Western scientific discoveries and these ancient, long-standing Indigenous knowledges and epistemologies. Colonialism and industrial capitalism have all but destroyed a way of life and a perspective that sees the natural world as vibrant, alive, and filled with non-human lifeforms—both visible and non, both alive and not. Western science is only now confirming what has been understood by other peoples for centuries if not millennia: that trees are living beings, have complex sensory systems, interact with their surroundings, make decisions and change their behaviours, are highly social, have families, can learn, and even communicate and care for each other. These discoveries challenge the concept of plant blindness.³ Recent events like the COVID-19 pandemic have demonstrated without a doubt that the body is not separate from its environment. To achieve a more sustainable life on the planet, we need to rethink, reconceptualize, and resituate everything “human” in relation to the environment accordingly. To recognize how deeply interconnected we are within a larger, more complex system, where all parts of that system are equally important and form a dynamic whole, is ultimately an ethical matter.



Ursula Biemann, *Forest Mind*, 2021, sync 2-channel video installation, 31 minutes

The exhibition *more-than-human* grew out of a research project that I have been working on since 2018 entitled *Foresta-Inclusive*.

The title of this work came from the book *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* by Robert Pogue Harrison, where he examines the historic relations between Western civilization and forests, and identifies “that the word itself, *foresta* means literally ‘outside.’” Human civilization is outside of the forest, and the forest is outside of the human experience. *Foresta-Inclusive* emerged from a desire to reintegrate the forest and the human and to find ways through art making to inspire a deeper sense of empathy and responsibility for the forest. The related, but wider overarching goal for this research project is to completely unsettle the mental habit of assuming that humans are superior to everything else on the planet. In totality the exhibition will illustrate inclusively, somatically

and experientially that we are participants in a more-than-linguistic dialogue with many parts of a larger more complex ecosystem—a system that is comprised of singular voices and stories shared through scent, vibration, colour, and other phenomena beyond human sensory capability.

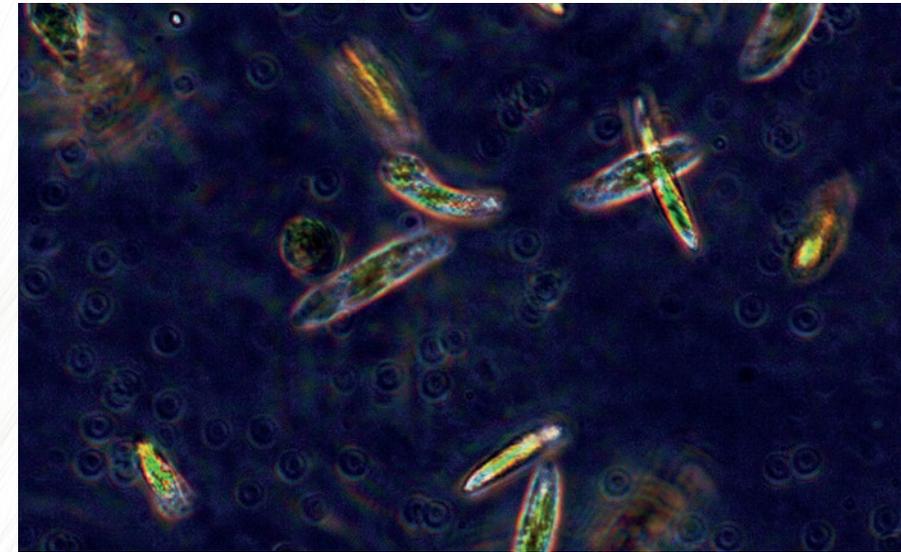
Art has a tremendous capacity for telling stories about the experiences of others, drawing the viewer into these stories and encouraging the development of empathy. Art at the intersection of science and technology is uniquely positioned to tell more-than-human stories as the artists repurpose and reorient the scientific and technological tools of “visualizing” complex, invisible phenomena operating everywhere yet beyond human sensory perception. Once we can both sense the world from a humanist, plural perspective and think of the world from multiple (but not dualistic, not hierarchical) perspectives, it becomes possible to have productive discussions that can lead to real inclusive change. It is essential that we shift our collective understanding about the sophistication and vitality of non-human, even what we might consider “non-living,” agents to develop an ethics of inclusion that would enable a radical transformation of our perceptual capacities, our conceptual schemes, and our laws, such as the legal “rights” of nature. As scholar T. J. Demos suggests in his book *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology*, “art holds the promise of initiating exactly these kinds of creative perceptual and philosophical shifts, offering new ways of comprehending ourselves and our relation to the world differently . . .”⁴

The exhibition *more-than-human* is a group show of media artworks at the intersection of these four promising nodes: art, science, Indigenous worldviews, and technology. The works in the show speculatively and poetically use multimodal storytelling as a vehicle for interpreting, mattering, and embodying more-than-human ecologies, with the goal of critically and emotionally engaging with the important work of de-centring the human, even while the viewer is that human. Many of the works use technological and scientific tools as entry points for witnessing and interacting with these more-than-human worlds, as they help visualize phenomena beyond human sensory perception while nevertheless situating us within them. Together the works in the show offer embodied and felt perspectives that interweave scientific and Indigenous perspectives, opening the wild possibility of a *discovery* being a *remembering*.

Human ontologies and stories are not the only way to understand and thus structure the living world. Many stories are unfolding in every direction at once, with just as many narratives and perspectives.⁵ The storytelling of microbes, protozoa, mycelia, bees, and plants are not necessarily about the world we humans are building. The humbling act of recognizing that we are not the only ones, not at the centre and not even the subject of others' conversations can support our rethinking of our "truths" about ourselves, our place in the world, and the nature of our relationship to multiplicity and difference. Beyond helping us perceive the complexity of the world around us by visualizing and studying

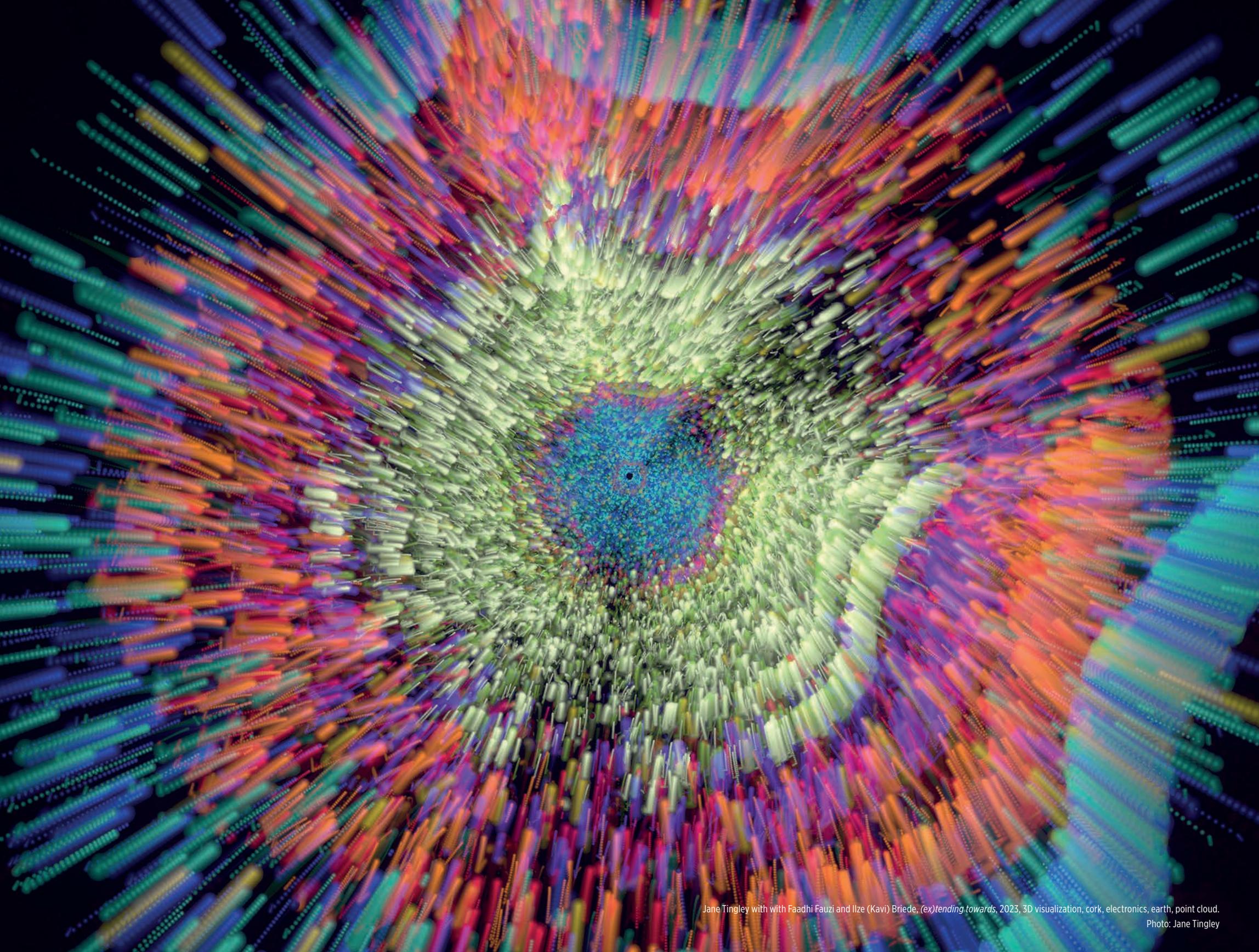
phenomenon that exist beyond limited human sensory perceptions, this recognition also shifts our imagining of the impact we have on the planet—on life.

Joel Ong, *Untitled Interspecies Umwelten*, 2021-, photo still of live microscopic feed. Photo: Joel Ong



The artworks in this exhibition ask: What does it mean to “be alive” and to “have agency”?

How does re-training ourselves to slow down and listen to voices that have been marginalized or forgotten for millennia actually work? What could it mean to be “in dialogue” with something that does not share the same language or spatio-temporal reality? Once we authentically acknowledge the aliveness of something, what are the concrete ethical implications of that recognition that spill beyond the experience of an art exhibition in which that acknowledgement happened?



Jane Tingley with with Faadhi Fauzi and Ilze (Kavi) Briede, *(ex)tending towards*, 2023, 3D visualization, cork, electronics, earth, point cloud.
Photo: Jane Tingley

Atmospheric Forest

RASA SMITE + RAITIS SMITS



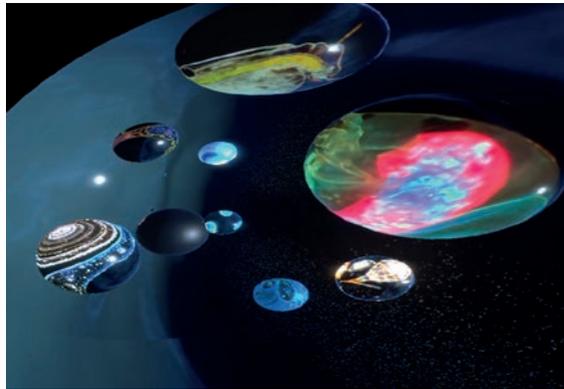
Dawning

GRACE GROTHAUS



Emerging from the Water

DOLLEEN TISAWII'ASHII MANNING
+ MARY BUNCH



(ex)tending towards

JANE TINGLEY WITH FAADHI
FAUZI + ILZE [KAVI] BRIEDE



In creating *Atmospheric Forest* the artists worked with scientists researching the Pfywald Alpine coniferous forest in Switzerland, a forest suffering from drought due to climate change. The work visualizes the complex and hard to understand relations between the forest, climate change, and atmosphere. It is an outcome of the research project *Ecodata-Ecomedia-Ecoaesthetics*, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, hosted by the FHNW Academy of Art and Design in Basel, in collaboration with the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL.

Dawning identifies the circadian rhythm as a chorus that all creatures on the planet participate in. She visualizes the canopy of the forest, affected in real time by live forest data, inviting the human to join into a rhythmic global song that connects all living things.

Emerging from the Water (Resonance) is an output of *EarthDiver: Land Based Worlding*, a MITACS-funded project at the Peripheral Visions Co-Lab, in partnership with Native Women in the Arts. The project is also supported by VISTA - Vision: Science to Applications / Canada Research Excellence Fund (CREF), and the SSHRC Canada Research Chairs Program. Creative Technology by Michaela Pnacekova (VR and Unreal) and Christina Dovalis (OffWorld 360 videography in Unreal, projection mapping).

(ex)tending towards uses live sensor data collected from the rare Charitable Reserve in Cambridge Ontario to drive a 3D visualization, a scent sculpture, and other phenomenon to create experiential installations that propose a new temporal experience when engaging with the forest.

Forest Mind

URSULA BIEMANN



Forest Mind is a film inspired by several years the artist spent collaborating with the Indigenous Inga community in Colombia. This film explores the intelligence of nature and the intelligence in nature, viewed from both a Western science and shamanic perspective. The film looks at DNA technology—a Western approach to understanding what the Inga people understand to be a vital force that permeates all that exists.

one and the same

SUSAN MORRISSETTE



one and the same investigates the ways worldviews are reflected in our ideas and relationships with landscape. The work sets up a one-to-one relation between viewer and landscape that enables the viewer to engage and consider their own impact on the environment.

Phytovision

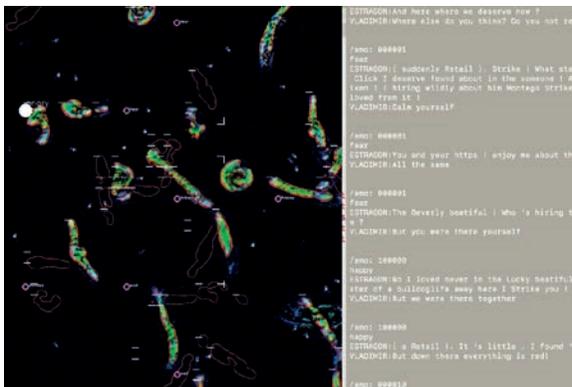
LINDSEY FRENCH



Phytovision asks the viewer to become plant, by offering an environment that filters the world through the sensory realities of vegetal life. The viewer can see through the same colour spectrum, hear through vibration, and smell the world of vegetal life.

Untitled Interspecies Umwelten

JOEL ONG



Untitled Interspecies Umwelten is an artwork that challenges the idea that language is a communicative structure that is human determined. Using a computer system, he speculates about ways in which interspecies communication structures might look.

Combined, the works in the show weave a story that tells a tale of symbiosis, intersections, and more-than-human relationality. The works combine scientific, philosophical, and Indigenous perspectives to create an experiential tapestry that asks the viewer to reconsider, reorient, and rethink relationships with the more-than-human. Asking again: Once we are shifted, once we authentically acknowledge the aliveness of the more-than-human, what are the concrete ethical implications of that recognition that spill beyond the experience of an art exhibition in which that acknowledgement happened? Has the concept of accountability not also shifted?



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- ¹ Matthew Hall, *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany* (State University of New York Press, 2011).
- ² Hall, *Plants as Persons*.
- ³ Plant blindness refers to the phenomenon of humans overlooking plants as living beings. See James H. Wandersee and Elisabeth E. Schussler, "Preventing Plant Blindness," *The American Biology Teacher* 61(2) (1999): 82–86.
- ⁴ T. J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (Sternberg Press, 2016), 19.
- ⁵ Karen Houle, "Symmetry and Asymmetry in Conceptual and Morphological Formations," in *From Deleuze and Guattari to Posthumanism: Philosophies of Immanence*, eds. Christine Daigle and Terrance H. McDonald (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022).

Biographies



URSULA BIEMANN

is an artist, author and video essayist. Her artistic practice is research oriented and involves fieldwork from Greenland to Amazonia, where she investigates climate change and the ecologies of oil, ice, forests and water. In her multi-layered videos, she interweaves vast cinematic landscapes with documentary footage, science fiction poetry and academic findings to narrate a changing planetary reality. In 2018, Biemann was commissioned by Museo de Arte, Universidad Nacional de Colombia in the co-creation of a new Indigenous University in the South of Colombia led by the Inga people in which she contributes the online platform *Devenir Universidad*. Her recent video installation *Forest Mind* (2021) emerges from this long-term collaboration. She has published numerous books, including *Forest Mind* (2022) and the audiovisual online monograph *Becoming Earth* on her ecological video works 2011-2021. Biemann has exhibited internationally with recent solo exhibitions at MAMAC, Nice and the Centre culturel suisse, Paris. She is appointed Doctor honoris causa in

Humanities by the Swedish University Umea, and has received the 2009 Prix Meret Oppenheim, the Swiss Grand Award for Art, and the 2022 Zurich Art Award.

WWW.GEOBODIES.ORG



MARY BUNCH

is a media artist, Canada Research Chair, and Associate Professor, Cinema and Media Arts at York University. Through theoretical inquiry and collaborative research creation, Bunch mobilizes queer, feminist, disability and decolonial frameworks to better understand peripheral worldmaking imaginaries in media arts and intermedial performance. She is co-editor of a special issue on Access Aesthetics in Public, Principal Investigator on the research creation project *Pluriversal Worlding with Extended Reality* (SSHRC Insight) and co-investigator on *Earthdiver: Land-Based Worlding* (MITACS). Dr Bunch is co-director of the Peripheral Visions Co-Lab, Executive Committee member of Sensorium: Centre for Digital Arts and Technology, a core member of Vision: Science to Applications (VISTA), a Fellow at the Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, and an Affiliate of Revision Centre for Art and Social Justice.



LINDSEY FRENCH [SHE/THEY] is a settler artist, educator and writer whose work engages in multi-sensory signaling within ecological and technological systems. She has exhibited widely including at the Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago), the International Museum of Surgical Science (Chicago), Pratt Manhattan Gallery (New York), the Miller Gallery for Contemporary Art (Pittsburgh), and SixtyEight Art Institute (Copenhagen). Recent publications include chapters for *Ambiguous Territory: Architecture, Landscape, and the Postnatural* (Actar, 2022), *Olfactory Art and The Political in an Age of Resistance* (Routledge, 2021), *Why Look at Plants* (Brill, 2019), and poetry for the journal *Forty-Five*. They earned an interdisciplinary BA in Environment, Interaction, and Design (Hampshire College), and an MFA in Art and Technology Studies (School of the Art Institute of Chicago). Newly based in the prairie landscape of Treaty 4 territory in Regina, Saskatchewan, french teaches as an Assistant Professor in Creative Technologies in the Faculty of Media, Art, and Performance at the University of Regina.

WWW.LINDSEYFRENCH.COM



GRACE GROTHAUS is a computational media artist whose research explores ecosystemic human and plant relationships in relation to the present global climate crisis and speculative futures. She is interested in art's potential to foster empathy with more-than-human worlds. Frequently collaborative, Grace works with scientists, engineers, musicians and other visual and performing artists. Her research-creation is expressed as physical computing installations which take place both outdoors or in the gallery and often center around the sensing and visualization of invisible environmental phenomena. Her artworks have been exhibited widely including at the International Symposium of Electronic Art (Barcelona, ES & Durban, SA), Environmental Crisis: Art & Science (London, UK), Cité Internationale des Arts (Paris, FR), and the World Creativity Biennale (Rio de Janeiro, BR). Grothaus has received numerous awards including from the United States National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts. Currently she is working towards a PhD in Digital Media from York University where she has been named a VISTA scholar and a Graduate Fellow of Academic Distinction.



DOLLEEN TISAWII'ASHII MANNING

is an interdisciplinary artist and Queen's National Scholar in Anishinaabe Language, Knowledge, and Culture (ALKC) in the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies at Queen's University. Manning has expertise in Anishinaabe ontology, mniidoo interrelationality, phenomenology, and art. A member of Kettle and Stoney Point First Nation, her primary philosophical influence and source of creativity is her early childhood grounding in Anishinaabe onto-epistemology. She is Principal Investigator of Earthdiver: Land-Based Worlding (MITACS), and Co-Investigator on Pluriversal Worlding with Extended Reality. Manning co-directs the cross-institutional Peripheral Visions Co-Lab (York and Queen's). She is an affiliate of Revision Centre for Art and Social Justice, and Fellow of The International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation (IICSI).



SUZANNE MORRISSETTE [SHE/HER]

is an artist, curator, and scholar who is currently based out of Toronto. Her father's parents were Michif- and Cree-speaking Metis with family histories tied to the Interlake and Red River regions and Scrip in the area now known as Manitoba. Her mother's parents came from Canadian-born farming families descended from United Empire loyalists and Mennonites from Russia. Morrissette was born and raised in Winnipeg and is a citizen of the Manitoba Metis Federation. As an artistic researcher Suzanne's interests include: family and community knowledge, methods of translation, the telling of in-between histories, and practices of making that support and sustain life. Her two recent solo exhibitions, What does good work look like? and translations recently opened in Toronto (Gallery 44) and Montreal (daphne art centre) respectively. Her work has appeared in numerous group exhibitions such as Lii Zoot Taysr (Other Worlds), an exhibition of Metis artists working with concepts of the unknowable, and the group exhibition of audio-based work about waterways called FLOW with imagineNATIVE Film + Media Art Festival. Morrissette holds a PhD from York University in Social and Political Thought. She currently holds the position of

Assistant Professor and Graduate Program Director for the Criticism and Curatorial Practices and Contemporary Art, Design, and New Media Histories Masters programs at OCAD University.

WWW.SUZANNEMORRISSETTE.COM



JOEL ONG [PHD, MSC.BIOART] is a media artist whose works connect scientific and artistic approaches to the environment, developed from more than a decade of explorations in sound, installation and socially conscious art. His conceptual explorations revolve around metaphors of distance, connectivity, assiduously reworking this notion of the ‘environment’ - how different tools and scales of observation reveal diverse biotic and abiotic relationalities, and how these continually oscillate between natural and computational worlds. His works have been shown at internationally at the Currents New Media Festival, Nuit Blanche Toronto, Seattle Art Museum, the Gregg Museum of Art and Design, the Penny Stamps Gallery and the Ontario Science Centre, etc. Joel is Associate Professor in Computational Arts and Director of Sensorium: The Centre for Digital Arts and Technology at York University, in Toronto, Canada.

His research has been funded by such as SSHRC, eCampus Ontario, Women and Gender Equality Canada.

WWW.ARKFREQUENCIES.COM



RASA SMITE AND RAITIS SMITS are Riga and Karlsruhe based artists and co-founders of RIXC Center for New Media Culture in Riga, co-curators of RIXC Art and Science Festival, chief-editors of Acoustic Space, as well as co-chairs of recently founded NAIA - Naturally Artificial Intelligence Art association in Karlsruhe, Germany. Together they create visionary and networked artworks—from pioneering internet radio experiments in the 1990s, to artistic investigations in electromagnetic spectrum and collaborations with radio astronomers, and more recent “techno-ecological” explorations. Their projects have been nominated (Purvitis Prize 2019, 2021,

International Public Arts Award - Euroasia region 2021), awarded (Ars Electronica 1998, Falling Walls - Science Breakthrough 2021) and shown widely including at the Venice Architecture Biennale, Latvian National Museum of Arts, House of Electronic Arts in Basel, Ars Electronica Festival in Linz, and other venues, exhibitions and festivals in Europe, US, Canada and Asia.

RASA SMITE

holds a PhD in sociology of media and culture; her thesis Creative Networks. In the Rear-View Mirror of Eastern European History (11) has been published by the The Amsterdam Institute for Network Cultures. Currently she is a Professor of New Media Art at Liepaja University, and Senior Researcher at FHNW Academy of Art and Design in Basel, Switzerland.

RAITIS SMITS

holds his doctoral degree in arts, and he is a Professor at the Art Academy of Latvia. In 2017 Raitis was a Fulbright Researcher in the Graduate Center of NYC.

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JANE TINGLEY

is an artist, curator, Director of the SLOlab: Sympoietic Living Ontologies Lab and Associate Professor at York University. Her studio work combines traditional studio practice with new media tools and spans responsive/ interactive installation, performative robotics, and telematically connected distributed sculptures/installations. Her work is interdisciplinary in nature and explores the creation of spaces and experiences that push the boundaries between science and magic, interactivity and playfulness, and offer an experience to the viewer that is accessible both intellectually and technologically. Using distributed technologies, her current work investigates the hidden complexity found in the natural world and explores the deep interconnections between the human and non-human relationships. As a curator her interests lie at the intersection of art, science, and technology with a special interest in collaborative creativity as impetus for innovation and discovery. Recent exhibitions include Hedonistika (2014) at the Musée d'art contemporain (Mtl, CA), INTERACTION (2016) and Agents for Change (2020) at THE MUSEUM (Kitchener, CA). As an artist she has participated in exhibitions and festivals in the Americas, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe - including translife -

International Triennial of Media Art at the National Art Museum of China, Beijing, Elektra Festival in Montréal (CA) and the Künstlerhaus in Vienna (AT). She received the Kenneth Finkelstein Prize in Sculpture (CA), the first prize in the iINTERFACES - Interactive Art Competition (PT).



Lindsey french, *Phytovision*, 2018-2019

Free Public Events

Wednesday, February 01, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

OPENING RECEPTION

In-person at Onsite Gallery

Join us for the public launch of the exhibition, with a land acknowledgement and opening remarks.

Thursday, February 02, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

MORE-THAN HUMAN ARTISTS' PANEL DISCUSSION PART 1

In-person at Onsite Gallery and Live Streamed Online

Listen to a selection of the artists in *more-than-human* as they introduce their artworks and engage in a moderated discussion and Q+A about their practice and its multiple intersections.

Wednesday, March 23, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

MULTIPLICITIES AND PLURALITY: CURATOR JANE TINGLEY IN CONVERSATION WITH DR. KAREN HOULE

In-person at Onsite Gallery

Join Dr Karen Houle for an introductory talk on basic premises of Cartesian humanism followed by an exhibition tour discussion of the artworks in that context with Jane Tingley.

Upcoming Exhibition

Friday, April 07, 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.

SCREENING OF FOREST MIND AND Q+A WITH URSULA BIEMANN

In-person at Onsite Gallery (199 Richmond Street West) and Live Streamed Online

Forest Mind (31 minutes) tackles the underlying concepts that distinguish the Indigenous knowledge systems from that of modern science, gaging the limits of rationalism which has dominated Western thinking for the last 200 years.

Saturday, April 29, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

MORE-THAN HUMAN ARTISTS' PANEL DISCUSSION PART 2

In-person at Onsite Gallery and Live Streamed Online

Listen to a selection of the artists in *more-than-human* as they introduce their artworks and engage in a moderated discussion and Q+A about their practice and its multiple intersections.

Saturday, May 13, 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.

GUIDED NATURE AND FOREST THERAPY WALK

High Park

Join us for a slow paced, sensory-based guided walk that connects you with the healing power of the natural world. Space is limited, advance registration required.

June 14 to December 9, 2023

ON AMERICANITY AND OTHER BELONGING MATTERS

Curated by Analays Alvarez Hernandez and Colette Laliberté

Eight artists from Bogotá, Montréal and Toronto explore and reflect upon the idea of Americanity. What does it mean to become aware of one's Americanity in today's context of globalization? Does Americanity imply the same for those who are based in Bogotá, Montréal or Toronto, whether they were born in these cities or in other cities within the same countries, or elsewhere on the American continent, or even on another continent? Considering the complex and different, yet similar, colonial/decolonial histories across the Americas, this exhibition offers an insight into a variety of strategies of territorial appropriations and re-appropriations.

MORE-THAN-HUMAN EXHIBITION SUPPORTED BY



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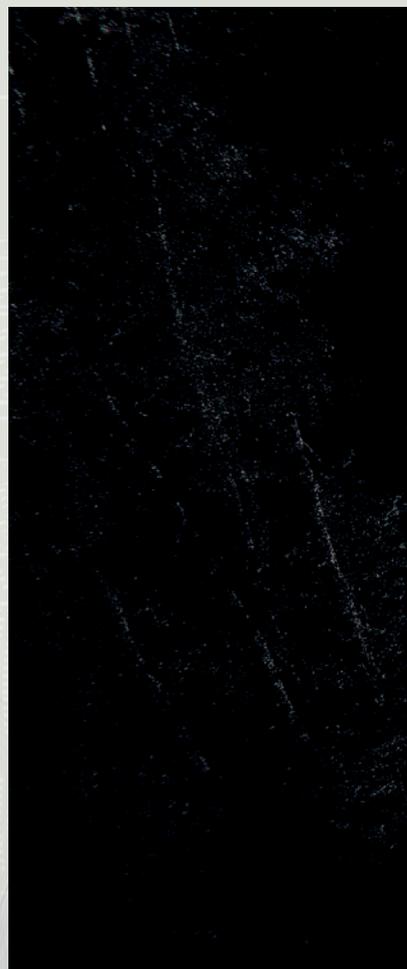
Social Sciences and Humanities
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sciences humaines du Canada



Onsite Gallery presents contemporary, Indigenous, and public art and design to advance knowledge creation and stimulate local and international conversations on the urgent issues of our time.

Rasa Smitte + Rattis Smitis, *Atmospheric Forest*, 2020, immersive VR installation



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 **HOURS**

WEDNESDAY TO FRIDAY:
noon to 7 p.m.

SATURDAY:
noon to 5 p.m.

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