



How to Live with Toxicity?

An Interdisciplinary Conversation

Second Annual Rachel Carson Center Tandem Lecture

Wednesday, 5 May, 2021

7:00 – 8:30 pm (CET)

Kate Brown
(MIT)



Antonia Alampi
(Spore Initiative)



REGISTER HERE FOR THE ZOOM EVENT:

<https://lmu-munich.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwoc--hpjgjG9YvKE9d9R52X-0HJajCrpBA>

Kate Brown

Long-lasting toxins compress time and space, exposing people distant in years and miles from the source of contamination. I started research on a history of Chernobyl in East Europe, but ended up in a freezer of a bio store in Washington DC pointing a Geiger counter at frozen blueberries. Following reports of Chernobyl berries crossing US borders, I sought to track them to my breakfast table to personalize the placenessness of the Anthropocene. Like Cold War scientists before me, I realized that radioactivity showed the vital interconnections of eco-systems. Think of the work represented in the little radioactive berries. Connecting with mycorrhizal fungi, blueberry bushes scour the Pripjat Marshes for rare nutrients and with them radioactive elements that mimic nutrients. Following the plant from soils to the sales counter is the labor of hazardous hope; a first step toward restoration.

Kate Brown is Professor of Science, Technology, and Society at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Her research interests illuminate the point where history, science, technology and bio-politics converge to create large-scale disasters and modernist wastelands. She has written four books ranging from population politics, the production of nuclear weapons and concomitant utopian communities, the consequences of nuclear fallout from the Chernobyl disaster to narrative innovations of history writing in the 21st century.

Antonia Alampi

*It is hard enough to know how to feel when someone dies, let alone when a world dies (Eduardo Viveiros de Castro). How could you let the planet get here? One hears the children asking. It's not that "most adults" really don't or didn't know. It's likely more that "most adults" either didn't have another choice or got used to it: to consume anything affordable, only partially understanding that there is no *cheap*, but that *someone or something else* is paying the price for it; to witnessing via a screen the tragedy, the devastating consequence, mostly *somewhere else*. It's when it becomes close that it hits one harder, or that it hits one at all. As Caroline Ektander brilliantly put, can an exhibition *be a place that opens up a space of somewhere-else-here?* Sometimes. But once that distance partially collapses, when the understanding becomes more intimate...what follows? A few exhibitions I curated together with Caroline, engage with environmental injustice through the lenses of the uneven distribution of the toxic. They act as triggers to share reflections around numbness, (cultural) extractivist practices, the necessity for considerate responsibility and accountability, for wider translation and distribution.*

Antonia Alampi is the director of Spore Initiative in Berlin. Her professional practice as a cultural organizer, curator, and now director, has been defined by working collaboratively with artists and professionals from different fields and backgrounds, and within rather small-scale socially sensitive, politically engaged and structurally vulnerable resilient organizations. She has been the artistic co-director of SAVVY Contemporary, in the curatorial team of sonsbeek20-24, and curator of Extra-City Kunsthall.

