

# The Portfolio

By Isabel Fredeus

2025

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# INTRODUCTION - Biography

Isabel Fredeus (°1991) is an Antwerp-based (BE) artist. She is an inter-disciplinary artist that works with installation, sculpture, video, performance, drawing and intervention. Fredeus is mainly interested in materials that are elastic, manipulative and flexible. Within her artistic practice she tries to follow signs, investigate the origin of their attraction and search for alternative meanings within them. For these reasons Fredeus works process oriented. In her practice she is mainly occupied with natural processes, physical laws and the symbolism they create. She considers her atelier as a place to explore various methodologies where irony goes hand in hand with spirituality and scientific approaches are confronted with poetic layers.

Aesthetically she's drawn to the morphology of form, contradictions and displaying development or growth. Change itself is deeply embedded in her artistic work.

A few years ago Fredeus discovered working with hot glass. Glass (just like water) has different states of "being" or scientifically you could call these "phases" of matter. Water and glass trigger her in a similar way and are essential materials that she works with in her studio. Fredeus puts her focus on what is going on with the works she creates, addressing artworks as systems that undergo change and experience processes.

Isabel Fredeus obtained a Master in Fine Arts and a Master of Research in Art & Design at St Lucas School of Arts in Antwerp. Her work was shown at Gr\_Und, Berlin (DE), Sainte Anne Gallery, Paris (FR), Intershop, Leipzig (DE), Extra City Kunsthal (BE), Middelheim Museum (BE), M KHA (BE), Felix de Boeck & Eco museum (BE), Benzeholz (CH), Rubenshuis (BE). In 2015, she was a resident at Villa Ruffieux residence, Sierre (CH). She won the De Lucas award 2015, awarded by Sint Lucas University College, Antwerp (BE). She won the Middelheim Museum Young Artist Prize 2018 awarded by the Middelheim Promotors, Antwerp (BE). She also won the prize of the public with her sculpture 'Under The Weather'. Currently Fredeus is working as researcher at V.U.B. Brussels (BE), guest lecturer at Luca School of Arts Ghent (BE) and is represented by Whitehouse gallery Brussels (BE) and Sainte Anne Gallery, Paris (FR).

## Feeling Strained (2023)

Yeast and water play an active role in the time-based installation 'Feeling strained'. The network of glass reservoirs, which resembles the human vascular system, serves as an incubator for life and mimics the cell division that occurs when yeast multiplies. The installation is constantly changing, just like the human body.

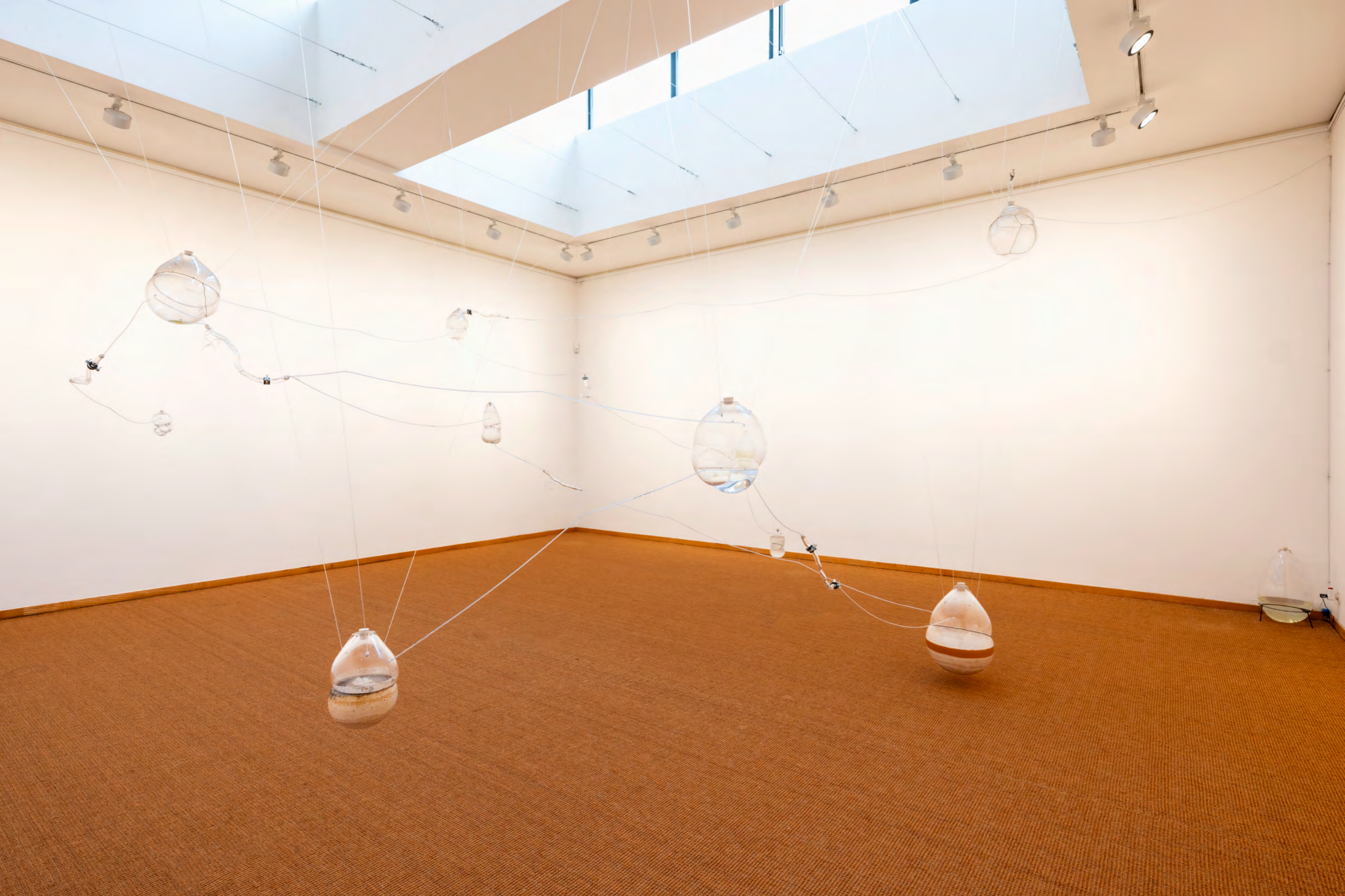
During the creation process, Fredeus was guided by her recurring methodological question: 'What process should the work represent and what conditions are necessary for this?'

'Feeling strained', composed of glass, yeast and water, visualises an interaction that is imperceptible to the naked eye, just like a microbiome: the set of micro-organisms (yeasts, viruses and bacteria) that reside in a particular environment of the body - part of a multifaceted world and, at the same time, a universe with countless symbioses.

Just as the eye can have a blind spot, Fredeus confronts us with the invisible dynamics of cell division. In a poetic manner; 'Feeling strained' offers room for imagination and wonder.

text by Benedict Vandaele

time-based installation  
yeast, water, glass



# Acid Trip (2021)

In 'Acid Trip', Fredeus proposes the observation of shells immersed in acidic water and destined to dissolve over the course of hours, days, weeks. Accelerating the course of the dissolution, the fragility of the external envelope reveals the complexity of its internal structure and hints at the impermanence of the living. Here the drawing is made by itself once the artist has activated the installation by plunging the shells one by one in the vases. The lines of the shells are drawn increasingly clear until they disappear.

text by Alizée Gazeau

Time-based installation  
Glass, acid, shells, coral skeletons, wood.





Fungal logistics #1 (2022)

installation  
glass, wood, plaster, silicone

## A Fungal Affair (2024)

sculpture  
glass, wood, trametes versicolor (fungi) , iron

within the closed ecosystem, 2 sculptures of wood and fungi are in a constant dialogue, creating new forms and shapes within the glass everyday

'A Fungal Affair' is made grace to the technical support by Elise Elsacker, Gert Bullee and V.U.B

image © Candice Athenais





## Ongoing detachment (2021)

sculpture  
100 x 70 x 3 cm  
glass, bluestone



## A fungal affair #4 (2024)

borosilicate glass, wood, mycelium  
Made grace to the technical support by Elise Elsacker, Els Flossie and V.U.B  
45 x 20 x 13 cm

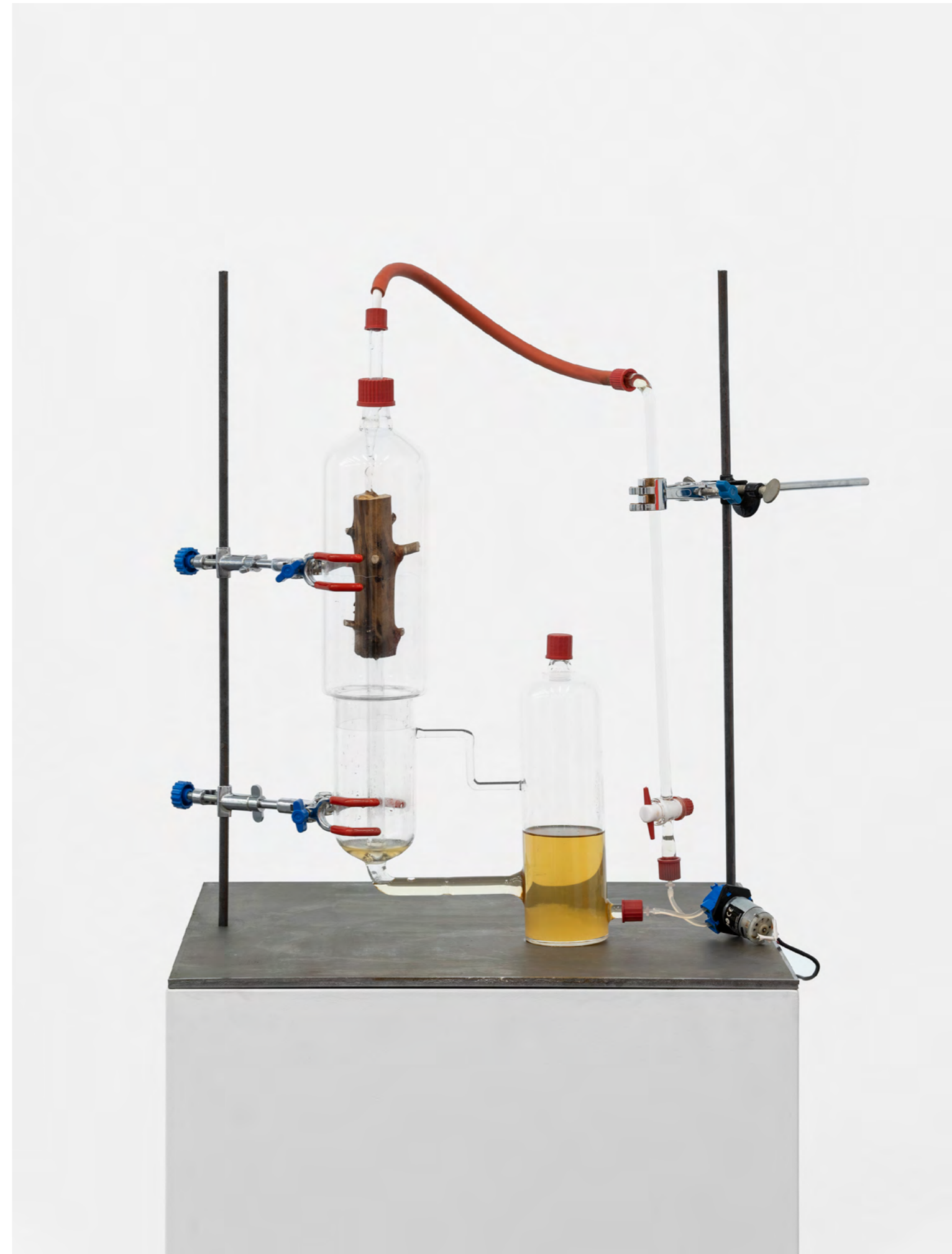


## Capsule (2022)

sculpture  
23 x 29 x 17 cm  
alabaster, iron, nylon

## A fungal affair (2024)

borosilicate glass, wood, trametes versicolor (mycelium), nutrients, water, electronics, iron  
Made grace to the technical support by Elise Elsacker, Els Flossie and V.U.B  
2024





*Under the Weather (2018)*

Outdoor Sculpture  
Glass, chemicals, bluestone.

Image by Ans Brys

## NISHIMWE X FREDEUS (2023-...)

'NISHIMWE X FREDEUS' is a performance that is a distillation of an artistic dialogue going on since August 2022 between Prisca-Agnes Nishimwe and myself.

The dialogue is centered around image and sound, Prisca-Agnes Nishimwe, a performer who explores the complexities of her voice within a universe where emotion, perception and impulse intersect in a constant flux between beauty and tragedy. Myself, a visual artist who creates artworks to explore natural processes, physical laws and their symbolic representation.

Up to today we collaborated during two art residencies:

- Location: 'Het bos' Antwerp / invited by 'the theatermakers' 2024.
- Location: 'WP Zimmer' Antwerp / invited by 'the theatermakers' 2023.

And performed 'NISHIMWE X FREDEUS' publicly three times since then. All performances were unique but based on a similar script since they are presentations of live soundscapes and analogue imagemaking.

- 'SNOBS' - Het bos / Antwerp (BE).
- NISHIMWE X FREDEUS - Het Bos - invited by Theatermakers / Antwerp (BE).
- Rubenshuis - invited by mino artspace / Antwerp (BE)



# 2. Texts about work

## 2.1. A Fungal Affair

Solo exhibition

Whitehouse Gallery/ Chaussée de Charleroi, 54 1060 Brussels, Belgium.

12.09.2024 - 10.10.2024

symbiosis

noun [ U ]

a close connection between different types of organisms in which they live together and benefit from each other

A rather unusual cooperative one might say, when 2 seemingly uncorrelated professions collide together to engulf in an experiment with near endless possibilities.

Elise Elsacker ( a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Bio-engineering Sciences at the VUB ) and Isabel Fredeus ( an artist engrossed in working with natural processes ) initiated this symbiotic relationship at the beginning of this year. Where the focal point of a scientist lies on collecting and analyzing data, this of the artist shifts to experimenting in a creative way with the material at hand.

In this case, the material is called 'mycelium', and it engages in a more or less similar symbiosis with his surroundings. It stretches his fungal threads in search for nutrients and in return it may enhance, prosper, or simply redeliver ingredients or characteristics to the beneficiary partner at stake.

Both scientist and artist, inaugurate in this collaboration from two different educational backgrounds and two dissimilar approaches. But rather than to oppose each other, this strengthens the ingenuity of the works on display.

The exposition is kind of like the fruit that sprouts from their mutual interest in Fungi, as a component, as an art supply, as a partner...comparable to a mushroom that sprouts when the mycelium has been nurtured enough in his natural environment.

All of this together could be seen by an outsider as some sort of love affair, a devotion between science and art.

In our case however, we like to call it A FUNGAL AFFAIR...

Sam Meersman

## 2.1. Cities Living Within

Solo exhibition

Whitehouse Gallery/ Groot Park 2 - 3360 Lovenjoel (Leuven) Belgium.

05.07.2020 - 30.08.2020

Materiality and process are two key words in the very diverse art practice of Isabel Fredeus (b. 1991, lives and works in Kapellen). Her new project is preceded by patient research into the acidification of ocean water and the slow death of coral reefs. Using numerous mediums, the artist expresses what this research teaches her: how corals provide themselves with a fluorescent colour as a protection from the heat of the sun, before turning white and dying; or how several sea creatures' skeletons are weakening because of the disrupted acidity of the water. A glass fermentation bottle literally shows this process: shells are plunged into acetic acid and disappear, before our very eyes, in a matter of hours.

Natural processes have always been important to Fredeus's art. Works often show the process itself – as is the case with the fermentation bottle, but also with her installation 'Under the Weather', which won her the 2018 Young Artist Prize of the Middelheim museum. Just as often, she finds the perfect material to reflect a certain effect or natural surface. Plaster sculptures on a glass base and glass 'paintings' translate the life of and under water. A piece of limestone, which is naturally formed out of sediments from shells and other small skeletons, has been minutely sculpted to simulate the structure of human bones. This skin – the water surface, the sculpted limestone, the capricious glass – conceals mysterious, inner lives. Like the corals and the water that inspire her works, the images and materials created by Fredeus are living organisms, breathing and interacting.

Tamara Beheydt

## 2.2. Mutable Surroundings

Solo exhibition

Boab Artgallery/ Kloosterstraat 152 - 2000 Antwerp, Belgium.

08.11.2018 - 16.12.2018

Everything flows and nothing abides; everything gives way and nothing stays fixed.  
Heraclitus (530 - 470 BC)

The work of Isabel Fredeus (\* 1991) can be approached through the concept of plasticity. As an artist, she takes particular interest in the malleability or flexibility of certain materials, and their behaviour in the act of co-creation—a poetic encounter between subject and object. Rather than being static objects, her works appear as living organisms that are in constant mutation, in a vibrant state of becoming. Valuing process over product, the artist delights in rendering material variability visible on an aesthetic level. Isabel Fredeus creates laboratory-like situations where sets of parameters are met with a touch of chance and wonder. Her practice unfolds itself in situ, in an inner dialogue with a

given location. The constituent elements are simple yet endlessly intriguing in their mutual combination: the sphere, the line, the circle, the grid, the pendulum. Experiment doesn't seek corroboration here, nor do the instruments have a specific function; everything vigorously thrives on uncertainty, indeterminacy and probability. In the oscillation between order and chaos, control and release, her works act like strange attractors. Biologically speaking, plasticity stands for the complex ways in which biological life forms adapt to the ever-changing conditions of their environment. Instead of being self-contained, they depend on a constant transfer of matter and energy between the system and its surroundings. Correspondingly, the work of art can be considered as an 'open system'—an idea that has been around for decades (just think of Hans Haacke, Angela Bulloch or Olafur Eliasson), but has hardly lost relevance. Fredeus's works never exist in full isolation; her visual constellations thoughtfully probe the dynamic interstice between inside and outside, and the continuous flows between both.

Pieter Vermeulen, November 2018

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