

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Internationally Acclaimed Artists Headline This Summer at The Reach

Abbotsford, BC –Two new exhibitions at The Reach Gallery Museum displace humankind from the center of scientific and creative processes, imagining instead that we are just one amongst a complex ecosystem of collaborators that each play a crucial role in our shared future.

Drawn from Water is a presentation of Amsterdam-based Dutch artist Karin van Dam and Toronto-based Canadian artist Ed Pien's recent investigations of water not only as a source of vitality, mystery, and enchantment, but also as a co-creator in their individual and collaborative practices. Pien (b. 1958, Taipei) and van Dam (b. 1959, Eindhoven) first met during a Paris residency in the late 1990s and have been collaborating regularly over the past three decades.

Canada has been a recurring meeting place in their collaborative practice. Following a cross-country road trip together in 2017—which inspired some of the prints, drawings, and photographs in *Drawn from Water*—and separate site visits to The Reach in 2017 and 2022 respectively, van Dam and Pien returned to British Columbia this spring for a Deer Lake Artist Residency at the Burnaby Art Gallery. During this time, they have used field and archival research to engage with the complex natural and social histories of Sumas Lake and its surroundings in the Fraser Valley. Their collaborative investigation will culminate in *Surfacing*, a new mixed-media, site-specific installation presented as part of *Drawn from Water*.

Presented in dialogue with *Surfacing* is a selection of van Dam and Pien's solo works. Although their individual artistic practices are distinct the artists share a deep investment in heightened awareness and embodied knowledge of natural and built environments. Pien and van Dam also share a strong desire to complicate hierarchical perceptions of the relationships between humans and non-humans, as well as an attitude of wonder towards the unknown, uncontrollable, and potentially unknowable.

The decentring of the human (and, particularly, the scientist) continues in Jennifer Willet's travelling exhibition, *When Microbes Dream*. The exhibition presents a futurist vision, in which the human (scientist) is displaced from the top of the ecological hierarchy and agency is redistributed amongst ecosystems' many non-human and human beings.

Central to Willet's vision is the notion of interspecies collaboration which manifests in a performative sculpture, a large-scale installation incorporating live cultures, and a selection of digital prints, populated by a menagerie of mammals, microbes, insects, and plants working together to enact biotech processes for human audiences. *When Microbes Dream* reimagines laboratory aesthetics as bountiful, feminine, and gaudy—in direct contradiction to scientific norms. In this world of whimsy, specimens and scientific processes are transformed into spectacles that question the boundaries between disciplines.

Willet is internationally recognized as a pioneer in the emerging field of bio art. Her research resides at the intersection of art and science, and explores notions of representation, the body, ecologies, and interspecies interrelations in the biotechnological field. She engages in performance, installation, photography, and sculpture-based artistic practices, community arts and social practice, and philosophy of science, as well as media studies, science, and technology studies, combined with protocols from the biological sciences.

Produced in partnership with IOTA Institute and INCUBATOR Art Lab, *When Microbes Dream* premiered at Kapelica Gallery (Ljubljana, Slovenia) in October 2021 and subsequently travelled to Ectopia (Lisbon, Portugal) in September 2022 and i3S (Porto, Portugal) in January 2023. The Reach is the first Canadian venue of the exhibition's international tour.

The season of exhibitions kicks off with an opening party at The Reach on Friday, May 26, at 6:30 pm. Everyone is welcome and guests will enjoy light refreshments and a cash bar. The following day, May 27, at 1:30 pm, Karin van Dam and Ed Pien will give an artists' talk, in which they will discuss their recent and new solo and collaborative work on view in their exhibition, *Drawn from Water*. Admission is by donation.

For a full schedule of Summer 2023 events at The Reach, visit www.thereach.ca.

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Thumbnail images (high-res versions available for download at <https://tinyurl.com/4fye96y>)



Figure 1 Karin van Dam, *Lichen*, wool and monofilament, 2021. Photo courtesy of Karin van Dam



Figure 2 Karin van Dam, selection from *Coal* series, three photographs, 2021/2023. Photo courtesy of Karin van Dam

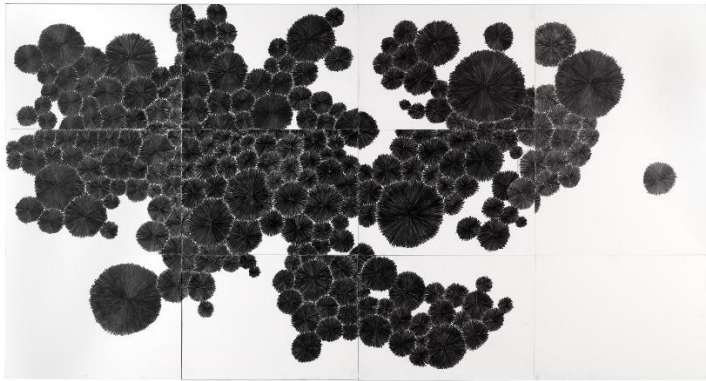


Figure 3 Karin van Dam, *Organism*, graphite on paper, 2023. Photo courtesy of Karin van Dam.



Figure 4 Ed Pien, *Rain Forest 2*, digital print on archival cotton paper, 2016. Photo courtesy of Ed Pien



Figure 5 Ed Pien, *Celestial Clouds* from *OceanWater Drawing: We Are Stardust* series, collaboration with Halifax Harbour Ocean Water, ink and conté, 2017–2018. Photo courtesy of Ed Pien



Figure 6 Ed Pien, *Amidst Blue and Black Kelps*, ink and coloured pencil on 3M reflective film laminated on shoji, 2023. Photo courtesy of Ed Pien



Figure 7 Ed Pien, *Primordial Soup*, ink and coloured pencil on 3M reflective film laminated on shoji, 2023. Photo courtesy of Ed Pien

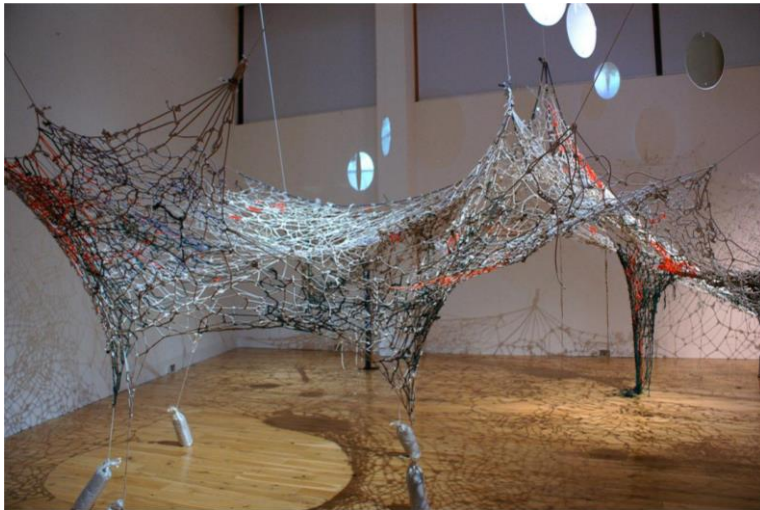


Figure 8 Ed Pien, *Memento*, rope, mirrors, 2 video projections, sound element, tarpaulin, and glassine, 2009. Photo courtesy of the New Art Exchange, Nottingham, U.K.



Figure 9 Jennifer Willet, *Laboratory Ecologies*, deer decoy, incubator in sheep's clothing, owl night light, lab supplies, tent fabric, 2017. Photo courtesy of Jennifer Willet/INCUBATOR Art Lab and IOTA Institute



Figure 10 Jennifer Willet, *The Biosafety Puppet Playhouse*, performance object and sculpture, 2020. Photo courtesy of Jennifer Willet/INCUBATOR Art Lab and IOTA Institute



Figure 11 Jennifer Willet, *When Microbes Dream*, installation dimensions variable, 2022. Courtesy of Jennifer Willet and Ectopia, 2022