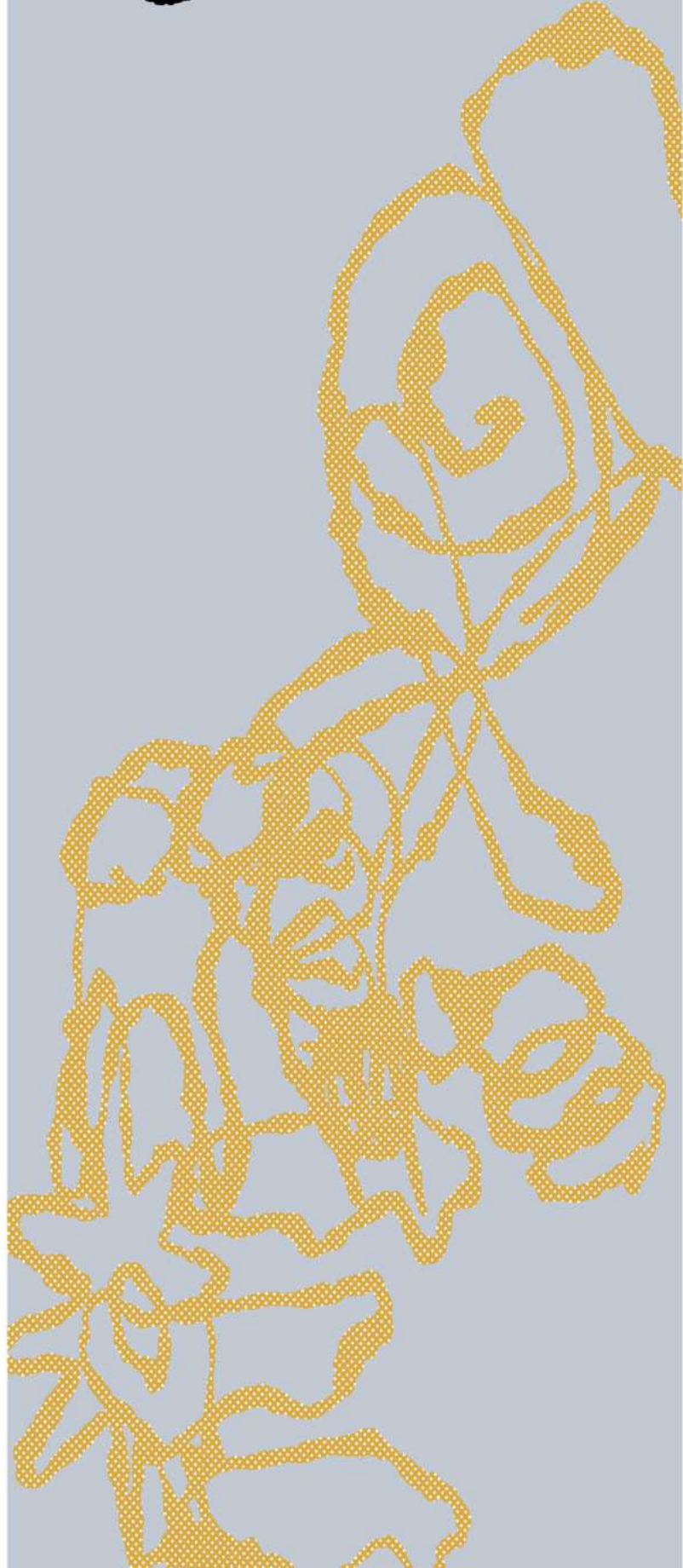


(Dis)comfort
Narratives
MOVING WITH THE FEELING



HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, in partnership with BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, presents *(Dis)comfort Narratives: Moving with the Feeling*, as graduation event of the 2023—2024 Master Fine Art class, with works by the graduates Habiba Afifi, Fatemeh Asiri, Naomi de Bruijn, Savvas Gerolemids, Wenkang "Hohn" Guan, Athina Koutsiou, Nguyễn Ngọc Tú Dung, Cornalijn Overweg-Ramaker, Öykü Özoğul, Natsumi Sakai, Parel Strik, Pan Vanitcharonthum, and Sean Ali Wang.

The diverse range of graduation projects sheds light on the tensions and proximities inherent in the interplay of eco-socio-cultural pressures and intimate, relational dynamics, from multiple perspectives and diverse contexts and backgrounds.

Within the shifting relationalities of reality, comfort and discomfort can never be entirely separated. From the social and communal to the personal realm of the mind and body, political dynamic is always at play. To come to terms with oneself, these young artists pose a question: What are alternative ways of storytelling, connecting, and living in current eco-socio-political climates? In their presentations, they bring together the complexities of the relationship between society and the self — to exemplify displacement, alienation, re-location, and coexistence — asking the pivotal question: What does it mean to 'connect'? 'To connect' actually means different things to each one of them, including the internal connection with the self, a connection with the surrounding environment, a connection with society at large, or the immediate community within and around oneself.

Spanning from human communities to non-human ecologies, these narratives explore (dis)comfort through various means. It may take the form of investigations into the moments of encounter through conversations or effectual and intuitive interactions: Parel Strik with her close community, and Natsumi Sakai with the anonymous other. Savvas Gerolemids creates dream infrastructures, seeking alternative ways of co-existence and co-creation. Habiba Afifi explores the potential coexistence between humans and ecologies through science fiction, while Pan Vanitcharonthum does so through acts of hunting. On the other hand, Sean Ali Wang highlights the existence of pluralistic but isolated communities. Nguyễn Ngọc Tú Dung is drawn to the educational context, and she practices (un)learning as a way to challenge and play with pedagogical realities. Some are led by introspective exploration. Öykü Özoğul delves into and expands upon a trace of thought, while Athina Koutsiou firmly advocates for acceptance and actively works towards living with mental illness. While the research of others focuses on social norms, such as Wenkang "Hohn" Guan's questions on societal restraints through experimental gatherings; and Naomi de Bruijn's challenging social conventions through the culture of protest. Fatemeh Asiri navigates the South of Iran, while Cornalijn Overweg-Ramaker delves into the Eastern Netherlands, questioning the societal expectations imposed on women in these geographically divergent settings.

Throughout these propositions, the emerging artists invite the audience to co-inhabit, and at times co-author, encounters and the narratives created. Moving together with all the feelings present is a concrete attempt to collectively draw possibilities for empathy and solidarity.

Curatorial text by Habiba Afifi, Fatemeh Asiri and Natsumi Sakai

PUBLIC PERFORMANCES

- 19 **Unknown Classes Performance Pedagogy**
18:00 - 21:00
Nguyễn Ngọc Tú Dung
- 20 **Landscape of Pressure (activation)**
16:00 - it keeps on going
Cornalijn Overweg-Ramaker
- Regenerative Hunting**
17:15 - 18:15
Pan Vanitcharonthum
- Curiosity and Hohnsptiality (who are you?)**
Ongoing
Hohn
- 21 **Following Objects**
16:15 - 16:45
Natsumi Sakai
- Unknown Classes Performance Pedagogy**
17:00 - 19:00
Nguyễn Ngọc Tú Dung
- Landscape of Pressure (activation)**
It keeps on going
Cornalijn Overweg-Ramaker
- Curiosity and Hohnsptiality (who are you?)**
Ongoing
Wenkang "Hohn" Guan
- 22 **Following Objects**
16:00 - 16:30
Natsumi Sakai
- Landscape of Pressure (activation)**
It keeps on going
Cornalijn Overweg-Ramaker
- 23 **Unknown Classes Performance Pedagogy**
15:00 - 17:00
Nguyễn Ngọc Tú Dung
- 26 **Unknown Classes Performance Pedagogy**
15:00 - 18:00
Nguyễn Ngọc Tú Dung
- Landscape of Pressure (activation)**
It keeps on going
Cornalijn Overweg-Ramaker
- 27 **Unknown Classes Performance Pedagogy**
14:00 - 18:00
Nguyễn Ngọc Tú Dung
- Landscape of Pressure (activation)**
It keeps on going
Cornalijn Overweg-Ramaker
- 28 **Landscape of Pressure (activation)**
It keeps on going
Cornalijn Overweg-Ramaker
- 29 **Following Objects**
16:00 - 16:30
Natsumi Sakai
- Landscape of Pressure (activation)**
It keeps on going
Cornalijn Overweg-Ramaker

Fatemeh Asiri *My Mother Made Me Die Out of Love* Multimedia Installation

The work *My Mother Made Me Die Out of Love* investigates the different aspects of gender discrimination, governmental ideologies and patriarchy experienced by women in Bushehr province, particularly in the Shahniya region. Using qualitative interviews and narration, personal archives, and moving images this work sheds light on the intersectionality of oppression to underscore the effects of such practices on culture, particularly about child marriage.

This work aims to explore various forms of storytelling to answer a critical question: How can we find the underlying reasons behind early matrimony by women in Bushehr province, and could these lead to insights into women in a similar situation elsewhere?

My Mother Made Me Die Out of Love invites audiences to delve into the nuanced narratives of individuals impacted by early marriage, exploring the complexities of their experiences and the societal pressure that shaped their choices or made 'this practice' their choice.

You are invited to join in amplifying these voices, promoting a deeper understanding of the cultural expectations and challenges faced by women impacted by similar practices in different societies.

Savvas Gerolemids *Dreaming of about: Infrastructures for collective dreaming* Mixed media, installation

If I dream your dream, do we dream together? In a reality where all dreams are commodified, those who sell the most dictate the main narrative.

While engaging with notions like DreamKeeping, DreamCare, DreamHome and DreamMailbox, Savvas questions the role of painting as an individualised and liberal practice.

Using art as a case-study he engages in interviews with classmates and invites them to intervene on the painting. Becoming a constituent of 'The School of Dream' he is proposing infrastructures for dreaming together. Notions of identity and language appear and come into play through two paintings with contrasting techniques and aesthetics, encouraging audiences to engage with speculative storytelling.

Athina Koutsiou *Fragile, Handle with care* *A constellation of moments in time, where emotions overwhelm the self*

Fragile - Handle with care - A constellation of moments in time, where emotions overwhelm the self is a project inspired by daily experiences growing over time. It is a translation of mental, cognitive suffering into concrete tactile artifacts of clay, paper and text. These media allow to make tangible and reflect on the self, becoming apparent as interconnected with the other/others. Affected by the demands of modern society — such as continuous and uninterrupted productivity, availability, and visibility — the work allows moods and feelings of anxiety and depression to materialize and become present in space. In an effort to create awareness for a scattered self, suppressed memories and thoughts are made tangible and evident. Fragile sculptures and drawing with textures materials invite people to engage, in order to survive.

Fatemeh Asiri (b. Iran, 1991) is a researcher and artist specialised in the themes of identity, and belonging within the MENA region, with a particular emphasis on Iran and Kuwait. She does that through writing, film/video, performance and installation. She uses a multidisciplinary approach to capture the complexities of human experiences.

Due to her passion and fascination for the arts, her journey into the world of art and artistic research began by her professional experience as a cultural worker. By drawing on her lived experiences, she combines her work with a deep and contextually nuanced portrayal of the social and cultural dynamics of the landscapes she explores.

Fatemeh uses different forms of storytelling to shift the audience's focus to unparalleled journeys. She tries to do so by bringing together a diverse range of experiences and perspectives to create a dialogue among artists, educators, and people with similar interests. In her works, Fatemeh links together diverse voices in an intimate setting where individuals can connect and share their experiences.

Savvas Gerolemids (b. 1994, Cyprus) is a visual artist focusing on painting, drawing and installation. In his practice Savvas is interested in exploring the potential of representational and non-representational art forms in storytelling/fabulating. During the past two years, he has been dedicated to researching the relationship between dreaming, painting and socio-political engagement. Savvas is interested in the potential of representation and the spectacle merging with acts of organisation in order to build dream(s) that can compete with the ones propagated by imperialist as well as capitalist orders.

Athina Koutsiou (born in Greece) is an artist who explores emotion and feelings, materializing mental struggles through a variety of media. Diagnosed with dysthymia and anxiety, she works with the self, and by extension with those around her. At times urged, at times stimulated by daily experiences, her work connects and creates awareness for the mind-body continuum.

Öykü Özoğul
*Bana inanmadığın anlarda aksini
ispatlamak içindir sessizliğim*

How can I stay with the text?
The question and reflections are echoed throughout the text as staying with the island — staying with yourself. The text combines poems and self-reflections through automatic writing practices which open up through repetitions, questions and conversations with the self. Once you come across the text in the space, the longing begins. To be held, to be known... The text is essentially about the space given to the Cypriots currently living around Europe, reflecting on generational influences and traumas manifesting as the current self, and the text as an agent for highlighting the repetitions through the ephemerality of time and existence. It is a dynamic, rhythmic and cyclical movement — a process opening up a sensorial relation to another resiliency, an unexpected opportunity for inter-generational healing — that allows her and us "to stay with the text".

Öykü Özoğul (b. 1998 in Nicosia, Cyprus) makes space for an alternative to the collective mindset of the islanders/ Cypriots on pre-perceived paradigms of resiliency that prevail in Cyprus, articulating an opportunity for inter-generational healing. Following and chased by Cypriot identity politics, Özoğul finds ways to bring conversations about belonging and identity to the table. She does so in poetic engagement with phonetic repetitions in and through diverse tongues, in a range from daily language to literature.

Nguyễn Ngọc Tú Dung
Unknown Classes
Performance pedagogy & situated installation

Unknown Classes acts as a playground for pedagogy possibilities, proposed from the perspective of someone who has been absorbing knowledge from three different educational systems including her place of birth (Vietnam); her place of current learning (the Netherlands); and where she is far from graduating (life). By adopting a similar strategy to sneak preview cinema, where content is only revealed at the site, or a walk into the woods that is filled with unexpected encounters, *Unknown Classes* tries to tackle the predictability and repeatability aspects in pedagogy. Every time, the secret guests will be introduced during post-session discussions. *Unknown Classes* is built upon its existence and residue, keeps evolving and (trans)forming as it moves forward. *Unknown Classes* appear in two alternating forms, activity/event/class' based sessions and a situated installation. When one is on, another one is in its napping mode. *Unknown Classes* are accessible through real-time encounters together with harvestings, documentation, and residues produced during the classes.

Nguyễn Ngọc Tú Dung (b. a while ago, Hồ Chí Minh city, Việt Nam). As a multidisciplinary practitioner with way too many curiosities, Dung likes to question, unlearn, and play around with established norms and thought patterns, including her own. Witnessing the world's downfall of solidarity and affection, Dung developed an ambition to bring them back. Hence, she focuses on using a range of practices from visual art to pedagogical pursuits, engaging in spontaneous collaborations, organizing, public interventions, and participatory performances to explore the potential of unconventional encounters. Dung considers learning as the central of her practice and contributing to bringing beings closer, again, as her life goal. Dung is currently the artist-in-library resident at Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons, Utrecht in collaboration with the Read-in Collective. Dung is based somewhere on planet Earth.

(Un)learning is not restricted to happening only in walled school environments but also beyond, therefore, *Unknown Classes* sessions are not necessarily in the form of a traditional class(room). With this tryout, Dung also wants to ask how far a personal dream can reach a communal dream, when inviting the public to step into one of her most ambitious fantasies, bringing back the excitement towards learning.

Wenkang "Hohn" Guan
Brazil
III (International, Invitational, Interactional);
Videos and sounds

I want to be an ambassador.

In the battlefield of propositions, political voices pin and stretch my attention like gummy bears.

Gonna be a one-man army, your next door Amy.

If we cannot share our joy then let's share all sorrows.

leftists' universal values, Hohn picked up collages and improvisation with a loser's twist. He is constantly doubting widely accepted ideologies and creating absurd scenarios that incorporate different (sometimes opposing) kinds of people. He's been struggling to figure out effective ways to relate and communicate within Dutch society. Maybe you could help him aww!

Wenkang "Hohn" Guan grew up in Guangzhou, China, and finished his bachelor of fine arts in New York. He then threw himself into the experimental music scenes in China and mainly used drums as his voice. He's called "Mr. Worldwide" and "Improvvised Drum King" amongst his friends.

Feeling squeezed by capitalism and nationalism and the

Cornalijn Overweg-Ramaker
Landscape of Pressure
Installation activated through performance

Cornalijn's performance activates the installation *Landscape of Pressure*: her moving body turns the grand, elongated construction, adding infinite layers of fabric — not smoothly and continuously, rather impermanently, laboriously — creating a fabric that can be removed, replaced, changed; a tissue that allows for things to re-surface or fade.

Between the action and the turning a relation emerges.

By actively engaging her body in repetitive action over an extended period, a second issue arises, labour. The concept implies a strong connection between hard work, pressure to perform, and a strain in doing well. These tension fields profoundly shape Cornalijn's work and thoughts and affect her deeply, emotionally and physically.

In the performance, she seeks a way to endure the pressure she experiences, whether to tolerate it, standing still in resistance, or to move forward again with it, simultaneously acknowledging its constant presence. Through intimate conversations with five women who find themselves in similar cultural frameworks and experience comparable demands, characterized by insurmountable expectations, rigid judgments, and self-imposed limitations, Cornalijn de-links, contextualizes and deeply reconnects herself. *Landscape of Pressure* keeps addressing and questioning the systemic framework in which the women who are in conversation with the artist, including herself, find themselves.

Cornalijn Overweg-Ramaker (b. 1997 in Gramsbergen, East Netherlands) is an installation- and performance artist who draws attention to the pressures and tensions she experiences within the realm of contemporary Dutch life. She explores the constant and constraining force and rapid pace at which she feels compelled to navigate daily existence. This exploration reveals a complex relationship between her desire for hardworking and her longing for a mode of stillness. Cornalijn's research focuses on (the dynamics/interplay of) demands from various fields, such as upbringing, family- and ancestral history, Christian belief- and value systems, and contemporary Dutch society. By bringing her body into a state of utter fatigue through enduring performance, she seeks to undo thinking, for the sake of sensing and feeling.

Sean Ali Wang
Prato Trio
A three channels video installation
with recycled fabrics

Prato Trio is based on anthropological landscapes captured during the development of Sean's documentary film project, focusing on the three main communities in the Italian city of Prato, regarded as the textile industry capital of Europe. Among its two hundred thousand citizens, the Chinese population approaches a quarter, the highest proportion among all European cities. This phenomenon traces back to the 1990s when local Italian manpower became scarce, leading to the recruitment of Chinese immigrants who later transitioned into owners of thousands of factories.

Currently, local Chinese have to employ Pakistani workers to fill the new manpower gaps, prompting a new wave of entrepreneurship. Over half a century, the Italian, Chinese, and Pakistani exchange their positions in relays within the exploitative system of capitalism. It is upon the tangible screens made by recycled fabrics Sean collected from Prato that the trio of these three main groups perform their symphony together.

Sean Ali Wang (b. 1991, China) straddled the border between China and Europe in the last decade, researching Chinese diaspora, Sino-Europe relation and power shifts through ethnographic images. His works reflect on his own identity as an ethnic minority from a Chinese Muslim family whose members are scattered in three continents. His documentary films *Lady of the Harbour* and *A Marble Travelogue* were premiered at IDFA and selected at 50+ film and art festivals including *Visions du Reel*, *CPH:DOX*, *Hotdocs*, *Art of the Real* Lincoln Center. Sean is also a guest lecturer at UvA and Delft TU.

Pan Vanitcharoenthum
Regenerative Hunting
Food, research, performance, installation

Regenerative Hunting is an artistic research relating to thinking about how to sustain myself while caring about the ecology. It is a practice that questions the dominant food industries in the Netherlands, and tries to find a more sustainable way of obtaining food through hunting invasive species. The species that I am focusing on in this exhibition is the American crayfish. Catching and cooking these crayfish has taught me that the diversity in both nature and human society are important for collective sustainability. This awareness is made apparent in my artwork through the collective hunting gathering and food sharing events.

colonization has inspired him to start researching / reconnecting with nature and food sources through activities such as hunting and regenerative farming.

Pan Vanitcharoenthum (born and raised in the polluted city of Bangkok) grew up with a desire to search for nature and a more sustainable lifestyle. This curiosity has led Pan to come to study in the Netherlands, a country that is globally known for sustainable design, technology, and food production. However, he discovered that the concept of sustainability in the Western world was achieved through colonization and exploitation of resources in developing countries. This realization about modern technology and green

Naomi de Bruijn
I'd rather see u(s) in the streets
 Nomadic happenings, situated outside
 and in public spaces in Utrecht

Within days of extreme injustice (a genocide on-play in Palestine, the deadly borders of Europe, worrying election results in the NL and so much more absurdity to talk about) there is urgency for an immediate response. While the numbers of deaths are being counted, the people in the streets are being counted, too. How does this human swarm of resisting bodies act, move and unfold itself? How to facilitate a coming together of voices? What are the rites found in protest movements, specifically in the Netherlands? How to amplify voices that need to be heard? What is the role of the rising megaphone? What powers are these voices speaking against? How is the language against them used as a tool of the oppressor? How to bring a megaphone into an institution? How to graduate in the streets?

Naomi de Bruijn (b. in The Netherlands) carries an interest for language learners. Currently, she questions her role as a multimedia artist, figuring out how to act and react through local solidarity movements during the times of loud injustice. One question that comes up repeatedly: How can the language of protest be a practice?

Parel Strik
How to Care?

Do you
 Installation and workshop

The installation consists of a series of aprons collaboratively crafted by Parel and individuals representing her care-relations, including her mother, partner, colleague, best friend, boss and teacher. Through shared activities such as cooking, eating and apron-making, Parel and her care-relations delved into topics of care needs. The aprons serve as visual reminders of conversations surrounding care.

Parel Strik's (b. 1997, Brussels) artistic practice is about the transformative powers of encounters and dialogue in public space, with a deeper interest in fostering connections and exploring themes of hospitality, self-care and sustainability.

To nurture these relationships, Parel initiated a correspondence wherein she shares reflections on their encounters through letters and invites responses. Through this exchange, Parel cultivates a shared understanding of what 'encounter' means.

Her working space extends into the public realm, where she facilitates experiences that invite people to come together. Parel believes that the act of meeting each other at the dinner table is a means for coming together, sharing stories, and connections, but also a deeper understanding of the care we (as humans) extend to others, which is directly linked with and intrinsically tied to the care we (can) grant to ourselves.

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Parel's installation offers insight into creative processes that serve as moments of communal engagement, time spent together, and relationship-building. This project is characterized by its open-ended nature, going beyond pressure of time limits and instead fostering ongoing relations in their process.

These questions, understandings, and insights inform a workshop centered around apron-making. Working with the analogy of the care label, the workshop will be hosted at BAK. Together, participants will create aprons that visually express, reflect their preferences and their care needs. As participants eat, converse, and sew together during the workshop, discussions will revolve around care needs, prompting the central question: How to — Do you care?

Habiba Affi
Eco-Spiritual Nesting
 Ceramic Sculpture Series

Eco-Spiritual Nesting is a meditation on the intersection of ecological consciousness and spiritual reflection, drawing inspiration from Sufism and Material Ecology. It reimagines the concept of 'nests' as dynamic, symbiotic spaces where humanity, nature, and technology converge to enhance biodiversity and reduce anthropocentric impact on the environment.



At its core, the project explores the notion of Radical Rest within the transitional Sufi realm known as 'Al-Barzakh' — البرزخ. This state of sleep, healing and introspection finds its expression within ceramic nest prototypes, inviting viewers to contemplate the interconnectedness of all life forms.

Habiba Affi (b. 1997, Egypt) is a transdisciplinary artist and researcher. Her practice explores the interplay between humans, technology, and ecology, probing their socioeconomic implications on themes such as labour, progress, autonomy, and ethics. Concurrently, her work navigates the subtle realms of consciousness, dreams, and the space between cognition and materiality. From art-based research, documentary filmmaking, and sculpture, Habiba views her work as an open invitation for contemplation and discourse on the evolving narratives of our era, sparking introspection and conversation about the critical issues shaping the world.

Through *Eco-Spiritual Nesting*, I invite audiences to imagine new futures where humans and non-humans relate beyond mere utility. This involves exploring frameworks for creative storytelling and ecological philosophies that draw inspiration from nature's wisdom and autonomy.

Natsumi Sakai
Following Objects
 Performance

How to meet the other? When exclusion provides the longed-for sense of belonging, how to meet the 'other'? How to meet the world again — following objects, sounds, and hidden whispers; tracing surfaces.

Natsumi Sakai (b. 1999), artist currently based in Den Haag. Starting from sensing an undefined-ness, my practice goes through sadness and pain towards what is dismissed, because it cannot fit into the framework of words. At the same time, words are an integral part of my practice, because I find beauty in the desperate action of twisting words to tell the untellable. It is an aspect of utterance that harbors the will to reach (out to) an 'other' and simultaneously its futility.

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 Nguyễn Ngọc Tú Dung
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