

**SCREEN
CITY
BIENNIAL
2022**



**OTHER
MINDS**

23 SEP — 20 OCT

Archenhold Observatory
/ Sternwarte. Berlin.

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SCREEN CITY BIENNIAL 2022

OTHER MINDS

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Opening

Admission is free on the day of the opening

Dates

Main venue

Other venues

Opening hours from September 24, 2022

Archenhold Observatory

Weekdays (Tuesday - Friday):

Weekends (Saturday & Sunday)

October 3rd and last exhibition day October 20:

Schering Stiftung

Thursday-Friday:

Saturday-Sunday:

Admission, all exhibition venues:

Reduced admission*:

* Reduction is valid for students, those in Federal Volunteer Service, BBK members, unemployed persons, and disabled persons (at least 50 % "GdB") upon the presentation of relevant identification.

Free admission for those 16 and under, and press card holders

GENERAL INFORMATION

September 23, 2022
(18:00–21:00)

September 24 – October 20, 2022

Archenhold Observatory
Alt-Treptow 1, 12435 Berlin

Schering Stiftung (Unter den Linden 32-34, 10117 Berlin)
Colonial Village Karpfenteich (Treptower Park)
Facade of Akademie der Künste (Pariser Platz 4)
Weapons company offices (Pariser Platz 6a)

15:00–21:00

13:00–18:00

(closed on October 8)

13:00–19:00

11:00–19:00

15 €

8 €



ARTISTS

Anna Ehrenstein
with 4DHD

Eli Cortiñas

Espen Sommer Eide

Grace Ndiritu

Jacob Kirkegaard

Jenna Sutela

Lundahl & Seidl

Lundahl & Seidl

with ScanLAB Projects

Metahaven

Patricia Domínguez

Viktor Pedersen

with Ingrid K. Bjørnaali

Curated by Daniela Arriado and Vanina Saracino



OTHER MINDS

Screen City Biennial (SCB) *Other Minds* looks into the liminal states of consciousness that arise in the symbiotic relationship between the human mind and that of other living and non-living matter—including plants, bacteria, fungi, and technology. The project interrogates and challenges the notion of the human, embracing instead an idea of the more-than-human—a concept that expands personhood to entities beyond our species—by stressing the crucial connections among all living and non-living matter, both on a planetary and a cosmic scale. The core exhibition of *Other Minds* takes place at the Archenhold Observatory in Berlin. At this historically significant astronomical observatory, the project brings together the voices of artists whose work draws connections across layers of history, spacetimes, worldviews, and speculative narratives for the future. The program presents lens-based and time-based artworks, a majority of which are newly commissioned, including performances, activations, artist talks, and online events.

As a departure point for its storytelling, *Other Minds* focuses on the entangled issue of consciousness—a constantly morphing concept that has been at the center of philosophical inquiry for centuries. Its definition and application have changed radically during the course of history as a consequence of new scientific findings and the emergence of alternative worldviews. In recent years, animals like cephalopods—the octopus in particular—have led to a broader understanding of how non-human minds function, with their decentralized brains distributed all over their fluid bodies, merging what we call “understanding” and “sensing” into one single gesture. As argued by Peter Godfrey Smith, whose work has inspired this exhibition and its title, cephalopods—in contrast to mammals—represent a unique experiment in the evolution of large brains and complex behavior. In fact, our most recent common ancestor dates only so far back and was a much simpler organism that, if we can make contact with contemporary cephalopods as sentient beings, it is only because evolution has built the mind twice over. In this view, the octopus could be considered the closest manifestation of an alien intelligence that we might ever encounter—our alien kin.

With their tentacles (deriving from Latin *tentāre*, to attempt, to try), cephalopods have inspired Donna Haraway's notion of *tentacular thinking*—a strategy that encourages us to think and act beyond binary divisions and dual opposites, opening our awareness to the multiple realities that we are still unable to recognize and comprehend fully. Attempting to train our brains to think tentacularly could allow us to create a framework to overcome the dualities that are so rooted in our modes of thinking; the opposition between biological life and death, the human/non-human, gendering, among many others. In this way, tentacular thinking might help us arrive at a broader understanding of more-than-human agencies, perhaps even leading to a more liveable future for us all.

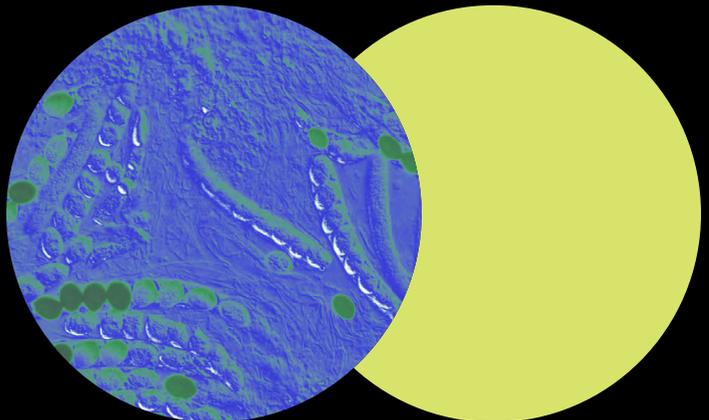
How can we learn to understand our worlds tentacularly, and what do we need to unlearn in order to achieve this? How can these strategies enable a shift in our paradigms and in our modes of seeing, a shift that ultimately establishes a collective planetary consciousness, rather than individual ones? And have we ever been one single entity, or are we essentially manifold?

As has been proven, the human body is composed of a significantly higher number of microbial cells than human cells. Bacteria, fungi, and viruses co-inhabit our body, giving it life and allowing it to function. We are a consortium of critters that constitute much more than an individual body; we are a portable ecosystem that constantly exchanges matter and energy with its surroundings—a holobiont. Collaboration and symbiosis are therefore key to understanding life, evolution, and consciousness. Emerging evidence also points to the fact that our microbiome not only supports our metabolism, bodily functions, and evolution, but it may also directly affect our thoughts and feelings, ultimately influencing the way we act. If our thought processes and emotions are affected by other life forms that co-inhabit our body, then, is our mind ever really acting on its own? Or is the human mind merely a small component in a much larger planetary assemblage of more-than-human minds who are collectively shaping a cosmic intelligence—something that we may not yet be able to grasp and describe?

Connections between the microscopic and the telescopic are drawn in **Metahaven's** film *Capture* (2022), a cinematic search for what perception and sensing can entail today, with sound composed by **Espen Sommer Eide**. Including archival footage from the CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) and newly-created cinematic scenes from a variety of cameras and sensors, the work plays upon observation,

entanglement, sci-fi, science, and poetry. In Jenna Sutela's audiovisual work *Milky Ways* (2022), the bodies of terrestrial organisms are explored as connected aquatic environments, drawing particular attention to the sugars role of sugars contained in breast milk that communicate with babies' gut bacteria and seem to shape the early development of babies' nervous systems. Under these considerations, the transfer of breast milk from mother—or (m)other, as Sutela spells it—to baby is only partially an act of feeding; most significantly, it is an act of worldbuilding across generations and interspecies. The way memory allows for a string of data to be passed through matter across time is further developed by Lundahl & Seidl's virtual reality experience and installation *Eternal Return: the Memor* (2019–2022, with ScanLAB Project). Drawing multiple connections between living matter and geology, the work crafts an experience of time-travel from earth's deep past as unicellular cyanobacteria to its post-anthropocentric future. Their work *Symphony of a Missing Room: Sternwarte* (2022) choreographs a sensorial experience of the Archenhold Observatory; we become receivers of the light that travels from the stars, and attempt to make contact with a signal that reaches us from a multiple light-years distance.

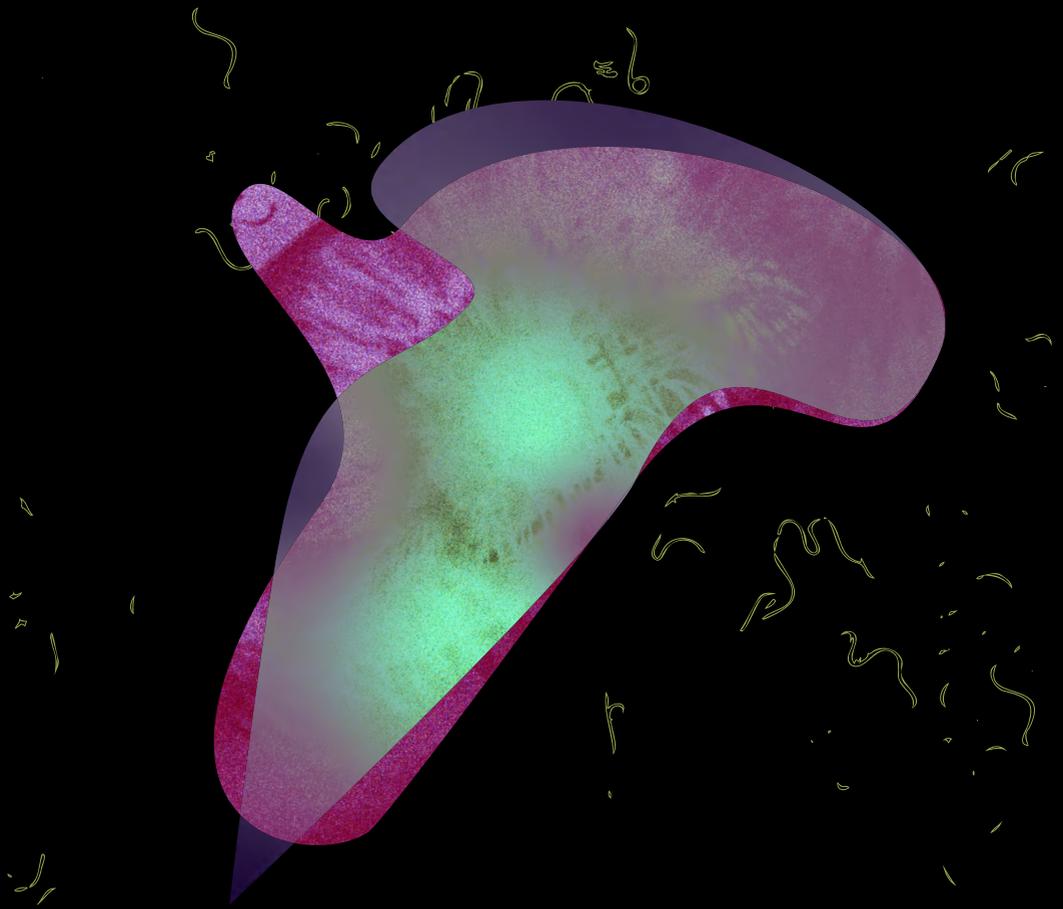
A large part of *Other Minds'* storytelling concentrates on vegetal intelligence, fungi and plant teachers. Throughout history, in fact, the symbiotic relationship between humans and psychoactive plants, mushrooms, and even animals, has opened up new modes of seeing and sensing the real. This may bring us closer to notions of oneness and the planetary, holistic agency, beyond an idea of fragmented functioning. The dissolution of the "I" that can be experienced when psilocybin compounds enter our metabolism may equally enable a temporary comprehension



of the functioning of holobionts and more-than-human agencies. It has even been argued that psilocybin mushrooms may have had a crucial role in the rapid development of the human brain, which tripled in size in just two million years. The mushrooms would not have provoked a sudden shift, but they may have been a subtle and considerable factor in the evolution of the brain by acting like “hackers” of the human mind and contributing to its expansion into a neurologically modern hardware for thinking. The connections between the human brain and psilocybin plants are explored and dreamed up by **Grace Ndiritu** in *Becoming Plant: the Experience* (2022), **Viktor Pedersen** and **Ingrid K. Bjørnaali** in *To See Without Man* (2022), and **Patricia Domínguez** in *Matrix Vegetal* (2021–2022). These works emphasize the mind-expanding potential that could be unleashed if we established a symbiotic connection with the vegetal mind, thus expanding posthumanist notions of planetary entanglements into cosmic consciousness. Can thinking about the leaf as an energy-processing surface help us to revise our current extractive practices, which are leading to an anthropogenic depletion of resources? Can photosynthesis provide a speculative framework for imagining a future in which the human body has learned to process starlight directly and has partly become vegetal?

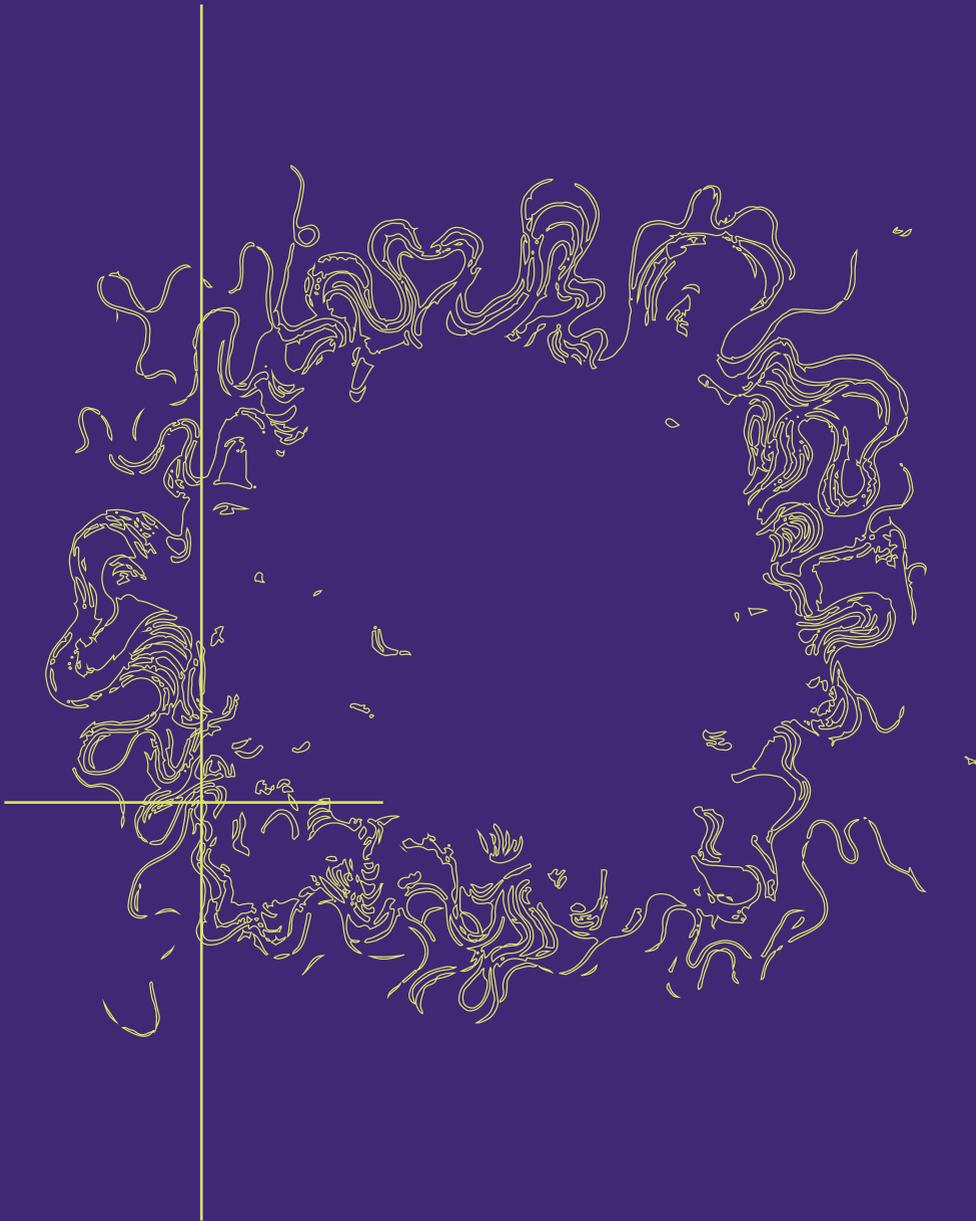
Another thread of *Other Minds* focuses on the development of artificial intelligence, the mind of software, and on how the possibility of artificial consciousness is already affecting our present and the way we envisage a future amidst the ruins of capitalism. In the augmented reality work *Coffee Ground Imaginaries* (2022), **Anna Ehrenstein** and **4DHD** use the traditional divination technique of tasseography (a method of interpreting patterns in coffee cups) to respond to the way algorithmic engineering is creating patterns to predict and materialize global futures. In the lecture performance *I'd Blush If I Could* (2022–2023), **Eli Cortiñas** proposes a critical approach to the increasing feminization of technology by putting in dialogue different devices—humanoid robots, voice-activated systems, chatbots, gynomorphic and zoomorphic social devices—to discuss issues around ecology, sustainability, care, and gender.

Concluding the drift of *Other Minds*, with *Opus Mors* (2019) **Jacob Kirkegaard** crafts a complex space for the audible experience of the molecular modification of matter once life's state of consciousness has ended. Being presented at an astronomical site, the work combines the molecular and the cosmic, re-signifying the notion of human decomposition as a natural transformation (or re-composition) into another matter. Is it possible to hear the sound of electrons? Beyond its apparent stability, on the atomic and subatomic levels, matter is



incessantly electric. It vibrates within its seeming solid confines, in a dance that entangles us all with the invisible bacteria, viruses, and fungi that thrive in our bodies, or with the “inert” objects we are surrounded by. All the atoms are imperceptibly decaying and unwaveringly waiting to be transformed into new matter, in a continuous symphony and coevolution.

Looking at the medium of the moving image in an expanded fashion, and occupying unconventional public spaces for the arts in Berlin (2022) and Oslo (2023), *Other Minds* extends from its main venue at the Archenhold Observatory, to other locations across the city. Accompanied by an extensive public program, including activations, live performances, talks, and online events, *Other Minds* looks closely into more-than-human agencies, coevolution, and the fundamental interconnectedness of living and non-living matter.



THE ARCHENHOLD OBSERVATORY AND TREPTOWER PARK



Screen City Biennial *Other Minds* takes place at the Archenhold Observatory (in German: *Archenhold-Sternwarte*) in Berlin, Treptow, as the main exhibition venue. Located in the former eastern part of Berlin, in the middle of Treptower Park, the Archenhold Observatory is the oldest and largest public observatory in Germany, and a place where many layers of history converge.

The Archenhold Observatory is surrounded by vast meadows extending into the forest of Plänterwald, and includes the **Museum of Celestial Science** (a museum of astronomy), whose collection contains a giant iron meteorite; a Planetarium (Zeiss-Kleinplanetarium); the **Small Observatory** adjacent to the main building; the **Einstein Hall**, the location of Albert Einstein's first public lecture on the theory of relativity in Berlin (held on June 2, 1915, during World War I); the **Solar Physical Cabinet**, as well as the **Great Refractor**, the longest movable refracting telescope in the world.

Inaugurated during Berlin's Great Industrial Exposition of 1896 (in German: *Große Berliner Gewerbeausstellung*), the Great Refractor is a 21-meter-long telescope that was meant to display Germany's

technological prowess to the world. When the Exposition came to an end, there were no more funds to dismantle the telescope as had been originally stipulated by contract. The city of Berlin then determined that the astronomical object could remain where it was in Treptower Park until further notice, and this officially began the founding of the Archenhold Observatory.

Berlin's Great Industrial Exposition of 1896, which extended throughout Treptower Park, included other "attractions" such as a colonialist theme park that featured more than a hundred black persons brought in from Germany's former colonies, including Togo, Cameroon, German West Africa (present-day Namibia), German East Africa (which comprises today Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi), as well as a number of Pacific territories. These people of color lived, worked, and performed in Treptower Park under the gaze of a paying (and largely white) audience, in what could be considered a sort of human zoo. Such racist practices of displaying people as exotic objects were frequent in European's colonial practices up into the twentieth century. Today, an info sign can be found at Treptower Park in remembrance of Germany's violent colonial history—a diminutive object whose size stands in stark contrast to the imposing presence of the nearby Soviet War Memorial (also located in Treptower Park, and but a few hundred meters away from the Archenhold Observatory). This contrast in visibility, these two different modes of remembering, reveals how the city has legitimated the remembering of certain histories, while diminishing or silencing others—and this in spite of Berlin's vaunted culture of remembrance.

Public spaces are hardly ever neutral spaces, and Screen City Biennial *Other Minds* accordingly aims to highlight the contested layers behind its venue, identifying the signs and traces that mark the scientific museum as such, while embracing the submerged elements of its history through exhibition storytelling and that of the single artworks. The artists have entered into dialogue with the Museum of Celestial Science and with the archaeology of stargazing or cosmic objects displayed in its rooms, as well as with the surrounding area of Treptower Park.

ABOUT SCB

Screen City Biennial (SCB) is dedicated to the expanded moving image in public space, featuring artworks that explore the relationship between the moving image, sound, technology, and urban architecture.

Having been held in Stavanger (Norway) during the first editions, in 2022 SCB transcends the traditional spacetime biennale structure by proposing a multi-location model across two cities, Berlin and Oslo, spanning an extended exhibition period during 2022/2023. The first chapter of *Other Minds* is centered at the Archenhold Observatory in Berlin, one of the three astronomical facilities of the Stiftung Planetarium Berlin (Berlin Planetarium Foundation). Other locations include the Schering Stiftung, Treptower park, and a network of outdoor sites around Pariser Platz which embrace the urban landscape of the city.

WEBSITE & CONTACTS

→ screencitybiennial.org

Screen City Biennial (Office)
Brunnenstr. 72
13355 Berlin



EMAIL
contact@screencitybiennial.org

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TEAM

Director: Daniela Arriado

Curators: Daniela Arriado and Vanina Saracino

Production Manager: Andrea Goetzke

Technical supervision: Noam Gorbat

Technical advisor: Florian Köhler

Production assistant: Diego Chiarelli

Visual communication and design: Mote Studio (Berlin)

PR and communication: Yvonne von Duehren

Social media: Simon Schwade, Diego Chiarelli

Exhibition mediation: Kirstine Elisa Kjeldsen, Elena García, Nahomi Wintana, Chyn Ilorra, Marlene Rüb, Lisa Weber

Research and editing: Vanina Saracino

Proofreading: Suzanne Zuber

Translation: Matthias Kählert

Performers: Evgenia Chetvertkova, Franziska Gerth, Christine Sollie, Michiyasu Furutani

Screen City Biennial is produced by Art Republic

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS/THANK YOU

We would like to thank the artists for their trust and for sharing their work and perspectives. It is an honour to present their strong voices and to embark on this inspiring journey together.

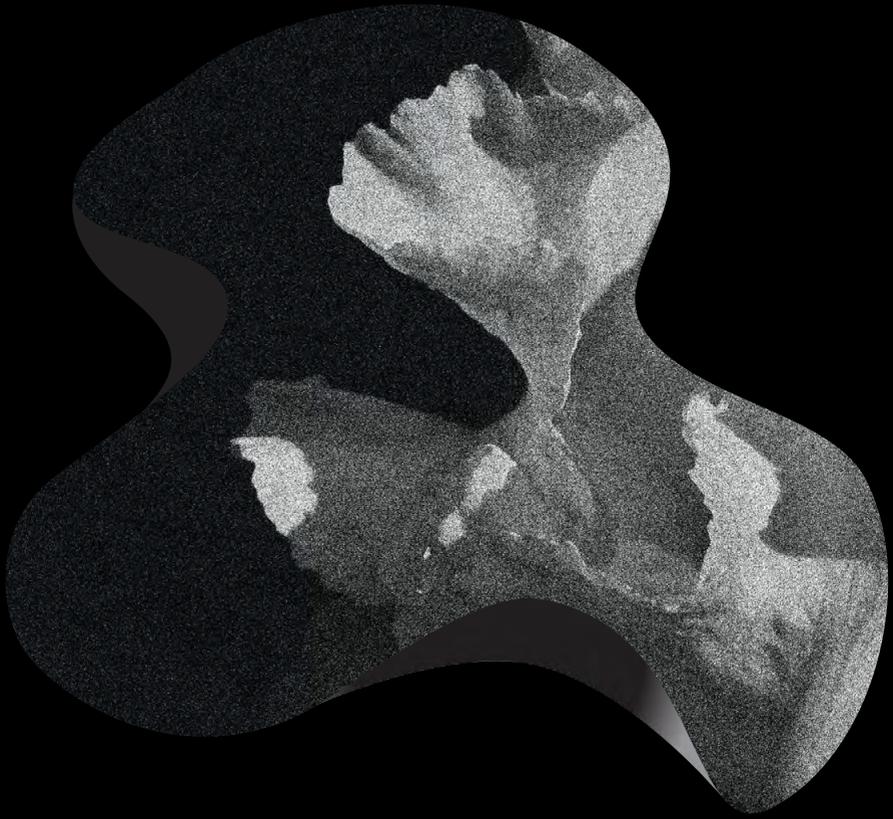
The Biennial stands strong thanks to an extended line of supporters who believe in the vision and trust in the potential that lies in SCB as a biennial, and as a platform embracing and mediating these artistic voices. We would like to thank all of them, especially Hauptstadtkulturfonds for facilitating the presentation of SCB in Berlin for the first time, and who, together with the Norwegian Art Council and Nordic Culture Point, have so generously supported the production of the new commissions. We look forward to continuing the journey in Oslo with them in 2023.

The team at Archenhold Observatory has welcomed *Other Minds* and have gone out of their way to understand the exhibition's needs, even going so far as to make special areas available that are usually not accessible to the general public. For this collaborative spirit, we are deeply grateful to the whole team at the Archenhold Observatory and Stiftung Planetarium Berlin.

Enjoy the journey!

Truly yours,
SCB Team





screencitybiennial.org