



Spora

Works currently on view by: Raven Chacon, Mary Manning, Helen Mirra, Jenna Sutela, Vivian Suter

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

Unfolding and growing over the course of two years, the artworks in the project are on long-term view in the non-gallery spaces of SI. In the stairways, hallways, roof, and other interstitial spaces, artists have contributed to the daily life, maintenance and functioning of the building with artworks that take shape through compost, plants, wall paint, public space and more. These include Jenna Sutela's earth battery-powered oracle, Vivian Suter's weather-exposed mural, Helen Mirra's chance-determined background painting, a newly composed score as a large-scale mural by Raven Chacon inviting activation by passersby, and Mary Manning's photographs merging private and public, natural and urban spaces.

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

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

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

Works List:

Raven Chacon, *Vertical Neighbors*, 2024

Large format outdoor score
Courtesy the artist

Vertical Neighbors is a composition for pairs of the same brass horn instrument. The score exists as a set of murals, visible to one or more musicians on the ground and their counterparts in an elevated position. A performance of this composition becomes an acknowledgement of vertical orientations as temporal relationships, aligning past and future knowledge. The term “vertical neighbors” was first relayed to Chacon by lawyer, activist and joik (traditional Sámi song) artist, Ánde Somby, to refer to relatives past, present and future who co-exist in vertical dimensions.

Mary Manning, *A Formal Feeling*, 2023

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

Mary Manning, *A Formal Feeling*, 2023

Chromogenic prints, paper, mat board, artist's frame
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Mary Manning, *And all the lives we ever lived and all the lives to be are full of trees and changing leaves (For Jenni)*, 2023

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

Mary Manning, *Lifes Rich*, 2023

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

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

Helen Mirra, *Harmless mistake*, 2023

Mistakenly mixed wall paint
Courtesy the artist

Harmless mistake centers errors as generative moments. Mirra's instructions developed for SI intend for any painting repairs in the interstitial spaces of the gallery to be performed with leftover and “mistake” paint, mixed erroneously in the wrong color and discarded by paint shops. Inspired by John Cage's work with Crown Point Press in San Francisco, for which he used leftover ink from other artists' projects, the intervention in SI's installation and maintenance work will reduce the amount of new paint consumed while leaving traces of what has come before on the walls.

Jenna Sutela, *Vermi-Sibyl*, 2023

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

Vermi-Sibyl conjures a figure from the television series, *The Muppet Show*, a matronly compost-pile named Marjorie. Because everything from vegetal and fruit scraps to coffee grounds and organic leftovers is deposited in her, Marjorie knows all; she is an oracle. For this new project developed especially for SI, Sutela creates a receptacle into which staff deposit their compostable materials. Garnering the electrochemical reactions in the soil as an earth battery, the compost powers a sound installation, transmitting oracular messages to the East Village.

Vivian Suter, *Untitled (Mural)*, 2023

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

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