

## **SONJA BÄUMEL**

### ***ENTANGLED RELATIONS—ANIMATED BODIES***

Austria's entry to the 23rd Triennale di Milano International Exhibition 2022 is to be shown at the MAK

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MAK – Press and PR

#### **Press Release**

Vienna, 31.1.2023

presse@MAK.at

#### **Press Conference**

Tuesday, 31.1.2023, 10 am

Register to take part via [presse@MAK.at](mailto:presse@MAK.at)

*ENTANGLED RELATIONS—ANIMATED BODIES*, Austria's entry to the 23rd Triennale Milano International Exhibition 2022 by the artist Sonja Bäumel (Milan, 15.7.–11.12.2022), which with 305,767 visitors proved very successful, can be seen in the MAK Forum from 1 February 2023. Thus, the performative and multisensory installation—which was commissioned by the MAK and funded by the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport of the Republic of Austria—is now being made accessible to an Austrian audience after its presentation in Milan. The spectacular work directs visitors' attention to the vital relationships and interrelations between our bodies and the microbial world and makes us wonder what it might mean if the human-made borders around the body and the human self were expanded.

Sonja Bäumel: "The human being is a walking biotope. Hundreds of thousands of microorganisms, including bacteria, archaea, eukaryotes, viruses, yeasts, and parasites, live in, on, and around human bodies and keep them alive. Try as we might, we cannot escape the vital interconnections with the microbial world. What if we imagine human bodies beyond the singular, as always multiple and many, and as a place without categories like species and gender, a place of social and biological entanglements?"

Bäumel has translated this idea of pan-species relationships into a space-consuming installation: a larger-than-life amoeba magnified 40,000 times, developed on the basis of data from the Science Visualization Lab of the University of Applied Arts Vienna and the product of months of handiwork by the artist in collaboration with Vitalie Leşan, it makes the human body seem small and fragile. A dynamic projection overlays the installation showing a real amoeba based on video recordings by the Dutch artist Wim an Egmond, which

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was developed with the support of the Dynamic Projection Institute. A sound specially developed by Sonja Bäümel together with Eva Mahhov acoustically transports the microbial world into the space.

By shifting and fragmenting so-called “physical boundaries,” Bäümel draws our attention to the interdependence between the moving, seeing, and touching bodies and their constant exchange with microbial milieus. She reveals unknown forms of movement, intelligence, and communication and triggers a rethink about the status of microbes as “pathogens” with the aim of redefining the relationships between various life-forms.

Moreover, *ENTANGLED RELATIONS—ANIMATED BODIES* broadens the traditional practice of anatomical drawings and models, for which reference is paradoxically always made to the dead body. Inspired by the realization that the human body can never be viewed in the singular, but rather is co-created by and intertwined with its—microbial—surroundings, the installation has the potential to show the anatomical model as a fluid ecosystem in which science and imagination enter into a mutual dialogue.

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The project is inspired by amoebas’ ability to change shape by stretching their fluid skin and to blur the line between what is and is not an “individual”: when cells migrate together, they can form collective bodies and move in a coordinated fashion. There are astonishing parallels in this regard between amoebas and human immune cells: like amoebas, most cells in our bodies are motile. Viewed under the microscope, immune cells not only look like amoebas but are also made of the same material. They use the same cytoskeletal molecules to trigger the transformation of their cell bodies; the molecular mechanisms also perceive molecular signals sent by other cells. The Sixt Group at ISTA (Institute of Science and Technology Austria) conducts groundbreaking research into immune cells and made video material available for the project that makes these interactions visible.

*ENTANGLED RELATIONS—ANIMATED BODIES* tied in seamlessly with the topic of the 23rd International Exhibition *Unknown Unknowns. An Introduction to Mysteries*. Under the curatorial direction of Ersilia Vaudo, an astrophysicist and chief diversity officer at the European Space Agency (ESA), the Triennale Milano focused on the manifold unknowns that shape and influence our universe and the coexistence of species on our planet.

A live performance jointly developed by Doris Uhlich and Sonja Bäümel also makes it possible to experience the interdependence between humans and microorganisms:

MAK Forum, 31.1.2023, 7.30 pm and 29.4.2023, 4 pm

Press photos are available for download at [MAK.at/en/press](https://www.mak.at/en/press).



**Commissioner**

Lilli Hollein, General Director and Artistic Director, MAK

**Curator**

Marlies Wirth, Curator, Digital Culture and Design Collection, MAK

**Artistic Concept and Realization**

Sonja Bäümel

**Funding**

Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport of the Republic of Austria

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**Performance and Choreography**

Sonja Bäümel and Doris Uhlich

**Video Projection *Amoeba***

Wim van Egmond

**Sound**

Sonja Bäümel, Eva Mahhov

**Papier-mâché Sculptures**

Sonja Bäümel, Vitalie Leşan

**Artistic Cooperation**

University of Applied Arts Vienna, Science Visualization Lab  
Alfred Vendl, Martina R. Fröschl

University of Applied Arts Vienna, Studio Book and Paper  
Beatrix Mapalagama

**Scientific Cooperation**

ISTA – Institute of Science and Technology Austria, Sixt Group  
Prof. Dr. Michael Sixt

**With the kind support of**

Dynamic Projection Institute, your partner for innovative dynamic projections,  
made in Austria

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Austrian Cultural Forum Milan



**Press Conference**

Tuesday, 31.1.2023, 10 am

**Opening**

Tuesday, 31.1.2023, 7 pm

Free admission after 6 pm

**Exhibition Venue**

MAK Forum

MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna

**Exhibition Dates**

1.2.–30.4.2023

**Opening Hours**

Tue 10 am–9 pm, Wed to Sun 10 am–6 pm

**Curator**

Curator: Marlies Wirth, Curator, Digital Culture and Design Collection, MAK

**Live Performance**

Tuesday, 31.1.2023, 7.30 pm

Saturday, 29.4.2023, 4 pm

**MAK Admission**

€ 15, reduced € 12; every Tuesday 6–9 pm: admission € 7

Free admission for children and teens under 19

**MAK Press and PR**

Judith Anna Schwarz-Jungmann (Head)

T +43 1 71136-213, [judith.schwarz-jungmann@MAK.at](mailto:judith.schwarz-jungmann@MAK.at)

Sandra Hell-Ghignone

T +43 1 71136-212, [sandra.hell-ghignone@MAK.at](mailto:sandra.hell-ghignone@MAK.at)

Ulrike Sedlmayr

T +43 1 71136-210, [ulrike.sedlmayr@MAK.at](mailto:ulrike.sedlmayr@MAK.at)

