

“By integrating art, the Wyss Academy aims to show that nature and culture are not opposing forces.”

Sonja Schenkel, Head of Communication and Social Innovation at the Wyss Academy

Habitat **On the culture of transformation**

The Wyss Academy’s vision is to develop new relationships with nature. Art plays a role in this. The headquarters in Bern offers space for this and in the future also in the regions. Because nature and culture are not opposites.

“Art can change the world!” wrote Ai Weiwei in his Manifesto without Borders. Underneath, he put in enlarged type: “If we allow ourselves to continue to dream and use our imagination, anything is possible,” and thereby struck on an important point of the Wyss Academy. Developing a new relationship with nature is at its core an act of innovation, a creative process in which vision and new ways of thinking play a key role.

Innovation as a form of creative thinking, undermines saying no, pessimism, paralysis and ignorance. Neurological studies have shown that creative thinking takes place in a different part of the brain than our basic reflexes of fight, flight, freeze and fawn. We need other connections to enable us to think in new and different ways. Physical and emotional sensations play an important role here.

The field of visibility, visuality, readability and even the imaginative opportunities we find in art have great potential to stir up our powers to develop our visions and to create. “By involving art, we also want to show that

nature and art are not opposites,” says Sonja Schenkel, Head of Communication and Social Innovation at the Wyss Academy.

The Academy’s first habitat, a so-called “narrative environment”, was created at the headquarters in Bern in 2020. Narrative environments are laboratories in which narratives can be developed, tested and applied to a wider audience.

The Habitat at the Wyss Academy is a space for guest artists who work in the same core fields as the foundation. On the other hand, it invites co-design processes with the broader public and spurs digital collaboration with the hubs in the regions. The culture of transformation as part of our engagement is at the core of its concept. Similar spaces will be created in East Africa, South America and Southeast Asia. With this Habitat, the Wyss Academy has developed a sensory level that will accompany us through both our engagements and in communicating our knowledge. Sensuality supporting sense-making.

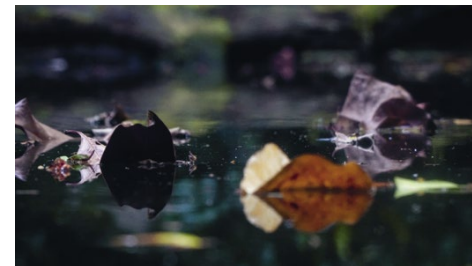
Monica Ursina Jäger’s installation “Forest Tales and Emerald Fictions” (2019) opened in 2020, almost exactly at the same time as most cultural institutions went into lockdown. Hers is the first chapter in a series that visualizes the Hub’s current projects and its engagement processes.



Can forests be a model for urban development? The installation explores this idea.



Left: The light-sensitive natural pigment chlorophyll gradually transforms over the life of the exhibition.



Forest Tales and Emerald Fictions (2019)

The installation describes the forest as a spatially complex structure, a place of multi-layered relationships and dependencies, and a space for imagination, narration and remembrance. The video installation shows the forest not only as the resource, infrastructure and service provider as we often see it, but also as an ecosystem with a transtemporal and translocational character. The artist asks us to what extent the forests can be used as a model for sustainable urban development.

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Top: Ephemerality and transformation are recurring elements in nature.

Left: Artist Monica Ursina Jäger prepares her chlorophyll image. The installation was curated with Damian Christinger.