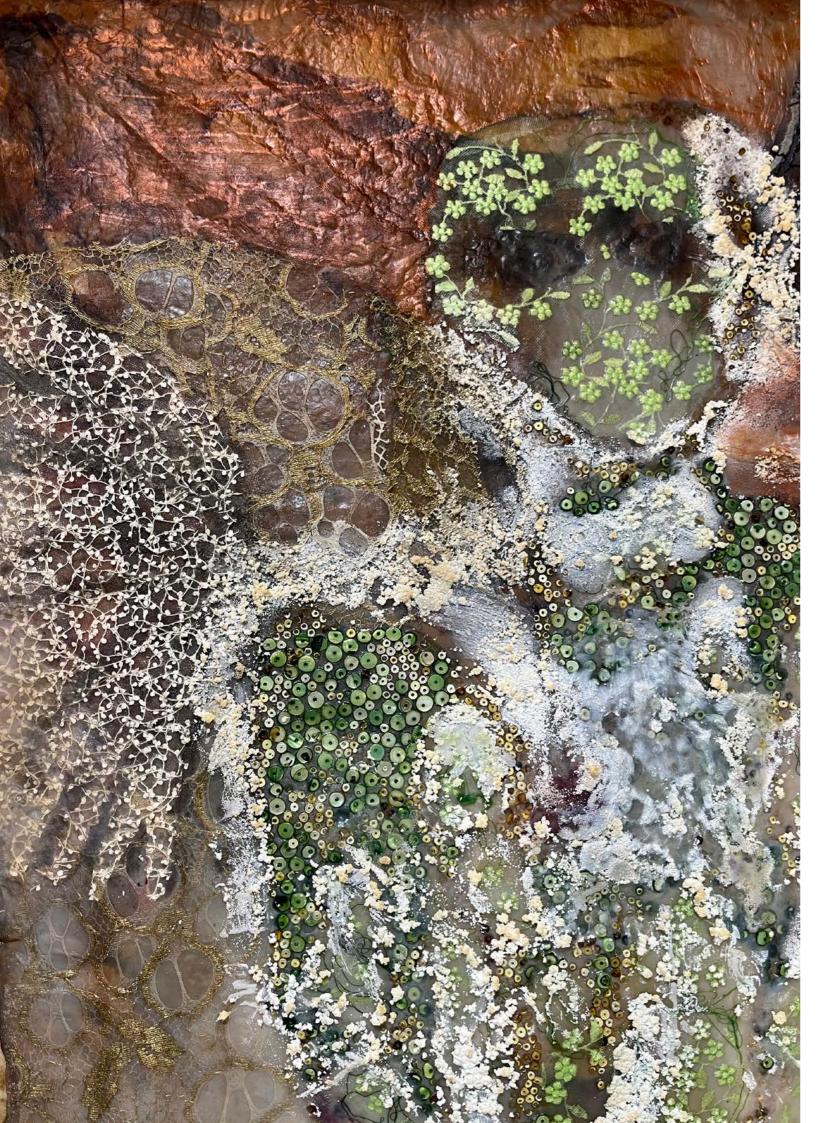


# Iri Berkleid



#### **Approach**

Iri Berkleid lives and works in Paris. After exploring experimental techniques at the biological lab of the School of Visual Arts in New York, Iri Berkleid has developed her own cosmogony through a practice grounded in intervening within **microbiological processes of matter formation**. The artist shapes cellulose as it grows in symbiotic cultures of bacteria and yeast, thus revisiting traditional pictorial and sculptural methods through the lens of the biological principles that underpin her practice. These principles have become both her primary constraint for creation and a major source of inspiration.

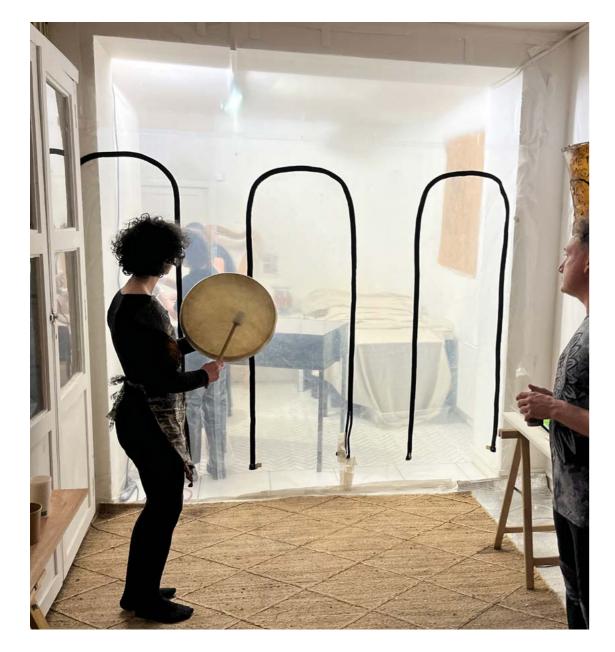
By seeking to transfigure **ever-mutating organic matter**, Iri Berkleid aims to «shift our perception of the abject and the sublime, and question the interstice between bodies and their environments». She sees each work produced through this **dual process of creation** as a multitude of artworks, whose different states she shares through immersive installations, performances, or «documentary-works.»

Her will of transmission is driven by the **concept of the "aura"** as developed by the philosopher Walter Benjamin. Oscillating between abstraction and figuration, the **finilised and stabilized pieces**—presented as sculptures or "organic tapestries"—retain the traces of past vital activity.

In searching for the **imprints of the psyche on matter**, the themes explored by the artist sketch out intimate chimerical imaginaries drawn from her dreams or from social myths inspired by evolving contemporary narratives, such as the biopolitics of bodies, interspecies alterity, or spirituality in connection with a microcosmic nature.



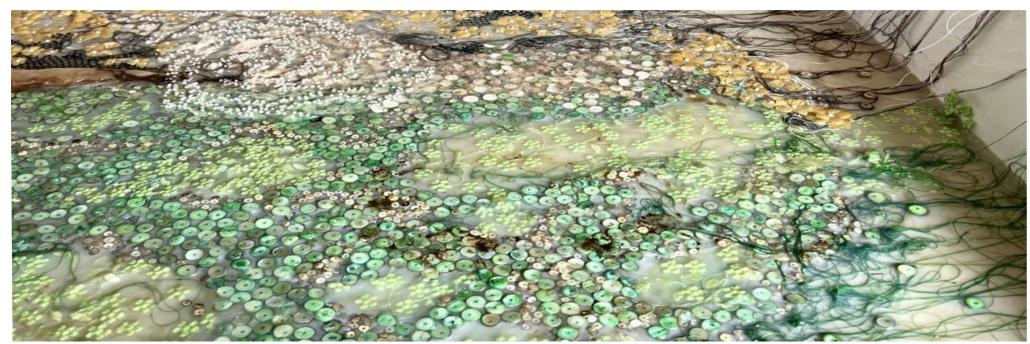










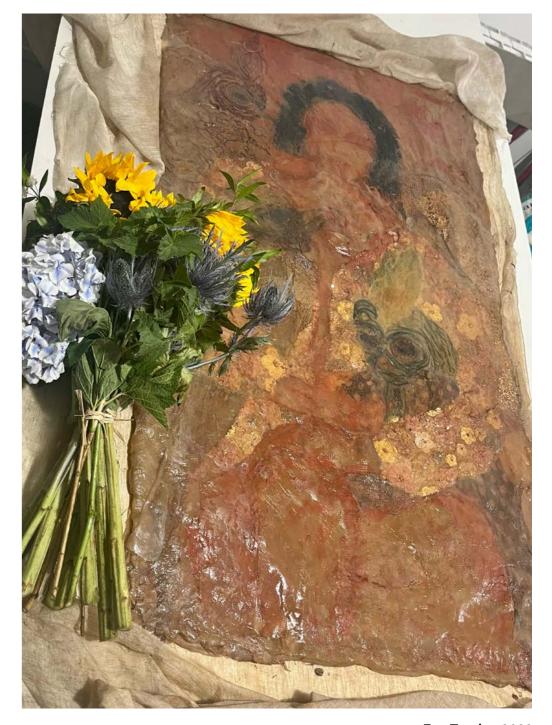




Extraction at the Studio, 2025
Live music: Fanny Perrier Rochas
with the participation of Mailys Cluzet & Clara Geoffroy







Eva Tender, 2023
Bacterial cellulose, various materials  $120 \times 70 \, \text{ cm}$ 

Phase of co-creation (left)
Phase of incubation (middle)
Phase of dehydration post extraction (right)

#### La Naissance d'Eva Extraction at the Studio, 2023

La Naissance d'Eva is a microperformance around a figurative portrait growing artwork and the moment of its extraction from its vat of culture after three months of growth.

The microperformances at the studio invite an audience to witness the extraction of a new artwork at the site of its production. The extraction is a key moment in the artist's creative process. Like a birth, it is the moment when the artwork is separated from its culture medium after it finished its cycle of growth to transition into a stabilized and inert state.

The artist invites the audience to discover the piece while it is still vigorous and vividly colored, before initiating a performative ritual that activates the infrastructures—designed and built for her practice. Singer Fanny Perrier Rochas unfolds multiple musical languages. Accompanied by a drum, harp, or piano, ancestral songs drawn from Byzantine and Syriac repertoires evolve into vocalizations, thus accompanying the communion of all living beings present at the event, across all scales.



Microperformance La Naissance d'Eva

Written and directed by Iri Berkleid, performance by Jodie Williams, musical performance by Fanny Perrier Rochas, theatrical performance by Martin Guillaud and Evangelia Pruvot





### Introduction text of the Performance interpreted by Martin Guillaud

«In a few moments, you will witness the extraction of the artwork. This is the precise moment when the cellulose skin is removed from its culture of bacteria and yeast after three months of incubation.

The connection with its culture will be irreversibly broken, the structures of the microorganisms disrupted, and the symbiotic process interrupted.

This moment does not yet exist, and soon, it will no longer exist.

In the vat, the symbiotic ecosystem will continue its course, forming a new cellulose skin. Meanwhile, the extracted cellulose skin will begin its drying process, losing 95% of its water weight over two weeks at a controlled humidity level. It will go from approximately 40 kilograms to 200 grams in 15 days. Only the traces of this past vital activity will remain on the waterless cellulose.

During extraction and drying, the artwork will be extremely vulnerable. It may be colonized by external microorganisms, crumble, tear, detach, or deform.

Since the beginning of this speech, the artwork has already transformed several times as cellular duplications have occurred. While the reaction of microorganisms to different interventions—with tissues, pigments, and other various manipulations—could be roughly reported by the recreational human, the reaction of microorganisms to their incessantly observing eye is even more uncertain.

In report no. 112, the recreational human notes: «Every measurement implies an exchange of information, by definition.»

They then add: «Observing the artwork during its three months of growth was like observing the sky in motion, as if I could feel and sniff this fleetingness.»









# Organic Tapestries & Sculptures

#### Eros' Wake, 2024

Eros' Wake is a body of work inspired by the theme of the death of the god Eros, linking together the materials of rubber and bacterial cellulose.

Created for the Cataoutchouc exhibition at the rubber factory Les Chaudronneries de Montreuil in April 2024, the corpus centers around an evolving installation, presenting the work as it grows within its microorganism culture table.

The piece was the subject of a micro-performative intervention by singer Fanny Perrier Rochas, who performed an ancient Syrian ritual chant evoking the passage between life and death.





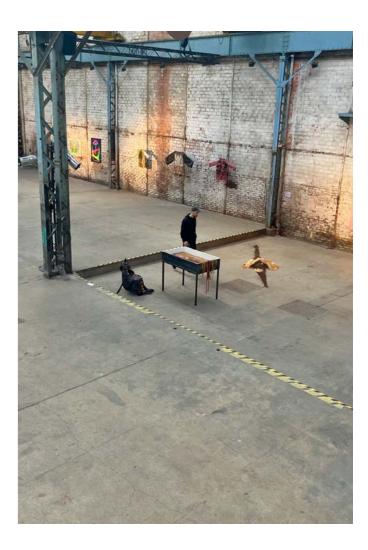
*Eros' Wake, 2024*Bacterial cellulose, rubber

Stabilized work from the installation on metal stand (left)  $160 \times 70 \times 30 \text{ cm}$ 

Sculpture in grown bacterial cellulose and rubber, chair (right)







Eros' Wake, 2024

Exhibition views : Cataoucthouc, Relations en Tension II, Jakmousse
Les Chaudronneries, Montreuil, 2024

Evolving installation with oxidizable metal and ceramic tiles culture table (120  $\times$  70  $\times$  140 cm), growing cellulose mattress (60 kg), rubber, glass pane, dried cellulose piece embroidered with rubber on chair









Musical microperformance by Fanny Perrier Rochas

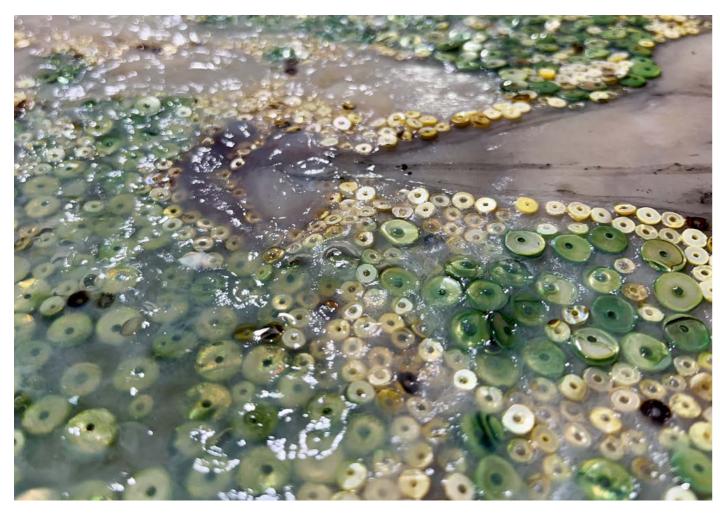




Beak Me Tender, 2023
Bacterial cellulose, various materials
130 X 90 cm

Stabilized (left)

Exhibition view: Intramorphose, galerie Treize, Aix-en-Provence, 2025 (right)



Details of the artwork at the incubating phase (up, right)



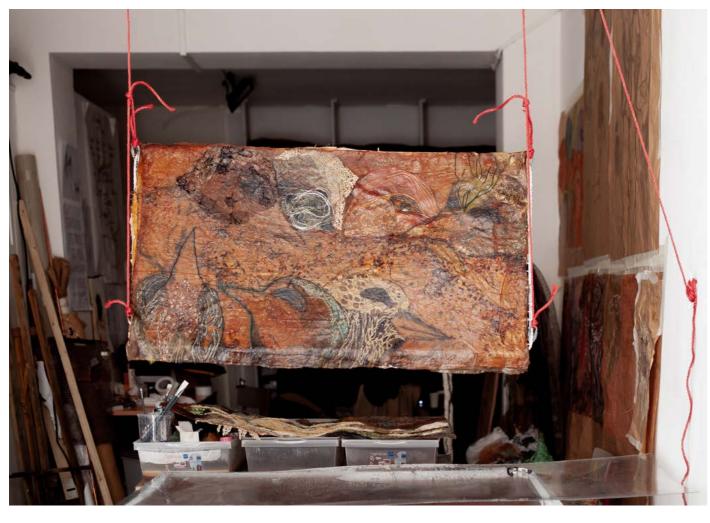
Research partnership with the laboratory Coniphy-Conidia, Lyon, 2023



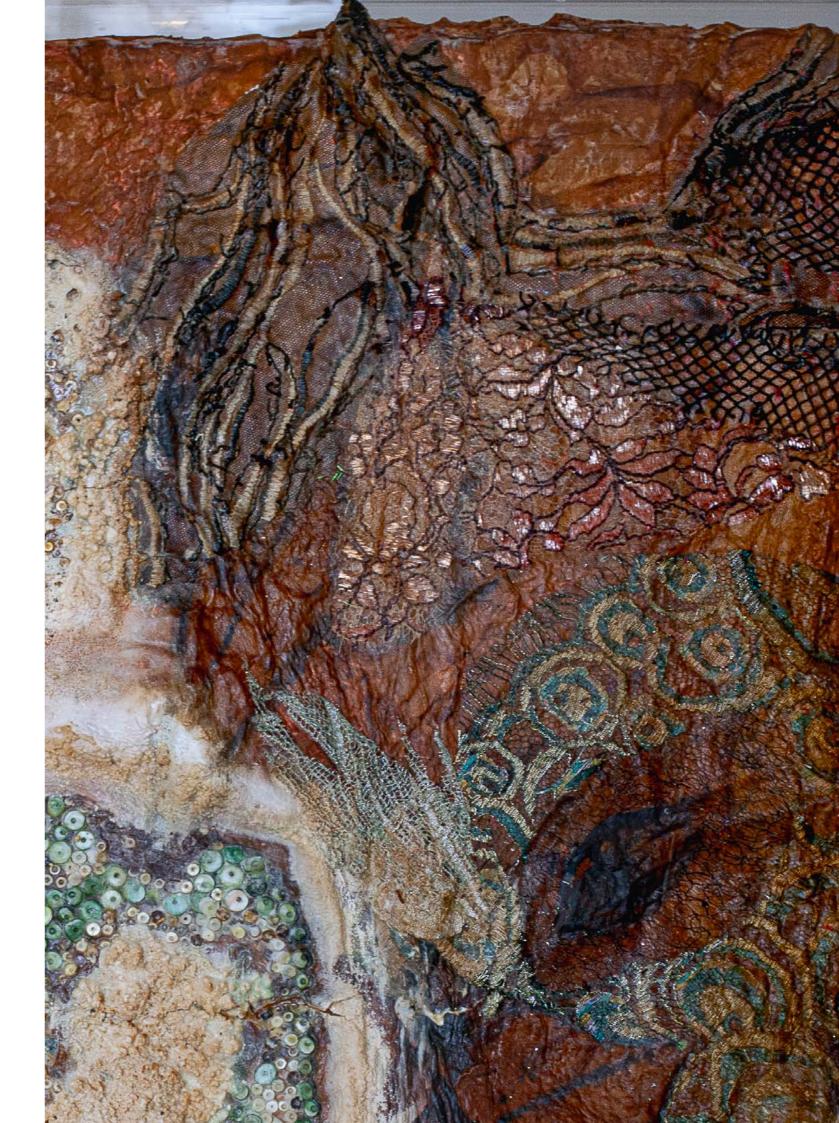
Video documenting the different phases of the growing artwork

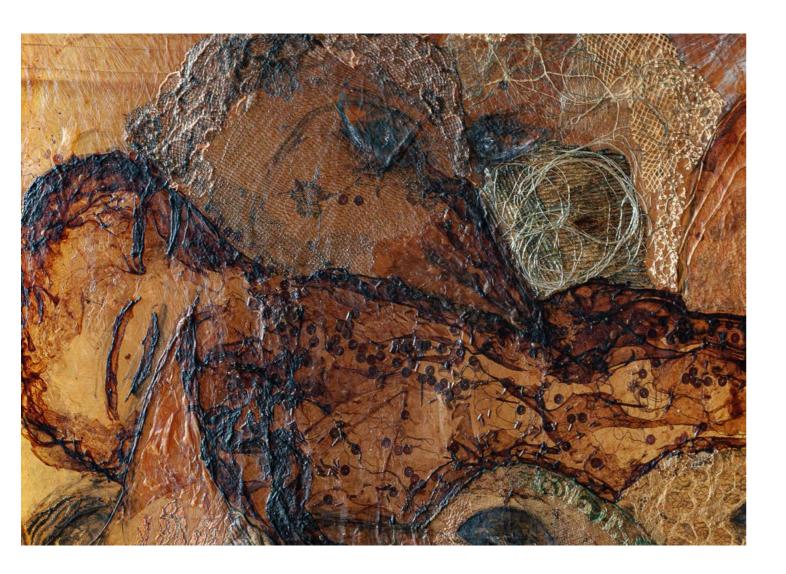
LIEN VIDEO













## Extract from a text inspired by this series of works for the exhibition *Intramorphosis* at the galerie Treize

(...) The Intramorphosis tells the story of a world in descent. Or rather, a world that overflows. It is an exhibition whose central theme is uncertainty, but which also speaks of doubt, instability, of precarious and shifting bodies arranged in a certain way—but which could have been otherwise, or simply not been at all.

Its narratives unfold against backdrops of erased landscapes, without past or future, where bodies drag themselves beneath sanguine skies that offer no dawn, no dusk, no zenith. It speaks of those colors we never quite know how to name, of evenings spent spying on the mirror for fear that our reflections might begin to disobey us, and of bacterial colonies spreading across a microorganismic skin, slowly drawing images: a young man asleep, and giant birds watching over his dreams (...)

Love Me Tender, 2023

Bacterial cellulose, various materials

130 X 90 cm

Stabilized, details

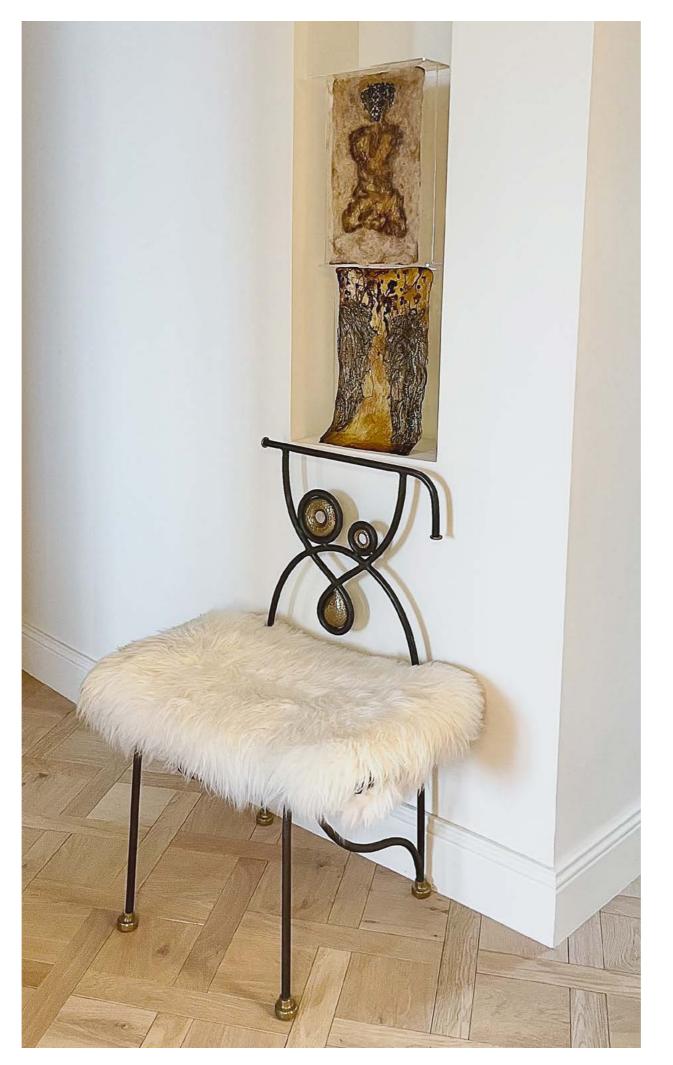
Photo documenting the process in the studio (previous p.) - extraction (bottom left), post-extraction (up left)

Details of Beak Me Tender (previous p. right)











Série Les Métamorphoses, 2024 - 2025 Cellulose, various materials (29 x39 cm)

Untitled 2 (up left)
Individuation (bottom left)
Installation with the work from ceramist Laurent Boyadjan (right)
Private collection view (middle)
Incubating phase (following p.)







Exhibition view of *Individuation, Les Métamorphoses series Intramorphose, Gallery Treize,* Aix-en-Provence, 2025

# The Body Abstracts Series 2022-2024

Iri Berkleid's exhibit, hybrid and subtle, is the culmination of years of experimental research across the fields of bioengineering and sculpture. On the cusp of the feminism born out of American pioneers from the 70s and modern-day examinations of the intersectionality of struggles, desires, and gender-related trauma, Iri Berkleid cristallizes the sublime contradictions and struggles of her generation.

Through their fascinating medium, the SCOBY, the works of art herein displayed, enriched by years of reflection, creation, and research, evoke in a regular procession, sensual marvelling and perverse revulsion.

Those familiar with Iri Berkleid's work know how much patience is needed to painstakingly grow bacteria from kombucha baths into a skin-like membrane.

As they grow, these living bodies are weaved and fused with sand, lace or pearls. This imbues these bodies with figurative and symbolic qualities that reflect Iri Berkleid's musings on epigenetics, physical and psychological violence, and the reclaiming of the body by women. Yet, the beholder will most certainly see in these busts their own reflection and walk away with much to be pondered.

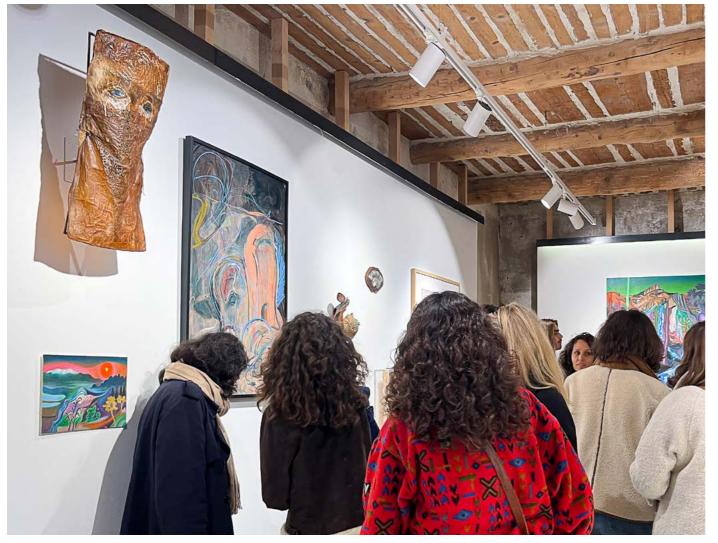
Odyssée Bouvyer Marsan 2022











**Body Abstracts** is a series of twelve busts created by Iri Berkleid. Sculpted out of bacterial cellulose, the sensory sculptures are the result of research and experimentations around bodies: the organic cellular body and its matter - the political and social body inscribed into a conceptual feminist approach. Body Abstracts questions the representation of these bodies in a post-Anthropocene era. How to represent and project our bodies in symbiosis with the rest of the living world?

The busts are made of organic matter: bacterial cellulose. This matter is the sediment of bacteria whose function is to ferment and reproduce the SCOBY – Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast. The artist cultivates this bacteria cluster, grows it for 2 to 3 months depending on the biological time of growth. A labour of care is performed daily as the living matter thickens, mutates and transforms.

Iri Berkleid enters in conversation and collaborates with the matter. She accepts guidance from it as she intervenes in the growing process, gradually inlaying alien elements such as textiles, pearls, yarns, lace... The organic matter becomes a canvas revealing abstract or more figurative patterns, inspired by subjects like inter-species empathy, love, exile and awe. Berkleid explains that her intervention is "an epiphenomenon" in the creation of each bust that absorbs, conforms, or rejects her proposition. They become unique in their consistency, asperities and shapes.

The title Body Abstracts pays homage to Meat Abstracts, Helen Chadwick's photographic series of raw meat steaks and light balls as signifiers of human bodies. Iri Berkleid stands in the aftermath of the second-wave feminist avantgarde of the 1970s. Not completely feminine nor completely masculine, the androgenous busts leave room for the viewer's interpretation.

This series is anchored in the artist's inquiry about cellular memory and epigenetics. Just as the Bust 12, Berkleid chases the psychic imprints on matter. The fusion of lace and microcellular landscapes created by the cellulose evokes the marks left by some materials on bodies throughout time. Light installations suggest a presence, the light of the soul. They bring a spiritual dimension to the artist's work.

The busts converse when exhibited together, filling the empty space of the room with their animated auras. The space between our skins and the busts shrinks irremediably, reminding us our bodies' attachment to the "very fabric of life that binds us together in the mystifying dance of microscopic and everchanging cells".









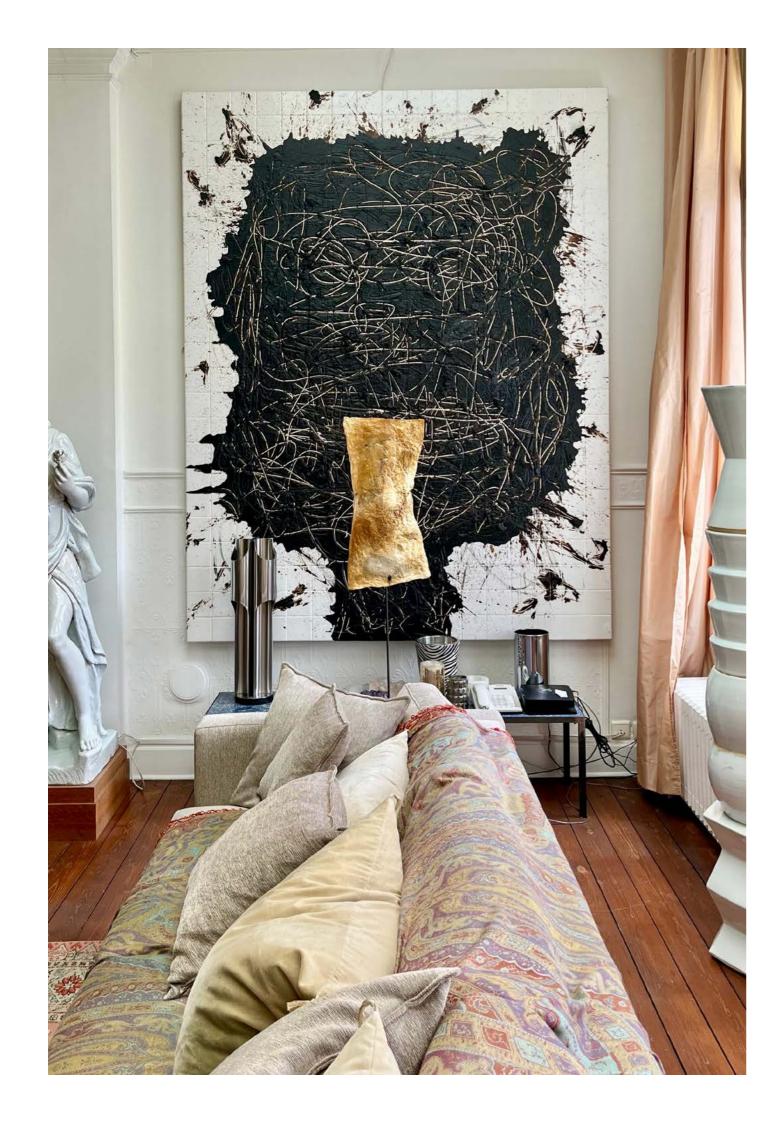


Bust Sarah Bernhardt on a metal stand in the hotel's room, 2024

# The Diner Party Revisited, 2024

This series is produced as part of a commission for a hotel, where each room pays tribute to an illustrious woman. To date, Iri Berkleid has created two busts, one in homage to actress Sarah Bernhardt and the other to soprano Maria Callas. The series is intended to expand to the 16 suites of the hotel.





Bust 0, 2022

Cellulose, nails, cotton wires 65 X 10 X 35 cm

Incubating (p.-6 gauche)
Stabilized (p.-6 droite)
Details (p.-7 right)
Exhibition view *Symbiocène, L'Eté des Serpents, Arles*, June 2022 (p.-5 up left)

Buste Maria Callas, the Diner Party Revisited series, 2023 Cellulose, various materials, nails, cotton threads

66 X 35 X 15 cm

Incubating (p.-3 right) details (p.-2 right) Stabilized (p.3 left) details (p.-2 left)

Exhibition view Intramorphose, Gallery Treize, Aix-en-Provence, April 2025 (p.-5 bottom left)

Private Collection view with *Bust 8, 2022* Cellulose, sand, pigments, nails, cotton threads 65 X 10 X 35 cm

### Guts Help Us!, 2024

**Guts Help Us!** is an installation centered around a triptych of busts mounted on metal frames and three photographic prints showing images of the busts during their growth in their microorganism culture baths.

Blending politics and the intimate, each bust is marked by a slogan written in black capital letters, borrowing from the aesthetic codes of political activism while unfolding a microbiological and psychological rhetoric.

«PILE OF WORRIED AGGREGATED CELLS RESISTING TROPISM, OF ALL SORTS»
«TRAINED EMPATHETIC HUMAN AGAINST FACISM, OF ALL SORTS»
«DIRTY DUSTY BRAIN BOYCOTTING POPULIST WASH, OF ALL SORTS»

This work was created in the tense political context of recent months in France. As a visceral reaction to the rise of fascisms and violence in our society, the artworks represent, for the artist, a shield protecting her psychological and physical integrity.



Installation *Guts Help Us!, 2024*Triptych of busts on metal frames (66 X 35 X 35cm /bust)
& photographic prints (38 x 60cm)

Images of individual busts and incubating images (following pages)











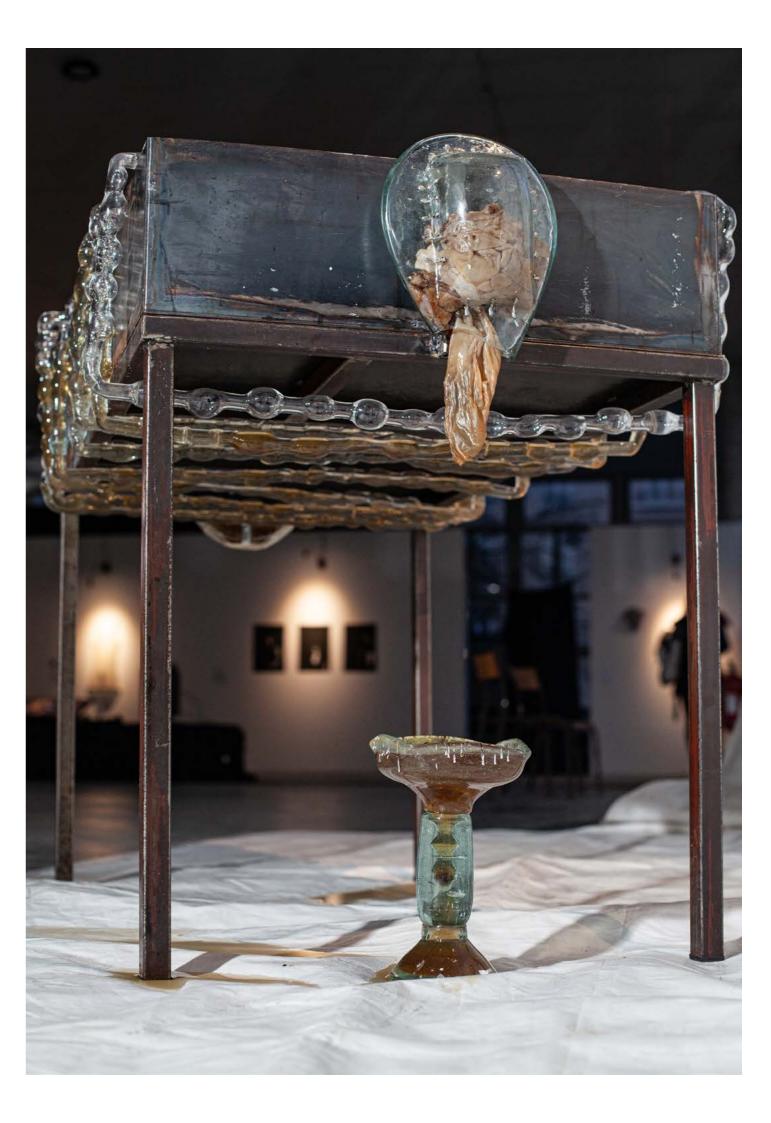


# Hybrid Sculptures, & Installations











Les incontinences, 2025

Les Incontinences is an evolving installation created in January 2025 for the exhibition Coalescence produced by the french collective Déficit. Focusing on the biological questions and processes tied to the artist's practice, it revolves around her new work with glass, initiated in August 2024, where the artist experiments with various techniques: cane blowing, casting, pulling, and laboratory glassworking with a torch.

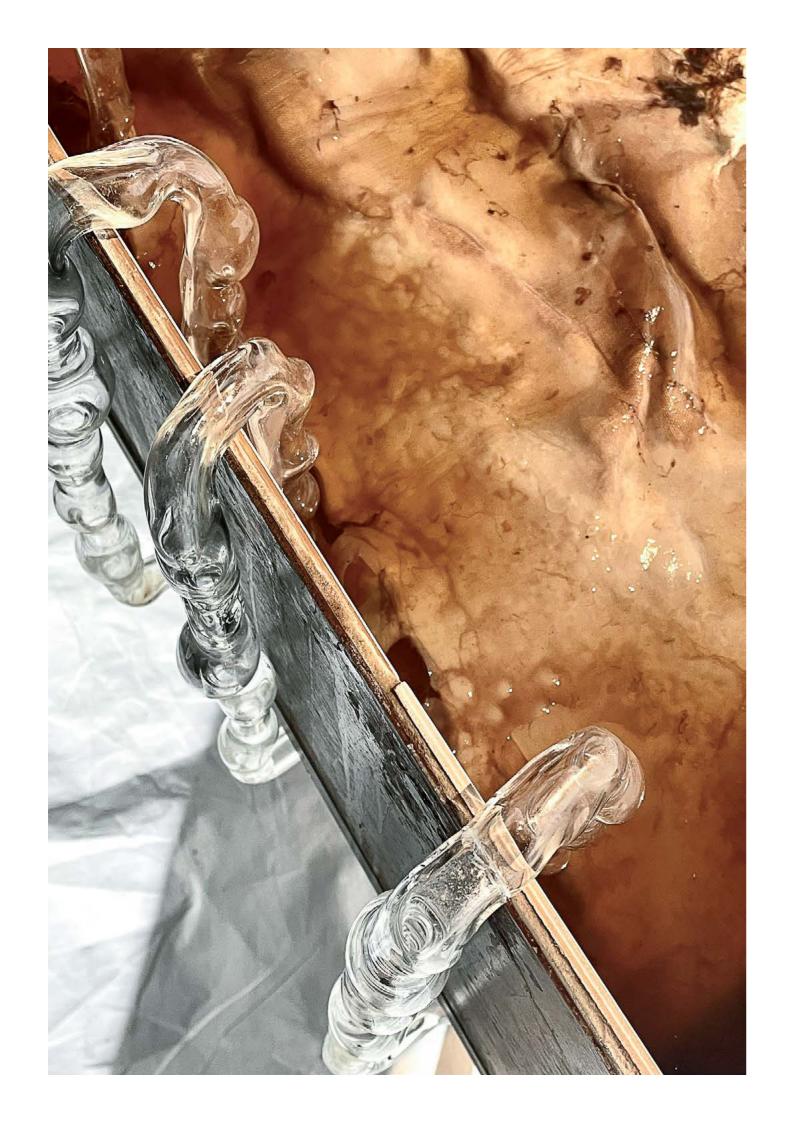
An hybrid sculpture between an alive cellusoic mattress, moving amniotic liquid, semi-organic glassware, and a metal and ceramic container-structure looking to come straight out of an industrial laboratory, **L'Incontinente** presents an enigmatic machine for growing the artist's material. With its successes and failures, it challenges its agency and will—questions at the origin of life.

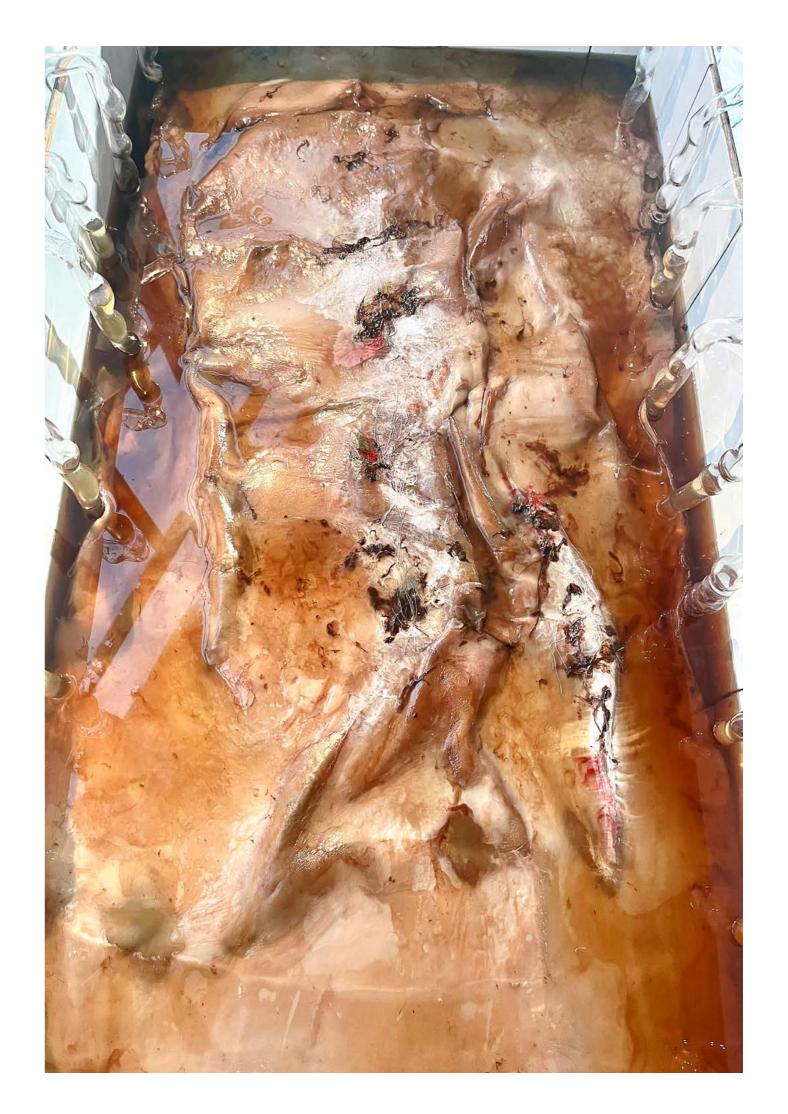
Part of Les Incontinences installation, which transposes the artist's research space into the exhibition space, the artwork highlights the creative process rather than the finished works resulting from this process.

Installation Les incontinences, 2025
Exhibition Coalescence by the collective Deficit, Césure, Paris
Blown glass, growing bacterial cellulose inlaid,
Metal culture table, workbench, boat tarp,
Cast glass frame and photography (next p. left)























# Microperformances





# Microperformance A Wet Aesthetic of Resistance, 2025



A Wet Aesthetic of Resistance (Esthétique d'une Résistance Mouillée) is a performance written and produced by Iri Berkleid, for which performer and circus artist Jodie Williams activates the artist's installation in which a work is in the process of growth through a microcosmic biological process.

This performance is the third in a series of works that the artist describes as "mini-operas," showcasing multiple scales of life concurrently to create spaces of communion between all bodies. Each performance embarks on the search for traces of the psyche on matter, addressing different themes.

Here, drawing on a phrase from Peter Weiss's book The Aesthetics of Resistance: «I am made of flesh and blood that flows in my veins, and you, now reduced to ideology only, are lost,» here the artist questions the transformation of our ways of thinking in times of acute conflict. The costume is designed by Chaim Vischel.

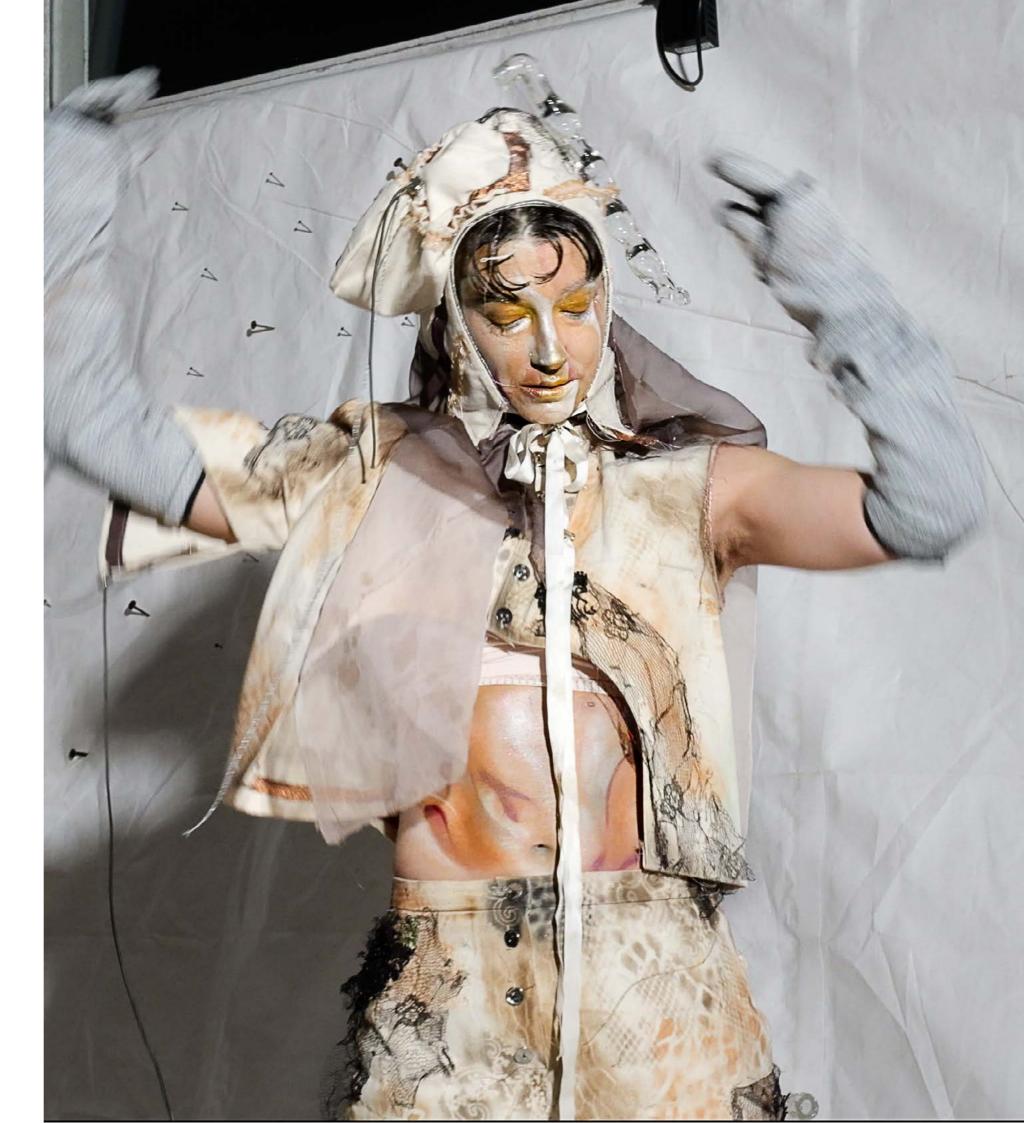












# **TEASER**

## Microperformance Esthétique d'une résistance mouillée, 2025 Césure, Paris

Written, directed, and musically composed by Iri Berkleid Performance by Jodie Williams, Julia Jibert, and Maylis Cluzet Costume and makeup design by Chaim Vischel



# Microperformance Body Abstracts, 2022



**Synopsis**: Body Abstracts, The Performance, is an immersive performance by the artist Iri Berkleid that tells the story of a symbiosis and a separation in 5 "tableaux". At the intersection of music, theatre and visual arts shows, Iri stages the circus artist Jodie Williams, the poet and musician Santiago Aldunate and the music composer Tamas Juhasz. A first public version of 18 minutes took place at SOMA Marseille in October 2022 in front of an audience of sixty people.

The action takes place in an evolving installation in which a cellulose membrane, resembling human skin, grows during the month running up to the performance. Jodie's body is transformed by the fusion with the membrane and emerges in enigmatic forms in the bathtub before spilling out, body to body, into the performance space. The separation of the two bodies marks the second part of the performance, where Jodie becomes the conscious master of the material. She now handles the material practically, yet still sacredly, under the improvised sounds of Tamas who sets the tempo for her ascension to the final scene, her projection, the creation of a mural from the remaining pieces of material.

Her actions are abstractions of Iri Berkleid's real process and experience of working with this matter, highlighting the labour and physical effort, the intimacy and fusion, the constraints and conflicts of working with a new materiality. The audience is invited to a complete sensory experience, in proximity with odours, sounds and textures; a new environment, displacing them to reconsider their notion of abjection and awe.

In each performance Iri invites a different musician to frame the work, giving a sensitive impulse to start the action. Their voice leaves a gentle trace carried through the duration of the piece until the audience are reunited with the music in the form of a concert at the end. Jodie, exiting the performance space after the final act, leads a hypnotized audience into the concert of the guest musician, a familiarity that now relieves the trance of the performance environment.

## **TEASER**

Body Abstracts, The Performance Soma Marseille, Octobre 2022 Written and directed by Iri Berkleid, performance by Jodie Williams, musical performance by Santiago Aldunate and Hanta Yo, sound creation and live music by Tamas Juhasz



















## **Microperformances**

"This body of work concerns the experimental and spiritual dimension of my research, with organic matter as its foundation. Echoing my own studio experience and a transformative practice shaped through contact with ever-evolving material, the micro-performances I produce alongside my sculptural works offer unique moments of communion across multiple scales of life— a direct, unmediated experience of micro-organic nature.

These performative works emerge from immersive evolving installations in which living artworks are growing and activated by the performer Jodie Williams. They stem from a search for an abstract corporeal language born from the symbiosis between the actant, Jodie Williams, and the living matter at the moment of action. The various manipulations of the material by the actant and her two assistants (recurring figures), as choreographed in each performance, tell stories that have already been told throughout art history—but here, they are told differently.

It is through this hybrid creature—at once akin to us humans and to the artwork itself, resembling a seeping, vigorous mattress of flesh—that a reflection on a new form of interspecies otherness emerges. It is an experience rooted in the sacredness of organic matter and its life force—raw, potent, and unapologetic.

Several elements recur in each creation and together form the essence of this body of performative works: a space defined and structured by a tarp; the presence of the installation enabling the growth of the work in an exhibition space prior to the performance, making the ongoing mutations visible and accessible to the public; the act of extracting the work from its growth bath using ropes and pulleys; the physical endurance of the actant (each piece weighs approximately 80 kilograms) and the centrality of water.

Also present are two assistants, whose waterproof and fully covering costumes contrast with the actant's symbiotic relation to the living matter—echoing the paradox between the organic closeness of the living world and the classificatory systems that reduce its agents to pathogenic spectra. Each performance features live musical compositions by invited composers and the intervention of soprano Fanny Perrier Rochas, whose presence embodies the ritual dimension of the performance. The performance ends in a recurring final gesture: the actant creates a wall fresco by hanging fragments of organic material onto nails.

The term "microperformance" was coined by art critic Jens Hauser and artist Lucie Strecker to describe a new form of performance developed by bioartists, which stages microorganisms as active agents within the work."



## Bio

Trained in classic sculpture and drawing at *ESAG Pennighen Paris*, Iri started to work with living materials during her MFA at the *School of Visual Arts* in New York between 2018 and 2020. She was immersed in the influences of the feminist avant-garde of the 1970s and their subversive techniques to regain control of the body and its representations; she was fascinated by the new science of epigenetics and militants who were remodeling the contours of contemporary politics by twisting identity politics into revolutionary biopolitics of the body. As she was addressing these questions in her Master's research, she spent much time at the school's biolab observing living organisms. There, she discovered bacterial cellulose, a living matter produced by cultures of microorganisms - she instantly fell in love with it! Soft, watery, delicate, invasive and vitally powerful, it substantially resonated with her artistic exploration: the marks of psyche on matter. From then on, this organic matter and its biological processes of growth became the cornestone of her practice.

Following Covid-19, Iri resettled in Paris and started building her own vats of cultures in her studio. She experimented with the matter until she figured a unique way of co-creating with the microorganisms, revisiting both sculpture and drawing techniques in the light of these bio principles.

Before starting her journey as an artist in 2017, Iri worked as an independant opera producer in London for two years, an experience from which she keeps many artistic influences and which deeply inspired her art, especially her performing works.

Previously, she graduated in law and studied diplomatic conflict resolution – she researched the political impact of collective emotions in inter-ethnic conflicts. She then trained as a mediator in international organizations in 2013-14. This working experience raised her awareness of power relations, social structures, and conflict dynamics. Iri's creation can be viewed as an attempt to transcend these cultural, psychological and physical barriers through experiences of communion and the ritualistic and organic aspect of her work.





## CV



#### **EXHIBITIONS**

Intramorphose, *Galerie Treize, Aix-en-Provence*, Commissariat Pierre Allizan (2025); Coalescence, *Césure, Paris*, Commissariat collectif Deficit Corp (2025); Cataoutchouc, *Les Chaudronneries de Montreuil*, Commissariat collectif Jakmousse+- (2024); Microdosage Poétique, exposition monographique, *SOMA, Marseille*, Commissariat Muriel Bourdeau (2022); Symbiocène, *Galerie L'Été des Serpents, Arles*, Commissariat Marie de Ganay (2022), Eros Hypnotica, *Artwork in Promess, Paris*, Comissariat Adeline Cuberes (2022); Body Abstracts, *Le Cercle de Art, Paris*, Commissariat Marie de Ganay (2022); Queer Appropriation, *Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris*, Commissariat Alper Turan (2020); Non-location Specific, *Flatiron Gallery, New York*, Commissariat David A. Ross (2019); Te Llevo Para Que Me Lleves, *Centro Munar, Buenos Aires*, Commissariat R.A.R.O (2018); Flesh & Stones - Renacimiento, *Espacio Nigredo, Madrid*, Commissariat R.A.R.O (2017).

#### **PERFORMANCES**

Esthétique d'Une Résistance Mouillée, 12 Janvier 2025 à Césure Paris ; La Veillée d'Eros, 27 avril 2023, Les Chaudronneries de Montreuil ; La Naissance d'Eva à le 28 Juin 2023 à l'atelier ; Body Abstracts, le 29 Octobre 2022 à SOMA Marseille.

### **GRANTS, RESEARCH PROGRAMS, RESIDENCIES**

Les Rencontres, *Carré sur Seine*, Boulogne Billancourt (2024); Atelier de recherche sur le Bioart avec le critique Jens Hauser, *Chaire Arts & Sciences, École Polytechnique Paris* (2023); Résidence et bourse de recherche *SOMA Marseille* (2022); Résidence Infinitésimal, *AYATANA Research Program for Science & Art*, Canada (2021); Atelier de recherche sur l'Histoire du Queer avec le curateur Alper Turan, *Cité Internationale des Arts*, Paris (2020); Bourse d'étude, Departmental Awards, *School of Visual Arts* (2018, 2019, 2020); Résidence et aide à la production d'exposition *R.A.R.O Madrid* (2017), Résidence et aide à la production d'exposition *ACART Madrid* (2017).

#### **DEGREES**

Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Art Practice, *School of Visual Arts*, New York (2018-2020); Master's Degree (MA) Arts and Cultural Management, *King's College London* (2015-2016), Master's Degree (MA) Conflict Resolution, Diplomacy and Mediation, Université *IDC Hezlyia*, Israel; Licence de Droit, *Université Panthéon-Assas Paris II* (2007-2011)

#### **OTHER EDUCATION**

Biologie L1 & Chimie L1 *CNAM* Paris (2025); Soufflage de Verre, *ARCAM Glass*, Nantes (2024); Pratique de la scénographie, *Studio Té*, Rennes (2023); Design, Scénographie & Art Appliqué, *ESAG Penninghen Paris* (2011-2012); Advanced Photography, *Central Saint Martins*, Londres (2015); Social Anthropology (MOOC), *Oxford University* (2014)

#### **OTHER JOBS**

Conférences (2021-2024), Paris: Le Vitalisme expérimental: Une Alternative à l'Histoire du bioart (art, féminisme et techno-sciences), le Cercle de l'art, Colloque Le Corps Objet d'Anne Creissels, Université Paris 8. Entreprenariat Culturel (2015-2017), Londres: Coordinatrice de projet pour .art (UKCI) et The Artstack; Productrice freelance de l'Opéra Puck en partenariat avec Synart & The Royal College of Music Diplomacie & Médiation (2014), New York: Assistante du directeur de médiation, OMBUDSMAN, United

Diplomacie & Médiation (2014), New York : Assistante du directeur de médiation, OMBUDSMAN, United Nations



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IG : Iri Berkleid

Studio visits on demand

Microdosage Poétique, 2022 Cellulose, various fabrics 190 x 120 cm

Piece in growth at the moment of its extraction from the microorganism bath

