

unfinished conversation

tracing moments of encounters: collaborating with what is next to us

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Encountering



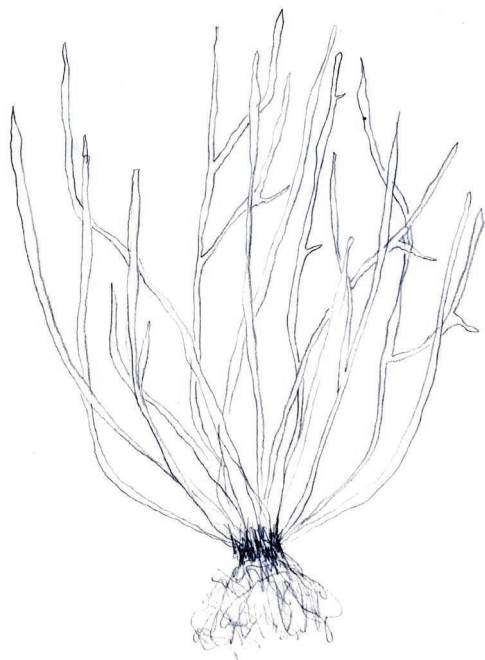
- Do you think we could use it as a brush?
- Yes, I think so, with a liquid ink, maybe.
- Humm interesting, maybe we can also find other ones around floating
- Yes, let's look for them.
- I will leave these ones here, we can bring and collect them afterwards.
- Look at this one, it's interesting no?
- Yes, we could use water to draw.
- Like water drawings!



The first thing we noticed was long, tubelike, felt dry in the hand and had a round head with hairs standing away in all directions: a little stick. We directly shared the joy over this little creature and without hesitation we started to imagine what to do with it.

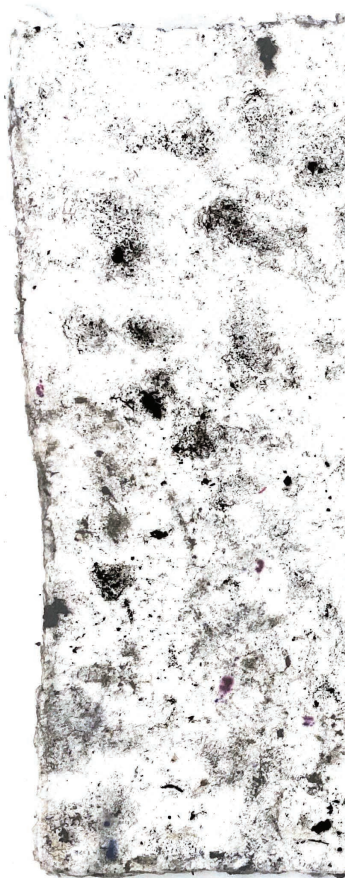
Within seconds our vision was formed to make pictures with the brush stick. Activated by the idea, our eyes were ready for more. More sticks, more brushes, more ideas. Our ideas came in reaction to what we have noticed just before. We started to collect and separate our first tools in some corners at Floating University Berlin. Meanwhile we walked with the group, looking for parasites.

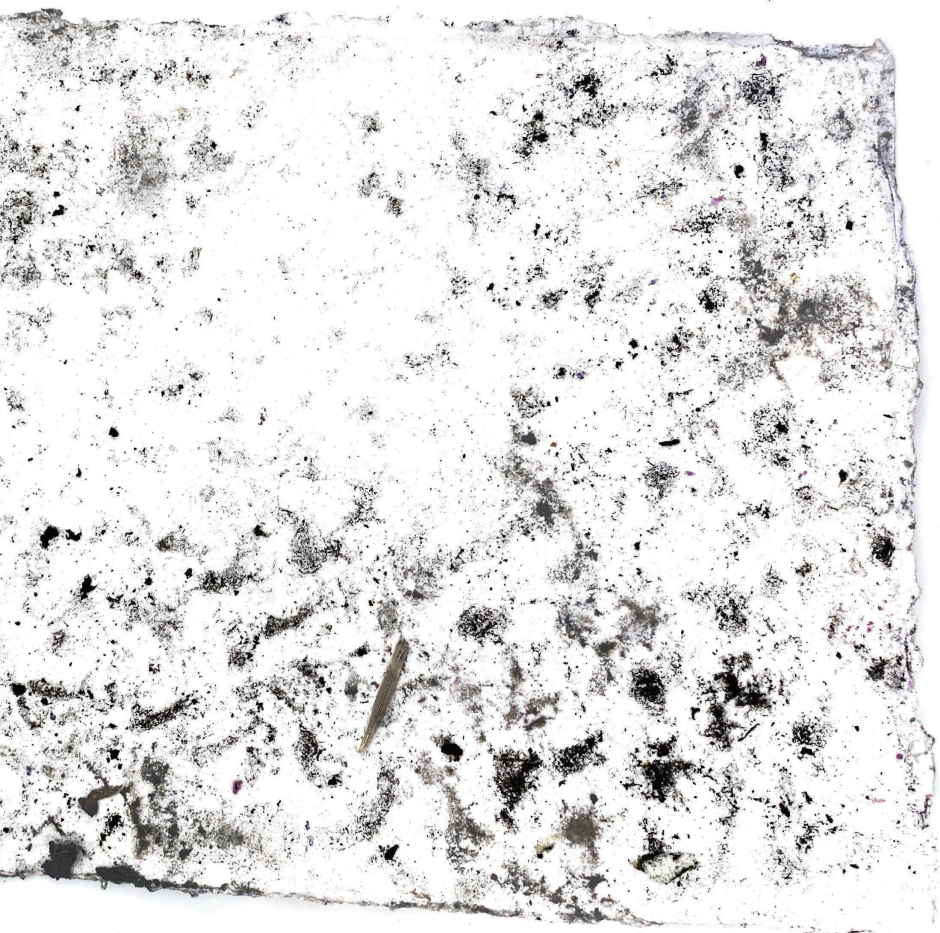
Noticing what lies in front of us and sharing the joy over this acknowledgement inspired us to work together and knitted the first knot in our web of connection, it let us bond with each other. We were born in different cities, different countries, different cultures but we found ourselves in this place at this moment sharing the same curiosity about other beings.



*"Like them we feel differently
attached in this place, where we
belong and don't belong at the
same time." (1)*

Locating





Floating became this created landscape first of all because of the water that accumulates there, which comes from the Tempelhofer Field, also because of the rain, because of the clouds, because of the forests, because of the soil.

"The plants knitted and knotted bits of the old and the new into a complex habitat, creating an emergent natureculture of postcolonising, recuperating lands. The vegetal volunteers that sprouted and the remnants that expanded actively generated the present-day landscape." (2)

Floating has an organic shape, almost oval, and the water covers most parts of it. It is surrounded by high thin trees in the background and low trees closer to the water. There is a small path between the water and the trees that we can walk at. It is like walking on the border of a swimming pool. We call it water because it is not a lake, but the water stays there, floating, above the concrete floor. The construction respects these landscapes - the variability of water levels, the trees, the algae - so they are elevated from the floor and the water can pass underneath. During a few months, the encounters we had became what this place is made of. A place of being with other beings and being affected by them: the algae, the frogs, the ducks, the water, the sky, the birds, the sticks. Suddenly it became our encounter point and we began to come more often.

"We understand place as a lived encounter." (3)

We enter this place from the level of the street and we have to go down to the level of the water. From a distance, it is already special: almost like a little forest in the middle of the city. Now proximity revealed the beings, the shapes, the forms, the sounds, the light that covers the city.

"we came to realize how these plants behaved, tracing paths beyond our comprehension." (4)

We were guided by our curiosity and by the process, by sharing moments, by looking at natural elements, by being in the environment. We were inspired by the encounters, the relations and transformations, by the transformative process we found in the algae, the water, the berries in the paper, the paper in the water. We used different tools to discover things: silence, camera, walking, microscope, natural elements (sticks, water, berries, algae, paper, fabric, clay, soil, leaves, snails, frogs), sound recording. And, above all, we were present the moment we were there.

(3) Instone and D'Costa, "Becoming Entangled", 62

(4) Instone and D'Costa, "Becoming Entangled", 67.





"...allowing the work to build itself as idea, material, form and consent coalesced." (5)

Attuning





More than a certain result, or a precise object or a specific topic our process was motivated by spending time together on the site. We wanted to continue our bonding over finding things. We wanted to become aware of the presences and sensitive to what is there: Inside of us (our own feelings, thoughts, doubts, ideas), outside of us (what lies in front of us, what we see, touch, hear, smell...) and around us (what else is there: the life of others, the structures we learned about, the written texts, the news, the education, the ideas of the world...).

"Because relationships are encounters across difference, they have a quality of indeterminacy. Relationships are transformative, and one is not sure of the outcome." (6)

We asked: How can we notice without forcing our will on what we see and without knowing first, what we are about to find? What kinds of knowledge do we bring to the site and are using in order to observe and tune in, but also how do we use that knowledge? And when can we also let it drop?

(6) Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "On Nonscalability: The Living World Is Not Amenable to Precision-Nested Scales." *Common Knowledge* 18, no. 3 (2012), 510, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/485828>



Observing by eye
often opens the first entry points towards noticing,
soon follows the ears
and noses
and skins awareness.

Our eyes were witnessing the small movements.
Our bodies were turned towards, away
and with it.

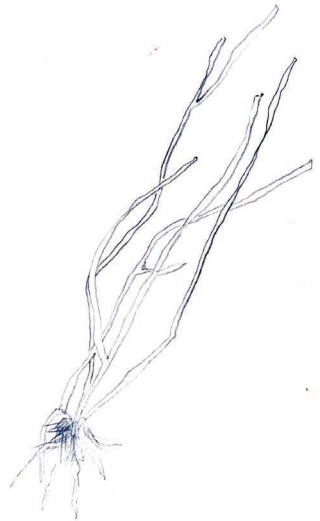
To vary our view, to see more or different,
we used camera lenses
with and without analogue filter,
and a microscope.

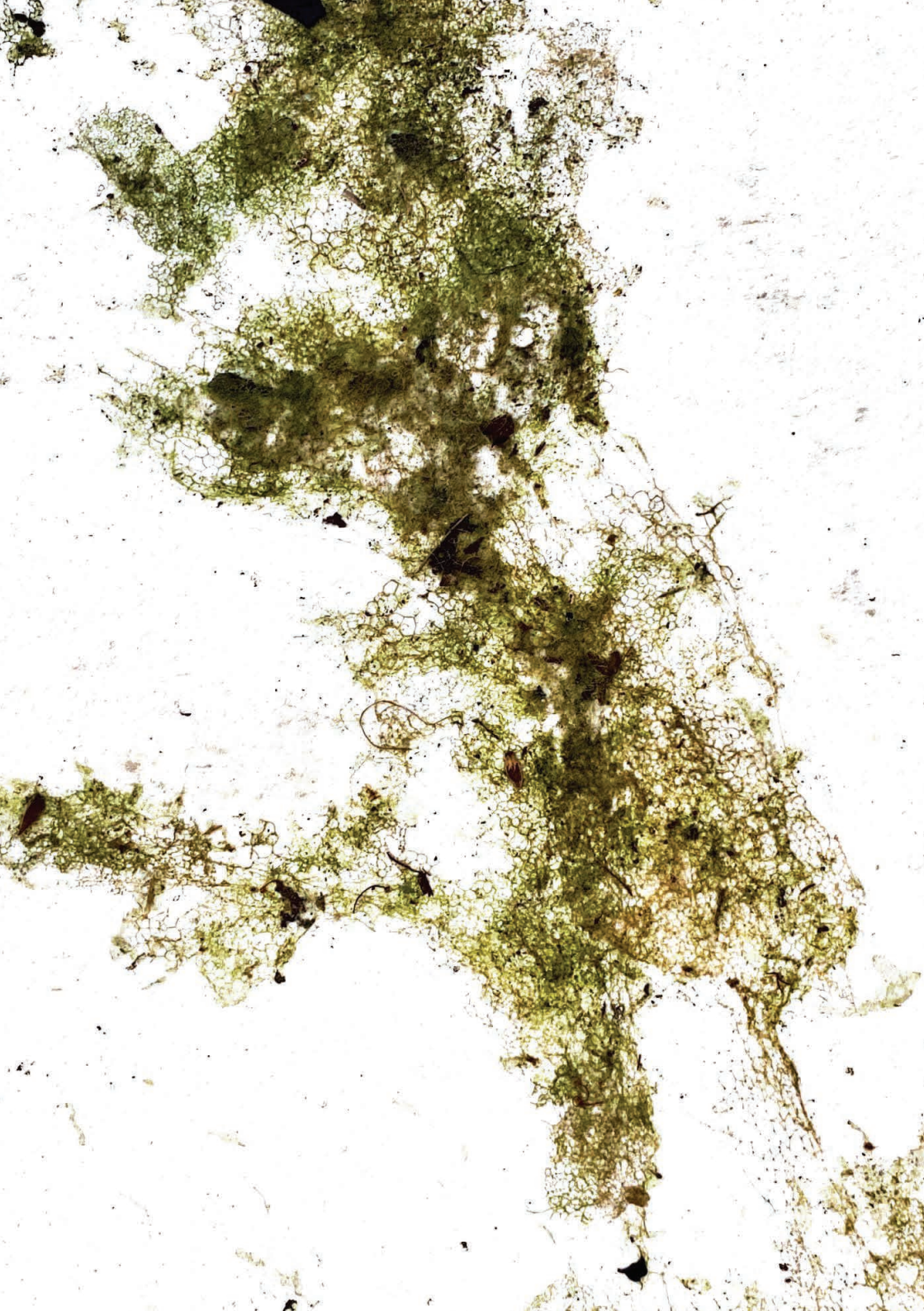
And so did we hear differently:
we brought sensitive microphones and recorders
we listened closely
while being there, to notice differences.

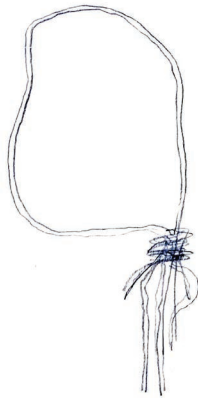
When we visited the place
the sun arose
in the middle of the day,
in the evening
until the sky turned dark.

We witnessed
how the water rose with the rain
and the plants grew with the water
and some insects and animals became visible.

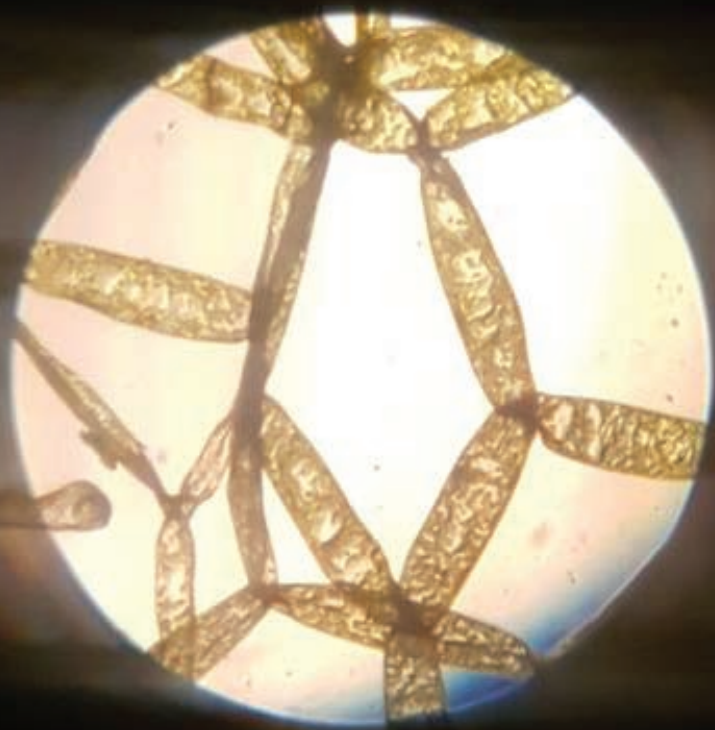
The atmosphere changed through the water,
life changed through the water.
Colors, Movements, Light, noises.







Attaching - algae next to grief

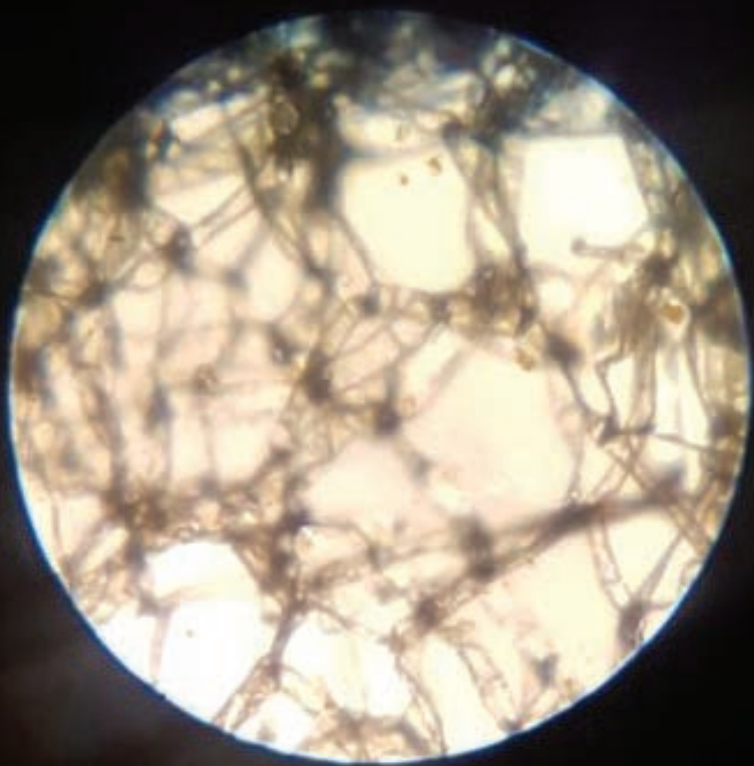


One evening we were sitting on the rack above the water and watching the grey sky unfold into darker grey. Both of us felt sad and heavy that day. We talked about some of our fears, doubts about our families and how we want to navigate through the struggles. Meanwhile we looked more closely inside the water in front of us and started to take out some of the green hairs. We were fascinated by its dignified form: fingers out of hexagonal nets. The algae were growing just in the days before very suddenly with the arrival of the water. These algae come with the water, they come with the rain that falls, with the tears of the sky.

*"Algeas are the goddess of weeping and tears,
they are the goddesses of grief." (7)*

When we took out the algae out we noticed a lot of movement inside of it. Little creatures we barely could see, only with high concentration of the eye we could sense some movements in between the green meshes. That was the moment we became aware that if we take out the plant from its growing environment, we not only take the living requirement but also other lives. Only by the simple movement of lifting our fingers up. But in the moment of our interest, this lives became secondary.

(7) The proximity of the Name for the goddesses and the word for the seagrass are bridging towards each other. ALGEA, Theoi Greek Mythology, <https://www.theoi.com/Daimon/Algea.html>

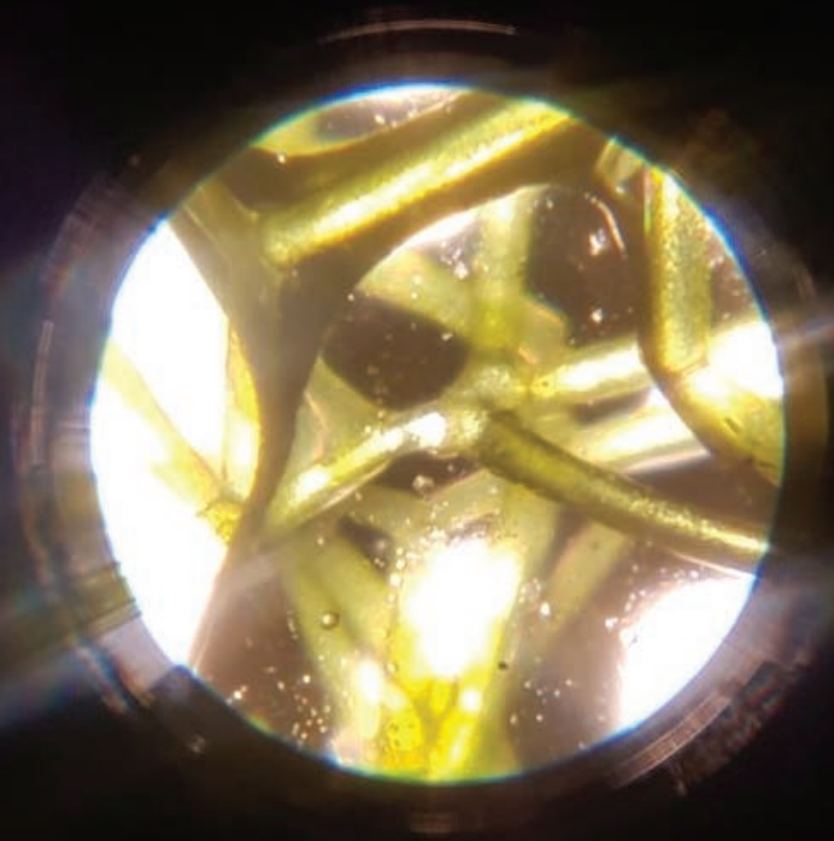


When we left, we let the algae lie on the wooden rack. In the following days, other elements would interfere in the algae's existence: wind, rain and sun alternated and the algae dried, their texture became stiff, they touched like wool and the color changed from green to grey. Letting even more days pass, the algae's consistency became very loosely and fragile, its color turned towards white, almost close to dispersion. Was this dying body still the algae or in the motion of becoming a ghost of itself? Was it becoming a new being?

"In all our vulnerable entanglements with more-than-human life, we humans too are monsters." (8)

The more fragile the algae's life became the more care we dedicated. We needed to look for a place where its appearance we just found so enjoyable to observe wouldn't be damaged. The wind could carry it away, or some human could throw it, or an animal could take it, eat it or step on it. As soon as we took the algae out of the water, we took it into our arms. But our arms were deadly to it. We cared still, but for the sake of our own interest. So the algae became our collaborator in our artistic process without being asked. And we sensed our own deadly facets.

(8) Heather Swanson, Anna Tsing, Nils Bubandt, Elaine Gan "Introduction - Bodies tumbled into bodies" in *arts of living on a damaged planet*, ed. Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, Nils Bubandt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), M2.



“If we could learn from the parasites that every thing is not quite itself, and it never was—that there is deathliness and irascible vigour, and plurality and plunder, pushing and pulsing within each creature—then we might undo the charms of charisma and expand the boundaries of our care’
(9)

The algae forced transformation overlapped with the creation of a sculpture. The algae was the creator and the creation, her transformation was the beauty, and we were the artist-parasites making them part of our artistic work.



whereabouts of numens

a creature of its own
filled fueled with liquid
of life
the one and never lonely
we gather around you
we soak you
alive cause of you

:
ocean of tears
lake of sorrow

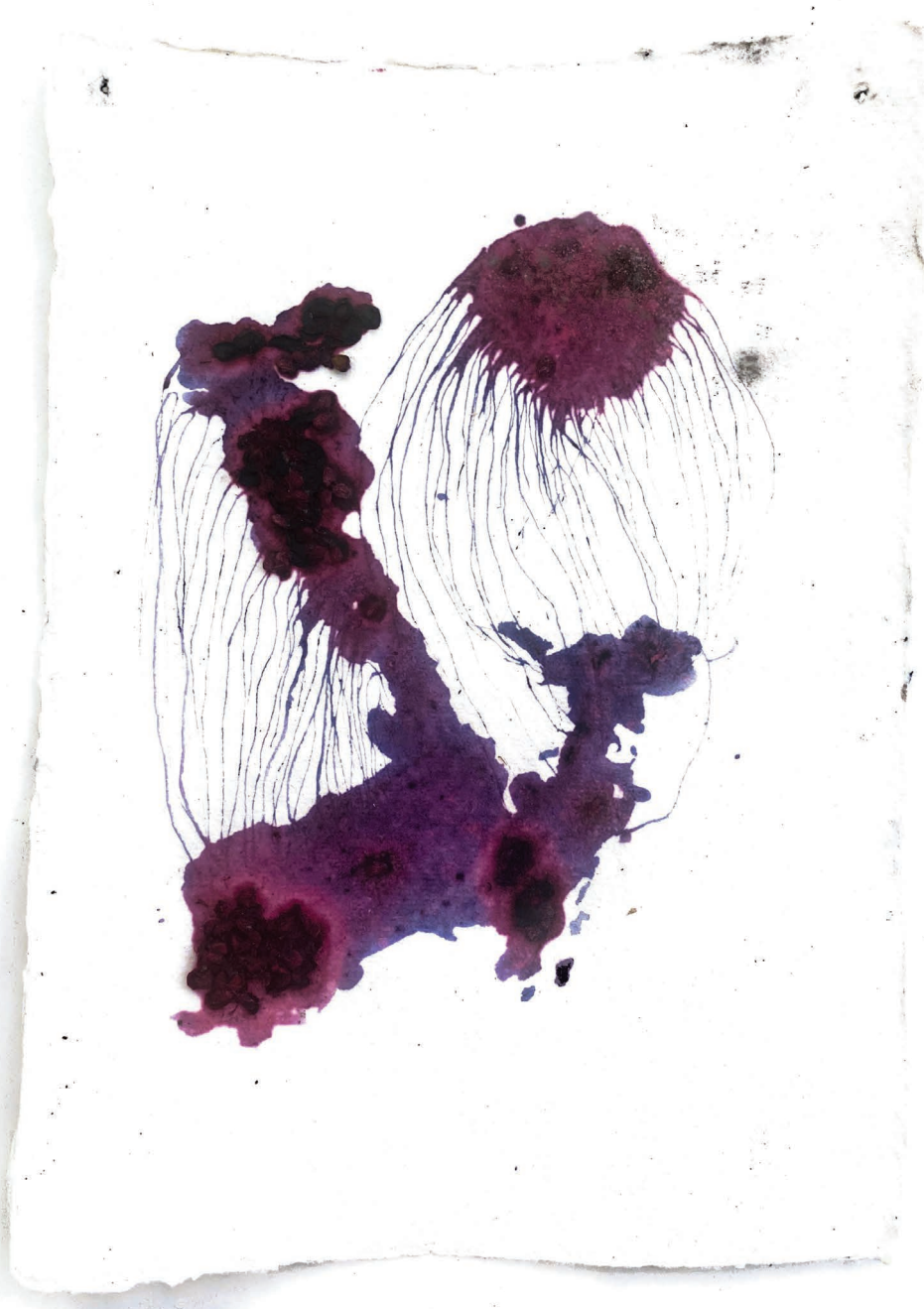
we snail and crawl ourselves towards you
holy quell

and listen to the ghostly whispering

"I am the bringer of weeping and tears
I am the god the goddess
beyond micro and overtly macro

wailing

I raise my headless top into the sky
I don't reach out
you reach into me
deeply through the infinity that is charging me"





Parasitizing - next to each other is space

The classification of a parasite presumes a setting in which there is something that can be disturbed, a structure, a house, a pattern, a way of living. Something that seems to be an order, or seems to be in balance, seems to be working, or functional, clean. Until the Parasite creates an unbalance, a dysfunction, a brake, a crack. The Parasite becomes the counterpart of the established, of the "original". The Parasite becomes the invader, the other.

So how must the space be conditioned, so that some body can become a parasite?

"Parasites raised the question of who or what belongs." (10)

What can we learn from the parasites about the site it belongs to? We can learn about the conditions it is constructed with, we learn about the "*door of the house*"⁽¹¹⁾, the rules, the scales⁽¹²⁾ that are considered appropriate, the places that are already taken and about the forms of living that are accepted as valuable⁽¹³⁾. But far from being the opponent of liveliness, the parasites simply break the construction of ideals, of the idea of what a house is and to whom it belongs.

(10) Instone and D'Costa, "Becoming Entangled", 77.

(11) Cf. Derrida 2000, p. 4ff.

(12) Cf. Tsing 2012

(13) Cf. Swanson et al. 2017

“Far from being unnatural participants, pests or invaders, biologists now think about parasites as keystone species enhancing biodiversity, and as motors of evolution driving the continual renewal of life” (14)

On our walks through Floating we met the rust fungus coloring one bud of the rose hip in an enchanting powdered orange. The fungus eats from the plant but doesn't eat it. We also met the gall mites, building its house on top of a leaf to spend their lives in this self-made house next to similar houses (15).

We watched those creatures that are classified as parasites. We even watched them under the microscope. In this way they worked for our artistic project too.

The parasite creates a new space for itself and therefore changes the conditions for all. It is a reminder of the insuperable entanglement of life. It is a reminder of the site as a fluid environment, always made of relations. It is a reminder of overcoming oppositional thinking and the fear of dependence. Towards thriving through the ephemeral.

(14) Instone and D'Costa, "Becoming Entangled", 76.

(15) "Inside the Life of Gall Mites": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMNHtjIRU>





It showed us to embrace the parasitic moments in ourself in order to unlearn othering, and become more aware of the damage we create ourselves. To learn through *"the act of risking attachment, the active search for different and interconnected practices of feeling, thought, and action"* (16).





what would my death
mean
to anyone

where does my
death belong ?

it is important for us
that your death means
something

it means to us
that you belong.

Presenting at “Friction”



photo by Nadja Henß

1. (unfinished conversation), Installation-drawings (water, mud, algae, berries) and sculptures (algae, clay, soil, sticks, nuts, snails, etc.), 2024







photo by Nadja Henß

To present this process in a few-hours exhibition was a challenging moment for us. On one hand we were confident about our process and what came out of it, still seeing it as an ongoing journey of discovery. On the other hand, we compared ourselves to others and we felt insecure. We doubted what we did, if it was a "proper" "work of art". But then we looked again at our process, and we saw ourselves there, with the algae, with the water, with the days spent in Floating together.

Maybe parasites just arrive and stay, uninvited guests that also make company. So, in a way, it changes the perspective and the way of seeing things. Would we also be changing our perspective, accepting the existence of this body of work as a parasite to ourselves, us "artists", and our own production? Would we be accepting the possibility of this as an artwork that is deeply shaped by collaboration?

After a few conversations and back and forth indecisions, we decided to present everything that arose during the process and embrace its variability of forms, shapes, mediums, interactions. At the end, they all represented ways of looking, discovering, being next to each other.

The "water drawings" were proposed as a work that could be experienced in real time, once. That we could invite people to relax - by lying down, together - and look at the sky. This sky, proposed and drawn by us. Until the fabric got wet. Until we used all the sticks. Until we also wanted to lay down and enjoy ourselves.

The installation on the wall with drawings and algae sculptures were set up in the place we used to dry and protect them during the process. We collected the drawings we left in the water in different parts of Floating, the berries-drawings and structured the algae with clay, moldable in the place and still wet, still in transformation by the constant rain and passing snails on the installation day.

The video was set up in this area as well and is a collection of moving images we could get from the beings: The sound of the frogs, the microscopic algae, the ducks going in different directions, the berries turning red, the water, the sun, the wind.....





2. untitled, ephemeral drawing, 2024







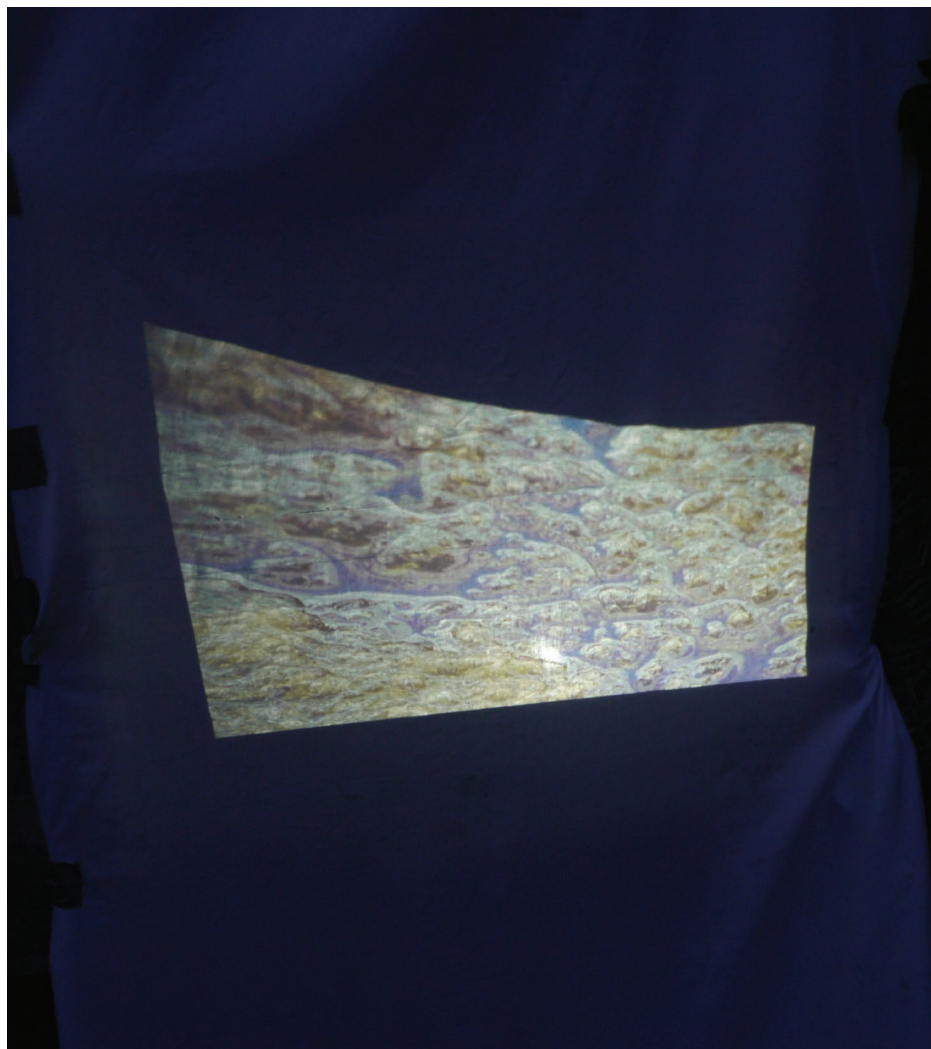
photo by Nadja Henß



photo by Carolina Paoletti

Process as a duration of encounters, to *"be in the tangle in a multidirectional mode, finding meaning through being present in the mess and complexity of 'being-with' (17), to be open to possibilities.*

(17) Instone and D'Costa, "Becoming Entangled", 63.



3. (unfinished conversation), Video 8:36 Min., 2024

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHaQm5wNQn8>



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...to be continued

