

The age of Anthropocene

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An ecosystem in my mind, an ecosystem in my hands. Everything feels connected and continuous, whether it be my thoughts, my creations, my being or our existence. I find it hard sometimes to separate and categorise things in life, everything is connected through invisible threads.

The action of exploration takes an immense importance in my life and work whether it be visual exploration, mental exploration, physical exploration, emotional exploration or perceptual exploration. I am constantly and most of the time subconsciously trying to find ways out of the societal norms of experiencing life. I always find myself seeking to explore not necessarily always the unknown but rather the things in front of us we either don't pay attention to or have accumulated so much factual knowledge on that we no longer value the extreme simplicity or complexity of it's existence here and now. This way of existing seeps into my way and reason of creating, I believe one's way of existing both through thoughts and actions inevitably influences one's way, reason and content of creation and lifestyle.

What you absorb you will consciously or subconsciously release in some shape or form.

We are conscious beings. Beings of cognitive minds. We are human beings, animals with consciousness. Over time we have lost touch with our natural instincts, through the growth and sophistication of our consciousness towards ourselves and life around us.

To reconnect with our natural instincts also means that we can learn to comprehend how to navigate life with more ease and less fear and stress which are two things humans have distorted the comprehension and chemical production of through the evolution of our conscience and lifestyle. We trigger these fear and stress receptors unnecessarily, releasing chemicals into our body which naturally should occur way less due to our initial primal triggers being more basic and less regular such as the danger of one's physical being. We feel fear and stress for unnecessary reasons nowadays which leads to mental and physical health problems. We are not meant to live with the constant production of these chemicals in our bodies but as a society we create new stressors daily through the way and pace in which we are inventing both physical, social and now virtual structures. This might not always be in our control however we can have control over the way we let it affect and influence us.

knowledge of this aforementioned fact (stress chemicals and they're reason for production)

Understanding and learning to feel and trust our bodily response to all factors and triggers of life.

Through time our consciousness has been one of the biggest evolving aspects of our species in the last 1 million years. Our cranial capacity and complexity have evolved so much they have increased the size of the human brain tremendously, through the development of cognitive abilities such as language, tool use, complex social behaviour, becoming aware of our own thoughts , feelings, and perception we started developing complex languages, cultures, and technology as well as engage in introspection, self-reflection, and moral reasoning.



We have also managed to land ourselves into an unofficial geological epoch called the Anthropocene, characterised by the unprecedented impact of human activities on the Earth's systems it is in turn impacting us as well as our planet. From climate change and biodiversity loss to resource depletion and pollution, the consequences of our actions are far-reaching and heavy to believe and as an artist, I feel a responsibility to gently engage with these issues and to contribute to the conversation around how we can address them and a feeling for change. I seek to inspire a deeper sense of connection, awe and responsibility towards the planet we call home. A notion of symbiosis and turning towards the complex creatures and beings of this

earth to solve the problems we have created for ourselves rather than becoming dependant on arising technologies and AI to solve man made issues.

Why are we not humbly turning to the species of this planet to help us fix the problems we have created for ourselves. Between the amount of insects and mushrooms species on this planet we have abundant evolutionary intelligence we can turn to and look at to find solutions towards our own problems. Species which have inhabited this world before us and are still around have shown revolutionary evolvement and found every and any technique towards staying alive on this crazy planet. I have a special intrigue and personal belief in these two species as I find them to have incredibly intricately evolved and truly have reason for being here today.

*"Mushrooms are the digestive track of the planet.
The ability to break things down can help us deal with our problems like pollution - oil problems."*

- Paul Stametts, fantastic fungi

Without mushrooms, life on this earth would not regenerate and survive, they are at the end as well as the beginning of all life cycles. Creating new life from death, continuing and keeping intact the cycles of evolution and growth.

"Mycelium has more networks than our brain has neurological pathways, and it works the same, with electrolytes, electrical pulses. They're the most common species on earth, they're everywhere "

- Jay Harman, Fantastic Fungi

(We are soooooo smalllll! Why do we feel so powerful I don't get itttttt!)
: things my brain screams at me sometimes.

In the late 1970 Terrence and his brother Dennis McKenna were the first that proposed the stoned ape hypothesis. Central to their theory is the notion that early human ancestors experienced a transformative shift in cognitive abilities after stumbling upon psilocybin mushrooms, commonly found growing in the dung of herbivores which they followed and hunted. By consuming these mushrooms, our ancestors would have ingested psilocybin, a potent psychedelic compound. The McKennas argued that these mind-altering experiences had a profound impact on the development of

language, imagination, and complex social structures. They propose that the ingestion of these mushrooms stimulated the brain in novel ways, triggering patterns of thought and perception, ultimately contributing to the emergence of human intelligence and culture. While the Stoned Ape Theory remains speculative I believe it presents an interesting hypothesis on how the human cortex tripped in size over the short span of two million years.

"The fact that we lack the language skills to communicate with nature does not impugn the concept that nature is intelligent. It speaks to our inadequacy for communication."

- Paul Stametts, fantastic fungi

I believe strongly in these words. Why does our inability to communicate with other species prove that our intelligence is "heightened" and theirs "lowered". Mushrooms have been here longer than us, surely we have a lot to learn for our own evolution on this planet. If these connections are underground, all around us and sending signals through electrical pulsations, how can we not perceive this as communication. We are aware of animals communication as most species (but not all) primal way to communicate is through sounds, like us, but we have invalidated for such a long period of time non auditory communication as we may not comprehend it and may therefore view it as less intelligent or real. This is not the case, we are discovering constantly new forms of communication, even as humans, we have evolved to communicate through image, written word, tactility, actions just to name a few non verbal forms of communication or language.

"In South Africa, in the sediments of lava they have found fungus like organisms, mycelium fossils in the lava 2.4 billion years old. This is the oldest recurs of a multicellular organism on earth."

- Paul Stametts, fantastic fungi

There are so many ways in which this single species that has populated our planet for much longer than we have, can help us deal with the issues we've caused. From breaking down long living materials we have created or issues such as turning oil spills into living environments budding with life to replacing the heavy manufacturing of certain materials such as concrete, leather or styrofoam which all also use incredibly precious resources and quantities of water, instead, by growing mycelium we could be replacing styrofoam packaging with grown mycelium packaging, replace leather with mushroom leather and even the meat industry could start being replaced by edible meat-like mushrooms. In 2021 Balenciaga came out with a mycelium

leather coat in their winter collection, this was one of the first emerging plant based leather shown on the runway show of high fashion brand, revolutionising and creating space in the market for this to grow and become a more commonly used alternative.

I believe one day I will work with mushrooms in my art, however the requirements to successfully grow and build mycelium structures is quite particular, needing it to be a highly hygienic environment with very little to no external microbes entering the environment of growth. Working with living material is a dream of mine and I am sure the time and place will arrive eventually for this process to happen as I feel very strongly about turning towards these creatures to learn and that spreading this knowledge on their abilities and possibilities to help is crucial for our future. I envision growing mycelium sculptures to bring into my installations and project onto, and to without a doubt document and film the process of growth and delve into the micro world which I will then use as footage for future interconnected pieces.

Insects are a huge fascination of mine. I find them to be incredibly intricate visually and in their behaviour but most importantly I am interested in their perspective, how their size and point of view influences them. How could we try seeing the world from their angle, through their eyes and how have they adapted to living life like this.





"Modern technology has become like a phantom limb, it is so a part of us"

- Sherry Turkle, *Alone together*

We live in a world where screens and phones are constantly in front of us and our eyes no longer have the habit or natural instinct to be aware of our surroundings. This is something happening more and more in our world and people are staring all day at screens and then to relax watch a movie which is controlled framing of reality given to us on a screen. Children these days are being given iPads or phones to be distracted and not misbehave so adult can focus on their screens without distraction or worry. We are starting to have less of an ability to "scan" the world we move through, notice everything which we would might have in our past do to find food or become aware of potential danger. Why search for visual excitement in the external world when everything you would or could imagine seeing can appear on a screen on demand?

Presence.

Something we are all in much more need of in this world.

Visual stimulation as a form of recognising presence in a physical space.

Acknowledging your surroundings by taking note of them with your eye, your mind.

In world where everything has become so accessible to us how can we open our eyes, turn our brains off to just purely experience something for what it is?

Through my work, I aim to reflect on the evolution of human consciousness in this time of significant environmental change. I am interested in how our understanding and appreciation of the natural world has evolved over time, and how this understanding has shaped our relationship with the environment as well as how our consciousness has impacted humanity's relationship with our natural instincts and emotional comprehension. I explore the ways in which our pursuit of knowledge and growth has led to a disconnection from the very things that make us human. We have become so focused on advancing our technology and intellect that we have forgotten the importance of our innate intuition and emotional intelligence.

"In the pursuit of knowledge: everyday something is added.

In the pursuit of enlightenment: everyday something is dropped."

- verse 48 of the Tao

I hope to awaken people to the beauty and complexity of our natural instincts and emotions, to help them rediscover the richness of life that can only be experienced through a deep connection to oneself and the world. By exploring the human psyche, I hope to inspire a greater awareness of the need to reconnect with our true selves, embrace our natural instincts and find healing and respect for the natural world.

"We must, as Steiner says, view with wonder that which we do not understand."

- Theo Gimbel, Healing through colour



In my installations I create spaces which encourage wander and exploration to help foster a deeper sense of awe, respect and appreciation for our environment. I create spaces where people might have a chance to start noticing certain visual phenomena around them and then subconsciously start noticing these phenomena in the external world, in their everyday surroundings and hopefully find slight pleasure and appreciation which in turn will release serotonin into their system, the "happy chemical".

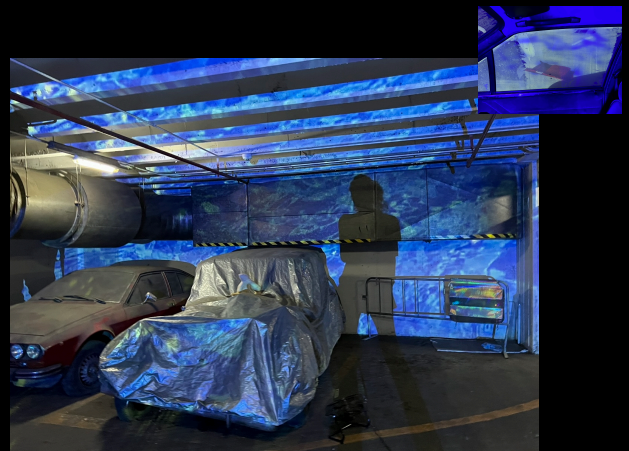
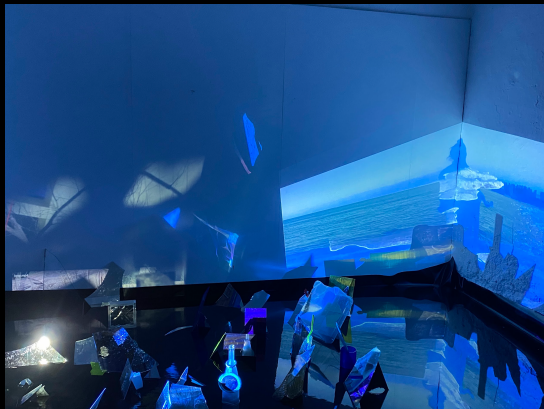
Imagine feeling momentary joy from such a mundane phenomenon such as a water reflection, a shadow you find amusing or light transpiercing a glass refracting light onto your kitchen counter, how impactful that can become in your life if only you spent a little time consciously training your subconscious mind to register and enjoy these things surrounding you, how much more pleasant life could become for yourself, to share these moments of visual appreciation with yourself.

Through creating these sensorial environments saturated with various visual phenomena for people to experience I believe we can influence the nervous system directly by bypassing the cognitive mind to take it to an internal subconscious reaction and absorption, leading to a sensorial and emotional response which would lead to a higher impact on memory and change in one's life.



Water and light

I've always incorporated water and light in some way within my installations, I find them to be fascinating mediums to explore as they are ever changing and also mediums which every human has a connection with since we ourselves consist of water and need light for all living beings to continue their existence. With the belief and knowledge that water is the building block to all life forms and that without light all life would cease to exist, I find it incredibly important to pay homage to these two elements. Not only are they our truest source of life and existence, they are also both conductors of energy and frequencies and as electrical beings, when immersed and surrounded by these in a sensorial manner we can benefit our own energetical conceptions. These two mediums are pure sources of illusion, they have the capacity to distort, illuminate, transpire, refract, absorb, warp and so much more as they have the possibility to be in constant movement or completely still. In my work I've used and represented these mediums in various ways. Here are a few examples below.



My medium represents me. I create playgrounds for myself, visual playgrounds, environments so rich in visual phenomena that I find joy and excitement and end up creating within my creations, ecosystem in my art, each piece birthed and lingering with previous creations seeping in gently and sometimes even unnoticed. In my installations I also incorporate video, usually as a source of light but as well as a trigger to the external world when being inside a closed environment. My videos are portals into my world. A

dear friend once told me that they, for the first time truly understood me when they saw a 10 minute long video I had made and used within the installation I had created for LOOP Video festival in 2021. This blew my mind and for the first time I felt a true sense of being at one with my art in that moment, I am my art and my art is me, we are mirrors facing each other creating endless portals of creation. I would find it hard to separate these more than anything.

My video pieces vary, from pure untouched footage to heavily green screen and layered imagery creating dreamlike visions of the world around us. Mainly using my archive which consists of content I have created since 2016 (approximately 12 000 videos to date) to select footage to then use, my videos become enlaced with personal memories and anecdotes of my journey through the visual world. I don't usually set out with intention to film, unless for a specific piece in collaboration with another and even in this case I try keep my process as organic and natural as possible, usually stumbling upon things recording them and potentially using them around this time but often finding myself using them 3 to 5 years later. I keep my intent to explore always, my ideal environment to film is places I've never been, a new environment to crawl around and climb in, seeing things from all perspectives and light changes.



Photography and videography have always been something I've been interested in, not necessarily the technicalities but rather the medium as a way of directly capturing a moment but with the possibility of choosing the perspective in which it is captured. I remember as a child my parents would give me a disposable camera when I would go on school camps, around the age of 6 years old and I loved it, to capture something in just the way I choose to see it fascinated me. I then at the age of 12 did a commercial for Disney channel and once I got paid decided I would get myself my first proper DSLR camera and started shooting in the environment I was most familiar with, which had always excited me, the bush. Growing up seeing incredible scenes of a leopard in a tree eating a buck or days old baby elephants running next to their mother was so visually and emotionally exciting and something I had access to. I would never go out without my camera, but as time passed and the same crazy wildlife scenes went by I found myself a bit bored as I was visually interested in much more but also found myself inclined to start taking more videos as moving image always intrigued me.

Taking videos and putting them together became something I found fun but never truly saw it as art but rather creating something that pleased me. Sometimes they would be of my friends but mostly of the world around me, any environment I went into I started looking at it through the eye of exploration, captured by small detailed and fleeting moments these are some of the things I already at the time felt a necessity to capture as my eyes were instinctively drawn to them. This is still the case today, just with a bit more consciousness of why I do it. I've also always been told, whether by teachers, close friends or family that I have a great "eye". My eye, my eye, I never really got it, what did they mean by my eye. It almost frustrated me, I would have teachers using this phrase when I would be seeking constructive feedback on my work and they would tell me what a great eye I have and not to worry. But I didn't understand that what they meant is that I have my own unique perspective of the world, one I thought and sometimes still catch myself thinking that everyone has but then realise that I do indeed have " a great eye" one that sees the world differently, that chooses odd perspective and travels from macro to micro, sees patterns other would never instinctively see and fleeting moments of light everywhere I go. I play with my eyes a lot, often moving between perspectives and focus, sometimes blurring them a little or stretching to the furthest peripheral vision my eye can reach, it's fun and I believe we all have the capacity to do it.

My brother Victor was the first to bring to my attention what people meant though by my eye. We spoke about it, analysed it, wondered what it would be like if we could swap eyes for a day and I understood that my capacity to scan the world around me was much more conscientious and impacting to me than the average persons and that I take on a different perspective towards my visual surrounds. This got me wondering how others see the world as well as how impactful our intake of our visual surroundings can be to us as humans. Why do we have eyes?

The main function of our eyes is to detect and perceive light, which allows us to see and interpret the world around us. The eyes are able to focus on objects at different distances and send visual information to the brain, which then processes and interprets this information to create our sense of sight.

"Knowledge at a distance is tantamount to foreknowledge. The uncommitted reach into space is gain of time for adaptive behavior: I know in good time what I have to reckon with. The apprehension of distant objects therefore means an immediate increase in freedom by the mere increase which remoteness allows in the time-margin for action".

-Hans Jonas about sight.

"It's about choosing how you'll respond to your emotional warning system. It supports the approach described by Viktor Frankl, the psychiatrist who survived a Nazi death camp and went on to write Man's Search for Meaning, on leading a more meaningful life, a life in which our human potential can be fulfilled: 'Between stimulus and response there is a space,' he wrote. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

- Susan David in Emotional agility

The ability to depict the world visually, independent of the immediate physical presence, has led to the creation of numerous other cultural proxies or inventions that serve as substitutes or representations of reality.

"Eyes, blood driven cameras, vehicles of perception, toys, playgrounds, instruments, organs, lights, reflective voids. I spy with my little eye, a different perspective of the world to you, my own unique perspective which you may never comprehend or see similarly to me. This toy, this organ, this camera attached to me, allowing me to see the world differently to you and you differently to me. Let me take you to the playground, oh wait we're already here, everywhere you lay your eyes, your direct vision becomes a playground for your eye, your mind. Squint a little, pick a point and blur the rest around it. Stare at the red book for a couple seconds than take a look at the sky. What you'll see will be different to me yet we all get to play this game, a game that seized so many moments of boredom and anxiety, that lead me to smile in a moment of nothingness or normality. A toy I carry with me everywhere I go and allow to rest when my eyelids feel heavy. Sometimes I try share my moment of playful vision with you, explaining the steps, the rules to perceive in the closest way possible how my eye plays with the physical world but even then you may see it differently to me, in which case you'll then share your perception with me and together try create the collective perception, the collective eye."

- extract from a creative writing essay I wrote in 2021

Sight, the human sense I wish to stretch the most. My intentions are to help increase peoples comprehension that the visual world, everything our eyes have the capacity to see, is a playground if we just know how to play and pay a bit more attention to the smaller, stranger, indirect visual phenomenons we are constantly surrounded by in both the man made world and the natural world and even more so when these two collide. Our reality.

Books which have webbed my subconscious's ecosystem together.

Healing through colour. by Theo Gimbel

You're not listening. by Kate Murphy

Touch, the science of the sense that makes us human. by David J Linden

Unthinkable, An extraordinary journey through the worlds Strangest brains. By Helen Thomson

The journey. By James Norbury

The dawn of everything by David Graeber

Metamorphoses. By Emanuele Coccia

As consciousness is harnessed through flesh. By Susan Sontag