

2018-26

Carolin 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.

2025

Mega Fluff



The tangle of colorful, translucent shapes appears like an alien plant. It was assembled from many intertwined sculptures that were created during the RE:PLACES installation - a robot that transforms granules from recycled plastic into unusual, multi-colored objects. These are made of PLA plastic and have the creation process and thus the knowledge of technical aspects of plastic recycling inscribed in them. Plastic, a material otherwise associated with cheap, disposable products, reveals its valuable and changeable materiality in the work.

Mega Fluff, 2025
PLA-plastic
ca. 180 x 180 x 180 cm



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

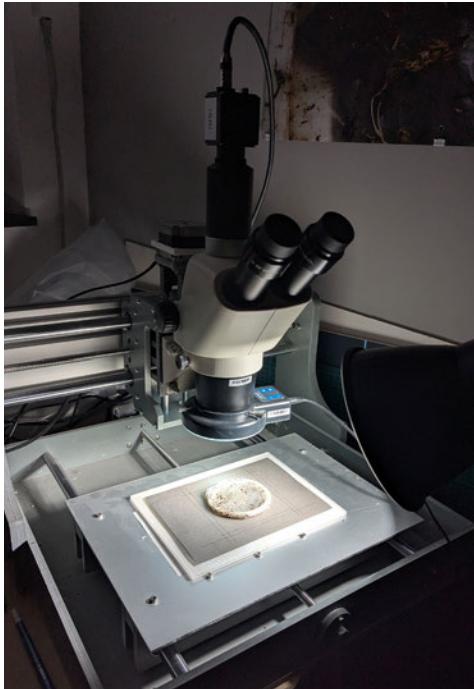


Nature Soft

2024

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.

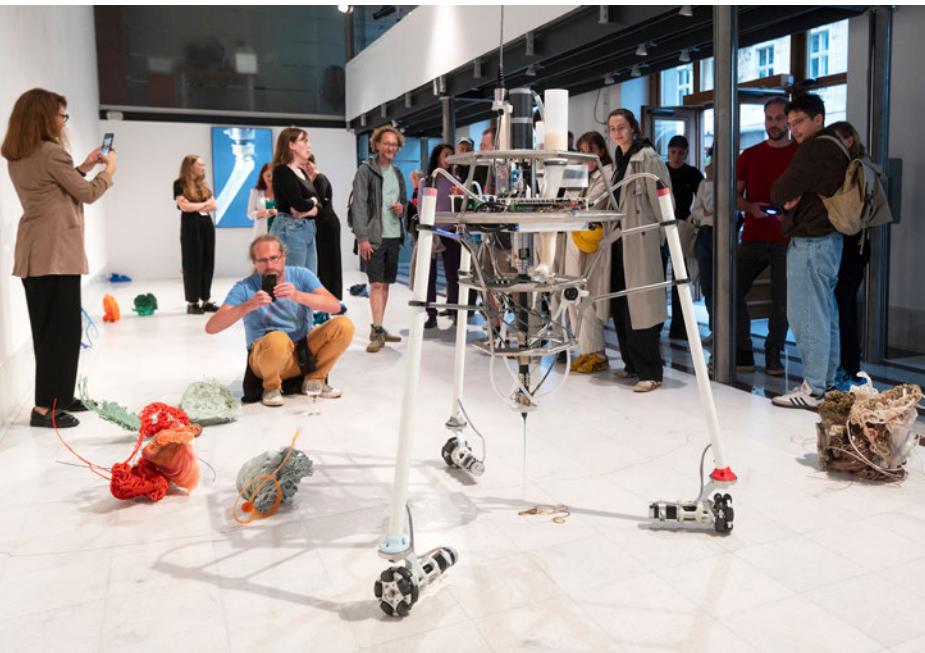
2021

RE:PLACES



2021

RE:PLACES



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



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.

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.

2012/13/18

Vincent and Emily



Eco Expanded City, WRO Art Center, Remona Department Store, Wrocław, PL, 2016

2018

Vincent and Emily



Long, delicate bodies made of elastic metal rods face each other at a certain distance. Moving smoothly, the two robots lean in the direction of various human and non-human actors in the room or turn away from them. Equipped with optical sensors, they search each other out but can't (always) distinguish their partners' signals from those of the surrounding environment. This gives rise to unforeseen reciprocal interactions between *Emily*, *Vincent*, and their audience.

In addition to the obvious difference in size between the three versions of *Vincent and Emily*, a subtle shift in formal and technical attributes leads the viewer to perceive the work differently each time, thereby influencing the interaction between human and robot.

The 2018 version of the work was supported by Azkuna Zentroa, Bilbao.

Vincent and Emily, 2018
Spring steel, thermal imaging
camera, sensors, motors
Each robot 30 x 30 x 230 cm

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)

Embedded, Henry Royce Institute Hub Building, University of Manchester, 2025
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, Kunstarboden Kempten, 2020
WIR|ES, Cadoro – Centre for art and science, Mainz, 2018

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 Electroinca 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, Kunst-
halle 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, Ballestrem'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-Pföhler,
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-Pföhler, 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 Kunsfonds,
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
Kunsfonds, 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