



Spora

Featuring works by Mary Manning, Helen Mirra, Jenna Sutela, Vivian Suter, T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss

This May, Swiss Institute launches *Spora*, a curatorial initiative centered in SI's institutional imperative to integrate environmental consciousness and climate action into all facets of the institution. Like spores spreading throughout the physical structure of our building and permeating the immaterial processes of SI, *Spora* is an experiment that explores what a practice of environmental institutional critique could be.

Unfolding and growing over the course of the next several years, the initial artworks in the project will be on long-term view in the non-gallery spaces of SI. In the stairways, hallways, roof, and other interstitial areas, artists have contributed to the daily life, maintenance and functioning of the building with artworks that take shape through compost, plants, wall paint, public space and more. These include Jenna Sutela's earth battery-powered oracle, Vivian Suter's weather-exposed mural, Helen Mirra's chance-determined background painting, T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss's sonic recordings of mycelium, and Mary Manning's photographs merging private and public, natural and urban spaces.

The artworks at the core of *Spora* are accompanied by the institution's initial steps towards climate action, begun in 2022, which take form as a thorough analysis of SI's carbon emissions through transport, travel, energy, and other ecological and social factors, and a plan of actions developed with the entire SI team for reducing the institution's environmental impact. SI will publish and share this process with the hopes to sprout inspiration and collaboration across institutional boundaries. *Spora* is conceived as an open-ended approach, which acknowledges that this is a continuous project that will generate more questions than answers. It is an attempt to germinate change while acknowledging context and limitations, with the understanding that this process is imperfect but urgent.

Spora and the accompanying event series, *These Seasons*, as well as the institutional initiatives of climate action, propose a start to a morphing process of reflection and transformation.

Spora is made possible by Teiger Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Consulate General of Finland in New York City. The project is organized by Stefanie Hessler, Director, and Alison Coplan, Senior Curator and Head of Programs.

Works List:

Mary Manning, *A Formal Feeling*, 2023

Chromogenic prints, paper, mat board, artist's frame
Courtesy the artist and Canada, New York

Mary Manning, *And all the lives we ever lived and all the lives to be are full of trees and changing leaves (For Jenni)*, 2023

Chromogenic prints, mat board, artist's frame
Courtesy the artist and Canada, New York

Mary Manning, *Lifes Rich*, 2023

Chromogenic prints, mat board, artist's frame
Courtesy the artist and Canada, New York

Mary Manning's photographs are studies of people and sites of urban nature-cultures in the East Village and beyond. They connect the inside spaces of galleries, artists' studios and domestic environments with dancers moving against the backdrop of a building in Chelsea, arboreal autumn foliage, or a bicycle leaning against a tree. Manning's photo collages of the city explore movement set against its built environments while interrogating dualisms of nature and culture, interior and exterior, motion and stillness.

Helen Mirra, *Harmless mistake*, 2023

Mistakenly mixed wall paint
Courtesy the artist

Harmless mistake centers errors as generative moments. The instructions are for wall repairs to be made in a "middle way" - with as much care as always, but without the precision of perfectionism. The repairs are neither foregrounded nor invisible. The use of "mistake" paint, commonly available from paint shops for a nominal cost, is typical of Mirra's ethical frugality. The intervention in SI's installation and maintenance work suggests a way of meeting "problems" directly, with a gesture which is neither creative nor destructive.

Jenna Sutela, *Vermi-Sibyl*, 2023

Acrylic, powder coated steel, polyester, copper, aluminum, environmental sensors, wires, single-board computer and microcontroller, food scraps, earthworms, microorganisms, soil, speaker
Team: Vanda Skácalová and hoyahelper
Thank you: Ertl & Zull, arri Sattlerei and Elvia Wilk
Courtesy the artist

Vermi-Sibyl conjures a figure from the Muppet universe, a matronly trash heap named Marjory. Because everything from vegetable and fruit scraps to coffee grounds and organic leftovers is deposited in her, Marjory has seen it all and knows all; she is an oracle. For this new project developed especially for SI, Sutela creates a receptacle into which staff will deposit their compostable materials to be processed by around a thousand worms inside. Garnering the electrochemical reactions in the soil as an earth battery, the vermicompost will power a sound installation that will be installed on SI's rooftop in the summer of 2023, transmitting oracular messages to the East Village.

Vivian Suter, *Untitled (Mural)*, 2023

Mixed media on wall
Courtesy the artist and Karma International, Zürich

Vivian Suter's painting on the building adjacent to SI and facing St Marks Pl is the artist's first mural work to date. Suter is known for painting large-scale canvases in the forest in Guatemala, where she exposes them to sunlight and rain, falling leaves and critters passing. Exposed here to the elements of New York, Suter's mural will change over time, affected by weather as much as the pollution of the city. In the artist's words, Suter works *with* nature, not against it.

T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss, *wa lúlem ta ts'áytens tl'a stéwa kin (The mushrooms are singing)*, 2023

Chicken of the woods plug and sawdust spawn, lion's mane mushroom plug spawn, maitake sawdust spawn, oyster mushroom plug spawn, reishi sawdust spawn, shiitake plug spawn, wood ear plug spawn
Courtesy the artist

Artist and ethnobotanist T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss launches a new project exploring the role of wild mushrooms for the remediation of soils affected by industry, colonialism and toxicity, while further considering them as tools for healing bodies, minds and spirits. Wyss channels the reparative sounds of mushrooms through biosonic synthesizers to bridge the languages of plants with Indigenous languages, creating conversations between them all in a sculptural installation. Beginning in May with a fridge that houses mushroom spawn, the installation will expand in the coming months when the mushrooms will be replanted into a carved elm log, where they will continue to grow and decompose the log installed on SI's rooftop terrace.