

GROUNDED VISIONS

ARTISTIC RESEARCH
INTO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Grounded Visions: Artistic Research into Environmental Issues

Co-curated by Boris Magrini and Jill Scott

Scientific advisor: Angelika Hilbeck

This exhibition presents artworks and artistic research, documenting how artists work with scientists on environmental issues. It takes place at the Department of Environmental Systems, ETH Zurich, where art exhibits are rarely shown.

The Artists are:

Brandon Ballengée

Tiffany Holmes

Andrea Polli

Aviva Rahmani

Juanita Schläpfer-Miller

Jill Scott

Eugenio Tisselli

27 November 2015 to 23 March 2016

Monday to Friday, 11.00-19.00

ETH Zurich, Institute of Integrative Biology

Green Floor, Universitätstrasse 16,

CH-8092 Zurich, Switzerland

Opening, Friday 27 November 2015, 5pm

SUMMARY

Curated by Jill Scott and Boris Magrini, the exhibition is part of the PhD program z-node at the Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts resulting from a cooperation between the ZHdK and the ETH Zurich and presenting works inspired by environmental science. It includes **Brandon Ballengée** with photographs of amphibians, **Aviva Rahmani** with drawings about long-term landscape restoration and **Juanita Schläpfer-Miller** with a project called *Climate Hope Garden 2085*. Also **Tiffany Holmes** shows her innovative eco-visualization software to measure water quality, **Andrea Polli** presents a project with weather observers in Antarctica and **Jill Scott** exhibits a media sculpture about sound perception with stories from wild plants. In addition, a community web project by **Eugenio Tisselli** is shown that was developed with farmers together in Tanzania (in cooperation with **Angelika Hilbeck**). The scientific advisors for these projects were, Angelika Hilbeck, Christopher Robinson, Christoph Kueffer, Norbert Diller and Andreas Fischlin.

CONTACT

Boris Magrini

+41 76 571 24 27

borismagrini@yahoo.fr

ETH Zürich

Institute of Integrative Biology IBZ

Gabrielle Attinger

Tel +41 44 632 29 16

gabrielle.attinger@usys.ethz.ch

More information at: www.z-node.net

The Z-node PhD Program- a cooperation between ICS, ZHdK, ETH Zurich and Plymouth University UK

Organization:

Prof. Dr. Jill Scott, Co-curator Boris Magrini, Dora Borer, Department of Cultural Analysis, Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts, ZHdK / Dr. Angelika Hilbeck, Gabrielle Attinger, Department of Environmental Systems Science, Institute of Integrative Biology, ETH Zurich



hdk

ETH zürich

DUSYS

ibz



PLANETARY COLLEGIUM NOVUS ORDO ARTIFICIUM

Zürcher Hochschule der Künste
Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts

GROUNDED VISIONS

ARTISTIC RESEARCH
INTO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

PRESS RELEASE

Part of the PhD program z-node at the Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts and a collaboration between ZHdK and ETH Zurich, *Grounded Visions: Artistic Research into Environmental Issues* is an exhibition featuring artists who have participated in scientific investigations and data-analysis conducted in the field with the purpose of confronting on-going ecological topics. Climate change, water and earth pollution, invasive species and agricultural challenges are critical subjects that we are confronted with and to which we are urged to find concrete solutions. Artists have been contributing to the debate surrounding these issues for decades and today this interest has grown into a solid community of thousands of artists, as one can see on the web site www.greenmuseum.org. Today, modern technologies and global communication allow artists to engage with new approaches that confront ecological issues and participate in a dialogue with the scientific research community. Furthermore, PhD educational programs for artists offer them the opportunity to conduct research within experimental and collaborative environments in labs with scientists, allowing for a more diversified and in depth confrontation with current discoveries. This is the case with the seven international artists involved in this exhibition, they all have participated to the international research program called Z-node of The Planetary Collegium: a PhD collaboration platform between the University of Plymouth UK and the Zurich University of the Arts in Switzerland.

The aim of the exhibition is to create new audiences for art and to encourage artists to engage with scientists. The exhibition includes results of some of this practical research with Tanzania small-scale farmers by Eugenio Tisselli, in collaborations with agro ecologist Angelika Hilbeck and artist Juanita Schläpfer-Miller. *Sauti ya wakulima* (2011 - ongoing) - the voice of the farmers in Swahili - aims at fostering shared knowledge on a local scale, engaging farmers in the rural region of Tanzania. Farmers were invited to generate and create audio-visual information concerning their agricultural practice and their own strategies of climate change adaptation. They used smartphones to construct a knowledge base of more than 2000 audio-visual documents. The project aimed at strengthening a social network of solidarity, while also encouraging the reciprocal voice of the users to further develop the project and its tools.

In *Ground Truth* (2008), a documentary film and an installation on climate change directed by Andrea Polli, the artist and filmmaker has followed and interviewed weather observers at the South Pole Station, McMurdo Station and at field sites on the Ross Ice Shelf and the Dry Valleys of Antarctica. Andrea Polli, was advised by climate change scientist Andreas Fischlin and in her film she examines the necessity of research carried out in the ground, where the field scientists say that "real climate truth" can be experienced. In an epoch of sophisticated satellites, this video is a rare recording of the experiences of scientists in extreme environments and their personal stories about relations between human activities and the earth's natural cycles. In order to demonstrate how to empower ordinary citizens with their own ground truth experiences, she also shows *Hello Weather!* (2008): an installation of a mobile weather station that complements the presentation of the documentary film.

The Z-node PhD Program- a cooperation between ICS, ZHdK, ETH Zurich and Plymouth University UK

Organization:

Prof. Dr. Jill Scott, Co-curator Boris Magrini, Dora Borer, Department of Cultural Analysis, Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts, ZHdK / Dr. Angelika Hilbeck, Gabrielle Attinger, Department of Environmental Systems Science, Institute of Integrative Biology, ETH Zurich



hdk

ETH zürich

DUSYS

ibz



PLANETARY COLLEGIUM NOVUS ORDO ARTIFICIUM

Zürcher Hochschule der Künste
Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts

GROUNDED VISIONS

ARTISTIC RESEARCH
INTO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The series of cyanotypes *Climate Hope Garden – Traces of the future* (2011) by Juanita Schläpfer-Miller, were developed during her collaboration with biologists Angelika Hilbeck, Peter Edwards, Jake Alexander, Miluse Trtikova and Andreas Fischlin. The series consists of plant images formed by the exposure of photosensitive paper to UV light, taken during the Climate Hope Garden installation in the research climate chambers at the ETH in 2011. In this installation, a set of plants were grown under the actual downscaled climate scenarios for Switzerland. With this work, the artist intends to enable the public to engage with climate scenarios on a personal level, while offering a personal, artistic interpretation and site specific performance of this important scientific debate.

Trigger Points, Tipping Points (1997-2007) is a composition of drawings, photographs and digital prints by Aviva Rahmani, presenting details of a site-specific, performative project conveying her original ecological restoration ideas, which she terms trigger point theory. Guided by her experience with on site restoration work she encircles small locations whose restoration could effect larger systems. Ecologist Christoph Küffer calls this Re-designing Nature. The panels are interpretations of her process of restoring the small coastal area on Vinalhaven Island in Maine, USA, that was degraded by decades of quarrying industries and used as a town dump. The artist considers her restoration project (*Ghost Nets* 1990-2000), to be a model for repairing large landscapes and nurturing biodiversity. She believes that new heuristic models can help the public and scientists to understand the complexity of bioregional environments and that the porous boundaries between ecosystems can be helped by transdisciplinary collaborations.

While working together with aquatic ecologist Christopher Robinson from EAWAG during her Artists-in-labs residency, Tiffany Holmes created *Floating Point* (2004) an innovative water quality data visualization device. By using the same data acquired by the scientists from rivers and waterways, she interprets this information in real-time through custom made software. The responsive software generates animations that display water quality data with simple visual language. The overall purpose of the project is to promote general awareness on topics concerning aquatic pollution to a non-scientific audience. Through her work, Holmes wishes to foster sustainable and ecologically responsible modes of living

Auralroots (2015) is an interactive media project based on research into sound and tactile perception by Jill Scott. This model is based on the stereocilia, tiny hair cells located in the inner ear. The main Zurich consultant on the project was Norbert Diller, experimental audiologist from the Zurich University Hospital, as well as scientist Helmy Mulders, through a Symbiotic Residency in Australia. This audio-visual installation allows the viewers to interact with sculptural models of these cells and through custom made software and hardware, and to combine sounds from a database of 54 tracks. It reveals research on three stages of female growth, as a child in the womb, as a relationship between mother and daughter and as an adult observer who is an art and science investigator. Among these tracks, stories are found based on recordings of interviews and conversations with elders of the Australian Aboriginal community. These traditional stories on indigenous knowledge are passed on from mother to daughter about the collecting of wild plants and roots for survival and medical use.

The Z-node PhD Program- a cooperation between ICS, ZHdK, ETH Zurich and Plymouth University UK
Organization:
Prof. Dr. Jill Scott, Co-curator Boris Magrini, Dora Borer, Department of Cultural Analysis, Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts, ZHdK / Dr. Angelika Hilbeck, Gabrielle Attinger, Department of Environmental Systems Science, Institute of Integrative Biology, ETH Zurich



hdk

ETH zürich

DUSYS

ibz



PLANETARY COLLEGIUM NOVUS ORDO ARTIFICIUM

Zürcher Hochschule der Künste
Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts

GROUNDED VISIONS

ARTISTIC RESEARCH
INTO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The *Malamp Reliquaries* (2001 – ongoing) is a series of high-resolution scanned photographs of amphibian deformities, collected by Brandon Ballengée and printed as unique watercolour ink prints. These deformed frogs found in nature are successively cleared and stained through chemical process to be displayed to the audience as symbolic reliquaries of a compromised ecosystem. The artist collaborated with evolutionary and developmental biologist Stanley Sessions in the USA, while carrying on an international on-going study of amphibians. By means of recording the malformations of amphibians in the wild, Ballengée – who is also a biologist - investigates the environmental changes and the predator-prey relations of these species.

The seven artists presented in this exhibition move freely between the worlds of art and science, searching for their inspiration and making their interpretations: they collaborate with researchers, join interdisciplinary research programs and often develop open source or custom software. They are representative of a new generation of artists that do not consider their role in society as being secluded in an ivory tower. They rather take on a more responsible role of raising public awareness and join forces with researchers to carry out their investigations or become investigators within the culture of science. The exhibition on display at the Institute of Integrative Biology offers a novel insight into collaborative research between art and science, showing that interdisciplinary and collaborative efforts are essential for the development of new discourses, alternative visions and the creative solutions required to address pressing ecological issues.

The Z-node PhD Program- a cooperation between ICS, ZHdK, ETH Zurich and Plymouth University UK

Organization:

Prof. Dr. Jill Scott, Co-curator Boris Magrini, Dora Borer, Department of Cultural Analysis, Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts, ZHdK / Dr. Angelika Hilbeck, Gabrielle Attinger, Department of Environmental Systems Science, Institute of Integrative Biology, ETH Zurich



hdk

Zürcher Hochschule der Künste
Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts

ETH zürich

DUSYS

ibz



PLANETARY COLLEGIUM NOVUS ORDO ARTIFICIUM