

2021-24

Carolyn Liebl and Nikolas Schmid-Pfähler



We create enigmatic plastic sculptures in collaboration with quirky robots. Through these and other sculptural and installation-based works, we explore the interweaving of natural and artificial, human and non-human, material and ideology. Our practice unfolds through aesthetic inquiry combined with a research-based approach.

2024

Nature Soft

The Glenkeen Variations, Crespo Haus, Frankfurt am Main, 2024



How does plastic die? Deep in the compost piles of Glenkeen Garden, Carolin Liebl and Nikolas Schmid-Pfähler pioneered artistic research on plastic ageing. Immersing themselves in the heaps of naturally heated flora waste, they delved into the biodegradability of specific plastics, aiming to depict the explored transformations visually. Composing a sort of indexical photography of decomposing processes, Liebl and Schmid-Pfähler represent processes of micro narratives, foraging maps that reveal the hidden yet vibrant worlds of decay and rot as well as the discrepancy between ecological promise and actual deterioration.

– Ben Livne Weitzman

The work was realized within the framework of the ArtNature/NatureArt Residency in Glenkeen Garden, Ireland of the Crespo Foundation, Frankfurt am Main.

Nature Soft, 2024
Detail of scan no. 1,
Photography,
300 x 300 cm



2024

Nature Soft



Plastic film samples in compost
from young grass cuttings.

2024

Cho. I'm breaking up with you.



2024

Cho. I'm breaking up with you.

Mortal plastic plants slowly succumb to the forces of time and chemistry. The alien vegetation rests within a cylindrical glass vessel filled with caustic soda. In this transitory habitat the flowers' bodies break down and disappear in the clear liquid.

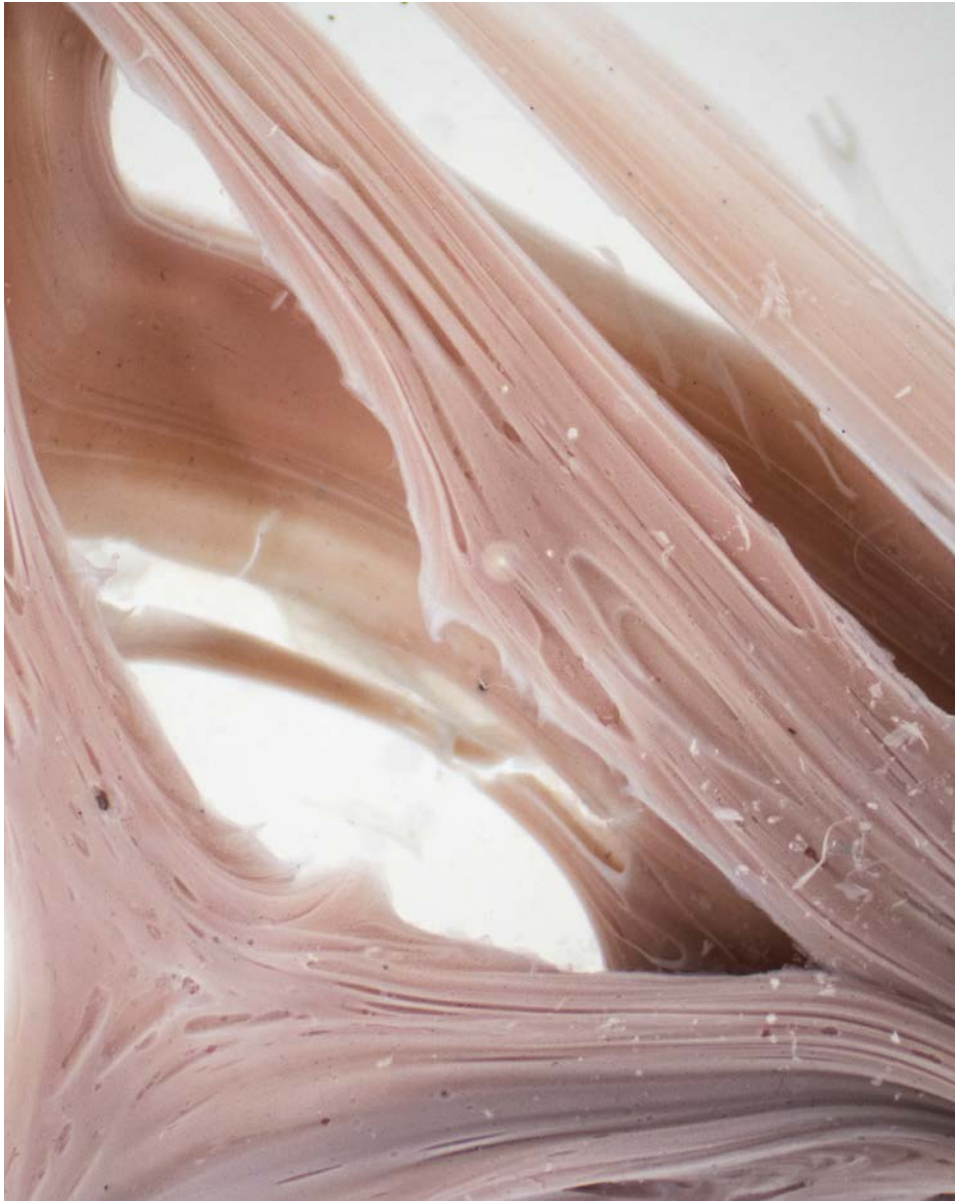
It takes days to months for an entire bouquet to fully disintegrate, providing only fleeting glimpses of its gradual decay. This chemical degradation process of a plastic called PLA (polylactic acid) reveals the invisible forces at play on a molecular level, challenging the promises of biodegradability and our ambivalent relationship with plastics.

The work was realized within the framework of the ArtNature/NatureArt Residency in Glenkeen Garden, Ireland of the Crespo Foundation, Frankfurt am Main.



2024

Cho. I'm breaking up with you.



PLA before degradation



PLA after degradation

2021

RE:PLACES

RE:PLACES, Galerija Kresija, Ljubljana, SI, 2023



2021

RE:PLACES

Colorful, formally expressive sculptures set the stage at the beginning of the performative installation. On closer inspection, the objects seem atypical for their particular material makeup—solid plastic forming multicolored abstract shapes with occasional bubbles on their surfaces. The compact, weighty pieces are made of various types of plastic that are the waste products of industrial production.

A complex apparatus resembling a three-legged planetary landing module enters the scene. In a branched funnel system, it transports differently colored granules made from plastic waste. The material is heated up and then compressed in a cylindrical extruder inside the robot, after which it's finally squeezed out at the bottom as a viscous colored substance. The hot material bulges and twists until it cools down and solidifies into its final shape. In a creative process lasting several minutes, the 1.70-meter-high robot excretes the plastic objects and then deposits them around the exhibition space like three-dimensional brushstrokes.

This creates a variety of intertwined forms with glassy surfaces and fascinating transitions in hue—material qualities not usually associated with plastic. The visual and haptic experience leads to an intuitive aesthetic approach to the thematic complex of plastic and the problems arising from its use.



RE:PLACES, 2021
Extruder, motors, sensors,
metal, plastic
1.5 × 1.7 × 1.5 m



The work was realized within the framework of the EASTN-DC Residency at Cardiff Metropolitan University and the European Media Art Platform EMARE program at FACT, Liverpool with support of the Creative Europe Culture Programme of the European Union.



2024

oozing lilac



oozing lilac, 2024
Video loop (15:40min)

The video work oozing lilac is part of the RE:PLACES installation.

Joint biography

Nikolas Schmid-Pfähler (*1987) and Carolin Liebl (*1989) have been working as an artist duo since 2012. They live and work in Offenbach am Main, DE.

2017 Diploma in electronic art with Prof. Julika Rudelius and sociology/theory of media with Prof. Dr. Marc Ries, University of Art and Design Offenbach am Main. (Liebl and Schmid-Pfähler)

Since 2019 foundation and direction of the interdisciplinary art space Atelier Wäscherei in Offenbach a. M. (www.waescherei.studio).

2022/23 Lecturers on artistic research with high technology for emerging artists, FUNKEN Academy, in cooperation with Ars Electronica (Linz, AT), WRO Art Center (Wroclaw, PL), Klub Solitaer e.V. and Fraunhofer Institute for Electronic Nano Systems (Chemnitz).

2024 Foundation and chair of the board of the non-profit association Atelier Wäscherei e.V. for the promotion of Contemporary Art.

2025 Label4Future, cooperation project focusing on sustainability and circular economy, Ars Electronica (Linz, AT), CIKE (Košice, SK).

Solo Shows (Selection)

With Or Without You (with Kristin Reiman & Filippa Pettersson), Goethe Institut Irland, Dublin, IE, 2024

RE:PLACES, Galerija Kresija, Ljubljana, SI, 2023

Nature Soft & Evil Materials, Working Artist Studios, Ballydehob, IE, 2023

Carolin Liebl und Nikolas Schmid-Pfähler, Kunstarkaden Kempten, 2020

WIR|ES, Cadoro – Centre for art and science, Mainz, 2018

Amplified Entity, 1822 Forum, Frankfurt a. M., 2016

Group Shows (Selection)

The Story That Never Ends. The ZKM Collection, ZKM | Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, 2025

ENNOVA International Art Biennale, Ennova Art Museum, Langfang, CN, 2024

The Glenkeen Variations: ArtNature/NatureArt, Crespo Haus, Frankfurt am Main, 2024

Ars Electronica Festival, Funken Academy – shaping the invisible, Linz, AT, 2024
RIXC Art Science Festival: Crypto, Art and Climate, National Library of Latvia, Riga, LV, 2023
EASTN-DC Festival: Matte(R)ealities, Cardiff School of Art and Design, Cardiff, GB, 2022
Kinetismus: 100 Years of Electricity in Art, Kunsthalle Praha, Prague, CZ, 2022
NTAA'22, Liedts-Meesen Foundation, Zebrastraat, Ghent, BE, 2022
Device_art Festival, Kontejner/ZKM Karlsruhe, Museum of Contemporary art, Zagreb, HR, 2021
Ars Electronica - EMAP Garden, online, 2021
Werkleitz Festival move to ... ecosphere, Kubus der Ex-Stasizentrale, Halle (Saale), 2021
Sapporo International Art Festival (SIAF), Sapporo, JP, online, 2020
404 International Festival of Art & Technology, online broadcast, 2020
7 Positionen Kinetischer Kunst, Galerie Schrade, Karlsruhe, 2020
Habitat. Relazioni Trasversali, Casa delle Letterature, Rome, IT, 2019
The Only Stable Thing, Palazzo Contarini del Bovolo, Venice (IT), 2019
Robotics - Festival di Arte e Robotica, Centrale Idrodinamica, Trieste (IT), 2018
Prototipoak. International Meeting of New Artistic Forms, Azkuna Zentroa, Bilbao (ES), 2018

European Media Art Festival, Kunsthalle Osnabrück, Osnabrück, 2017
WRO-Biennale, National Museum, Wroclaw (PL), 2017
PERFORM!, Videonale.16, Bonn, 2017
Moths, crabs and fluids, Griffin Art Space, Warsaw (PL), 2016
New Frankfurt Internationals II, Nassauischer Kunstverein, Wiesbaden, 2015
KunststudentInnen stellen aus, Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, 2015
International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA), Dubai (AE), 2014
Paraflows, Künstlerhaus, Vienna (AT), 2014
FILE Festival, Centro Cultural FIESP – Ruth Cardoso, Sao Paulo (BR), 2013
Spielsalon, Fridericianum, Kassel, 2013
WRO-Biennale, Balleström's Palace, Wroclaw (PL), 2013
Schirn at Night, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, 2012

Art in public spaces

Licht Kurbel, interactive light installation, Frankfurt a. M., DE, 2022, 2023
Makrocontroller, light sculpture, Fürstenfeldbruck, DE, 2021

Publications

hello world/ Carolin Liebl, Nikolas Schmid-Pfähler,
Distanz Verlag, Berlin, 2022,
ISBN 978-3-95476-484-6
Atelier Wäscherei/ 2017 – 2022, KRAUTin Verlag,
2022, ISBN 978-3-96703-051-8
Amplified Entity/ Carolin Liebl &
Nikolas Schmid-Pfähler, Frankfurt a. M., 2016

Residencies (Selection)

Frankfurt a. M., DE, Fliegendes Künstlerzimmer im
Quartier, Crespo Foundation,
October – December 2022
Glenkeen Garden, IE, ArtNature/NatureArt, Crespo
Foundation, March – May 2022
Liverpool, GB/Offenbach a. M., DE, European Media
Artist Residency, EMAP, FACT Liverpool,
July – September 2020
Cardiff, GB, EASTN-DC Network, Cardiff Metropolitan
University, October – November 2019
Wroclaw, PL, Goethe-Institut/ WRO-Art-Center,
September – October 2013
Barcelona, ES, INTER_WE, Espronceda Center for
Art and Culture, January – February 2018

Scholarships and Awards (Selection)

hap hessenweit, Atelierförderung, basis e.V.,
Frankfurt a. M., 2021–25
Reisestipendium, Goethe-Institut Peking, CN,
2024
NEUSTARTplus-Stipendium, Stiftung Kunstfonds,
2023
Neustart für bildende Künstlerinnen und Künstler,
BBK Bundesverband, Berlin, 2021/22
Gwaertler Grant, Gwaertler Stiftung, Basel, CH,
2021
Kunstpreis Kunst und Technik, Kunstverein
Heidenheim, 2021
Hauptpreis der Darmstädter Sezession, 2020
Stipendium für bildende Künstler*innen, Stiftung
Kunstfonds, Bonn, 2020
BEN Award, B3 Biennale, Frankfurter Kunstverein,
Frankfurt a. M., 2013

Public Collections (Selection)

Ennova Art Museum, Langfang,
Hebei Province, CN
ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe
WRO Art Center, Wroclaw, PL

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VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025