

# Morphology of Errors - Malin Franzén

The exhibition Morphology of Errors is based on a multi-year work in which the artist Malin Franzén is interested in knowledge-seeking processes in areas such as botany, bookprint and nature conservation, and the representation of these results. Since 2018, she has returned to Art Lab Gnesta, and traveled to Goa, India as part of our project Swamp Storytelling within a collaboration with the Indian research group Earth CoLab. The newly produced artworks zoom in on the "errors" that occur in this type of process, as they offer a larger picture and maintain the tension in the search for answers. Here the artist examines their own inherent qualities and logic, their form and relationships.

Large prints of digital glitches hang on reddened alder frames. The glitch has emerged during the digitization of a book about illustrations in herbal books from the Renaissance, a time when the representation of nature became more truth-seeking. Nobody really knows how the digital glitches, "errors", occur. Some of the prints are painted with swamp ink boiled on plants and berries found at Marksjön just outside Gnesta, in shapes that in different ways represent where the plants were picked.

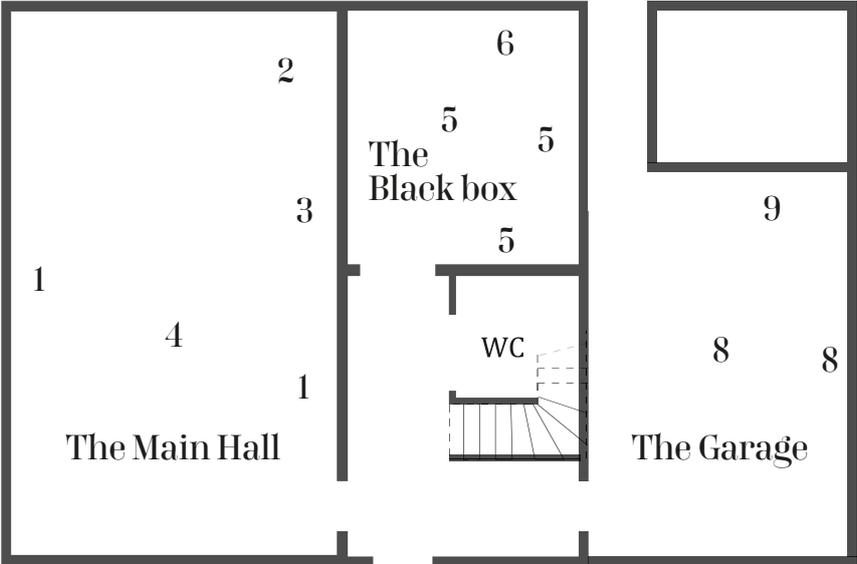
In a video, the artist is seen together with Earth CoLab in Goa when they together test different methods of observing nature around them, by making leaf metamorphoses - originally a thought from Johan Wolfgang von Goethe. Right next to the video, the visitor can sit down on a cushion that resembles the book support cushions on which delicate books are presented in archives and museums. Filled with sweet hay from Marksjön, that was collected from a mowing the artist carried out together with the Nature Conservation Board Daga-Gnesta earlier this autumn, the cushion testifies to the artist's interest in handling errors and residual material. The reason for mowing the ground and transporting away the left plant material is namely to let the place continue to be an oligotrophic bog with fewer and less nutrient-demanding plants.

Through the rooms, a variety of different nature prints return, that Malin Franzén produced in places such as Marksjön, Palermo and Venice, both alone and in different collaborations with school classes and the general public. Next to a landfill located at an estuary in Palermo, she printed the plants that had mutated due to the pollution to continue living there. The five meter long print was then presented in the city's botanical garden, but was torn apart during a storm. Along the wall of the greenhouse and in the garage is Marksjön's flora, which, unlike a classic flora, only presents the plants from a specific location.

Perhaps the most important companion in the work has been the plant morphologist and philosopher Agnes Arber (1879-1960) who through her scientific career stayed with the wonder of nature and the idea that we can not know everything. As a woman, Arber was not admitted to the university's research community on the same terms as men, she was "an error", and had to set up her own laboratory at home. In the exhibition's small hall - and curiosity cabinet - we get a little closer to Arber, after the artist's visit to the house in Cambridge where she lived and worked, and a newly built lab close by, where a work space was named after her. The diversity of connections, impulses and expressions presented here speaks well with Arber: the exhibition gives them a temporarily fixed form, but in reality they are, like all knowledge, elusive.

*Caroline Malmström, Curator*

**Art Lab Gnesta**



## The Field Study (The Main Hall)

### 1. I was digging my sand-castles on the edge of a tumultuous sea of great and ancient problems<sup>1</sup>

8 parts - 200 x 200 cm  
Alder lamella wood, woodcuts, plant ink from Marksjön.

### 2. The storm print

800 x 150 cm  
Nature print

### 3. The camera knows nothing, and can record merely that aspect of plant form which is actually presented to it, but the observer, who draws a plant, is not thus limited<sup>2</sup>

18 min  
HD video with sound

Camera: Adrian Roche and Malin Franzén  
Participants: Savita Avicennia and Danika Tavora

### 4. Book support cushion

200 x 200 cm  
Fabric, mowed hay from Marksjön

## Arber's Study (The Black box)

### 5. Stemming, spreading, segmenting, sprouting<sup>3</sup>

Installation, mixed size  
Alder lamella wood, plant ink from Marksjön, letterpress, woodcuts, pressed plants from Marksjön, video.

### 6. A laboratory of one's own<sup>4</sup>

111x154 cm  
Digital print

## WC

### 7. From first to last, the plant is nothing but leaf<sup>5</sup> 30 sec, loop Animation

## The Botanical Garden (Garaget)

### 8. Plants of Marksjön, in order of appearance, in a circle according to location, 2018-2020

41 parts, 30 x 42 cm  
Alder lamella wood, nature prints, Waterplants by Agnes Arber, string of tufted sedge, pressed and dried yellow water-lily.

### 9. Coe Fen before and after the draining

5 min  
HD video with sound

## The Collection (The Greenhouse)

### 10. The fear of swimming in formlessness<sup>6</sup>

Nature prints, Alder lamella wood, egg tempera, plant ink from Marksjön, fanzine, dried plants from Palermo and Venedig.

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<sup>1</sup> Arber, A. (1957/1967). *The Manifold and the One*. 2:nd edition. Wheaton, Illinois. Theosophical Publishing House.

<sup>2</sup> Arber, A. (1950). *The Natural Philosophy of Plant Form*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Bockemühl, J. (1985). *Toward a Phenomenology of the Etheric World. (The Formative Movements of Plants, p.146)*. Spring Valley, New York. Antroposophic Press, Inc.

<sup>4</sup> Packer, K. (1997). *A Laboratory of One's Own: The Life and Works of Agnes Arber, F.R.S. (1879-1960)*. London. Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London. Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 87-104.

<sup>5</sup> Goethe, J. W. v. (1790/1959/1981). *Växternas metamorfos, p.64*. 2:nd edition. Stockholm. Kosmos förlag.

<sup>6</sup> Bockemühl, J. (1985). *Toward a Phenomenology of the Etheric World. (The Formative Movements of Plants, p.131)*. Original quote: The danger of swimming in formlessness. Spring Valley, New York. Antroposophic Press, Inc.

*The exhibition is shown Oct 3 - Nov 15 2020, Fri-Sun 12-16.*

www.artlabgnesta.com

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**Curator:** Caroline Malmström

**Artistic leaders:** Signe Johannessen, Caroline Malmström and Erik Rören

**Exhibition design and installation:** Erik Rören and Mikael Jonasson

**Communication:** Emanuel Hallklint

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