

Long Term Artistic Proposition for the Casa de Mateus  
Year: 2023 (April / May / July / September / November)  
Artist: Anne Marie Maes

## the Lab for Form & Matter

as part of the Mateus Labs

keywords : environment / sustainability / transition / ecology /  
technology / awareness raising / critical reflection / artist studio /  
artistic production / workshops / participants /

[...] Contemporary creators are already laying the foundations for a radicant art - *radicant* being a term designating an organism that grows its roots and adds new ones as it advances. To be radicant means setting one's roots in motion, staging them in heterogenous contexts and formats, denying them the power to completely define one's identity, translating ideas, transcoding images, transplanting behaviours, exchanging rather than imposing.

*(Bourriaud, the Radicant)*

# the Location

This is an artistic proposal for a long term site specific project, stretching over spring, summer and fall. The goal is to activate an on-site artistic production studio, in close collaboration with the local fab lab, and to develop works starting from primary materials collected on the domain of the Casa de Mateus. The focus will be on biodiversity, sustainability and transition, and we'll include elements from the local forests, vineyards, vegetable gardens, orchards, wild flower gardens and french gardens.

We would like to focus on creating a deep connection with the environment we are part of, specially with the "terroir" of the Casa de Mateus, and thus commit to encouraging cross-pollination with the local ecosystem.

We want to create an evolving project of new experiments and proven practices, all inspired by the rhythm, energy, beauty and inventiveness of nature. A project that thrills, inspires, challenges and delights local and national audiences, that stimulates community involvement and that attracts visitors from around the country.











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# the Studio

We will set up a permanent artist studio on the premisses of the Casa de Mateus. *The Lab for Form & Matter* is a long term project that emphasises the process. New works will be presented regularly, arising from workshops and performances during the year. Central to the project is the installation of the physical Lab. The set-up will be an 'Open Laboratory' in which we will process the bio-information that has been collected on the grounds of the Casa de Mateus. Gradually, a collection with all kinds of organic works of art will be growing. Through the bio-data from local flowers, plants and trees visualised in artworks, we will tell the story of this special place. In this Lab/Artist Studio, we will focus on the symbiotic relationships between living organisms - including plants, bacteria, insects and fungi. Starting from the microscopic, we will investigate the ecosystem of the Douro region by studying a range of organic elements proper to the domain. Besides materials for art production, lichens, plants, fungi and bacteria are also storytellers connecting us to our environment through their colours, their smells, the memories they evoke. Their stories will be processed in a series of new artworks, realised with ecological methods and creating new materials such as bio textiles and 'microbial skins'.





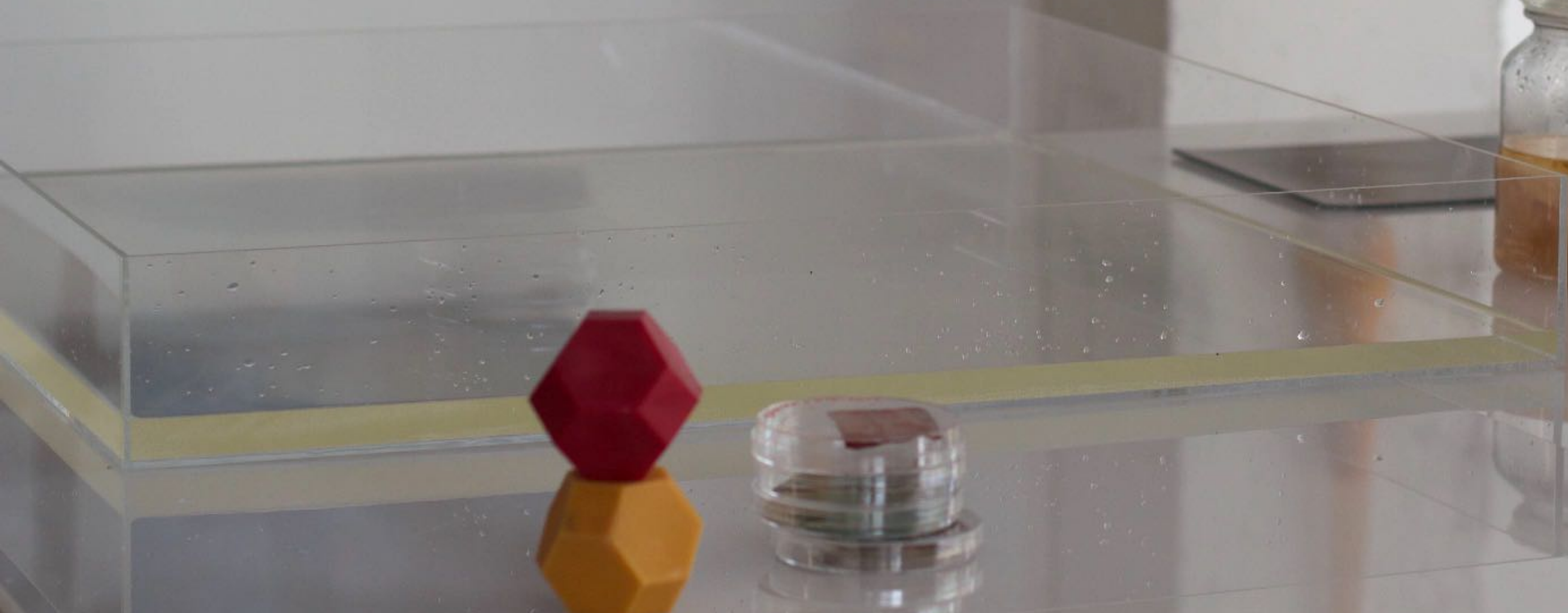
The battle is gathering pace.  
Most people own no land.  
Most of us live in cities and  
have no garden of our own.  
We demand more from this  
planet than it has the space  
and resources to offer.  
Guerrilla gardening is a  
battle for resources, a battle  
against the scarcity of land,  
environmental abuse and  
wasted opportunities.  
It is also a fight for  
freedom of expression and  
for community cohesion.  
It is a battle in which bullets  
are replaced with flowers.

on guerrilla gardening - a handbook for gardening without boundaries.





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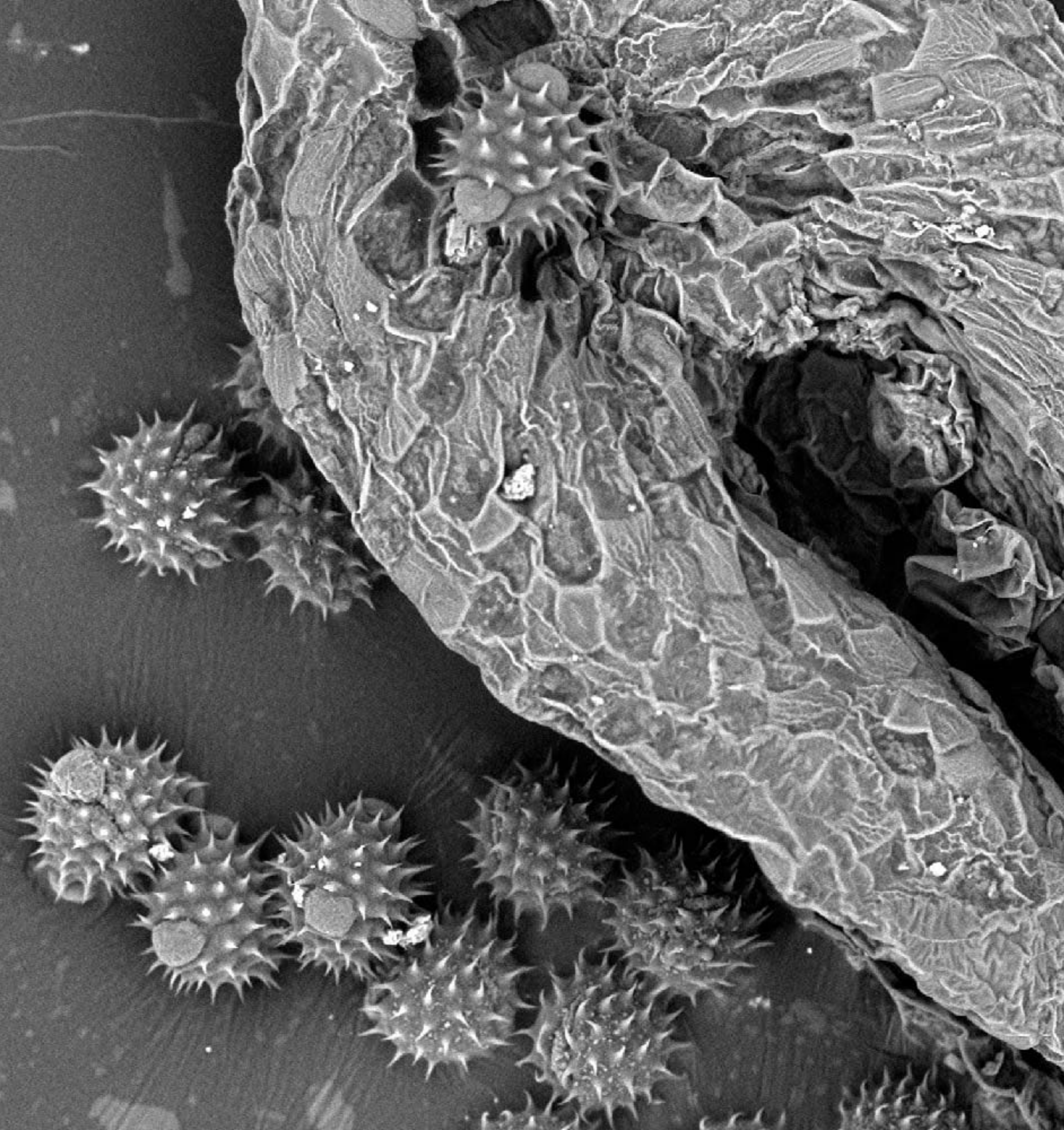
# the Process

Document the changing seasons and their impact on the ecosystem of the Casa de Mateus :

- Capture the different moods and colors of each season
- Create artworks that highlight the biodiversity in plant species
- Use materials from the domain, such as plant parts, seeds, fruits, or vegetables
- Create works that explore themes such as growth, decay, or transformation
- Explore the use of living materials, such as plants or microorganisms
- Collaborate with the local FabLab. Create artworks that incorporate sensors, robotics, or other types of technology exploring the role of technology in shaping our understanding of the natural world.
- Explore the concept of time. Create artworks that incorporate elements that change over time, such as plants that grow or decay.
- Use the materials co-created by bacteria, algae, and insects to create artworks that reflect on the theme of symbiosis and interdependence in nature.
- Create artworks that incorporate materials such as lichens, fungi, and bacteria in a way that reflects on how these materials connect us to our environment and evoke memories.

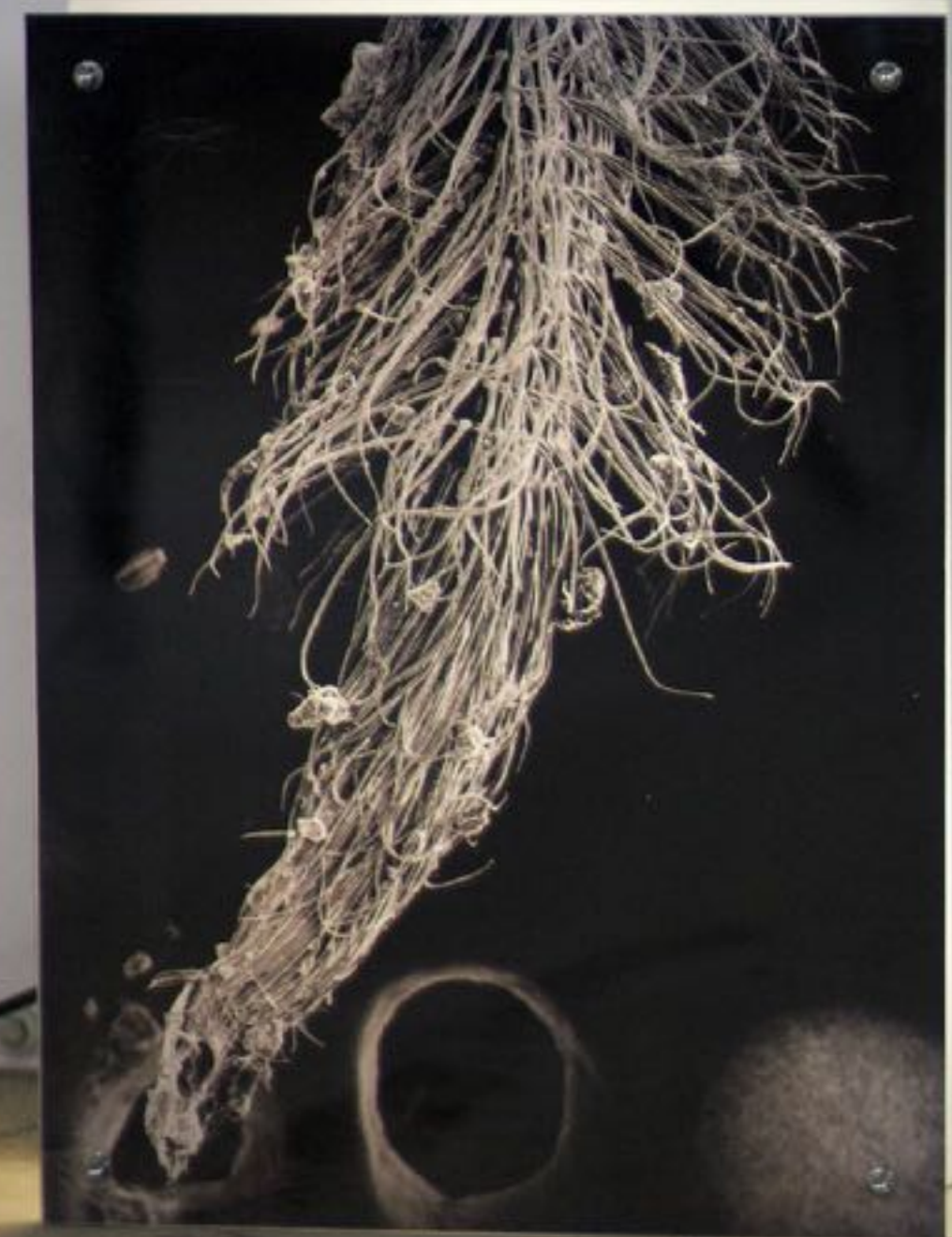
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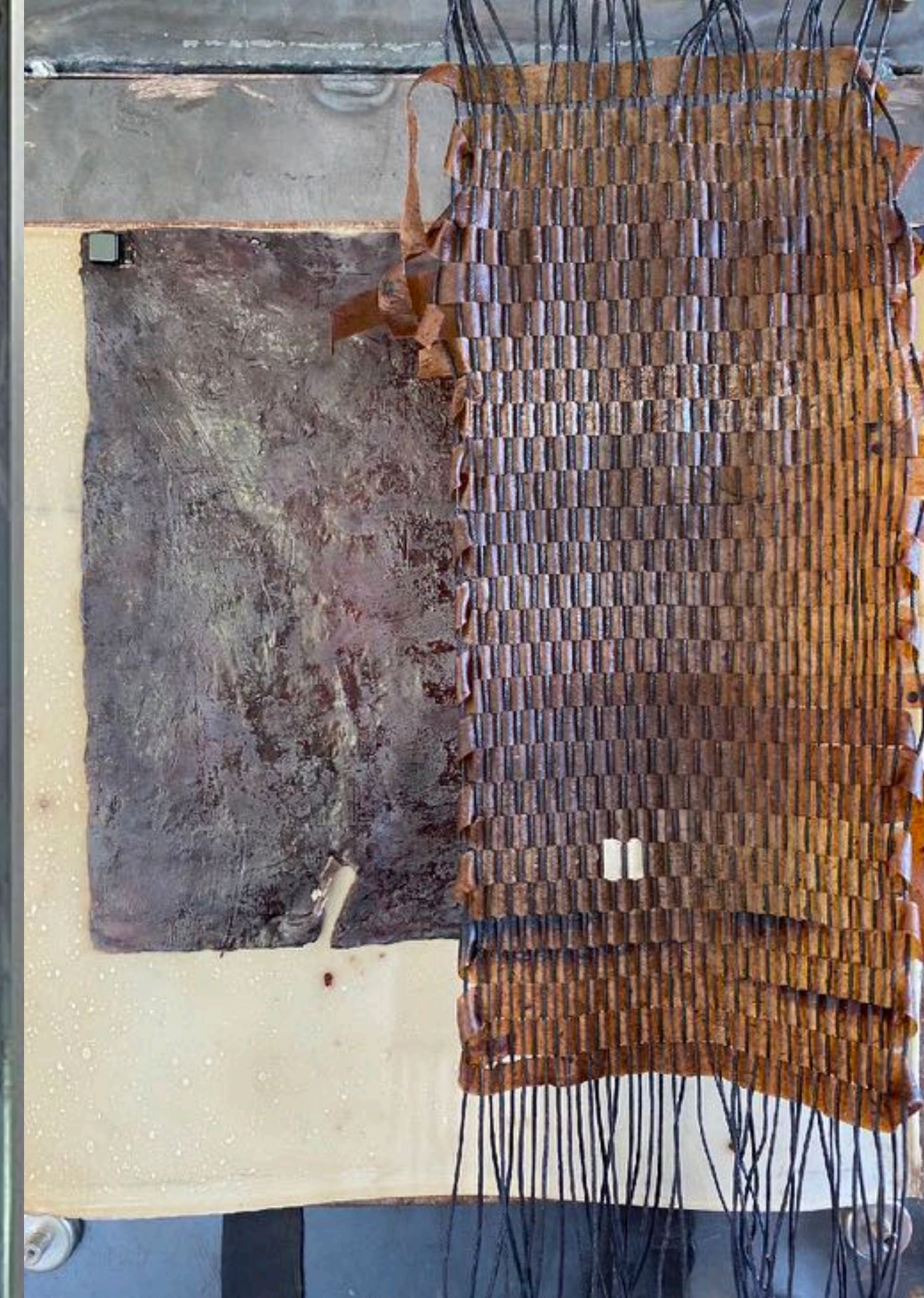


Left: Scanning Electron micrographs (SEM) of *Calendula officinalis* pollen  
Above: 3D-print of a single *Mentha spiccata* pollen

Poster on Guerrilla Gardening  
SEM micrograph of a honey bee *Proboscis* (part of the tongue)



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Left: Bacteria reacting with iron

Above: Fermented microbial skin, woven work with red algae



Left: bio-textile on basis of agar agar and with natural pigments.  
The design is created in a mould made from 3D printed designs.  
Above: hunting & collecting of mushrooms.  
Extraction of natural pigments.



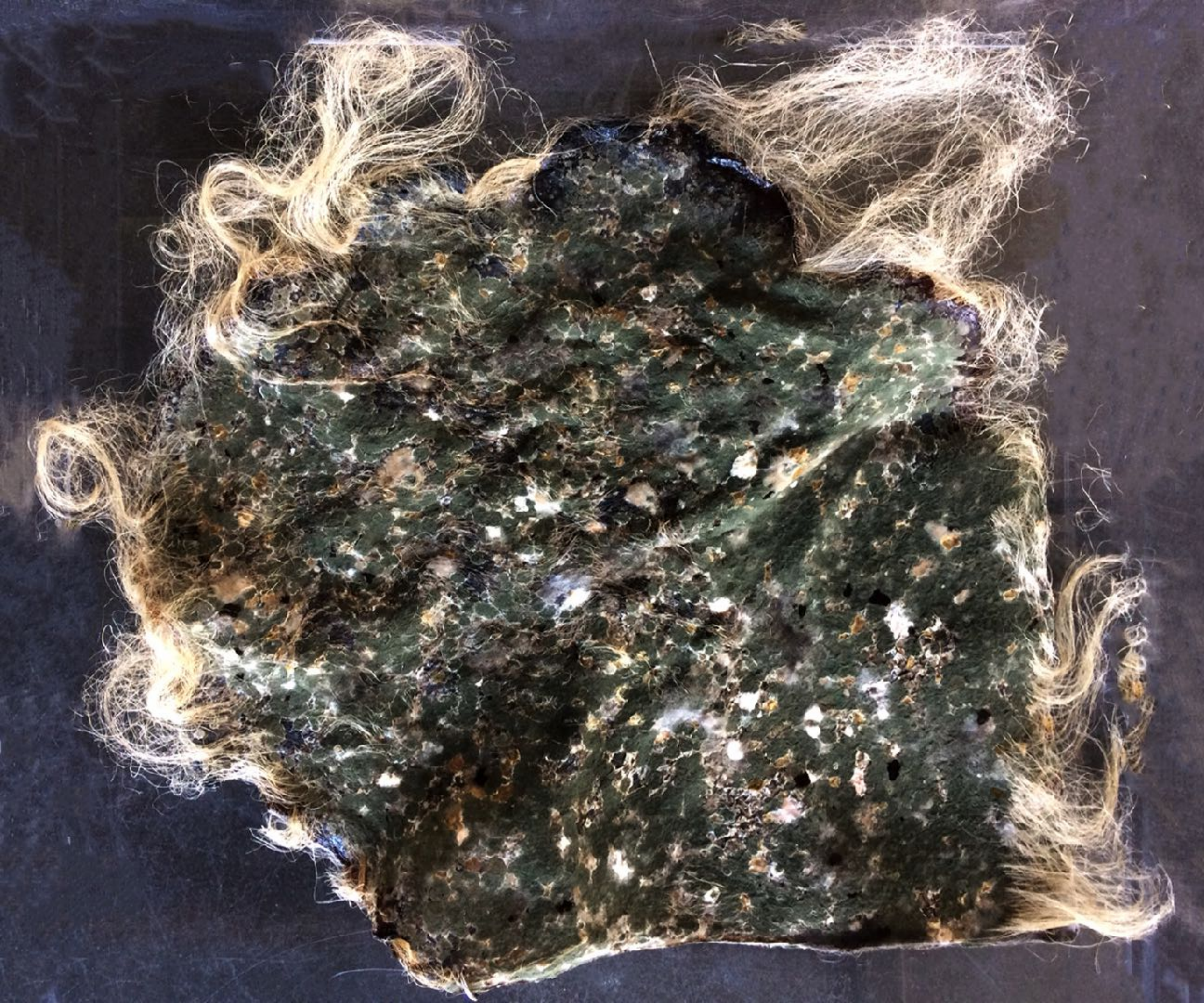


2 lightboxes with a composition of organic materials: bio plastics on basis of agar agar, tanned fish skins, fermented microbial skins. Natural pigments.





CNC-milled moulds,  
microbial skins



Bio-skin on basis of fermentation, kitchen waste, hemp hairs.



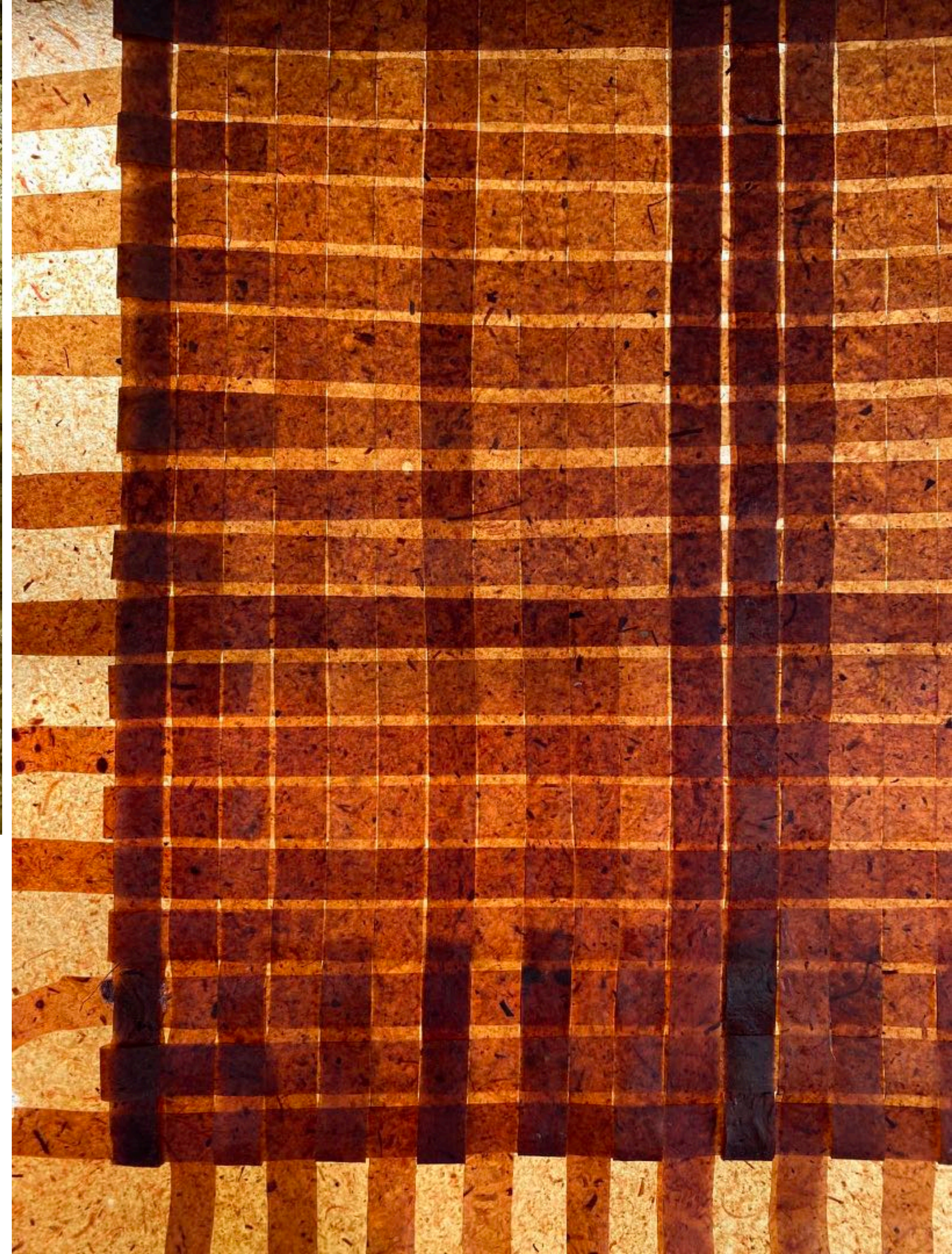
Microbial skins dyed with natural pigments



Bioplastics created in digitally tailored moulds, dyed with natural pigments



above: biotextile on basis of agar agar and with natural pigments.  
The design is created in a mould made from 3D printed designs.  
right: red algae woven work





A range of microbial grown skins (fermentations), dyed in the bath.

# the Timeline

1. April 2023 : The set-up of an 'Open Laboratory' in which the artist processes the bio-information that has been collected on the grounds of the Casa de Mateus (close collab with FabLab and BioLab). The installation of the studio will continue over the year. We immediately start with Hunting & Collecting spring flowers.
2. May 2023: Hunting & Collecting. Spring. New Life. Observation and inventory of medicinal plants. Picking, drying (for later use) and macerating for extraction of contents. Making products based on contents of the collected plants (cosmetics) and creating biotextile artworks
3. July 2023: We work with the fruit from the orchard. We create strong biotextiles with leftovers and learn how to minimize organic waste.
4. September 2023: The grape harvest (the Vintage) is now central to the production of our work. We learn about types of soil, the importance of bacteria, the right time to harvest, the making process, the leftovers and what can be made with them.
5. November 2023: Mushroom time. We take a close look on circular systems found in the natural world. We explore living systems as materials for our works.

These 5 workweeks can be planned in collaboration with people from the fablab and from the biolab. The purpose is that labs complement each other.

# the Budget

1. Artist fee: 2500,-€ /project-week (5 days week + travel)
2. This includes a continuous completion of the studio, as a workshop and as an artistic installation.
3. This includes preparation of the topic, booklet with HowTo instructions, recipes and links for the participants.
4. This includes the artworks made in the studio.
5. Not included: travel, accommodation.
6. Not included: materials for artworks & workshops. Materials for artist studio. Hard ware (cooking fire, pots & pans, glass containers, ... ) and consumables (agar agar, glycerine, gelatine, ethanol, ...).
7. Max. participants per project week: 10 to 12 people over 2 days/ week.
8. The studio can be seen as an evolving installation, an exhibition that can be visited also when no workshop is going on.
9. There are yet many items in the storage rooms that can be usefull for furnishing the artist studio (stainless steel kitchen furnishings, wooden/glass cabinets, chairs, tables, ...)



'O Tiger-lily,' said Alice, addressing herself to a flower that was waving gracefully about in the wind, 'I wish you could talk!'

'We can talk,' said the Tiger-lily, 'when there's anybody worth talking to.'

*Alice through the Looking Glass, Lewis Carroll.*