



Madrid, 13 June 2019

**Art, science, technology: Madrid contributes to the international debate on the climate crisis by coming up with solutions**

## **Matadero Madrid becomes a loud hailer on the climate crisis with the international *Eco-visionaries* exhibition, a proposal for a cyborg garden in its complex and the creation of the Mutant Institute of Environmental Narratives**

- From 13 June to 6 October, Matadero's Nave 16 will be hosting *Eco-visionaries. Art for a Planet in a State of Emergency*, an international exhibition project that addresses the climate crisis through artistic practices.
- Curated by Pedro Gadanho, Mariana Pestana and Matadero Madrid, the exhibition features installations and audiovisual projects by more than 40 contemporary artists, who tackle issues such as the extinction of species, deforestation, air pollution and the need to imagine new food systems.
- *Eco-visionaries* is the inaugural activity of the Mutant Institute of Environmental Narratives (IMNA), a new Matadero Madrid initiative that promotes projects that help to create environmental narratives capable of going beyond traditional green discourses.
- While the exhibition is running, the IMNA will move into Nave 16, where it will present a range of activities and projects, such as an ambitious *Cyborg Garden* to improve temperatures in the Matadero complex, citizen science initiatives, a radio programme, performances, climate fiction workshops and international lectures.
- The *Eco-visionaries* opening will be held today at 7.30 pm in Nave 16 of Matadero Madrid and will be attended by the curators and the artists Pinar Yoldas, Paula Gaetano Adi and Darlene Farris-Labar.

Forty visionary artists and architects respond to the urgency of the environmental crisis threatening our planet and are occupying Nave 16 of Matadero Madrid to take part in

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the international *Eco-visionaries* project, an exhibition-cum-manifesto that condemns the situation but first and foremost presents proposals.

*Eco-visionaries* is the shared title of **an international exhibition project** originally organised by the MAAT (Museu de Arte, Arquitetura e Tecnologia) in Lisbon (Portugal), Bildmuseet de Umeå (Sweden), House of Electronic Arts (HeK) in Basel (Switzerland) and LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial in Gijón. It was conceived as a work in progress to which new contributions have been added by the Centro de Creación Contemporánea Matadero Madrid and the Royal Academy of Arts in London (United Kingdom). In Spain, **Matadero Madrid and LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial in Gijón** are working in partnership on the joint presentation of this proposal.

*Eco-visionaries* is being presented in Matadero Madrid as the first activity of a new initiative, the centre's **Instituto Mutante de Narrativas Ambientales** [Mutant Institute of Environmental Narratives-IMNA], which will address the climate crisis through research and artistic output. The institute is backed by Platform-A, an interdisciplinary network consisting of the itdUPM (Innovation and Technology for Human Development Centre), Madrid City Council, through its Environment and Mobility Division, and Matadero Madrid. The institute will be temporarily based in Nave 16 in order to present its projects and to support the exhibition with its activity. Among its various projects, the institute proposes to establish an ambitious **Cyborg Garden** for the Matadero complex as an experiment in climate change adaptation in urban environments.

## **ECO-VISIONARIES. ART FOR A PLANET IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY**

At a time when climate change is becoming ever more obvious and the voices calling for radical action are increasing in number and growing louder, eco-visionaries put forward critical and creative visions for storytelling, initiating discussions and devising strategies for surviving in the world to come, which they present in a range of contemporary art practices, among them installations, audiovisual works and projects in other media. From the extinction of species to deforestation, from pollution of the seas to the toxicity of the air we breathe, from the foreseeable climate refugees to the need to imagine new food systems, the exhibition addresses the most important crisis that humankind faces.

Ever since pre-industrial times and particularly from the second half of the last century onwards, environmental degradation and human-caused climate change have been increasing at a pace without precedent in any previous period of history. The exhibition examines the theoretical framework of the **Anthropocene**, a concept used by some in the scientific community for this new geological era we live in, and a term that makes

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reference to its defining characteristic: the responsibility borne by humans as the agents of environmental change on a planetwide scale.

Curated by **Pedro Gadanho, Mariana Pestana and the Matadero Madrid team**, *Eco-Visionaries* is a manifesto-exhibition focusing on the impacts of rapidly changing ecological conditions, mostly provoked by human action on the surface of the planet.

*Eco-visionaries* asks how artists, architects, designers and other cultural practitioners are inquiring into such ecological transformations, by producing a critique of their causes, raising awareness on their less visible aspects, and anticipating alternative visions on how to respond and adapt to their consequences. With more than 40 participants across four sections - disaster, extinction, co- existence and adaptation – pieces and projects in the exhibition alternate between critical inquiry and visionary optimism. In the subjective, unstable images of ecology captured by the works of art and architecture selected for *Eco-visionaries*, we seek to recover a sense of hope in the future, rescued from the monsters of reason that emerged out of the Enlightenment's dreams of human progress.

This proposal is unique in that over the course of two years, each of the participating bodies has mounted an exhibition on the links between contemporary art and the current environmental challenges we face. These exhibitions were underpinned by the same theory and concepts but took different approaches directly related to the particular interests of each institution. *Eco-visionaries* is a non-touring research project that is being presented concurrently in different venues and, more importantly, features new works and new ideas in each presentation. It works with the contexts where it is shown and hence is an open research project that grows throughout the process.

Bildmuseet (15 June – 21 October 2018) approached this subject by taking a look back at the history of the link between art and ecology; MAAT (11 April – 8 October 2018) focused its exhibition on the cross-disciplinary connection between art, design and sustainable architecture; and HeK (30 August – 11 November 2018) examined the nexuses between art, ecology and technology. *Eco-visionaries* is being held concurrently in Matadero Madrid and in LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial. LABoral addresses in its *Eco-visionaries* exhibition (24 May – 26 October 2019) the emerging connections between the biosphere and the technosphere, examining them from different perspectives, illustrated with works of an interdisciplinary nature that encompass art, science, technology and society. Matadero Madrid is turning the spotlight on the mutualism between human and non-human species and on projects to do with adaptation to climate change in urban environments. It is also presenting an ambitious programme of activities and debates through a new platform for interdisciplinary work: the Instituto Mutante de Narrativas Ambientales (IMNA).

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The results of the various *Eco-visionaries* exhibitions are presented in a [catalogue](#), published in English by Hatje Cantz, containing essays by the curators and contributions from experts in various fields, among them Linda Weintraub, Amale Andraos, Matthew Fuller and T.J. Demos.

### The Participating Artists and Architects

Allora & Calzadilla (United States / Cuba), Nelly Ben Hayoun (France), Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares (Switzerland / Brazil), Zheng Bo (China), C+/In the Air (Spain / United Kingdom), Carolina Caycedo (United Kingdom / Colombia), Emma Charles (United Kingdom), Fernando Cremades (Spain), Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg (United Kingdom), Darlene Farris-Labar (United States), Paula Gaetano Adi (Argentina), Tue Greenfort (Denmark), Terike Haapoja (Finland), HeHe (United Kingdom / Germany), Husos (Madrid), Andrés Jaque (Spain), Kiluanji Kia Henda (Angola), Jakob Kudsk Steensen (Denmark), Gabriel Ruiz Larrea (Spain), Pedro Neves Marques (Portugal), Next Nature Network (Holland), Eva Papamargariti (Greece), SKREI (Portugal), Superflex (Denmark), Jenna Sutela (Finland), Unknown Fields Division (United Kingdom / Australia), Ana Vaz and Tristan Bera (Brazil / France) and Pinar Yoldas (Turkey).

### MUTANT INSTITUTE OF ENVIRONMENTAL NARRATIVES

In the gallery adjoining the exhibition room and connected to it, Matadero presents the temporary headquarters of the **Mutant Institute of Environmental Narratives** (Instituto Mutante de Narrativas Ambientales – INMA), a project supported by **Plataform-A**, an interdisciplinary network made up of the itdUPM (Innovation and Technology for Human Development Centre), Madrid City Council, through its Environment and Mobility Division, and Matadero Madrid. The platform brings together an international group of artists, designers, researchers, thinkers, scientists, engineers, architects and many other agents around artistic research and production to tackle the climate crisis.

In light of the urgent need for collective awareness of the planet-wide crisis, Matadero Madrid is proposing the Instituto Mutante de Narrativas Ambientales as an initiative to **promote projects that help to create environmental narratives that go beyond traditional green discourses**. This it hopes to achieve through artistic practices and in connection with other areas of knowledge such as journalism, the humanities and social sciences, science and technological research. The institute believes that alongside the necessary technological projects and processes, the current global challenges call for cultural and political changes – based on collective intelligence and social innovation – that will make it possible to implement radical structural changes connected with new

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habits of production and consumption, a rebalancing of global systems and a new responsibility pact vis-à-vis future generations. Based on this conviction and through the research and analysis of the imaginaries and desires that continue to hold our society in thrall, the institute will be promoting artistic production, the use of fiction and other strategies based on interdisciplinarity.

IMNA has adopted a position in the debate on the Anthropocene, viewing it as a new epoch that calls for a new understanding of humankind and our position and occupation of the world. It wishes to serve as a space for rethinking the relationships between culture and nature, between nature and technology, and for generating a new imaginary that takes into consideration the interests of non-human entities and that promotes mutually beneficial relationships with other species.

Based on this framework and in the firm belief that the global challenges demand knowledge that extends across and beyond disciplinary boundaries, the Instituto Mutante proposes to foster the growth of the environmental humanities to achieve an interdisciplinary approach to the climate crisis that will enable regenerative social communication to take place. This is posited as a tool for achieving **three goals**: to identify and understand existing imaginaries concerning climate change (its treatment in the media, on social networks, etc.); to engage in interdisciplinary research in partnership with others, producing projects on climate change adaptation; and to communicate research and innovation initiatives to empower citizens in this process of adaptation.

The Instituto Mutante aims not only to give society insights into research activity and environmental knowledge but also to initiate research with agents in a range of disciplines and with the public. The goal is to work together on developing nature-based solutions capable of giving rise to new associations of ideas and known concepts.

All of this will take place through **partnerships** between artists, foundations, institutions, public authorities, universities, collectives and assorted **communities to create strategic environmental information campaigns and to nurture projects to rethink the relationships between culture and nature**, between **nature and technology**, between science and fiction (or between fiction and non-fiction), between the macro and the micro, between politics and cosmopolitics, between ethics and eco-ethics, between ecology and politics, and the role of non-humans in planetary ecosystems. The institute is launching various lines of work: communication between species, the river as a core component in the transformation of the city; the rights of nature and environmental justice (to be addressed by studying and condemning ecocides and 'toxic biographies'); the new economies; and food systems.

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## IMNA Programme of activities

Between June and October in Nave 16, the IMNA is running a series of activities to present its main lines of action, from a radio programme to lectures, performances, citizen science initiatives, online training on green cities, games and climate fiction workshops.

The activities are organised around **three core themes**: *Co-operative Resilience*; *Post-nature*; and *Non-human Entities*. What type of networks do we construct in relationships between humans and other species? What would happen if we were to regard the planet as several brains thinking and acting in a single body, as occurs in some micro-organisms? What are the consequences of conceiving of 'nature' as something that is autonomous, relatively untouched and separate from our human society? What might the role of the Manzanares River be in efforts to transform the climate in the city of Madrid?

Starting with a review of theories of evolution based on the survival of the fittest, the *Co-operative Resilience* line of work studies processes of adaptation founded on co-operation and the horizontal learning of other species. As an example, we present, among other initiatives, **Game of swarms, a work by the artist Paula Nishijima**, which examines natural networks such as those of social insects or micro-organisms in order to create new forms of relationships and work.

The *Post-nature* framework of theory that points to the end of the dichotomy between nature and society makes it possible to conceive of the idea of *urban nature* and of the need to reconsider processes to green cities. This is illustrated by, among other initiatives, **Riología [Riverology]**, a work by the artist **Robertina Šebjanič** on the process of greening the Manzanares River that includes a citizen science activity involving more than 600 participants.

Lastly, the Instituto Mutante presents initiatives such as the **Ministerio del Futuro [Ministry of the Future]** – a working group that will consider the nature of the portfolio of a hypothetical minister of the future and which will invite law students, civic organisations involved in environmental protection and other agents to participate in laying the groundwork – and **Comunicador Inter-especial [Inter-special Communicator]**, a work by the artist **Fito Conesa**, to address the need to define a mixed political arena that recognises the rights of *non-human entities* and of the humans to come in order to construct a future inter-species and intergenerational pact.

The initial results of the work done to date by Plataform-A (an interdisciplinary network of the institute) will also be presented. In addition to the process of greening Matadero through the Cyborg Garden, the installation of a climate network in Madrid to provide citizens with useful weather information will be presented. There will also be the presentation of a climate change mitigation initiative focusing on active mobility (pedestrians and cyclists), public transport and shared mobility on the Sur (Vallecas)

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and Moncloa campuses of the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (Polytechnic University of Madrid), taking into account Measure 19 of Madrid City Council's *Plan A: Plans on Sustainable Commuter Mobility*.

### A Cyborg Garden at Matadero Madrid

Plataform-A has launched a number of projects in Madrid that are taking an interdisciplinary approach to address climate change adaptation and to improve air quality in the city of Madrid, among them the development of a highly ambitious climate network, experiments to improve mobility around the city and an urban greening initiative in the form of the creation of a **Cyborg Garden** in Matadero Madrid.

The Matadero complex has vast spaces without plant life or shade and is situated in the middle of a 'heat island'. Consequently, it suffers enormously during periods of extreme temperatures and especially the heat waves that are occurring with increasing frequency in Madrid. In light of this adverse situation, a process to create the **Cyborg Garden** was set in motion in April 2018, taking the form of a series of workshops led by artists and architects and involving geologists, botanists, engineers, sociologists, anthropologists, designers and many others. The garden will be a case study in the city's public space, providing an opportunity to experiment with nature-based solutions on urban climate change adaptation that will increase resilience.

Led by the Elii oficina de arquitectura, the initiative is now at the prototyping stage. The artists who have taken part include the biodesigner **Orkan Telhan** (Germany), who holds a PhD in Computing and will be working with new species and the rituals involved in caring for these natural and artificial hybrids; the **uh513** collective, consisting of the artist María Castellanos and the technologist Alberto Valverde (Spain), who will be using cyborg prototypes and virtual reality and inviting us to expand our sensorial faculties and to interact with plants in the garden; the **Double Happiness** architects' collective [Joyce Hwang and Nerea Feliz] (USA / Spain), who will be considering the needs of insects, the 'other' occupants of Matadero Madrid that are not always visible but are nevertheless crucial in the dynamics of the urban ecosystem; the **TAKK** architects [Mireia Luzárraga and Alejandro Muiño] (Spain), who will be developing spaces where people can spend time, spaces that generate shade and share in the local biodiversity; and **Rachel Armstrong, Rolf Hughes, Pierangelo Scravaglieri** [Newcastle University], **John Bowers, Tim Shaw e Ioannis Ieropoulos** [University of the West of England] (UK) who all will be designing a purification system to treat visitors' urine and turn it into irrigation water for the Cyborg Garden.

The process to create the garden and the Instituto Mutante's other initiatives represent experimentation based on an interdisciplinary working methodology developed in workshops involving agents in very different fields. The aim is to promote collective intelligence and co-creation around nature-based solutions to raise awareness and to

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foster the participation of numerous actors. This vision requires us to act within a methodological framework to formulate together the transformations our cities need in a more efficient manner, encouraging the inclusion of unconventional agents and, at the same time, developing new narratives on climate change and sustainable transformation from different and disruptive perspectives capable of reaching increasing numbers of people.

During this phase, Matadero Madrid will function as a proving ground and as a case study for trialling prototypes that can be replicated in other spaces in the city of Madrid, as well as other scientific and technological innovation processes for testing the aforementioned nature-based solutions. Consequently, the Instituto Mutante's projects are collective exercises in reflection and in the development of climate change adaptation solutions.

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### ***Eco-visionaries. Art for a Planet in State of Emergency***

13 June – 6 October 2019

Matadero Madrid. Nave 16. Paseo de la Chopera 14

Tuesday to Sunday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Mondays and from 13th to 18th August closed

Free entrance

#EcoVisionaries

### **Instituto Mutante de Narrativas Ambientales**

13 June – 6 October 2019

Matadero Madrid. Nave 16. Paseo de la Chopera 14

Programme of activities at [www.mataderomadrid.org](http://www.mataderomadrid.org)

#MutantInstitute

### **Jardín Cyborg**

13 June – 6 October 2019

Matadero Madrid. Nave 16. Paseo de la Chopera 14

Tuesday to Sunday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Mondays and from 13th to 18th August closed

Free entrance

#CyborgGarden

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