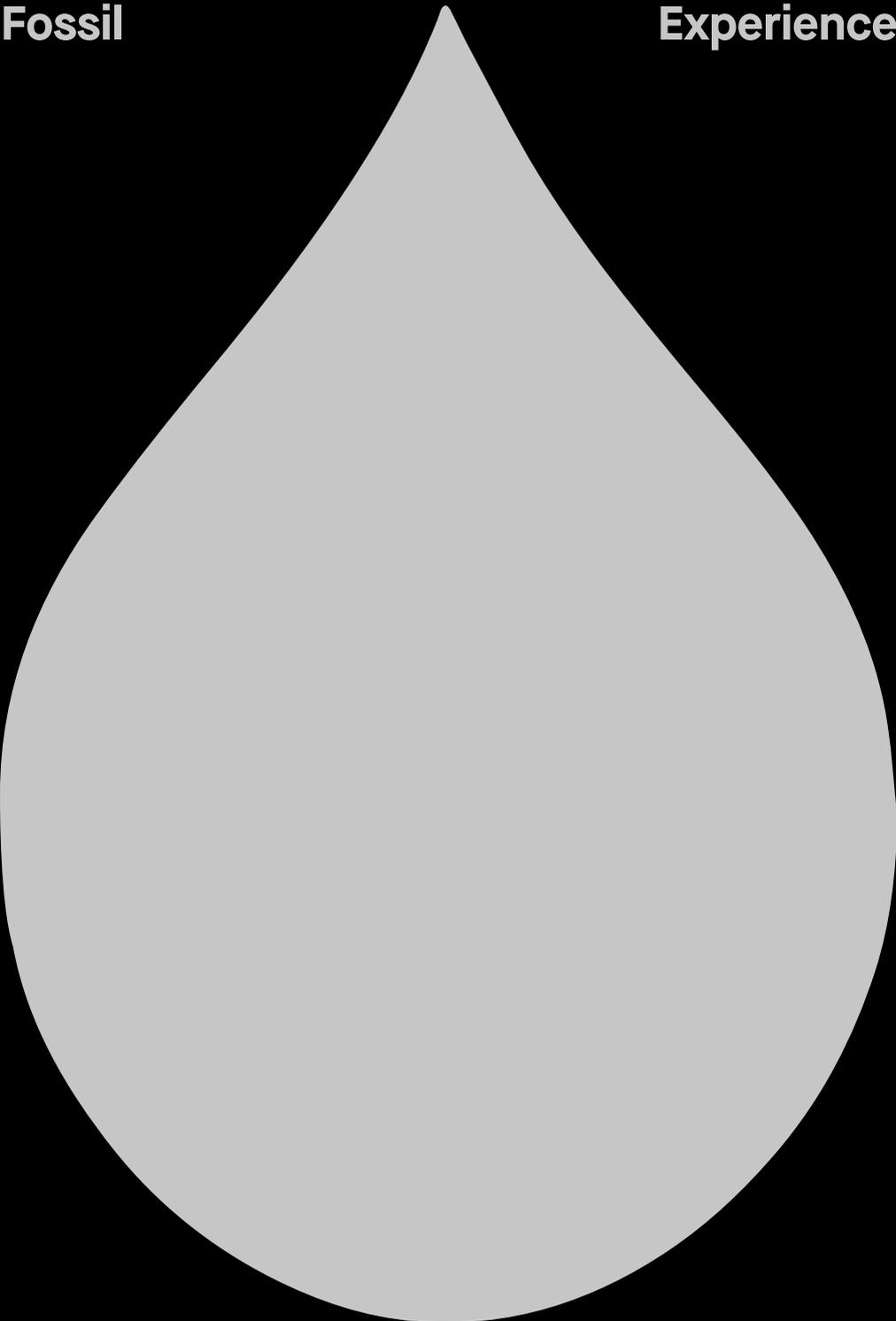


**Fossil**

**Experience**



This publication is part of the project

**Fossil Experience**  
07/04–19/05/2022

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# Fossil Experience

Program: 7/4–19/5/2022  
Exhibition: 23/4–8/5/2022

Ayò Akínwándé  
Monira Al Qadiri  
Kat Austen  
Marjolijn Dijkman  
Rachel O'Reilly

Poetry by Róża Domaścyna, Ibiwari Ikiriko, and Julia Spicher Kasdorf, as well as further contributions from Christopher Basaldú, Caroline Breidenbach (wasserstories), Ayasha Guerin, Fossil Free Berlin, Fossil Free Culture NL, Rebecca Abena Kennedy-Asante (Black Earth Kollektiv), Klimaneustart Berlin, Anna Lena Kronsbein (Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries), Maike Majewski (Transition Town Pankow), Elske Rosenfeld, Liz Rosenfeld & Dasniya Sommer, Esteban Servat, Sumugan Sivanesan (Black Earth Kollektiv), The Driving Factor (Elisa Bertuzzo, Daniele Tognozzi, Neli Wagner), Wassertafel Berlin-Brandenburg (Heidemarie Schroeder), and Philine Wedell (Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises).

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# Introduction

The exhibition *Fossile Erfahrung* and its accompanying program address a number of the widely divergent – and in part violent – realities generated by the use of fossil fuels. The wealth accrued by specific social groups, nation states, and corporations by means of fossil fuels is inseparable from the ecological disasters at the sites where they are extracted, processed, and transported. In regions with high levels of energy consumption, including post-industrial urban centres such as Berlin, fossil energy and petroleum-based products are ubiquitous. A large part of electricity provision continues to be dependent on fossil infrastructure. At the same time, greenhouse gas emissions, toxic waste, and environmental damage arising from the production, transport, and burning of fossil fuels continue to be overlooked, or are downplayed by powerful institutions.

This meant, for example, that at the beginning of 2022, natural gas could be labelled as sustainable by the European Commission, despite its negative climate impact. This classification encourages investment in the expansion of infrastructure for fossil fuels, even as environmentally friendly, renewable energies are urgently called for. In the name of energy security, investments have recently been announced for the construction of terminals for the import of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) in Germany. Increased demand for LNG on the international market drives the worldwide expansion and deregulation of hydraulic fracturing (fracking), an extremely environmentally damaging technology. The excessive use of fossil gas is connected with countless uncomfortable truths that must be named and acknowledged, including the fact that the European West co-finances Russia's invasion of Ukraine through its dependency on Russia's fossil gas.

The notion of fossil experience points, on the one hand, to the experience of acceleration made possible by the widespread availability of cheap energy, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. On the other hand, it refers to the traumas of extraction, exposure, and displacement, which threaten to further escalate as climate change progresses. The emphasis on the notion of “experience” underscores the fact that fossil energy and petrochemical products do not only exist “outside” of us or “elsewhere”: everybody has a fossil experience and in a global net of trade relations, resource extraction, production, and speculation, countless places and existences are connected to one another.

Fossil experience also bleeds into the long-awaited energy transition as, in the guise of a supposedly green capitalism, this transition is instrumentalised by a number of corporations to continue maximising profits. But it is neither sufficient nor acceptable to greenwash energy technologies that simply repeat dubious extractivist logics. Climate change and environmental devastation can only be addressed by centring demands for social and ecological justice, including environmental reparations.

*Fossil Experience* slows down prevailing narratives about the energy transition, and investigates the legacy and scope of ongoing fossil fuel dependency. Through this, it investigates the legacies and scopes of ongoing dependencies on fossil fuels. Located in a former water reservoir, the exhibition brings together artistic works and stories about geographies affected by the speculation and resource extraction involved in energy production. The exhibited works offer insight into the tight relationship between the capitalist growth imperative and ongoing colonial logics in relation to fossil energy sources. The works focus on the wide-reaching consequences for interdependent human and more-than-human ecosystems, and acknowledge the political movements that advocate for their protection. Resonating with the former function of the site, the exhibition constantly returns to the threat posed by large-scale industrial projects to bodies of water.

*Fossil Experience* recognises that fossil infrastructures and energy politics continue to financially enrich specific social groups, nation-states, and companies. Concerned for the health of human and more-than-human ecosystems, the exhibition addresses experiences of violation and vulnerability caused by fossil realities which, if unchecked, will continue to call organised life on the planet into question. In doing so, the exhibition points towards aesthetic strategies in the representation of these realities and their possible undoing.

# Ayò Akinwándé Ogoni Cleanup (2020)

**Video performance, 2-channel, 2-channel video shown as split-screen, colour and sound, 3:44 minutes**

In a 2020 performance, Ayò Akinwándé attempts to clean a river course in Ogoniland in the Niger Delta. The video documentation of *Ogoni Cleanup* shows how, with his bare hands, Akinwándé pushes water from one place to the other, adding clean water with a canister. Played in a loop, this activity seems to be both endless and futile.

In the Niger Delta, over half a century of oil extraction has left environmental damage on a gigantic scale in its wake, compromising the health and wellbeing of those who live there. In 1956, Royal Dutch Shell began extracting oil in the federal state of Bayelsa in the heart of the Niger Delta. From this point onwards, multiple national and international mineral companies have been active in the region. Oil pollution due to defective infrastructure, neglect of risk management procedures, and a lack of crisis intervention remain a constant problem. Humans, as well as more-than-human ecosystems, are significantly affected by the resulting environmental degradation, as well as air pollution and acid rain from the burning of expelled gases.

Akinwándé's performance criticises the lack of efforts on the part of the government, as well as of international and national companies, in stopping oil pollution and cleaning local ecosystems. Leaks in infrastructure – which has in part already been shut down – often remain untreated for days or weeks, allowing crude oil to flow into water bodies, mangrove forests, and agricultural areas, while decimating fish populations and destroying harvests. People living in the Niger Delta are not only directly exposed to pollutants such as heavy metals and other components; their food security is also massively threatened.

In the title of the work, *Ogoni Cleanup*, which refers to the Niger Delta as Ogoniland, Akinwándé honours the presence of the Ogoni people, who have fought for decades for independence and against the destruction of their livelihoods. Founded in 1990, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), led by Ken Saro-Wiwa, organised numerous protests, ultimately managing to push Shell to temporarily end its activities in Ogoniland. In the same year, the region was occupied by Nigerian military forces. Together with eight further fellow campaigners, Ken Saro-Wiwa was executed in 1995. Through their unyielding commitment, Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Ogoni Nine, and MOSOP have set an international example of resistance against the oil industry. At the same time, the case makes transparent the extent of violence to which nation-states and companies – in this case Royal Dutch Shell – are willing to resort in the Global South, while underscoring the level of danger to which activists in the Global South continue to be exposed.

## Monira Al Qadiri

### Wonder 1, 2, 3 (2016–2018)

Three natural pearls (each 1 cm) in aquariums, dimensions variable

Kuwaiti artist Monira Al Qadiri's *Wonder 1, 2 and 3* display natural pearls that have been carved into the form of oil drill heads. In the Gulf region, pearl diving has a long tradition that has shaped the region's economy and played a central role in cultural life. Archaeological finds from the Arabian peninsula demonstrate that natural pearls were already extracted in the late Stone Age (6000–5000 BCE). With their iridescent glow, they were the inspiration for countless legends, and have been attributed with many different meanings by various cultural groups around the world. Today, they continue to be appreciated as jewellery pieces. Natural pearls symbolically evoke a range of attributes, from purity, wisdom, and fertility, to tears of sadness.

Well into the 1930s, more than 100,000 workers would travel to the inland sea to work during the season from April to September. These workers included enslaved people from the African continent, contract workers, and professional divers from Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. At great risk, they would dive more than 30 times per day in order to gather natural pearls from the oyster-rich banks. The discovery of oil meant that pearl diving was no longer economically significant from the mid-20th century, when in many Gulf states, including Kuwait, the export of crude oil became a key source of income.

By aligning two motifs – natural pearls and the drill heads used to extract oil – Al Qadiri connects two different phases in the cultural and economic histories of the Gulf. Both oil drilling and pearl diving extract organic materials considered to be of value from below the surface. However, the global power relations and environmental conditions that brought these extractivist practices to the fore differ. Al Qadiri's work raises questions relating to the representation of continuities and breaks in the region and in particular in Kuwait, which was laid to waste when withdrawing Iraqi troops set fire to oil fields at the end of the Gulf War in 1991. *Wonder* is also embedded in Al Qadiri's personal history, as her grandfather was a singer on pearl diving boats. Placed in artificially decorated aquariums, the drill-shaped pearls represent the distortion of historical narratives caused by the industrial reverberations of a single substance. In this way, petromodernity can be seen to mutate both cultural practices and the lens through which they are viewed.

## Kat Austen

### This Land is Not Mine (2020–2022)

20-channel video installation with soundscape, 14 minutes

Kat Austen's multimedia project investigates Lusatia, a region that extends from the German federal states of Sachsen and Brandenburg to the voivodeships of Lower Silesia and Lubuskie in West Poland. Since the 1890s, the development of Lusatia's economy and landscape has been determined by resource extraction. According to the *Archive of Disappeared Places (Archiv verschwundener Orte)*, due to the expansion of the lignite (brown coal) industry, since 1924, a total of 137 places have been relocated and replaced with open cut mines and industrial infrastructure. Lignite, however, has led not only to loss. It has also created jobs in the region, and then as now, it has contributed to narratives about Lusatia's identity. However, multiple identities coexist in Lusatia, and their histories predate current national borders.

*This Land is Not Mine* addresses these coexisting identities in Lusatia – which is home to the Sorbian cultural group and a plethora of further human and non-human beings – as it undergoes fundamental socio-economic transformation as a result of the phase-out of lignite-related industries. Consisting of twenty small-format screens, Austen's audio-visual installation displays a series of vignettes registering impressions of Lusatia recorded by the artist over two years. The accompanying sound composition is comprised of field recordings gathered both by the artist and by those living in Lusatia, uploaded to the online platform *Lausitzklang*, which was specifically built for *This Land is Not Mine*.

The title of the work, *This Land is Not Mine*, incorporates a play on words in which multiple layers of the work begin to unfold. On the one hand, “the mine” as a site of extraction points to the fact that there are facets of Lusatia beyond the coal industry. There are countless further narratives that characterise the region, which shift and come to light as industry in the region undergoes rapid transition. On the other hand, the reference to “mine” as a possessive pronoun raises questions around property and land ownership, both in the sense of belonging and in relation to access rights. Are property relations, which in practice allow for human dominance over land and ecosystems, at all reconcilable with fundamental principles of sustainability? The title *This Land is Not Mine* also refers to the artist's personal relationship to the region. Austen, who grew up close to the Welsh border in Great Britain, moves through Lusatia as a visitor. She encounters a landscape to which she does not belong – but where much is familiar.

The project *This Land is Not Mine* was funded by the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), Potsdam, as part of an artistic research grant. The 20-channel video has been realised with help by Kazik Pagoda, aBe Pazos, and Will Greensmith. Sound recordings were contributed by Ili Os, Christina Kliem, Johannes Staemmler, John Grznich, Erik Lemke, and Martin Ballaschke.

## Kat Austen

### Stranger to the Trees (2020)

Glass sculpture with fluorescent liquid and microplastic, metal frame, 2-channel video installation with colour and interactive sound (7 minutes), cotton fabrics, online exhibition via post-gallery.online

In the interdisciplinary project *Stranger to the Trees*, Kat Austen investigates the implications of the spread of microplastics for forest ecosystems. Due to the durability of petrochemical plastics, it is expected that they will accumulate and remain in the environment in the long term.

Early research on the influence of microplastics on the environment has mostly focused on their distribution in water ecosystems and their interaction with aquatic flora and fauna. In the ground, microplastics are less conspicuous, but their concentration is many times higher and accumulates both through direct entry and via atmospheric deposits. Austen's multimedia installation *Stranger to the Trees* addresses possibilities of complementarity by asking how microplastic and trees in forest ecosystems might coexist.

Alongside field recordings and artistic research in birch groves between Berlin and Wrocław, Austen also cultivated birch trees in contact with microplastics, teaching herself the Renaissance piccolo by serenading the birches daily. Using DIY methods derived from scientific literature, Austen marked microplastic beads (5-50 µm) with a fluorescent pigment and introduced them into the ground of potted silver birches during their growth period. After five months, the root samples were examined using fluorescence and confocal laser scanning microscopy. In this way, indications of microplastics in the trees' root structures could be documented and new insights gained relating to the phytoremediation potential of silver birches – that is, their ability to contribute to the decontamination of soils with elevated levels of microplastics by uptake through their root system. The outcome of this work encompasses the *Stranger to the Trees* installation, as well as a peer-reviewed academic article demonstrating the removal of microplastic from the soil via birch tree roots.<sup>1</sup>

As a multimedia installation, *Stranger to the Trees* brings together an interactive soundscape with moving images of microscopic close-ups and birch forests. Contained by a glass sculpture shaped in the form of a birch, fluorescent liquid reflects the medium used in the research process.

*Stranger to the Trees* was realised within the framework of the European Media Art Platforms EMARE program at WRO Art Center with support of the Creative Europe Culture Programme of the European Union. Consulted experts: Joana McLean, Franz Hölker, Daniel Balanzategui, Simon Barraclough, Pawel Janicki, Kamila Mróz, and Michal Adamski. Special thanks to: Matthias Strauß, Bernhard Bosecker, Kristen Råstas, Kelli Gedvil, Andreas Baudisch

<sup>1</sup> Austen et al. (2022) „Microplastic inclusion in birch tree roots“, *Science of the Total Environment*, 808, 152085. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2021.152085>

## Marjolijn Dijkman

### Cloud to Ground #1 (2021–2022)

Floor installation with fulgurites (produced with sand from Genk (BE), Lommel (BE) and Manono (DRC), copper powder, cassiterite, lithium) and loose sand from Lommel (BE), dimensions variable

For her series *Cloud to Ground*, Marjolijn Dijkman has created artificial fulgurites by running electricity through sand and earth. These materials were acquired from sites where raw materials are extracted in Belgium and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Fulgurites form naturally when lightning hits the ground, where it can discharge up to 100 million volts in a split second. The heat released causes sand, rock, organic deposits and other sediments to fuse, or vitrify. The clumps and tube-like artefacts that form in the process are also known as “fossilised lightning”.

*Cloud to Ground #1* arose as part of Dijkman's research on the history of electricity and a series of experiments to render electric charges visible using various materials. In *Cloud to Ground*, Dijkman references the moment in Western European 18th-century scientific research in which electricity began to be investigated as a natural phenomenon, and then systematically put to use. Whilst in contemporary living environments, electricity production often takes place out of sight and is generally taken for granted, during the Enlightenment in the 18th century, electric phenomena were often demonstrated in order to educate and entertain.

Some of the material vitrified in the fulgurites comes from Genk, a former coalfield in the Belgian province of Limburg. Coal was discovered in the area at the start of the 20th century and extracted from 1914 to 1988 in the Winterslag coal mine. In a Western European context, structural change in energy provision already began as early as the 1960s. Today, there is broad agreement that the full phase-out of coal-fired energy production must take place as soon as possible, as other technologies for generating and storing energy are put forward.

In this sense, the electrification of transport is a central factor in the energy transition. For this, battery technologies currently rely on lithium, a light alloy that is the object of increasing financial speculation. This means that resource extraction continues unabated in other places, for example in Manono in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a former Belgian colony where tin was mined from 1919 until 1982. In *Cloud to Ground #1* Dijkman has also used sand from Manono. Currently, one of the largest lithium rock mines is being developed there by Austrian and Chinese companies. Through this, the material composition of the fulgurites raises questions relating to resource extraction, financial speculation, and electrical technologies in light of ongoing asymmetries in global power relations.

# Rachel O'Reilly

## INFRACTIONS (2019)

**Documentary, split screen, colour and sound, 60 minutes, thematic map**

*INFRACTIONS* is a feature length video installation platforming frontline Indigenous artist and cultural workers' struggles against threats to more than 50% of the Northern Territory of Australia from shale gas fracking. As the country becomes a leading exporter of planet-warming fossil gas globally, pressure on this region has intensified, threatening hard-won Aboriginal land rights and homelands.

Plans to 'Develop the North' of Australia have been resurrected at different moments since the nineteenth century, but abandoned just as quickly for being built on fantasies that related little to the actual behaviour of monsoonal-desert water systems. With the lifting of a state moratorium in 2018, British, US, and homegrown mining companies seek to roll out toxic drilling rigs over vast underground flows, which are key connecting sites of culture, law and food for First Nations.

Refuting capitalist and colonial models of land and water in the driest continent on earth, *INFRACTIONS* features musician/community leader Dimakarri 'Ray' Dixon (Mudburra); two-time Telstra Award finalist Jack Green, also winner of the the 2015 Peter Rawlinson Conservation Award (Garawa, Gudanji); musician/community leader Gadian Hoosan (Garrwa, Yanyuwa); ranger Robert O'Keefe (Wambaya), educators Juliri Ingra and Neola Savage (Gooreng Gooreng); Ntaria community worker and law student Que Kenny (Western Arrarnta); musician Cassie Williams (Western Arrarnta); the Sandridge Band from Borroloola; and Professor Irene Watson (Tanganekald, Meintang Bunganditj) contributor to the draft *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 1990–1994.

As the camera connects incommensurable legal geographies, extractive industry and labour history to ongoing resistances and movement, defenders of culture and water warn of stories of manufactured consent, and Indigenous legal theorist Irene Watson explains the limits of the Western international legal system for planetary survival and justice.

Director/Research/Camera/Sound: Rachel O'Reilly

Producer: Mason Leaver-Yap

Editor/Visual Research: Sebastian Bodirsky

Camera: Tibor Hegedis, Colleen Raven (Nharla Photography)

Sound mastering: Jochen Jezussek

Map visuals: Valle Medina, Benjamin Reynolds (Pa.LaC.E)

Subtitles: Sebastian Bodirsky, Katharina Habibi, Sonja Hornung

**Program**

## Panel discussion #1

# Local Action for a Climate Neutral, Post-Fossil City for All!

07/04/2022, 7–9 pm, Loft in the Schankhalle Pfefferberg, in German language

**Guests:** Fossil Free Berlin, Klimaneustart Berlin, Philine Wedell (Senate Department for Economic Affairs, Energy and Industry), **Moderation:** Maïke Majewski (Transition Town Pankow)

In August 2019, Pankow's local city council (BVV) declared a climate emergency in the municipality – which is also where Prater Galerie is located. Acting at a point in time when the climate debate became a central issue in Germany during the heatwave of 2019, the BVV followed the example of numerous cities and municipalities worldwide. That summer, the Initiative for Climate Emergency Berlin (Volksinitiative Klimanotstand Berlin) also handed over a petition with 36,458 valid signatures supporting the declaration of a climate emergency. The Berlin Senate decided to declare a climate emergency in December of the same year, renewing its commitment to the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Climate change is a global phenomenon that plays out very differently at the local level, affecting ecosystems and people worldwide in unequal ways. It represents a global challenge because neither extreme weather events, nor species extinctions, nor infectious diseases stop at state borders. Even the rise in temperatures that is now already unavoidable is going to drastically change the conditions for living organisms and forms of human social life. Locally-caused emissions have an impact on the global climate system, connecting distant places through the principle of cause and effect, and this bears on questions of climate justice. In particular the industrialised nations of the Global North, which historically have caused the highest emissions and profit most from globalisation, are called upon to contribute to the mitigation of climate change and environmental destruction. The necessary transformation must be planned and consistently implemented at the federal, state, city and municipal levels.

This first panel discussion of the events program for *Fossil Experience* will consider how a full commitment to climate justice and adherence to the 1.5°C limit will be implemented on a local level, and what consequences this will entail. What has been done since the climate emergency was declared in 2019? What structural changes in terms of infrastructure, energy provision, and transport must be implemented in Berlin, and which stakeholders are driving for such changes? How can the transformation be financed while ensuring that housing is affordable for all? How might art and culture contribute to the development of a post-fossil and sustainable city?

## Panel discussion #2

# “Does this seem like a desert to you?”

05/05/2022, 7–9 pm, Loft in the Schankhalle Pfefferberg, in German language

**Guests:** Caroline Breidenbach (wasserstories), Anna Lena Kronsbein (Leibniz Institute for Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries), Wassertafel Berlin-Brandenburg (Heidmarie Schroeder), **Moderation and Co-curation:** The Driving Factor (Elisa Bertuzzo, Daniele Tognozzi, Neli Wagner)

The shift to battery-powered forms of mobility and transport is considered to be a key step in the transition from fossil-based to renewable energy sources. Nation-states and regions today compete to attract investments that will expand electromobility products and infrastructure. Berlin-Brandenburg is no exception. In late 2019, Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla, announced that the fourth “Gigafactory” will be built in Grünheide, located just kilometres from the outskirts of Berlin in a water conservation area. With 20 concessions made to allow for an early start for construction, the factory was completed before the application documents and the objections raised against them could be thoroughly examined. Residents, scientists, activist groups and Berlin's water utilities management are deeply worried about the impact the factory will have on local water cycles and the quality of drinking water. On March 22, 2022 – World Water Day, of all days – the first battery-powered SUVs rolled off the production line.

“Does this seem like a desert to you?” was Elon Musk's scornful response when asked about the impact of his factory on local water supplies during a site visit in August 2021. Berlin-Brandenburg is indeed no desert. And yet, despite its noticeable abundance of surface water, it is among the regions with the lowest precipitation in Germany. Elon Musk's desert comparison simplifies and trivialises a far more complex set of problems. Lakes are sinking and groundwater – which supplies drinking water – is at an all-time low. A recent study from the Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries demonstrated that water quality is already compromised by high levels of sulfites and trace organic compounds due to historic and ongoing industrial and consumer activity. Coupled with spikes in demand due to urbanisation and population growth, climate-change-induced pressure on an already-polluted water system brings with it real consequences for human and more-than-human organisms.

Tesla is a profit-oriented player that self-styles as being, in its own words, “driven by sustainability”. Yet here, the third largest car assembly factory in Europe seems set to threaten the water quality – and water supply – for a major metropolis. How will this affect the region's ability to adapt to the ongoing rise in temperatures due to climate change? In this panel, representatives from the scientific community and the local action group Wassertafel Berlin-Brandenburg will shed light on how resistance to the industrial project has formed. How can scientific research become instrumental in the protection of endangered ecosystems? Who shapes the debate about water scarcity and pollution in Berlin-Brandenburg and how – particularly in relation to Tesla's “Gigafactory” and its assumed role in the energy transition?

## Panel discussion #3

# Fossil Gas is Not Clean

12/05/2022, 6–8 pm, online, English language with simultaneous translation into German, registration: [anmeldung@pratergalerie.de](mailto:anmeldung@pratergalerie.de)

**Guests:** Christopher Basaldú, Rachel O'Reilly, Esteban Servat, **Moderation:** Sumugan Sivanesan (Black Earth Kollektiv)

Over the past decade, what is commonly referred to as 'natural' gas has come to be framed as a fuel to bridge the transition towards a fossil-free energy future. Because gas produces around half as much CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than coal when burned, it is widely framed as a cleaner, alternative source of energy. However, this does not take into account its entire life cycle. 'Natural' gas is fossil gas. Its production releases methane into the atmosphere, a far more potent greenhouse gas than CO<sub>2</sub>. Methane emissions are caused by deliberate venting or flaring, as well as by leakage at all stages of production, storage, transport, and consumption. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) involves an especially energy-intensive procedure, as the fossil fuel must be cooled to -160°C to reach its compressed and liquefied form. LNG can be shipped over long distances without pipelines – the tankers used for transport are in turn powered by gas or fuel oil.

Despite its de facto negative climate balance, fossil gas, like nuclear energy, was defined as sustainable by the European Commission at the beginning of 2022. This classification promotes investments in the expansion of climate-damaging fossil energy projects. In order to become less dependent on Russian gas supplies, Germany is now pushing ahead with the completion of import terminals in Wilhelmshaven, Brunsbüttel, and Stade to expand the supply of LNG in the mid-term. What places and lifeworlds lie on the other side of corporate fossil fuel supply chains?

In this panel discussion, common rhetoric around the topic of 'natural' gas – also with regard to the transition to fossil-free gases – will be critically examined with a particular focus on the production of unconventional gas, which forms an increasing share of total gas consumption. Hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is an energy-intensive technology that is extremely harmful to human and environmental health. It is banned in most parts of Europe. Still, the European economy benefits from the willingness of other nation-states and energy companies to exploit unconventional gas deposits while completely disregarding highly concerning consequences for land, water, and more-than-human communities in the vicinity. Unconventional gas extraction goes hand-in-hand with ongoing settler-colonial violence, as nation-states such as Australia and the US speculate on energy security concerns and potential export markets. In this panel, attention will be given to the expropriation and misuse of land and water, as corporate power and colonial continuities are confronted by sovereign Indigenous legal systems and calls for climate and environmental justice.

## Panel discussion #4

# Entanglements of Social, Environmental and Climate Justice

19/05/2022, 6–8 pm, online, English language with simultaneous translation into German, registration: [anmeldung@pratergalerie.de](mailto:anmeldung@pratergalerie.de)

**Guests:** Ayò Akinwándé, Rebecca Abena Kennedy-Asante (Black Earth Kollektiv), Fossil Free Culture NL, **Moderation:** Ayasha Guerin

In 2019, primary energy consumption per capita in Germany amounted to 43,703 kWh. According to *Our World in Data*, the average energy consumption across the African continent in turn amounted to only 4,220 kWh per capita, with South Africa (25,620 kWh) being the only African country to remotely resemble the European average of 31,160 kWh per capita. These figures roughly correspond to annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, meaning that in 2019, a person in Germany produced around ten times the amount of climate-damaging greenhouse gases in comparison to a person living on the African continent. Yet the consequences of global warming are set to be most pronounced in equatorial, tropical and subtropical regions, where local temperatures are predicted to rise to unprecedented levels over the next thirty years. Climate change's repercussions will hit those regions hardest that have historically contributed to climate change the least.

European companies have an ongoing presence on the African continent that began in the early days of European colonisation, and persisted despite the fight for decolonisation in the mid- to late 20th century. Many of these companies are still focused on (out)sourcing both human labour and raw materials to serve Western-dominated markets and energy-thirsty lifestyles. One key player is Shell, which discovered oil in the Niger Delta in 1956 following half a century of exploration. Formed in 1907 when Dutch and British petroleum-producing companies merged, Royal Dutch Shell had already become one of the world's largest petroleum and natural gas companies, and was the sole owner of oil exploitation rights in the region. Shell is responsible for decades of severe oil spills, environmental devastation, and human rights abuses connected to oil extraction in the Niger Delta.

Departing from Ayò Akinwándé's video performance *Ogoni Cleanup*, on view in the exhibition *Fossil Experience*, this panel will examine Shell's responsibility in the Niger Delta. How do visual arts and activists address the local impacts of oil extraction, oil's global supply chains, and the involvement of the oil industry in the sponsorship of culture? Can points of solidarity be formed between cultural workers in countries in the Global North and the Global South? Expanding the frame, the panel will discuss decolonial perspectives on climate and environmental justice. How to redress the traumata of centuries of colonial and corporate exploitation, which has reached genocidal and ecocidal proportions? Where should finances for climate adaptation plans and the repair of ongoing environmental devastation come from? Which forms of mobilisation are necessary in order to effectively push for reparations in post-colonial regions – including ecological reparations?

## Exhibition opening with performance and poetry reading

22/04/2022, 6–10 pm, Großer Wasserspeicher

**Liz Rosenfeld and Dasniya Sommer with assistance from Fungi Phuong Tran Minh**

### ***Material Ways***

In their durational performance *Material Ways*, Liz Rosenfeld and Dasniya Sommer deepen their established relationship with the practice of bondage, raising questions relating to physical burnout and the expulsion of energy. The performance connects the slowness of Shibari practice with the conversion and decomposition of material containing hydrocarbons, including dead plants. Shibari, a Japanese bondage technique, traditionally calls for larger bodies: the interaction between fleshiness and plant-based jute ropes is considered to produce valuable images. Rosenfeld and Sommer merge their creative strategies regarding the abundance of flesh (Rosenfeld) and the material relationship between ropes and bodies (Sommer), pushing the energetic sustainability of one another's boundaries and exploring the puissance of the fleshy body. In acknowledgement of the many capitalist realities in which materials and bodies are constantly pushed beyond exhaustion, Sommer carefully works towards sculpting Rosenfeld's body into full Shibari suspension, evoking the delicate precarity of human and more-than-human existence.

### **Poetry reading with Ayò Akinwándé**

#### **Excerpts from Ibiwari Ikiriko's *Oily Tears of the Delta* (2000)**

In the video performance *Ogoni Cleanup*, which is on view in the exhibition *Fossil Experience*, Ayò Akinwándé attempts to clean up a river course in Ogoniland in the Niger Delta with his bare hands. The area has been scarred by more than half a century of oil production, leaving behind environmental damage of ecocidal proportions. The presence of the oil-producing industry, the pollution of water, air and soil, and the serious human rights violations carried out by state actors and companies like Royal Dutch Shell represent recurrent themes in contemporary Nigerian literature. At the opening, Ayò Akinwándé will read poems from Ibiwari Ikiriko's poetry collection *Oily Tears of the Delta*, published in 2000. Ibiwari Ikiriko's political poetry bears witness to the Delta's despoiling, and calls for concrete action to be taken to address the wanton destruction and neglect of the region.

## Performance Evening with Kat Austen and Elske Rosenfeld

30/04/2022, 6–8 pm, Kleiner Wasserspeicher

**Elske Rosenfeld**

### **Statements for the Future**

*Statements for the Future* is a 15-minute statement assembled from declarations, manifestos, and lists of demands put forward by working groups and individuals, dissidents, artists and cultural workers, labour unions, women's groups, as well as gay and lesbian organisations in the autumn and winter of 1989/90. It was first performed on November 9, 2019, the 30th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, at Sala Omnia, a former assembly space of the Romanian Communist Party in Bucharest. Performed again in the "Kleiner Wasserspeicher" (small water reservoir) of Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg, the work offers insight into a specific historic moment and situates the dissident history of the Prenzlauer Berg neighbourhood within an Eastern European post-socialist context. Many of the demands put forward in 1989/90 speak to present-day issues – including environmental issues – bringing forward continuities of collective organising in moments of transformation.

**Kat Austen**

### **This Land is Not Mine**

*This Land is Not Mine* is a multimedia project that includes an audiovisual installation and a music album with seven songs composed by Berlin-based artist Kat Austen. Realised over the course of two years, *This Land is Not Mine* melds acoustic and electronic sounds with field recordings in homage to Lusatia, a landscape at the German-Polish-Czech borders that has been ravaged by open cast mining. A modern-day protest album, *This Land is Not Mine* tells stories about villages lost to the past, rivers harbouring secrets and communities that rebuild in the wake of mine closures. During her performance, Kat Austen will play the entire album, overlaying it with sounds generated from local water samples using adapted scientific instruments. Video projections contextualise the soundscapes and create an immersive journey through contemporary Lusatia.

# Workshop with Kat Austen

07/05/2022, time and venue tba

English language, registration: [studio@katausten.com](mailto:studio@katausten.com)

## Participatory Artistic Research: Exploring Airborne Microplastics

Microplastics are tiny particles of plastic found everywhere across the planet. The majority of plastic in the environment today is made from petrochemicals. Released into the environment continuously for decades, plastic and microplastic particles accumulate. As long-lived traces of human activity, microplastics can now be detected almost everywhere – even in the remotest areas. Building on her previous DIY research into microplastics in soil and water ecosystems and how they coexist with trees and rocks, join artist Kat Austen for these first explorations into catching airborne microplastics using adapted fog-catchers. Presented in the context of the NEUSTART Kultur funded installation of *Stranger to the Trees* in the Großer Wasserspeicher in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg, this workshop involves participatory research into the reverberations of petrochemical products.

Poetry

## Róża Domaścyna The shepherd knitted

trees of life in bridal stockings  
sent thirteen-year-old girls carolling  
with key sceptre and saviour doll  
from town to town  
then he saw the bulldozers coming  
saw them pushing the towns into piles  
and carting them off and then  
the devil's present was unearthed  
black the landscape turned black  
mine followed mine leaving pit  
upon pit behind each called lake  
for every town a stone was raised up  
on the level plain that looks after the green  
still he kept on singing the songs of christmas  
in his language in a dream he saw the girls  
all wrapped up in embroidered ribbons each  
called herself THE CHILD and went to the children  
from the town to caress them and to the adults  
to stroke them with the rod so they realise  
what they are really up to  
after that the day was longer by a chicken's step

when he left he dragged the year with him  
the girls migrated from here to there  
for pentecost they switched languages  
lost key sceptre and saviour doll  
later they would sometimes come down the path  
to the sea saw elk and donkeys there grazing  
on solar powered catamarans they fared  
from sea to sea as if looking for something  
but christmas kept the secret  
of the singing girls the way to caress the children  
kept the picture of the towns the path to the shepherd  
who knitted trees of life in bridal stockings  
for the next day longer by a chicken's step

This poem was previously published in Germin in: Róża Domaścyna,  
*Die dörfer unter wasser sind in deinem kopf beredt*, poetenladen, Leipzig, 2016.

## Ibiwari Ikiriko The palm and the crude

In the beginning  
Was the Palm  
And the Palm  
Was of us  
And the Palm  
Was by us  
And the Palm  
Was with us

Then came the Crude  
And the Crude  
Was of us  
But by them  
And with them.

In the beginning  
Was the Palm,  
And the Palm  
Oiled our palms  
Balmed our joints  
Sweetened our insides  
And anointed our heads.

And the Palm  
Propelled the pacification process  
And with us as proud partners  
Merchants and Missions  
Rode triumphant upland  
To let in light  
Bright as palm fruits  
In the sun.  
Then came the Crude  
And the Crude  
Wasted our waters  
Soiled our soils  
And lacerated our lot

And we, Aborigines  
Of the riverside, bereft, stoic,  
Wash our palms  
With dry spittle  
As legs move up  
To tie hands,

And sahelian  
Dunes boom with  
Maritime doom.

This poem was previously published in: Ibiwari Ikiriko, *Oily Tears of the Delta*,  
Kraft Books Limited, Ibadan, 2000.

# Julia Spicher Kasdorf

## September Melon, Seismic Testing

Larger than my head, it rests heavy in one hand  
as I lift it to my ear and knock for the thud

that says the center will be red and dense, wet  
and sweet, studded with shiny black seeds,

a gift this late in the season. Where we live,  
among boulders and trees, thumper trucks gain

uneven purchase, so a rig, driven by one man  
traces a grid through the woods, grabs trees

with a metal claw, holds them until a blade saws,  
then tosses them aside. An auger drills shot holes

and sets the blast with radio-controlled detonators  
thirty feet down. On Sunday morning they blasted

when everyone else was at church, the professor says,  
certain the men trespassed on his unleashed land.

A seventy-year-old woman stands up in a public meeting  
to tell how she showed the gas men a map of her farm,

said blast anywhere but here and here. They agreed.  
But wouldn't you know it, they blew up the two

spots where she'd buried her husband and horse.  
Another landowner begged for a day to move

his bee boxes. The gasmen refused. What happened?  
I asked, imagining the furious hum and spray

from gilded hives when the earth shook.  
The man shrugged, not the point of his story.

This poem was previously published in: Julia Spicher Kasdorf and Steven Rubin, *Shale Play: Poems and Photographs from the Fracking Fields*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018.

### Ayò Akinwándé

#### Ogoni Cleanup (2020)

Video performance, 2-channel video shown as split-screen, colour and sound, 3:44 minutes

### Monira Al Qadiri

#### Wonder 1, 2 and 3 (2016–2018)

Three natural pearls (each 1 cm) in aquariums, variable dimensions

### Kat Austen

#### This Land is Not Mine (2020–2022)

20-channel video installation with soundscape, 14 minutes

*The project This Land is Not Mine was funded by the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), Potsdam, as part of an artistic research grant.*

### Kat Austen

#### Stranger to the Trees (2020)

Glass sculpture with fluorescent liquid and microplastic, metal frame, 2-channel video installation with colour and interactive sound (7 minutes), cotton fabrics  
*Stranger to the Trees was realised within the framework of the European Media Art Platforms EMARE program at WRO Art Center with support of the Creative Europe Culture Programme of the European Union.*

### Marjolijn Dijkman

#### Cloud to Ground #1 (2021–2022)

Floor installation with fulgurites (produced with sand from Genk (BE), Lommel (BE) and Manono (DRC), copper powder, cassiterite, lithium) and loose sand from Lommel (BE)  
*Produced in collaboration with Lukas Pol*

### Rachel O'Reilly

#### INFRACTIONS (2019)

Documentary, split screen, colour and sound, 60 minutes, thematic map  
*Commissioned by KW Berlin Production Series*

