

translating clouds, grounds and flows brings together three artistic research processes tracing floods, groundwater, and the Danube as living, entangled systems. Emerging through close collaboration with Viennese scientific partners, the works offer insight into ongoing inquiries and research processes still in formation.

Across the exhibition, data begins to shift — into patterns and presences — opening spaces where aquatic environments are encountered as ecologies that are alive and in constant transformation. It becomes an invitation into rhythms, fluid boundaries and subtle presences that usually remain unnoticed.

Developed within the S+T+ARTS AQUA MOTION program at TU Wien and in collaboration with other research institutions, the projects by mischer'traxler studio, and the artists Paula Nishijima and Regina Hügli with Aaron Kimmig situate themselves where art, science and technology meet in shared inquiries into water and its changing conditions.

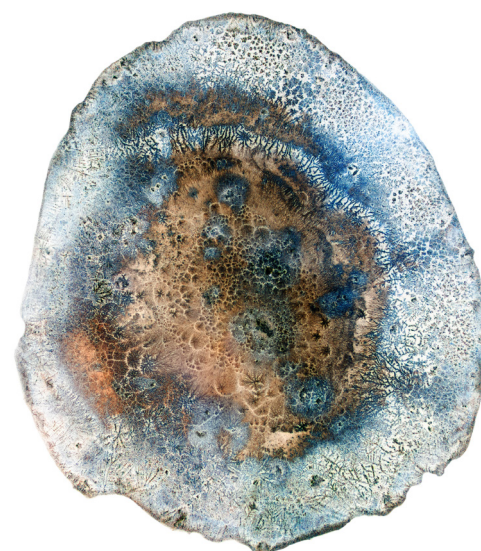
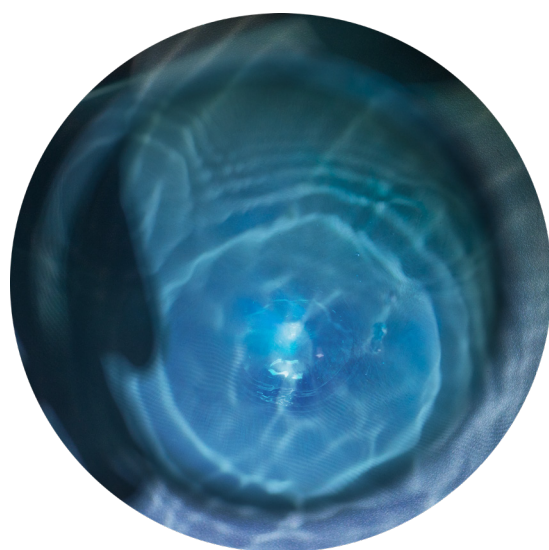
thanks to: the S+T+ARTS team at TU Wien:
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translating clouds, grounds and flows

opening. 23 June 18:00 | 24 June – 4 July 2026
Galerie Rauminhalt | Schleifmühlgasse 13 | 1040 Wien
Tuesday – Friday, 12:00 – 18:00 | Saturday, 10:00 – 15:00



How can water once again be experienced in a sensory, relational and collective way?

Donna Haraway's¹ "The Companion Species Manifesto"² offers a key theoretical framework for interpreting the three projects in the exhibition *translating clouds, grounds and flows* not merely as ecological or technological investigations, but as exercises in a more-than-human practice of relationship-building. Haraway understands "companion-ship" not as a harmonious unity between humans and nature, but as a mutual "becoming-with", in which living beings, materials, technologies and environments bring each other into being. This is precisely where the works by Paula Nishijima, Regina Hügli with her artistic and technical partner Aaron Kimmig and mischer'traxler studio come in: hydrological data is transformed into oracles, groundwater appears as a living network, and water no longer appears exclusively as a resource, but as part of mutual ecological interdependencies.

The starting point is the question of how water can once again be experienced sensually and collectively. The modern separation of nature and culture creates an epistemic³ distancing through which ecological systems become abstracted resources. The projects on display respond to this with forms of embodiment and sensory experience: water is heard, felt, and experienced atmospherically – as part of shared interdependencies. Visitors encounter water not from a controlling external perspective, but as part of a mutual interconnection.

This interconnection is evident in *themis*⁴ *Danube*, initiated by mischer'traxler studio. The shadowy face in the water only comes into being through constant movement and the interplay of a wide variety of organisms, sediments and currents. Lacking a stable identity yet closely intertwined, this fluid apparition is reminiscent of Haraway's concept of symbiotic systems: systems that do not generate themselves autonomously, but arise collectively and cooperatively. Here, water functions not merely as a medium of representation, but emerges as an actor in its own right. In doing so, the Danube "speaks" not solely through human translation, but through processes of circulation, resonance and constant change.

This perspective links *themis Danube* with the work of Paula Nishijima and Regina Hügli with Aaron Kimmig, who also explore water as a medium that can be experienced. The starting point for their artistic research is the question of how new forms of ecological awareness might emerge - and how water, in the face of increasing climate extremes, is regaining its own form of presence and expression. Both projects shift the focus from water as a controllable resource to a living fabric of exchange, storage and circulation that connects urban, atmospheric and social spaces.

¹ Donna Jeanne Haraway is a historian of science, author and feminist scholar, and an emeritus professor in the Department of History of Consciousness and the Department of Feminist Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

² In "The Companion Manifesto", the author explores the relationship between humans and animals, using her relationship with her dog Cayenne as an example. In the book, she weaves together personal experiences—both insightful and unusually intimate—with scientific analysis and critical reflection. On evolutionary, historical and personal levels, Haraway describes the development of the 'companion species' not as a process dominated and domesticated unilaterally by humans, but as a reciprocal, shared process of learning and becoming between humans and animals. She analyses the historical and political dimensions of the power relationship (for example, the use of dogs in prisons and for border security) and advocates a loving and responsible approach to 'significant otherness'.

³ epistemic refers to knowledge, understanding or the theory of knowledge (epistemology). It describes matters relating to the acquisition, structure or evaluation of knowledge, such as in the context of "epistemic beliefs" concerning the acquisition of knowledge, or in logic for modelling states of knowledge.

⁴ *Themis* is the Greek goddess of justice, morality and order. She is regarded as the Greek equivalent of the Roman goddess Justitia. She is the daughter of Uranus and Gaia.

reflections on the exhibition
Harald Bichler

translating clouds, grounds and flows

Paula Nishijima's *Between Water's Moods* can also be linked to Haraway's thinking. The project does not approach the figure of the Danube Maiden⁵ (Donauweibchen) in a nostalgic or folkloric manner, but rather as a mediator between human perception and hydrological processes. Data is transformed into poetic forms of experience; water is given a form of expression that remains neither purely scientific nor purely mythological. Haraway emphasises that new ecological relationships require new narratives - stories, myths and figures that reintegrate humans into processes of planetary coexistence. The Danube Maiden functions as just such a speculative figure of "making kin"⁶: a link between river, city, climate and collective imagination.

Regina Hügli's and Aaron Kimmig's *Rain Taste Soil Drink* also draws attention to the material and infrastructural conditions of water. The work invites us to become aware of the often invisible networks of coexistence - those processes that connect bodies, technologies, soils, vegetation and atmospheres. Hügli and Kimmig make these hidden circulations tangible: groundwater, soil sealing, precipitation, natural filtration systems and urban water storage appear as part of a living metabolism between the city and the environment. Water is not romanticised here, but revealed as a living network and the fragile foundation of (urban) existence.

The exhibition creates dialogues between different ways of perceiving and representing ecological interconnections - between mythology and technology, infrastructure and physicality, resonance and hydrological knowledge. Together, the projects develop new forms of attention towards fragile aquatic ecosystems and open up a shift in perspective away from anthropocentric⁷ notions of nature. Visitors encounter water in an open experiential space that foregrounds listening, embodied perception, and mutual dependencies.

In this way, the works outline a multi-layered hydrology of the Danube and the city of Vienna, in which surface, underground and atmospheric bodies of water are deeply intertwined. Water reveals itself simultaneously as ecological memory, as a medium of shared landscapes, and as the foundation for future forms of coexistence. The projects approach ecosystems as coexisting agents with their own presence and agency. They invite us to imagine new forms of caring coexistence within a more-than-human world.

⁵ The Danube Maiden is a mermaid-like creature from an Austrian legend of the same name, said to be friendly towards humans.

⁶ "Making Kin" is a maxim coined by the philosopher of science and pioneer of cyborg feminism, Donna Haraway, which calls for cross-species symbiosis.

⁷ Anthropocentrism grants humans a special moral status. The interests and needs of other life forms or of nature are subordinated to human benefit, or are protected only if they serve human interests.

between water’s moods

Paula Nishijima, 2026

Paula Nishijima’s *Between Water’s Moods* combines artistic research, hydrological data and speculative narrative forms to create a multi-layered exploration of the changing states of water. The work takes as its starting point the Donauweibchen – a water spirit figure from Austrian and Central European folklore – a water spirit figure associated with Austrian and Central European folklore, who was said to emerge from the depths of the Danube to warn people of impending floods.

If in the past humans relied on ancient entities and myths to interpret messages from nature, today the future is increasingly read through technological “oracles” and weather forecasting systems that translate water into data streams and predictions. The development of such technologies runs parallel to an intensification of floods and droughts in Austria – consequences of climate change, topographical conditions and human interventions in landscapes and water cycles.

Yet it is precisely this translation into data and forecasts that creates a sense of distance. The complexity of scientific knowledge and monitoring systems often makes it difficult to form an immediate connection with nature. *Between Water’s Moods* addresses this disconnect and asks how water can once again be experienced as a living, tangible and physical presence. How does a body of water change when its metabolism is thrown out of balance? How can these changes be perceived through the senses?

At the heart of the installation is a machine-like oracle that translates hydrological data into physical patterns. Waves, vibrations and movements render water’s “mood swings”, revealing processes that usually take place beyond human perception. The patterns generated draw on a large hydrological dataset used to train forecasting systems – yet they elude purely functional interpretation. Instead of clear-cut predictions, poetic and open-ended constellations emerge, inviting interpretation by the audience.

Situated in the context of Vienna and the rhythms of the Danube, the project seeks to reactivate the collective memory of a landscape long shaped by floods, while opening an archive of possible futures embedded in the cycles of rivers.

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technical development: Nicholas Lan

scientific support: Karsten Schulz, Martin Schmid, Christine Sindelar, Thomas Gold (BOKU)

video documentary:
Camera: Christian Prinz (camera), Paula Nishijima (editing)

thanks to: Helmut Habersack (Institute of Hydraulic Engineering and River Research (IWA-BOKU))

rain taste soil drink

Regina Hügli with Aaron Kimmig, 2026

Rain Taste Soil Drink explores drinking water and groundwater in Vienna, as well as the relationship between the city’s residents and their local water sources. The project develops a hybrid installation combining an educational mission with a performative intervention in public space, offering sensory encounters with the slow processes through which pure spring water is created.

Using cellulose sponge material commonly employed in industry and construction, a temporary “Sponge Fountain” invites residents to engage with the processes of water infiltration, absorption, and gradual release — processes that are rarely visible on the sealed surfaces of contemporary cities, yet essential for mitigating extreme weather events and cooling the urban environment. Community events such as water tastings and workshops deepen this connection, linking the sponge-like qualities of Vienna’s spring catchment areas to everyday urban life.

The exemplary ecological management of these catchment areas and the strong legal protection of water as a common good inspired the “Manifesto of Hosting Water”. Developed through months of research into Vienna’s water systems, the multi-species manifesto identifies “sponge-like qualities” — porosity, slow processes, and equitable distribution — as essential characteristics of both water-hosting environments and resilient communities. Through its performative proclamation in the city, the manifesto opens a space for reflection on the state of urban water bodies and the urban climate while encouraging a critical examination of contemporary political decisions and their environmental and social consequences.

The manifesto also serves as the conceptual framework for the project’s digital platform and the exhibition space. Dark-field microscopy of local water samples renders what every drop carries: microorganisms, microplastics, salt crystals — information written into the water itself. Visualisations of global atmospheric flows trace the long journey water takes before it falls as rain and slowly seeps through soil to become spring water. A printed map based on surface and subsurface data of Vienna makes the city’s hidden water infrastructure legible. All three are present in physical space and on the digital platform, which additionally communicates scientific data on Vienna’s climate and groundwater resources.

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artistic collaborators: Aaron Kimmig (platform, film, map, research), Stefano Mori (fountain installation), Sabina Holzer (conceptual and choreographic guidance of performance)

scientific support: Christina Formanek (Federal Environment Agency), Christian Griebler (University of Vienna), Norbert Kreuzinger (TU Vienna), Lukas Plan (NHM), Bich Tran (University of Wageningen) a.o.

thanks to: Elmar Bertsch, Christina Erber (MA 45), Wolfgang Gruber (MA 31), Norbert Kreuzinger, Bernadette Laimbauer, Bernhard Mang (MA 49), Oliviu Moiseanu, Cornelia Steiner (Geosphere Austria).

themis Danube

mischer’traxler studio, 2026

*themis Danube** bring the Danube ecosystem into the exhibition space. A shallow water basin forms a condensed, abstract fragment of landscape. Beneath the water surface, over 150 species from the Danube’s ecosystem. They shift and transform alongside stones, driftwood, mud and other river elements, forming a dynamic digital collage. Gradually, the individual species gather into a temporary face before dispersing once more into a living multitude.

Visitors encounter *themis Danube* from above, leaning over the basin and engaging with the water through touch. Each contact initiates a response. Species rearrange, sounds emerge and fragments of a collective voice become audible. Through image, sound and spoken language, ecological relationships are translated into forms that can be perceived, understood and experienced.

Rather than presenting the Danube as an object of observation, *themis Danube* allow the river to be experienced as a counterpart. Through sight, sound and physical interaction, visitors encounter the ecosystem as an active Mitwelt rather than a passive environment. Composed of many interconnected species, the Danube emerges as a living community with which humans are fundamentally entangled.

themis Danube is part of *themis*, an ongoing artistic practice initiated by mischer’traxler studio in 2022. Across rivers, forests, wetlands and other habitats, *themis* explore how ecosystems can gain visibility and a voice within human discourse and institutional contexts. Composed of swarms of local species, ranging from trees, fungi and microorganisms to pollinators, predators and aquatic life, they take shape as polyphonic entities that make ecological interdependencies tangible.

* *themis* are plural entities composed of many species and the relationships between them. They are therefore referred to as “they” rather than “it”.

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themis initiative: www.themis.eco

digital development: Simon Laburda & Arian (interaction programming), Marlen Jachek (animation & character design), Rodrigo Gutiérrez (voice & text-to-speech development)

scientific support: Thomas Friedrich (BOKU), Aaron Griesbacher (Nationalpark Donauauen)

thanks to: all previous *themis* collaborators who have helped shape the evolving *themis* practice.