



29 JUNE –  
27 SEPTEMBER 2023  
Online

CURATED BY  
TINA SAUERLAENDER

ORGANIZED BY  
THE MACKENZIE ART GALLERY

EXHIBITION DEVELOPMENT  
CAT BLUEMKE AND JONATHAN CARROLL

**ECHOES FROM THE FUTURE : SPECULATIVE CREATURES  
AND POST-HUMAN BOTANICALS**

Artist Reiner Maria Matysik with curator Tina Sauerlaender

**Tina Sauerlaender:** Hello, Reiner.

**Reiner Maria Matysik:** Hey, Tina. Nice to meet you.

**Tina Sauerlaender:** Nice to see you too. Reiner, in the exhibition, we present several speculative creatures from your series *Beings*. They have beautiful names like *Pulia Sensitive*, dearest Sensitive One, or *Dione Valida*, healthy Mother of Venus. In total, there are more than 300 different *Beings*.

You have created a cosmos, a whole new world. What is the idea behind *Beings* and why did you start developing the series?

**Reiner Maria Matysik:** Yes. We are living in a world where more and more organisms are not running by evolution and natural development, but by the human interest. I just thought if this is happening, we as artists should somehow interact with this reality we are facing.

So what are we doing with this organisms instead of using them like everybody else? So we start creating new ones, which are not in the concept of all the economical and agricultural and pharmaceutical world, but they're just really made by the ideas of artists. I'm the first one who starts this, but we should be much more.

So everybody's invited to take over and there are some artists that were following this idea and doing their own *Beings*. But I was trying to find out is there any necessity for sculpture anymore? You can say, okay, we have a gallery, we have a private space, we have a museum where art objects, like sculptures are more like a poetry in space or they're just to delight the people. But I wasn't happy with this and I thought, okay, so how can we continue creating art in a way that has a different necessity and is pushing the society outside of the cultural sphere more.

And so I came up with this project. I was always since I was a small child interested in nature, mostly the vegetative area like the plants and shrubs, trees all these kind of things but also other organisms. I was digging into this deeply and felt very connected to this. Not like a natural scientist, but somehow different. So I was like, will I become a researcher or will I become an artist? I didn't know. But in the end I thought there's much more freedom and maybe it's much more needed to be an artist.

And then also I was very good at maths and sciences in the beginning, but then I kind of dropped and got a bit more lousy. So I thought, okay, this is not for me. I go the second direction and, and become an artist and here I

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am.

**Tina Sauerlaender:** Yes, I think it was a really good decision. And it gives you also the freedom to be more open, to be speculative, to not be tied to scientific facts.

And I think that is exactly what you're doing with the series *Beings*, creating your own notion of these different creatures and their own systems. You approached the topic also from a posthuman perspective. You say that these creatures could or would live here on, on our planet after the humans died out. Is this correct?

**Reiner Maria Matysik:** Well, I don't care so much about the humans. Maybe they're around still. Maybe they're not around, maybe they're slaves of these organisms and maybe something else happens. And there's one project, which is connected to this project but quite individual, it's called *Sexual Creeping*.

Mm-hmm. They're stories, just texts, whereas in the body of work, you were just talking about the Being entity is sculptures that are only working with little texts. They sound like natural scientific descriptions of organisms, and it has to be because they're really a very precise sketches of entities that are to become. Now this other project, *Sexual Creeping* started with texts and they're stories of organisms to be that are so strong that they take over the power of humans. So they seduce them sexually. And they think it's going to be fantastic. But then in the end, these organisms are just using this as an entrance to overcome the power of the humans, and they take over, they grow into something mingling themselves with parts

of the human bodies, they just destroy and destruct from inside, ending in a catastrophe for the human, not for this other organism. The other organism is quite happy with it because this is what it wants. Yes. And so I also made sculptures that are kind of explicitly this.

Yeah. Showing the way these organisms are working, but the audience has them on their lap. You hear this on headphones. You get the sculpture by some service person, and you get it into your hands on your lap or over your shoulder and you deal with it while you're listening. So you make the connection yourself and it's quite intense.

**Tina Sauerlaender:** This is when you have installed the beings like in a physical space.

**Reiner Maria Matysik:** This is how I present it in a safe space. You go to some lounge chair or you go to some sofa and then you may be there alone or with somebody else.

To come to the show now, I really was surprised because this wasn't my idea. But I I thought, how did you know this? Some of the creatures in this landscape, if I go with my avatar and I hit them, they move, and this is what I really like because I don't like sculptures just to be just looked at with your eyes. I like to touch them with my hands. I created these sculptures from some rubbery materials so that you can really interact with them and use them. Mm-hmm. And so I was surprised that you came up with this idea, which is really related to my way of treating sculptures. Just bump them around, you know? And I really like this.

**Tina Sauerlaender:** Well, I'm really happy that

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you're saying this because I already felt that it would be interesting also that you use the virtual conditions and that you say, well, these objects are not just 3D models, you can interact with them. You can really push them. You can bounce them basically. And to animate them a little in this in this reality. What I like so much about the Beings, every being, every one of the 300 lives in certain places. Some live overground, some live underground and I wasn't able, in the exhibition with the exhibition architecture I provide to deliver these different kinds of places where they would usually live. So I'm happy that they are not just sculptures as you say, which you look at, but that they're somehow animated and can also move around.

Hmm. Yeah, maybe Reiner, you can tell us a little more about the Beings and you can choose one of them and explain a little more about it's natural habitat, which usually you would live in, that you created.

**Reiner Maria Matysik:** Of course there is for example *Pulcheria Sensitiva* like all these sculptures they are like sketches for organisms. Like a researcher in the rainforest, you find some new species, and you have to name it. This is your obligation. As I'm designing them I need to call them and give them a name.

So it's the family name and the art name and this is *Pulcheria Sensitiva* it's the dearest sensitive one. And this one asking the question, are we one or are we many. In the 1910s twenties, there were some writers, philosophers in Germany, they're questioning many things. And there was, who had the idea, if I look at the tree's, the tree, one organism on the other, like many, and he said, okay, we have all these

leaves and we have all these little tubes. So the leaves live for one year. So, he said they're thousands or tens of thousands of singular organisms. And they all unite to be stronger. And they seem to be one, but actually they're not one. They're all individuals. And of course there are organisms in, in biology that are Individual cells and are living as individual cells.

And then if there's some necessity they gather and they become one. And the unity of individuals dissolves in new permanent states of *Pulcheria Sensitiva*. Single individuals of *Pulcheria Sensitiva* have combined psychologically to clusters of organisms of collective living substance.

The upper shape is stabilized by lime and acid fibers from elastic frame protein containing iodine. This organism lives very secretively and leaves its hiding place only at the time of fertilization. If one organism is moved, the others move along in the process. Little ripe descendants break away and swarm out individually at another location. They might form a new cluster of organisms.

**Tina Sauerlaender:** Beautiful. Thank you for giving us insights into like the detailed worlds of one of your Beings. We already talked about this a little, that beings are hyper project existing in a physical space and also existing in a virtual space.

So, from your point of view, what are the advantages of presenting the *Beings* in each of the world? What are the advantages of the physical world? What are the advantages of the virtual world to present serious?

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**Reiner Maria Matysik:** Yeah. The, the classical intention of sculptures is I would say to create them, make them as desirable as possible and sell them. But in this case I, I am not about selling them.

It's more like they are a core to reflect on the possibilities we have going forward with living nature. Like where do we want to go and what goals could we achieve? Therefore I was making these sculptures and trying to communicate this in a very wide way.

So I made a book that you can go to the shop and buy this. And I put them on the internet so that you can see the photograph, the text of the sculptures. But then when the 3D scanning came up, I thought, now this is the way.

Now there's the Museum of Contemporary Art in Taipei. They show sixty or seventy of the sculptures. But all of the rest of the world cannot see them so now with this 3D printing after 3D scanning, in many places of the world, people can go and print them for themselves, or they can be shown and they can be as 3D models in the digital space.

And this is the benefit. And I think it changes the physical presence in the space is something else than the digital. And I'm really a physical person, so I think this is quite important, but it makes up with this multiplication and this availability worldwide. I think it's really a good, good way to do it. It's a bit like in the old times you had a painting and you needed somebody to make a sketch and put this into printmaking and then you have hundreds of copies of this painting and so we can bring the idea across without a sense of

color, without size. But you have this thing, and it's similar with this 3D sculpting designing for me for now. I also used 3D modeling. I do this a hundred percent digitally and this also works. But for me now I prefer this old fashioned way because I think they should be not staying digitally they should come into the real world. So for me, it's quite important that I model them in the real world because they're made for the real world. If there would be a project that is done digitally and should stay in this world, fine, but for my special project it's quite important. And so I use 3D scanning technology.

**Tina Sauerlaender:** Great, thank you. And how will you proceed with the series? Will you continue creating new Beings or will you focus on exhibiting the series virtually and physically?

**Reiner Maria Matysik:** It's a bit funny because this is running since 1999 or something. So I create projects that I make sculptures for a month and that's it. And this project is really running for a long time and developing. Because it's quite slow. This modeling is really slow work. But still, every now and again, I add another one. So it's not over. It's still running.

I don't know when it's going to end. Maybe when the first creature is living and kicking our legs or licking our legs or whatever it does with our legs.

**Tina Sauerlaender:** Well, I think this is then just the beginning of it. A new beginning.

**Reiner Maria Matysik:** I think we need to take a step and go into creating this for real and not just as a design.

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So if you do a design you want, this is a prototype, which doesn't work, but if you put the engine inside and you start it, then it works. And not joking, I really think we should create new organisms, artists and scientists and of course there needs to be some big impact of some national or private institution. But this is this is not just speculation. I really think this will have to be done. So we need to create organisms, not just the models I create. So this may be in another generation, but I think it's going to happen.

**Tina Sauerlaender:** That's a really interesting point of view. Let's see what will be happening in the future. And thank you so much, Reiner, for being here.

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## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Reiner Maria Matysik** builds bridges between scientific research and artistic activity. He asks about the possibilities and consequences of evolution as well as human influence on it. His “bionts” are based on Matysik’s assumption that humans will and should actively intervene in evolutionary events. The unbelievable speed of development in genetic engineering and molecular biology already suggests that the future will require completely new thought processes. Here, above all, the human claim to dominance is at stake.

[matysik.de](http://matysik.de)

## ABOUT THE CURATOR

**Tina Sauerlaender** (she/her) is the co-founder and co-director of the exhibition platform and international [collective](#) of independent curators, [peer to space](#) (since 2010). She has been curating and organizing large-scale group exhibitions like [Resonant Realities](#) (Exhibition of the VR ART PRIZE by DKB in Cooperation with CAA Berlin, Haus am Lützowplatz, Berlin, 2021), [The Unframed World. Virtual Reality as Artistic Medium for the 21st Century](#) (HEK Basel, 2017), or initiated and co-curated [SPECULATIVE CULTURES. A Virtual Reality Art Exhibition](#) (Kellen Gallery, Parsons/The New School, New York, 2019). She focuses on the impact of the digital and the internet on individual environments and society, on virtual reality in visual arts, and on exhibition making in [virtual realms](#). She is also the artistic director of the [VR ART PRIZE by DKB in Cooperation with CAA Berlin](#). She is co-founder & CEO of [Radiance VR](#) (since 2017), an international online platform and research database for virtual reality experiences in visual arts that includes the [Radiance VR App](#) for VR Art for Meta Quest headsets.

She holds a PhD from The University of Arts, Linz, Austria. The title of her dissertation is *PERFORMING IDENTITIES. Self-Representation in Art from the Renaissance to Virtual Worlds*. In conjunction with her PhD she curated the online exhibition [performingidentities.net](#). She is a lecturer for Digital Art History at the University of Applied Sciences in Bielefeld, Germany. She gave talks on Virtual Reality & Art at re:publica (Berlin), ZKM (Karlsruhe), New Inc (New York), Kunsthalle (Munich), University of Applied Arts (Vienna), Digifest (Toronto), Technical University (Prague) or Roehrs & Boetsch (Zurich).

She is the founder of the [SALOON Berlin](#), the initial branch of the [SALOON Network](#), an international network for women working in art.

## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

### *Echoes from the Future: Speculative Creatures & Post-Human Botanicals*

Disruptive human activity threatens the Earth’s ecological balance, eradicating biodiversity and shared resources. *Echoes from the Future*, curated by Tina Sauerlaender (peer to space), highlights artists working across diverse media to preserve nature, reveal environmental devastation, and speculate on future life forms. The virtual exhibition features work by artists Aviv Benn (ISR/UK), Laura Colmenares Guerra (COL/BE), Reiner Maria Matysik (DE), Sarah Oh-Mock (DE), Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes (CAN), Sabrina Ratté (CAN), and Tamiko Thiel (US/DE). In rendering current environmental issues visible within a virtual reality landscape, *Echoes from the Future* immerses audiences in alternative post-anthropocentric futures and speculative ecologies.

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## ARTISTS

Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes  
Aviv Benn  
Laura Colmenares Guerra  
Reiner Maria Matysik  
Sarah Oh-Mock  
Sabrina Ratté  
Tamiko Thiel and /p

## SPECIAL THANKS

Canada Council for the Arts, Crystal Mowry  
Additional support from MacKenzie Art Gallery Staff

