

**SARAH DOERFEL\_SELECTED WORKS & CV**  
**CONTACT@SARAHDOERFEL.COM**



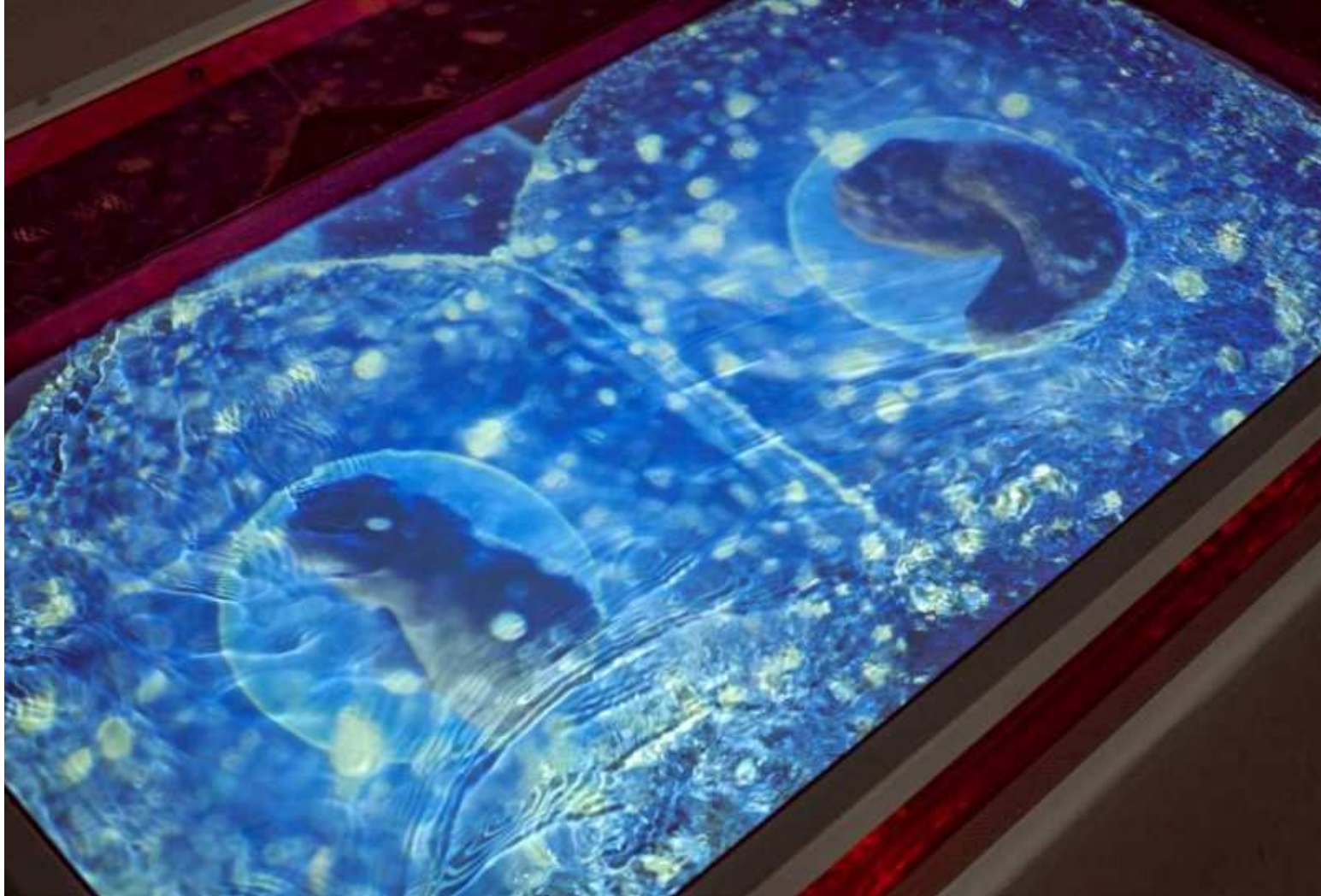
image by Conny Mirbach

My works deal with temporal and physical transition zones. The negation of a boundary with our environment is central to my dynamic-relational understanding of identity. As permanent trans-beings, the seeming separation between death and life, past, future and present, dissolves for us at a closer look. With the base principle of evolution as a permanent condition of change, wide doors open into narrative speculation. Intermediate states of symbiosis and parasitism, mineral and organic being, human and more-than-human, pain and healing are at the centre of my sculptures, video works and paintings.

My work has been shown internationally, including at Shedhalle Zurich, the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum, Berlin, the Macro Museo, Rome, and the Kunstverein Munich. I have received grants from the Stiftung Kunstfonds, the Cultural Department of the City of Munich and the Bavarian State Ministry of Science and Art, among others. I studied Fine Art and Photography & Video Art in London and Munich.

*Meine Arbeiten beschäftigen sich mit zeitlichen und physischen Übergangszonen. Die Negation einer Grenze zu unserer Umwelt ist zentral für mein dynamisch-relationales Verständnis von Identität. Als permanente Trans-Wesen löst sich die scheinbare Trennung zwischen Tod und Leben, Vergangenheit, Zukunft und Gegenwart bei näherer Betrachtung auf. Mit dem Grundprinzip der Evolution als permanentem Zustand des Wandels öffnen sich weite Türen zu narrativen Spekulationen. Zwischenzustände von Symbiose und Parasitismus, Mineral und Lebewesen, Mensch und Mehr-als-Mensch, Schmerz und Heilung stehen im Zentrum meiner Skulpturen, Videoarbeiten und Malereien.*

*Meine Arbeiten wurden international gezeigt, u.a. in der Shedhalle Zürich, im Museum Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, im Macro Museo Rom, und im Kunstverein München. Ich erhielt u. a. Stipendien von der Stiftung Kunstfonds, dem Kulturreferat der Landeshauptstadt München und dem Bayerischen Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst. In London und München studierte ich Freie Kunst und Fotografie & Videokunst.*



## **X-ray** (2024)

realised with the support of Erwin & Gisela von Steiner Foundation

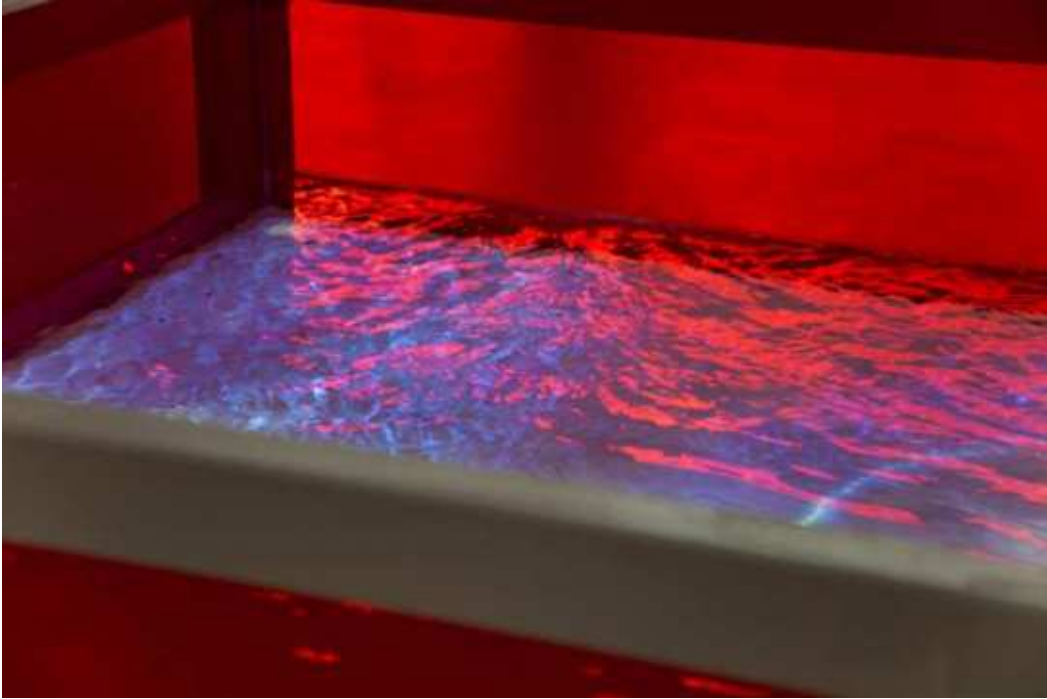
The solo-exhibition *X-ray* is dedicated to the speculative elements in the relationship between humans and their inner bodies. On the one hand, the exhibition examines the early embryonic development. Humans and their vertebrate relatives jump between the millennia of their evolution in the womb and at times develop fish eyes, gill arches, reptilian muscles and a tail. These developmental phases have been known since Darwin and continue to open wide doors to speculation in modern science. The postnatal life form still seems to be negotiable, the future habitat not yet determined. On the other hand, *X-ray* looks at Etruscan votive offerings. In ancient Italy, ceramic casts depicting human organs were sold in front of temples expressing the wish for its healing. Due to the ban on human dissections in Roman antiquity, anatomical knowledge of the inside of the body was severely limited. This resulted in abstract organ offerings that puzzle archaeologists today and spur speculations reaching as far as the offerings being musical instruments.



**eternal night/ Dotterzentrum** (2024)

watercolour on canvas  
45 x 60 cm





**eternal night/ das Wirbeltier** (2024)

watercolour on canvas  
45 x 60 cm





**soft shell** (2023)

watercolour on canvas  
120 x 160 cm





**no day, no night (Etruscan womb) (2024)**

170 x 95 x 35cm

video installation (digital video 16:9/ 4' 12" looped, water, acrylic glass, wood)



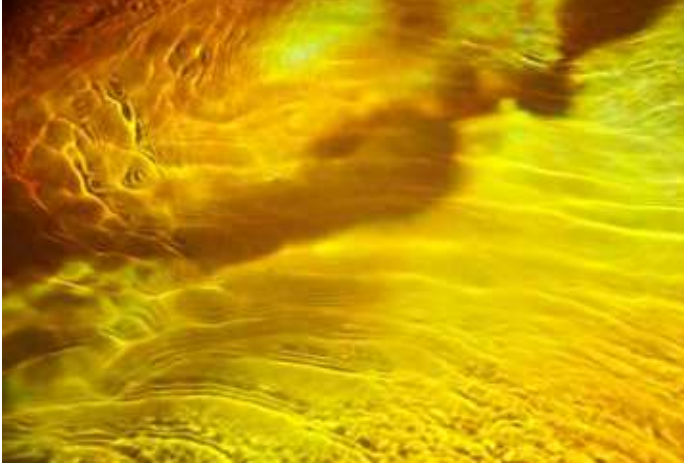


**eternal day/ large Votive (2024)**

51 x 41 x 41 cm

sound 3' 51"

micro loudspeaker, ceramic, steel



**eternal day/ intersection (2024)**

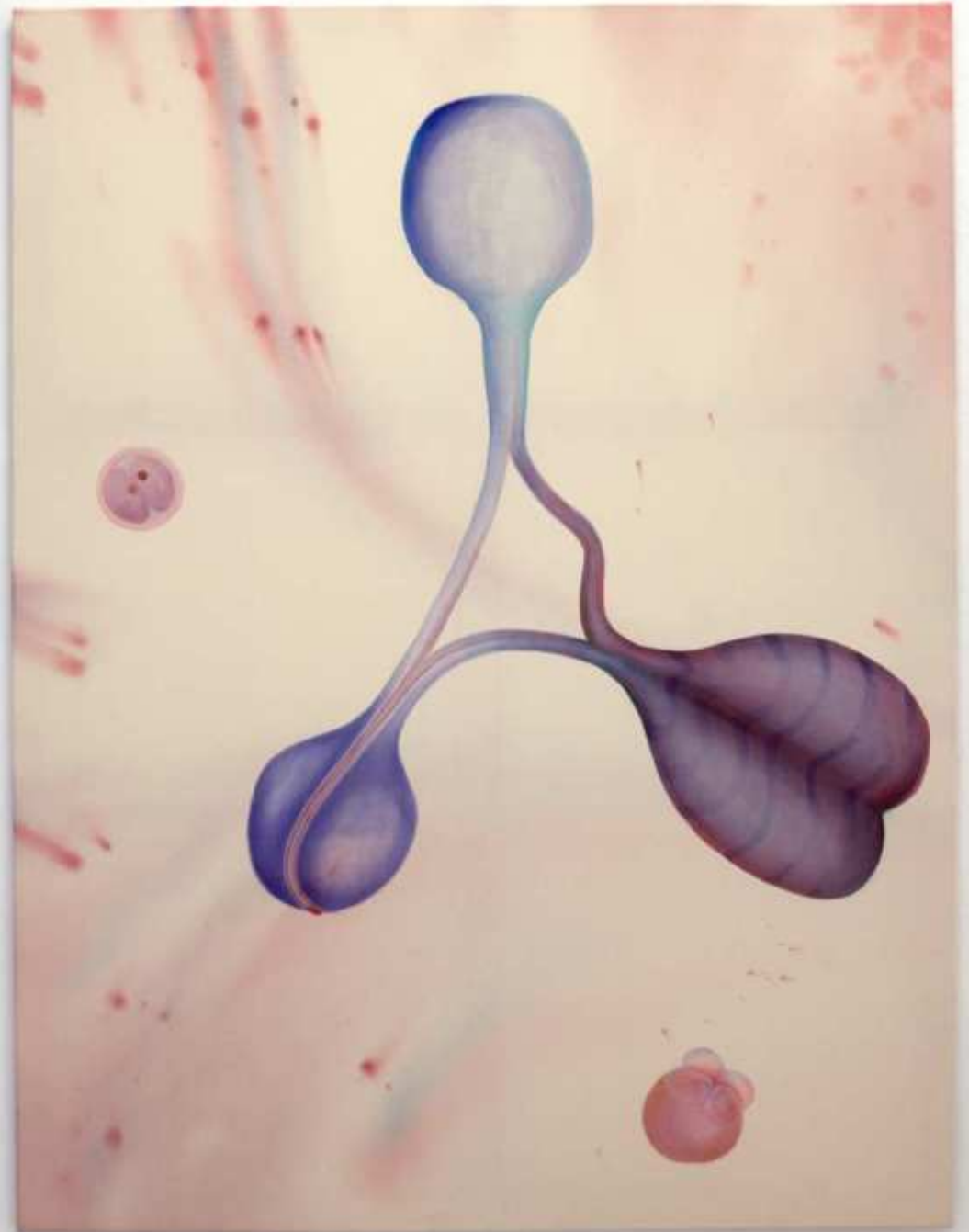
17 x 17 x 97cm  
ceramic, steel

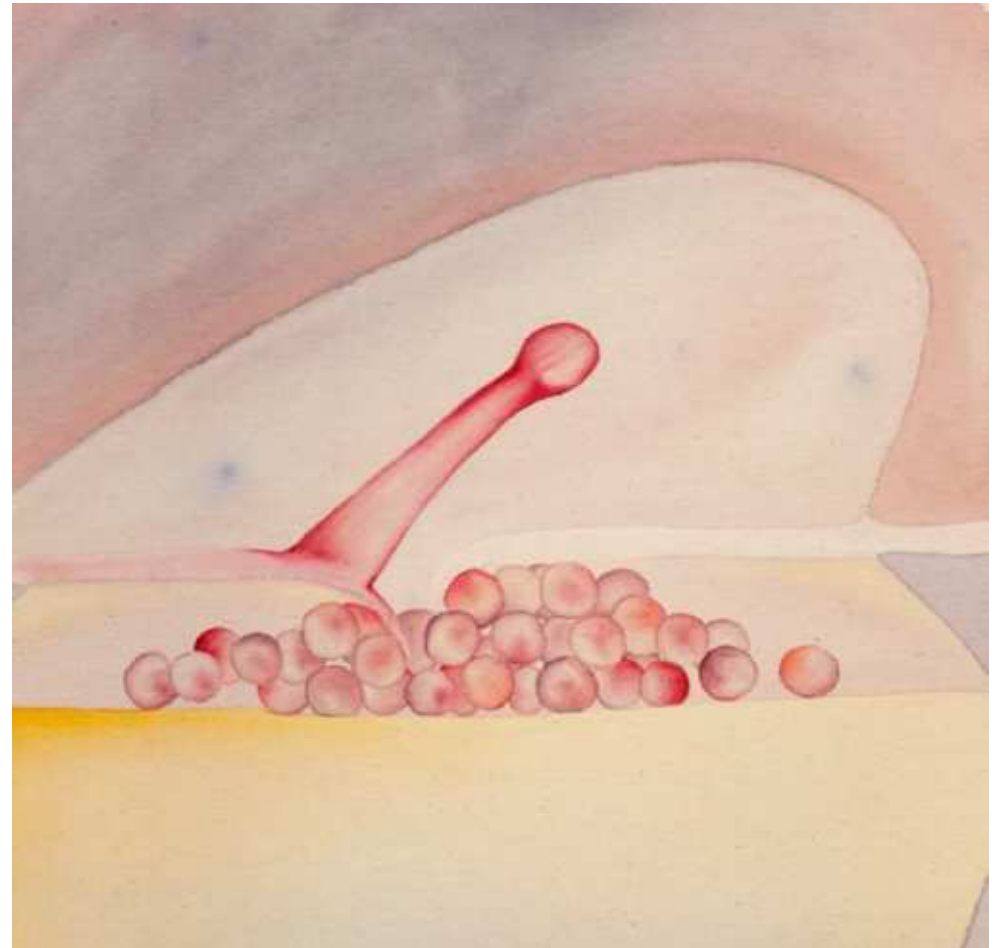




**eternal day/ Serum**  
(2024)

watercolour on canvas  
120 x 160 cm





**eternal night/ placenta ship (2024)**

watercolour on canvas  
120 x 160 cm

# on X-ray

by Magdalena Wisniowska

The secret lies at the heart of Sarah Doerfel's work, alongside the guts, the lungs and the womb. Curiosity makes us glance inside, in the hope we might see something. We want to know what's there, how the organs work, what is it that keeps us alive. Instead, we see a mess of tissues and blood vessels, body fluids and pus. For the secret is not matter or an object to be discovered. No matter how deeply we cut, it will not reveal itself. In the same way, no x-ray can show us the hidden DNA code, which when transcribed into amino acid chains, folds into protein. No, the secret can only be sensed indirectly, through the symptoms it produces, whispering impatiently at us, "Read the room!"

In her work for this exhibition, Doerfel adopts the position of a symptomatologist, training her clinical eye on the inner body. Together we stand before a shallow red pool and look down at a video projection showing a series of mysterious clay objects being lifted and examined by the archetypical man of science. This is exhibit A, body one, like that described by Foucault at the beginning of the chapter *Open Up a Few Corpses in The Birth of the Clinic* (1). It is the body opened with a sense of excitement and wonder, and more than a frisson of transgression.

The organic objects found inside are recreations of votive offerings such as those recently excavated at the site of the thermal springs at San Casciano dei Bagni in central Italy (2). Here, as in other locations, different cultural artifacts – coins, statues but also these peculiar terracotta representations of internal organs – were thrown into the warm waters of a sacred temple pool in the hope of promoting healing. There they laid buried, perfectly preserved in the mineral-rich mud. What we hear is the distant rattling of a clay ball found inside one of the more indeterminate of the objects, unheard for hundreds of years.

There is however a second body, exhibit B, belonging to anatomical pathology and its study of tissue structures. For Foucault, the process of death – like that of disease – is drawn out across these membranes and their intercon-

nective systems (3). And we no longer die at once, finally, at the end. I do not die – my cells, tissues and organs do, slowly and steadily, heart, lungs, brain. But in death too, we also see the progress of life in reverse, beginning with the zygote and embryo (4). Contemporary science only confirms: stem cells are the last to die, still found alive in the muscles of a 17-day-old corpse (5).

To look down at Doerfel's video, is to see the secret that the corpse holds, emanating from within. The pool, now glowing with blue light, contains frog eggs, and we are shown their embryonic development in the kind of unnatural detail only macrophotography can offer. Here rotating slowly to better catch the light is a spine, there, the external gills. Looking beyond the pool, the watercolour paintings capture similar phylotypic stages of embryogenesis, the moment when all embryos express the highest degree of morphological resemblance and whether human or fish, it all looks the same. We know now that this resemblance is determined by homologous genetic mechanisms, regulated by the oldest evolutionary genes. Phylogeny whispers the secret: these are the molecules of the distant ancestor.

In Doerfel's work, embryogenesis allow us see, not the secret – its code remains unknown – but how life is stilled. We become what we are when development is halted at the critical stage. Looking back, however, we also see the time of endless potential, when we could become anything and everything.

1 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic. An Archeology of Medical Perception*, trans. A.M. Sheridan (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), 124–48.

2 See "New Podcast episode! Votive finds from San Casciano dei Bagni – a conversation with Dr Jacopo Tabolli," <https://thevotivesproject.org/2023/10/16/a-conversation-with-jacopo-tabolli/>, accessed May 16, 2024.

3 Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 142–43. See also Gille Deleuze's "Seminar on Foucault, 1985–1986. Part I (Historical Knowledge). Lecture 06, 26 November 1985," trans. Samantha Bankston, <https://deleuze.cl.purdue.edu/lecture/lecture-06/>, accessed May 16, 2024.

4 Foucault, 143.

5 Mathilde Latil, Pierre Rocheteau, Laurent Châtre et al., "Skeletal muscle stem cells adopt a dormant cell state post mortem and retain regenerative capacity," *Nature Communications* 3, no. 903 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms1890>, accessed May 16, 2024.

**Truce** (2022)

digital video, 16:9

14' 50"

realised with support of Foundation Kunstfonds/  
Neustart Kultur

The video shows how difficult it is to separate symbiosis and parasitism between the earth's inhabitants by taking a look at the complex relationship between humans and medicinal leeches. The worms have been irreplaceable in healing for thousands of years and are currently used as a 'non-sterile medical device' in reconstructive surgery. Leeches have been eradicated in Western Europe, so they are now farmed or imported.

*Truce* was filmed in Europe's largest leech farm and in activist Ryūki's house. Ryūki founded the *Leechylove* initiative, which campaigns for species-appropriate husbandry after medical use. Their leeches feed on their blood, relieving chronic pain. The community has been living in a close physical relationship of dependence, which Ryūki calls symbiosis.

from the exhibition text by Sarah Johanna Theurer

**streaming link:**

<https://vimeo.com/730996184>

**password: sanguis**



installation view at *Nurturæ*  
Lothringer 13, Munich, 2022





installation view at *Stories of Those Left Behind*  
Shedhalle, Zurich, 2024











**where I end and You begin (2023)**

tarp, ceramics, sound, speakers, camping mat  
240 x 170 x 120cm

The tent refers to nomadic lifestyles, but also to a contemporary relationship to nature as a place for self-optimization and recreation. Here, visitors are invited to take a seat on a sleeping mat under the tent roof and listen to the sound piece. It takes us on a bicycle trip into nature. The protagonist sets out on a tour on their own when the discrepancy emerges between the rhythm of urban life and that of the forest, culminating in the transformation into a new being.

text by Judith Hofer









**eternal day/ sunset sky (2024)**

watercolour on canvas  
90 x 120 cm







**Colony** (2023)

watercolour on canvas  
120 x 90 cm

**Changing Room I + II (2019/ 2023)**

latex, steel, ceramic, the artist's hair  
250 x 75 x 75cm and 60 x 60 x 60cm









## Pioneers (2023)

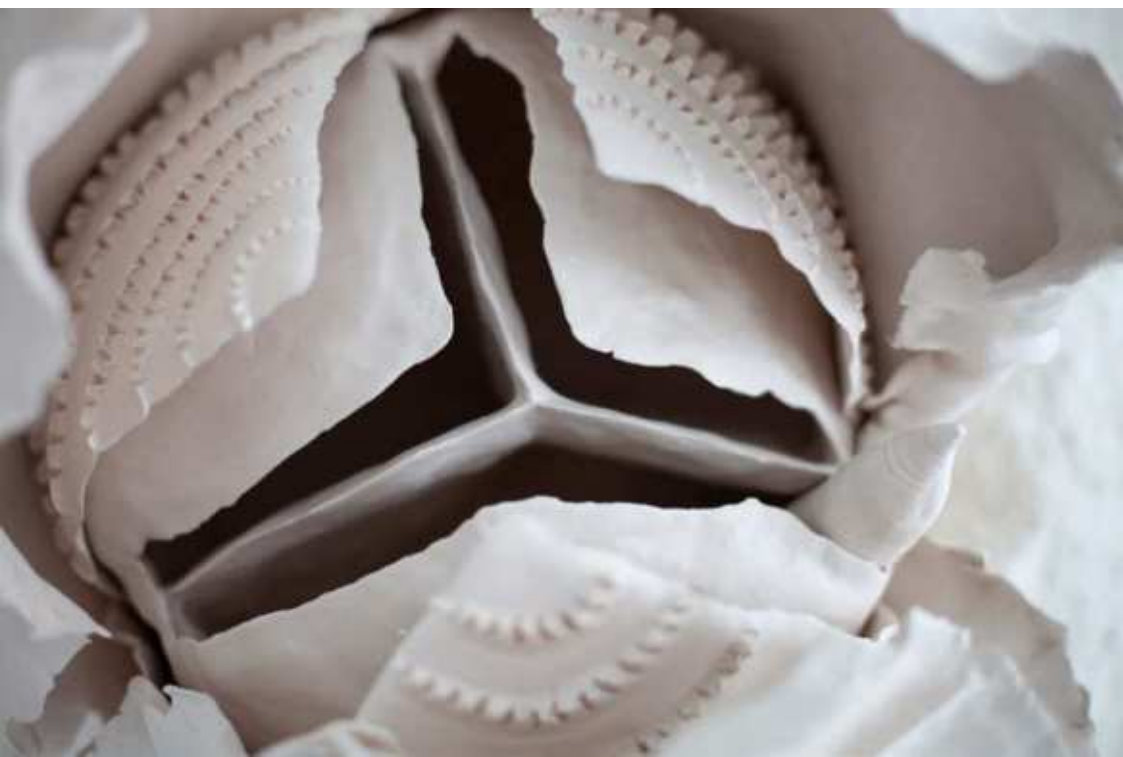
recycled flour, ceramics, paprika powder

4 sculptures between 29 x 27 x 23 cm - 41 x 52 x 45 cm

*Pioneers* introduce us to a fictional scenario of a symbiotic plant-animal species settling as the first on a newly formed stretch of land. The sculptures appear as cabbages, set in a timeframe oscillating between prehistoric past and post-dystopian future. We encounter a lifecycle from bud, to a courting flower with a phallus protruding from its centre, to the peak of growth and the beginning of decay. The Savoy-like cabbages show characteristics of carnivorous plants with gaping jaws, which enable the species to prey from the air while extracting nutrients from the soil. The white, unglazed clay displayed on dyed flour makes the sculptures seem fragile, while light and shadow create an eerie, immersive quality akin to a Pittura Metafisica painting.

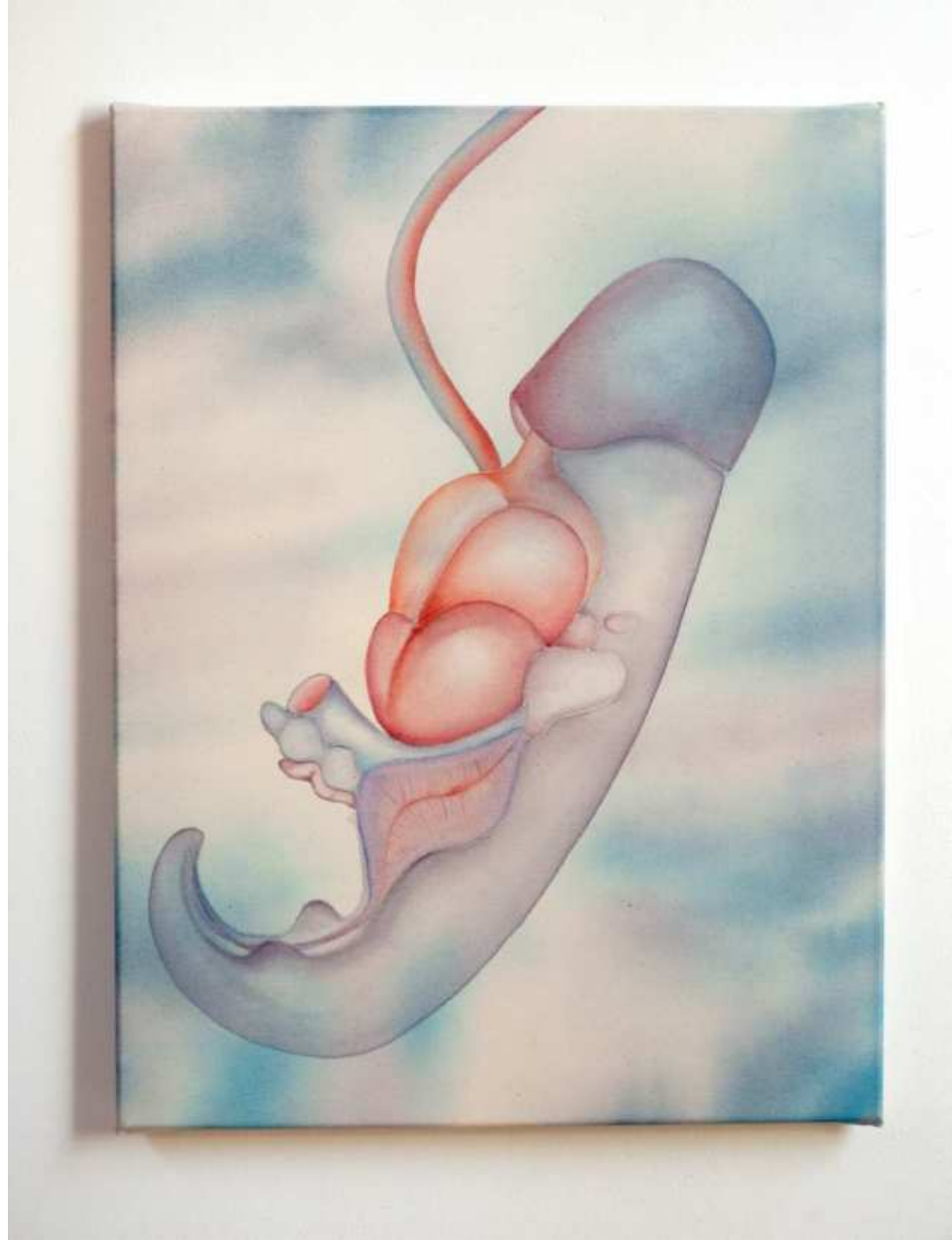
from the exhibition text by Teresa Retzer





**FLINT** (2024)

watercolour on canvas  
45 x 60 cm







**Fever Suction Line** (2024)

watercolour on canvas  
28 x 20 cm

## **Lure Stones** (since 2017)

is an ongoing series exploring the relationship between mineral and organic matter, oscillating between life and death. From iron to salt, living beings depend on regularly consuming minerals. Today's funeral industry offers the option of compressing a diamond from the physical remains of the deceased. Commercial harvesting of a medicinal Alpine plant has driven the evolution of camouflage of the species: The once green-yellow plant now grows and flowers in stone grey.



## **Lure Stone V** (2021)

fossilized sea urchin, modelling clay, watercolour  
15 x 15 x 15 cm

**Lure Stone III (2020)**

stone, modelling clay, watercolour, photographic coloration colour  
11 x 17 x 15 cm



**thick presents** (2021)

ceramic, latex, water, steel, poem

31 sculptures between 18 x 20 x 12 cm - 38 x 68 x 101 cm  
on two tables à 4,00 x 0,90 x 0,86 m

In times of great environmental change, new networks of relationships emerge and accelerate the never-stopping process of evolution. Fictitious species struggle in parasitic-symbiotic relationships and become manifest in fossils of the future. The recurring symbol of the tooth summarises these aspects, which can sustain and take life, in its simultaneous function as egg tooth for hatching, chewing tool and weapon to kill.









**Untitled (mandragora) (2023)**

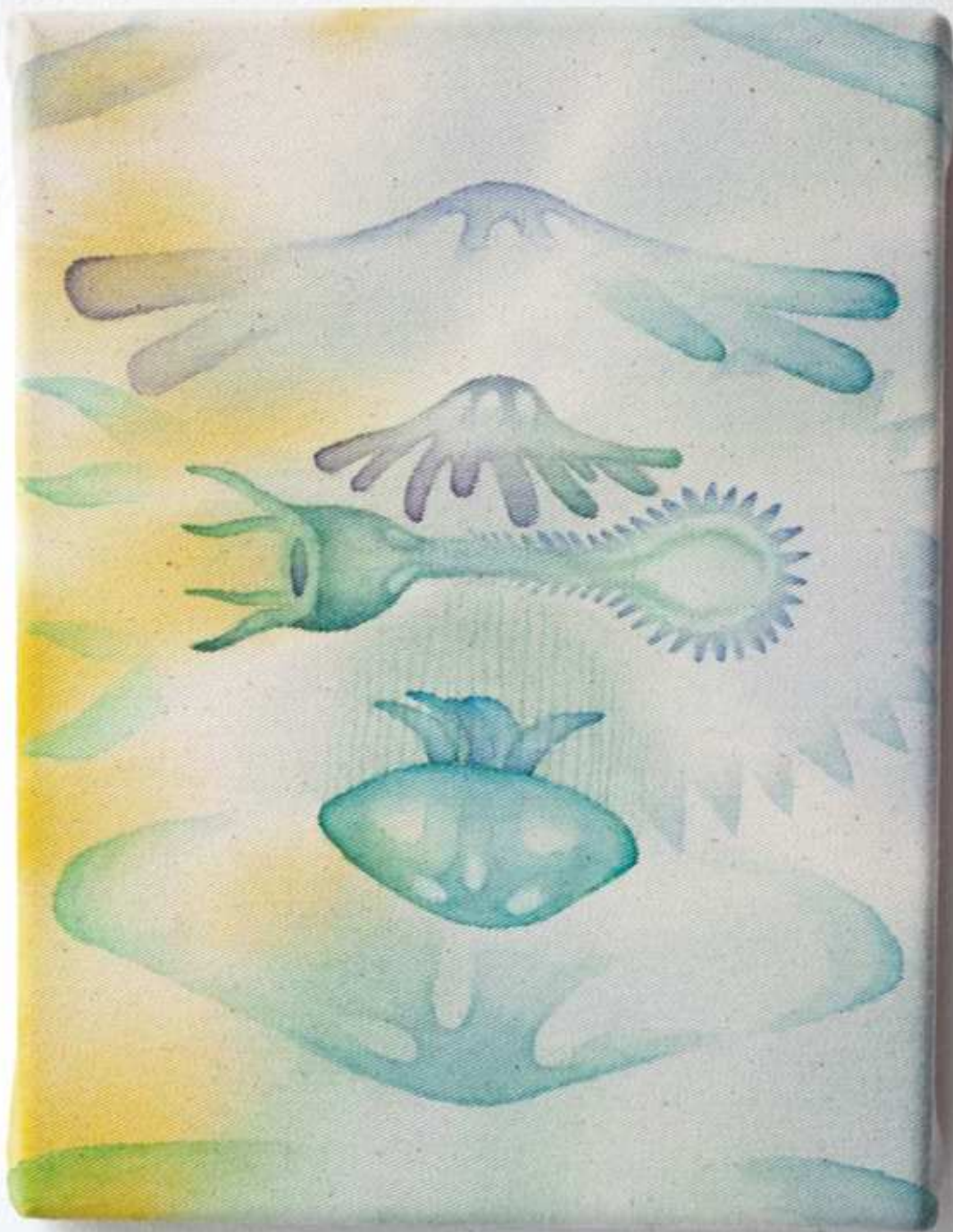
watercolour on canvas  
90 x 120 cm





**Futur II (life cycle of the  
immortal jellyfish) (2024)**

watercolour on canvas  
19 x 24 cm





**hollow stems will help us walk (2021)**  
ceramic, onions, charcoal  
30 x 30 x 28 cm



### **Future Fossils (2022)**

hand-harvested Lower Greensand  
approx. 25 x 25 x 16 cm each

The material was collected at low tide during a residency at Ventnor Botanic Garden. It was composed on the Isle of White, UK during the time just before the last mass extinction, when dinosaurs still roamed the area and the trees grew, which provide for today's fuels. Greensand is around 100 mio. years old. The shapes are composed of various body features of locally endangered, extinct and potential future species.





**Evolution of the Pearl Necklace (internal accessories) (2024)**

watercolour on canvas  
51 x 40 cm

## E D U C A T I O N

- 2015 - 2021 Fine Arts, Diploma, class of Olaf Nicolai  
Academy of Fine Arts, Munich
- 2017 master class of Simon Starling (Royal Danish  
Academy of Fine Arts Copenhagen)  
cx centre for interdisciplinary studies, Munich
- 2009 - 2013 Photographic Arts, BA Hons.  
University of Westminster, London, UK

## S O L O & D U O E X H I B I T I O N S / S E L E C T I O N

- 2024 *X-ray*, Artothek, Munich  
*Capsule*, Theory in Practice, Munich
- 2022 *taking back my goodbye*, Ventnor Botanic Garden,  
Isle of Wight, UK
- 2021 *Diplom 2021.2*, Academy of Fine Arts, Munich  
*meine drei lyrischen ichs*, Kunstverein Munich  
*Festival der (Über)Lebenskünste*, Seekult Festival,  
Friedrichshafen, GER
- 2019 *Object Model Pattern*, Empfangshalle Galerie,  
Munich
- 2015 *Solutions*, Galerie Bildfläche, Eichstätt, GER  
*Ränder und Atolle*, Ickstattstraße, Munich
- 2014 *Rubbish Collection*, Maybe a Vole, London, UK
- 2012 *Every Day You Become More (Rushing)*,  
art in public, London, UK

## G R A N T S / P R I Z E S / R E S I D E N C I E S / S E L E C T I O N

- 2024 fellow of *Akademie der Künste* Berlin/ Junge Akademie  
for the *Berlin stipend and residency 2025*  
shortlist *Villa Serpentara* stipend and residency,  
*Akademie der Künste*, Berlin/ Rome
- 2023 project grant, Erwin and Gisela von Steiner  
Foundation, Munich
- since 2023 member of *the Professional Organisation of Fine  
Artists (BBK) Munich & Upper Bavaria*
- 2022 artist residency, Ventnor Botanic Garden,  
Isle of Wight, UK  
international project grant, Cultural Department  
of the Municipality of Munich  
grant *Bayern Innovativ*  
grant *Junge Kunst und neue Wege*, Free State of Bavaria  
shortlist stipend *Märkische Kulturkonferenz*
- 2021 grant *Foundation Kunstfonds/ Neustart Kultur*  
shortlist *Artist Development Programm*, EIB Institute,  
Luxembourg
- 2020 prize *next generation 2021*, LfA Förderbank Bavaria
- 2019 catalogue grant, LfA Förderbank Bavaria, Munich  
project grant, Akademie Verein, Academy of Fine Arts,  
Munich
- 2018 material grant, Oskar-Karl-Forster Stipend Fonds,  
Munich
- 2017 shortlist *Videodox 02 Award*, Biennial for Bavarian  
Video Art
- 2013 *first class award*, BA Photographic Arts,  
University of Westminster, London
- 2009 - 2013 international scholarship, University of Westminster,  
London

## G R O U P E X H I B I T I O N S / SELECTION

- 2024  
*Protozone 17: Stories of Those Left Behind*, Shedhalle, Zurich  
*with ends in mind*, workshop and reading, Shedhalle, Zurich  
*with ends in mind*, workshop and reading, Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, London  
*Table of Tone*, Center for Art and Urbanistics, part of Berlin Art Week, Berlin  
*Intersections*, Nouveaux Deux Deux, Munich  
*Jahresgaben*, Kunstverein Munich
- 2023  
*Cavernous Shell*, Tom Reichstein Contemporary, Hamburg  
*Beyond the Matter*, Galerie der Künstler\*innen, Munich  
*Après Dessert*, A:D: Curatorial, Berlin  
*Fragrant Tissues*, Beacon, Munich  
*Painful Tenderness*, Hinterconti, Hamburg  
*Desire Paths*, Hilbertraum, Berlin  
*Jahresgaben*, Kunstverein Munich
- 2022  
*Nurturæl*, Lothringer 13, Munich  
artist talk mit Sarah Johanna Theurer (Haus der Kunst), Lothringer 13, Munich  
finalists exhibition *Märkische Kulturkonferenz 2023*, Industrial Museum Menden  
*to the land II*, art in public, Perlach Forest, Munich  
*Jahresgaben*, Kunstverein Munich
- 2021  
*Jahresgaben*, Kunstverein Munich
- 2020  
*to the land*, art in public, Perlach Forest, Munich  
*Covid 19 Diaries*, Lovaas Projects, Munich
- 2019  
*Macro\_asilo/ Mobile Cinema Reloaded*, MACRO Museo, Rome, IT  
*Die Kreuzung als Glücksfall*, art in public, Munich  
*Mobile Cinema Reloaded*, Nelimarkka Museo, Alajärvi, FIN
- 2018  
*Territory of Ready*, MaximiliansForum, Munich  
*If your phone doesn't ring it's me.*, Metropol Kunstraum, Munich
- 2017  
*Quality Time*, Kunstverein Munich  
*Videodox 02 Förderpreis*, Biennial for Video Art, Galerie der Künstler\*innen, Munich  
*Jahresgaben*, Kunstverein Munich  
*Festival of Future Nows*, Hamburger Bahnhof/ State Museums of Berlin, cooperation of the  
Institute for Spacial Experiments and the National Gallery for Berlin Art Week
- 2016  
*A Tree Is Best Measured When It's Down*, Galerie der Künstler\*innen, Munich  
*Pasa Página: Days of the Artist's Book in Chisinau*, T5 Art Cluster Chisinau, Moldova
- 2013  
*MOLT! Speculative Identities*, Zona Dynamic, Atelierhof Kreuzberg, Berlin  
*FreeRange*, Truman Brewery, London, UK  
*Secret 7"*, Downstairs at Mother, London, UK
- 2012  
*Heartbreak*, Smarty Pants Laundrette, Art Against Knives, London, UK