

THINKING THROUGH THE MILIEU Reading Group with Soft Turns at Gallery 44 (2023-2024)

- collective reading, sharing and discussion list by various contributors - THANK-YOU EVERYONE!!

First session (June 7, 2023): Teresa Castro - *The Mediated Plant*

1. Teresa Castro - *The Mediated Plant*
2. *The Secret Life of Plants* - 1979 documentary film inspired by the seminal book: *Secret Life of Plants* (1973), with soundtrack by Stevie Wonder - *Journey Through The Secret Life of Plants*
3. Rachel Aviv - *What Does It Mean To Die?*
4. Time lapse videos of plants by Max Reichmann, *Das Blumenwunder* 1926 (discussed in *The Mediated Plant*):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iY6ulVCRsKI>
<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/blumenwunder>
5. Denise Ferreira da Silva in conversation with Stefanie Hessler
6. David Abram - *The Spell of the Sensuous*
7. Ed Yong - *An Immense World* (he also wrote *I Contain Multitudes*, about the microbiome)
8. Charles Foster, - *On Being a Beast* (the guy who pretended he was a badger, a fox and a swift, to the best of his ability!)
9. Paul Hawken, *The Magic of Findhorn*
10. Martin Buber - *I and Thou* - very short reading but covers a lot of the ideas that we discussed - from 1923

Second session (August 2, 2023): Isabelle Stengers - *Reclaiming Animism*

1. Isabelle Stengers - *Reclaiming Animism*
2. Jostein Gaarder - *Sophie's World*
3. Ariella Azoulay - *Civil Imagination*
4. Elizabeth Povinelli - *Routes/Worlds*
5. Sarah Jaffe - *All Organizing is Magic*
6. Robert Pirsig - *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*
7. Niki Seth Smith - *Why Does Ritual Matter for Social Change?*
8. Eduardo Viveiros De Castro - *Cannibal Metaphysics for a Post-Structural Anthropology*

Third session (October 19, 2023): Robin Wall Kimmerer - *Gathering Moss*

1. Robin Wall Kimmerer - *Gathering Moss*
2. Robin Wall Kimmerer - *Ancient Green - Moss Climate and Deep Time*
3. On Being with Krista Tippett (podcast) - *Robin Wall Kimmerer The Intelligence of Plants*

4. [1,500-Year-Old Antarctic Moss Brought Back to Life](#)
5. Merlin Sheldrake - [Entangled Life](#)
6. Emanuele Coccia - [The Life of Plants: A Metaphysics of Mixture](#)

Fourth session (November 29, 2023): James Bridle - Ways of Being

1. James Bridle - [Ways of Being](#)
2. Radiolab “bit-flip” [episode](#) about the cosmic ray that changed an election
3. James Bridle - [The stupidity of AI](#)
4. Weiyi Chang - [universal, timeless, celestial](#)
5. Richard Feynman - [Computer Science Lecture - Hardware, Software and Heuristics](#)
(Wojciech: I always enjoyed Feynman’s explanation of the simplicity of how computers work. Note: This is a bit like the exercise we did during this session)
6. James Gleick - [Chaos: The Making of a New Science](#) - Chaos Theory - explores natural phenomenon that don’t lend themselves to conventional mathematical (digital?) approaches. Written in clear, straightforward language - by a well known science writer.
7. Yuval Noah Harari - [Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind](#) - fascinating take on Human History; how our evolution and our human nature is shaped by the internal and external stories we tell ourselves and how those stories affect how we behave.
8. Michael Talbot - [The Holographic Universe: The Revolutionary Theory of Reality](#)

Fifth session (February 21, 2024): Elvia Wilk - The Word Made Fresh: Mystical Encounter and the New Weird Divine

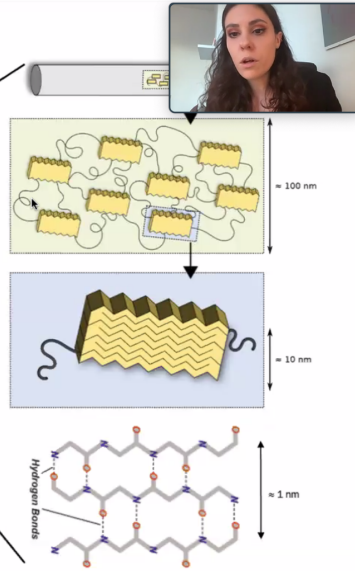
1. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock - [The New Weird](#)
2. Elvia Wilk - [Extinction Burst](#)
3. Jeff VanderMeer - [Annihilation](#)
4. Richard Powers - [The Overstory](#)
5. Jill Bolte Taylor - [My stroke of insight TED talk](#)
6. Interesting topics we discussed that should be revisited in future readings:
 - a. Eye Gazing
 - b. The Wet — Moyra Davey; [Les Goddesses](#) (see page 51: The Green & The Wet)

Sixth session (May 2, 2024): Laura Tripaldi - Parallel Minds Discovering the Intelligence of Materials

1. Hilton F. Japyassu and Kevin N. Laland - [Extended spider cognition](#)
2. Andy Clark & David Chalmers - [The extended mind](#)
3. František Baluška & Michael Levin - [On Having No Head: Cognition throughout Biological Systems](#)

4. André Geremia Parise, Gabriela Farias Gubert, Steve Whalan and Monica Gagliano - [*Ariadne's thread and the extension of cognition: A common but overlooked phenomenon in nature?*](#)
5. Michael J Spivey- [*Extended cognition and life after death*](#)
6. Marco Facchin and Giulia Leonetti - [*Extended animal cognition*](#)
7. [Heather Barnett](#) - UK based artist working with Slime Mould - Youtube [interview](#)
8. Youtube: [Tentacle Robot Can Gently Grasp Fragile Objects](#)
9. Youtube: [Octopus-Inspired Robots Can Grasp, Crawl, and Swim](#)
10. Youtube: [Think Like an Octopus - Human Elements](#)
11. Youtube: [Self-Assembly: What Is It?](#)
12. Some screengrabs from Laura Tripaldi's talk:

Recording



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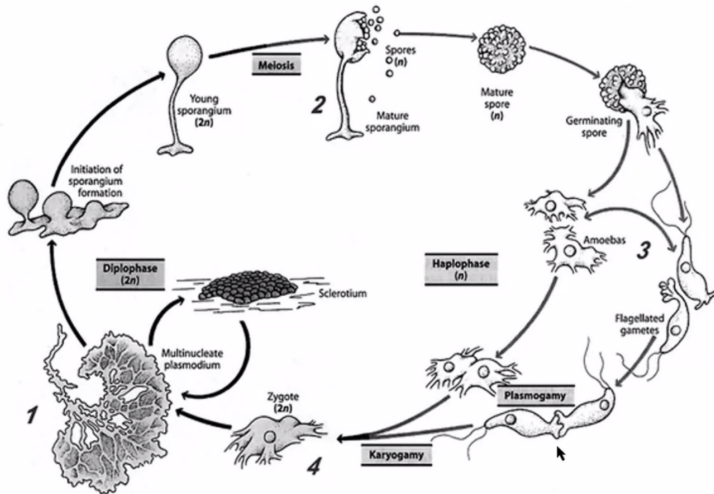
Recording

You are viewing Laura Tripaldi's screen

View Options

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Physarum polycephalum or "slime mold"



Audio Settings

Chat

Q&A

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Recording

Hardness vs. softness

“Hard” design

Rigid materials
No growth or evolution
Top-down assembly
Centralized architecture

“Soft” design

Deformable, fluid materials
Memory and adaptation
Bottom-up assembly
Decentralized architecture

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Recording

Self-Assembly

The autonomous organization of components into patterns or structures without external intervention

Static

Viruses

Crystals

Bubbles

Dissipative

Snowflakes

Belusouv-Zhabotinsky reaction

Living organisms

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Seventh session (October 10, 2024): Excerpts of Various Authors: Merlin Sheldrake, Peter Godfrey-Smith, Raymond Odeh and Charles L. Guy, Adrian Lahoud, Nils Bubandt, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Thomas Fuchs and Jann E. Schlimme, Richard Powers, Matteo Pasquinelli, Karen Barad, Dorion Sagan, Vladimir Vernadsky, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Kohei Saito and Soft Turns.

1. [Octavia E. Butler](#)
2. Zoë Schlanger - [*The Light Eaters: How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth*](#)
3. [Emergence Magazine](#)
4. Robin Wall Kimmerer - [*Braiding Sweetgrass Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*](#)
5. Janine Benyus and Azita Ardakani Walton - "[On Nature's Wisdom for Humanity](#)," in On Being with Krista Tippett (2024)

Potential future readings:

2. [Hito Steyerl - *A Sea of Data: Apophenia and Pattern \(Mis-\)Recognition*](#)
3. [Jussi Parikka - *A Geology of Media* \(Chapter #1\)](#)
4. [Nils Bubant - *Haunted Geologies: Spirits, Stones, and the Necropolitics of the Anthropocene*](#)
5. [Deborah Bird Rose - *Shimmer: When All you love is being trashed*](#)
6. [Sabu Kohso - *Nuclear Recursivity and Seismic Awakening*](#)
7. [Ursula K. Heise - *From the Blue Planet to Google Earth*](#)
8. [Josephine Berry - *The Agency of \(Planetary\) Feeling*](#)
9. [Karen Sherman - *The Glory Hole*](#)