



Iri Berkleid





## Statement

Iri Berkleid lives and works in Paris. After exploring experimental techniques at the biological lab of the School of Visual Arts in New York, Iri Berkleid has developed her own cosmogony through a practice grounded in intervening within **microbiological processes of matter formation**. The artist shapes cellulose as it grows in symbiotic cultures of bacteria and yeast, thus revisiting traditional pictorial and sculptural methods through the lens of the biological principles that underpin her practice. These principles have become both her primary constraint for creation and a major source of inspiration.

By seeking to transfigure **ever-mutating organic matter**, Iri Berkleid aims to «shift our perception of the abject and the sublime, and question our relationship to the body and its environment». She sees each work produced through this **dual process of creation** as a multitude of artworks, whose different states she shares through immersive installations, performances, or «documentary-works.»

Her will of transmission is driven by the **concept of the “aura”** as developed by the philosopher Walter Benjamin. Oscillating between abstraction and figuration, the **finalized and stabilized pieces**—presented as sculptures or “organic tapestries”—retain the traces of past vital activity.

In searching for the **imprints of the psyche upon matter**, the themes explored by the artist sketch out intimate chimerical imaginaries drawn from her dreams or from social myths inspired by evolving contemporary narratives, such as the biopolitics of bodies, interspecies alterity, or spirituality in connection with a microcosmic nature.



«*Grown*                      *Art*» :  
Organic                      Tapestries,  
Microperformances



## ***Eros' Wake, 2024***

*Eros' Wake* is a body of work inspired by the theme of the death of the god Eros, linking together the materials of rubber and bacterial cellulose.

Created for the Cataoutchouc exhibition at the rubber factory Les Chaudronneries de Montreuil in April 2024, the corpus centers around an evolving installation, presenting the work as it grows within its microorganism culture table.

The piece was the subject of a micro-performative intervention by singer Fanny Perrier Rochas, who performed an ancient Syrian ritual chant evoking the passage between life and death.

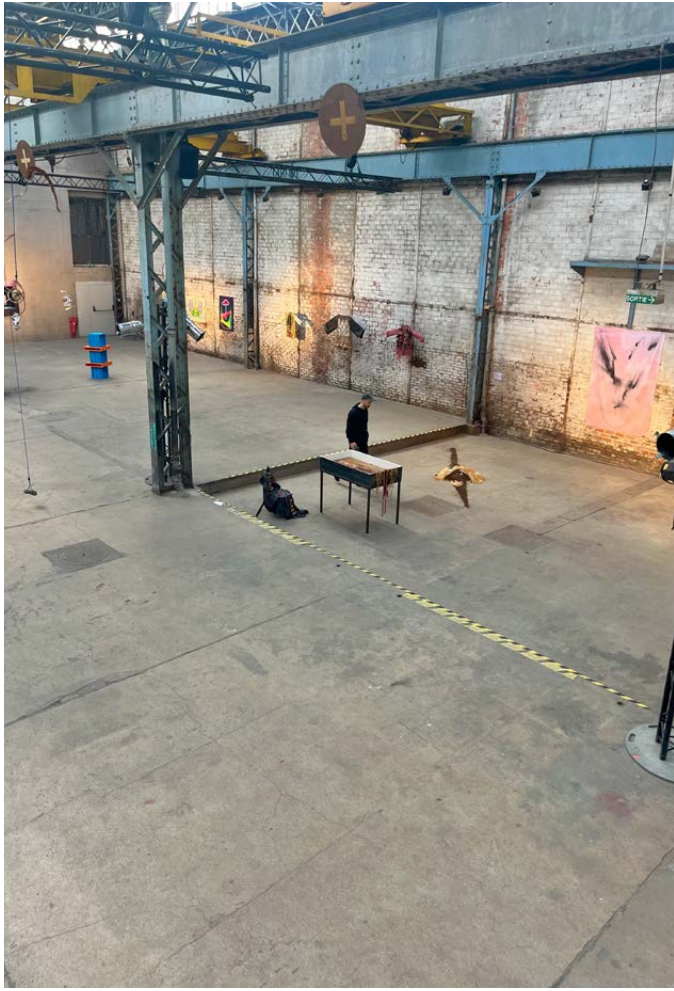
***Eros' Wake, 2024***  
Bacterial cellulose, rubber

Stabilized work on metal stand  
from the evolving installation (left)  
160 × 70 × 30 cm

Sculpture in bacterial cellulose and rubber, chair (right)  
90 × 70 × 60 cm







***Eros' Wake, 2024***  
 Vues d'exposition  
 Cataoucthouc, Relations en Tension II, Jakmousse  
 Les Chaudronneries, Montreuil, 2024

Evolving installation with oxidizable metal and ceramic tiles culture table  
 (120 × 70 × 140 cm), growing cellulose mattress (60 kg), rubber, glass pane,  
 dried cellulose piece embroidered with rubber on chair



Musical microperformance by  
 Fanny Perrier Rochas





*In the Studio - Two culture tables with the growing incubating artwork Eros' Wake, 2024*



## *Plasmatic Plastics, 2023-2025*

*Text inspired by this series of works and excerpted from the writings of exhibition curator Axel Fried for the exhibition Intramorphosis at Galerie TREIZE, 2025  
(translated from french)*

*The Intramorphosis tells the story of a world in descent. Or rather, a world that overflows. It is an exhibition whose central theme is uncertainty, but which also speaks of doubt, instability, of precarious and shifting bodies arranged in a certain way—but which could have been otherwise, or simply not been at all.*

*Its narratives unfold against backdrops of erased landscapes, without past or future, where bodies drag themselves beneath sanguine skies that offer no dawn, no dusk, no zenith. It speaks of those colors we never quite know how to name, of evenings spent spying on the mirror for fear that our reflections might begin to disobey us, and of **bacterial colonies spreading across a microorganismic skin, slowly drawing images: a young man asleep, and giant birds watching over his dreams.***

*It is also about childhood images—apparently insignificant—that live within us and occasionally resurface without reason or warning. This is an exhibition filled with impressions, intuitions, and memories; with chimeras too—organs of stone, flesh, and glass; things that exist first only in poems until someone gives them form, allowing dreams to settle in other minds.*

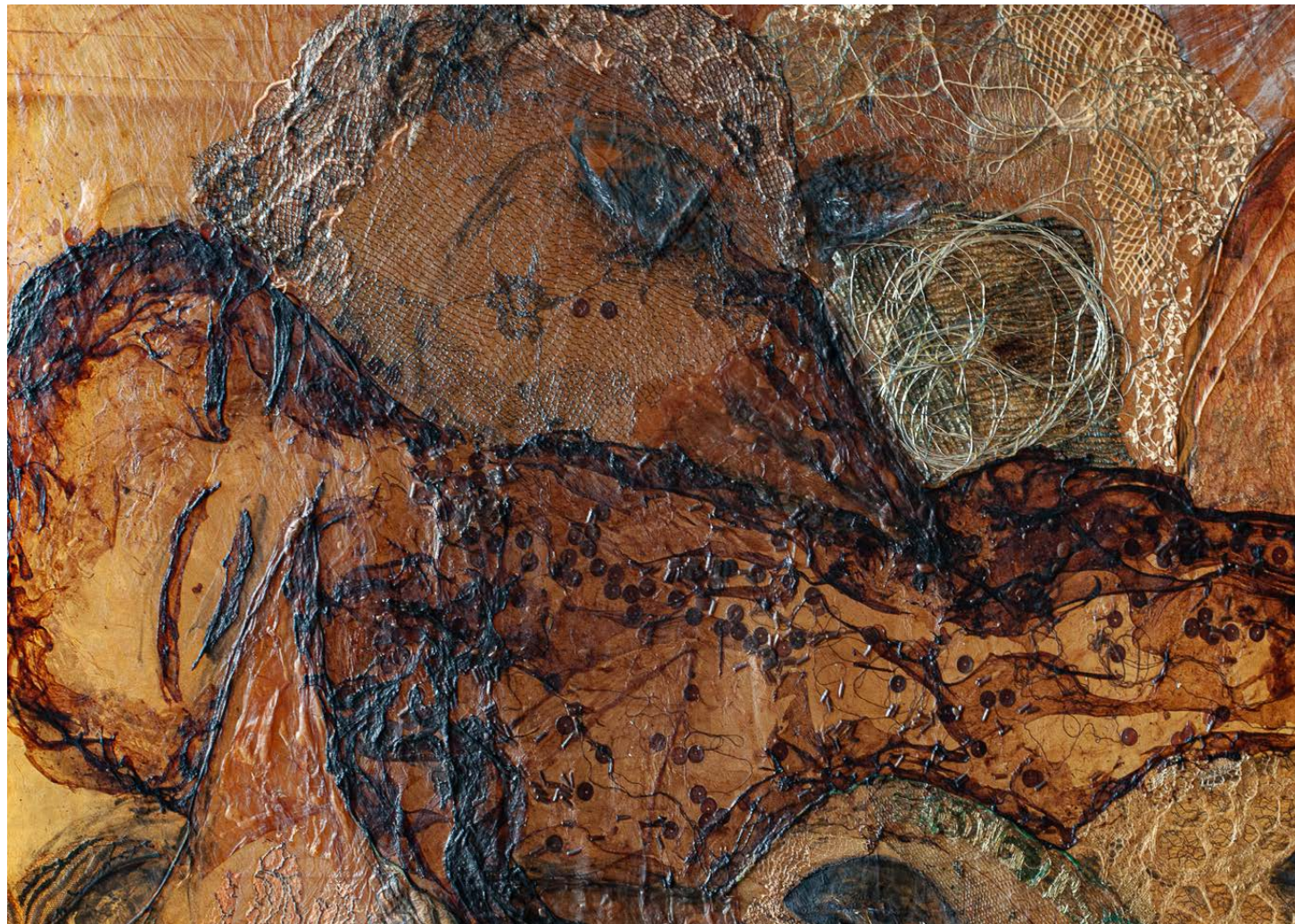
*What comes next is less clear, but it will come nonetheless, for things are always entangled, always collaborating in the making of forms, ideas, and beings.*

*The Intramorphosis tells the story of a strange world—our own—where nothing was ever truly planned, and yet everything emerges together, in an infinity of specific configurations that shift and reorganize to shape the moment.*



***Love Me Tender, 2023 (détails)***  
Bacterial cellulose, various materials  
130 X 90 cm





***Love Me Tender, 2023 (details)***  
Bacterial cellulose, various materials  
130 X 90 cm





***Beak Me Tender, 2023***  
*Bacterial cellulose, various materials*  
 130 X 90 cm

*Exhibition view Intramorphose, Treize gallery*



Vidéo documentant  
l'«œuvre-processus» :

[LIEN VIDEO](#)



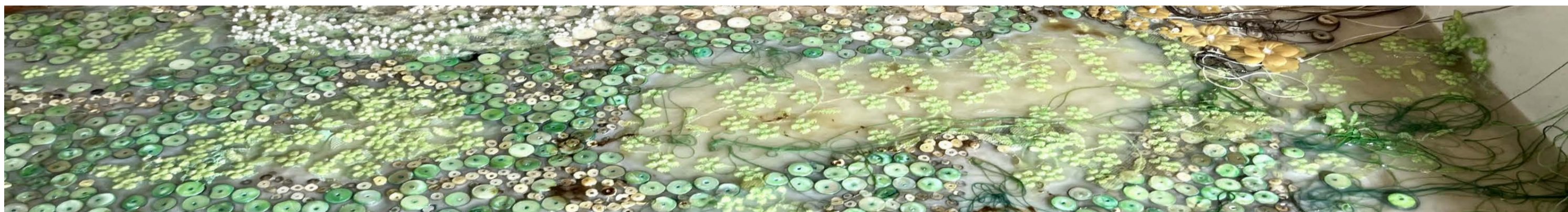
*Beginning of the creation phase of the artwork  
Beak Me Tender, 2023*



*Research partnership with the laboratory Coniphy-Conidia,  
Lyon, 2023*



*Microperformance  
Extraction at the studio, 2025*





# Microperformance La Naissance d'Éva, 2023

PERFORMANCE TEXT (translated from french)

read by Martin Guillaud

*«In a few moments, you will witness the extraction of the artwork. This is the precise moment when the cellulose skin is removed from its culture of bacteria and yeast after three months of incubation.*

*The connection with its culture will be irreversibly broken, the structures of the microorganisms disrupted, and the symbiotic process interrupted.*

*This moment does not yet exist, and soon, it will no longer exist.*

*In the vat, the symbiotic ecosystem will continue its course, forming a new cellulose skin. Meanwhile, the extracted cellulose skin will begin its drying process, losing 95% of its water weight over two weeks at a controlled humidity level. It will go from approximately 40 kilograms to 200 grams in 15 days. Only the traces of this past vital activity will remain on the waterless cellulose.*

*During extraction and drying, the artwork will be extremely vulnerable. It may be colonized by external microorganisms, crumble, tear, detach, or deform.*

*Since the beginning of this speech, the artwork has already transformed several times as cellular duplications have occurred. While the reaction of microorganisms to different interventions—with tissues, pigments, and other various manipulations—could be roughly reported by the recreational human, the reaction of microorganisms to their incessantly observing eye is even more uncertain.*

*In report no. 112, the recreational human notes: «Every measurement implies an exchange of information, by definition.»*

*They then adds: «Observing the artwork during its three months of growth was like observing the sky in motion, as if I could feel and sniff this fleetingness.»*







**TEASER**



***Microperformance La Naissance d'Eva***

Written and directed by Iri Berkleid,  
performance by Jodie Williams,  
musical performance by Fanny Perrier Rochas,  
theatrical performance by Martin Guillaud and Evangelia Pruvot





**Eva, 2023**  
*Bacterial cellulose, various materials*  
120 X 70 cm







*Untitled 2, série Les Métamorphoses, 2024 - 2025*  
*Small size series of works (29 x39 cm)*  
*Stabilized (left), Growing (right)*





*Individuation, série Les Métamorphoses, 2024 - 2025*  
 Small size series of works (29 x39 cm)  
 Stabilized (left), Growing (right)





*Individuation, Les Métamorphoses series, 2024 - 2025*  
Small size series of works  
29 x39 cm

*Exhibition view l'Intramorphose, Treize Gallery, Aix-en-Provence*



«*Grown Art*» :  
Sculptural Works,  
Microperformances





Exhibition view of the  
artwork *Buste Maria Callas,  
Intramorphose*,  
Gallery Treize,  
Aix en Provence, 2025









***Buste Maria Callas, the Diner Party Revisited series 2023***

Cellulose, various materials, nails, cotton threads

66 X 35 X 15 cm

Incubating

Stabilized detailed (previous p.)





***Bust Sarah Bernhardt*** on a metal stand in the hotel's room, 2024

## *The Diner Party Revisited, 2024*

This series is produced as part of a commission for a hotel, where each room pays tribute to an illustrious woman. To date, Iri Berkleid has created two busts, one in homage to actress Sarah Bernhardt and the other to soprano Maria Callas. The series is intended to expand to the 16 suites of the hotel.

***Buste Sarah Bernhardt , Série The Diner Party Revisited, 2023***  
Cellulose, various materials, nails, cotton threads





## *Body Abstracts, 2022*

*Iri Berkleid's exhibit, hybrid and subtle, is the culmination of years of experimental research across the fields of bioengineering and sculpture. On the cusp of the feminism born out of American pioneers from the 70s and modern-day examinations of the intersectionality of struggles, desires, and gender-related trauma, Iri Berkleid crystallizes the sublime contradictions and struggles of her generation.*

*Through their fascinating medium, the SCOBY, the works of art herein displayed, enriched by years of reflection, creation, and research, evoke in a regular procession, sensual marvelling and perverse revulsion.*

*Those familiar with Iri Berkleid's work know how much patience is needed to painstakingly grow bacteria from kombucha baths into a skin-like membrane.*

*As they grow, these living bodies are weaved and fused with sand, lace or pearls. This imbues these bodies with figurative and symbolic qualities that reflect Iri Berkleid's musings on epigenetics, physical and psychological violence, and the reclaiming of the body by women. Yet, the beholder will most certainly see in these busts their own reflection and walk away with much to be pondered.*

**Odyssée Bouvyer Marsan  
2022**

***Buste 0, Série Body Abstracts, 2022***  
Cellulose, nails, cotton threads  
65 X 10 X 35 cm







**Body Abstracts** is a series of twelve busts created by Iri Berkleid. Sculpted out of bacterial cellulose, the sensory sculptures are the result of research and experimentations around bodies: the organic cellular body and its matter - the political and social body inscribed into a conceptual feminist approach. Body Abstracts questions the representation of these bodies in a post-Anthropocene era. How to represent and project our bodies in symbiosis with the rest of the living world?

The busts are made of organic matter: bacterial cellulose. This matter is the sediment of bacteria whose function is to ferment and reproduce the SCOBY – Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast. The artist cultivates this bacteria cluster, grows it for 2 to 3 months depending on the biological time of growth. A labour of care is performed daily as the living matter thickens, mutates and transforms.

Iri Berkleid enters in conversation and collaborates with the matter. She accepts guidance from it as she intervenes in the growing process, gradually inlaying alien elements such as textiles, pearls, yarns, lace... The organic matter becomes a canvas revealing abstract or more figurative patterns, inspired by subjects like inter-species empathy, love, exile and awe. Berkleid explains that her intervention is “an epiphenomenon” in the creation of each bust that absorbs, conforms, or rejects her proposition. They become unique in their consistency, asperities and shapes.

The title *Body Abstracts* pays homage to *Meat Abstracts*, Helen Chadwick’s photographic series of raw meat steaks and light balls as signifiers of human bodies. Iri Berkleid stands in the aftermath of the second-wave feminist avant-garde of the 1970s. Not completely feminine nor completely masculine, the androgenous busts leave room for the viewer’s interpretation.

This series is anchored in the artist’s inquiry about cellular memory and epigenetics. Just as the Bust 12, Berkleid chases the psychic imprints on matter. The fusion of lace and microcellular landscapes created by the cellulose evokes the marks left by some materials on bodies throughout time. Light installations suggest a presence, the light of the soul. They bring a spiritual dimension to the artist’s work.

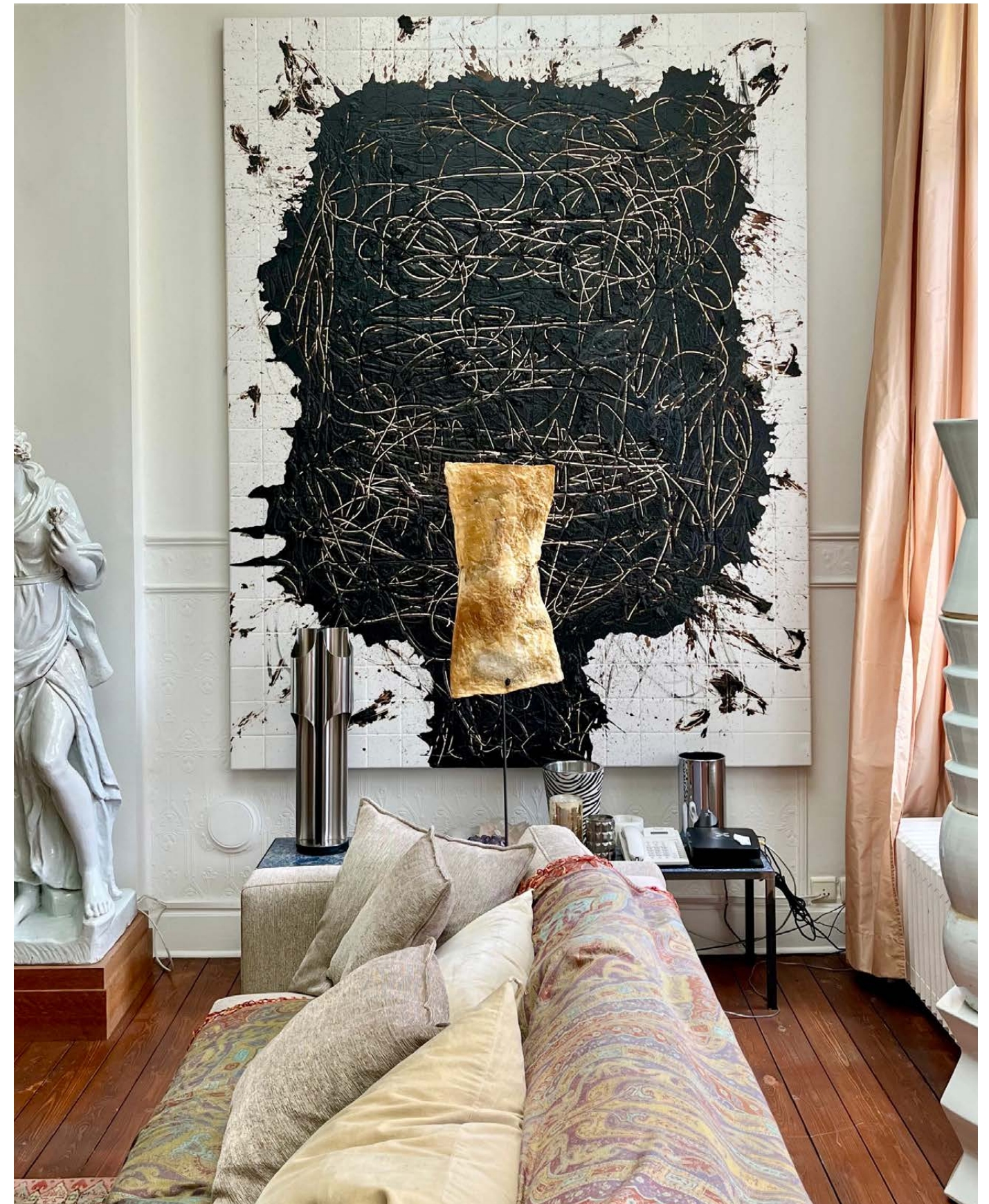
The busts converse when exhibited together, filling the empty space of the room with their animated auras. The space between our skins and the busts shrinks irremediably, reminding us our bodies’ attachment to the “very fabric of life that binds us together in the mystifying dance of microscopic and everchanging cells”.

Marie de Ganay  
Exposition Symbiocène, Arles, 2022





**Body Abstracts Series, 2022**  
Exhibition view *Symbiocène, L'Été des Serpents, Arles*, June 2022



**Buste 8, Série Body Abstracts, 2022**  
Cellulose, sand, pigments, nails, cotton threads  
65 X 10 X 35 cm

Private Collection view



## Microperformance Body Abstracts, 2022



**Synopsis** : *Body Abstracts, The Performance*, is an immersive performance by the artist Iri Berkleid that tells the story of a symbiosis and a separation in 5 "tableaux". At the intersection of music, theatre and visual arts shows, Iri stages the circus artist Jodie Williams, the poet and musician Santiago Aldunate and the music composer Tamas Juhasz. A first public version of 18 minutes took place at SOMA Marseille in October 2022 in front of an audience of sixty people.

The action takes place in an evolving installation in which a cellulose membrane, resembling human skin, grows during the month running up to the performance. Jodie's body is transformed by the fusion with the membrane and emerges in enigmatic forms in the bathtub before spilling out, body to body, into the performance space. The separation of the two bodies marks the second part of the performance, where Jodie becomes the conscious master of the material. She now handles the material practically, yet still sacredly, under the improvised sounds of Tamas who sets the tempo for her ascension to the final scene, her projection, the creation of a mural from the remaining pieces of material.

Her actions are abstractions of Iri Berkleid's real process and experience of working with this matter, highlighting the labour and physical effort, the intimacy and fusion, the constraints and conflicts of working with a new materiality. The audience is invited to a complete sensory experience, in proximity with odours, sounds and textures; a new environment, displacing them to reconsider their notion of abjection and awe.

In each performance Iri invites a different musician to frame the work, giving a sensitive impulse to start the action. Their voice leaves a gentle trace carried through the duration of the piece until the audience are reunited with the music in the form of a concert at the end. Jodie, exiting the performance space after the final act, leads a hypnotized audience into the concert of the guest musician, a familiarity that now relieves the trance of the performance environment.







*Body Abstracts, The Performance*  
Soma Marseille, Octobre 2022

Written and directed by Iri Berkleid, performance by Jodie Williams,  
musical performance by Santiago Aldunate and Hanta Yo,  
sound creation and live music by Tamas Juhasz

[TEASER](#)







*Body Abstracts, Installation évolutive  
Soma Marseille, Octobre 2022*



*Containing-sculpture Ready-made  
Workshop training day for the students of the  
Second Chance School  
Soma Marseille, 2022*



*Discussions with the public about my creative  
process  
Soma Marseille, 2022*



## *Guts Help Us !, 2024*

*Guts Help Us!* is an installation centered around a triptych of busts mounted on metal frames and three photographic prints showing images of the busts during their growth in their microorganism culture baths.

Blending politics and the intimate, each bust is marked by a slogan written in black capital letters, borrowing from the aesthetic codes of political activism while unfolding a microbiological and psychological rhetoric.

«PILE OF WORRIED AGGREGATED CELLS RESISTING TROPISM, OF ALL SORTS»  
«TRAINED EMPATHETIC HUMAN AGAINST FACISM, OF ALL SORTS»  
«DIRTY DUSTY BRAIN BOYCOTTING POPULIST WASH, OF ALL SORTS»

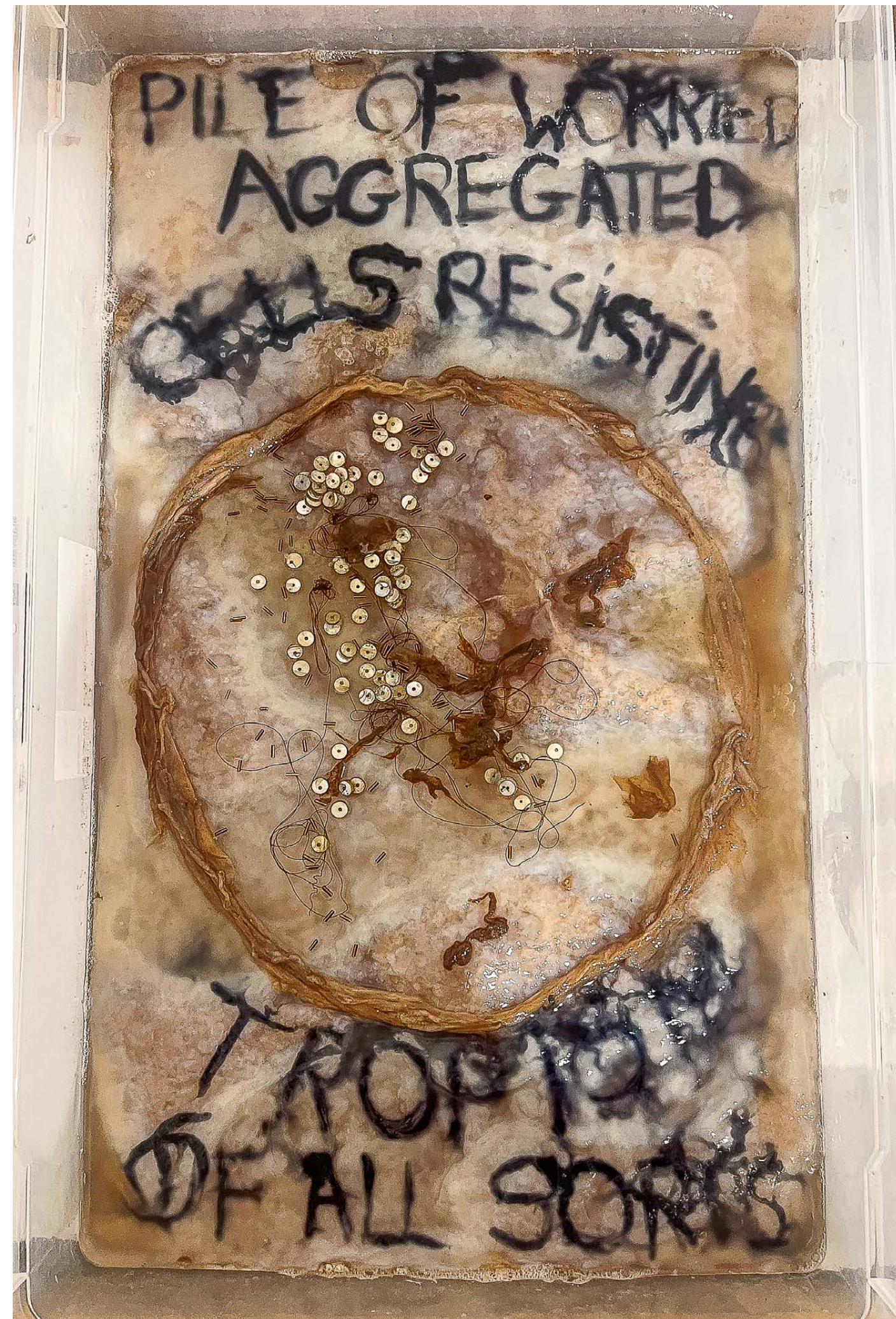
This work was created in the tense political context of recent months in France. As a visceral reaction to the rise of fascisms and violence in our society, the artworks represent, for the artist, a shield protecting her psychological and physical integrity.



Installation *Guts Help Us!*, 2024  
Triptyque de bustes sur châssis en métal,  
tirages photographiques  
66 X 35 X 35cm par buste











***Guts Help Us!, 2024***

Images of the incubation phase (left, right)

Photographic prints 38 x 60 cm  
(previous p. right, p.-2 left, p.-3 right)

Bacterial cellulose busts 66 x 35 x 35 cm  
(previous p. left, p.-2 right, p.-3 left)



## *Les incontinenances, 2025*

*Les Incontinences* is an evolving installation created in January 2025 for the exhibition Coalescence produced by the french collective Déficit. Focusing on the biological questions and processes tied to the artist's practice, it revolves around her new work with glass, initiated in August 2024, where the artist experiments with various techniques: cane blowing, casting, pulling, and laboratory glassworking with a torch.

An hybrid sculpture between an alive cellusoic mattress, moving amniotic liquid, semi-organic glassware, and a metal and ceramic container-structure looking to come straight out of an industrial laboratory, **L'Incontinente** presents an enigmatic machine for growing the artist's material. With its successes and failures, it challenges its agency and will—questions at the origin of life.

Part of *Les Incontinences* installation, which transposes the artist's research space into the exhibition space, the artwork highlights the creative process rather than the finished works resulting from this process.



*Installation Les incontinenances, 2025*  
**Césure, Paris**

*Blown glass, growing bacterial cellulose inlaid,  
Metal culture table, workbench, boat tarp,  
Cast glass frame and photography (next p. left)*







**Guts Help Us!, 2024**  
 Cast glass frame, photographic  
 print: image of the growth of the  
 busts from the eponymous series  
 30 x 23 cm





*Microperformance  
A Wet Aesthetic of Resistance, 2025*



*A Wet Aesthetic of Resistance (Esthétique d'une Résistance Mouillée) is a performance written and produced by Iri Berkleid, for which performer and circus artist Jodie Williams activates the artist's installation in which a work is in the process of growth through a microcosmic biological process.*

*This performance is the third in a series of works that the artist describes as "mini-operas," showcasing multiple scales of life concurrently to create spaces of communion between all bodies. Each performance embarks on the search for traces of the psyche on matter, addressing different themes.*

*Here, drawing on a phrase from Peter Weiss's book The Aesthetics of Resistance: «I am made of flesh and blood that flows in my veins, and you, now reduced to ideology only, are lost,» here the artist questions the transformation of our ways of thinking in times of acute conflict. The costume is designed by Chaim Vischel.*







Microperformance *Esthétique d'une résistance mouillée*, 2025

Césure, Paris

Written, directed, and musically composed by Iri Berkleid

Performance by Jodie Williams, Julia Jibert, and Maylis Cluzet

Costume and makeup design by Chaim Vischel

**TEASER**







Portrait within the installation Les Incontinences for the exhibition Coalescence  
Césure Paris, 2025

## Bio

Trained in classic sculpture and drawing at ESAG Pennighen Paris, Iri started to work with living materials during her MFA at the School of Visual Arts in New York between 2018 and 2020. She discovered bacterial cellulose, a matter produced by cultures of living microorganisms at the school's biolab. She instantly fell in love with it! Soft, watery, delicate, invasive and vitally powerful, it substantially resonated with her artistic exploration : the marks of psyche on matter. From then on, this organic matter and its biological processes of growth became the cornerstone of her practice.

Following Covid-19, Iri resettled in Paris and started building her own vats of cultures in her studio. She experimented with the matter until she figured a unique way of co-creating with the microorganisms, revisiting both sculpture and drawing techniques in the light of bio principles.

Before starting her journey as an artist in 2017, Iri worked as an independant opera producer in London in 2015 and 2016, an experience which highly inspired her and from which she keeps many artistic influences.

Previously, she graduated in law and studied diplomatic conflict resolution – she researched the impact of collective emotions in inter-ethnic conflicts on politics. She then trained as a mediator in international organizations in 2013-14. This work experience made her aware of power relations, social structures, and conflict dynamics. Creating experiences of communion through the ritualistic and organic aspects of her work, Iri's creation might be viewed as an attempt to transcend these cultural, psychological and physical barriers.



Photo of the growing artwork *Guts help us !*



## CV



### EXHIBITIONS

Intramorphose, *Galerie Treize, Aix-en-Provence*, Commissariat Pierre Allizan (2025) ; Coalescence, *Césure, Paris*, Commissariat collectif Deficit Corp (2025) ; Cataoutchouc, *Les Chaudronneries de Montreuil*, Commissariat collectif Jakmousse+- (2024) ; Microdosage Poétique, exposition monographique, *SOMA, Marseille*, Commissariat Muriel Bourdeau (2022) ; Symbiocène, *Galerie L'Été des Serpents, Arles*, Commissariat Marie de Ganay (2022), Eros Hypnotica, *Artwork in Promess, Paris*, Commissariat Adeline Cuberes (2022) ; Body Abstracts, *Le Cercle de Art, Paris*, Commissariat Marie de Ganay (2022) ; Queer Appropriation, *Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris*, Commissariat Alper Turan (2020) ; Non-location Specific, *Flatiron Gallery, New York*, Commissariat David A. Ross (2019) ; Te Llevo Para Que Me Llevés, *Centro Munar, Buenos Aires*, Commissariat R.A.R.O (2018) ; Flesh & Stones - Renacimiento, *Espacio Nigredo, Madrid*, Commissariat R.A.R.O (2017).

### PERFORMANCES

*Esthétique d'Une Résistance Mouillée*, 12 Janvier 2025 à Césure Paris ; *La Veillée d'Eros*, 27 avril 2023, Les Chaudronneries de Montreuil ; *La Naissance d'Eva* à le 28 Juin 2023 à l'atelier ; *Body Abstracts*, le 29 Octobre 2022 à SOMA Marseille.

### GRANTS, RESEARCH PROGRAMS, RESIDENCIES

Les Rencontres, *Carré sur Seine*, Boulogne Billancourt (2024) ; Atelier de recherche sur le Bioart avec le critique Jens Hauser, *Chaire Arts & Sciences, École Polytechnique Paris* (2023) ; Résidence et bourse de recherche *SOMA Marseille* (2022) ; Résidence Infinitésimal, *AYATANA Research Program for Science & Art*, Canada (2021) ; Atelier de recherche sur l'Histoire du Queer avec le curateur Alper Turan, *Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris* (2020) ; Bourse d'étude, Departmental Awards, *School of Visual Arts* (2018, 2019, 2020) ; Résidence et aide à la production d'exposition *R.A.R.O Madrid* (2017), Résidence et aide à la production d'exposition *ACART Madrid* (2017).

### DEGREES

Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Art Practice, *School of Visual Arts*, New York (2018-2020) ; Master's Degree (MA) Arts and Cultural Management, *King's College London* (2015-2016), Master's Degree (MA) Conflict Resolution, Diplomacy and Mediation, Université *IDC Hezlyia*, Israel ; Licence de Droit, *Université Panthéon-Assas Paris II* (2007-2011)

### OTHER EDUCATION

Biologie L1 & Chimie L1 *CNAM Paris* (2025) ; Soufflage de Verre, *ARCAM Glass*, Nantes (2024) ; Pratique de la scénographie, *Studio Té*, Rennes (2023) ; Design, Scénographie & Art Appliqué, *ESAG Penninghen Paris* (2011-2012) ; Advanced Photography, *Central Saint Martins*, Londres (2015) ; Social Anthropology (MOOC), *Oxford University* (2014)

### OTHER JOBS

**Conférences (2021-2024), Paris** : Le Vitalisme expérimental : Une Alternative à l'Histoire du bioart (art, féminisme et techno-sciences), le Cercle de l'art, Colloque Le Corps Objet d'Anne Creissels, Université Paris 8. **Entreprenariat Culturel (2015-2017), Londres** : Coordinatrice de projet pour .art (UKCI) et The Artstack ; Productrice freelance de l'Opéra Puck en partenariat avec Synart & The Royal College of Music **Diplomacie & Médiation (2014), New York** : Assistante du directeur de médiation, OMBUDSMAN, United Nations





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Studio visits on demand

*Microdosage Poétique, 2022*  
Cellulose, various fabrics  
190 x 120 cm

*Piece in growth at the moment of its  
extraction from the microorganism bath*

