Press Release, 22 June 2022

BACK TO EARTH

A multi-site exhibition responding to the climate crisis featuring Dineo Seshee Bopape, Brian Eno, Cooking Sections, Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg and Formafantasma among many others

A major live programme featuring award-winning opera Sun & Sea and the return of the Serpentine Marathon of talks and performances

Serpentine North, The Magazine and other locations
22 June – 18 September 2022
Press View, Wednesday 22 June 2022, 9.30am – 12pm

Seba Calfuqueo, Tray Tray Ko, video, 6’13, 2022, film still, photo by: Sebastian Melo. © Serpentine and the artist.
Back to Earth is Serpentine’s long-term, interdisciplinary, artistic programme responding to the urgent climate crisis. The programme features an exhibition staged at Serpentine North from 22 June to 18 September 2022, with further works situated in Serpentine’s restaurant The Magazine and further afield in Kensington Gardens. Back to Earth also features an extensive live programme with activations during the exhibition and for the next two years.

Evoking responses to the climate emergency and spotlighting a multitude of durational perspectives from across the globe, Back to Earth reflects how we can learn from diverse experiences to create change.

Back to Earth exhibition at Serpentine North

A snapshot:
Agnes Denes – flag The Future Is Fragile, Handle with Care
Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg – Pollinator Pathmaker, a garden artwork created through an algorithm that optimises planting for pollinators
Brian Eno – a sound installation
Carolina Caycedo – a new wallpaper of waterways that have been shaped by human intervention
Cooking Sections – a new CLIMAVORE menu focusing on sustainable ingredients
Dineo Seshee Bopape and Katy’taya Catitu Tayassu – a series of earth and clay forms
Formafantasma – a manifesto for exhibition making that minimises carbon emissions
Giles Round – an installation using mirrored surfaces that maximise natural daylight
Karrabing Film Collective – a new film commission, premiering in the UK, on the significance of connection to land in Indigenous communities with the goal of creating a new cultural heritage area in Australia
Sissel Tolaas – a unique smell score that draws on the emotional power of smell
Superflux and Studio Ghazaal Vojdani – a takeover of the gallery shop to reimagine what a shop will need to look like in the future, asking: what will our alternative models of consumption look like in a changed climate?
Tabita Rezaire/Amakaba and Yussef Agbo-Ola/Olaniyi Studio – a temple of medicinal plants to explore our relationship to them and their healing powers

More information:
Brian Eno has created a new sound and light installation emerging from his research into generative compositions and Agnes Denes presents her flag The Future is Fragile, Handle with Care.

Artist Tabita Rezaire/Amakaba and architect Yussef Agbo-Ola/Olaniyi Studio present an installation exploring our relationship to medicinal plants. They have designed a temple as a multisensory space for audiences to remind themselves of the healing powers of plants. The temple
is constructed using materials recycled from Serpentine’s previous exhibitions and adorned with specially woven panels that will be reassembled into a building in Amakaba, Rezaire’s centre for agroecology in French Guiana. This installation is presented in collaboration with Palais de Tokyo, Paris.

A new wallpaper by artist Carolina Caycedo envelops the exhibition space, collaging satellite images of waterways that have been shaped by human intervention across the Americas.

Further highlights include a series of earth and clay forms by Dineo Seshee Bopape. The artist’s movements and breath are translated into sound pieces by animist and shaman Katytaya Catitu Tayassu in a collaboration that explores methods of reengaging with our bodies, lands and ancestors.

Research-based design studio Formafantasma present a manifesto for exhibition-making that minimises carbon emissions, alongside many other artist’s designed posters. Artist Giles Round’s intervention features mirrored surfaces and forms based on the satellites that survey environmental changes to maximise natural daylight and reduce the need for artificial lighting.

A new film commission, The Family (A Zombie Movie) by Karrabing Film Collective, is premiering in the UK to explore the significance of connection to land and in Indigenous communities.

A unique smell score by artist and researcher Sissel Tolaas evolves through the space and over the course of the exhibition, drawing on the emotional power of our sense of smell to address the need for change in response to the climate emergency.

Expanding beyond the exhibition space, the gallery shop has been transformed through a collaboration between design and experiential futures company Superflux and designer Ghazaal Vojdani. They present a shop for the future that aims to gather knowledge from a group of advisors, offering visitors a selection of books and products that reflect alternative models of consumption in a changed climate.

During the course of Back to Earth, Cooking Sections present new CLIMAVORE elements of the menu on offer at The Magazine in collaboration with Benugo. The new ingredients Cooking Sections embed in the menu continue to have a focus on regenerative aquaculture and agriculture.

Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg’s Pollinator Pathmaker at North Flower Walk in Kensington Gardens and online at www.pollinator.art is ongoing for the next two years. This uses a data-led algorithmic method of planting to focus on the needs of pollinators in the UK. Along with external partners, a methodology for recording and monitoring pollinator patterns is being developed.
Bettina Korek and Hans Ulrich Obrist said: "Now in its third year, the Back to Earth initiative has been a remarkable testament to what a dynamic platform for interdisciplinary ideas and practices Serpentine is. This exhibition is a chance to share a selection of Back to Earth projects with audiences, under the common banner of a show, to think about the interplay among artists, thinkers, performers and curators, and to consider the importance of building new connections between art and society. There could not be a more universal subject matter than the Earth and the climate crisis we are facing as natural beings. We are galvanised by the calls for change and creative solutions that have come to life through Back to Earth and hope that they inspire more."

Placing sustainability at the core of the exhibition, Back to Earth at Serpentine North continues to use existing structures and reuse the materials from disassembled parts of Radio Ballads, the preceding exhibition, to minimise waste build and reimagine exhibition making. Almost all work has been produced locally and inks and papers involved in printed materials have been selected to prioritise recycled processes.
Beyond Serpentine North and 2022

Thursday 23 June – Sunday 10 July
Sun & Sea at The Albany
Scorching Suns, Rising Seas at The Albany

Saturday 9 July, 9:30am
Equilibrium at the Serpentine Pavilion 2022

Saturday 16 – Sunday 17 July, 11am – 7pm
Queer Earth and Liquid Matters at Stone Nest

Thursday 21 July, 7pm
Manthia Diawara: A Letter from Yene at Ciné Lumière, Institut français du Royaume-Uni

Saturday 10 September, 8pm
Himali Singh Soin: Static Range at the Serpentine Pavilion 2022

Saturday 17 September, 3pm
Bones Tan Jones: Fertile Souls at the Serpentine Pavilion 2022

Saturday 22 April 2023
Back to Earth Marathon

Coinciding with the exhibition, Back to Earth LIVE brings together Serpentine’s vast network of individuals and organisations involved in tackling the environmental crisis in an extensive and ambitious 3-month programme of talks, performances and debates.

The programme will feature the UK premiere of the award-winning opera performance Sun & Sea by visual artist and composer Lina Lapelytė, writer and poet Vaiva Grainytė and film / theatre director Rugilė Barzdžiukaite, curated by Lucia Pietroiusti, Founder of Serpentine’s General Ecology programme. Hosted at The Albany, Lewisham, London, from 23 June to 10 July, the show is co-presented by LIFT, the Albany and Serpentine as part of LIFT 2022, Back to Earth and We Are Lewisham. We Are Lewisham is presented by Lewisham Council, in partnership with the Albany. Lewisham is the London Borough of Culture 2022, a Mayor of London initiative. As part of the Sun & Sea live programme (23 June – 10 July 2022), Scorching Suns, Rising Seas, a public engagement programme deepening themes of environmental justice for the show, will include
free film screenings taking place at The Albany, Lewisham, as well as a public symposium at Serpentine on Saturday 9 July.

On Saturday 9 July, concluding Scorching Suns, Rising Seas, a public gathering convening artists, filmmakers, policymakers, scientists and writers to engage with issues around environmental justice on diverse scales will take centre stage. Participants will include activist Rosamund Kissi-Debrah, climate scientist Tim Lenton, novelist Ayanna Lloyd Banwo, Stop Ecocide co-founder Jojo Mehta, musical artist Love Ssega, legal practitioner Philippe Sands, photographer Sarah Stirk, jazz educators Tomorrow’s Warriors, and others to be announced. It is curated by Radical Ecology, in partnership with LIFT 2022, Serpentine’s Back to Earth project, We Are Lewisham, University of Exeter’s Global Systems Institute, University of Exeter Arts & Culture, University College London’s Sarah Parker Remond Centre for the Study of Race & Racialisation, Open Society Foundations, Lewisham Migrants & Refugee Network and UCL Anthropocene.

Queer Earth and Liquid Matters presented in collaboration with Stone Nest and QUEERCIRCLE, will be dedicated to transformation, queerness, the natural and unnatural, wild, decolonial, Indigenous and submerged perspectives. Curated by Macarena Gómez-Barris, Jack Halberstam and Kostas Stasinopoulos, the programme will bring together artists, writers, filmmakers, sound designers and practitioners to explore what falls outside the category of the human, decolonial, queer and social ecologies, visions and experiences of apocalypse, as well as Indigenous refusal and outrage and the consequences of extractive capitalism. As part of Back to Earth LIVE, Queer Earth and Liquid Matters will dive into issues of wildness, transitivity, decoloniality, land and water struggles, and how queer/trans Indigenous embodiment complicates many of the dualities of the Western ontology. The programme will feature talks, performances, film and more from a stellar list of participants including Xavi Aguirre, Seba Calfuqueo, Adham Faramawy, Ash Fure, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Jack Halberstam, Victoria Hunt, Bhanu Kapil, Juan Francisco Salazar, P. Staff, Bones Tan Jones and more to be announced.

Also part of the Back to Earth LIVE series, on Thursday 21 July, Serpentine will present the international film premiere for Manthia Diawara’s commission for Back to Earth. A Letter from Yene emerges from conversations with the community in which Diawara lives for part of the year, in the seaside town of Yene in Senegal, primarily occupied by fishermen and farmers but recently besieged by coastal erosion and uncontrolled urbanisation. A changing coastline, a deprived sea, disappearing rituals and new professions emerging out of the climate emergency form the landscape of Diawara’s Back to Earth film, commissioned by Serpentine, MUBI and PCAI Polygreen Culture & Art Initiative.

Diawara’s reflexive documentary unfolds as if it were a letter written to the viewer. Following encounters between the fishermen, pebble collectors and himself, Diawara explores what it means that they all collectively and unknowingly contribute to the undermining of that same
environment through their different daily activities. How do their exchanges generate change and impact their different understanding of what surrounds them? How can they build a political solidarity and come together with the land and sea as equal partners?

On Saturday 10 September, Serpentine will present an epistolary performance by Himali Singh Soin accompanied by drummer David Soin Tappeser and with interventions by friends. This will be in the context of Soin’s Back to Earth commission, Static Range, a project based on a historical spy-story in the Indian Himalayas. The performance will form a landscape of speculations and reflections on nuclear culture, porosity, leakages, toxicity and love, spiritual-scientific entanglements, environmental catastrophe and post-nation states.

Bones Tan Jones’s Back to Earth commission will be dedicated to Fertile Souls, a survival skills share collective founded in 2019 seeking to queer the idea of what survival could look like to a community of queer folks, people of colour and beings who exist beyond the boundaries of society. Through workshops such as sound healing, astrology, body healing rituals, instrument making, vocal resonance, herbal medicine resource sharing and more, Fertile Souls will share ways in which we could take our healing into our own hands, and nurture ourselves within the ever-growing dystopian landscape. Bones Tan Jones will present an activation of Fertile Souls aligned with the pagan wheel of the year, the solstices and equinoxes, and all ceremonial dates in between.

Reflecting Serpentine’s long-term commitment to working together with artists in the face of climate change and following on from the organisation’s long-standing experience in the production of ambitious, multidisciplinary, live events at the forefront of contemporary thought, the Back to Earth Marathon, co-curated with Brian Eno, will bring together participants across all disciplines to address today’s environmental urgencies on Earth Day 2023 (22 April).
NOTES TO EDITORS

About *Back to Earth*

*Back to Earth* is a multi-year project that invites over sixty leading artists, architects, poets, filmmakers, scientists, thinkers and designers to respond to the environmental crisis. With the support of partner organisations and networks, these collaborators are devising artistic campaigns, protocols and initiatives.

Interdisciplinary at its core, *Back to Earth* manifests throughout all of Serpentine’s onsite, offsite and online programmes, sharing its resources in order to amplify ongoing projects or campaigns around the climate emergency, as well as to develop new ones. *Back to Earth* considers ecology as embedded in everyday practices and agencies.

*Back to Earth* is a programme about change and a catalyst for change. Echoing the global response to the climate crisis, *Back to Earth* is a complex web of interconnected research, interventions and activities. The project asks: What new ecosystems can foster agency within organisations? Which kinds of research-sharing, resource-sharing and collaborative working practices are necessary to present complex responses to complex problems? How can arts institutions bring visibility to climate actions that create positive change for communities, places and imaginations around the world?

The programme emerged out of Serpentine’s long-standing engagement with the topics of extinction and the disappearance of species, knowledges and customs, which began with the 2014 Extinction Marathon, co-curated with artist Gustav Metzger, as well as out of General Ecology, Serpentine’s overarching environmental research project. Collaborators include Judy Chicago, Sir David Adjaye, Vivienne Westwood, Etel Adnan and Olafur Eliasson.

About Serpentine

Championing new ideas in contemporary art since 1970, Serpentine has presented pioneering exhibitions for half a century from a wide range of emerging practitioners to the most internationally recognised artists of our time.

*140 Artists’ Ideas for Planet Earth* edited by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Kostas Stasinopoulos has been relaunched as a paperback edition. Through 140 drawings, thought experiments, recipes, activist instructions, gardening ideas, insurgences and personal revolutions, artists who spend their lives thinking outside the box guide readers to a new worldview.
Back to Earth is curated by
Sarah Hamed, Assistant Exhibitions Curator
Rebecca Lewin, Curator, Exhibitions and Design
Hans Ulrich Obrist, Artistic Director
Lucia Pietroiusti, Strategic Consultant, Ecology and Founder, General Ecology
Kostas Stasinopoulos, Associate Curator, Live Programmes

Jo Paton, former Chief Producer
Holly Shuttleworth, former Producer

About The Family and The Zombie
The Family and The Zombie is a co-commission by Serpentine, London, for Back to Earth, Palais de Tokyo, Paris for Reclaim the Earth and E-WERK Luckenwalde for POWER NIGHTS: Being Mothers. With the support and collaboration of Indigenous Language and Art Program, Department of the Arts, Australia and Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, Darwin, Australia. Additional thanks to Madre, Napoli.

About Pollinator Pathmaker
Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg’s Edition Garden 3 is presented with special support from Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation and Google Arts and Culture, and will be on display for the next two years.

Originally commissioned by the Eden Project with the support of Garfield Weston Foundation as part of Create a Buzz. Additional partners include Gaia Art Foundation and collaborators Google Arts & Culture. Curated by Misha Curson and Celine Holman.

By creating a series of international edition gardens, Pollinator Pathmaker is growing into a global art-led campaign to save the world’s pollinators. A mission that is enhanced by the first international commissioner, LAS (Light Art Space) in Berlin, Germany.

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Press images available at serpentinegalleries.org/press
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