

# DIGESTIVE SYSTEMS

a photo+ exhibition  
about food  
production and  
consumption

**ECOARTTECH**

(Lelia Nadir &  
Cary Adams Peppermint)

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# About the Pace University Art Gallery

Founded with the conviction that art is integral to society, the Pace University Art Gallery is a creative laboratory and exhibition space that supports innovation and exploration for both artists and viewers. Open to students, staff, and faculty from across the Pace campuses and, equally, to the Lower Manhattan community and visitors from around the world, the Art Gallery encourages personal investigation and critical dialogue via thought-provoking contemporary art exhibits and public programming. Enhancing the Art Department's BA and BFA programs, the Art Gallery offers students real-world opportunities to exhibit their own art and to work directly with professional artists to install and promote exhibitions.

For more information:

<https://www.pace.edu/dyson/art-gallery>

Instagram: @paceuniversityartgallery

Facebook: @paceuniversityartgallery

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Pace University Art Gallery

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## DIGESTIVE SYSTEMS

We all eat.

We all need to eat.

In the Digestive Systems exhibit here at Pace University, EcoArtTech, Maria McKinney, and Dana Sherwood use photography as part of their practice to explore food production and consumption. Through the commonality of food—the sustenance of life—the artists poignantly illustrate the interconnectedness of human and non-human animals. In this Anthropocene epoch, during which the Earth's climate is predominantly impacted by human (in)actions, the artists advocate that we must care for our shared environment. The artists have collaborative processes that serve as potential models for sustainable relationships among humans and between species. Further, each highlights our planet's inherently symbiotic ecosystem by finding the synergy in and between manually manipulated and digital lens-based media.

EcoArtTech, a joint project of Leila Nadir and Cary Adams Peppermint, is exhibiting Microbial Selfies, a series of photographs created with custom built electronics and software that allows the microbes within fermenting fruit and vegetables to take their own "selfies." The resulting abstractions—including close-ups of blueberry mead, red cabbage kraut, and kombucha generated when a microorganism moves—are vividly colored, biomorphic forms with algorithmic alterations triggered by the submerged sensors' chemical readings of the bubbling recipes. In the artists' own words, they work "collaboratively with local communities (human, bacterial, and ecological) to resuscitate fading food practices including fermentation" to facilitate our shared recovery from what they call "industrial amnesia." By fusing new "hi-tech" computer components and ancient "low-tech" cooking techniques to make visible that which is invisible,



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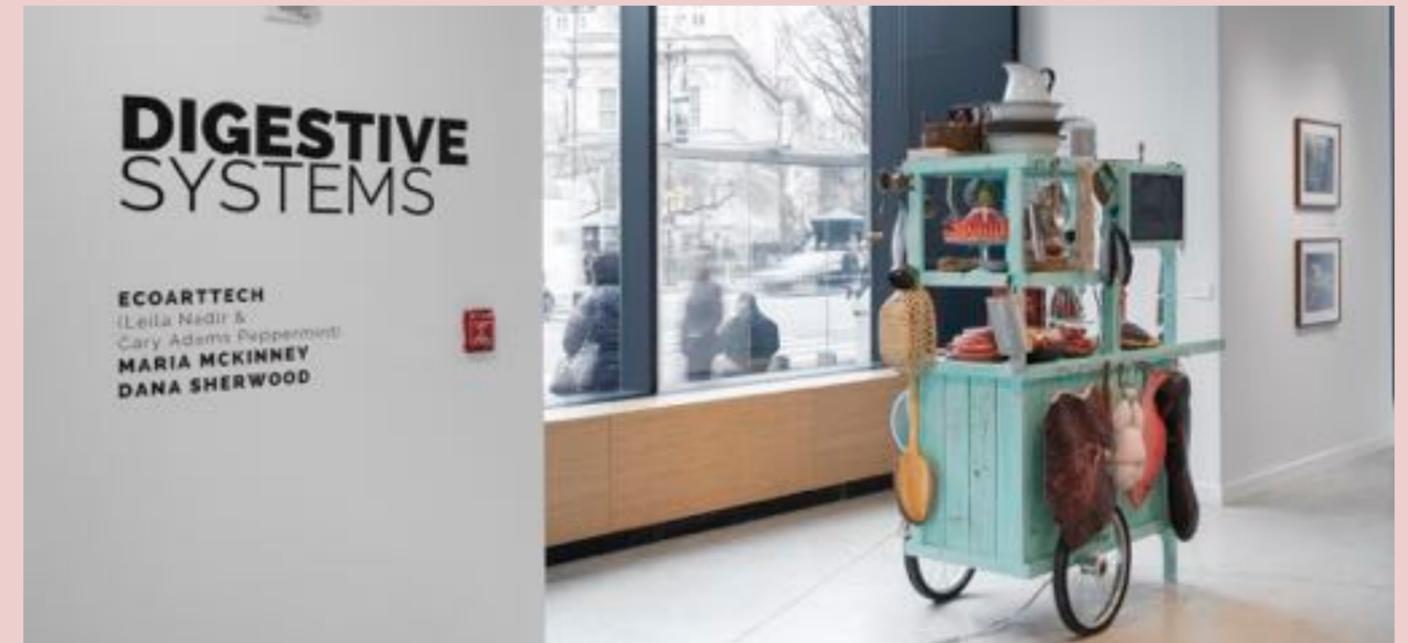


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EcoArtTech underscores that our ecosystem is infinitely more complex and teeming with life than it may initially appear. Consequently, their work urges viewers to value the full spectrum of Earth's living beings. For the health of the planet and all of its inhabitants, Nadir and Adams Peppermint offer concrete strategies by which technology can be used to cultivate a stronger human connection to nature rather than perpetuating its continued use to isolate humans from the environment of which they are an intrinsic part.

Like EcoArtTech, Maria McKinney makes evident what was previously unseeable and therefore unknowable. Based on her collaboration with scientists and farmers at a stud farm, the artist presents a selection of photographs from her Sire series which draws poetic parallels between ancient fertility rituals and contemporary genetic breeding techniques. The photographs, each featuring a side view of an impressively corpulent bull alongside a much smaller human handler, are reminiscent of British livestock paintings from the 1800s that celebrated the wealth of the owner and promoted the virility of the animal. However, while similar compositionally, McKinney's bovine subjects look directly at the viewer, conveying the undeniable power of their individual life force. Additionally, in each formal portrait, the bull carries a sculpture of its own genomic structure or economic breeding index that the artist has constructed out of brightly colored artificial insemination straws. Quite literally, the once unexplained inner magic of life and regeneration is revealed externally. McKinney handweaves her contemporary plastic objects using the traditional patterns and craft techniques that were used in pre-Christian Ireland to create fertility dolls out of the harvest's final hay straw. In doing so, she effectively draws the connection between past and present human efforts to control nature to ensure ample food production.

Dana Sherwood's video, *Feral Cakes*, as well her drawings, sculpture, and photographs are also on view in the Digestive Systems exhibit. For her work, the artist creates elaborate tabletop tableaus that reference historical still life paintings and children's make-believe tea parties simultaneously. However, these elaborately decorative feasts are made not for human consumption, but rather for the artist's non-human neighbors' nourishment and enjoyment. Thus, these nature morte scenes do not remain inanimate for long. Filming in her backyard and other liminal sites where human and non-human animals already share (and/or compete for) spatial and nutritional resources, Sherwood employs a combination of fantasy and improvisation to emphasize human kinship with animals. Sherwood's setups are "a tool to understand culture and behavior and more importantly to recognize that we are not separate from nature and the ecosystem." Rooting her work in scientific research, Sherwood embraces her animal neighbors as individually agent collaborators who often behave in ways she cannot control or predict. Her humorous videos draw a crowd and—unusually for wall mounted media work—viewers stand together to watch and discuss the work from start to finish, cultivating further the interrelation amongst humans and between species. Sherwood's self-described magical-realism is additionally advanced in her intimate watercolor illustrations that whimsically depict her animal neighbors' carousals complete with sausage party banners and shrimp topped cakes. Finally, Sherwood accentuates the shared human/animal space by bringing *Crossing the Wild Line*, a resin facsimile of a food cart feast, into the gallery.



With these three bodies of work, the Digestive Systems exhibit examines the damage being done to the Earth's ecosphere via the universality of food production and consumption. Human and non-human animals need food—and, likewise, fertile earth, fresh air, clean water, and sun enough to flourish. If we see ourselves as part of nature, then perhaps we can find a long-lasting balance. Collectively, the artists chart a restorative path for us not only in their artistic content but also by investing in cooperative work models and seamlessly integrating new technologies with traditional artmaking materials.

Sarah Cunningham  
Art Gallery Director  
Pace University  
Spring 2020



## EcoArtTech (Leila Nadir and Cary Adams Peppermint)

Based in Rochester, NY, Leila Nadir and Cary Adams Peppermint have been working together for over two decades as multi-species kin-makers, creative-critical researchers, undisciplined storytellers, and eccentric educators. Their mediums are poetic visibility, feeling-perception, and the simple acts of everyday life.

The artists work across disturbed ecological zones to explore the chances for restorative gestures and collaborative repair amidst disaster and ruins.

Microbial Selfies are digital images created with custom electronics and software that allow microbes to take their own "selfies" and add image manipulation effects based on the shifting pH levels, oxygen, and color values of the fermentation process. Microbial Selfies is part of EcoArtTech's new series of social sculptures, titled EdibleEcologies, that work collaboratively with local communities (human, bacterial, and ecological) to resuscitate historic food practices and facilitate recovery from a cultural memory disorder that they call "industrial amnesia."



Nadir and Adams Peppermint have earned support from the National Endowment for the Arts, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Center for Land Use Interpretation, New York Foundation for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, K2 Family Foundation, Franklin Furnace Fund, and numerous academic fellowships. Their performances, exhibitions, and lectures have taken place at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Postmasters Gallery, New York University, 319 Scholes, Smackmellon Gallery, Exit Art, U.C.L.A., M.I.T. Media Lab, ISEA 2012, Banff New Media Institute, European Media Art Festival, Parsons The New School for Design, and the Neuberger Museum of Art, and many other places. Their work is in the collections of the Whitney Museum, Walker Art Center, Rhizome.org, Turbulence.org of New Radio & Performing Arts, and Cornell University Rose Goldsen Archive of New Media Art. Both members of EcoArtTech teach at the University of Rochester, where Leila Nadir is Assistant Professor and Founding Director of the Environmental Humanities Program and Cary Adams Peppermint is Associate Professor of New Media and Emerging Practices.

<http://ecoarttech.net>

## Maria McKinney

Maria McKinney is a visual artist from Dublin, Ireland making work through a range of media including sculpture, installation, photography and video. She combines hand-craft with response to context, collaborating with scientists and farmers to produce projects that explore ideas surrounding genomics and agriculture. The Sire series is proposed as a rephrasing of what was once intangible. In pre-Christian Europe, people annually performed customs in relation to the reaping and sewing of the harvest. These rituals have since been popularly interpreted as an attempt to influence the future behavior of nature. Part of this practice involved making a corn dolly, an object made through the intricate handcraft of binding straw with the final sheaf of that year's crop. Now, we not only understand these formerly mysterious processes of propagation, but also manipulate them to our own ends. This ability is in itself a cause of wonderment; the magic has become, in a sense, real. The colorful objects on the back of the bulls are made from semen straws, the storage receptacles used in the artificial insemination process. The animals are the bearers of these ceremonial-inspired sculptures. Together, the carrier and object coalesce into something strange and entrancing.



McKinney's work was included in the four-person exhibition *Somewhere in Between* at the Wellcome Collection, London UK in 2018. McKinney has also made a number of solo exhibitions including the RHA, Dublin, Ireland (2016) Lokaal 01, Antwerp, Belgium (2016) *La Permanence*, Clermont-Ferrand, France (2015), the MAC, Belfast UK (2012) *the Lab*, Dublin, Ireland (2010) and *the Context Gallery*, Derry, UK (2008). Her work has been curated in group exhibitions at Bozar, Brussels (2020), the Gregg Museum, NC, USA (2019), Sunderland Museum, UK (2019) and *Void Gallery*, UK (2015).

Her work is part of the collections of the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading UK, Europol, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Office of Public Works and Bank of Ireland. She has additionally held residency awards at Skowhegan, Maine, USA, 2017, Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, Dublin, Ireland 2017-2020, Parity Studios, science resident UCD, Dublin, Ireland 2015-2016, Fire Station Artists Studios, Dublin, Ireland 2012-2015, Banff Centre Residency, Canada, funded by Arts Council of Northern Ireland 2010, and *The Red Stables*, Dublin City Council, Ireland 2009.

<http://cargocollective.com/mariamckinney>

To create the Sire series, McKinney with Dovea Genetics, a bull stud farm with 90 bulls standing at stud producing semen in a controlled environment. Her scientific collaborators are quantitative geneticist Dr. Donagh Berry (Teagasc), genome biologist Prof. David MacHugh and Head of Veterinary Clinical Studies Prof. Michael Doherty (both UCD). The project has been realized in consultation with a veterinarian and the artist has worked closely with the animal's handlers to ensure they are not made uncomfortable or distressed while making the work.

## Dana Sherwood

Dana Sherwood is a Copake, NY based artist whose work explores contact between human and non-human animals in order to understand culture and behavior in a changing environment. In her work, nature, often in the form of non-human animals, plays a complex role as both subject and collaborator, asserting its presence and subverting the artists' perceived control. Sherwood relies upon her own style of magical-realism to portray contact between human and non-human animals as a tool to understand culture and behavior and more importantly to recognize that we are not separate from nature and the ecosystem.

Her sculptures, videos, and paintings depict ritualized feedings created for animals who live on the frontiers of human civilization such as raccoons, possums, and foxes as well as our close companion species like horses and dogs. The animals assert their presence and desires as the work theorizes about the Anthropocene, the current geological epoch in which human activity has caused substantial, irreversible damage to the natural world. Since graduating from the University of Maine in 2004, Sherwood has exhibited throughout the Americas, Europe and Australia including solo exhibitions at Nagle-Draxler Reiseburogalerie (Cologne), Denny Dimin Gallery (New York) and Kepler Art-Conseil (Paris). Her work has also been shown at Storm King (New York), The Fellbach Sculpture Triennial (Germany), Pink Summer Gallery (Italy), Kunsthal Aarhus (Denmark), The Palais des Beaux Arts Paris (France), Socrates Sculpture Park (New York), Flux Factory (New York), The Biennial of Western New York, Prospect 2: New Orleans, Scotia Bank Nuit Blanche (Toronto), dOCUMENTA 13, and many other venues worldwide. She will have her first solo museum exhibition at the Florence Griswold Museum in 2022.

<https://danasherwoodstudio.com>



## Image credits

Front Cover: EcoArtTech (Leila Nadir and Cary Adams Peppermint), Raspberry Mead, from the Microbial Selfies series, Archival print generated by fruits, vegetables, and microbes using custom electronics and software, 19 x 13 inches, 2014

Inside Front Cover, Top: Maria McKinney, Management/Polled, Doon just the job (CH2305), from the Sire series, Archival pigment print, 27 x 40 inches, 2016 (Sculpture imaged: Management/Polled, Semen straws, glue, cable ties, 3D printed objects (PLA - polylactic acid), powder coated steel frame, 70 x 85 x 55 cm, 2015)

Inside Front Cover, Middle: EcoArtTech (Leila Nadir and Cary Adams Peppermint), Red Cabbage Kraut, from the Microbial Selfies series, Archival print generated by fruits, vegetables, and microbes using custom electronics and software, 19 x 13 inches, 2015

Inside Front Cover, Bottom: Dana Sherwood, Crossing the Wild Line (detail), Videos, monitors, books, glassware, aluminum, cooking implements, wood, varnish, resin, acrylic, and sausage casings, 70 x 64 x 22 inches, 2015, courtesy of Denny Dimin Gallery

Page 2: Dana Sherwood, Candied Landscape I and Candied Landscape V, C-Prints, 16 x 20 inches, 2011, courtesy of Denny Dimin Gallery

Page 5: Installation image featuring Dana Sherwood, Crossing the Wild Line (detail), Videos, monitors, books, glassware, aluminum, cooking implements, wood, varnish, resin, acrylic, and sausage casings, 70 x 64 x 22 inches, 2015, photograph by Adam Reich

Page 6-7: Maria McKinney, Longevity/Apoptosome, Black Water Lad (HE2067), from the Sire series, Archival pigment print, 27 x 40 inches, 2016 (Sculpture imaged: Longevity/Apoptosome, Semen straws, glue, cable ties, steel frame, 140 x 55 x 145 cm, 2016)

Page 8: Leila Nadir and Cary Peppermint in their studio

Page 9: EcoArtTech (Leila Nadir and Cary Adams Peppermint), Probiotics of the Kitchen, Digital video, 8 minutes, 2015, also pictured is table of fermentations, photograph by Adam Reich

Page 10: Portrait of Maria McKinney

Page 11: Installation image of Sire series by Maria McKinney, photograph by Adam Reich

Page 12: Dana Sherwood, Feral Cakes, Digital video, 11:22 minutes, 2017, courtesy of Denny Dimin Gallery

Page 13: Portrait of Dana Sherwood, photograph by Emily Andrews

Inside Back Cover, Top: Maria McKinney, Conformation/Cube, Kilskeagh Hill 16 (KZH), from the Sire series, Archival pigment print, 27 x 40 inches, 2016 (Sculpture imaged: Conformation/Cube, Semen straws, glue, cable ties, 3D printed objects (PLA - polylactic acid), steel frame, copper rods, 98 x 114 x 120 cm, 2016)

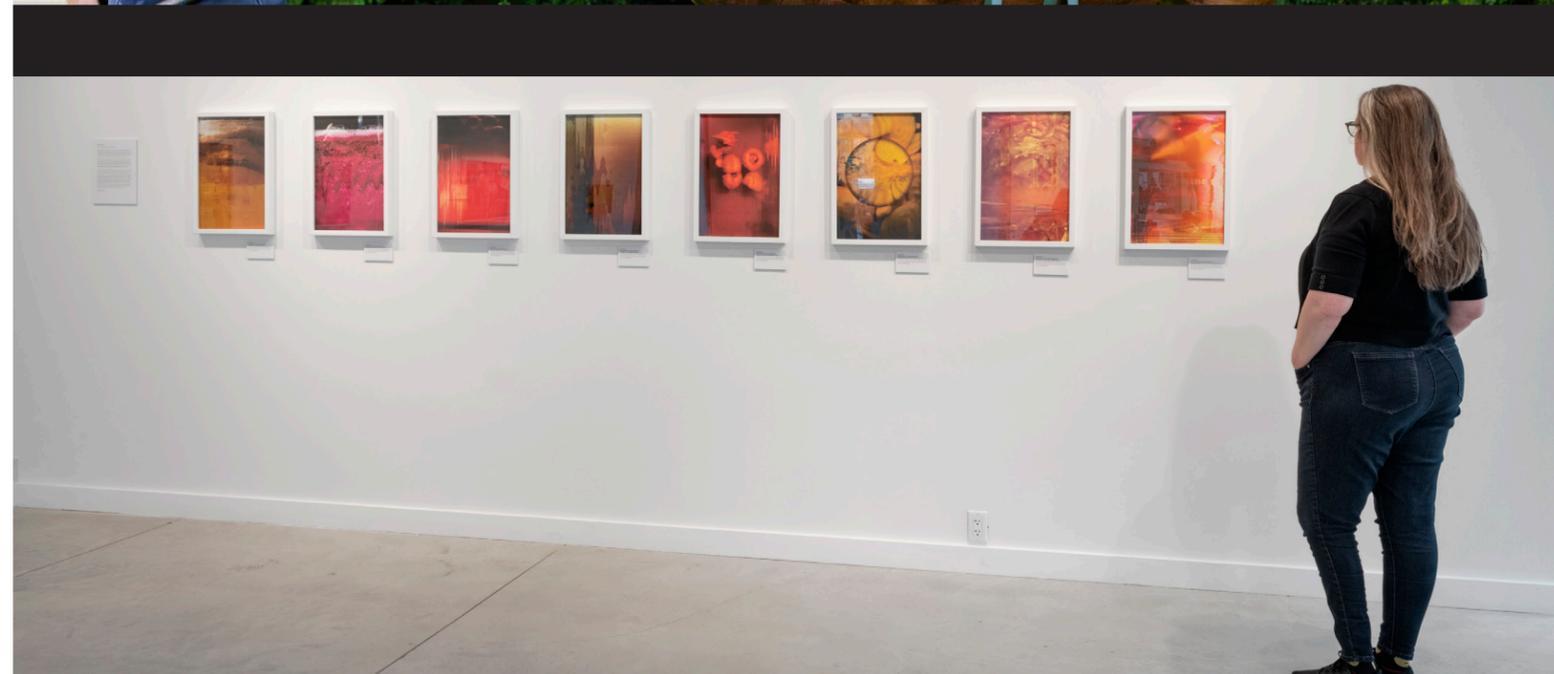
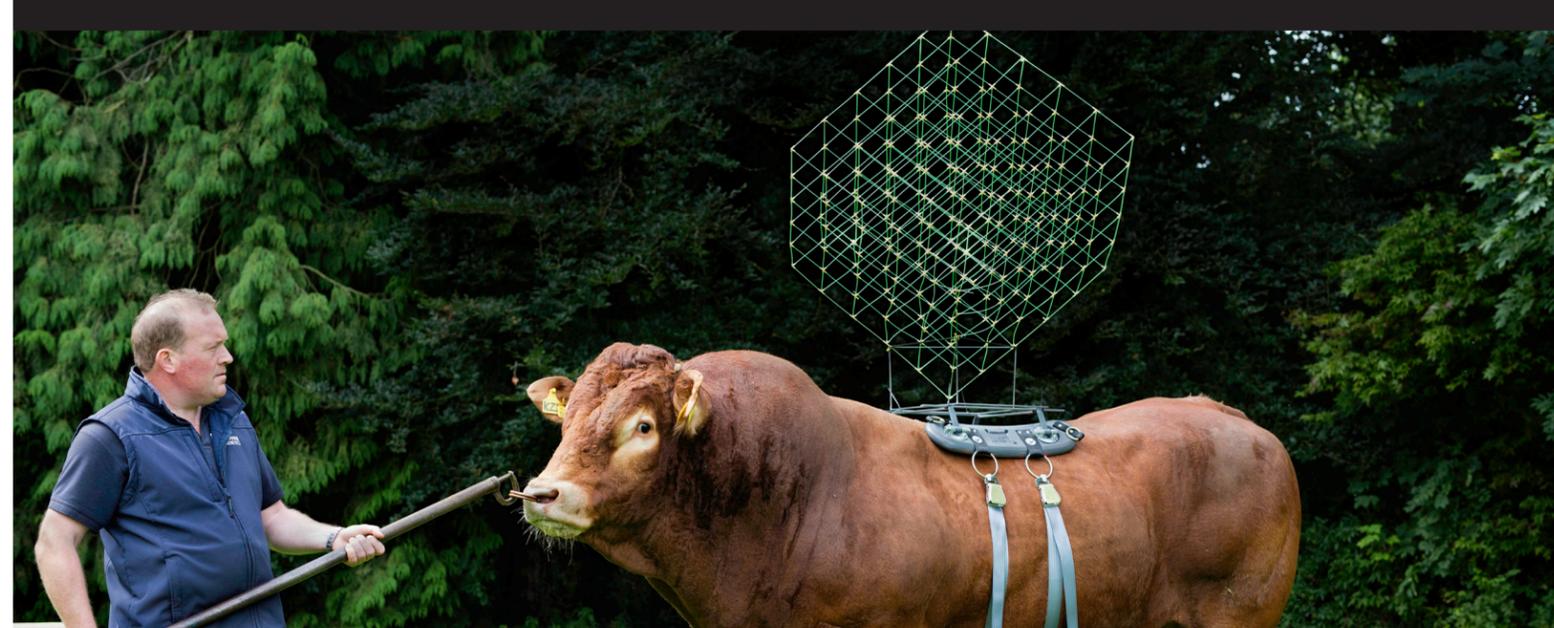
Inside Back Cover, Middle: Installation image of Microbial Selfies series by EcoArtTech, photograph by Adam Reich

Inside Back Cover, Bottom: Dana Sherwood, Possum with Spiral Jelly, Watercolor and gouache on paper, 7 x 10 inches, 2017, courtesy of Denny Dimin Gallery

Back Cover: EcoArtTech (Leila Nadir and Cary Adams Peppermint), Kimchi, from the Microbial Selfies series, Archival print generated by fruits, vegetables, and microbes using custom electronics and software, 19 x 13 inches, 2014

Special Thanks: Denny Dimin Gallery

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