

# MOCA London

Museum of Contemporary Art  
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## Press release

**Ram Shergill**

### **Posthuman Bodying**

*The Birth of a Critical Posthuman Practice*

10 April - 7 May 2022

#### Opening times:

Thursday and Friday: 2pm - 6pm

Saturday: 12pm - 4pm

or by appointment



In the first exhibition of two Ram Shergill brings together new works of sculptures, photography and living matter (living artworks). Between the first and second exhibition period, microalgae and living matter will grow on the sculptures, photographs, and Bioregenerative Mask Systems. Ram Shergill's career in photography and portraiture has informed his interests and research into the body, the environments we exist in, and our shifting into new relations with other living forms.

Working closely with biochemical engineering, architectural design and bioregenerative methods, Shergill's work hypothesizes modes of "becoming other together" through *sympoiesis* (making-with in collectively producing systems). Assemblages of human and non-human agency are established, forging a new form of "Critical Posthuman Practice," furthering the concept of a new human — a human after the pre-existing human. A new identity is formed through Posthuman Bodying, in which the human body engages in pertinent and critical relations with nature and the ecological environment.

The exhibition explores the viewpoint of a human "becoming natural" in an environment via *sympoiesis* (conjoining with the nonhuman through collectively producing systems). Ram Shergill's work analyses the human body through a performative and aesthetic façade, depicting a visual "Growth of Form." The human body iterates radically extending its perceived anatomy, creating new alliances with various species altruistically in the creation of an enhanced "Critical Posthuman Body." Nature advances through co-evolving, posing a direct challenge to the perception of "being" as linear and static. Instead, this work contends that the human body is a collective of multiple organisms and the human can be extended further to become natural in an environment via a form of organic *Posthuman Bodying*.

The human identity morphs into newer directions and challenges the perception of the "singular body" when it is aligned cohesively with multispecies entities. The works presented in the exhibition intend to elucidate the notion that we are a species that is convergent and are co-dependant with

living organisms and are continuously *becoming*, in the framework of an ontological hybridisation. Creatively we form a dynamic co-existence in which organisms flow into other organisms. Cells and a multitude of organism's "co-evolve" and dance in a form of radical relationality – adapting, protecting, creating, mutating *rhizomatically*<sup>1</sup> with each other in the metabolic universe that is known as the *holobiont*.

The artworks set out to critically question the intra-relationship between human, animal and botanic organisms. This exhibition sets the foundation to go beyond the visual (re)appropriation of animal characteristics in human appearance, and acts as a catalyst for developing new technologies in the fields of external morphology. This exhibition is part one of the exploration into Ram Shergill's *Carapace* systems which will eventually create an outer layer of biogenic flesh, using methods of adaptation, growth, and reconfiguration as a response to harsher conditions on Earth and for life support beyond Low Earth Orbit (LEO).

## Exhibition Part 1 and Part 2

**Part 1** of the Exhibition will explore the relationality of the human body with various species and how they can "intra-relate" in the creation of posthuman bodies. The birth of a "Critical Posthuman Practice" is established. A "multispecies ethnography" will be carried out at MOCA London (Peckham), using art and technology.

**Part 2** (end of Feb/March 2023, exact dates to be announced)

The second part of the exhibition will see the developed process of the living art works and elaborate on the concept of "Critical Posthuman Bodying" developing the notion of "intra-relationships" of the human and nonhuman form. The human and nonhuman form assimilate and establish arrangements via *sympoiesis* in the creation of ecological assemblages through technological devices. The ontological and rational objectivity of the human is challenged, in which the "being" further develops through a symbiotic mix of animal cells and microbes in the creation of a critical posthuman identity. Shergill's living artworks will be exhibited at MOCA London (Peckham), which depict "function and form," elucidating bodily forms of art and technology through performativity, in the construction of "The Critical Posthuman Carapace."

For part 2 there will be a symposium in collaboration with University College London, including a panel discussion regarding Ram Shergill's concept of a "Critical Posthuman Practice." The symposium and panel discussion will feature prolific international guest speakers from the world of art, academia, and technology.

[www.moca.london](http://www.moca.london)

[@moca\\_london](https://www.instagram.com/moca_london)

[www.ramshergill.com](http://www.ramshergill.com)

[@ramshergill](https://www.instagram.com/ramshergill)

[www.theprotagonistmagazine.com/moca](http://www.theprotagonistmagazine.com/moca)



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<sup>1</sup> Rhizome is a term used by Deleuze and Guattari and can be described as an itinerant flow of practices, Rhizome was a philosophical concept and developed in their Capitalism and Schizophrenia project. Rhizomes work with trans-species connections and become an "interbeing" and are considered nomadic in culture, science, and theory. In Botany it is known as a plant stem growing from a root in various directions.

## Artist Biography

Ram Shergill is currently undertaking doctoral research at University College London, The Bartlett of Architecture under the supervision of Professor of innovative environments, Professor Marcos Cruz, and Associate Professor in sustainable bioprocess design at UCL Biochemical Engineering, Dr. Brenda Parker. His thesis title is “The Critical Posthuman Carapace: Constructing Exoskeletal Hybrid Living Systems (EHLS)” in which he creates novel forms of architecture in constructing a carapace acting as a shield to the body, as a response to harsher conditions on Earth and beyond Low Earth Orbit (LEO). Using architectural design in combination with biochemical engineering, forms of bioregenerative outputs are created, combining human with non-human organisms, explicating a mode of critical posthuman practice. His research aims to explore the present-day body from a new and uncharted viewpoint using advanced apparatus and technologies. Examining forms of *sympoietic* relationality, challenging the perception of the body as a singular cultural agent. Methodologically, the systemic approaches in creating a carapace will function as a set of biologically integrated interfaces between the body and its surroundings.

In principle, Shergill’s research sets out to reimagine and redefine the body in an environmentally fragile planet — achieving new aesthetics, evidencing systems and materials which respond to internal and external transformations relating to the human body, through the construction of Exoskeletal Hybrid Living Systems (EHLS).

Ram Shergill captures a kaleidoscope of different cultures through his interdisciplinary art practice including, photography, film, creative direction, fine art and design. Internationally recognised for his contribution to the industry, Ram remains at the forefront of his field, using methodologies in creative practice to create a discussion that questions the notion of identity, dress and the power of performativity. Ram is a visiting lecturer at UAL and has previously lectured at Falmouth University and Arts University Bournemouth. In addition to lecturing, he has been a keynote speaker at various conferences and galleries internationally.

Being of British Indian origin has given Ram an intercultural upbringing allowing him to understand the effects of marginalisation and underrepresentation. In his practice, he has been rectifying effects of marginalisation and inequality in the university setting and in the workplace. Fundamentally, this has been achieved by Ram taking on an active role in leading more of an inclusive pedagogy through contemporary and pertinent EDI practice and research.

Ram was awarded the Arts Culture and Theatre Award (ACTA) in 2016 for his contribution to the arts. His work has been shown in exhibitions internationally including Sotheby’s, The Wallace Collection, Somerset House, and the Whitechapel Gallery. Ram Shergill’s portraits are now housed in the permanent collection of the National Portrait Gallery.



## Ram Shergill Posthuman Bodying The Birth of a Critical Posthuman Practice

*Works on display:*



Exoskeletal Erika

68 x 45 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 10, £ 1500.00

Talent Erika Pattison  
Mask by Emma Witter  
Artistic Direction Daen Palma Huse



Butterfly

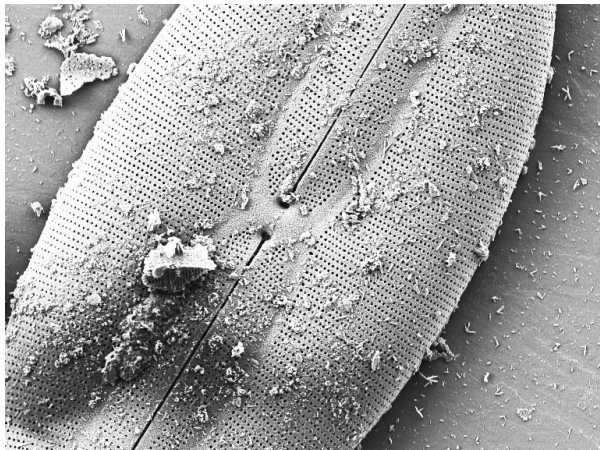
Image 64 x 53 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 10, £ 1900.00

Headpiece by Philip Treacy for Alexander McQueen  
Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, John Christopher, Margherita Gardella, Flo Dron



Squid Beak

50 x 46 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 10, £800.00



Diatom Lyra Frustule Exoskeleton

Edition of 20, £650.00  
28 x 21 CM chromogenic print

Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Dr. David Williams, (NHM) Natural History Museum,  
Professor Anson Mackay



Bioregenerative Algal mask I

44 x 29 CM, Chromogenic print  
Edition of 10, £1250.00

Talent Rentaro Nakaaki from the English National Ballet  
Artistic Direction, Daen Palma Huse  
Artistic lampworker Ian Pearson



Porcupine

51 x 61 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 10, £1900.00

Project Team: Maiko Takeda, John Christopher



Armour of Glass

69 x 46 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 800.00

Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Daen Palma Huse, Jack Irving, Debbie Finnegan, Julia Babbage



Bioregenerative Algal mask VI

46 x 30.5 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 10, £1200.00

Talent Fred Goudie  
Artistic Direction Daen Palma Huse  
Artistic lampworker Ian Pearson



Bioreactor Face

61 x 42 cm

Edition of 15, £ 2000.00

Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Daen Palma Huse, Jack Irving, Debbie Finnegan, Julia Babbage, Savannah Blake

Artistic Lampworker Ian Pearson



Critical Posthuman Face

46 x 30.5 cm chromogenic print

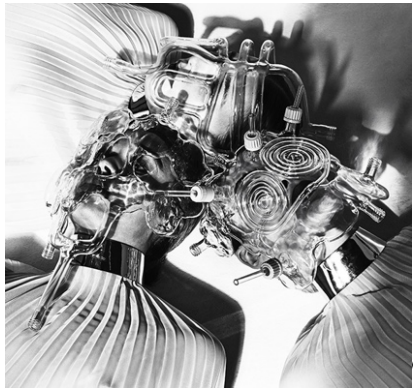
Edition of 10, £ 450.00

Talent Fred Goudie

Artistic Direction Daen Palma Huse

Artistic lampworker Ian Pearson

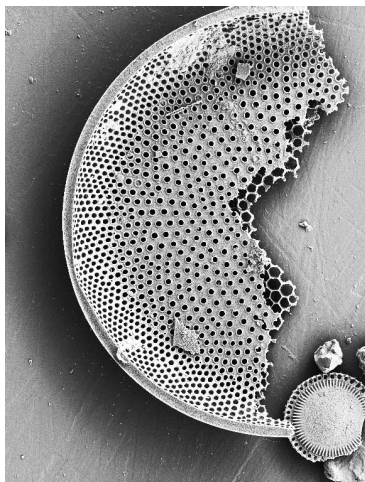




## Posthuman Bodying I

45 x 42.5 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 1100.00

Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Daen Palma Huse, Jack



## Diatom *Coscinodiscus*

50 x 37 CM chromogenic print  
Edition of 10, £ 875.00

*Coscinodiscus perforates* SEM. Original material, London, 2022.

*Coscinodiscus* are a genus of diatoms which are extinct and are associated with freshwater habitats.

This image shows the internal view of frustule element showing a fragment of a valve - depicting the central area without areolae and rimoportulae scattered over the valve surface.

Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Dr. David Williams, (NHM) Natural History Museum,  
Professor Anson Mackay



Bioregenerative Algal Intestine II

24 x 30 CM chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 600.00

Talent: Fred Goudie  
Artistic Direction: Daen Palma Huse



Borosilicate Hal

38 x 25 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 650.00

Bioregenerative Algal Mask  
Artistic lampworker Ian Pearson



Iridescent Borosilicate Mask

61 x 40.5 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 10, £ 2000.00

Talent Eve Delf, in Borosilicate Glass

Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Daen Palma Huse, Jack Irving, Debbie Finnegan, Julia Babbage



Airlift Chlorella Bioreactor

18 x 12 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 400.00

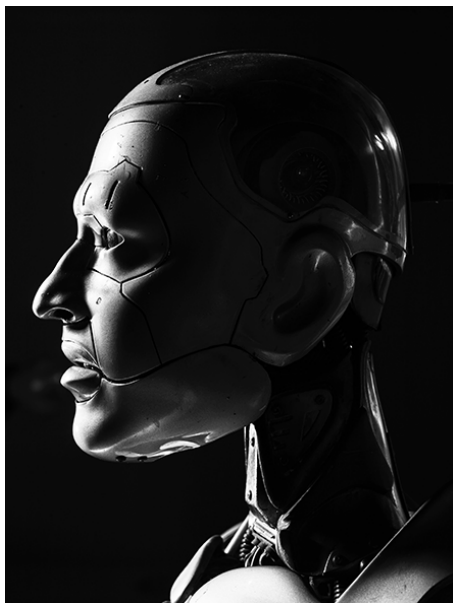
Bioregenerative Algal mask  
Talent Fred Goudie  
Artistic Direction Daen Palma Huse



Butterfly In Wood

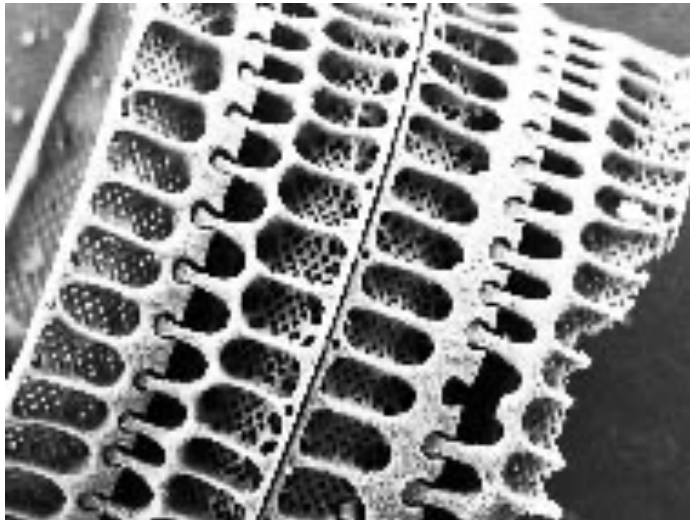
18 x 13 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 350.00

Artistic Direction Daen Palma Huse  
Wooden Mask by Yaani Fan



Posthumanities

26 x 19.5 cm chromogenic print  
Price on request



Prehistoric Diatom

24 x 18 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 300.00

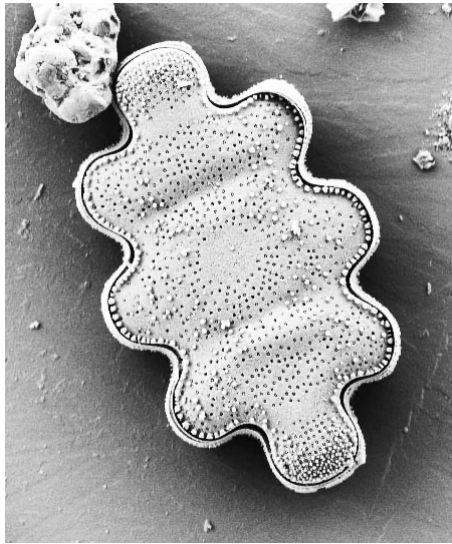
Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Dr. David Williams, (NHM) Natural History Museum,  
Professor Anson Mackay



Bioregenerative Chlorella Vulgaris

72 x 48 cm chromogenic print  
Price on Request

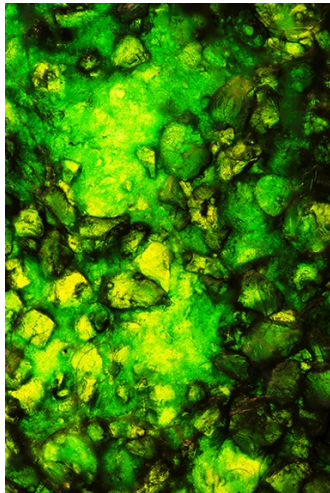
Talent Fred Goudie  
Artistic Direction Daen Palma Huse  
Artistic lampworker Ian Pearson



Diatom “Shergill”

18 x 14 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 95.00

Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Dr. David Williams, (NHM) Natural History Museum,  
Professor Anson Mackay



Prantar Tamuli, *Tectonic conferviance*

Emergent ethereal textures of photosynthetically biomineralized living tissue formed by the growth of filamentous cyanobacteria biofilm (*Oscillatoria animalis*) in a hydrogel scaffold with translucent amorphous silica.

26 x 17 cm chromogenic print  
Price on request

Project Team: UCL: Prantar Tamuli, Brenda Parker, Marcos Cruz

## **Table**

Team: Bio-ID / Marcos Cruz, Brenda Parker, Nina Jotanovic, Shneel Malik, Anete Salmene  
*Not for sale*

## **Sculptures**

All sculptures by Ram Shergill  
*Price on request*

Project Team;

UCL: Pradeep Devdaas, Ben Spong, Martyn Carter,  
UAL Photogrammetry: Elliot Denman, Luke Musen Guan  
Ram Shergill in house sculpture production: Daen Palma Huse, Abhinav Bhandari

Sculpture on Bio Integrated Table Mark Baldwin OBE

Sculpture 1

Dr. Birgitta Huse, Social Anthropologist

Sculpture 2

Fred Goudie, Talent at Menace Model Management, special thanks to Patrick Egbon -  
Marshall

Sculpture 3

Yana Uralskaya, Jewellery Designer at Visual Couture

Sculpture 4

Mark Baldwin OBE

*Further works from the series:*



Floral Borosilicate Crown

68 x 45 CM chromogenic print  
Edition of 10, £ 1400.00

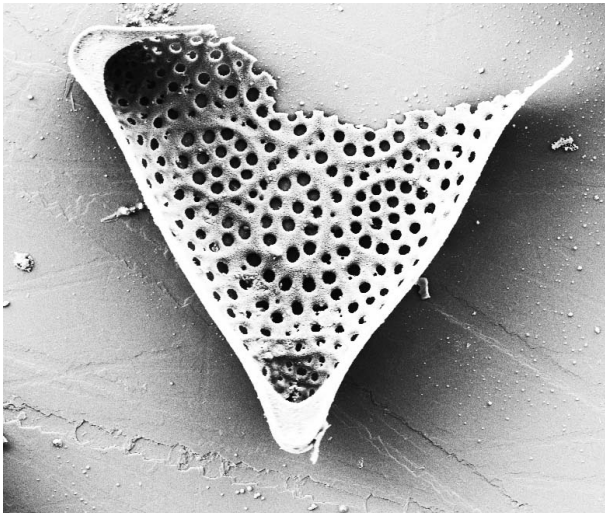
Talent, Rentaro Nakaaki from the English National Ballet  
Artistic Direction Daen Palma Huse  
Artistic lampworker Ian Pearson



Kaleidoscopic Elephant

33 x 32.5 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 10, £2000.00





Diatom triceratium

33 x 39 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 450.00

Diatom Navicula Lyra

Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Dr. David Williams, (NHM) Natural History Museum,  
Professor Anson Mackay



Bioregenerative Bodying

61 x 40.5 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 10, £ 1100.00

Project Team:  
Talent Savannah Blake  
Corset by Jack Irving  
Artistic Direction Daen Palma Huse

Artistic lampworker Ian Pearson



Bodying the post human

55 x 36 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 700.00

Talent Nadia Araujo  
Artistic Direction Daen Palma Huse



Robotic Sea Urchin

45 x 30 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 750.00

Design Jack Irving  
Artistic Direction Daen Palma Huse



### Bioregenerative Ballet

32 x 21 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 600.00

Talent Stanislaw Węgrzyn  
Artistic lampworker Ian Pearson



### Sharukh Khan Ra One

16 x 12 cm chromogenic print  
Price on request



Cyborgian Rajnikant

56 x 42 cm chromogenic print  
Price on request



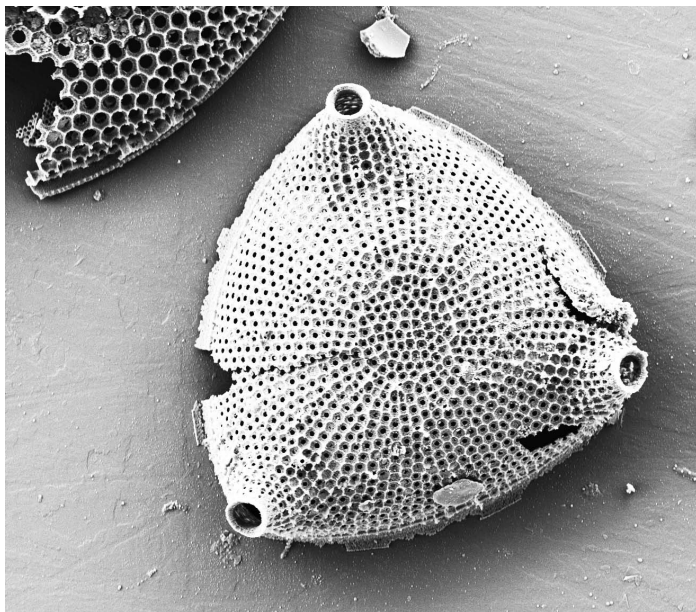
Bioluminescent Sharukh

26 x 19.5 cm chromogenic print  
Price on request



The Critical Posthuman Tree  
Stanislaw Węgrzyn

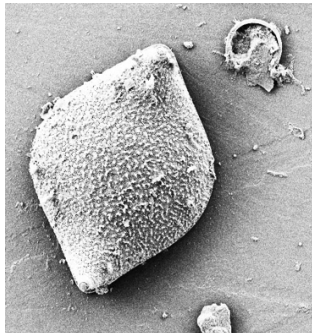
30 x 20 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 600.00



Diatom triceratium

30.5 x 26.5 chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 600.00

Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Dr. David Williams, (NHM) Natural History Museum,  
Professor Anson Mackay



Diatom Biddulphia Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Dr. David Williams, (NHM) Natural History Museum, Professor Anson Mackay

30.5 x 28.5 chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 600.00



Borosilicate Armour on Eve

46 x 40.5 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 30, £ 800.00

Talent Eve Delf, in Borosilicate Glass

Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Daen Palma Huse, Jack Irving, Debbie Finnegan, Julia Babbage



### Sympoietic Futures

55 x 83 cm chromogenic print  
Edition of 10, £ 1700.00

Talent Eve Delf, in Borosilicate Glass

Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Daen Palma Huse, Jack Irving, Debbie Finnegan, Julia Babbage

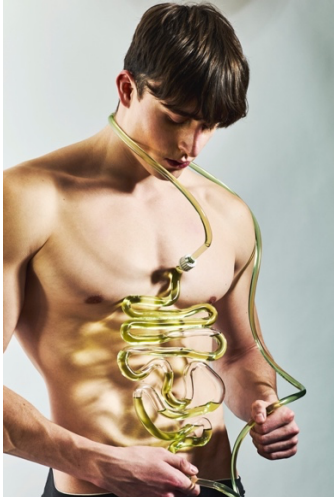
Project Team: UCL: Ram Shergill, Daen Palma Huse, Jack Irving, Debbie Finnegan, Julia Babbage, Eve Delf



### Chlorella Vulgaris Sympoiesis

44 x 29 cm chromogenic print  
Price on request

Talent Fred Goudie  
Artistic Direction Daen Palma Huse



## Bioregenerative Algal Intestine I

18 x 12 cm chromogenic print

Edition of 30, £ 400.00

Talent Fred Goudie

Artistic Direction Daen Palma Huse

## Exhibition Credits

Exhibition Curation by Michael Petry and Roberto Ekholm at MOCA London

Assistant Curator Viola Farinella

Artistic Direction of Ram Shergill's work, prints, archival management and production

Daen Palma Huse

Exhibition assistance, Abhinav Bhandari

UCL PhD Team, Professor Marcos Cruz, Dr. Brenda Parker, Anete Krista Salmane, Alexandra Lacatusu, Prantar Tamuli, Pedro Maximo

Special thanks to Professor Saul Purton, Professor of *Algal* Biotechnology at University College London and Paul Bevan at UAL

PhD Programme Director and Departmental Tutor, Professor Jonathan Hill

The UCL PhD in Architectural Design doctoral programme encourages the development of architectural research through the creative combination of designing and writing. The Architectural Design thesis consists of projects and texts that share a research theme and have a productive relationship. The projects may be drawn, written, filmed, constructed, or make use of whatever media is appropriate to the research subject. Integrating varied research methods, the thesis emphasises the creative interdependence of drawing, writing, and building in the development of innovative practices and theories of architecture.

Photographic Prints by Gary at EC ONE Lab

Framing by David Mitchell Framing