



maro pebo

portfolio





El Libro de Etl (The Book of Etl)

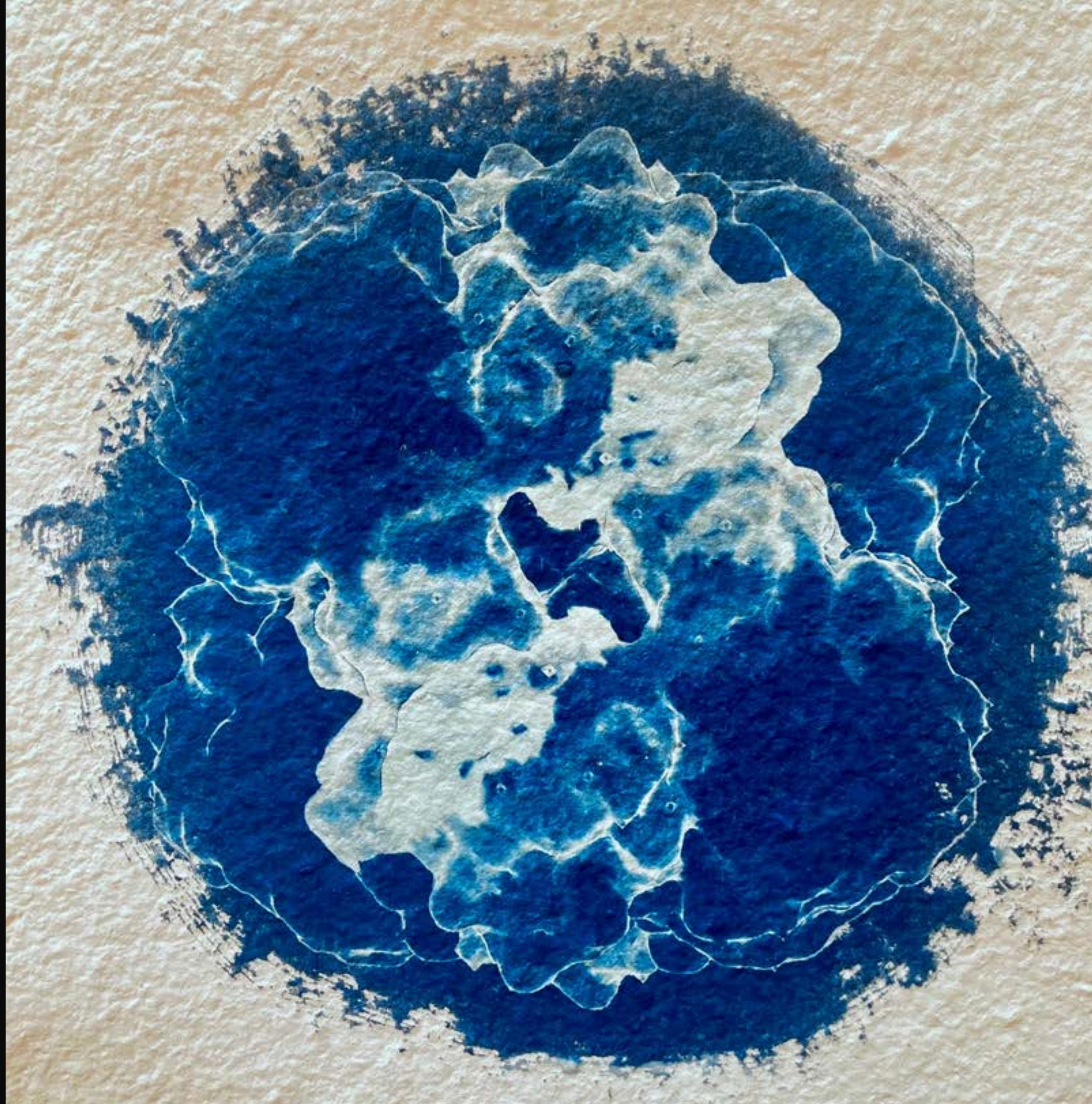
2023, cyanotype codex

Etl is the Nahuatl word for bean. This codex takes the form of a book about beans, and about the microbial labour that makes them nourishing. Rendered in cyanotype, a photographic process that draws its images directly from sunlight, its pages trace a single biochemical relationship: how the koji fungus, *Aspergillus oryzae*, produces the enzyme α -galactosidase, and how that enzyme breaks down the oligosaccharides that the human body cannot digest on its own.

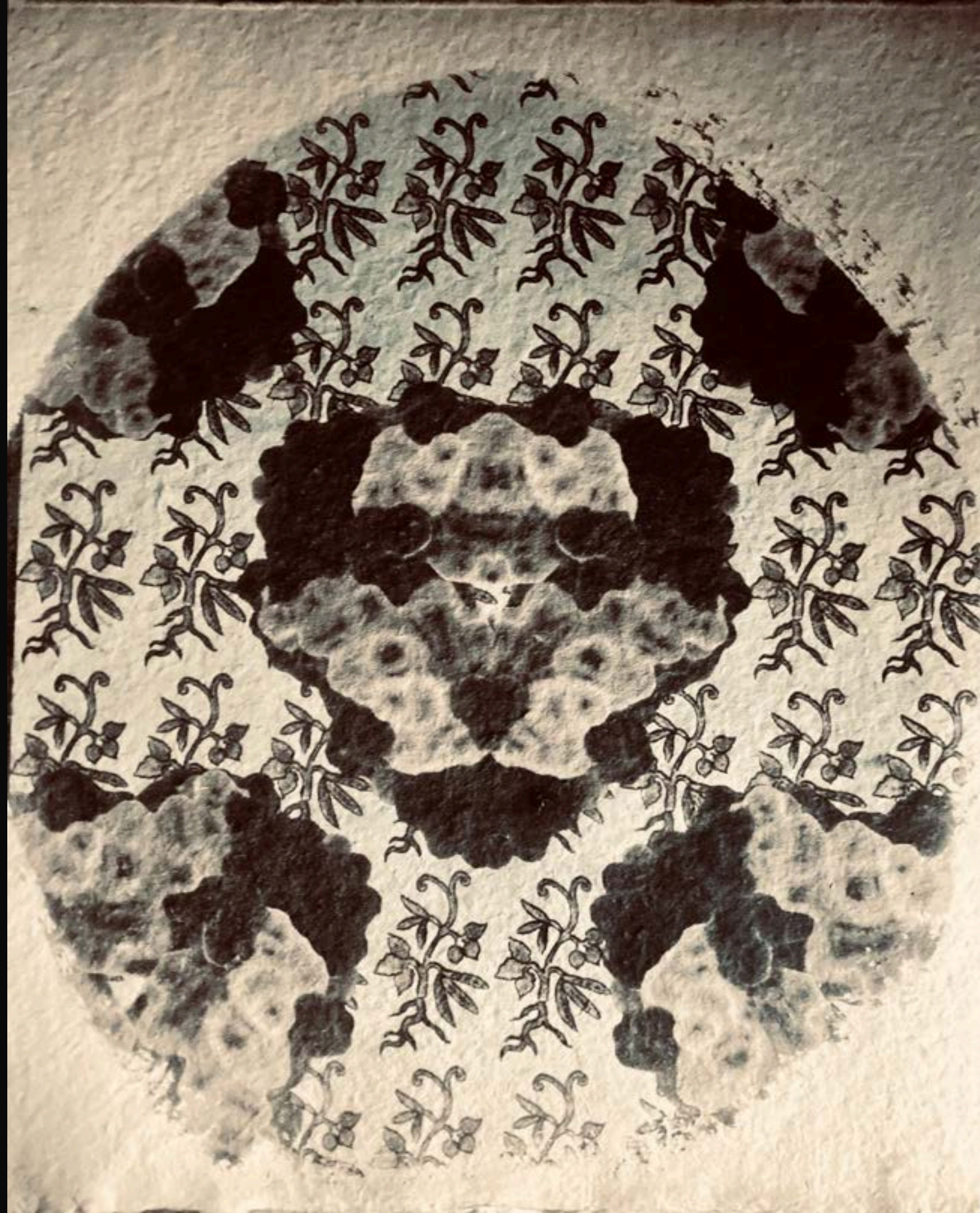
These oligosaccharides are common across legumes, and they are part of what makes them difficult to eat. Unable to process them, we pass them to the bacteria in our gut, with familiar consequences. *Aspergillus* resolves this quietly, at the molecular scale, converting an indigestible food into an available one. The codex frames this as a form of interspecies collaboration, a fungus, a legume, and a human body brought into alignment through fermentation.

Drawing on the codex as a Mesoamerican form of knowledge keeping, El Libro de Etl situates a contemporary question of digestion and food transition within a much older account of how humans have always eaten with, and through, other organisms.





Details from "The book of EtI"



Details from "The book of EtI"



Lab for Transpecies Relating 2023

A golden enzyme from the Koji fungi connects us to an ancient source of proteins found in beans.

The heart of the artwork is a laboratory bench that showcases an interplay of elements: Beans as seeds, as roots inhabited by bacterial nodules, and as flourishing plants. The Koji as blooming culture, as golden crystals, as enzyme powder, and other signifying artifacts.

The instalation is the reserch instalation counterpart to the Book of Etl





α -Galactosidase
as sculptural form



Rebiosis

Edible sculptures and data visualisation installation and ingestion participative performance

2023 - 2026



Rebiosis is a performance of intimacy with
microorganisms.



What if, among the fear and aversion of the other, we took a leap of faith into deep communion, with ingestion as the most intimate interspecies communication? What if biodiversity was lost not only in external ecosystems but in ourselves?

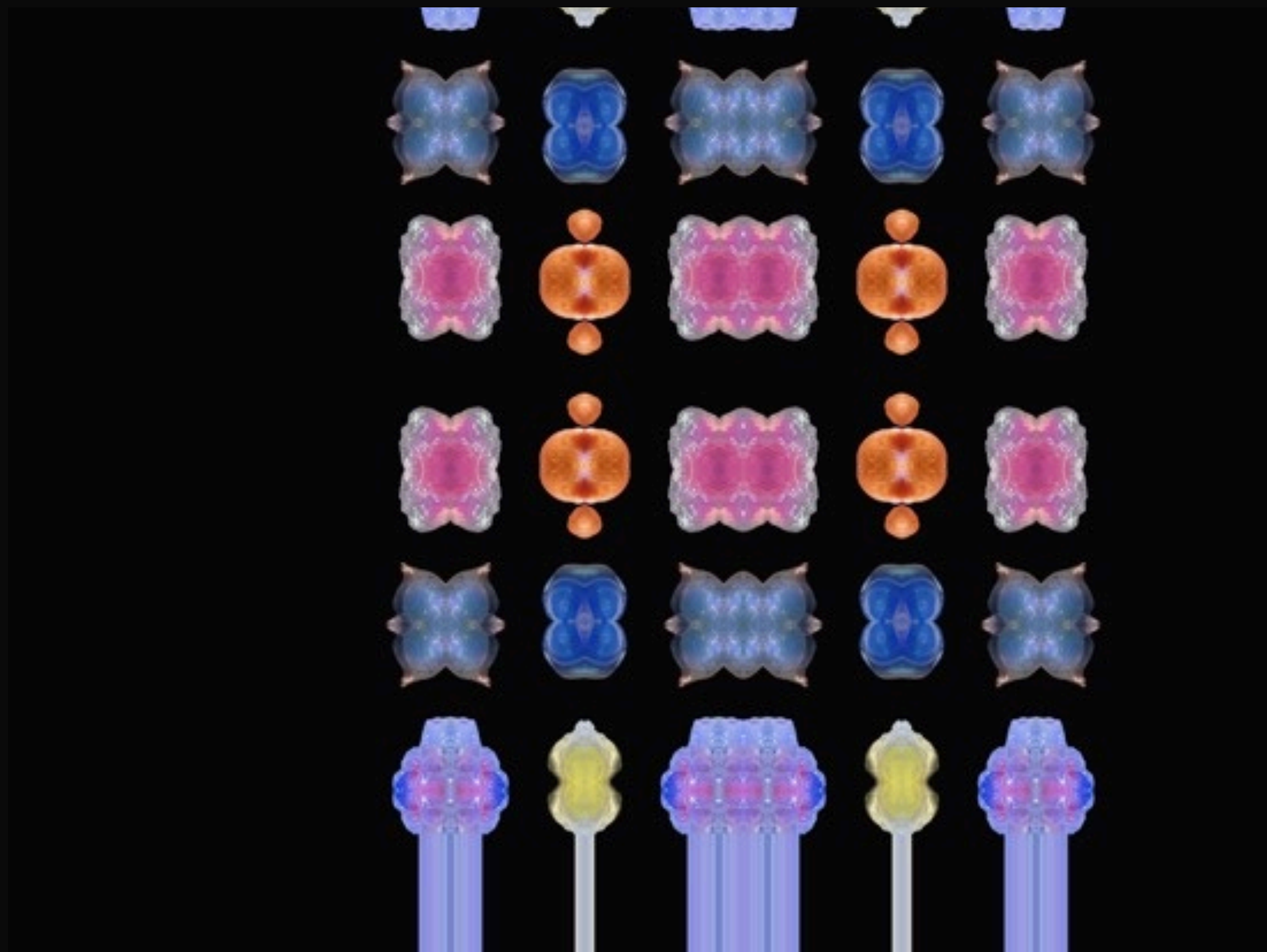
Rebiosis is an installation/performance of intimacy with microorganisms, an act of communion through ingestion. The participant eats and consumes the microbes that nourish and sustain us. Some will be digested. Some will stay to participate in the eater's microbiome.



The edible sculptures represent imaginaries of microbial life as we have never seen it before, not through the mediating lens of microscopy or commercial imagery, but through abstraction and wonder. Much as a painting might reveal more of a person's nature than a photograph, these forms pursue a deeper truth than strict representation allows. They propose microorganisms as subjects of contemplation: living organisms in their own right, not merely













Ancient Relationships
in collaboration with
Carolina Paez
Legume plants, symbiont
microbes, glass, and
lichenous rocks
2023





Ancient Relationships, explores the symbiotic relationships between humans, legumes, and bacteria, focusing specifically on Rhizobacteria and its relationship with plant roots. Presented as an ikebana arrangement, the work places the plant's roots as protagonists, making visible the often hidden but crucial role of symbiosis in supporting nitrogen fixation and the health of plants in soil.

Depending on the iteration, the plants are ancient varieties of legumes cultivated by Mesoamerican cultures, a reference to the resistance to monocultures and corporate seed control. Images behind the plants show the bacteria that enter root cells, allowing them to perform new functions. The blown glass forms, shaped by the rocks onto which they were melted, echo the ancient relationships that transform and shape plants and other organisms over time.

By shifting focus from the visible relationship between plants and humans to the invisible relationship between bacteria and roots, the work asks us to reconsider our interconnectedness with the microbial world.



Maro Pebo + Malitzin Cortes
Dr. Yun Wah Lam

Microbial Emancipation

The reliquary holds mitochondria from the artist's blood that used to be a free bacterium.

In each of our cells, we have these ancient bacteria that are the source of our energy and still keep their own independent genome.

This work detaches this key organelle to remind us of our deepest relation to microorganisms.



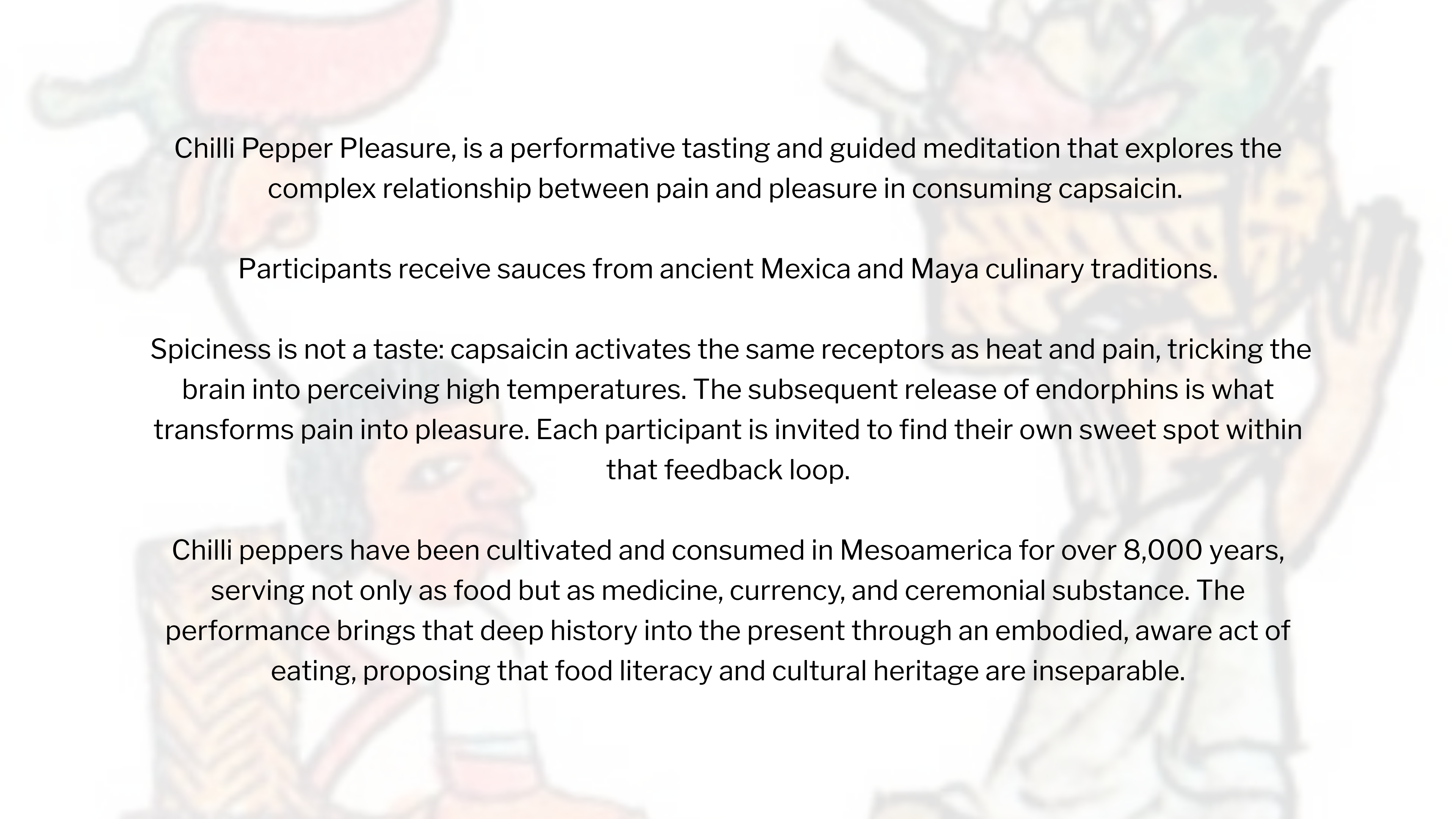


The emancipation of the mitochondria frames and visualizes the well-known fact that our relationship is deep. Bacteria are not just everywhere around but also somehow inside. Animal and plant life is possible because of this hipper-intimate relation. This is a provocative fact that transforms our relation with microorganisms.

We have known about the bacterial past of chloroplasts and mitochondria for decades thanks to the work of Lynn Margulis, but *Microbial Emancipation* makes it material, has it happen, helps us experience it in each of our cells.



Chilli Pepper Pleasure: Performative Tasting Meditation, by Maro Pebo & Roland van Dierendonck Malta 2023



Chilli Pepper Pleasure, is a performative tasting and guided meditation that explores the complex relationship between pain and pleasure in consuming capsaicin.

Participants receive sauces from ancient Mexica and Maya culinary traditions.

Spiciness is not a taste: capsaicin activates the same receptors as heat and pain, tricking the brain into perceiving high temperatures. The subsequent release of endorphins is what transforms pain into pleasure. Each participant is invited to find their own sweet spot within that feedback loop.

Chilli peppers have been cultivated and consumed in Mesoamerica for over 8,000 years, serving not only as food but as medicine, currency, and ceremonial substance. The performance brings that deep history into the present through an embodied, aware act of eating, proposing that food literacy and cultural heritage are inseparable.

Tecuitlatl

Tecuitlatl, “excrement of the stone,” was the name the ancient Mexica gave to cyanobacteria harvested from Lake Texcoco. They used it in two ways: as a pigment for painting codices and as food, rich in protein, vitamins, and minerals. Today, this organism is known as Spirulina.





The species *Arthrospira platensis* grows in a spiral form. In this work, the spiral connects to the fractal patterns the Mexica used to represent the movement of water in their codices. The same organism that coloured images of jade circles and precious water was also consumed at ceremonies alongside amaranth, forming part of a sacred food system where nourishment and ritual were inseparable.

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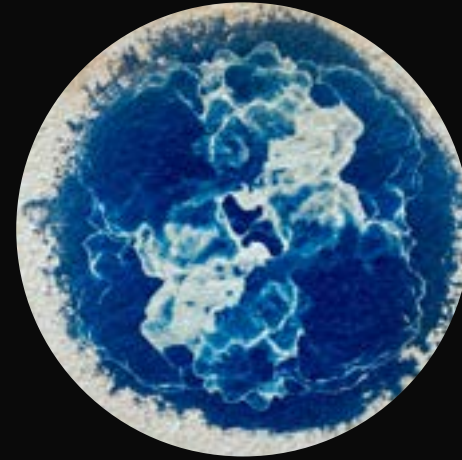


Edible Arthrospira Sculptures

Arthrospira paintings on
Amate Paper

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Contact



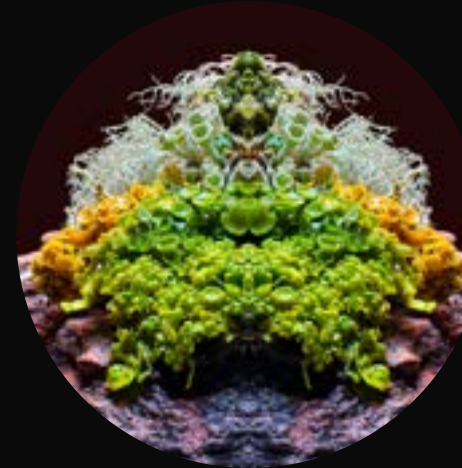
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RESIDENCE

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