

2016-26

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. Scan no. 1

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. Scan no. 1

Embedded, Henry Royce Institute Hub Building, University of Manchester, 2025



Watch project video:

<https://vimeo.com/1231059554>

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

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)

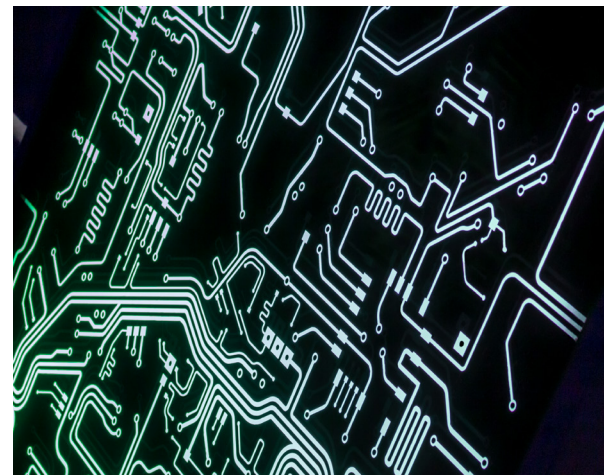
The video work oozing lilac is part of the RE:PLACES installation.

2021

Makrocontroller

Shiny metallic conductor tracks cut across a deep black surface, forming a net-like pattern with moving dots of light shimmering in bright colors. The play of light brings to mind the nighttime twinkle of distant cities. On the other side of the square black construction is a skein of milky lines with light spreading in pastel tones.

The sculpture's shape and design are based on the microcontrollers built into almost every electronic device today. The light visualizes the rapid movements of electrical signals. Because the semiconductor chip is greatly enlarged by a factor ranging from 1:100 to 1:100,000, the sculpture transports the hardware, which in the digital realm ordinarily goes unnoticed, into the sphere of urban space. At this scale, the chip resembles a road map displaying the connecting paths of human interaction: it's an invitation to explore the basic building block of digital global networking and its influence on life on our planet.



Makrocontroller, 2021
Stainless steel, glass, LED lights,
electronic components
1.55 × 3 × 0.5 m

2016

Amplified Entity

There's a twitching and stirring: wave-like contractions ripple through a shiny copper body. A coil of thick copper wire forms a delicately articulated tubular shape with a smooth outer shell and a haphazardly branched system on the inside. Milky transparent strands with fine copper veins protrude from beneath the imposing object; once electricity runs through its veins, it takes on a strange life of its own.

The appearance and physical presence of the voluminous coil leave a wide berth for the imagination: associations include a human organ, a pupated larva, or a study of mechanical movement entirely outside the realm of human and animal life. The metallic body's perspective seems to alternate between micro and macro: is this a small section of a larger, more complex system, or an independent (life) form? The strategies of abstraction and amplification create something deliberately ambiguous and even monstrous, alluding to the field of tension in which scientific and artistic exploration into artificial life and intelligence have always operated.

– Alexandra Waligorski



Amplified Entity, 2016
Enameled copper wire, silicone, stainless steel
3.6 × 1.9 × 1 m



2012/13/18

Vincent and Emily



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).

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

2025/26 Label4Future, cooperation project focusing on sustainability and circular economy, Ars Electronica (Linz, AT), CIKE (Košice, SK).

Since 2026 Carolin Liebl has been a member of the City of Offenbach's Cultural Commission.

Solo Shows (Selection)

forever fading, Cadoro – Centre for Art and Science, Mainz, 2026

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, Kunstarkaden 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 – 2028

Mapping Festival 2026. The In Between, Fonderie Kugler, Geneva, CH, 2026

Art Beyond Boundaries, La Galleria, Venice, IT, 2026

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, Zebrstraat,
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
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
Schirn at Night, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, 2012

Art in public spaces

Licht Kurbel, interactive light installation,
Frankfurt a. M., DE, 2022/23/24/25
Makrocontroller, light sculpture, Fürstenfeldbruck,
DE, 2021

Research Collaborations

DNA Origami – Shaping the Invisible, Fraunhofer
Institute for Electronic Nano Systems, Chemnitz,
2022/23

Artistic research on biodegradable plastics in
cooperation with the Smart Materials Innovation
Hub, Henry Royce Institute, University of
Manchester, GB, ongoing since 2020

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

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., 2021–26

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

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

Contact:

Carolin Liebl and Nikolas Schmid-Pfähler
robots@radiate.fish
www.radiate.fish

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VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025