

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Nov. 3, 2023

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Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences

Art Exhibition by Julia Pollack to Open at NAS

WASHINGTON – Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences announces “Julia Pollack: Collaborative Ecologies,” an exhibition resulting from collaborations between artist Julia Pollack and scientists at the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology (IGB) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The exhibition opens on Nov. 6, 2023, at the National Academy of Sciences and will remain on view through June 7, 2024.

Pollack is a curator and creator at the IGB where she creates artwork based on her conversations and collaborations with scientists. This exhibition features two bodies of work focused on honeybee colonies and microbial communities. The pieces represent visual explorations that highlight the power and aesthetics of science imagery.

To create the photographic series “Das leben der anderen” (The Lives of Others), Pollack collaborated with German scientist Tim Gernat who studies complex systems and swarm intelligence in bees. Honeybees are the most important pollinators on the planet, but bee health is seriously threatened by many factors. Current research seeks to clarify how honeybees’ social interactions enable their colonies to respond to disease, which may lead to better colony management practices and increased food security. Barcode-based honeybee tracking makes it possible to automatically distinguish hundreds of individuals in digital videos and to continuously monitor and record them over long periods of time to increase our knowledge of bee social networks. Pollack thought it would be useful to document honeybee’s interactions in photographs. She hopes the images will bring us closer to bees to recognize our own hive tendencies and unexpected similarities.

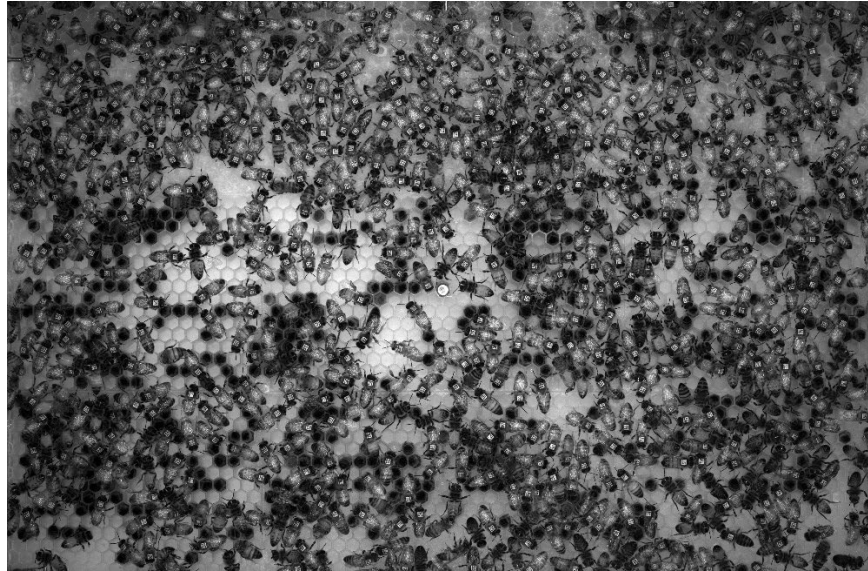
The other series featured in the exhibition, “In Fragments No Longer,” is inspired by the microbial world that surrounds us. It features digital prints with imagery of Lysogeny broth (LB) plates with the personal microbes of Pollack and four collaborators. To create this work, Pollack collaborated with science writer and microbiologist Ananya Sen, IGB outreach manager Claudia Lutz, IGB director of core microscopy facilities Glenn Fried, and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign professor of microbiology Cari Vanderpool. The works remind us that we are mere passengers making our way through a microbial world that binds us all together with a multitude of invisible connections.

“Julia Pollack: Collaborative Ecologies” is on exhibit at the National Academy of Sciences, 2101 Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. The building is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays, and closed weekends and holidays. A photo ID is required. For more information about our exhibitions, visit www.cpnas.org.

Cultural Programs of the NAS sponsors exhibitions, salons, theatrical readings, and other events that explore relationships among the arts and sciences. The NAS is a private, nonprofit institution that recognizes achievement in science by election to membership, and — with the National Academy of Engineering and the National Academy of Medicine — provides science, technology, and health policy advice to the federal government and other organizations.

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Press Images



Left to right, top to bottom: *The Hive*, 2023, inkjet print on fabric, 90 x 60 inches; *In Fragments No Longer*, 2023, inkjet print on fine art paper, 24 x 36 inches; *Das Leben der Anderen (The Lives of Others)*, 2023, inkjet print on photo paper, 3.5 x 4.25 inches.

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