

april april

gut flora

Lizette Hernández, Rebecca R. Peel, Sarah M. Rodriguez, Micah Schippa, Michelle 진아 Song
Curated by Margaret Kross / Romance

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With the right breathing exercises and hip openers, the gut can be activated, spewing spirals of memories you didn't know you had. In that soup of acid, neurotransmitters, and microorganisms, one might gain access to generational memory, and cosmic knowledge, too—an elixir of psychedelic dreams, psychosis, past dimensions, and entangled interspecies being. Hot tears and visions vomit from the gut trying to recoup something in these viscous fluids. When the gut gets activated, cradling higher consciousness, lower consciousness, and divine energy, all at once, are we dying, or healing?

Urban development leading to the loss of local habitats and biodiversity may be detrimental to human health by depleting or otherwise altering the reservoirs of environmental microbes. Members of the microbiota can be permanent 'residents,' transmitted through close contact between individuals, or transient 'hitchhikers' from ingested food, water, and various components of the environment.

The earth is a brain is a body.

Gut flora can affect how we experience the world, triggering intense feelings of happiness, reward, or anxiety and depression, in turn impacting behavior and health. People have co-evolved with environmental bacteria adapted over eons to being at home in human bodies...

...shaping a topography of psychological and emotional experience—why ourselves and our homes are unwell, what is subsequently culturally determined, how a soul evolves. How does the body grieve and flourish in conditions inhospitable to the creatures we need growing within us.

Epidemiological studies show individuals living in built environments have lower diversity of microbiota. Most of the body's serotonin comes from the gut wall. Any disturbance to the gut microbiomes is supposed to be associated with neuropsychiatric disorders, metabolic disorders, autoimmune diseases and allergies, etc. Poor health-effects may be caused by changes in the human lifestyle, diet, living environment, and environmental biodiversity as a result of urbanization.

It follows that manipulation of the flora and living conditions represents a promising therapeutic strategy. Studies show that growing up in microbe-rich environments, such as traditional farms, can have protective health effects, both mental and physiological.

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—Margaret Kross



info@aprilapril.gallery
Quincy Street, Brooklyn, NY 11216

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Margaret Kross is a writer and curator. Her writing has appeared in Artforum, CURA, Frieze, and Flash Art as well as museum publications. She has held curatorial roles at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York and managed Media, Engagement, and Special Projects at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago. At the Whitney, Kross organized *Bunny Rogers: Brig Und Ladder* (2017) and worked with artists Carolina Caycedo, Demian DinéYazhi´, Ginger Dunnill, Torkwase Dyson, Cy Gavin, Lena Henke, and Erin Jane Nelson in co-organizing *Between the Waters* (2018), both in collaboration with Elisabeth Sherman. She also worked on numerous curatorial teams, including the 2022 Whitney Biennial, co-organized by David Breslin and Adrienne Edwards

Most recently, Kross was a 2023 Curatorial Research Fellow with Independent Curators International (ICI). Other projects include editing a limited-run journal, *Mossflower*, focused on the process and labor of studio practice through prose, poetry, images, and archives from over thirty contributing artists and writers. She also runs *Romance*, an apartment exhibition space in Pittsburgh.

Lizette Hernández (b.1992, Los Angeles, CA) received her BA from the University of California, Los Angeles. Hernández creates sculptures with clay that are abstract in appearance but nonetheless suggestive of natural forms and textures. With her practice, she questions cultural customs through the subversion of expectations and the subtle allusion to the familiar within alien forms. Her work has been included in exhibitions at *Various Small Fires*, Los Angeles; Charles Moffett, New York; Craft Contemporary Museum, Los Angeles; Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, Los Angeles; and a solo exhibition at Harkawik, Los Angeles.

Rebecca R. Peel (b. 1990, Colorado) currently stations in Wyoming. The views are nice and the winters are long. Not much snow so far this season, though. Maybe it'll help the herds of ungulates who were depleted last year. We'll see if they drain the reservoir again next summer to irrigate the crops in Idaho.

Sarah M. Rodriguez (b. 1984 in Honolulu, HI) lives and works in Ojo Caliente, New Mexico. They earned their MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles in *New Genres* (2014) and a BFA From California College of the Arts (2008), and was a participant in the Shandaken Residency (2016) and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2010). Their works has been exhibited at Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, US; MOCA, Los Angeles, US; Paul Soto, Los Angeles, US; Depart Foundation, Malibu, US; La Maison Rendez-Vous, Brussels, BE; Mass Moca, North Adams; Folsom Projects, San Francisco, US; The Valley, Taos, US; and Tara Downs, New York, US among many others.

Micah Schippa (b. 1988) is a Chicago-based artist, writer, and musician. Recent and upcoming exhibitions include the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, *Romance* Pittsburgh, and *Pinacoteca Vienna*. They received their BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC).



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Michelle 진아 (Jin-Ah) Song (b. 1989, Hayward, CA) is an artist based in Los Angeles. Raised in Seoul, South Korea and the Bay Area, she received her B.A. in Art from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her recent paintings have been shown at No Place Gallery, and Chez Anonyme in Los Angeles, California.

