

MELTING PRESENT

Eglė Budvytė &
Matheline Marmy

29.08. – 11.10.2025

„We live in an age of mud – an era where information, data, and knowledge swirl together like a murky, opaque slurry, making it impossible to see clearly what lies ahead.“

– James Bridle, *New Dark Age*, 2018

In this quote, artist and author James Bridle describes in his book *New Dark Age* the challenges presented by the advancing Anthropocene—the current epoch of profound human intervention in the Earth’s natural processes. These interventions are characterized by extractive processes such as resource exploitation and information accumulation, leading to ecological disasters and planetary upheavals. More knowledge, as Bridle argues, does not necessarily lead to clearer predictions, but instead produces a kind of “knowledge sludge” that muddies our view of the future and exposes the limits of what can be predicted. Finding our bearings in a world that has become unpredictable, demands new models of thought and tools for navigation.

Melting Present addresses this state of increasing instability, opening up associative connections to current heatwaves, glacial retreat, and thawing permafrost. In their artistic contributions, Matheline Marmy and Eglė Budvytė explore how we might grasp the human-driven environmental changes of our time and question our exploitative relationship to life-sustaining ecological systems. Drawing on geological history, insights from life sciences, and speculative narratives, they open up alternative ways of viewing how humans, matter, and non-human beings coexist.

In her artistic research practice, Matheline Marmy explores how materials react to change—such as glass, copper, or textiles. Through experimental methods, she exposes these materials to chemical processes, heat, or time, treating them as more than something passive: they generate their own form, transform, react—and thus function as an active counterpart in the artistic process. Her sculptures and installations reveal these entangled interactions and share an affinity with the Arte

Povera movement, whose artists in the 1960s and 70s created installations with everyday materials. The works developed specifically for the exhibition are part of her long-standing exploration of materials as carriers of memory, history, and transformation.

Storytelling is also a central element of Eglė Budvytė’s artistic practice. Her video works, performances, songs, and poems address the persuasive and empowering potential of collectivity, vulnerability, and permeable relationships between bodies and the environment. She draws on choreographic movement, gestures, and singing as tools to disrupt social norms in public space and to renegotiate roles and relationships. The concept of symbiosis appears in her works as a form of togetherness—a coexistence that emphasizes connection and exchange, as opposed to strategies of control and regulation. This approach is also evident in her collaborative artistic practice: partnering with artists from other fields, the public, and amateur actors plays a central role.

Room 1

Matheline Marmy’s large-format wall work *Grande Distance Peripetia* opens the exhibition. Affixed to the center of a textile is a skeletal structure fashioned from bent and welded copper rods. The artist immersed the textile in baths of copper sulfate, iron oxide, and magnetite and dried it in the sun. The chemical reaction produces an unexpected color spectrum and creates crystalline formations. Marmy is interested in the painterly quality of the process as well as its proximity to analog photography: the textiles reveal the phenomena they are created with—much like a photogram where the traces and interactions from chemical exposure are preserved on the image surface. The coloration evokes associations with plant structures or the cheerful batik aesthetic of the hippie movement of the 1970s, while the crystal deposits are more reminiscent of acidic chemicals. The way the materials are used, the gestures performed on them, and the effects produced create a tension between naturalness and artificiality, seductive beauty and threatening toxicity.

In her audio work *Song Sing Soil*, Eglė Budvytė weaves together her own texts, voice, and layered sound effects into an atmospheric, polyphonic composition. Urgent instructions to the listener alternate with moments of silence, fragile melodies, and intimate reflections. Eglė Budvytė explores the permeability between shapelessness and form, between the realms of living and dying,

between meaning making and pulling it apart. She invites visitors to listen closely and embark on a meditative journey through the soundscape.

Room 2

The series of wall works is titled *Memory Float*. The metal skeletons are wrapped in textiles, which were also dyed in copper sulfate baths. The design of the welded support structures is inspired by historical clockwork components and microscopic images of foraminifera—single-celled organisms whose fossils contain traces of prehistoric life. The intertwining of horological and organic elements, as well as the works' title, alludes to the idea that materials, like cells, can store memories and information about long-past planetary changes. In doing so, Marmy echoes the idea of biologist Lynn Margulis, who describes cells as “time capsules” in her book *Symbiotic Planet*. Installed at regular intervals across the three exhibition walls, the arrangement of the works can be read as a kind of orientation system or large clock face, where the incomprehensibly vast spans of Earth's history converge with human history.

The cylindrical glass objects in the installation *No Prospect for an End* were created using a glass-casting process and are reminiscent of ice cores, soil samples, or industrial artifacts. The molten glass was mixed with copper sulfate and silver nitrate—substances also used in photographic developing processes. Color gradients, crystals, and streaks form inside the cylinders, as if the materials had been frozen in a chemical or geological transformation process. In combination with the bronze pedestal element, the semi-transparent bodies recall natural history presentations of minerals or fossils—but also evoke technical devices or storage modules that react sensitively to temperature or electrical impulses.

Marmy's title, *No Prospect for an End*, references a quote from the eighteenth-century geologist James Hutton: “No vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end.” This phrase expresses a view of the Earth where time is not linear—there are only cyclical processes, transformations, and transitions. Our own imprints on this planet are also becoming part of this geological history: since the 1950s, the impacts of the Anthropocene—such as microplastics, fertilizers, ash, or isotopes from nuclear tests—have been detectable in lake sediments, ice, and rock layers.

Room 3

Eglė Budvytytė's video work, *Songs From the Compost: Mutating Bodies, Imploding Stars*, was filmed in the pine forests and sand dunes of Lithuania. The choreographed movements of a group of performers follow a horizontal orientation—through forests, along dunes, and across the shoreline. The performers merge with the landscape and disrupt the usual upright posture of the human figure. It is a poetic exploration of various aspects of symbiotic life: interdependence, devotion, death, and decay. The scenes are accompanied by the intimate lyrics of a song expressing the desires of a being that shifts between different genders, voices, and bodies. The lyrics reference the scientific work of Lynn Margulis, who investigated the role of bacteria and the cooperative behavior of single-celled organisms in the origins of life. Also incorporated are concepts from science fiction author Octavia E. Butler, who questioned existing hierarchies and categorizations through themes such as symbiosis, mutation, and hybridity.

The video work was created in collaboration with Marija Olšauskaitė and Julija Steponaitytė. Contributors include local youth as well as performer and choreographer Mami Kang.

EVENTS

Guided Tour with Sign Language Interpretation
Thu, 11 September, 6–7 pm

Truth or Dare

Sat, 27 September, 2 pm

Conversation with Matheline Marmy and Stella Succi (in English)

Powerful Materials & Rare Earths – Amulets and Charms from E-Waste

Sat, 13 September, 2–5 pm

Workshop with Daniela Brugger for teens and adults

Digital Matter and Its Stories

Sat, 13 September, 6–7:30 pm

Reading and short film program by Daniela Brugger, with works by Maisha Maene, Tabita Rezaire, Elom 20ce, Musquiqui Chihying, and Gregor Kasper

STADTGALERIE TEAM

Director/Curator: Eva-Maria Knüsel

Administration: Andrea Bracher

Exhibition Technology/Carpentry: Verena Dietze

Audio and Video Support: Videocompany

Exhibition Attendants: Christoph Studer, Urslé von Mathilde

Graphic Design: Amanda Haas

Photography: Cedric Mussano

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2–6 pm
Saturday
12–4 pm