MILIEUX
institute for arts · culture · technology

Annual Report
2023-2024

Concordia

Territorial Acknowledgment

We would like to begin by acknowledging that the Milieux Institute for Arts, Culture and Technology is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtià:ke/Montréal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Something strange happened to academia in the 1960s with the boom in mass education worldwide. We started to separate the core functions of teaching and research both ideologically and administratively. The situation got worse with neoliberal reforms in the 1980s and we are left today with these too often separated university missions. Milieux is a research institute but in occupying a position between departments, faculties and programs we are also able to evolve our own approach to the critical function of teaching. This moves beyond the obvious observation that all research also involves teaching and learning even for the most senior and expert researchers. We are invited to think more pedagogically about how research unfolds across our Milieux clusters, and how the activities and programs we support can contribute to both formal and informal education, as well as the professional development of our students, collaborators and publics.

Unlike similar research institutes at other universities, Milieux does not offer degree programs of its own. Our students come from any department or program across campus, across Montreal and beyond. Students participate because they feel the need or desire to do so, and this is a powerful tonic when compared to the demands of formal program requirements and qualifications. This does not mean that learning stops when students cross the threshold; I would argue that maybe its where learning actually starts. When the external demand is relaxed for a moment, it might be possible to see, experience and feel something new, something transformational.

Is it possible for a research culture to teach? Much of the activity at Milieux revolves around tried-and-true seminar style models of faculty led research teams, reading groups, guest lectures and workshops, directed studies and even the occasional

formal class. Where we excel in this is in terms of providing relatively open access to a diversity of learning experiences for students from any program. By concentrating these activities across the spaces in our footprint we intensify the experience for students who begin to see synergies across seemingly unrelated events and interactions. This is a kind a teaching, although there is no syllabus.

Deeper than this are the unintended consequences of leveraging our resources and capacity to create opportunities that students may seize on to create rich learning experiences of their own design. Nostagain, is a collaborative student project centred around orchestrating a yearly symposium in nostalgia studies. It could be a model for course as the students work through the literature to define their approach, organize a significant public academic event, curate a research-creation exhibition, learn to give conference papers, and so on. We will not find a successful venture like this in any strategic plan so we can only make sure there is the opportunity for it to occur. Similar initiatives have appeared also with the solar media collective, the generative AI studio, the ethnography lab's Pit project and more. Sometimes the prompt is external, from a faculty member or collaborator. Sometimes the prompt comes from one or two students and snowballs. The pedagogy here is about how to scaffold opportunity, not in a competitive entrepreneurial way, but in a nurturing, inclusive way.

Everywhere, students are trying to find the time and space to work with one another and learn from each other. They are picking up all the essential skills and making them relevant to their own aspirations at the same time. The overhead for this is negligible but structural impediments are tremendous. I have seen enough of this now that I am starting to wonder if the rest of the university hasn't gotten it all wrong. This year's annual report is then a celebration of the teaching mission of Milieux; let's reconcile the academic split that never should have happened.

The Milieux Institute's seven dynamic clusters act as fortuitous meeting grounds for its research-creators, (as diverse amongst each other as the clusters are within the Institute!) to discuss, exchange, and collaborate. Peer-to-peer learning models are naturally adopted as workshops, talks, and long-term projects blossom from chance encounters in the physical and virtual space.

Each cluster has its own research and conceptual mandate, and the encounters and collaborations cross-cluster spring forth to new projects and ways of seeing. Here is a general but in no way exhaustive description of the Institute's clusters:

Speculative Life is a research cluster at the intersection of the humanities, social sciences, design, and art. Their research activities focus on critical approaches to the environment, infrastructure, biomedia, digital culture and AI. Established groups in the cluster include the Biolab, Critical Anthropocene Research Group, Critical Practices in Materials and Materiality, Disrupting Design, the Concordia Ethnography Lab, Financializing Infrastructures, and Machine Agencies.

Post Image is a dynamic research space with an open studio access model that strives to foster an image-based research culture that locates itself in-between institutional and community driven art making. Its initiatives, events and facilities are grounded in studio practice and prioritize collective models in the learning and sharing of ideas combined with self-directed research.

Textiles and Materiality brings together research-creation expertise from textile arts and material culture to experiment with methods, processes and interdisciplinary modes of thinking that will shape the future of textiles, material objects and charged experiential spaces. The cluster fosters such expertise as complex weaving, electronic fabrics, interactive garments, rapid prototyping technologies, emerging materials, soft surfaces, and smart fashion.

The **Performing Arts Research Cluster** (**LePARC**)'s mission is to investigate performance practices by facilitating collaborative encounters through an interdisciplinary hub. Its artist-researchers study the positive transformative impacts of performance practices on individuals and societies, and develop creative theories, methods, technologies, perceptual strategies that strengthen these impacts. The act of performance figures as the core part of the research at the cluster, with learning-by-doing as an essential part of their approach.

Media & Materiality focuses on understanding historical developments in media technologies and communication, ranging from the ARPANET to the ZX Spectrum. Theory and methods of media historiography are central, with a focus on emerging but robust subfields such as media archaeology, variantology, new materialism, circulation theory, and technology writing.

Indigenous Futures explores how Indigenous people are imagining the future of their families and communities by employing art- and technology-making, coupled with scholarly analysis and conceptual development, to illuminate how the challenges of the present can be addressed, in part, through concrete, constructive, and critical dreams of the future.

Technoculture, Art and Games (**TAG**) studies digital games as exemplary objects for cultural research, artistic creation, technical innovation and social mediation, all in the context of an expanding information society and the changing fabric of everyday life.

CLUSTERS

SOLAR ECLIPSE
April 8th | 2 PM
Terrace 11th Floor

Exploring the Future of IFRC

On January 24th and 25th, the Indigenous Futures Research Centre (IFRC) hosted its second annual symposium at Concordia's 4TH SPACE, bringing together faculty, students, and alumni to share Indigenous perspectives on research and its future possibilities.

The two-day event featured critical dialogues that spanned multiple interdisciplinary practices, offering diverse perspectives on Indigenous research. It began with a panel on how animation and digital media can be used for Indigenous storytelling, highlighting emerging undergraduate and graduate student research by Neko Wong-Houle, Taylor McArthur, and Caeleigh Lighting. Continuing with a conversation between Professors Hannah Claus and Michelle McGeough on recentering Indigenous methodologies in curatorial practices. Day 1 concluded with the screening of Past Future Forward: The Making of a Hawaiian Video Game, a documentary following novice designers as they created He Ao Hau ("a new day"), the first space-themed game about Hawaiians.

Day 2 saw an intergenerational discussion on Indigenous linguistics with MA student Van Racine, prof. Sigwan Thivierge, and educator Elma Moses. This was followed by a conversation amongst graduate students Sierra Barber, Brooke Rice, and Rodrigo D'Alcântara about interdisciplinary beading, featherwork, and hide tanning as contemporary materialities. The symposium wrapped up with a presentation from Abundant Intelligences on integrating Indigenous Knowledge systems and Artificial Intelligence, focusing on frameworks to support future generations.

MILIEUX EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING WORKSHOP SERIES

Winter 2024, Milieux hosted an experiential learning workshop series, exploring themes relating to AI & microbial agency, issues of sustainable practices, and intimacy and alternate senses, splicing traditional craft techniques with creative new ways of working. The four featured workshops were developed exploring and combining several student-centered research themes including: AI poetry & digital embroidery, archiving & bioplastics, bacterial portraiture, pigment extraction & dyeing, and tactile sound.
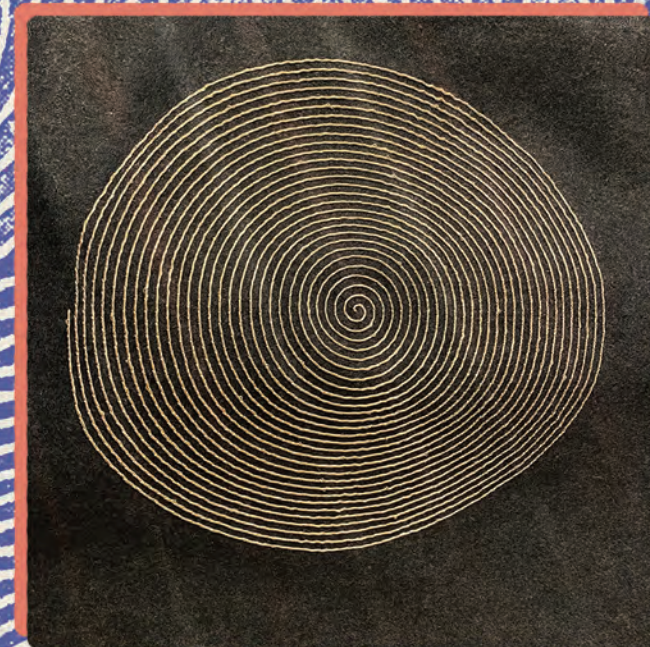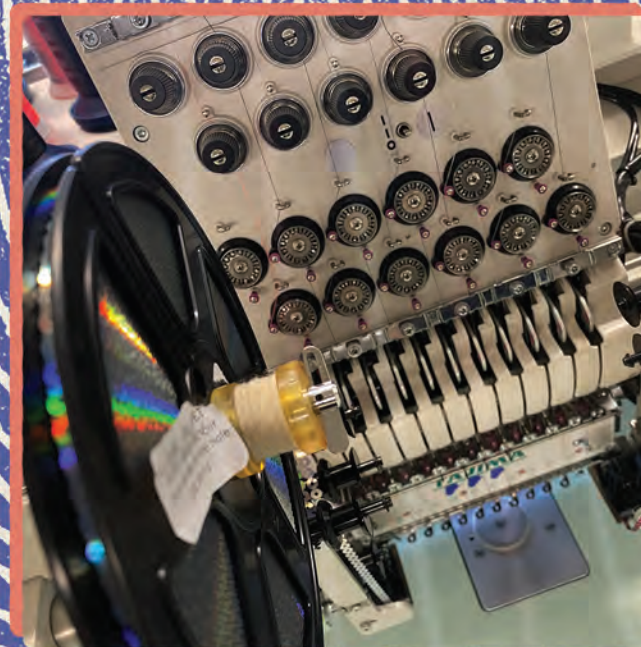
BACTERIAL PORTRAITURE

Come explore the microbiome & create small-scale portraits with bacteria! Alexandra Bachmayer will introduce participants to basic biolab protocols, and specific methodologies for growing bacteria from ourselves, and pigment-producing bacteria from preserved samples. We will use colourful pigment-producing bacteria to produce portraiture and view the growth and variety of bacteria cultivated from our own faces. Finally, we will learn methods to transfer the petri-dish portraits and other methods to preserve our small-scale artworks.
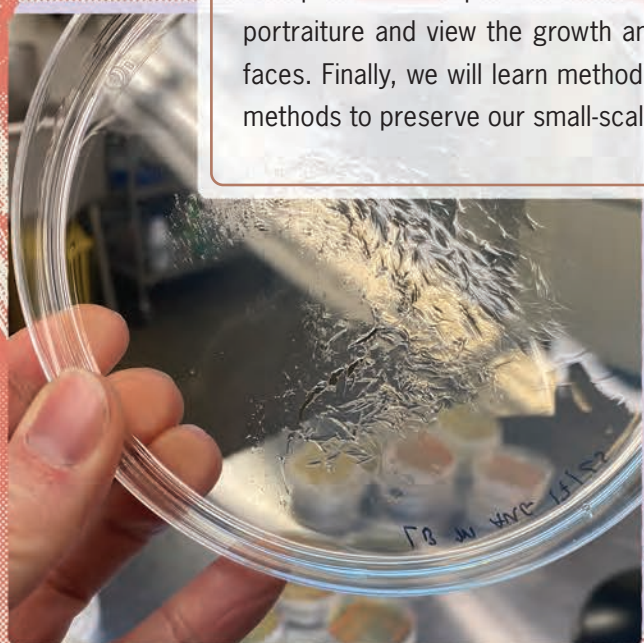
EMBROIDERVERSE: INTERFACING AI TEXT AND TEXTILE

Come create with bots (& other people)!
'Fusing traditional and machine embroidery methods to stitch decorative poem slogans, we explore language as code through textile and text's shared Latin root texere (to weave). Noting the long entwinement of computational and textile histories and techno-cultures, we will engage chat-bot models to play with material and experiential text and decorative threads. Using the Tajima industrial embroidery machine's design software database of typefaces as data inputs, we generate textured poem words.

How is AI both a threat and a thread of narrative language?
How can poetry hack language-based chat AIs, and produce playful failure?
This peer-guided experiential learning workshop shares these questions and through tactile processes, we speculate on what it means to collaborate with AI.' Led by Morris Fox & Geneviève Moisan and guest Zeph Thibodeau.
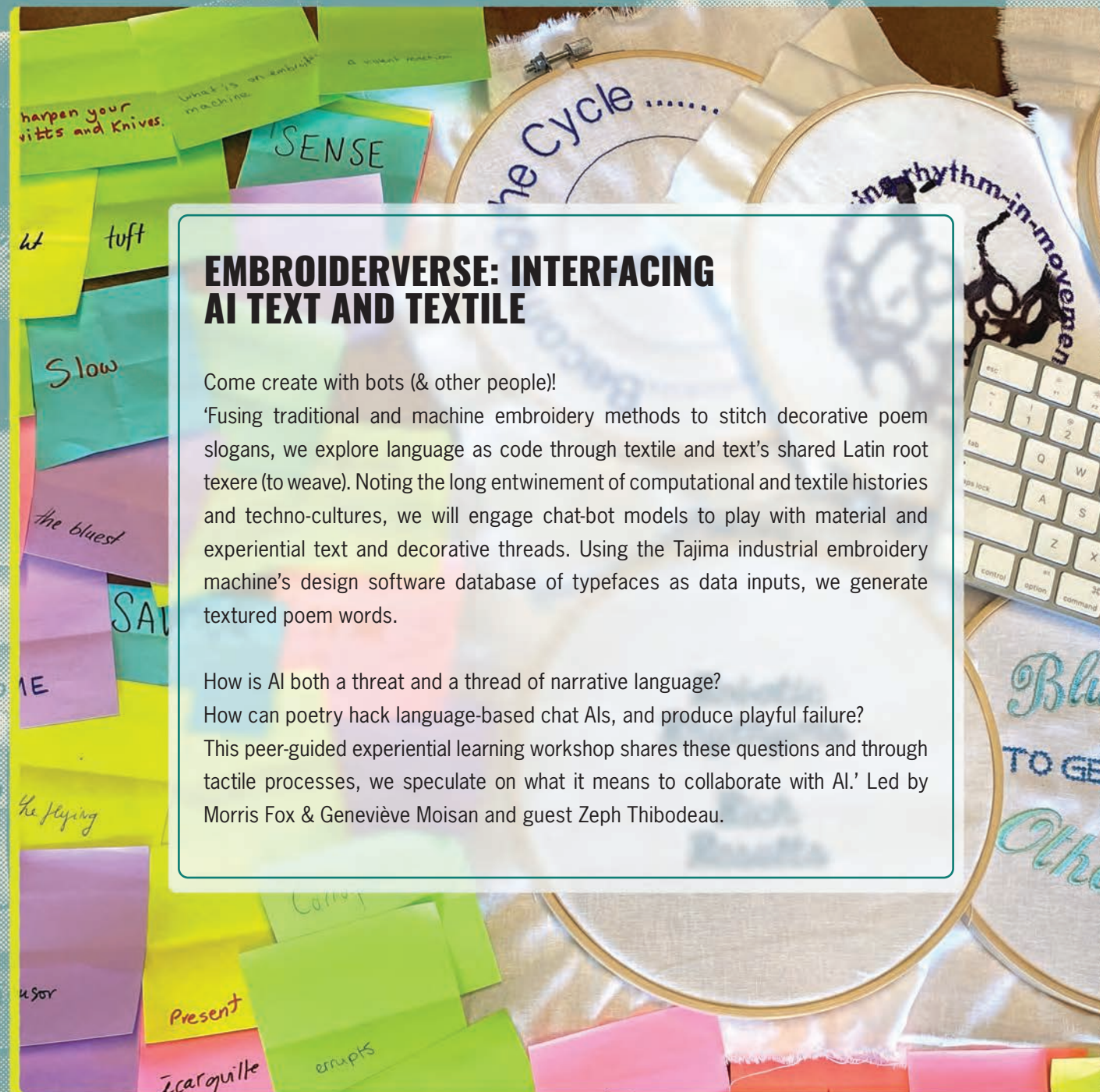
TACTILE SOUND

This workshop aims to explore the senses, by transforming the experience of sound from the auditory to the tactile and visual. How can we re-imagine the experience of sound via textiles and other material substrates? We will look at different computational and electronic platforms for integrating sound creation capabilities into textiles and learn different methods of creating soft speakers, affording opportunities for sound to be worn, felt & viewed in different ways.

Multi-disciplinary artist and recent MFA graduate RythÂ Kesselring will discuss her research and recent projects, along with other work in this field. She will then demonstrate the use and capabilities of several components that can facilitate the inclusion of sound into a textile wearable / artwork. We will also look at different textile speaker coils and magnet configurations in relation to the body to experience the sound in different ways.

CODED BIOPHILIA
(WITH GIULIA TOMASELLO)

Coded Biophilia is a workshop designed to learn the basics of soft wearables and the exploration of biological textiles. A space where participants will explore the potential of bacterial cellulose for textile futures in terms of growing living materials and creating speculative scenarios for second skins, sensors, and adaptive responsive structures. The workshop teaches new methods of making sensory surfaces for wearables and to envision how biotechnology and new materials will shape our environment. At the end of the workshop, participants will be able to identify state-of-the-art soft wearable and bio-textile applications and produce e-textile and bio-textile samples and if there is time a small prototype.

Can soft technology expand the ways our bodies sense and interact with the environment?

BIOPLASTICS 101
* A Basic guide to experimen

Basic Kitchen Tools Nee
- Hotplate, Pot, Silicon

Recipe:
5-10 parts starch (corn
40 parts water
1+ parts glycerine (ve
2-6 parts gelatine
3-5 parts distilled wh

BIOPLASTICS 101 (Continued...)

Steps:
1. Combine all the ingredients in a pot and mix the
2. Place the pot on the hotplate on low heat. Stir c
3. The cloudy mixture will eventually clear, becom
4. Turn off the hotplate and pour the mixture ont
5. Leave the mixture to dry out for between 4-10

The Tentacular Inquiry of Performance

Heather Anderson

Exploring the realm of performance research-creation, Embodied Interventions, returned on May 4-5, 2024, for its fifth edition. Since 2019, LePARC's signature event offers a performative platform for the research-creation projects of the cluster's community. Over the course of two days, the student-led showcase featured ten talented artists and performers across various places at the Institute. Their diverse performative practices created an environment where perspectives intersected and enriched one another.

Building upon a two-week laboratory-type residency at Milieux's Performance Lab, Embodied Interventions invited faculty, students, and the Concordia community at large to engage with a two-day presentation of public performances, discussions, screenings and workshops. The graduate student-led event embodied a spirit of "cross-pollination" through the exchange of ideas and projects related to performance and research-creation

This year's edition, titled The Tentacular Inquiry of Performance, offered a thoughtful examination of the convergence of research-creation and performative practices. Coordinated by Tricia Enns and co-curated by Margaret Lapp, Seyed Hamidreza Hosseini, and Lilía Mestre, with technical support from Malte Leander, the showcase marked a special collaboration between LePARC and the feminist artist-run centre Ada X for the HTMlles festival and fostered an environment where diverse perspectives collided and integrated with each other.

At the event's core lied a fundamental question: "What is performative inquiry?" With a focus on introspection and exploration, LePARC's Embodied Interventions: The Tentacular Inquiry of Performance provided a platform for deeper contemplation and dialogue, inviting attendees to ponder the complexities of artistic expression and the significance of performative inquiry in contemporary discourse.
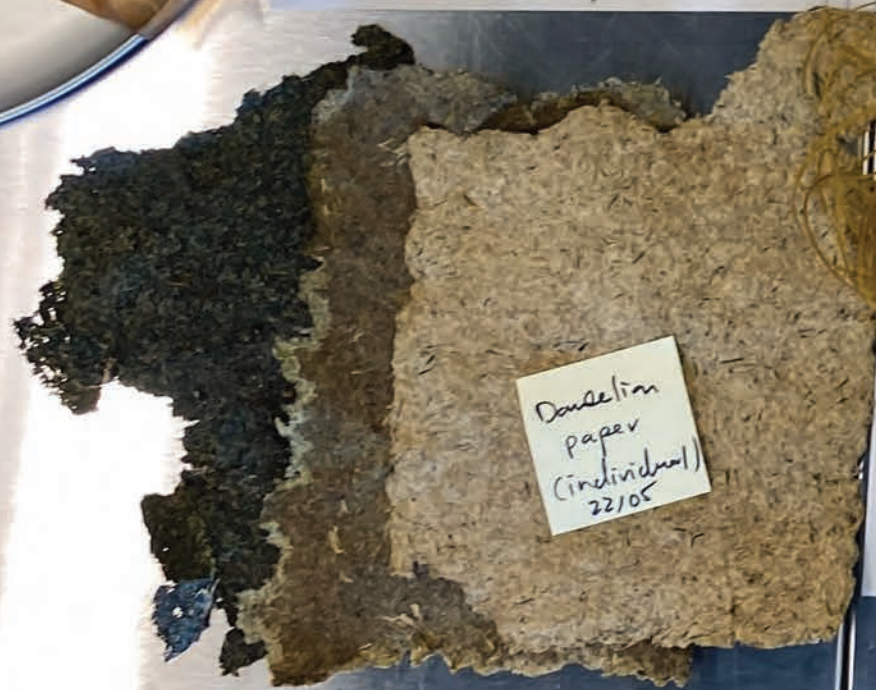
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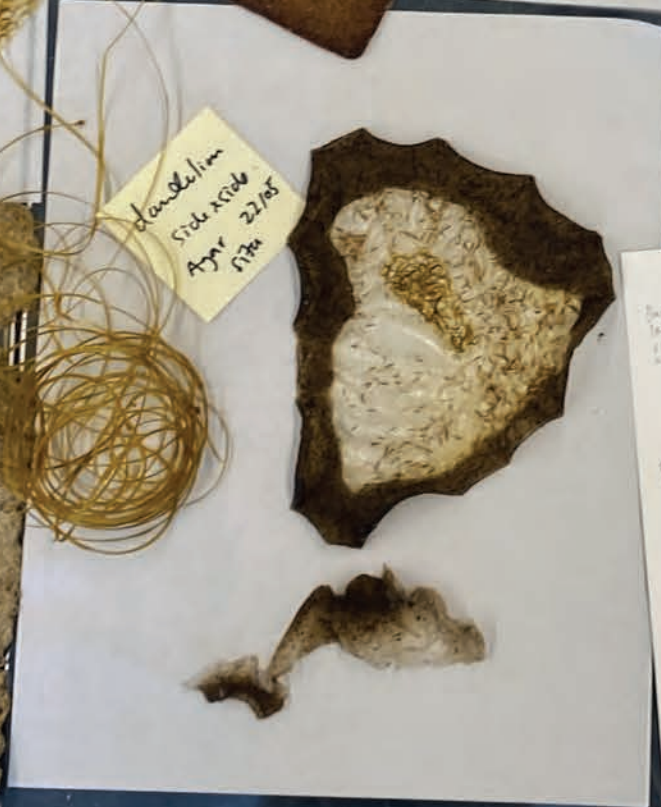
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EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

The diverse array of activities hosted by the Institute over the past year illustrates Milieux's commitment to not only fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, but also to encouraging varied modes of knowledge production and dissemination. By challenging the boundaries of traditional academic silos and initiating partnerships with major festivals, art centres and industry players, Milieux creates opportunities for its members to contribute to meaningful dialogues.

One of the Institute's main events this year was **the end-of-year exhibition** *The Commons*, hosted at 4TH SPACE from September 25-28th. The exhibition brought together the work of more than 60 members across disciplines and clusters. Curated by Hanss Lujan Torres, Punnet Jain, and Cecilia Mckinnon, *The Commons* explored the creative potential of the 'commons' as shared resources and spaces within the institute's multidisciplinary framework. The exhibition embraced a wide range of formats - artwork and panel discussions, video games, lectures, project presentations, and virtual reality experiences - all contributing to a broader understanding of what constitutes a creative common in a research community like Milieux.

In early November, **Post Image** hosted *Visioning New Horizons*, a symposium co-directed by Deanna Bowen, Hannah Claus, and Juan Ortiz-Apuy. The two-day event expanded on conversations sparked in the cluster's 2022-2023 speaker series, *Moving the Landscape to Find Ground*, and focused on strategies, projects, and policies aimed at challenging colonial legacies within arts institutions rooted in White settler governance. Presented in partnership with the Indigenous Futures Research Centre, the Faculty of Fine Arts, and the Onkwehonwené Research Chair, *Visioning New Horizons* brought together scholars, artists, and activists to critically examine the role of arts institutions in decentering colonialism. Through panels that interrogated images, the critical role of curation in shaping narratives, and the significance of 2-Spirit/Queer practices and IBPOC expression in new materialities, the symposium fostered critical dialogues on the intersection of arts, culture, and decolonization.

Around this same time, **Speculative Life Research Cluster** launched the **Visual Method Studio** (VMS). Led by Dr. Carolina Cambre and Dr. Mitchell McLarnon, the VMS is intricately connected to the EthnoLab and provides a space to question and better understand the expanding role of visual methods across disciplines (data collection, analysis, representation of research, etc.). This initiative aimed to connect the diverse approaches in different fields that use and apply visuals in research. Recognizing that visual approaches often intersect across fields but are rarely studied collaboratively, the VMS spearheads a unique and interdisciplinary environment and platform for students and faculty. Throughout the year, the studio has facilitated a series of workshops, talks, and cross-disciplinary discussions.

Indigenous Futures Research Centre (IFRC) held the **second edition of its annual symposium** on January 25 and 26 in 4TH SPACE. Over two days, students and faculty shared their work showcasing the diverse set of research and research-creation practices emerging from the IFRC community. From storytelling and curatorial practices to linguistics, new materialities an AI, the symposium highlighted the innovative ways Indigenous Knowledges are playing a key role to shape future possibilities.

Another highlight of this year was Milieux's significant contribution to Hexagram's *Rencontres Interdisciplinaires*. Hosted at Agora du Coeur des Sciences from March 25-28th, this 2024 edition focused on exploring and questioning human and more-than-human relationships in our rapidly changing world. Through panels, forums, workshops and performances, professors and students discussed how advances in biotechnology, AI, robotics, and environmental sciences are reconfiguring our understanding of agency and interaction. The symposium highlighted innovative scientific and artistic methodologies that challenge traditional anthropocentric perspectives, particularly in the context of global climate change. Presentations and discussions focused on how these emerging technologies and approaches are transforming research environments, artistic practices, and audience engagement, while questioning what it means to conduct research at the intersection of art and science in our posthuman era.

TAG's **Minecraft Bloc** research group presented the *Fun Palace experience* several times this year and was even featured in the programming of the AMAZE./ Berlin festival! Envisioned by legendary London theatre maker Joan Littlewood and architect Cedric Price, the Fun Palace was an ambitious architectural project that was never realized. Using archival documents and sketches, the research group invited players to spend sixty days building the iconic project in a survival multiplayer server in Modded Minecraft.

A version of the *Fun Palace SMP* was also presented as part of the Village Numérique, MUTEK's newest addition to the festival. From August 14-29th, Village numérique invited Montrealers to experience a unique digital art urban circuit. The Minecraft Bloc showcased a combination of video projections and scenes created in Minecraft in the display of the Montreal Goethe-Institute.

Earlier in May, **Milieux partnered with the Applied AI Institute** to provide seed funding for research-creation projects involving generative AI. From mid-May until the end of August, the members of the inaugural cohort of the **GenAI Studio** met regularly and worked collaboratively to explore the ways that AI could "go wild" might manifest. Their projects were showcased during the last day of the MUTEK Forum during a day-long series of experiments and provocations building on a discussion sparked by the *Into the Wild: AI's in Retrograde* panel. Attendees were invited to interact with the students, experience their prototypes and think of AI as a "craftwork" to play rather than simulate.

EVENTS CALENDAR   2023 / SEPT

05.09.23 **Screening + Discussion with the Robot in to Basics: Make your first Website Workshop** Speculative Life | 20.09.23 **TAG Watch Party: Emerging Voices in Black Refusal** Speculative Life (DIGS Lab) | 25.09.23 **Launch "The Commons" Exhibitio**n Milieux | 25.09.23 **[Talk] Geese,** 26.09.23 **Dwell Time: Virtual/augmented Reality activation with Puneet Jain** Speculative Life | 26.09.23 **An Island** Speculative Life | 26.09.23 **Panel on indigenous fashion** Indigenous Futures | 27.09.23 **IFRC X Daphne Beads: perler/ The Future is Wool: Sit & knit I** Textiles & Materiality | 28.09.23 **Reactive Graphene Oxide Residency** Speculative Life | **the privitization of the Internet** Milieux | 28.09.23 **"Knives": A conversation** Indigenous Futures | 28.09.23 **Finissage You Don't Like The Game, Change The Rules: Alternative Modes** of Videogame Productions TAG / **OCT** 04.10.23 13.10.23 **End of residency Presentation: Robotic Encounters: NAO's Adventures in Montreal** Milieux | 16.10.23 **[Talk] Sit & knit III** Textiles & Materiality / **NOV** 01.11.23 **The Future is Wool: Sit & knit IV** Textiles & Materiality | 01.11.23 **Software and Ekosi Studio in Dialogue** Indigenous Futures | 02.11.23 **Drawing With Threads: Materializing Data** Textiles **the Bones) by Kaveh NABATIAN** Speculative Life | 04.11.23 **Visioning New Horizons Symposium** Post Image | 07.11.23 Speculative Life | 10.11.23 **[Workshop] Merit of Making** Textiles & Materiality | 11.11.23 **GAMERella Game Jam 2023** TAG **[Workshop] Merit of Making II** Textiles & Materiality | 22.11.23 **Milieux Open House** Milieux | 22.11.23 **Repurposed Myriad temptations** Speculative Life | 23.11.23 **AI and Music: Public recording** Milieux | 24.11.23 **[Workshop] Drawing is Wool: Stitch Together** Textiles & Materiality / **DEC** 04.12.23 **[Open Lab Presentation] Pico Power and energy** | 07.12.23 **[Artist Talk] Lília Mestre & Laura Plante** LePARC | 14.12.23 **Epistemological Foundations Conversation** Indigenous Futures / **FEB** 02.02.24 **Milieux experiential Learning Workshop Series : Bacterial Portraiture** Milieux **Life (Ethno Lab)** | 12.02.23 **Epistemological Foundations Conversation #2** Indigenous Futures | 14.02.24 **UG Fellow** Juan Miceli LePARC | 23.02.24 **Milieux Experiential Learning Workshop Series : Interfacing AI Text and Textile** Milieux **Through Auditory Perception** Post Image | 08.03.24 **Milieux Experiential Learning Workshop Series : Tactile Sound (again)** LePARC | 22.03.24 **Rendering Desired Spaces: Crafting Methods for New Digital Geographies** Media and **Interdisciplinaires** Milieux | 27.03.24 **Writing Urban Life: Stories of Waste and Cities** Speculative Life / **APR** **Materialist Ecomodding and Picopower Logics: The case of SunBlock One, a solar Minecarft server** TAG | 10.04.24 | 12.04.24 **A Montreal Game Studies Conversation with Dr. Cral Therrien and Dr. Darren Wershler** TAG | 12.04.24 **and Discussion** Milieux | 17.04.24 **[Film Screening] Bicentenario** Speculative Life (Ethno Lab) | 18.04.24 **A SOLARPUNK** **fetauring Owen Hellum** TAG | 22.04.24 **Brother Embroidery Machine Training** Textiles & Materiality | 25.04.24 **[Talk]** **to bookbinding** Textiles & Materiality / **MAY** 02.05.24 **Milieux Experiential Learning Workshop Series : Coded** | 09.05.24 **Milieux at A/MAZE Fest** TAG | 17.05.24 **Morphoses: Open Studio Visit** Speculative Life (BioLab) | 29.05.24 **Life** / **JUN** 14.06.24 **[Lecture] Queer Transnational Space** Media and Materiality (DIGS Lab) / **JUL** 10.07.24 **numérique** Milieux | 23.08.24 **Milieux at MUTEK Forum: Wilding AI** Milieux

Residence Team Milieux | 13.09.23 **[Talk] Danielle Boyer on Indigenous robotics** Indigenous Futures | 14.09.23 **Back Game Studies** TAG | 21.09.23 **[Talk + Seminar] Sarah Sharma: Broken Machines, Towards a techno-Feminist Sheep and GP-AI: Notes on the Coming Commons** Milieux | 25.09.23 **[Gaming Session] Activating Games** TAG | **is more than a Park: Stories on the eve of an eviction** Speculative Life | 26.09.23 **Speculative Life Website Launch parler** Indigenous Futures | 27.09.23 **[Panel] textiles and Materiality Collaborative Project Chainstitch** TAG | 27.09.23 28.09.23 **Gentrification: The Story** TAG | 28.09.23 **[Talk] Archiving the Internet Commons: How activists are fighting "The Commons" Exhibition** Milieux | 29.09.23 **Panel on Interdisciplinary Research** Milieux | 29.09.23 **[Launch] If The Future is Wool: Sit & knit II** Textiles & Materiality | 13.10.23 **End of Residency Presentation: Mónica Riki** TAG | **Kath Albury: Digital sexual health - from litereacies to capabilities** Media and Materiality | 18.10.23 **The Future is Wool: Invitation to Ethnography: Ethnography of/as politics** Speculative Life | 01.11.23 **Indigenous Sisters in STEAM: revital & Materiality** | 03.11.23 **Visioning New Horizons Symposium** Post Image | 03.11.23 **[Film Screening] Kite Zo A (Leave Brother Embroidery Machine Training** Textiles & Materiality | 10.11.23 **Launch of the Visual Methods Studio (VMS)** | 12.11.23 **GAMERella Game Jam 2023** TAG | 14.11.23 **[Workshop] Textiles Quotes** Textiles & Materiality | 21.11.23 **Methods with Anna Harris** Speculative Life (Ethno Lab) | 22.11.23 **[Film Screening] Huahua's Dazzling World and Its and Ethnography** Speculative Life | 24.11.23 **Residency Visit: Dance Artist Sara Hanley** LePARC | 29.11.23 **The Future Transition** Speculative Life (BioLab) | 04.12.23 **[Film Screening] Geographies of Solitude** Speculative Life (Ethno Lab) **#1** Indigenous Futures   **2024 / JAN** 25.01.24 **IRFC Symposium** Indigenous Futures | 26.01.24 **IRFC Symposium** | 06.02.24 **Playing with AI Ethics** Media and Materiality / TAG | 09.02.24 **[Film Screening] Meezan (Scale)** Speculative Life **Introductory** Presentations Milieux | 16.02.24 **Playing with AI Ethics** Media and Materiality / TAG | 22.02.24 [Artist Talk] | 27.02.24 **Mime as Non-Verbal Communication** LePARC / **MAR** 07.03.24 **[workshop] Enhancing Immersive Art** Milieux | 15.03.24 **[Film Screening] Evicted City** Speculative Life (Ethno Lab) | 18.03.24 **The Killing Movie + Goodbye Materiality (DIGS Lab)** | 25.03.24 **Milieux at Rencontres Interdisciplinaires** Milieux | 26.03.24 **Milieux at Rencontres** 09.04.24 **The Hologram: Towards an Anti-capitalist Care Practice** Speculative Life (Machine Agencies) | 09.04.24 **Milieux Annual General Meeting** Milieux | 11.04.24 **Epistemological Foundations Conversation #3** Indigenous Futures **Performance as research: André Lepecki and Lília Mestre** LePARC | 16.04.24 17 **Stations: An Interactive Exhibition Lab: Eco-anarchism and micro-power to the people** Speculative Life (BioLab) | 19.04.24 **[Workshop] Unity Dialogue The Mother, The Politician, and The Guerilla by Nazan Üstünda** Speculative Life | 26.04.24 **[Workshop] Introduction Biophilia** Milieux | 04.05.24 **Embodied Interventions 2024** LePARC | 05.05.24 **Embodied Interventions 2024** LePARC **Milieux Summer Coffee & Chat** Milieux | 31.05.24 **Milieux x CCA: Propositions: Designing through Land** Speculative **Epistemological Foundations Conversation #4** Indigenous Futures / **AUG** 19.08.24 **Milieux at MUTEK: Village**

PUBLICATIONS

Andrei Zanescu and Lina Eklund published *Times They are A changin'? The Evolution of Female Protagonists in the Assassin's Creed Franchise* at Games and Culture.

Hanine El Mir published *Animal Life on Île Sainte-Thérèse in An Island is More Than a Park*. Montreal Waterways Collective/Concordia Ethnography Lab.

Alex Custodio and Michael Iantorno published *Unexceptional Consoles* at Game Studies, 23(3).

Alice Jarry and Jean-Michael Celerier published *Scoring the invisible: Biomaterial and computational processes for [re]capturing Atmospheric Pollution* at the Edinburgh Architecture Research, 38(2).

Jason Edward Lewis published *Good Technololgy is Messy* in the book The Good Robot: Why Technology Needs Feminism from Bloomsbury Publishing.

Guillaume Dandurand, Fenwick McKelvey and Jonathan Roberge published *Freezing out: Legacy media's shaping of AI as a cold controversy* at Big Data & Society, 10 (2).

Priscilla Jolly published Reflections on Loneliness from a Kitchen Sink at The Bangalore Review, (2024, March)

Maurice Jones and Fenwick McKelvey published Deconstructing public participation in the governance of facial recognition technologies in Canada at AI & Soc.

Martin French, W. Spencer Murch and Sylvia Kairouz published Establishing the temporal stability of machine learning models that detect online gambling-related harms at Computers in Human Behavior Reports. (14).

Stefanie Duguay, Christopher Dietzel and David Myles, D. published The year of the "virtual date": Reimagining dating app affordances during the COVID-19 pandemic at New Media & Society, 26(3), 1384-1402.

Joëlle Dubé and Chélanie Beaudin-Quinin published Vertigo Sea et Typhoon Coming On, récits obliques d'un sublime aquatique at Esse, 109.

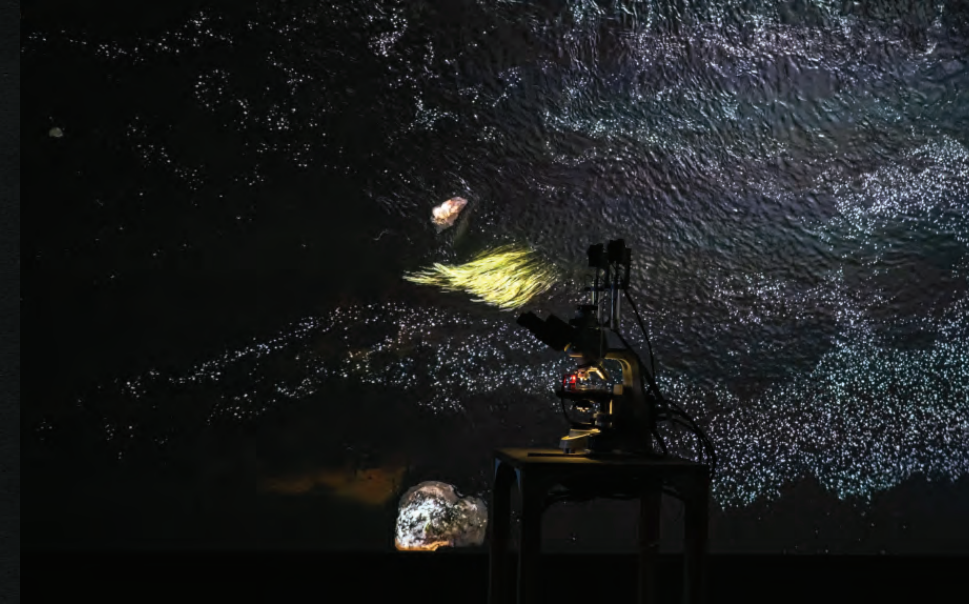Hanss Lujan Torres published Malcolm McCormick: K Enters the Castle At Last for the Nicolas Robert Gallery, May 2024.

Rehab Nazzal published Honouring Palestinian martyrs at Briarpatch, 53(2).

Brice Ammar-Khodja

Deanna Bowen

Cristo Riffo

A SELECTION OF EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCES

Speculative Life member Brice Ammar-Khodja presented Symphony of the Stones (The Archive) at Ars electronica in Linz from September 6th –10th, 2023. Symphony of the Stones (The Archive) is an installation that explores the interconnections between urban infrastructures, pollutants, soils and living organisms by activating mineral contaminants and various extractive residues.

Textiles & Materiality's RythÂ Kesselring presented Variation fibreuse; nuances textiles at the Centre Culturel Yvonne L. Bombardier in Valcourt, from January 21st – April 14th.

Post Image Co-Director Deanna Bowen presented The Golden Square Mile at the Leonard & Bina Ellen Gallery from February 21st – April 13th, 2024. The exhibition showcased groups of photo constellations and videos about "the genocidal impact of Anglophone White supremacy, colonial extraction, the railway, slavery, servitude, ridicule and wealth".

Speculative Life's Cristo Riffo presented Constellations, his first solo exhibition from March 13th to April 27th, 2024. Hosted by ELEKTRA, the exhibition showcased two projects developed at the BioLab: Sistema Cinco: non-Human Determinations and Self Writing Manifesto.

IFRC's Skawennati curated Resists with Love, an exhibition presented at Daphne Gallery from June 21st to August 17th, 2024, as part of the National Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations. The exhibition featured the work of Solomon Enos, Native Hawaiian artist, illustrator, and visionary.

TAG's Minecraft Bloc research group presented What is the Fun Palace? at the Village Numérique from August 19th to 29th. As part of the MUTEK festival, the inaugural edition of the Village numérique invited the public to discover Quebec's creativity through an urban circuit of 23 digital artworks throughout the Quartier des Spectacles.

On August 20th, Post Image and new media artist Allison Moore presented Mystic Vale at SAT. Mystic Vale is a fulldome video piece inspired by the forest ecosystem's diversity in Victoria.

The Writing Pod

Experiment

In January, the Milieux Institute launched its new project: the Writing Pod. Over the Winter 2024 semester, Milieux offered students the opportunity to write critical articles about arts, culture, and technology research in Montreal, focusing on the activities happening at the institute.

As universities and researchers face the challenge of not only producing impactful research but also effectively sharing their findings, research communication is particularly important in interdisciplinary research where diverse practices, conceptual frameworks, and languages converge.

In this context, Milieux selected three Concordia students to be part of this pilot project: Kristen Lewis (PhD candidate in Art History), Paola Lopez (MA student in Creative Writing), and Carlos Olaya (PhD student in Social and Cultural Analysis). Spanning different disciplines and backgrounds and guided by Assistant Professor and author Dr. Gillian Sze and Milieux Director Dr. Bart Simon, the group met bi-weekly over the four months of the experiment.

Originally conceived as a means for students to focus on research communication, the Writing Pod evolved beyond a typical creative writing workshop. Instead of writing about their own research, the three writers brainstormed, pitched ideas and conducted interviews to produce stories about the daily life at the institute. The experiment also offered the students immersion into Milieux's community and network.

A Discord channel was also created to facilitate communication among members, allowing them to share their texts and suggest edits on each other's work at each stage of the writing process.

Despite the challenges of writing about someone else's work and having a piece published, this pedagogical experiment provided a space for collaborative and innovative writing and an opportunity for students to improve their writing and expand their portfolios.

Printing Past the Ideal: Speculative 3-D Printing at the Milieux BioLab

Kristen Lewis

"You know, progress… it's not linear."

Alice Jarry and Alex Bachmayer are hunched over a tiny Eazao Zero 3-D printer, swiping a post-it note under the nozzle spitting out inconsistencies. Laughing while troubleshooting, Jarry and Bachmayer riff off one another about possible causes for the printer's malfunction. "It could be the pressure, the viscosity, or the nozzle size," says Jarry, "or any combination of those things." In any case, the post-it note is the current make-shift solution to cleaning up the malfunctioning printer and its mess.

Working with new concoctions of bio-remediated material, as is the aim of the Milieux Speculative Life BioLab, often means starting from zero and fine-tuning the way to the final product through repeated trial and error. This iterative creative process is also reflective of the lab's operational ethos, a hybrid research-creation laboratory that facilitates interdisciplinary, material-based research on the shifting character of "life on the planet." As Bachmayer proclaims, doing this work means that the journey to the final product–whatever that may be– is anything but linear.

BioLab Director Jarry and Technician Bachmayer are currently experimenting with the lab's two new 3-D printers, the Eazao Zero and Eazao Matrix M500. The Zero resembles a household sewing machine. Positioned like a sideways U,

the nozzle sits where the needle would be, and instead of feeding material through the open space where sewn work emerges out the backside, the nozzle of the Zero extrudes materiality on the print platform, constructing vertically. The stark white of the machine is reminiscent of gleaning porcelain, or the kind of durable plastic lining the shelves of IKEA's storage section. The Matrix builds material similarly but presents as a more industrial and robust piece of machinery. Constructed out of a black metal frame, the Matrix is not only larger in build but in presence, commandeering the space it occupies.

The 3-D printers enable novel experimenting possibilities for the BioLab. Instead of printing with conventional materials, like plastic filament wire, these machines are compatible with the kinds of crushed and pulverized materials the lab likes to repurpose, from broken eggshells to powders of flower dust. While the Zero produces smaller prints with more liquid mixtures, facilitating the use of suspended powders and compounds, the Matrix is more suitable to viscose matter, like clay, and according to the company website, "let's you print BIG." Accompanying this statement is a 3-D printed clay sculpture of Nefertiti, queen of the 18th dynasty of Ancient Egypt: for Eazao, big is huge, monumental even. The capacity of creation is ostensibly limitless and potentially sublime. In reality, the printer's capacity is limited, printing within the more modest dimensions of 500 x 500 x 700 mm, nothing larger than that of a standard floral vase.

The exaggerated rhetoric of the company website stands in stark contrast to the methodology and experience of the BioLab printing team. On the website, potential customers see perfectly executed vases constructed with intricate patterns. Seamlessly glazed, the vases bear vibrant or earthy hues. Overlaying the vases are easy-to-digest marketing soundbites that claim the printers are "Powerful, Easy to Use and Affordable." More than this, the "Eazao Zero is ready to use out-of-the-box," meaning "you don't have to waste time reading manuals and putting
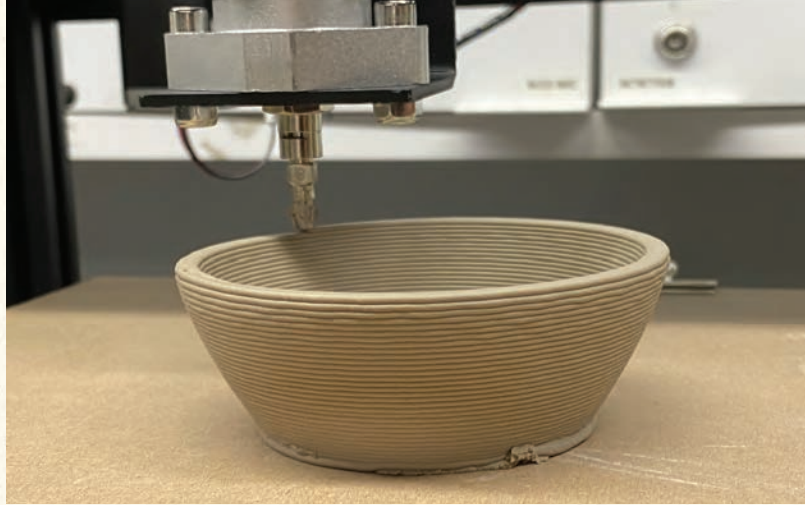
parts together." Technically smooth and user friendly, potential customers are sold ideals of a techno-utopic glitch-free experience. Such messaging is once again reflected in the imagery of depiction: Next to Nefertiti is a Grecian bust, a sculptural representation of perfect form.

Belying this representational perfectionism is the messiness of use exhibited by working with the printers. On the second day of test printing, I arrive at the BioLab to an affective field of excitement and confusion. Prior to my arrival the printer went berserk, spurting liquid everywhere but on the print board. "We were happy you weren't here to witness!" Jarry tells me, as the direction of progress is caught in a lull. "Ready to use out-of-the-box" means that there is no prior construction, not that the printing process itself is functionally seamless.

Emerging from this setback is a series of humble questions: Do we turn it off and on again? Who do we ask for help, the company through their website, or other experts? Searching online, Bachmayer discovers a Facebook group for Eazao users to ask and answer questions, harnessing the experience of other experimental users. While the ability to communicate with others is "pending approval," the DIY nature of creating with new mixtures requires collaboration.

The Woven Thread of Milieux's Textiles and Materialities Cluster

Paola Lopez

The first thing I noticed when I met Geneviève Moisan was her knit sweater. Made up of white, pink, and orange yarn, the jumper seemed like an appropriate outfit choice for a member of Milieux's Textiles and Materialities cluster; it was textured, colourful, and visually interesting. But the sweater was more than that; it was also representative of Moisan's warm and vibrant personality—and of the charming world of weaving I was about to be introduced to.

She immediately welcomed me into the space, first by asking about my own interest and relationship to textiles, and then by showing me the cluster's Jacquard loom.

As someone relatively new to the world of textiles, having learned to crochet under two years ago, and generally unfamiliar with the practice of weaving, it was initially hard to understand what I was looking at. The loom was tall and wide, made of lumber and straight lines, cords hanging taut in the middle of the structure. Like a hundred-year-old tree, the loom imposed itself on its viewer; it was bigger than one could initially imagine, its top completely out of reach from the average human hand, seemingly immovable, but defined by its many lines and vulnerable to the cracking of wood.

Moisan briefly showed me how the loom worked. She pointed out the machine's heddles, its cords, and its shuttle—a small, canoe-shaped device that allows the weaver to carry thread from one side of the loom to the other when changing colours. To better explain its function, Moisan turned on the computer connected

to the loom, pulled up a pattern that required some colour change, and wove a couple of tapestry lines in front of me. For a machine so big and inflexible, its movement was unexpectedly smooth. As a seasoned weaver, Moisan's hands moved quickly and comfortably over the machine, pulling the thread seamlessly, and bringing down the beater in a swift, loud motion.

Once she had completed a couple of rounds, she encouraged me to take her place and taught me how to pull the hanging rope that propelled the shuttle across the loom. She let me do it a couple of times, correcting my form when needed, until I got the hang of it. It wasn't as easy as she had made it seem; it required precise wrist motion and just the right amount of force.

Since I didn't have any weaving experience, Moisan didn't invite me to try my hand at it—and rightfully so. A machine so complex required expert care and handling. As the Equipment Support Specialist for the Textiles and Materiality cluster at the Milieux Institute for Arts, Culture and Technology, Moisan was also responsible for the use and maintenance of the Jacquard loom, which could entail supervising students while they conducted their own research, updating the computer's software, or even climbing to the top of the loom to clean and replace any of the machine's many pieces. She did not specify how exactly she reached the top, but I could just picture her carefully climbing a ladder and leaning over its side to reach what she needed. In my imagination, her red curly hair was carefully tied into a ponytail, much like the one she was sporting during our meeting, and she wore rubber gloves to protect the machine from her fingertips' natural oils.

Once she had shown me how the loom moved and wove, she showed me what it could create. Scattered around the room were several finished projects from students and researchers alike. One of them, "Material Codes: Ephemeral Traces,"

which was led by Kelly Thompson and supported by Moisan, explored the relationship between digital data, its visual components, and textile practices. The project led to the creation of many tapestries, all made up of different shapes, colours, and weaving techniques; some clearly depicted a specific figure or word, while others were completely abstract. Running my hand along one of the pieces, as Moisan encouraged me to, I could feel its thickness changing along with the colour, as well as the varying softness of all the connecting threads. This was a work of discovery, but it was also a work

of familiarity. Only weavers with intimate knowledge of the loom could break away from traditional form to create such varied and textured pieces.

But Moisan's knowledge and expertise did not end there. Although I had come into our meeting with minimal knowledge of the cluster and its members, and looking to learn more, it had become evident that Moisan was more than the Equipment Support Specialist; she was an artist and researcher in her own right.

Moisan shared her knowledge generously throughout our meeting, telling me fascinating facts about the loom and other features of the cluster, often answering my questions before I even got a chance to ask them.

She told me about the Jacquard loom's origins, explaining that it started as a combination of two separate mechanisms—a loom and a Jacquard machine—that used punch cards to determine specific actions, wherein a whole represents one thing, and the absence of a whole represents another, a binary system not unlike the technology used in early computers. She also told me about the loom's relationship to the labour movement, as the Lyonnais silk workers of the 19th century started and inspired several uprisings in demand of fair working conditions.

The more time we spent together and the more she showed me around the cluster, the more that she revealed of her experience, with and beyond the Jacquard loom. Moisan had been involved in the creation of textile antennas, soft speakers, and even a vest of conductive thread, which echoed the vibrations of an artist's music as they played their instrument. She talked about the projects proudly, excited to share the work with me, often flipping through thick binders of samples, and always naming her collaborators.

Yet, for all the expertise she clearly already had, she made an effort to keep learning. Besides the Jacquard loom, the Textiles and Materiality cluster is also home to an impressive embroidery machine—a contraption so big it had to be brought in through a wall-to-wall window using a crane—which Moisan keeps trying to master. As we stood together looking at it, she explained to me that the machine should be able to embroider sequins as well as thread, but that no one in the cluster knew how to do it, which is why she had taken it upon herself to learn. She gestured to the books on the subject she had read, showed me all the different colours of sequins she had acquired, and explained to me the laborious process of obtaining them, as only certain manufactures sold the specific kind and size of sequins the machine could use.

Since there weren't any pieces of the embroidery machine that I could handle, unlike the Jacquard loom, Moisan turned it on herself and embroidered me a small butterfly, both as a sample of what can be done and as a personal keepsake. In an additional act of attentiveness, she laid the border of the sample with a bright pink thread, as it matched the jacket I was wearing that day.

I left our meeting with a smile on my face, feeling inspired and invigorated by everything I had seen, heard, and touched. I had gotten to peek into one of Milieux's fascinating and elusive clusters; I was lucky enough to see and use a Jacquard loom, which is very rare for most people, as most looms of its kind are preserved in museums and art foundations; and I had gotten to meet Geneviève Moisan, who is as kind as she is accomplished, and who holds together the Textiles and Materialities like a woven thread.

To preach, to perplex.
Or, how to give a political message with Jazz, VR and videogames?

Carlos Olaya

A team of computer scientists of the Milieux Institute joined musicians and engineers from the Next-Generation Cities Institute, to create an audio-visual experience about the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. It took place last April 16th at the 4TH Space of Concordia University, and it was as exciting as intriguing. There were videogames, there was jazz, and a VR dive into the St-Laurent River. I went through all of it and what caught my attention is how hard it is to give a political message in such interdisciplinary research-creation endeavours: they had to constantly balance between preaching and perplexing. Let me tell you what I'm talking about, with a quick glance through the exhibition.

Right next to the entrance there were two screens with different games. The first one was "Zero Waste", a garbage tetris where you had to locate falling pieces of disposals into the right bin out of four options: recycling, compost, regular, and eco-centre. The other one was a sandbox where you had to design a park in the middle of Montreal's Chinatown. I did poorly in the first -placing 20 out of 23-. I was better, apparently, as my park scored in "safety", "accessibility", "inclusivity", "sociability", and "culture identity", and "green space"; they were measured by what Chinatown's residents wanted, in a project on urban garden planning. As I was having fun and getting a bit guilty with my scores, some kind of unease grew in me. I felt I was receiving a preaching.

There was a sign next to the screens that announced:

"Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

Very straightforward, right? In order to improve our cities, as the UN proposes, we have to align to already set measures: for garbage, the separation system of Montreal; for better urban spaces, what residents wanted for their neighborhood. The games are asking us how much attuned are we with the solutions. Why? Something feels odd about being scored on how fitting you are to someone else's ideas. But still, I'm not opposed to recycling and participatory urban planning seems awesome. Why did I fail with the recycling tetris? Should I explore a carreer on garden design? I could not close on those thought, when I was suddenly pull to the other stages of the exhibition.

Music was all over the place. A slow soca rhythm was driving the background, with a Caribbean flavor. Some steps into the other stations you could find several stands, holding a sign with different Sustainable Development Goals, where the sounds became a disordered cacophony. Although the tune was apparently banging through the whole room, some independent sounds came directly from individual stands. A guitar solo erupted from one of them:

"Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture".

The heavy distorted guitar was delivering an ominous unstable melody, very haunting, that jumped between major and minor musical scales. When I reached the stand, the solo was going through a sad descending pattern, like a lament.

Are not these objects, the normative goals of an international institution, hopeful artifacts? The guitar was telling me something else, that I have thought before:

I got to know the Sustainable Development Goals while working with NGOs on anti-deforestation projects, in the Colombian amazon rainforests. But none of our efforts were able to curve deforestation, as we could not touch its structural drivers: war, illegal powers, and structural land inequality. Still, anything we did with the NGOs -like workshops, talks, forums, resource sharing with producers- could be justified as efforts to "End hunger", or "Promoting sustainable agriculture". It seemed hypocritical to me, like Green-Washing.

Oh, sad guitar, I feel you. Why do we have to side with the UN's priorities, if they are so abstract and vulnerable to artificial manipulations?

Some of the exhibition's stands had written hopeful stories. Like the SALIM project, that helps to connect local producers with solidarity food networks in Montreal to supply vulnerable people. Others made a direct point, like: "prioritizing Indigenous rights and conservation leadership" to accomplish Goal 15 on protecting terrestrial ecosystems. But some stands had more perplexing points:

"While Goal 16 [Peace, justice and strong institutions] aims to advance a morally unequivocally destination, the realities of the real-world implementation can be devilishly complex"

On the last part of the exhibition there was a VR stand, that represented Goal 6 on "ensuring available and sustainable management of water" and Goal 9 on "resilient infrastructure and sustainable industrialization". Two head-sets were

available, and people took turns to go through the experience. In it, you appear by the Lachine Canal, looking at the St-Laurent River, when suddenly, the water level raised and you got drowned under it, floating alongside garbage. Sometimes, some captions appear, stating things like "26% of the overall water produced in Montreal was lost in leaks in 2020". People were having fun. "Oh my god", "this is amazing!", you could here from them, while they were trying to balance their body from the rising waters, with their googles on. You could grab the garbage with the joysticks, and people were going for it all the time. You could see them moving their arms on and on, like playing with snowballs.

I went through the experience as well. The music helped to feel a kind of vacuum in your stomach when the waters got at your head level. Watching at the garbage gave was not fun though. Is not this supposed to caution us against how we are treating the river? Why would I play with it? I was perplexed.

I got to talk to Baron Tymas, the cool jazz musician and professor who engendered the idea of 17th Spaces. He came from the US with the hope of engaging his practice with public debates. To get political, one might say. And we helped me to understand what I experienced in the actual exhibition. From the beginning there was a constant instability on how to represent such abstract objects as some political institutional goals: shall they tell people how we should accomplish them? Is it better to problematize the fact that we have to side with the UN? His approach was that of a jazz director, as Miles Davis would do… let everyone shine and adapt the harmony to route they took to solo with their own instruments.

I think they got into something powerful. By letting every team shine, the showcased how hard it is to gather around and do something about our troubled world, from preaching to perplexing.
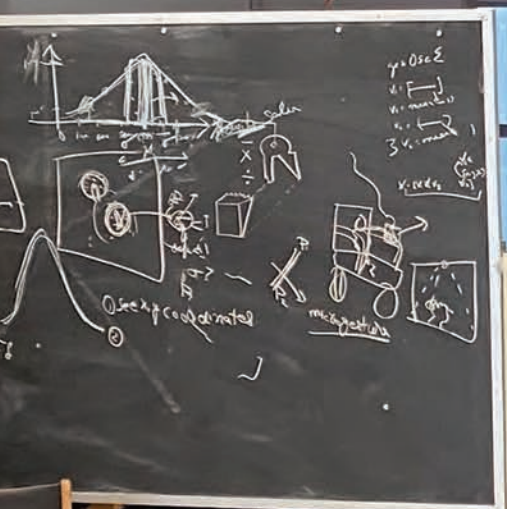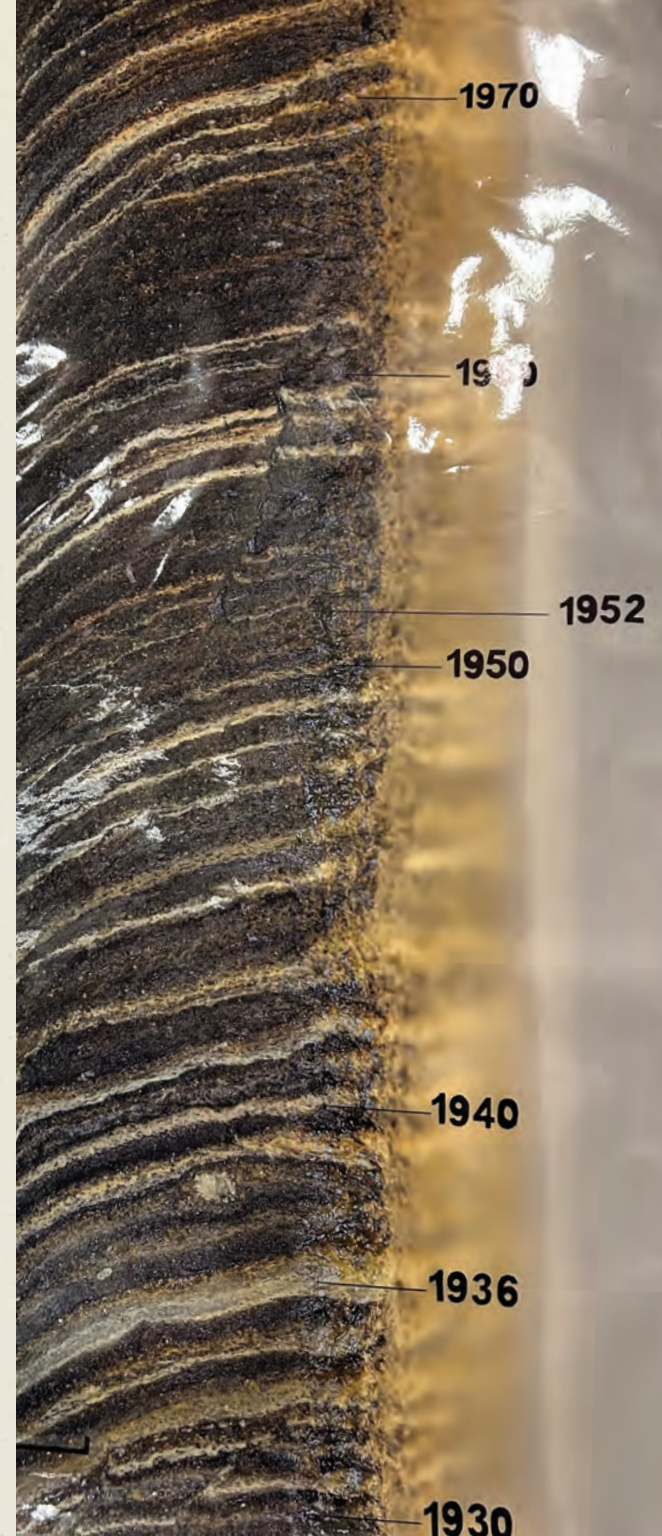
THE PLAN

1) FINALIZE
   PROTO-MANIFES
   FEN TO CREATE
   -DOCUMENT   JUNE
                                  18

2) TRANSLATE DOCUMENT
   INTO FALL PROGRAMM
   M_LLM-STORYTELLING
     - GENAI STUDIO
     - ARTS-PRACTICE
     - CONSULTATIONS MACHINE
   M-AI COMMONS

3) ANNOUNCE @ MUTEK
   AUG.25

Brennan
McCracken

Rethinking Sustainability:

Critical Anthropocene Network

How can scholars working in the environmental humanities contribute to efforts to identify and respond to the inequitably distributed effects of anthropogenic climate change? What role do the humanities play in broadening or redefining our understandings of terms such as "environment," "climate," "crisis," or "sustainability"? And what new forms of knowledge might be necessary to engage the global legacies of colonialism, gender, race, and sexuality bound up with the proposed epoch of the Anthropocene? From November 1-3, 2023, Dr. Jill Didur (co-director, Speculative Life Research Cluster) hosted a workshop bringing together scholars working across the environmental humanities to imagine new forms of collaborative research and public-facing engagement in response to these questions.

The workshop, titled Rethinking Sustainability: Critical Anthropocene Network (ReSCAN), focused on how to move beyond silos that have previously limited the impact of work in environmental studies, toward a transdisciplinary, humanities-based approach capable of facilitating global conversations on key sustainability issues. Researchers focused on the urgent need to examine the relationships between sustainability, human well-being, and the environment through the lens of the environmental humanities, a distinct approach that brings together the sciences, social sciences and critical humanities. Across two full days of conversation, visioning, and collaborative writing, participants discussed the critical state of the field and explored the intersections of various approaches to the environmental humanities attuned to entwined histories of colonialism, race, and multispecies relation. The workshop laid the foundation for future collaborations within the group and plans for partnership research grant proposals.

Participants included Dr. Philip Aghoghovwia (Kwantlen Polytechnic), Dr. Amit Baishya (Oklahoma), Dr. Elizabeth DeLoughrey (UCLA), Dr. Anne Pasek (Trent), Dr. Jean-Thomas Tremblay (York), Dr. Sharon Willoughby (RBC, Kew) and Dr. Kathryn Yusoff (QMUL), as well as Concordia faculty members Dr. Jesse Arseneault (English), Dr. Nalini Mohabir (Geography), Dr. Kregg Hetherington (Anthropology), and Dr. Cynthia Quarrie (English). This workshop was supported by a Sustainability Transitions Team Research Initiative grant awarded through Concordia's Office of the Vice-President, Research and Graduate Studies.

Melina Campos Ortiz

The PIT Project

The Pit project is a collective ethnographic exploration of the Francon Quarry in the Saint-Michel borough of Montreal, where seven graduate students engaged with a post-extractivist site as a space for future-making. The research started in 2022 as one of the seed projects for the Infrastructures of Ethnography partnership development grant, now known as EMERGE Matrix, a coalition of ethnography labs/centers/studios aiming to foster multimodal and collaborative methodological experiments together.

As a project revolving around a site outside the lab, we have had to adjust our goals and expectations regarding what we can do to engage with the massiveness of a post-extractivist site and all the problems it generates in a response-able manner. However, the Pit as a lab project has been an incredibly generative companion for thinking about collaborative ethnography.

This thinking has taken many forms and traveled to different places, geographically, epistemologically and pedagogically. We started by producing a zine "to visualize the possible" as a direct response to a specific request by a Saint-Michel community leader to our lab. As part of an ethnographic experiment conducted by the members of the partnership for the American Anthropological Association meeting in Toronto, our zine inspired the students at the Ethnography Studio (USC) to produce an echozine in which they use the format to put a set of individual projects in conversation around the notion of porosities, the tentative concept they explored during the first year of this partnership. Likewise, we used our experience with the Pit to explore CE2 Lab's (UBCO) invitation to respond to urban dissonance using letter signs, the ethnographic approach they developed as their seed project for the grant.

Following EMERGE's objective to build the infrastructures for collaborative ethnography, the Pit project has also led us to produce a video as a part of EMERGE's Cabinet of Curious Ethnographic Practices, in which we explore how engaging with the quarry as a collaborative endeavour helps us refine composite ethnography as a methodology. Similarly, we are currently fine-tuning a protocol as a set of steps for composite ethnography and an accompanying journal paper in which we narrate our experience putting this protocol into action during the Pit project.

As we embark on the third year of our grant, we have been assessing how our different experiments delivered (or not) the goals we set for ourselves in 2021. We have learnt a lot along the way, and while we might have to lower some of our expectations, the way the Pit Project has traveled shows that our original inspiration to undertake this project was on the mark. Indeed, as our PI put it: "[t]he noisy interstices between research projects produce their own kind of creative potential for mutual aid and technical play."
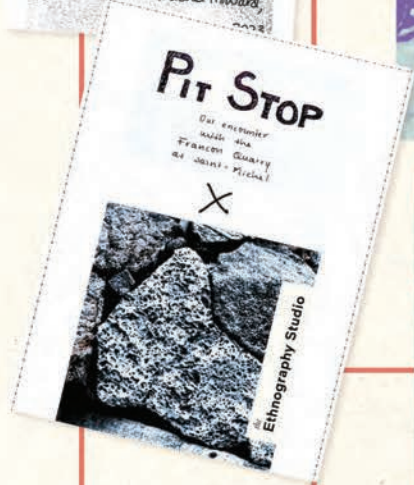
How can we learn about nostalgia by 'doing' it?

Richy Srirachanikorn

This question was asked by a group of Bachelor, Masters, and PhD students at the Technoculture, Art and Games (TAG) Research Centre from the humanities, social sciences, education, and computation arts – if nostalgia is a strong individual emotion, then why is it so culturally pervasive? Can we do anything with nostalgia that is collectively meaningful?

Two years after its inaugural symposium on digital nostalgia and a research creation workshop at Milieux, the NOSTAGAIN NETWORK hosted its second symposium, "Time in a Bottle", on the 4th February, 2024, with the 4TH SPACE at Concordia University.

Among its 18 presenters and 150 attendees were research-creation artists, junior and seasoned scholars, and the public who shared their experiences of nostalgia with each other. Individual projects led to group collaboration, single nostalgic memories became moments of surprising friendships, and 1 question – the one above – led to many, many more research questions!

From the planning to the execution of the symposium, this Milieux student group learnt and practiced nostalgia in ways that were tied to, and made for, the collective. 'Learning by doing' does not have to be a solitary endeavor or a top-down approach by reading and practicing theory alone. It can involve the creation of a student network that continues to learn about nostalgia by figuring out how others can do the same. Remarkably, it may also turn an individual's longing for the past into a collective belonging that lasts into the future…

Alex Custodio

Making a Mess with Method

Hands-On Approaches to Interdisciplinary Research

> What if we can build new and different forms of solidarity with our objects (and they with us)? And what if, beneath the nose of scholarship, this is what we do every day?
>
> Steven Jackson, "Rethinking Repair"

When asked to imagine a graduate methods course, one tends not to think of soldering stations, three-foot-tall Tetris controllers, or tiny solar robots splashing paint at a canvas. Yet, that's precisely what we saw at the Milieux Summer Institute during a two-week, interdisciplinary research course aptly named Mess and Method.
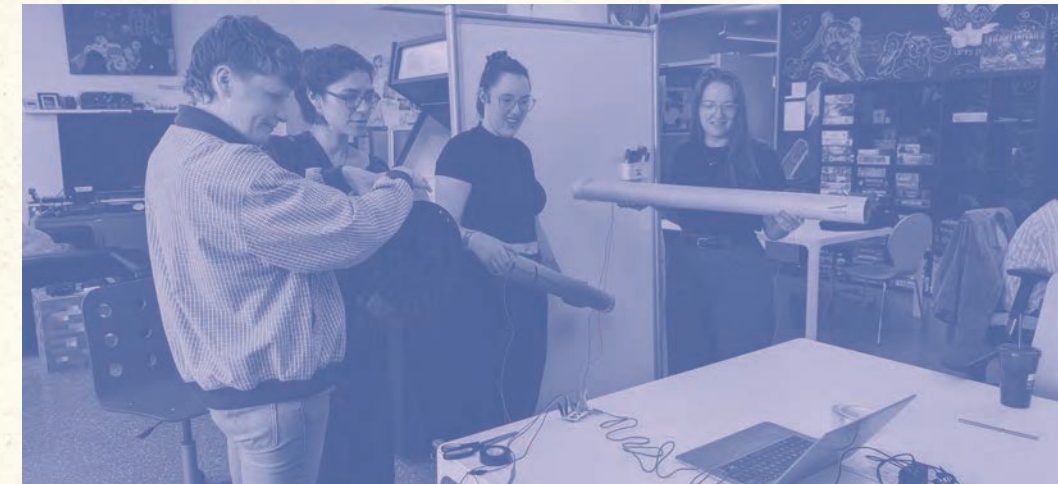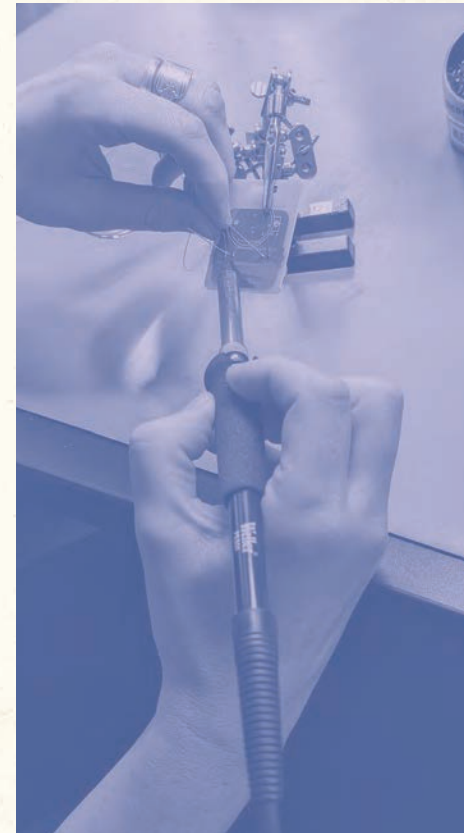

Designed by Dr. Darren Wershler, the course gathers students with varied research interests from different departments and encourages them to move beyond textual analysis toward a methodology that foregrounds collective, experiential learning. This year's course was co-taught by guest lecturer Dr. Lai-Tze Fan and included the participation of three student facilitator to guide the different groups in their project: Ph.D students Alex Custodio, Zeph Thibodeau and Concordia IITS technician Mario Gaudio.

Mess and Method launched with an online seminar to establish the theoretical context for the hands-on work that would take place at the Milieux Institute the following week. Operating on Kathleen Fitzpatrick's principle of generous

Through direct engagement with material cultures, the four interdisciplinary projects during that week revealed the way learning is an ongoing, collaborative process that is highly dependent on skill sharing and knowledge exchange.

Guiding each of the projects was Darren's heuristic for the course, a loose set of problem-solving approaches that has emerged from hands-on experience. This recursive approach considers subjects, objects, knowledge cultures, infrastructures, and policy, all while remaining mindful of the incommensurabilities that underlie this work. The techniques we look at—from hardware modding to dataset training—shape and are shaped by communities of practice, each with their own technical, discursive, and affective approaches. The course offers a rare opportunity to reflect not only on objects but also on our relationship with them as scholars and people.

thinking—an approach that charges academia to temper its penchant for criticism and competition—the course foregrounds collaborative knowledge sharing and skill transfer.

The seminar was uniquely compelling, insightful, and messy. Supplemental to the verbal discussions on Zoom was a robust backchannel on the course's Discord server, replete with memes and emojis. The decentralized classroom radically transformed the seminar model, affording students the opportunity to pick up threads from earlier in the conversation, elaborate on each other's points, or express sentiments of care and solidarity on a platform where the pace of conversation moved differently. While this non-linear text-based chat wasn't the most accessible medium for some learners, others found themselves deeply appreciative of the rare opportunity to engage in chaotic, synchronous discourse. The class structure itself revealed and challenged the way academic institutions privilege some approaches to learning over others and was one of many instances of incommensurability that permeated the course.

What emerged in the class's final colloquium was a common throughline of care and the often-invisible labour that goes into care work. What does it mean to care for a collective of tiny solar robot artists? What does it look like to check in with each other after an afternoon spent mired in the racist, transphobic, sexist data of AI datasets? Why do conversations around modding seldom acknowledge the slow, meticulous work of cleaning a circuit board? How do we leverage each other's strengths to create a cooperative process and experience? All these questions point to acts of maintenance.

Educational institutions privilege individual knowledge development and dissemination, but Mess and Method challenges the viability of this model. In its place, the course engages students in hands-on, collaborative, interdisciplinary research that recognizes how learning is an emergent process. It emboldens us to do research differently, drawing less on an ethos of do-it-yourself than of do-it-together—generatively, messily, and without fear of failure.

Michael Iantorno (PhD)

(TAG) TECHNOCULTURE ART & GAMES

Pippin Barr

Ida Toft (PhD)

Sylvain PATIEN (PhD)

Bart Simon
institute director

Chris Salter

V.K. Preston
cluster codirector

PERFORMING ARTS
(Le PARC)

Kim S

Cody Walker (PhD)

Ricardo Dal Farra

JUAN M

SPECULATIVE LIFE

Skot Deeming (PhD)

Kalervo Sinervo

Rilla

Brennan McCracken (PhD)

CRISTO (MFA)
ZEPH_THIBODEAU_PHD

C.C.

Shauna Janssen

Hanine El Mir (MA)

ISABELLA
Brione
(MA)

Jill Didur
cluster co-director

Kregg Hetherington
cluster co-director

Moe Beitiks
cluster codirector

Angélique Willkie

Ellen Mary Hebuika (PhD)

Olivier Charbonneau

Rilla Khaled

Darren Wershler

M. Shahram Ali (MA)

Jodee Allen (PhD)

Amrita J Gurung (PhD)

Marilyne Corignon Jacob (PhD)

Melina Campos (PhD)

Afshan Golriz (PhD)

DAVID HOWES

Alice Jarry
institute associate director

Eldad Tsabary

Lilia Mestre
cluster codirector

Jonathan Lessard

Alessia Signorino

Eric LaForest (PhD)

Rebecca Goose (MDes)

Leonardo Morales (BFA)

Maya Lamothe-Katrapani (MA)

VICTORIA STANTON (PhD)

Aram Sattarzadeh (MS)

and Chaline (PhD)

Jessé Marchessault (MA)

Scott DeJong (PhD)

MILIEUX

Carlos Olaya
(PhD)

LUCY FANDEL

Luis Rodrigues

BEN

(PhD)

Cise YEKEH (MA) Sam Bargault (BFA)

Priscilla Jolly (PhD)

Tricia Enns (MDes)

Jim Ramer

Justin Lewis
centre co-director

Hannah Claus
centre co-director

cluster co-director

POST IMAGE

cluster co-director

Miranda Smitheram
cluster co-director

MATERIALITY

Mikhel Proulx

Scott Benisiinaabandan (MFA)

Monika Pun (PhD)
cluster coordinator

Hanss Lujan Torres
centre coordinator

Zinnia Naqvi (MFA)

Geneviève Moisan
textiles technical support

Kite (PhD)

Daniel Cross

Elina Lex
(PhD)

Marisa Portolese

Molly-Claire Gillett (PhD)

Kathleen Vaughan
cluster co-director

Aaron Mc Into

PEDRO BARBÁCHANO
cluster coordinator

PATRICK TRAER

Shelley Ouellet (MFA)

Rytha Kesselring (BFA)

MATTHEW
BROOKS (MFA)

Kelly Thompson

Thomas Kneubühler
digital imaging technical coordinator

Celia Perrin-Sidarous

Jacqui Beaumont

ANNA EYLER (MFA)

Kelly Arlene Grant (PhD)

Skawennati

MILIEUX EXPO 23: THE COMMONS

September 25 - 29, 2023

Curated by Hanss Lujan Torres, Cecilia McKinnon and Puneet Jain

For this year's Expo, The Milieux Institute for Arts, Culture, and Technology invited its members to contribute interdisciplinary projects and activities related to the concept of The Commons. The Commons refers to shared resources and spaces accessible to all members of a community or society. This exhibition seeks to explore the many facets of the Commons and showcase the ways in which it can be a source of creativity, collaboration, and social change.

This Expo brings together the creative expressions of Milieux membership from its diverse research clusters through various media, including sculpture, VR, game design, video and audio installations, and interactive activations and panels. Milieux members interpreted theconcept of the Commons in their respective research and creative practices. Projects explore the theme through the lens of the natural commons, including land, water, and air, and the ways in which they are managed and protected; and the cultural commons, such as knowledge, art, and literature, and how they are created. Other approaches consider Commons as a shared space for innovative approaches to research and art-making, including open-source software, commonalities, and collaborative and community-based practices. The Commons as a theme also explores the challenges and opportunities of creating and maintaining a commons, including governance,inclusivity, and collective action issues.

Living with the new realities of climate change and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, questions about localities, shared spaces, and communities have become more prevalent. This exhibition includes considerations such as: How can such "commons" be constructed, negotiated, or provoked in the co-presence of others? What is the role of art in creating and sustaining commons, and how do these practices challenge dominant norms and power structures? As artists and researchers, how do our activities reflect an ethos of tending to, experimenting with, and cultivating a commons? And finally, what are the fruits of our common fields?

The main exhibition, workshops & panel discussions are held at the 4TH SPACE in the Library Building, with additional large-scale installations in the EV Building, at the Video Production Studio, EV-10.760.
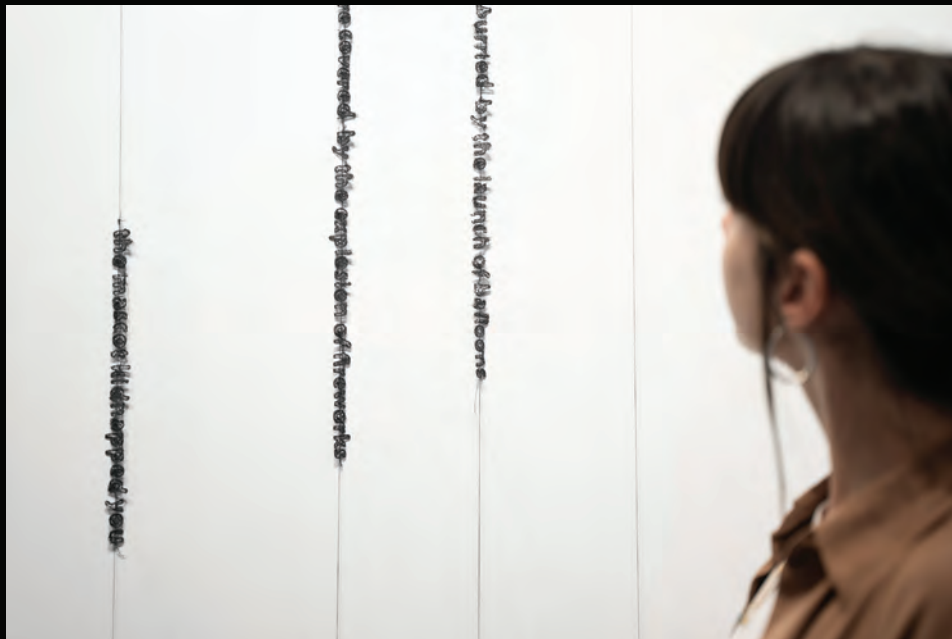
FEATURING:

Morris Fox & T+M Students,
Alice Jarry,
Marta Cerruti,
Jacqueline Beaumont,
Yiwen Chen,
Jacob Landry,
Philippe Vandal,
Nima Zakeri,
Pramila Choudhary,
Meghan Moe Beitiks,
Maurice Jones,
Tricia Enns,
Gina Hara,
Rowena Chodkowski,
Princex Naveed,
Owen Hellum,
Puneet Jain,
Scott DeJong,
Daniel Rumbolt,
Hei Lam Ng,
Nora Gibson,
Cristo Riffo,
Selina Latour & Mea Bissett,
Brice Ammar-Khodja,
Jiaying Chen (Frida),
Wawa Li & Yvonne Léa Carpentier-Wheeler,
Ceyda Yolgörmez,

Joseph Thibodeau,
Patil Tchilinguirian,
Ava Weinstein-Wright,
Camila Patiño Sanchez,
Carlos Eduardo Olaya Diaz,
Derek Pasborg,
Manoj Suji,
Melina Campos Ortiz,
Juan Miceli,
Pramila Choudhary & Sabina Rak,
Hanine El Mir,
Tarcisio Cataldi,
Jessie Stainton and Francis Ouellette,
Christian Scott,
Bart Simon,
Fenwick McKelvey,
Miranda Smitheram,
Stefanie Duguay,
Christopher Dietzel,
Heather Igloliorte,
Sage Paul,
Nico Williams,
Julie Grenier,
Linda Grussani,
daphne members,
Elena Rowan,
Michael Iantorno,
Marie LeBlanc Flanagan

Milieux Institute's

'Learning by Doing'

Approach to Curation and Festival Programming

If you were asked to describe Milieux in just a few words, you would likely find it quite challenging. Milieux is a unique space that brings together researchers—both faculty and students—to foster critical thinking and creativity. Though we are a graduate research institute, many undergraduates engage in our initiatives. We are an institute for art, culture and technology; we explore the intersection of these fields, but we don't necessarily "make art" in the traditional sense—at least not all of us. Milieux was founded on a desire not only to challenge the boundaries of disciplines but also to pursue cutting-edge research in an engaging, hands-on manner. This year, students had the opportunity to participate in a series of experiential learning workshops, enroll in a Summer Institute embracing the potential of DIY and collaboration, and organize their own events (screenings, panels, discussions), fully embodying the institute's 'learning by doing' ethos.
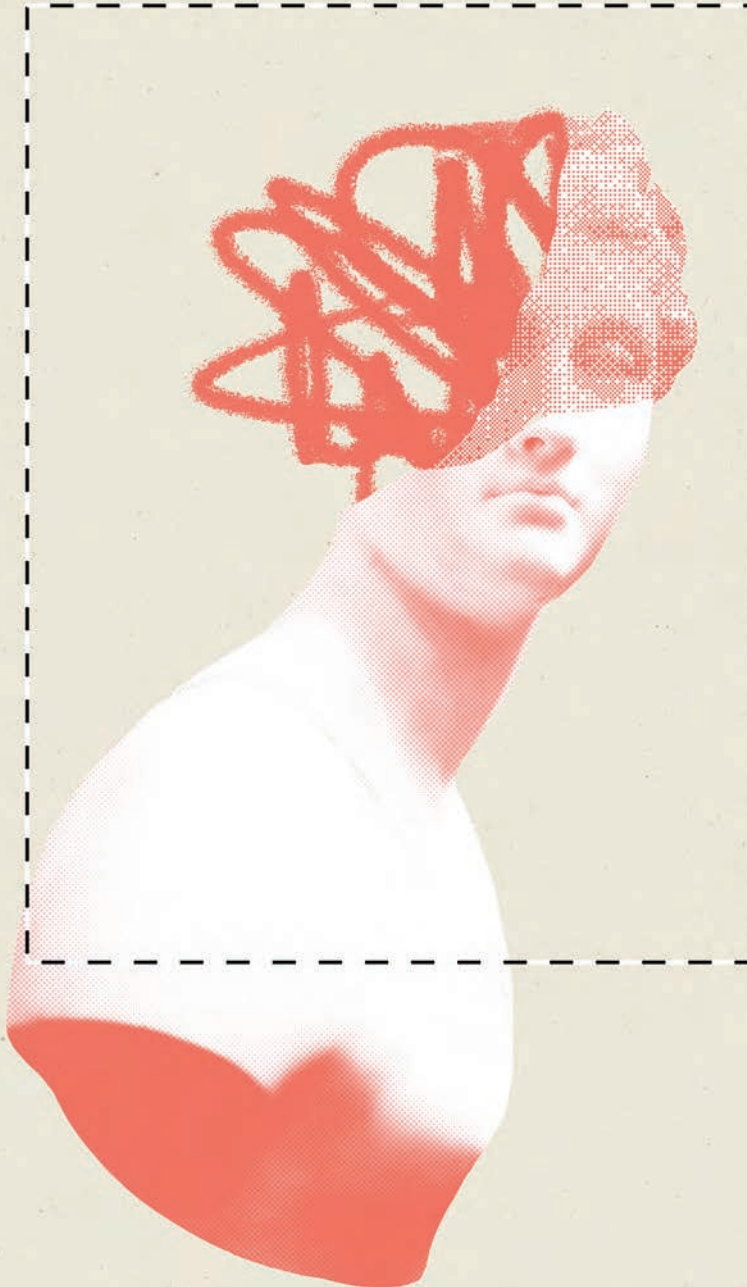
Our programming also allowed students to curate events outside of the Milieux spaces. In September 2023, the institute organized its end-of-year exhibition titled The Commons, hosted at 4TH SPACE. Drawing inspiration from the previous institute's exhibition In the Middle, a Chimera, where Milieux collaborated with several galleries and art centres around town, this iteration was organized by students with support from Milieux's admin team. Titled The Commons, the exhibition explored the concept of shared collaborative spaces – both physical and conceptual. Rather than imposing a narrow curatorial vision, the curatorial team, composed of Milieux members Hanss Lujan Torres, Puneet Jain and Cecilia McKinnon, decided to embrace an inclusive approach, inviting all members to participate.

> "We wanted a theme that was really broad enough so that everyone could find a way to participate, because all the different clusters are so different in their approach."
>
> Hanss Lujan Torres

This open philosophy resulted in over 60 presenters from Milieux's diverse research community. Spanning a wide range of practice from AI and VR to performance, bioart, ethnography and everything in between, The Commons was an excerpt of what Milieux is and does but also how to be creative around constrains. Not only did the event's format reflect the diversity of research happening at the institute but so too did the space in a room without walls, forcing the curation team to collaboratively respond to these spatial limitations with a creative approach.

> "When you encounter these sorts of limitations, that's when creativity sparks, right? I think it showed me what is possible or that nothing is impossible! It inspired a lot of new approaches to curating and collaborating."
>
> Hanss Lujan Torres

Milieux's involvement with MUTEK Forum provided another platform for students to explore curation and festival programming. Milieux member and PhD student Maurice Jones has been instrumental in the institute's involvement with the festival. Since 2020, Maurice has been working with MUTEK Montreal, developing programming around topics like the "Imaginaries of AI" and "AI Art and Governance." This year, the Forum was centered on the theme of "Into the Wild, Towards AI Ecologies."

As part of this programming, Milieux and the Concordia Applied AI Institute collaborated to create the GenAI Studio and provide seed funding to projects where students could experiment with generative AI and integrate it into their work. From mid-May to late August, Jones took on an organizing role, helping to facilitate collaborative sessions where the group of students could share knowledge, provide feedback, and further develop their projects.

"It's not telling people what to do, but more like shepherding - providing the space for people to explore."

Maurice Jones

On Friday August 29th, the Wilding AI Lab took place in one of the studios at Monument-National. During the whole day, attendees were invited to join the different provocations, presentations and demos of the projects of the inaugural cohort of the GenAI Studio. Reflecting on the experimental format of the lab, the projects offered participants a place to spark conversations on how AI - inspired by the early days of creative machine learning – could help us explore more speculative and imaginary spaces.

This emphasis on process over results allowed the students to embrace uncertainty and focus on learning through doing and encouraged open-ended exploration and conversation around the students' evolving work.

"People learned a lot. Some are moving forward with their projects as part of ongoing research, while for others it was just about playing around and having fun."

Maurice Jones

By encouraging students to take an active role in the institute's initiatives, Milieux continues to push the boundaries of traditional academic research. Whether through curating exhibitions like The Commons or guiding the institute's participation to a major festival like MUTEK, students are encouraged to explore and learn through hands-on experiences and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

UG Fellows

For the sixth consecutive year, the Milieux Institute has honored a group of ten outstanding undergraduate students whose research and contributions within the Institute's clusters have been exemplary. This year's cohort, represent over six academic departments, embodying the creative diversity and critical social engagement that define the Milieux community.

Their research spans a wide range of topics, from performance design and sustainable garment-making to data physicalizations and creative AI exploration. Each project not only enriches its respective cluster, but also the Milieux community as a whole. Amidst today's complex global challenges, it is noteworthy that many of the Fellows' projects share a common concern for exploring storytelling as a powerful multimodal medium to address collective issues.

The Fellows' dedication to interdisciplinary and collaborative research at the intersection of arts, technology and culture, is truly inspiring. Together, they envision and shape alternative futures through their innovative approaches. This fellowship recognizes undergraduate students who have demonstrated compelling work in their respective research clusters. Each student, nominated by Milieux's faculty affiliates, receives a monetary stipend and access to the Institute's resources to develop their projects over the 2023-2024 academic year.

Top Left to Bottom Right

Akiva Shannon
(Post Image)

Carolie Delisle
(LePARC)

Ella Noyes
(TAG)
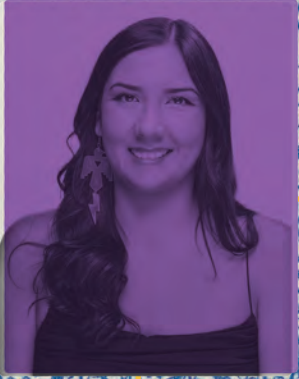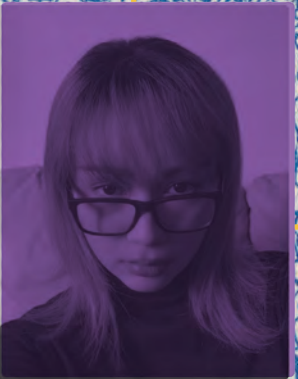
Neko Wong-Houle
(Indigenous Futures)

Gabrielle Simard
(Spec Life)

Taylor McArthur
(Indigenous Futures)

Chloe Marchal
(Spec Life)

Isabelle Anguita
(Post Image)

Noémie Carrier
(T&M)

Milieux x MUTEK Partnership Announcement
Reach: 5 300 | Likes: 69 | Shares: 6

Concordia Article about Ile Ste Thérèse
Reach: 642 | Likes: 10

Reel Solar Eclipse
Reach: 11 300 | Likes: 332 | Shares: 33

MUTEK Forum | Wilding AI | The consultation Machine project (Luciano Frizzera & Maurice Jones)
Reach: 11 3600 | Likes: 43

UG Fellow Announcement
Reach: 6 400 | Likes: 133 | Shares: 17

TeZ residency announcement
Reach: 682 | Likes: 7

Reach: 26003 / 32198
Stories: 500 / 52
Visitors: 4300 / 6000
Followers: 1399 / 2326
Link clicks: 189 / 844
Number of posts: 168 / 401

Total Membership
(Including Affiliates and Assistants)

The research institute maintains a **diverse and inter-disciplinary membership**, encompassing faculty, graduate students, undergraduate fellows, affiliated researchers, and independent collaborators. The total membership count of **393** reflects both long-term and short-term engagement with the institute's activities.

• **Regular Members (95)** – Faculty members and core researchers affiliated with the institute's research clusters.

• **Student Members (140)** – Enrolled undergraduate and graduate students who are active participants in research projects and programs.

• **Affiliated Others (158)** – Includes independent researchers, visiting scholars, postdocs, artists, and other external collaborators who contribute to research initiatives and cluster life.

• **Grand Total (393)** – The full scope of individuals engaged with the institute, including affiliates and non-employee collaborators.
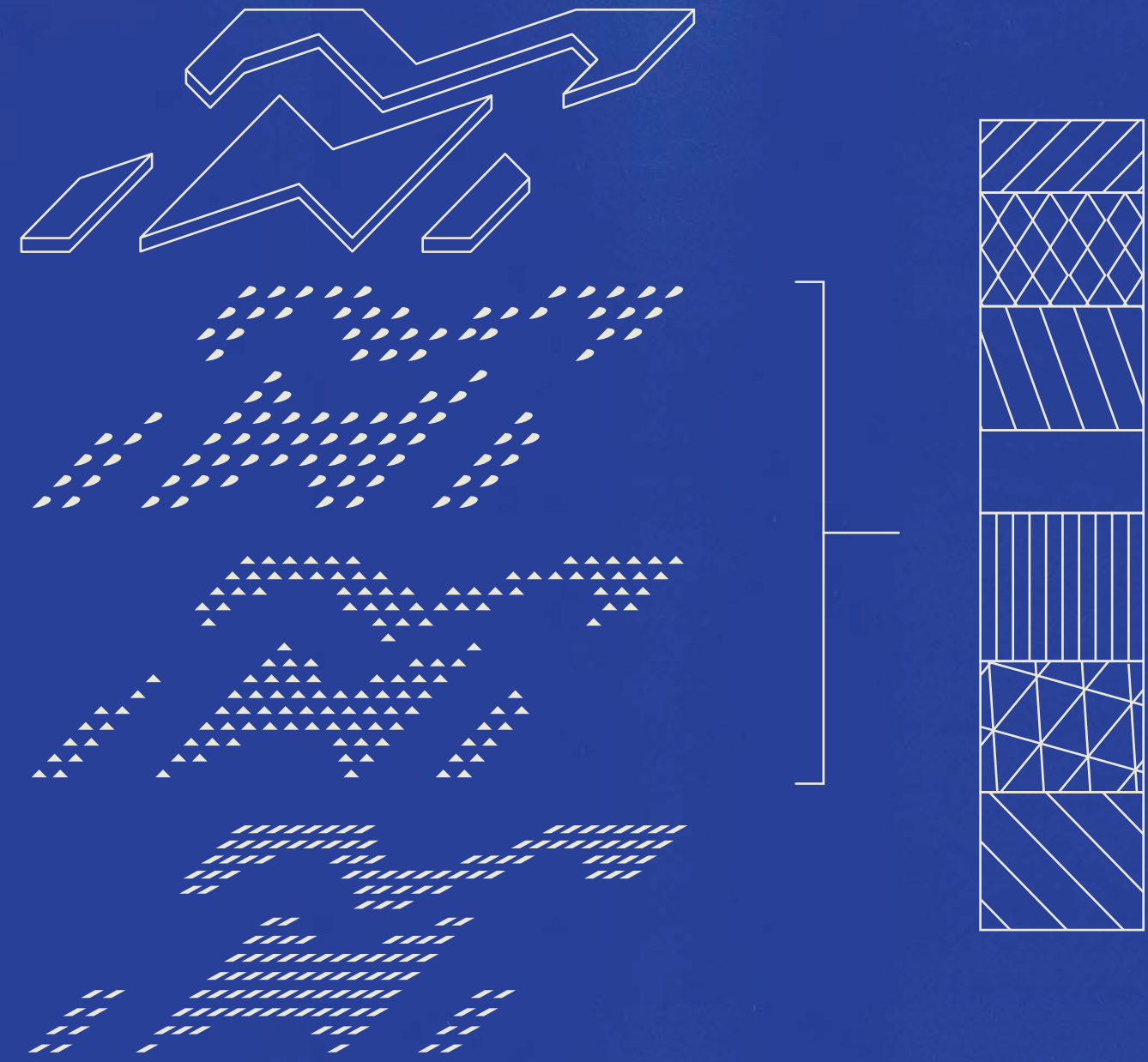
The institute's research clusters serve as **thematic and disciplinary hubs** for faculty and student members. The distribution of **235 regular and student members** across clusters reflects areas of specialization and interdisciplinary collaboration:

• **Indigenous Futures (21)**
• **LePARC (33)**
• **Media History (36)**
• **Post Image (24)**
• **Speculative Life (43)**
• **Technoculture, Art & Games (38)**
• **Textiles & Materiality (40)**

Membership by Cluster
(Regular + Students)

The institute's **core membership of 235 regular faculty and student members** is drawn from multiple faculties and academic units at the university, reflecting a strong interdisciplinary focus:

- **Faculty of Arts and Science (94)** – Representing humanities, social sciences, and science-based research.
- **Faculty of Fine Arts (134)** – The largest group, reflecting the institute's strong presence in creative research.
- **Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science (5)**
- **John Molson School of Business (1)**
- **Library (1)**

This distribution highlights the institute's role as a **cross-disciplinary research space**, integrating expertise from both creative and analytical disciplines.

Membership by Faculty/Unit
(Regular + Students)
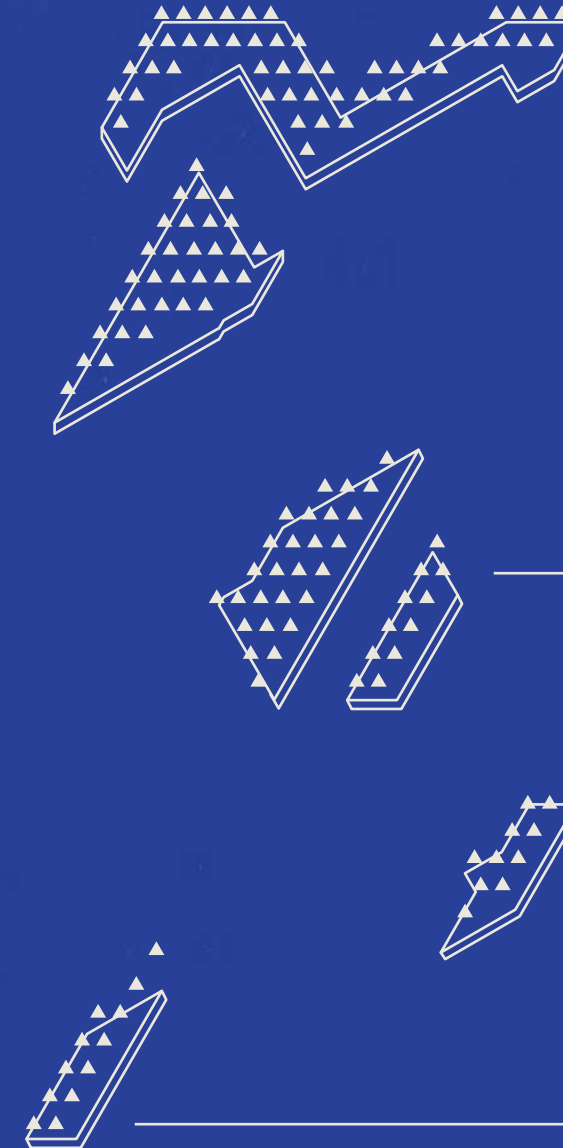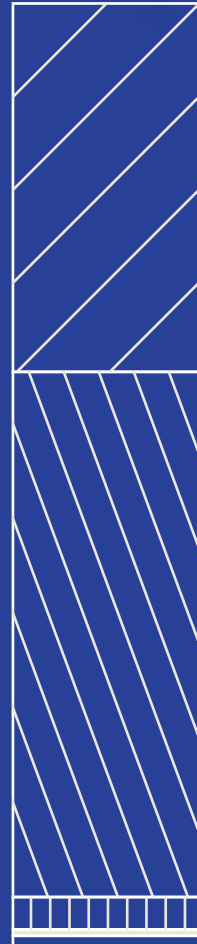
Student Membership

Student members form a vital part of the institute's research community, contributing to projects, artistic practices, and scholarly initiatives. The **140 student members** span multiple academic levels. Primarily a graduate research centre, select undergraduates are also involved in the research culture.

- **Doctoral Students (80)**
- **Master's Students (38)**
- **Undergraduate Fellows (10)** – Selected students actively participating in nominated research initiatives during the 2023-2024 academic year.
- **Undergraduate Students (12)**

MILIEUX STEERING COMMITEE & STAFF

Bart Simon, Institute Director
Ann-Louise Davidson, Associate Director
Alice Jarry, Associate Director

Harry Smoak, Head of Operations and Coordination
Marc Beaulieu, Head of Technical Support and Infrastructure
Ophélie Queffurus, Head of Communications

Genevieve Lutsch, Administrative Support
Francis Ouellette, Social Media Assistant
Natalia Balska, Graphic Design

Geneviève Moisan, Textiles & Materiality Technical Support
Marco Luna Barahona, Immersive Storytelling Studio Technical Support
Alex Bachmayer, BioLab Technical Support

Meghan Moe Beitiks, LePARC
Lília Mestre, LePARC
VK Preston, LePARC

Miranda Smitheram, Textiles & Materiality
Kathleen Vaughan, Textiles & Materiality

Jason Lewis, Indigenous Futures
Heather Igloliorte, Indigenous Futures
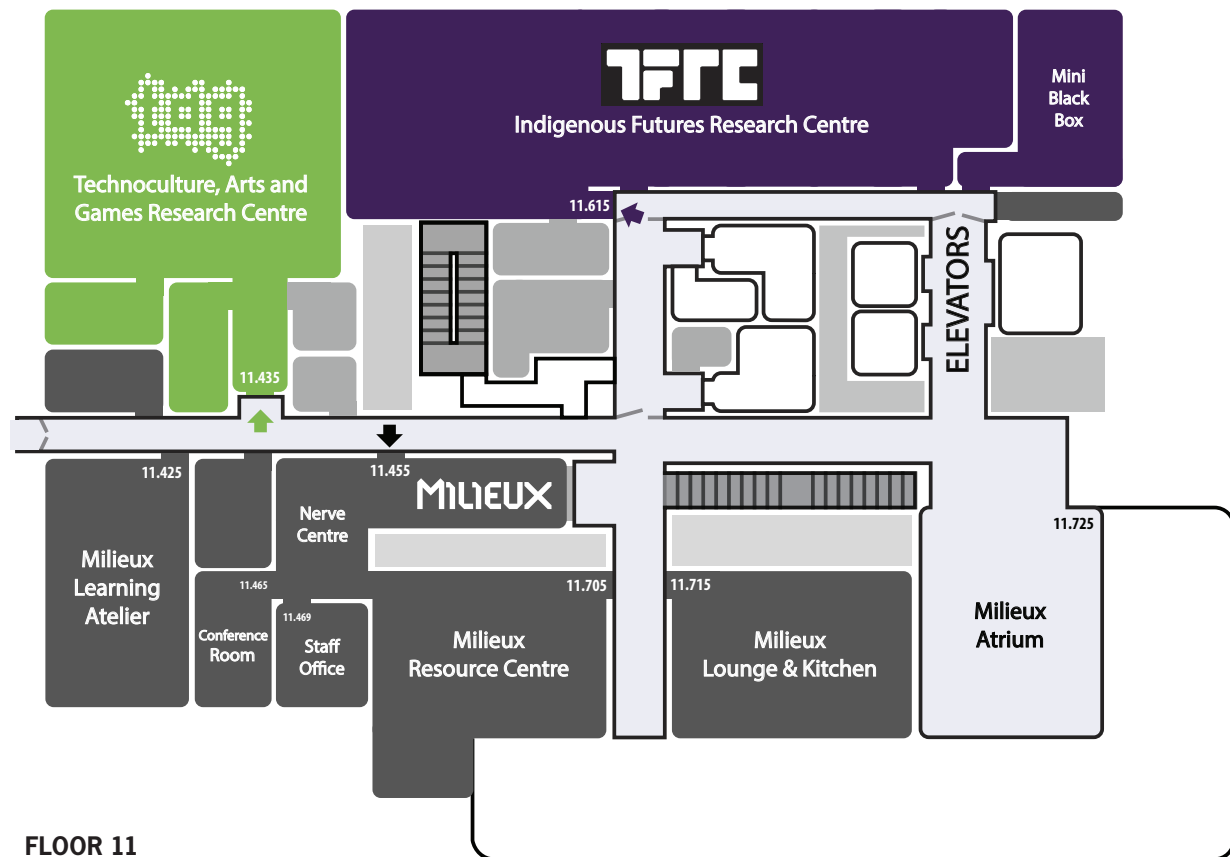**Hannah Clauss**, Indigenous Futures

Stefanie Duguay, Media and Materiality
Charles Acland, Media and Materiality

Kregg Hetherington, Speculative life
Jill Didur, Speculative Life

Deanna Bowen, Post Image
Juan Ortiz-Apuy, Post Image

Rilla Khaled, TAG
Darren Wershler, TAG

FLOOR 11

Technoculture, Arts and Games Research Centre

IFRC — Indigenous Futures Research Centre

Mini Black Box

11.615

ELEVATORS

11.435

11.425

11.455

MILIEUX

Nerve Centre

Milieux Learning Atelier

11.465

Conference Room

11.469

Staff Office

Milieux Resource Centre

11.705

11.715

Milieux Lounge & Kitchen

11.725

Milieux Atrium

FLOOR 11

FLOOR 10

MaSH Lab

Speculative Life Research Cluster

MilieuxMake Maker Space

Milieux Speculative Life BioLab

10.615

10.625

10.825

10.835

ELEVATORS

10.705

10.701

Residual Media Depot

Immersive Storytelling Lab (VR)

Post Image Research Cluster

10.715

Digital Imaging Lab

10.740

Milieux Temp Office

Machine Agencies

10.785

10.755 Temp

MILIEUX Nerve Centre

Textile & Materiality Digital Thread Laying Machine Room

10.725

10.730

10.765

LePARC (Performing Arts)

Textile & Materiality Jacquard Loom Room

10.735

Textiles and Materiality Research Cluster

Performance Lab

10.785

10.775

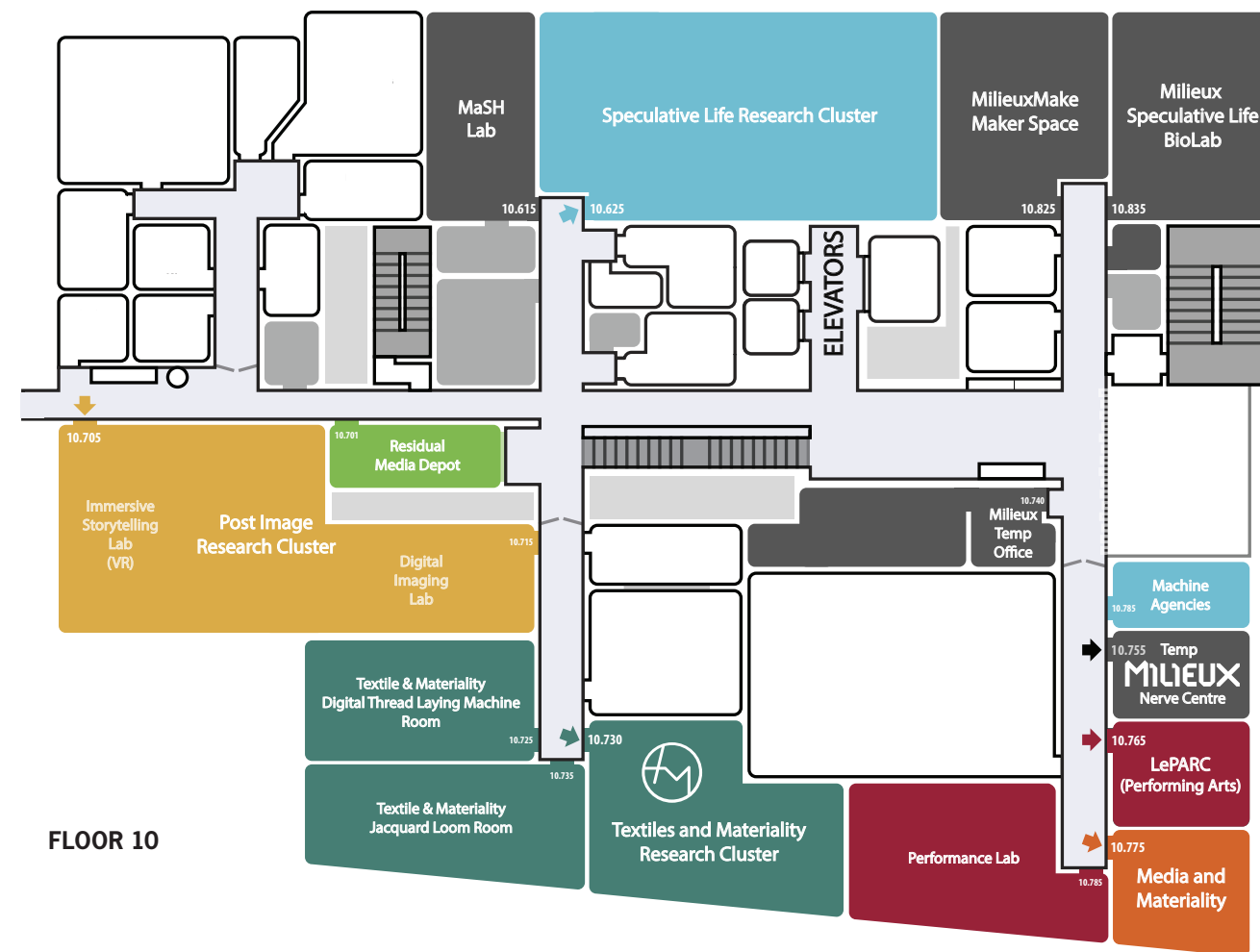Media and Materiality

FLOOR 10

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