

Rodrigo Arteaga

CFPR Editions / Mycelium Book

Foreword by Giuliana Furci





Rodrigo Arteaga

Rodrigo is a Chilean artist who completed a MFA in Sculpture at the Slade School of Fine Art in 2018. His practice is concerned with the complex relationship between nature, culture and representation. His interest in working across different areas of thought has led him to collaborate with specialists in fields such as Microbiology, Bio-Fabrication, Mycology, Natural History, Botany, and Architecture. His work often deals with the complexities between human and non-human relations, unearthing the coded enigmas of our relationship with the environment.

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For those of us who roam on the quest to discover new species of fungi, the questions of who and where are important. Moreso, when what may be unveiled is a game-changer for humanity in the form of medicine, food, or a nature-based solution for people and the planet. The questions of how and why are only possible to answer after who and where are understood. Nevertheless, these latter ecological questions have taken a fictitious priority over the former that deal with natural history. Our natural history and our history as naturals.

The quest for discovery not only involves roaming the Earth's surface and exploring a few centimeters into the soil or some meters above it. It involves deep listening, deep seeing, deep feeling and a state of openness to an encounter possibly never dreamt of. It requires time and attention. It also requires a combination of preconception together with expectance of something un-classifiable.

The more novel and unknown the finding is, the more chaos it brings upon encounter. Ecstasy, overwhelmingness, profound awe and wonder, joy, sometimes sadness and a fierce release from oneself. Although it is where stillness is needed, motion takes over inside and out. A bond is formed; presentation of each other to one another in intimacy. A silent request for permission to touch is expressed; to smell, to get close. A frenzied search in the immediate surroundings for more of its peers to be aware of. To be beware of. These moments can represent existence and can come to make plenitude be felt in totality.

This is the foreplay to what Rodrigo Arteaga takes on in this unique book on mycelium, on uncovering and documenting fungi – the Mycelium Book.

Now comes method.

There are many methods, and each explorer finds a unique way to piece together the steps necessary for the documentation of discovery, surely all tending to the task of preserving the find and attaining the desirable impossibility of losing any valuable information during the process. Even information one ceases to value. The profound notion of existence beyond one's circumstances, one's interests, one's vision and one's knowledge.

A step back, a seat, kneel, backpack off and always a breath of fresh air, a gathering of oneself. From anima to matter. Method.

Loupe, camera, pen, paper, ruler, container. Care. Much care. Respect for the magic of the encounter and for the wonder of existence, but above all, the wonder of co-incidence. That she and I's spirits intersected in space and time.

In Mycelium Book we can see and feel the magic of an encounter. We carefully prepare for the ecstasy of co-incidence. We understand a method. Importantly, we understand that the preparation for the documentation of natural history is neither random nor unforeseen.

Pre-prepare. Pre-pair.

The co-incidence with a fungus is never a given, there is no certain way to assure a find and there is no easy way to capture the elements involved once there together. Yet once again Rodrigo manages to encapsulate the process from the encounter to the feeling of plenitude, to the preparation of a method, then the steps themselves, and ultimately the preservation of the find for posterity. All in the animate experience of intimacy with a non-human being. In fact, a mostly invisible being. Almost untouchable most of its existence. Most definitely everywhere but nowhere at the same time.

Giuliana M. Furci

Field Mycologist

Foundress & CEO Fungi Foundation

Harvard University Associate

National Geographic Explorer

Co-Chair, IUCN Fungal Conservation Committee

Dame, Order of the Star of Italy

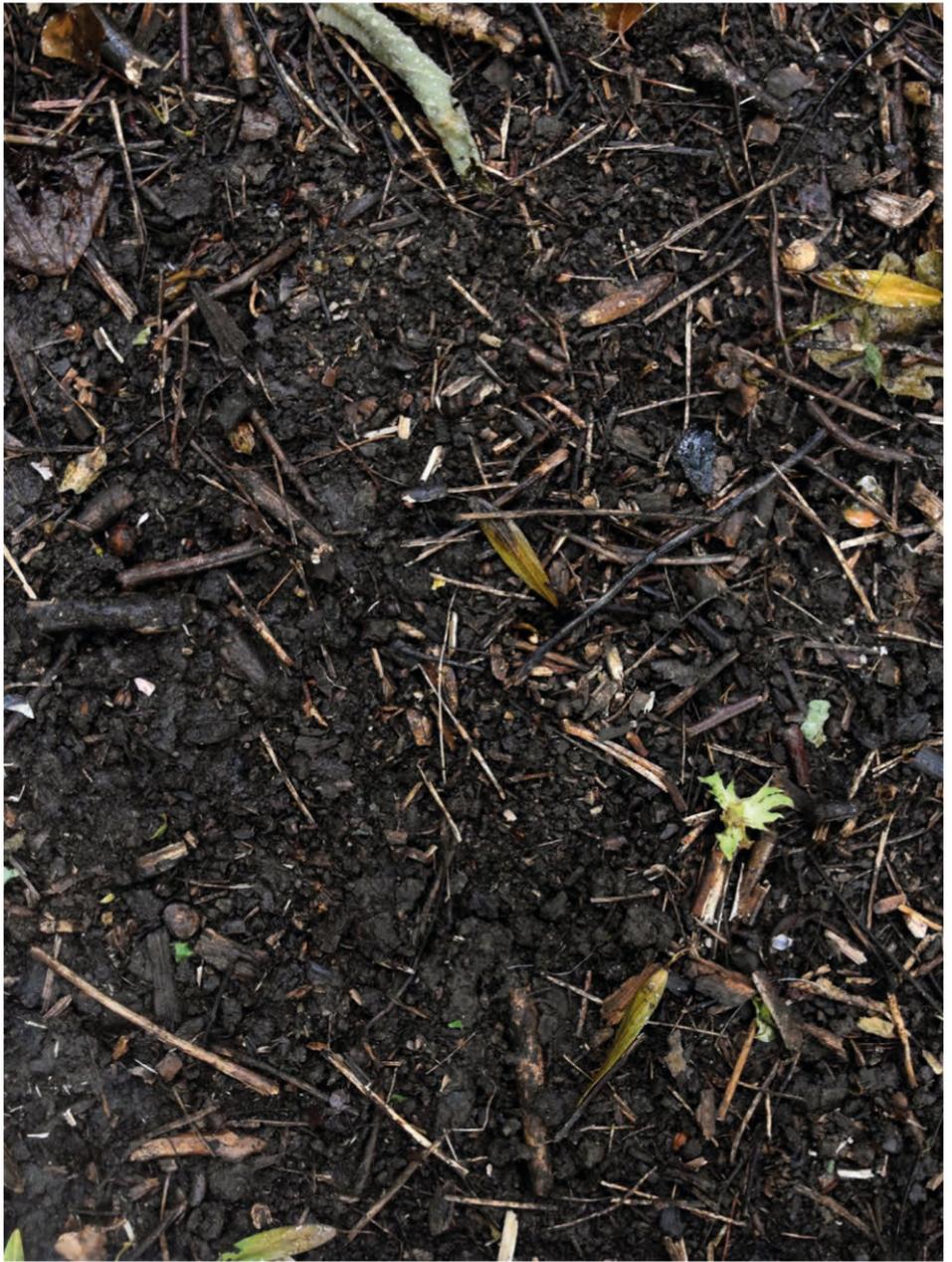
Santiago, Chile.

January 2023

Opposite: Soil print of a rainy day in Stoke Park.

Photograph by Rodrigo Arteaga

Giuliana Furci is the foundress and CEO of the Fungi Foundation. She is a Harvard University Associate, National Geographic Explorer, Co-Chair of the IUCN Fungal Conservation Committee and author of several titles including a series of field guides to Chilean fungi and co-author of titles such as the 1st State of the World's Fungi.





I used many printmaking processes that were new to me at CFPR. Laura Clarke, CFPR master printer, suggested experimental ideas such as sparkling white spirit on a soft ground on a copper plate, and directly exposing a mycelium found on the forest floor onto a photopolymer plate. I grew fungi on petri dishes, plates and vitrines, and observed mycelial networks under the microscopes at CFPR. From these observations I made etchings on copper plates imitating mycelial behaviour, printed with white ink on black paper. The microscopy observations later evolved into a video installation at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Chile. I was also able to document a live lichen using photogrammetry to then print it in 3D.

I tried a very exciting new idea that consisted of inoculating wooden letters with mycelium of *Pleurotus Ostreatus* (Oyster) for several weeks until the mycelium was completely ingrained in the wood. I then wrote poems on soil using these letters. It was like an intense mycelium bath, encouraging the mycelium to grow from the letters outward. I photographed them at this stage to create prints, calling them 'fungal poems'. This was a breakthrough for me which I want to keep exploring, also in sculptural form. I literally filled a whole notebook with ideas, some of which are the basis for year-long projects and others are impossible to make.

“In any fragment of the forest, part of the bark, you find huge diversity and it tells of how lively all the interactions are.”

My ideas grew much like mycelium as the residency progressed. I was thinking about symbiosis by the study of lichens and mosses in the subantarctic forests of Cape Horn when I arrived, and I realised that the CFPR itself was quite mycelial. I met so many experts in different fields that I felt I needed to get to know people and see what was possible on arrival. Many collaborations followed, much like a hypha would link and create new paths.

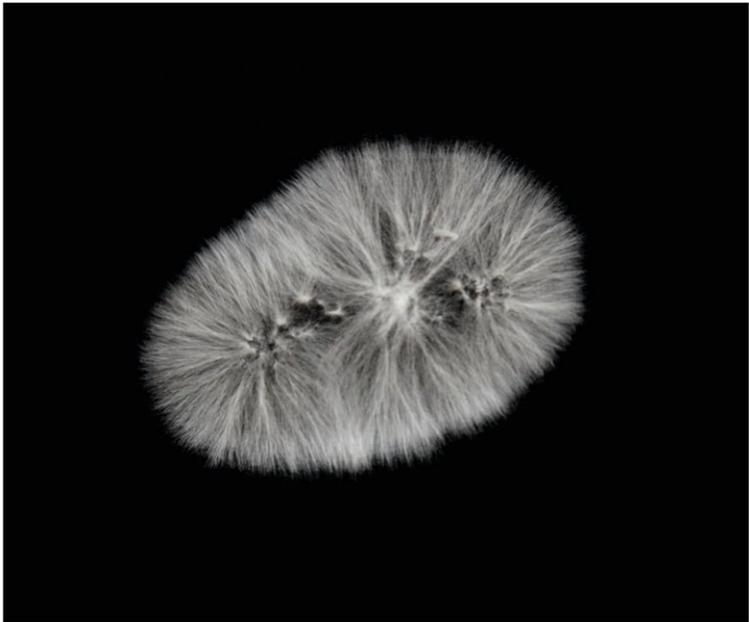
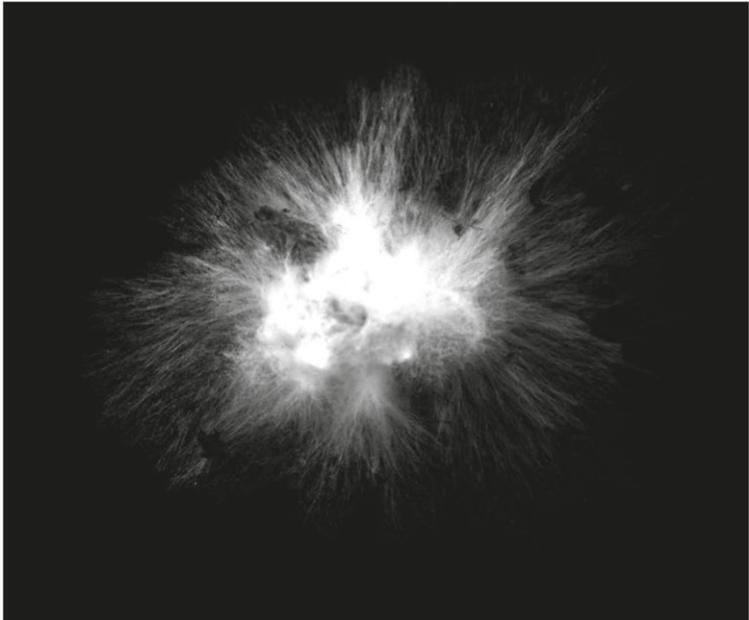
I initiated a variety of experiments simultaneously, to get a sense for what processes would work. Working with live organic systems is unpredictable and things can change drastically from day to day. It's quite exciting but you must be open to the possibility that things might not work. I remember one day being totally immersed in the forest when rain started pouring. I got completely wet, and it occurred to me that you had to get wet to study fungi - that was the reason why they were growing in abundance there.

I spent so many hours looking, observing, smelling, and moving things around in the search to find fungi. I think that daily ritual of cycling and going to the forest to see what I could find was very important. I spent time in Bristol's Leigh Woods, Snuff Mills and Stoke Park. The forest rewarded me each time and was leading my way. The residency became like a laboratory for thinking, observation and letting ideas and processes grow, as if gradually removing oneself and allowing the fungi to manifest.

Opposite top: Mycelium growing on soil.

Opposite bottom: Mycelium growing on black paper.

Photographs by Rodrigo Arteaga



Every day of the residency I learned something new. Just the opportunity to delve into research for two months was very enriching. So many days were spent walking in the forest, observing. I learned the locations of fungi that I came back to see, noticing changes in their growth. The forest rewards the ones who look. Preparing to discover something unknown and mysterious requires some opening up. I learned about different species to the ones I am most familiar with in Chile.

In this sort of constellation between the studio and the forest, I brought fungi samples to the lab and turned the darkroom into a growing room. The aim was to look at the local fungi. I think that gaze is very important – I have collaborated before with microbiology labs or bio fabrication labs and so I attempted, kind of, to make my own microbiology lab. I also had to study all the recipes – I'd never prepared agar before or explored the whole sterilization process. It's been a great learning experience, and an opportunity to develop that relationship with the forest. It's inwards and outwards at the same time. I also learned that my own studio should become more of a laboratory.



Opposite: Fungal poems: all fall cada caída. Wooden letters inoculated with mycelium of *Pleurotus Ostreatus* and written onto soil. Collaboration with Luna Montenegro and Adrian Fisher.

Left: Mycelium print. Etching with white ink on black somerset paper. Drawn using a very fine etching needle. 10 x 15 cm.

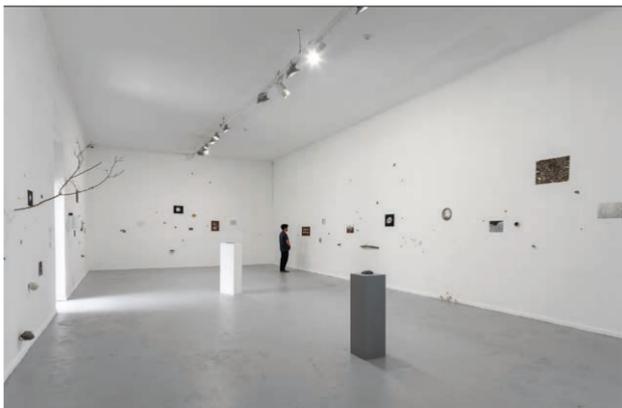
Photographs by Rodrigo Arteaga

ALL

FALL

CADA

CADA



Above: Residency work on exhibition at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Chile, November 2022.

Left: Residency work on exhibition at Museo de Arte.

Photographs by Felipe Ugalde

Whilst thinking about the final edition I was obsessing with the book *A Mycological Foray* which examines John Cage's fascination with fungi. I had also just finished reading *Entangled Life* by Merlin Sheldrake, which was extremely inspiring. I was in the middle of many experiments and one night I dreamt of a book that would encompass all the processes of the residency. The idea of a non-linear book started to take shape, a box-like artist book that could contain the process. Mycelium is much more a process than a fixed thing, so I was driven to the idea of a book that you could open and unfold, containing a collection of prints and objects. The opening of the box felt appropriate, because in many ways, I had been trying to open up the soil and see what happened below our feet. The CFPR team suggested new ideas that were included in the final edition, such as including a magnifying glass and petri dish in the box.

In the process the dark room was turned into a mushroom growing laboratory that became a constellation between the studio and the forest. I took fungi samples from the local surrounding forest to grow them in the lab and made experiments, that are understood as devices, to observe what would normally happen beneath the soil or through a substrate. Thin glass vitrines, microscopes, bio-trays, petri dishes and agar were all used to contemplate mycelial growth. Some prints were made with etching by copying mycelium networks, others by directly exposing mycelium onto photosensitive plates, others by writing fungal poems with inoculated letters. Mycelium is a process, a behaviour, and in a similar way, the ideas in this book have grown and expanded.

“The residency became like a laboratory for thinking, observation and letting ideas and processes grow, as if gradually removing oneself and allowing the fungi to manifest.”

My edition started to evolve into an artist book that included several editions instead of one. This was the only way of representing the ideas as what they are. I wanted to include the mistakes as much as the very thought through and prepared processes, as they are of equal importance. I wanted to make a work that almost made itself somehow.

The biggest challenge was the ambition of so many different prints – I got lost trying to make them into an index, which became a map to get lost in. I think we overcame the challenges as a team, through sharing ideas, and through the enormous patience, generosity and skill of Laura Clarke who did the editioning. We also benefitted from the skill of Bristol Bound Bookbinders who produced a beautiful linen box to contain the prints. I think we communicated well and, like a mycelium, worked in collaboration and symbiosis. I am so thankful to everyone who contributed to the overall project.

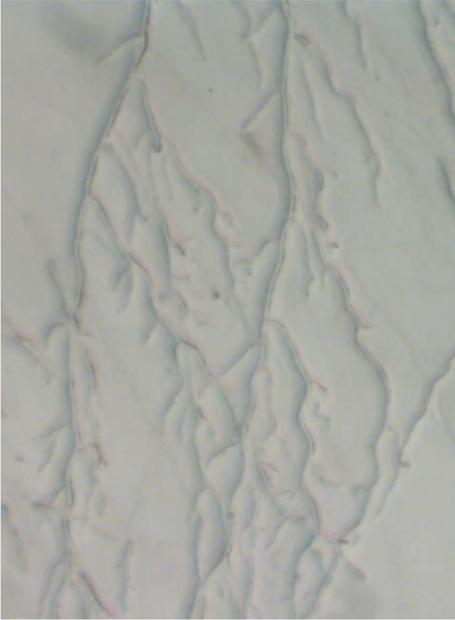
Below: Microscopy video installation at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Chile, November 2022.

Opposite right: Glass vitrine with topsoil and leaves collected at Stoke's Park inoculated with *Pleurotus Ostreatus* spawn.

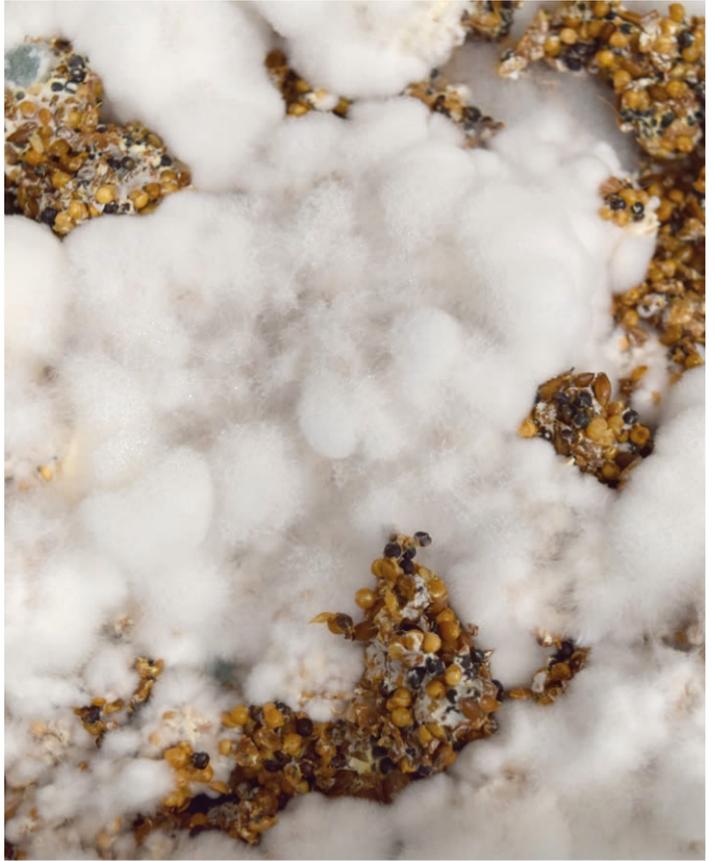
Opposite left: Microscopy of mycelium growing on agar in petri dish.

Photographs by Rodrigo Arteaga





“I’m very interested in rethinking notions or definitions of nature and culture and representation, to somehow awaken the terms... Like how we define ourselves as humans in relation to this thread of life that sustains us, whether we call that nature or ecology.”



Opposite top: Watercolour of a lichen in Leigh Woods. Bristol, UK.

Opposite below: Letters for the fungal poems being inoculated with *Pleurotus Ostreatus* grain spawn.

Right: Mycelium growing on leaf found on forest floor.

Below: Lamellas filled with spores of *Pleurotus Ostreatus*.

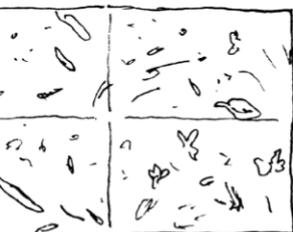
Below right: Spores seen around fungus growing on a tree.

All photographs by Rodrigo Arteaga





1. SOIL PRINT OF A RAINY DAY. 2. HAND LENSE. 3. LICHEN WATERCOLOUR. 4. MOSS WATERCOLOUR. 5. SPORE PRINTS ON BOOK PAGES BY CHANGING THE COLOUR. 6. OYSTER MUSHROOMS GROWING ON A TREE IN STOKE'S PARK. 7. PETRI DISHES WITH DIFFERENT SPECIES OF FUNGI AND BACTERIA. 8. PETRI DISHES WITH DIFFERENT SPECIES OF FUNGI AND BACTERIA. 9. INTERMIXED ASTROLOGY BOOK PAGES BY CHANGING THE COLOUR. 10. MYCELIUM GROWING ON A STONE FOUND ON STOKE'S PARK. 11. SPORES SCATTERED AROUND THE FOREST, FIRST SIGN OF THE MUSHROOM. 12. A SIGN THAT SAYS 'EVERYTHING AT ONCE NOWHERE IN PARTICULAR'. 13. TWO RECTANGULAR SPORE PRINTS. 14. MYCELIUM GROWING ON A TREE. 15. MYCELIUM GROWING ON A LEAF. 16. A RECTANGULAR SPORE PRINT. 17. A RECTANGULAR SPORE PRINT. 18. YEAST GROWING ON AGAR. 19. YEAST GROWING ON BLACK AGAR. 20. PHOTOPOLYMER OF MYCELIUM PRINTED ON PAPER. 21. MYCELIUM GROWING ON A LEAF. 22. A MUSHROOM. 23. A CIRCULAR SPORE PRINT. 24. OYSTER MUSHROOMS GROWING ON A TREE. 25. ETCHING WITH WHITE INK ON BLACK SAMURSET PAPER. 26. A PETRI DISH WITH FUNGI. 27. MYCELIUM GROWING ON A LEAF. 28. ETCHING WITH WHITE INK ON BLACK SAMURSET PAPER, MYCELIUM. 29. MYCELIUM GROWING ON A LEAF. 30. MYCELIUM GROWING ON A LEAF. 31. A HAND LENSE. 32. MYCELIUM GROWTH ON A LEAF. 33. WHITE INK ETCHING WITH WHITE INK ON BLACK SAMURSET PAPER. 34. A MUSICAL SCORE WITH MYCELIUM. 35. PETRI DISHES WITH DIFFERENT SPECIES OF FUNGI AND BACTERIA. 36. WOOD ROTTING FUNGUS. 37. A MUSICAL SCORE WITH MYCELIUM. 38. A MUSICAL SCORE WITH MYCELIUM. 39. A MUSICAL SCORE WITH MYCELIUM. 40. A MUSICAL SCORE WITH MYCELIUM. 41. A MUSICAL SCORE WITH MYCELIUM. 42. A MUSICAL SCORE WITH MYCELIUM. 43. FUNGAL POEM 2, ALL FALL CADA CAIDA BY LINA MONTENEGRO AND ADRIAN FISHER. 44. FUNGAL ETCHING. 45. FUNGAL ETCHING. 46. FUNGAL ETCHING. 47. LARGE MYCELIUM ETCHING WITH WHITE INK ON BLACK SAMURSET PAPER.



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ANT. 6. LICHEN AND MOSS GROWING ON BARK. 7. OAK LEAF PHOTOPOLYMER AND ETCHING. 8. INTERVENING ASTRONOMY
 M. GROWING ON TOP SOIL. 11. MYCELIUM GROWING ON TOP SOIL. 12. MYCELIUM GROWING ON TOP SOIL. 13. GREY OYSTER
 MUSHROOM FULL OF SPORES AROUND IT. 16. NIGHT SKY PHOTOGRAPHY INVERTED. 17. NIGHT SKY PHOTOGRAPHY INVERTED.
 ON HIMALAYAN HANDMADE PAPER. 21. MUSHROOM GIUS FULL OF SPORES. 22. DISSECTION OF A MUSHROOM. 23. LICHEN
 ON BARK, MYCELIUM. 26. DARDINIA CONCENTRICA DISSECTED. 27. MYCELIUM MOUNTAIN RANGE GROWING ON A THIN GLASS
 PLASTIC. 30. MUSIC SCORE TO BE PLAYED CONCENTRICALLY OF A MYCELIUM BY FELIX PAVO-KOVALENKO. 31. MYCELIUM
 SPIRIT SPARKLED ON SOFT GROUND COPPER PLATE. 34. PHOTOGRAPH OF MYCELIUM GROWING ON A PUTTY DISH SPON
 US ON A STICK. 37. OYSTER MYCELIUM ON AEAR PLATE WITH YEAST. 38. YEAST AND BACTERIA PRINTING ON BLACK
 MICROSCOPY TRAVELLING THROUGH THE MYCELIUM FOREST. 41. MYCELIUM TRANSFORMED QUTO PAPER. 42. FUNGAL FORM
 FORM 3, CONVERGENCE. 45. FUNGAL FORM 4, FUTURE. 46. FUNGAL FORM 5, EVERYWHERE AT ONCE NOWHERE IN PARTICULAR.

Mycelium Book / 2023

Edition size: 20 + 3 AP's

Dimensions: W 21.5cm x H 29cm x D 5cm

Printmaking processes: Intaglio, Photopolymer Gravure, Inkjet Print

Substrates: Japanese Paper, Somerset Paper, Digital Hahnemuhle, Magnifying Glass, Petri Dish, Wood, Bound Box



All photographs by Simon Regan





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