

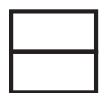


Research Project

2021-2023

Forms of Life

A collaboration between:



Royal Academy
of Fine Arts Antwerp

AP | AP HOGESCHOOL
ANTWERPEN

MUDAM
Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean
MUDAM

Working document - May 2021

Manuela Marques, *La Brassée*, 2017
Baryta print / 65 x 98 cm
Courtesy galerie anne barrault, Paris

Forms of Life

Research project

"Dwelling in the world (...) is tantamount to the ongoing, temporal interweaving of our lives with one another and with the constituents of our environment."

Tim Ingold, "On Weaving a Basket"

The research project *Forms of Life* explores the multiple resonances of a question animating all fields of contemporary creation, thought, and society: that of our relation to other forms of life, and the ways in which we inhabit the world. Our aim is to question the links that weave together the work of art and the world; images and the living; the forms that surround us and those we create – in other words, the fabric of life itself. The driving force of this project will be an exploration of the various meanings and transdisciplinary character of what we define as "forms of life" in the field of visual arts.

Our research project will unfold over the course of two years as a monthly seminar at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp created as a time for exchange, reflection, reading, practice and encounters with international artists and authors from various disciplines. Several highlights will punctuate the project's development, including a workshop in Venice during the summer of 2022 that will consider the city and its lagoon as a territory for reflection and artistic experimentation.

Forms of Life will also lead to two ambitious outcomes: a publication gathering interviews with the artists and thinkers who will have taken part in the seminar, and a project conceived with the group of students and presented at Mudam in the summer 2023 as part of the museum's Summer Project.

Forms of Life is developed by Tina Gillen (artist and teacher at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp) and Christophe Gallois (curator, Mudam Luxembourg), and is promoted by Guy Bovyn (Head of the Fine Arts programmes, Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp). It is part of the research group "Thinking Tools".

Forms of Life is organised by the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp and Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, in the context of the Luxembourg Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale.

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Ismail Bahri

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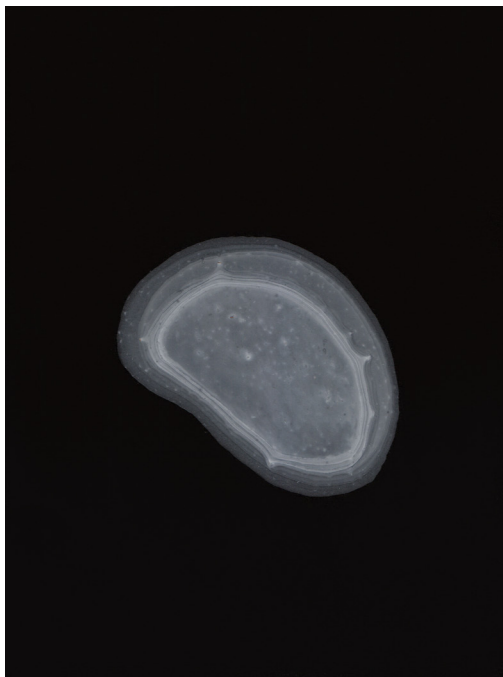


Ligne, 2011

Colour video without sound, 1 min

“I have a real interest in pure form and in phenomena; on the other hand I’m tempted to go beyond that and to see what is involved at a political and social level. I feel myself torn between the two. I sometimes start my experiments in the middle to see where it takes me.”

Ismail Bahri



Écumes, 2009

Milk and dusts
24 x 18 cm

“Impermanence lies at the heart of the work of the Franco-Tunisian artist Ismail Bahri. Placing a sheet of wind-tossed paper in front of his camera lens, slowing down falling water drops by making them slide along a thread, observing the reflection of the city in a glass filled with ink held in his hand as he walks along: Ismail Bahri makes elementary and empirical gestures, and pays attention to “what is happening”, and what effect these operations will have on him. The artist positions himself as an observer; he gropes around, and talks of “shortsightedness” in relation to his work. He then sets up what he calls a “capture device” for these gestures, usually using video, but also photography and sound, without any specialization. It is quite often outside of the frame of the image that meaning emerges, in the perceptible presence of the surrounding world, which is suddenly revealed.”

François Piron

Katinka Bock

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“Made with materials such as clay, stone, wood, copper and bronze, Katinka Bock’s sculptures are the outcome of simple gestures which can be directly read in the final form of the work: folding, rolling up, marking, making an imprint, finding a balance, falling, etc. They often involve physical processes like heat, evaporation, and the alteration of materials. (...) Katinka Bock’s oeuvre has a horizontal and porous relation with reality: “It comes from the life one has, and art always remains in life, it is a contribution to life”, she explains. Associated with simple forms – lines, arcs, cylinders, cubes – whose material quality she feels, these elements compose a vocabulary of forms based on which the exhibition areas are filled.”
Christophe Gallois



Horizontal alphabeth black, 2017
Ceramic
Dimensions variable



Farben dieses Meeres, 2014
(production still)
Photo: Katinka Bock

“Each material has its own qualities. That has always been my starting point. Probing in depth is both sublime and violent. It goes beyond the simple fact of ‘questioning’. That’s how I think I go about working with the matter: I work with it but I also provoke it; I probe it in depth. I like using clay because, unlike other materials, such as wood and stone, it has no pre-set form. It is like a blank page. It accepts any act that is performed on it.”
Katinka Bock

Edith Dekyndt

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Provisory Object 03, 2004

Colour video on loop, 1 min 57 sec
Collection Mudam



Airport Drawing 04, 2019

Ballpoint on paper
44 x 42 cm

“Edith Dekyndt’s experimentation revolves around everyday objects, which she observes as they undergo processes of transformation dictated by time. Her formal concerns thus naturally receded to make way for process. In order to record her experiences, she uses technological procedures like photography, sound, and installation, but also and above all, video. Nonetheless, she prefers more rudimentary means for the purposes of her experiments and questions some of the visual phenomena around us, at the limits of the perceptual, in a poetic and aesthetic approach. Her works prove to be physical and mental experiences based on elements or natural phenomena, like reactions to water or air in different forms.”
Laetitia Bahuon

“Matter is always here, it’s always right next to us. Matter matters. What I try to achieve is to make the materiality of objects speak. And I don’t discriminate between people, animals and plants. All of it is a sort of universal conglomerate for me. It is, of course, a very intuitive approach - the way it is for children who do not understand the difference between flowers and stones. But all these things are indeed very interrelated.”
Edith Dekyndt

Irene Kopelman

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“One of the main aspects of nature lies in its constant change, creating new forms, patterns and variations. Scientists who study nature identify these patterns and set up large-scale and long-term experiments to follow these changes over the course of time. Working close to them entails the artist entering their rhythm. (...) Seasons, weather conditions and environmental features create constrictions, for the scientist and the artist. The process of drawing (actual and metaphorical) while exposed to such constrictions has gradually become one of the core aspects of Kopelman's practice.”
irenekopelman.com



Cárcava B, 2020
(detail) Oil on canvas
20 x 20 cm



On Yellows, 2019
Ceramic
2 x 260 x 250 cm

“These works have emerged from an interest in the history of colour as categorisation in scientific research. For this project, I mainly focused on a landscape in Argentina as my point of departure. I carried out several field trips accompanying scientific researchers as they studied the different properties of yellow areas —observing, recording and collecting material to realise a series of new works. The works were based on methods of collage and abstraction through drawing, painting, sculpture and a new graphic project.”
Irene Kopelman

Jochen Lempert

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*From Symmetry and Architecture
(Sponge-Flamingo), 1997-2005*
Silver gelatin prints
35 × 48 cm

"A trained biologist, Jochen Lempert explores the natural world in black-and-white photographs in which he tries to capture the beauty of its subtlest manifestations. (...) Developed and printed on baryte paper following a precise set of procedures, and presented without frames, straight on the wall, Lempert's photographs are characterised by contrasts and grain that suggest a sometimes startling resemblance to drawings. In Lempert's work one finds something of the essence of photography as expressed in the etymology of the word – 'writing, drawing with light'. – and in the experiments of its pioneers, beginning with the English biologist Anna Atkins, who as early as 1843 produced cyanotypes of algae, and William Henry Fox Talbot, the author of "photogenic drawings" and the famous book *The Pencil of Nature* (1844)."

Christophe Gallois

Manuela Marques

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“Manuela Marques’s photographs are fake snapshots: meticulous reconstructions of intimate or introspective moments when there are people, portraits, or bodies moving through space; or long waited for rendez-vous with nature, places, some light. Manuela Marques’s production is not extensive, but sedimentary. That is why her images are characteristically intense, by making the matter of things the matter of her photograph, through the density of air shown in the dark; or the weight of objects and bodies prone to gravity; or the photographic cliché associated with the emotional cliché of the decorative object – the remnant of the longing for adventure in the conventional china shapes.”
galerieannebarrault.com

Main 1, 2014
Baryta print
98 x 65 cm

Courtesy galerie anne barrault, Paris

The workshop in Venice



Arsenale
© Andrea Avezzi

In summer 2022, a one-week workshop for 10 to 15 students will be organised in Venice and its lagoon, in the context of the Biennale. At many levels, from both a historical and a contemporary perspective, this territory crystallises a multitude of issues relating to our relationship with the world, from the pioneering role that Venice played in the emergence of globalisation and the problems related to international tourism that it faces today, to the characteristics of the lagoon's ecosystem and the dangers that climate change poses to it. The artistic importance that the city had historically and its current status as one of the hubs of international art will also offer a rich context to examine the role that art can play in our changing world.

During one week, Venice and its lagoon will be envisioned as a territory for reflection and artistic experimentation. The workshop will combine meetings with local actors (historians, marine biologists, ornithologists, writers, artists, craftsmen), collective reflections, and personal practice. Its aim will be twofold: to experience the complexity of the territory by approaching it through its many facets, and to experiment with creation in situ, in a direct relationship with the surrounding world. A first iteration of the workshop in Venice could take the form of an event or a micro-exposition at the end of the week, in a space invested for the occasion. A lecture or a discussion could also be organised in the context of the Luxembourg Pavilion.



© Laguna Projects

The Summer Project at Mudam



HEADEYENHEART, 2017
©Mudam Luxembourg

in conjunction with the *Forms of Life* research project, closely involving the group of students in the design and implementation of the project. Here are a few examples of projects carried out in the past:

2019: *Utopistas – An Everyday of Earthly Delights*. 2001 – an architecture practice led by Philippe Nathan and Sergio Carvalho.

2017: *HEADEYENHEART – Summer School*. Nicholas Burrows, Jay Cover and William Luz of Nous Vous.

2013: *Looks Like Music*. Yuri Suzuki.

2011: *Hortus Praxis*. Thomas Pausz.

Every summer, Mudam's Publics Service invites an artist, a designer or a collective to develop a specific project for the museum. Each project is unique and takes on a singular form, and invests different spaces of the museum, depending on the nature of the proposals: the Studio (educational space) of the Mudam, the Sculpture Garden, the Park Draï Eechelen, which surrounds the museum, etc. Emphasis is placed on proposals that involve, in one way or another, the public of the museum: interactive installations, workshops, discussions, performances, picnics, gardens...

We propose to conceive the Summer Project 2023



Hortus Praxis, 2011
©Mudam Luxembourg



Hortus Praxis, 2011
©Andres Lejona

The Luxembourg Pavilion at the Venice Biennale



Shelter, 2018
Acrylic on paper
20,7 x 29,5 cm

The research project *Forms of Life* is developed in resonance with the exhibition that Tina Gillen will present from April to November 2022 in the context of the Luxembourg Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale.

Titled *Faraway So Close* and conceived as a tableau vivant encompassing the Sale d'Armi, which are part of the Arsenale, Tina Gillen's project will give rise to the creation of new paintings and in situ works, and will take shape within a special installation inspired by cinematographic sets. This project is a continuation of the artist's exploration of themes found throughout her work, such as

architecture, landscape, and the relationship between abstraction and figuration. It will also offer a reflection on the relationship between inner space and the exterior world, and will address topics such as withdrawal, loneliness, and contemplation, but also the imagination, engagement, and the desire to connect and to relate to the outside world.

As a result of her desire to link her artistic practice and her research and teaching activities, the research project *Forms of Life* is an important companion to Tina Gillen's exhibition project for the Luxembourg Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. The two projects will develop in parallel and will nourish and influence each other, artistically and theoretically. With *Forms of Life*, Gillen would like to approach her exhibition in Venice as a platform to address, in dialogue with a younger generation of artists, urgent social, political, and environmental issues. *Forms of Life* will also affirm, in the context of the biennial, the importance of research, collective thinking, and transmission.

Tina Gillen. *Faraway So Close*

23/04 - 27/11/2022

Curator: Christophe Gallois, Curator / Head of Exhibitions, Mudam Luxembourg

Exhibition design: Tina Gillen / François Thiry, Polaris Architects

Mudam Luxembourg has been designated project leader for the official representation of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg at the 59th Venice Biennale by the Ministry of Culture.

Calendar

- October 2021— May 2022: monthly seminar at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp (1st year).
- January or February 2022: 2-day workshop in Antwerp.
- April 2022: opening of Tina Gillen's exhibition *Faraway So Close*, Luxembourg Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale.
- July, August or September 2022: one-week workshop in Venice and its lagoon.
- October 2022-May 2023: monthly seminar at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp (2nd year).
- July 2023-September 2023: Summer Project at Mudam.
- December 2023: release of the publication (tbc).

Biographies



© Geert Goiris

Active as a painter since the late 1990s, **Tina Gillen** (b. 1972, Luxembourg) works on the interface between figuration and abstraction, between the second and third dimension. Her work addresses themes and notions such as architecture, landscape, contemplation, the circulation of images, and the relationship between inner space and the exterior world. She teaches painting at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp.

Gillen has presented solo exhibitions at BOZAR, Brussels (2015); Mudam Luxembourg (2012) and M–Museum Leuven (2010). She has also taken part in numerous group exhibitions at international institutions including Mudam Luxembourg (2018, 2010, 2009); the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2012); Mu.ZEE, Ostend (2010); Wiels, Brussels (2009); M HKA, Antwerp (2007) and Platform Garanti, Istanbul (2004). Two monographic publications have been released about her work: *Echo* (MER. Paper Kunsthal, 2016), and *Necessary Journey* (Hatje Cantz, 2009).

In 2022, Gillen will present the exhibition *Faraway So Close* in the context of the Luxembourg Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale. As a result of her desire to link her artistic practice and her research and teaching activities, the research project *Forms of Life* is a companion to her exhibition project for Venice.



© Andrés Lejona

A graduate of the Curating Contemporary Art Course at the Royal College of Art in London, **Christophe Gallois** (born 1978) has been Curator/Head of Exhibitions at Mudam Luxembourg since 2007.

His curatorial practice, which is intimately linked to the practice of reading, is articulated around notions such as image, time, language, and sound.

At Mudam Luxembourg and in collaboration with institutions such as the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, the Aargauer Kunsthhaus in Aarau, the Whitechapel Gallery in London and the Centre de la photographie Genève, he has been the curator of several major group shows, including *The Space of Words* (2009) and *L'Image papillon* (2013), and one-person exhibitions by Guillaume Leblon (2009), John Stezaker (2011), Fiona Tan (2016), Su-Mei Tse (2017), Katinka Bock (2018), Jeff Wall (2018) and LaToya Ruby Frazier (2019). In 2022, he will be the curator of Tina Gillen's exhibition *Faraway So Close*, presented in the context of the Luxembourg Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale.

As a writer, he contributes regularly to exhibition catalogues, art magazines and monographs. He has edited publications such as *Pensive Images* (Edition Cantz, 2015), *Katinka Bock. Tomorrow's Sculpture* (Roma Publications, 2019), *Su Mei-Tse. Nested* (Sternberg Press, 2018) and *LaToya Ruby Frazier* (Mudam, Mousse Publishing, 2019).

Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp



The Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp.
© Photo: Michael Jacobs / Corbis via Getty Images

The Royal Academy of Fine Arts was founded in 1663 on the initiative of an artist, David Teniers the Younger. It is one of the first art schools in the world and, with its unique historical campus in Antwerp as a base, has gained name and fame with its educational programs and research projects. In addition, the Academy profiles itself as an active player in the cultural field.

As an inspired and inspiring biotope, located in the heart of an international harbour city, the Academy wants to form its students into critical and creative artists, designers, researchers and educators who engage and manifest themselves in a rapidly changing art world and society.

As an artists' and researchers' collective, the Academy has the ambition to be an international, dynamic and passionate living, thinking and working environment where all stakeholders, students and employees, are optimally involved in all aspects of the operation and communication and collaboration takes place in a transparent and open way.

www.royalacademyantwerp.be

Mudam Luxembourg



Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean opened in 2006 in a purpose-built building designed by the renowned Sino-American architect Ieoh Ming Pei and is located in the Park Dräi Eechelen, overlooking the historic city of Luxembourg. Through its collection, exhibitions, publications, artistic and educational programmes and partnerships, Mudam Luxembourg aims to advance its mission to present the most relevant contemporary art of our time to the largest possible public.

www.mudam.com

Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean
Ieoh Ming Pei Architect Design
© Photo: Christian Aschman / Mudam Luxembourg