

Beth Stephens & Annie Sprinkle & Butch. Still from video recording for introduction to screening of *Water Makes Us Wet, An Ecosexual Adventure*, 2019. *Ecofutures* programme, Genesis Cinema, London.



nobody was really expecting. We remember the film *Fresh Kill* (1994) by Shu Lea Chang that we screened during the festival and how it had already contained the elements of a global contagion. We thought that it was playful and surreal and unlikely to ever really happen. A year later, we find ourselves in the midst of a global pandemic with ecological and political contradictions that we will only start to make sense of in the next couple of years. For now, we are told that the levels of CO2 have drastically fallen, with a significant decrease in the demand of energy worldwide. However positive these news might sound, this is still not enough to salvage the existing or forthcoming ecological crisis. There have been proposals to adopt similar measures to the current worldwide 'lockdowns' and travel restrictions every year, until greener energies are systematically deployed at a global level.^[8] We continue to seek out ways to remedy the damaged relationship between humans and the environment and are unabashed to consider even the most radical approaches such as those proposed in Patricia MacCormack's *The Ahuman Manifesto* who asks, 'If all lives are of equal value, and some lives perpetrate more resource consumption or cause the liberty of other lives to be compromised, then is their value to be found in their absence rather than their preservation? Can annihilation be positive metamorphic change?'^[9]

Looking back at *EcoFutures*, we remember how we often felt that the programme galvanised situations that we least expected, so much so, that we often joked that either a curse or a spell of some sort had been cast. For instance, we received an unexpected last minute grant from the British Association of American Studies which 'magically' transported Silvia Federici from the US to Queen Mary University of London for a spellbinding presentation on witch-hunting and capitalist accumulation.^[10] During the installation of the exhibition our team worked wicked and interminable hours for four consecutive days defeating the most baffling technical requirements while adhering to (sometimes also breaking) rules that kept on appearing out of nowhere to ambush the project. We managed to install (and then dispose of) a tonne of sand inside the Mile End Arts Pavilion for Eca Eps' artwork *From Chibok to Calais* (2017-2019), despite the bizarrely cautious regulations imposed by the council of Tower Hamlets (from which we were renting the space). We emptied out and refurbished an entire room that was used as storage for wedding furniture and turned it into an immersive video-mapped installation space, having at its centre a pyramid that we constructed partially in-house and with no previous skills for Tabita Rezaire's work *Ultra Wet – Recapitulation* (2017-2018).^[11] We were blessed to have bio-hack artist and researcher Raphael Kim on

[8] See: BBC (2020) *Climate change and coronavirus: Five charts about the biggest carbon crash*. Available at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-52485712>>

[9] Patricia MacCormack *The Ahuman Manifesto: Activism for the end of the Anthropocene* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), p. 57.

[10] See video of the conference: YouTube (2019) 5.1 Silvia Federici - Queer-feminist Ecocriticism in Live Art and Visual Cultures <https://youtu.be/cK1_Nx0SB04>

[11] For a list of artworks, images and public events see Cuntemporary (2019) *Staring at the Sun* <<https://cuntemporary.org/staring-at-the-sun/>>



board with the project, who helped source and install a fully-operating scientific laboratory for a five-day bio-hacking workshop by Quimera Rosa; an ambitious endeavour that required specialist equipment and knowledge to materialize.^[12] Aleksandra Wojt, our events production assistant, managed to secure food and coffee kiosks stationed outdoors with electricity sourced directly from the kitchen, running through a window with a simple extension cable – which luckily didn't blow the fuses of the entire building. Surprisingly, the programme we set out to deliver hybridised and diversified beyond the conventional East London art bubble, which was happily popped with the inclusion of child-friendly activities during the open day event *Local Dialogues – Global Movements*,^[13] Raiza Kabir's workshop *Weaving Local Voices* which was tailored for local Bangladeshi women^[14] and a dance workshop for people of colour led by Ivy Monteiro and Javier Stell-Frésquez.^[15] Midway through the logistics of the programme we were devastated by the news of Annie Sprinkle's health condition (now stabilised) which meant that herself and Beth Stephens were unable to be there for the much-anticipated Q&A that

we had hoped for after the screening of their film *Water Makes Us Wet: An Ecosexual Adventure*. Their recorded personal video message (with their dog Butch included) was shown at the start of the film instead.^[16] However, there were also some pleasant surprises, like when Björk (yes, the singer) made a midnight appearance at our club night *Deep Trash: Eco Trash*, while the Swedish troupe *Arise Amazons!* were performing their 'yoni steaming' grand finale on stage.^[17] These are just some of the few aspects of this programme that had the quality of some sort of magic.

However, the most extraordinary part of that whole year was how it was even possible to create such an outstanding and smoothly managed programme with less than £20,000 public funding. Had it not been for the labour of our team, some of whom have been with us since 2012 and new ones that arrived on the cusp of various disasters, very little of what we dreamed of would have been made possible. The support we received from all 10 partner organisations was also dream-like and their enthusiasm and efficient responses kept us going even when we were nearing exhaustion with managing budgets, constantly

Mary Maggic, *Molecular Queering Agency*, 2017. *Staring at the Sun*, The Art Pavilion, London. Photo by Orlando Myxx.

[12] For Quimera Rosa's *SF Trans*Plant* workshop the collective used lab materials such as: a microscope, petri dishes, fungal spores, vegetable collagen, agar agar, autoclave lab bottles, alcohol lamps, scalpels, syringes, pressure cooker, electric hot plates, incubator, bio-hazard waste container etc. These were provided with the help of Raphael Kim, at the time a PhD candidate at Queen Mary University of London. Cuntemporary (2019) *SF Trans*Plant*. <<https://cuntemporary.org/trans-plant-workshop/>>

[13] See Cuntemporary (2019) *Local Dialogues – Global Movements* <<https://cuntemporary.org/local-dialogues-global-movements/>>

[14] See Cuntemporary (2019) *Weaving Local Voices: Sustainability, Survival and Economies of Labour* <<https://cuntemporary.org/weaving-local-voices/>>

[15] See Cuntemporary (2019) *Mother the Verb* <<https://cuntemporary.org/mother-the-verb/>>

[16] See Cuntemporary (2019) *Water Makes Us Wet: An Ecosexual Adventure* <<https://cuntemporary.org/water-makesuswet/>>

[17] For images, trailer and more information about this live art club night see: Cuntemporary (2019) *DEEP TRASH: Eco Trash* <<https://cuntemporary.org/deep-trash-eco-trash/>>