

**23rd Triennale Milano International Exhibition:
Sonja Bäumel is representing Austria with *ENTANGLED
RELATIONS—ANIMATED BODIES***

Commissioned by the MAK, Austria's entry broadens our
perception of our body

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MAK – Press and PR

Press Release

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The artist Sonja Bäumel is representing Austria at the 23rd Triennale Milano International Exhibition with her performative and multisensory installation *ENTANGLED RELATIONS—ANIMATED BODIES*. Under the motto *Unknown Unknowns. An Introduction to Mysteries*, this year's Exhibition (Milan, 15 July–11 December 2022) directs visitors' attention to the manifold unknowns of the technological, biological, and climatic changes of the past decades. Commissioned by the MAK and funded by the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport of the Republic of Austria, Sonja Bäumel explores the limits of the human body and its vital relationship to the microbial world. *ENTANGLED RELATIONS—ANIMATED BODIES* makes us wonder and think what it might mean if the human-made borders around the body and our understanding of 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 the 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 a pan-species form into a spectacular 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. The impressive papier-mâché sculpture expands into the space and enters into a symbiotic relationship with the transparent fragments of a human figure brought to life by the choreographer and performer Doris Ulich.

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A dynamic projection overlays the installation showing a real amoeba based on video recordings by the Dutch artist Wim van Egmond, which was developed with the support of the Dynamic Projection Institute. A sound especially developed by Sonja Bäümel together with Eva Mahhov acoustically transports the microbial world into the space.

By shifting and fragmenting the 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 and reveals unknown forms of movement, intelligence, and communication. The artist triggers a rethink about the status of microbes as “pathogens” in order to redefine the relationships between various life-forms and symbioses that are essential for our survival.

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Moreover, *ENTANGLED RELATIONS—ANIMATED BODIES* broadens the traditional practice of anatomic drawings and models, for which reference is paradoxically always made to the dead body. Inspired by the realization that the living body is inherently absent in illustrations of bodies, Bäümel employs performance—a transient art form—as an important element in up-to-date, contemporary, dynamic body models. Her performative installation thus also has the potential to view the anatomic model as a fluid ecosystem in which science and imagination enter into a mutual dialogue.

On selected dates a performance jointly developed by Doris Uhlich and Sonja Bäümel will make it possible to experience the interdependence between humans and microorganisms.

The MAK took part in the 22nd Triennale Milano International Exhibition *Broken Nature. Design Takes on Human Survival* with EOOS back in 2019. The Austrian entry *CIRCULAR FLOWS: The Toilet Revolution!* won the Silver Black Bee Award.

This year’s entry for Austria, *ENTANGLED RELATIONS—ANIMATED BODIES*, seamlessly ties in with the topic of the 23rd International Exhibition *Unknown Unknowns. An Introduction to Mysteries*. Under the curatorial direction of Ersilia Vaudo, astrophysicist and chief diversity officer at the European Space Agency (ESA), the Triennale Milano opens up interdisciplinary perspectives on the many unknowns on our planet: from the far reaches of outer space to the depths of the oceans, from the mysteries of consciousness to the environment we live in.



ENTANGLED RELATIONS—ANIMATED BODIES

A project by Sonja Bäümel, commissioned by the MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna

Exhibition venue

Triennale Milano
Viale Emilio Alemagna 6, 20121 Milan, Italy

Exhibition dates

15 July–11 December 2022

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

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



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Austrian Cultural Forum Milan

Press photos are available for download at MAK.at/en/press.

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