

It is part XXXII of an ensemble, and this ensemble is no longer necessarily ceremonial
(like ducks in a pond, breaking bad, naipatta)

Museum De Pont

Thursday 10 & 17 November 2022, 17-21h

film
jam sessions
poetry
performance
readings
drinks

Networked Collective

Chrys Amaya Michailidis
Toine van den Hurk
Benjamin Schoones
Loran van de Wier
Lotte Driessen
Sofie Hollander
Rob van Kranenburg
Marijn van Kreij
Kim David Bots
Bas van den Hurk
Jochem van Laarhoven
Marcia Liu
Mathilde Nobel
Maxim Ventulé
Liza Wolters
Piet Dirkx
Feline Pouwels
Fatemeh Heidari
Isabel Cordeiro
Sabina Timmermans
Samieh Shahcheraghi
Mathieu Wijdeven
Lucila Kenny
Terra van Dorst
Dieuwke Oosterbosch
Valerie Ludwig
Sigrid van Essen
Matea Bakula

thanks to:

Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen
Maria Snyder
Marié-Jose Eijkemans
Yda Sinay
Team De Pont
AKV St. Joost
Sanne Jansen

The question of how the varied species in a species assemblage influence each other—if at all—is never settled: some thwart (or eat) each other; others work together to make life possible: still others just happen to find themselves in the same place. Assemblages are open-ended gatherings. They allow us to ask about communal effects without assuming them. They show us potential histories in the making.

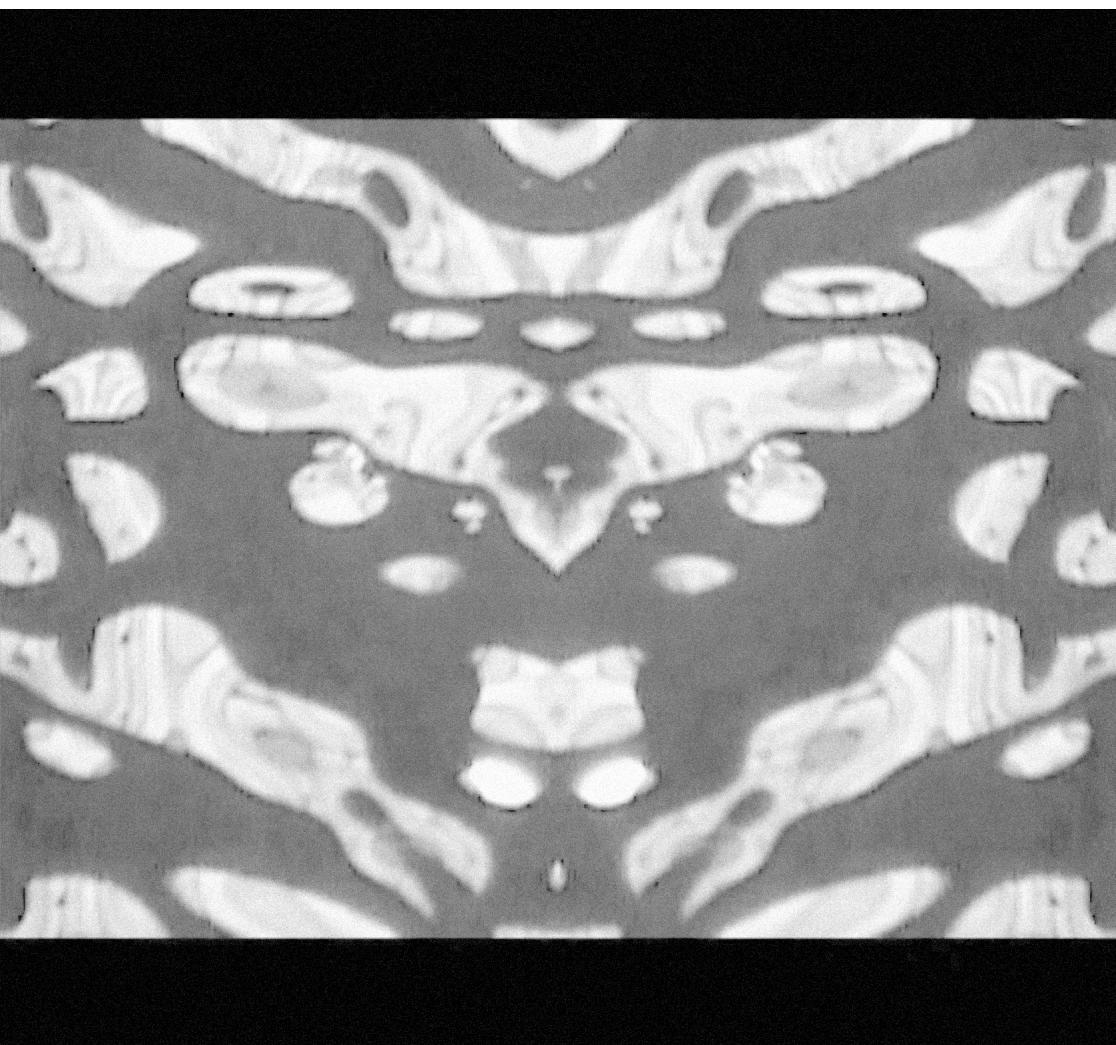
- Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing

Constantly in flux, the project It is part of an ensemble invites visitors to become part of a collective making- and thinking process. Through an assemblage of different elements the museum becomes for one evening an experimental gathering place. In her book *The Mushroom at the End of the World* anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing describes how we can be sensitized to recognize the possibilities of these assemblages. The book forms an important lead for the open collective of artists, theater-makers, musicians and students that composes this evening. In De Pont they will create, amongst others, a live soundtrack for a film installation, brew their own drinks and make prints with plants from the museum garden. On Thursday November 17 the evening will be further supplemented with three workshops related to the program of the week before.

The project *It is part of an ensemble* was initiated by Bas van den Hurk en Jochem van Laarhoven as a research into relations between fine art and theater. Out of this research *Networked Collective* came into being: a flexible group of artists, theater-makers, actors, performers, theoreticians and students who all feel engaged to further research ideas around forms of collectivity. The tension between the social process of working and living together and the formal, autonomous qualities of the work that form the outcomes of that process are constantly questioned within, amongst others, collective work periods, residencies, exhibitions and organizing workshops at academies.



It is part XXI of an ensemble, and this ensemble is no longer necessarily ceremonial, 2021 (filmstill)







my discomfort, I understand that we are learning to listen—even if we don't yet know how to have a discussion.

Meetings among pickers and with the Forest Service take place because of the legacy of Beverly Brown, a tireless organizer who decided to listen to the precarious workers of the northwest forest, including mushroom pickers.¹ Brown brought pickers together through a practice of translation that, rather than resolving difference, allowed difference to disturb too-easy resolution, encouraging creative listening. Listening was Brown's starting point for political work. She had begun not with languages but with gaps across city and countryside. As she explains in a memoir recorded before her death, Brown grew up knowing that urban elites never listened to rural folks—and that she was determined to do something about this.² She began by listening to disenfranchised loggers and other rural whites.³ But thus she was introduced to the commercial foragers who collect mushrooms, berries, and floral greens. These folks were more diverse than the loggers. Her work grew ever more ambitious as she set up scenes for listening across greater gulfs.

Brown's advocacy for political listening inspires me to think past a disturbance in our aspirations. Without progress, what is struggle? The disenfranchised had a common program to the extent that we could all share in progress. It was the determinacy of political categories such as class—their relentless forward motion—that brought us the confidence that struggle would move us somewhere better. Now what? Brown's political listening addresses this. It suggests that any gathering contains many inchoate political futures and that political work consists of helping some of those come into being. Indeterminacy is not the end of history but rather that node in which many beginnings lie in wait. To listen politically is to detect the traces of not-yet-articulated common agendas.

When we take this form of awareness out of formal meetings into everyday life, yet more challenges appear. How, for example, shall we make common cause with other living beings? Listening is no longer enough; other forms of awareness will have to kick in. And what great differences yawn! Like Brown, I would acknowledge difference, refusing to paper it over with good intentions. Yet we cannot rely on expert spokesmen, as we have learned in human politics. We need many kinds of alertness to spot potential allies. Worse yet, the hints of common

agendas we detect are undeveloped, thin, spotty, and unstable. At best we are looking for a most ephemeral glimmer. But, living with indeterminacy, such glimmers are the political.

In this last mushroom flush, a final upsurge in the face of varied coming droughts and winters, I search for fugitive moments of entanglement in the midst of institutionalized alienation. These are sites in which to seek allies. One might think of them as latent commons. They are latent in two senses: first, while ubiquitous, we rarely notice them, and, second, they are undeveloped. They bubble with unrealized possibilities; they are elusive. They are what we hear in Brown's political listening and related arts of noticing. They require stretching concepts of the commons. Thus, I characterize them in the negative:

Latent commons are not exclusive human enclaves. Opening the commons to other beings shifts everything. Once we include pests and diseases, we can't hope for harmony; the lion will not lie down with the lamb. And organisms don't just eat each other; they also make divergent ecologies. Latent commons are those mutualist and nonantagonistic entanglements found within the play of this confusion.

Latent commons are not good for everyone. Every instance of collaboration makes room for some and leaves out others. Whole species lose out in some collaborations. The best we can do is to aim for "good-enough" worlds, where "good-enough" is always imperfect and under revision.

Latent commons don't institutionalize well. Attempts to turn the commons into policy are commendably brave, but they do not capture the effervescence of the latent commons. The latent commons moves in law's interstices; it is catalyzed by infraction, infection, inattention—and poaching.

Latent commons cannot redeem us. Some radical thinkers hope that progress will lead us to a redemptive and utopian commons. In contrast, the latent commons is here and now, amidst the trouble. And humans are never fully in control.

Given this negative character, it makes no sense to crystallize first principles or seek natural laws that generate best cases. Instead, I practice arts of noticing. I comb through the mess of existing worlds-in-the-making, looking for treasures—each distinctive and unlikely to be found again, at least in that form.

latent commons







DE PONT MUSEUM