

Responses of the Body:
Under Different Social Structures

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Responses of the Body: Under Different Social Structures

DOCTORAL THESIS

Doctoral thesis in field of arts, in discipline

-fine arts and conservation

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Wroclaw, 2022

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## Introduction

Science and art, separate or in tandem, have provided extraordinary opportunities over the past few decades for exploring social structures. Increasingly, however, science and art are intertwined. Living organisms and gene technology have become materials for artists, while artists' studios have become the equivalent of scientists' laboratories. As art progresses experimentally in artists' studios, work conducted in laboratories progresses in parallel. These intertwined developments require time and agility. Time to let experiments yield results, and then time to analyze those results. Agility is needed to change course and conduct new experiments to expand the knowledge gained from previous experiments. One can never be sure what results experiments will bring or what needs to be done next. Ultimately, the most important aspect of this experience is the iterative research process.

Broadly speaking, my research and creative production are based on connections between science and art that I explore by working with living organisms in both laboratory and studio settings. In my PhD project, I aimed to examine the growth of specific living organisms in a laboratory environment for the purpose of assessing how organisms develop or die out, with a primary focus on their physical and psychological effects on women. I examined the source of several infections that affect only women, the connection between the physical and psychological ramifications of such infections, and the impact of different social structures that women must navigate as a result of these infections. At the same time, as an artist, I tried to find the most appropriate way to present this kind of research in the field of art, to find the right means of expression that could carry the weight of the issues I raised.

Beyond examining the effects of infection to assess how organisms develop or die out, with a particular focus on their physical and psychological effects on women, my goal was to address those effects in the context of the patriarchal systems within which women live. Infections easily develop in women's bodies and can negatively affect their lives. One of my main hypotheses is that microbes multiplying in a woman's body may have a detrimental effect on her, depending on certain external conditions that have their origin in the patriarchal social order. Another hypothesis is that there is a parallel between these cases of chronic infections and cases of domestic abuse and violence in patriarchal societies. For instance, a man with whom a woman has lived for years may become her attacker and cause her death; similarly, microbes can multiply in a woman's body to the point that they cause her death. Yet another related hypothesis is that women's struggle in life against bacteria is similar to their struggle against men. Just as dominant bacteria spread throughout and overcome the bodies of women, men can dominate women, forcing them to live in ways that further systemic patriarchy.

### Research Questions:

I asked: At what points do millions of microbes living in us become our enemy? What are the reactions of different women's bodies to these different points? Is one's personality affected if microbes in his/her body change while living in another country for extended periods – for example, as the result of immigration?

Focusing on the situation of immigrant women, this research aims to diagnose the reasons for the varying condition of women's bodies in the context of their current place of residence, and seeks answers to the following questions: Can the individual stories cited here function as a kind of portrait of these women? What do they tell us about their living environment? Does the different living environment directly account for the variation in individual stories/portraits?

# Chapter I: Process of the Project with a Focus on Unexpected Changes in the Body

Before living in Poland, I lived in the U.S. for about three years for my Master of Fine Arts education. During my stay there, I did research on femicide in the world, and I made a project focusing on Turkey, the country where I was born and grew up. This process enabled me to conduct research on women's lives, their perspectives on life, and their relations with the society they live in, and to gain knowledge on the subject of femicide as an international problem. Different lives, experiences and perspectives pushed me to go deeper into the subject of women's existence within systemic patriarchy, this time with a focus on biological changes, especially unexpected changes, in the living body.

In a recent article on femicide by Argentinian social scientist Verónica Gago, the author concludes that "the war 'on' the body of women ... can be understood in relation to those heterogeneous ways in which autonomy and contempt produce insubordination in favor of knowledges of the body and, at the same time, they do not determine it because we do not yet know what a body can do."<sup>2</sup>

Gago explored many topics ranging from labor and finance to the church and how these topics get evaluated over (or "on") the female body. Her approach opened a new line of research for me, taking me beyond the question of "on" to questions of "in" and differences "between" women's bodies. I could best observe this difference in my own body first. As a woman living as an immigrant in the U.S., what kind of physical differences did it make in my body?

territory-violence/.

The basis for starting my research was an infection problem I had experienced myself. After moving to the U.S., an infection problem I had experienced years earlier in Turkey started again. It took me about six months to get rid of this infection when I was in Turkey. I went on a special diet for a long time and used non-chemical drugs. I determined a new lifestyle for myself. After following this diet very strictly, my body got rid of this infection.

But it started again when I was in the U.S. Infections flared in certain parts of my body, especially female genital parts. I investigated reasons for this recurrence. The disease reminded me that I had to resume the dietary regimen that had helped before. The same problems were happening again, but in a different country.



Fig.1 -

I started reading articles and doing research on the topic. In these articles, I examined the diseases that women experience with somatic origin. The results surprised me because there were so many diseases of somatic origin in women that it would have been impossible for me to know them all beforehand (or ever, perhaps). I had the knowledge that psychological circumstances can affect female hormones and cause significant diseases, but I knew far less about somatically originating diseases. Putting together information gained on both topics, I have learned that infections can be of somatic origin but as an infection continues, it may create psychological symptoms, which it turns can worsen the infection, thus introducing a vicious circle.



Fig.2 -

<sup>1-</sup> I completed my Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Intermedia & Digital Arts at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County in Maryland, USA, in 2019. The abstract for my MFA thesis, which was titled "Toward the Healing of Souls: Crocheting, Collaborating, and Commemorating, reads as follows: "This project examines how people might work toward healing amidst the increasing number of murders of women and how to commemorate the deceased. The outcome is an installation of 300 crocheted pouches filled with living grass, all hanging from the ceiling and walls, each pouch representing one murdered woman. My purpose is to raise awareness of femicide worldwide by focusing on the crisis in my own country, to which I consistently return and where I, too, could be affected by the ever-worsening situation. I hope that this work fosters discussion, analysis, critique, and further research so that not only will the increase in femicide be reversed but, ideally, all homicide would end completely. Trying to engage viewers in this conversation, so they might gain knowledge and/or change their perspectives on femicide, is my primary objective. The pouches have been crocheted by over 70 participants and me; the project is ongoing."

<sup>2-</sup> Verónica Gago, "Is there a war 'on' the body of women? Finance, territory, and violence", Viewpoint Magazine, 7 March 2018, accessed 5 April 2021. https://www.viewpointmag.com/2018/03/07/war-body-women-finance-

<sup>3-</sup> Gillian Irving, David Miller, Angela Robinson, Simone Reynolds, Andrew J Copas, "Psychological factors associated with recurrent candidiasis: a preliminary study", *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 7 May 1998, accessed 20 February 2022. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1758140/.

The same thing happened in my own body. Since the infection that started for somatic reasons did not go away for a long time, it made me very uneasy and really affected my psychological state, and the infection persisted. I started talking about these problems with the women around me. I slowly came to the realization that many women have these same problems, but they all have different causes, and they all experience the problems in different ways. During this period, I focused my research on Turkish women who were immigrants.<sup>4</sup>

I observed the stress they experienced and the great distress that the life they built away from their relatives caused them. Stress-induced skin diseases such as eczema were very common. But each of them had a different way of coping with difficulties and their perception of the difficulties. Difference in perception was especially interesting to me, leading me to research topics such as the geographical environment in which the woman with the disease was born, the culture she grew up in, and her society's perspective on her as a girl, young woman, and adult.

4- Walter Renner, "Female Turkish Migrants with Recurrent Depression. A Research Report on the Effectiveness of Group Interventions: Theoretical

Assumptions, Results, and Recommendations", January 2011, accessed 15

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263217437\_Female\_Turkish\_

Migrants with Recurrent Depression A Research Report on the Effectiveness of Group Interventions Theoretical Assumptions

Results and Recommendations Edited by W Renner)

August 2020.

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Fig.3 -

In this project, which I started from my own personal experience, I proceeded to research what kind of differences the patriarchal society in which I was born and grew up made in my life. How much does the pressure on women in patriarchal society affect them psychologically? How did/does it affect me? For example, because sexuality is a taboo in patriarchal societies, sexual intercourse without marriage still makes women feel guilty. I started to research what kind of pressure this situation exerts on women. I examined the adaptation process of women born in different places and living in different countries and under changing social conditions.<sup>5</sup>

I talked to women and interviewed them and talked about the processes and the beginnings of different reactions in their bodies. I informed them of the goals of the project, as explained above, as I sought their agreement to collaborate.

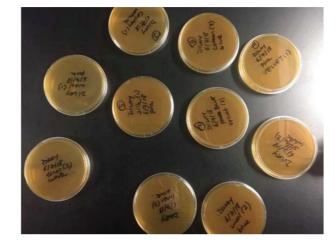


Fig.4 -

In order to better explain the changes in the bodies of immigrant women, I analyzed the differences in the bodies of local women living in the same place as the immigrant women, so the scope of my communication was broad. I examined indepth differences in these in-body differences that women may not even notice themselves.

The interviews I performed with them were recorded, becoming a joint project that is part of the final installation. I supported these studies with the appropriate theoretical infrastructure.

It takes about six months for a woman to recover fully from bacterial/yeast infections. I prepared a diary to demonstrate this process. This "women's diary" is presented in the form of a book, made by glass, that contains my own experiences and serves as a template for recording the experiences of others. On each page is recorded the traumas, distresses, and perhaps even the happiness experienced each day during the individual's healing process.



13

Fig.5 -

<sup>5-</sup> Mary Becker, "Patriarchy and Inequality: Towards a Substantive Feminism", 1999, accessed 13 July, 2019.

### 1.1. Theoretical Background:

Donna Haraway's 1985 article "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" has inspired cyberfeminism, cyberfeminist politics, and artistic practices. In her analysis of the sophistication of technology, she described a new feminism that was obscuring boundaries between humans and machines and could gradually blur categorical differences between women and men. She "imagin[ed] a world without gender" and closed her essay by asserting: "I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess." She wanted feminists to give up icons that emphasized gender and challenged them to adopt a visionary approach to life and work. Taking up the challenge, cyberfeminists have since argued that there is a correlation between women and new telecommunication technologies that could change the world. That is, unlike industrial technology, which has a patriarchal character, digital technologies based on networks and not on muscle power, and based on the brain rather than on hierarchy, characterize a much-improved environment driven by a generative relationship between women and machines. 6

Despite all the criticism it collects, cyberfeminism can be regarded as an effort to understand the new experiences that come into our lives with digital technologies. In particular, it is one of the conceptual tools that can be utilized in the process of analyzing cyberculture's gender codes. Social historian Megan Smitley has praised cyberfeminism's approach to technology for critiquing perceptions of technology as masculine (even though she sees flaws in cyberfeminism's support of the Internet, for example, which she sees as fundamentally capitalist and not free of masculinist controlling qualities). Nonetheless, cyberfeminism's approach has enabled women to see the benefits of technology. That said, birth control is another mixed example. While there are clear benefits to birth control for women and men, women have also been physically and emotionally harmed while trying to adapt to these technologies (birth control pills, for example, can actually change the biological structures of women's bodies).7

<sup>6-</sup> Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s", *Socialist Review*, no. 80, 1985. https://monoskop.org/images/4/4c/Haraway\_Donna\_1985\_A\_Manifesto\_for Cyborgs\_Science\_Technology\_and\_Socialist\_Feminism\_in\_the\_1980s.pdf

<sup>7-</sup> Megan Smitley, "Women and the Internet: Reflections on Cyberfeminism and a Virtual Public Sphere" (MSc thesis in Information Technology, Queen Mary, University of London, 20 November 2004). Accessed June 2018. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.11.599.5190&rep=rep1&type=pdf

According to theorist Marietta Radomska, Bio-Art provides a space that allows us to better understand the difference yet concomitance of the living and inanimate, organic and inorganic, human and nonhuman, as well as the futility of defining or trying to control their boundaries and thus contain them. She also discusses the ethical and political concepts of such thinking from a feminist perspective and examines Haraway's theories from an existential perspective within Bio-Art philosophy.8



Fig.6 -

The use of a biological material as an art object has always created ethical problems. Why should living matter be used as material for an art object? There are many different approaches to this question. An article on Bio-Art and ethics also mentions that the use of living materials can be an area of interest for people, encouraging them to research. To support this approach, while the microorganisms I used in my own installation were not harmed, precautions were taken to prevent them from infecting the environment. The idea that using live material is ethically wrong only stops people from dealing with developing fields. In other words, using different materials while living in the age of science and technology pushes the audience to have different experiences with and about art. This creates a new awareness of a variety of fields and of one's own reactions to discoveries within them.9



Fig.7 -

Another theorist who influenced me during my PhD process is Rosi Braidotti, a posthumanist who has drawn attention to the issue of women's inequality. She has emphasized that humanism will be overcome through criticism of the malehuman model. Moreover, she has drawn the path of women's emancipation step by step. The emancipation is realized through posthumanism, which has developed thanks to advances in science and technology. In general terms, these ideas, which are linked to scientific and technological changes 1n human identity, body, perception, and culture, are critical to discuss. Braidotti thinks that posthumanism radically challenges the centrality and exceptionality of the human being and doubts the authority of individual perspective.

In other words, the ideological assumptions of humanism imply that the mind is superior to the body, and the dualism produced here has been transferred to the social structures determined by it. Posthumanism has planned to dissolve this division.10

10-Rosi Bradotti, "Posthuman", Polity, 2013.

<sup>8-</sup> Marietta Radomska, "Non/living Matter, Bioscientific Imaginaries and Feminist Technoecologies of Bioart", Australian Feminist Studies 32, 9 May 2018. Accessed December 2019. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08164649.2017.1466649

Accessed 29 January 2020. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4791467/

<sup>9-</sup> Nora S. Vaage, "What Ethics for Bioart?", Nano ethics 10, 3 March 2016.

According to the history of bio art, Eduardo Kac, an artist, scientist and theorist, is considered to be one of the pioneers of this movement. In the early 1980s, Kac theorized on the subject, while creating digital, holographic, and online works that predict the global culture we live in today with its continuously flowing, ever-changing information. In 1997, the artist created the term "Bio-Art," exemplifying it in the creation of a transgenic rabbit. For this project, titled GFP Bunny (2000), Kac had green fluorescent protein (GFP) injected into the genetic structure of his rabbit named Alba, making it appear white in daylight and fluorescent green at night. The artist's direct interference with an animal's genetic structure was a first - a truly innovative action - in the history of art. 11

Working on these theoretical platforms, I conducted my research through laboratory studies and work in my studio. Visual art provides, to my mind, the best way to express things to people. I pursue my studies in a transdisciplinary manner, by using the language of art in order to sustain a communication with biology that produces results that go beyond both art and biology. Toward this end, I research the behavior of organisms (biology); psychological effects (psychology); and different social structures (feminist studies).

## 1.2. Inspirations

U.S. artist HEATHER DEWEY-HAGBORG has created representative portraits of women by using DNA obtained through discarded litter (such as used tissues and cigarette butts). Portraiture based on biological materials and data is of interest to me, as is stretching the notion of what portraiture constitutes.<sup>12</sup>



Fig.8 -

U.K. artist ANNA DUMITRIU's use of the term "transdisciplinary," rather than interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary, has helped shape my position that disciplines can be brought into play with one another to create a new context that transcends the parameters of those disciplines, rather than simply combining or integrating them. Dumitriu investigates the effect of gene sequencing on infection, examines the history of infection, and follows the development of infections and environmental factors that change the fate of the project. I am especially interested in her Communicating Bacteria Dress project, 2011, in which the behavior and communication among the bacteria with which she works are made visible in and on textiles with which she brings those bacteria into contact.13

<sup>11-</sup> Edwardo Kac. artist's website. Accessed 2017 https://ekac.cxg/transgenondex.htm

<sup>12-</sup> Heather Dewey-Hagborg, *Stranger Visions*, artist's website. Accessed February 2018. <a href="https://deweyhagborg.com/projects/stranger-visions">https://deweyhagborg.com/projects/stranger-visions</a>

<sup>13-</sup> Anna Dumitriu, *Anna Dumitriu*, artist's website. Accessed 25 May 2019. https://annadumitriu.co.uk



Fig.9 -



Fig.10 -

The "yeastograms" of JOHANNA ROTKO, based in Finland, are also of particular interest to me, especially since they entail portraits (in this case, of strangers she photographs on the streets). As she leaves the images to develop in contact with yeast cells, the portraits are modified. In my proposed "women's diary," which is now titled *The Glass Book*, I have designed a different yeast magnification on each page of the notebook sculpture, documenting how every artwork produced with living organisms is open to change and development. <sup>14</sup>



Fin 11



Fig.12 -

The works of TERESA MURAK, one of the most renowned contemporary Polish women artists, inspired me in the process of realizing my project. Concentrating on land art and feminist art, Murak produces her works using biological and natural materials. She believes in body and life energy and focuses on these in many of her works. The interactive process of her projects and the inclusion of the audience in their exhibition inspired me to open a laboratory space where I invite the audience to engage in my own work.<sup>15</sup>

Another artist who has strongly influenced my perception of function and recognition of bio-based modern art strategies is STEPHEN WILSON, an American artist who produced many multidisciplinary works of art from the beginning of Bio-Art until his death in 2011. In his work titled Protozoa Game (2003), he shows the interactions of humans and living protozoa with each other in an environment similar to a tabletop football game or pinball machine, in which a digital microscope and motion-tracking technologies intervene with human actions. In another project, titled Follow-Me (2003), individuals are invited to stand in front of projected imagery of protozoa and copy their movements. The human movements are captured on another screen, resulting in a split-screen installation wherein live video of humans and protozoa can be viewed simultaneously.

<sup>14-</sup> Johanna Rotko, *Johanna Rotko*, artist's website. Accessed by February 2019. http://www.johannarotko.com

<sup>15-</sup> Maryla Sitkowska, "Teresa Murak", *Culture.pl*, January 2003. Accessed June 2020. https://culture.pl/en/artist/teresa-murak

Control-Me (2003), individuals try to affect the movement of protozoa by singing, shouting, and talking into microphones in front of an image of the protozoa culture under a microscope. Wilson's early interactive installations allowed visitors to recognize the interrelatedness of humans and protozoa, while also experiencing their human urge to control nature.<sup>16</sup>



Fig.13 -

16- Regine, "Protozoa Games," We Make Money Not Art, 23 March 2006, https://we-make-money-not-art.com/after having re/. Stephen Wilson, "Interview with Stephen Wilson," We Make Money Not Art, 29 April 2007, https://we-make-money-not-art.com/interview with 12/. Both accessed 2018.

American Bio-Art artist KEN RINALDO learned that

researchers had detected some 3,000 different

types of bacteria on the banknotes of just one

bank in Manhattan, New York, he sent currency he

had collected from different countries around the

world to a gallery in Berlin for his 2019 installation

Borderless Bacteria / Colonialist Cash (the first

iteration of this project took place in Portugal in

2017). He guided assistants at Art Laboratory Berlin

to install the banknotes in rectangular petri dishes

atop enriched agar. Visitors were thus able to

view spontaneous microbial growth as the bacteria

crossed borders between nature and culture

and took visible shape across the background of

banknotes, which represented a variety of nations

using their economic systems to exert colonizing

powers. In a world where people who want to pass

from one country to another cannot move without

a passport or visa, an artwork wherein visitors can

experience the free and fluid movement of the

microbiome across the representation of colonialist

borders is poignant, and the work is especially

relevant to my own emphasis on immigrant women

in my thesis project.<sup>17</sup>

# 1.3. Interviews:

I interviewed two of the women who wrote in *The Glass Book*, one of the three installations in my exhibition. They shared their diaries with me, and we talked about the changes in their bodies.

### Interview with Yekateryna Grygorenko

**Question 1:** As an immigrant woman, what changes did you observe in your body when you lived in a different place from the country where I was born?

Yekateryna Grygorenko: Actually, I am a Ukrainian born in Turkey, but since my family is all Ukrainian, it doesn't make much difference if I was born in Turkey because my culture was formed according to Ukrainian culture for years. The changes in my body happened when I became a conscious individual and met Turkish people. As a foreigner, I was positioned as a more comfortable person by Turkish men, and I was always described as an easy bite. Virginity wasn't taught by my mother like it was an important thing. On the other hand, I was compared to Turkish girls a lot. (Of course, these are the things I experienced when I was 10-18 years old.) Events like this and more were very damaging to my psychology at that time, because of my insecurity. I hunched over because of my insecurity, and because I could not find anyone I could communicate with until my high school life, I always pretended to be someone else.

I listened to whatever music the middle school girls were listening to. I tried to follow them how they were dressed. I tried to imitate my girlfriend, who had the style and opinion that I did not like, because everyone liked her. I used to go to matches because the boy I loved played football, and it continued like this until high school every month or year I

was becoming another girl or another boy and it was pushing me not to love myself. In fact, I don't remember anything about a disease or blemish on my body, objectively, but my body was never mine. It was always someone else's.

**Question 2:** In your opinion, how much of the illness or distress you experience as a woman is of psychological origin?

Yekateryna Grygorenko. Recently, with the war in Ukraine, my psychology has been reflected in my body and for the first time, it has revealed the visible problems. I have had eczema on my head for about 4 months. At the same time, my discharge has not been healthy for these 4 months. Normally, I had a very healthy menstrual period, but there were differences in my bleeding in these four months. So all of my illnesses started with this stress. The fear that I will not see my family in my country again, the fear that I will not be able to go to my country again. All the results that came out by setting it up in my head.

<sup>17-</sup> Ken Rinaldo, Borderless Bacteria, artist website. Accessed 2019. https://www.kenrinal.do.com/portfolio/bordertess-bacteria-colonialist-cash/

**Question 3:** Do you think the changes or diseases in your body can change according to the cultural, social and political point of view of the society you live in?

Yekateryna Grygorenko: I think so. Because the most important thing, according to social and cultural codes and families, for the woman - the most successful thing - is to marry a good and paid man who is selfconfident. But on the other hand, for a well-educated woman, who has received a healthy sexual education without discrimination between girls and boys, it certainly cannot be the same as a woman who has been ... constantly suppressed. Not only in diseases, but also the sexual lives of the first x women and the second x women cannot be the same. For one. it is a duty to add a population to the world, to start a family, for the other, it is a pleasure full of lust and love. These are highly dependent on the self-confidence of the body and the health of the body itself. A woman who doesn't like her own body always encounters a problem, something I fought for a very long time, which although my mother gave me a good education, as I said in the first place, the environment, the society forced me to do it. I pretended not to be myself to avoid being excluded, and it took me a long time to love myself. That's why culture, society, family, religion, everything is in their (man's) hands. Just like our bodies.

### Interview with Ghazaleh Keshavarz

**Question 1:** As an immigrant woman, what changes did you observe in your body when you lived in a different place from the country where I was born?

Ghazaleh Keshavarz: I experienced a dramatic hair loss the first few months of my stay in the U.S. Constipation was another health challenge I was dealing with at the time. Unlike other friends new in this country, I did not experience weight gain or any changes to the shape of my body. I could assume a big portion of all these changes came from stress and anxiety caused by immigration.

**Question 2:** In your opinion, how much of the illness or distress you experience as a woman is of psychological origin?

Ghazaleh Keshavarz: In my case, big, big time! I took medication to control my anxiety and also have been doing psychotherapy and consultation for years now. I'm not saying it just started after my move to this country, I was experiencing such emotions and challenges back home as well. But this new chapter of my life and all education, work, immigration, homesickness, break ups, etc have just made that worse. For example, I had a chronic disk herniation and sciatica issue a few months ago; even though I feel better now, it's very much obvious that any little stress makes that back and leg pain worse and reminds me of how body and mind are closely connected and taking care of one means taking care of both.

**Question 3:** Do you think the changes or diseases in your body can change according to the cultural, social and political point of view of the society you live in?

Ghazaleh Keshavarz: Cultural and social impacts shape our characteristics and habits, and our lifestyle would change according to the condition we live in. For example, living in East Asia would make us adapt to a certain diet and activity level that could be much different from living in Europe. Culture, society, and politics are some of the main characteristics of each society which all impact the way we work, live, have fun, and view the future. Having said that – yes, I think all those factors impact changes and challenges in our body.



# 1.4. Completed Project as a Biological Laboratory Experiment

Artists: Ali Kanal - Dilay Kocogullari

### TISSUE\_LAB

Tissue\_Lab project, which I carried out in collaboration with Ali Kanal in March 2022, focuses on a specific place and investigates the biodiversity of that region, and it aimed to open new areas of exploration by following the traces of the biome. Its structure was formed by hybridizing the individual production practices of both artists. It was implemented by the combination of Kanal's exploratory production practice consisting of objects collected from abandoned buildings and my experimental production practice based on the micro/macro cosmos relationship and consisting of microscopic examinations in the laboratory environment. Kanal's field of research focuses on the external world and often traces the biome following his primal instincts. On the other hand, my research process in the laboratory environment took place in a completely sterile space within the framework of certain scientific teaching and defined the boundaries of the new biome to be discovered.

### Questions:

- Can researching the biome in inert areas with traces of human life lead us to discover different life relationships and textures?
- Can it turn the textural relationship of the biome into an artistic discourse?



Fig.15 -

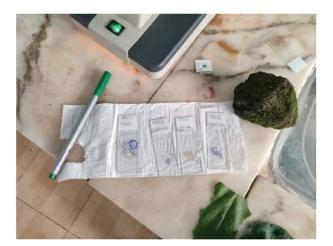


Fig.16 -

This laboratory area consisted of two different research sections. The first section was surface research consisting of textures that occurred on the wall of the room at the entrance. This research area was open to participation and aimed to create a visual database obtained from the textures discovered on the surface. The second section was in the kitchen area. This section focused on the objects collected in the streets where the place was located, and some plants obtained from the garden. This research space was open to participation and aimed to investigate the relational structure of the biodiversity of the immediate environment of the place.



Fig.17 -



Fig.18 -

The project was developed in line with the research process. It explored different textures specific to the region and investigated the relationship between them. It aimed to produce new artistic discourses specific to texture within the framework of this relational structure. It aimed to create an up-to-date discussion ground in the Anthropocene Epoch today by focusing on the similar relationships of

species with each other rather than the differences in biological species. Considering posthumanism, which is an anti-humanist approach that focuses on the human being, it was an important project in terms of proving the existence of species that humanity has not noticed by shifting away from the approach that humanity considers itself superior.

# Chapter II: Analysis of Doctoral Project Installations

For my doctoral project, I investigated the physical changes in the bodies of immigrant women living in different regions and the somatic causes of their reported diseases, questioned the women regarding psychological-somatic symbioses in these diseases, and I then created a material art response in which I combined art and science. Purpose: To show the reflections of the psychological changes of women who were born and raised in different places, cultures, social and political environments on their bodies. First, I experienced this in my own body. I lived in many different countries and grew up in a patriarchal society. I witnessed what kind of changes this created in my body, and I kept a diary of this process. I wrote down my psychological and physiological changes. Second, I decided to do this project with five women, plus myself. The result of this research took the form of three installations.



Fig.19 -



First installation (The Glass Book installation): 6 different women:

- 1. Born in Ukraine, grew up in Turkey.
- 2. Born in Turkey, raised in Turkey.
- 3. Born in Russia, raised in Wroclaw.
- 4. Born in Iran, raised in the U.S.
- 5. Born in Turkey, raised in the U.S.
- 6. Born in America, grew up in the U.S.

The Glass Book is created from sections taken from the diaries of these women. Each page of the book tells the story of one of them. In addition to the documentation here in the thesis you can see an array of details of the pages I made from glass by clicking on in the google drive link provided. Those pages formed a six-page diary. The highlights of this diary are the bacteria and fungi growing within the glass that were started from samples of skin, saliva, vaginal and other fluids of the woman represented on each page. I had the opportunity to work in hospitals for the purpose of taking these samples.

18-https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LfWVpgmpjhF2-1ROnUHGA25ps4xlsBtz?usp=sharing

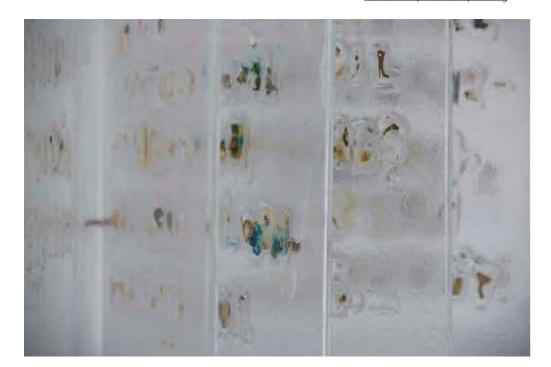


Fig.21 -

Second installation (photos installation): I'm not an artist who uses portraits a lot in their work, so instead of portraits, I thought of displaying objects that are special to these women by combining them with the biological materials I used. But then I decided that the idea of actually using "female portraits" was a good idea if I could harmonize it with my project. The portraits are not direct, conventional portrait photos of the women, but portraits of women made up of microorganisms specific to the portrayed women.

While I was doing this research, I wanted the old photos of the six women here, as well as their female relatives, because they experienced their migration and change of place together. Or even if they didn't move together, they grew up together under the same social conditions. I got all of the portrait photos I'm using from these six women, who selected their relatives' photos specifically for this project. These portraits were again combined with the biological material that metaphorically protected them.



Fig.22 -



Fig.23 -

So, the photos that I used in my installation were not only portrait photos, but also photos of several people together and even family photos. I combined photos of women or their families, which are important for these six women, with my own biological material, and produced bacteria with saliva samples I obtained from the women. I left their own DNA on the photographs. In order to increase the respect for the woman on any particular page, I tried to glorify her by including her family as well as including a part of her body in the installation.

In the book installation, all the women whom I included are already special, and are represented by the power and challenges that they have meted out and met, respectively, in their lives.





Fig.25 -

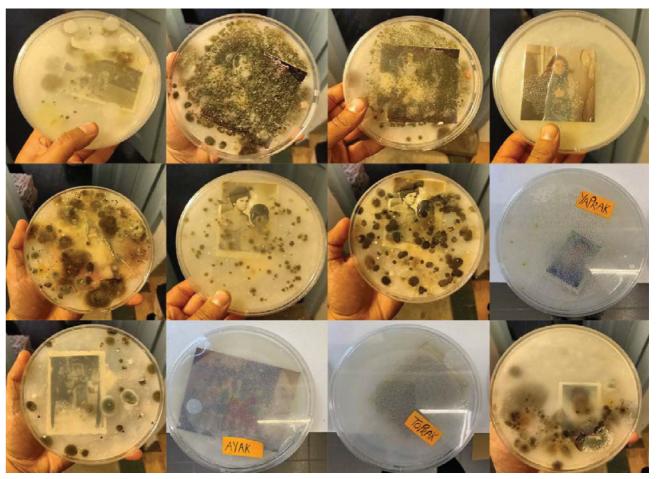


Fig.26 -







Fig.29 -

Third installation (object installation): As the third installation of the exhibition, I placed the souvenir objects I obtained from the same women into petri dishes, this time using another biological material, paraffin. Paraffin has a protective feature that prevents these objects from being damaged, emphasizing the metaphorical preservation of memory without damage and showing further respect for the women who shared these objects with me for my doctoral exhibition.

Laboratory space: On the first floor of the exhibition, as a form of introduction to my exhibition as a whole, I set up a laboratory space resembling the one I used for my research for the three installations in my exhibition.





Fig.31 -



Fig.32 -



Fig.33 -



Fig.34 -

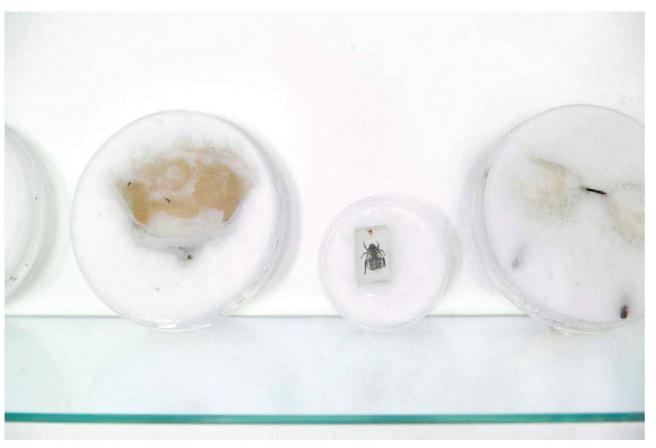


Fig.35 -

### Technical Explanation for Installations:

For *The Glass Book*, I chose to work with glass – a new medium for me chosen due to a number of features, such as its fragility and delicacy, and at the same time due to its specific durability (it does not distort the form) and hygiene (glass is an excellent material in terms of keeping it in purity) and relationship with materials used in laboratory tests. I experimented with different types of this material before choosing the German Schott glass which gave me the best results in terms of embedding samples taken from women (more on this topic continued in the text).



Fig.36 -

I asked for very short writings from the women who were participating which they wrote about their feelings when they were sick. I transcribed these writings into different languages on the glass of each page with special molds I prepared. I created small spaces for the letters on glass surface of each 35cm x 50cm-sized page and then filled them with agar - a biological material - as a medium. Thus, a medium wherein bacteria can live was created. Then for each page I planted the samples I took from the women (saliva, pieces of skin, vaginal discharge) in this medium so that a different bacterium could grow on each page. Each page then contained samples taken from a different person as well as entries from the same person's own diary.



Fig.37 -



Fig.38 -

After planting the samples, I set each glass page horizontally and covered it with plexiglass as the bacteria continued to grow inside. This Glass Book was then assembled and displayed as a book with its pages open.

As for the second installation, I used 20 petri dishes with a diameter of 15 cm., filling them with an agar nutrient medium, as in the first installation. I tried to get a richer mixture by adding different nutritional supplements to this nutrient medium, which I bought in powder form, which would allow more bacteria to grow. I asked the women who gave me their writings for *The Glass Book* installation for photographs of women who were important to them placed these photographs in these petri dishes and planted bacteria in them with biological samples from the same women.

Different bacteria grew in the petri dishes. Some covered the portraits, some remained intelligible. Some did not grow any bacteria at all. Others were completely covered with bacteria. I then sealed the petri dishes with hot glue so that they would not cause any damage to the environment.

In the other installation I made with the objects I took from the same women, I put objects that were valuable to them in petri dishes and covered them with paraffin. By taking advantage of the protective properties of paraffin, unlike the other installations, I created a space where no bacteria could grow. Thus, I aimed to protect those objects.



When visitors in the exhibition they have an opportunity to examine the objects with the pen microscope I made available. These objects which are an important part of the exhibition are composed of different objects that reveal the identity of the woman, while allowing them to remember objects that have been discarded somewhere and have been lying around for a long time. Many objects belonging to women such as combs, watches and earrings were used in this installation.

In addition to these installations, I also worked on glass the appearance of some bacteria under the microscope that I was working on during my glass experiments. Although, I didn't get the results I wanted these glass drawings helped me to gain more experience with glass even if they didn't physically contribute to my exhibition.

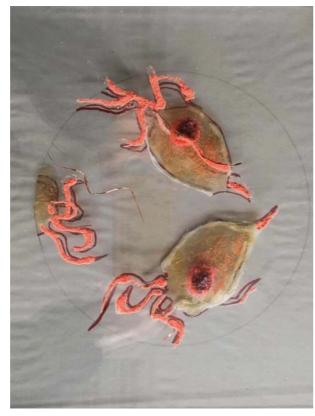


Fig.40 -



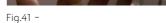




Fig.42 -



Fig.43 -

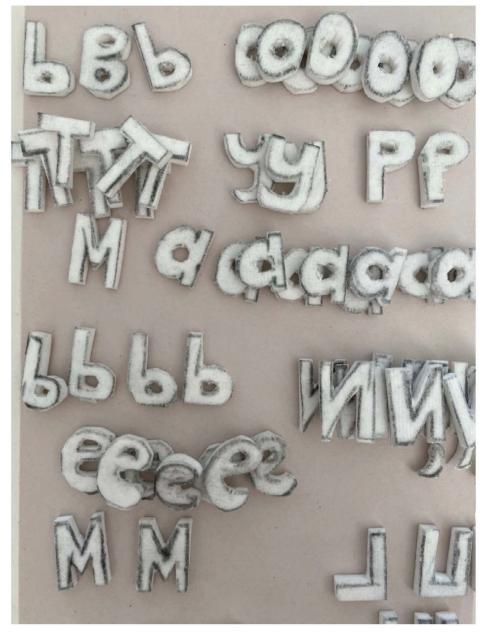


Fig.44 -



Fig.45 -

## **SUMMARY:**

As part of my doctoral research and the exhibition I am preparing, I have been investigating both the sources and consequences of the psychological and physical changes that a woman's body and her identity experience as a result of being affected by the manifestations of different cultures, languages, and events through the course of their lives. I was particularly interested in how these differences affect women emotionally and how they might shape women's life experiences. Using various artistic means, specifically derived from Bio-Art creative strategies, I explored women's relationships with nature and the effects of nature on the female body. I embedded these and other research questions within the framework of feminist theory.

My conducting of interviews with the six women proved to be a form of therapy for them. They came to an understanding, they said, that they/we had a common problem, and we talked about how they could find a solution to it, and they recognized that they were not alone. All the items that were precious to them and that they had been very careful to keep in an important place, and sometimes even hid, were displayed and appreciated. This was also one of the activities that made the women feel heard and valued.

The exhibition is the realization of the idea of bringing science and art together, and its design allows the active participation of the audience.

The fact that the glass notepad is a very fragile material suggests the delicacy of the female body, but at the same time these visual materials show how strong women are who carry all the difficult stories inside them.

This project has helped me to see the differences and similarities between women better and to increase my self- awareness. As I conducted more research on this subject, it opened a new door for me to see the differences in my own body. As a result of this part of the project, I now know my body better. So when I moved - that is, when I started living in another country - I understood what kind of trouble my body would experience or not. I learned how to deal with what nervously affected me while I was living in my own country.

As a next step in my research and work, I plan to continue evaluating and exploring the themes undertaken in my doctoral research, while complementing the previous scope of research focused on analysing the consequences of gender differences with similarities and spaces shared by both genders, and thus to address Nature itself as a non-polarized whole.



Fig.46 -



Fig.47 -





Fig.49 -



Fig.50 -

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