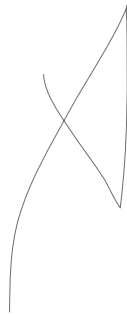


SCOPE OF WORK 44



MIRIAM SIMUN



SCOPE OF WORK

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on your Smartphone or Computer:

<http://t.co/scopeofwork>



2

1

“What implications will protein sequencing have on the world we are going to live in - biologically, culturally and politically?”

This is the question one of the founders of Glyphic Biotechnologies asked the artist Miriam Simun. Proteomics is purported to be the next frontier in the advancement of bioengineering, with the potential to revolutionize medical, material engineering, industrial food, and bio defense industries.

“Can the artist move beyond the representation (and criticism) of reality and begin to affect material reality?” Miriam asks. And what happens when the artist takes a position within the system of production (“artists as consultant”) as opposed to the position of independent, yet dependent on patronage (“artist in residence”)?

Miriam and Glyphic are drafting a Scope of Work, outlining a mutually agreed upon proposal of work - for the artist to engage with this biotech startup in probing, playing with, and developing imaginaries for the biotech startup as a site of cultural production. In Miriam’s errant process of figuring out how to position themselves in relation to Glyphic Biotech, venture capitalism, proteins, patents, mountains, boardrooms and friendship. You can follow Miriam’s ideas and reflections – and provide your own comments and ideas – in this process of drafting the Scope of Work through an audio diary delivered in a series of voice notes in a public telegram channel.

MIRIAM SIMUN

Who is it?

D is building a protein sequencing platform at this moment, as the proteomics revolution begins.

D is interested in what are the possibilities and implications of the technology his company is building for society.




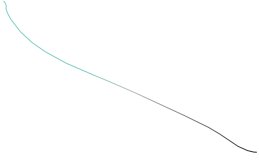


M is an artist with a practice that investigates the processes of science and technology, examines the ways in which knowledge is made, justified, and operated on in the world, and imagines futures with and against emerging technologies. M is interested in reconsidering, reframing, and examining the models we use to build our understanding of the world. M is interested in how artists can have more agency in shaping the world, rather than commenting from the sidelines.

voice_21-05-2022_01-48-40
Sun, 7/10 11:47AM • 9:50

Hi, this is Miriam. And this is Scope of Work. So Scope of Work is just what it says. It's a plan to write out a scope of work, a kind of agreement between myself and the biotech startup, Glyphic Biotechnologies. Glyphic is building a protein sequencing platform to sequence proteins at the single molecule level. So if we think about genetic sequencing and everything that's possible, that's become possible in the last few decades, because this technology has become available and become affordable, proteins are kind of, you can say, one level down. It's a bit more complicated than that, and as these messages continue, we'll get a little bit more into the science of it. But for now, we can think about proteins as the building blocks of life. And we don't yet have a way to quickly sequence all the proteins, for example, in a cell. And what glyphic is really trying to do is build a technology that enables that to happen relatively quickly. And of course, once we can sequence them, hopefully, we can begin to, but from Glyphic's point of view, for sure, hopefully, we can begin to modify and design and build with them as well. But first, I just wanted to, in the first message, share how this all started.

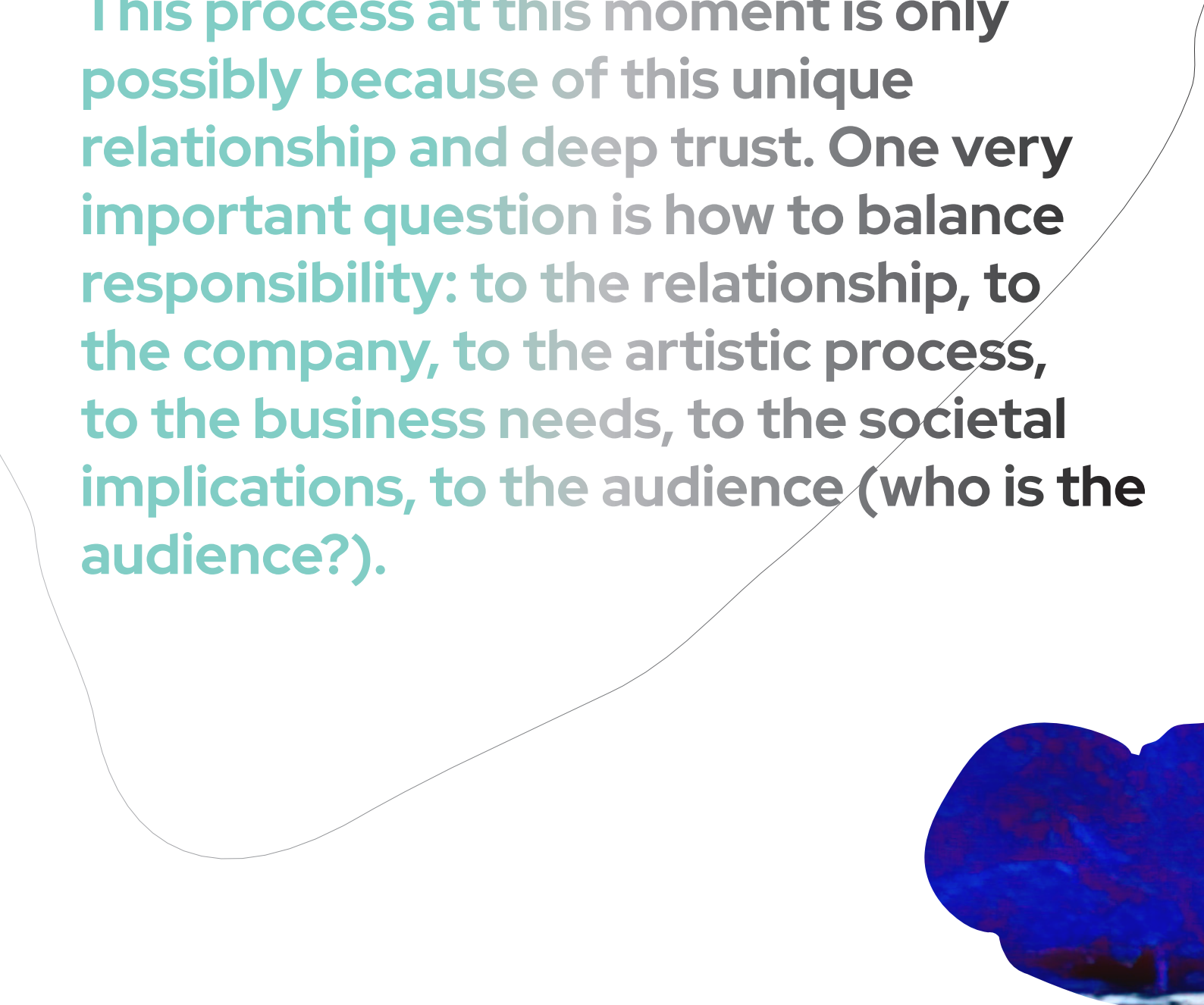




So Daniel, one of the co-founders and I are good friends. I'm an artist, and he got a PhD in neuroscience, but would call himself a bioengineer. We became good friends, he participated in a project I made called transhumanist cephalopod evolution, he was there with me with a group of other people kind of prototyping these exercises for the future of the human based on the model of a cephalopod. So he really witnessed and was a part of the artistic process for this one project I developed. And also is just a good friend and someone that I talked to about different ideas with. I met Daniel in Berlin, this last fall of 2021, just for fun. And he had at that point, just started glyphic with his co-founder, Josh, they were just beginning to hire their first first people on the team. And they mentioned that they were interested in starting an artist residency program and talked to me a little bit about it. And at that point, Daniel was really saying, yeah, we'd love to have artists, we're building this new technology, it's gonna have huge ramifications on the world. And we think artists can really help us think through what those implications are, and ask interesting questions. Which, of course, is super exciting to me, because often, when scientists want to collaborate with artists, they want their data visualized in really cool ways. So it's already, you know, a huge, great starting place to have the scientist thinking in this kind of broader, maybe more critical way.

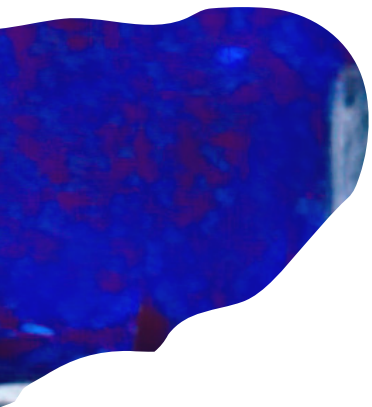
Who is it?

M and D are close friends with a deep degree of trust between them. This process at this moment is only possibly because of this unique relationship and deep trust. One very important question is how to balance responsibility: to the relationship, to the company, to the artistic process, to the business needs, to the societal implications, to the audience (who is the audience?).



70

2 The idea for framing the artist as consultant came out of the Artists Have the Answers? meeting by Artist Project Group, and Scope of Work is being developed for an upcoming Artists Have the Answers? festival.



What is it?

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pl

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1. A series of meetings/discussions:

(1) between an artist and a biotech company; (2) between two close friends (artist and biotech co-founder); (3) between artist and different interlopers (other artists, other proteomics scientists, other people working at art/biotech intersection [[with deep consideration of disclosure and IP issues]])

- * First meeting on a swiss mountain
- * Last meeting in the Bay-area conference room
- * A few meetings in between on zoom



voice_27-05-2022_14-58-25
Sun, 7/10 11:47AM • 2:05

Hello from Boston where it is sunny and warm. I saw Daniel yesterday one of the cofounders of Glyphic. And there's been some exciting developments. One of which is that they have 17 or 18 employees now, which is up a lot from the one or two that they had when we met in early March. I'm realizing that linear time is, besides being an illusion, is going to be a little bit tricky, especially in the beginning of this series of audio notes [...]



voice_15-06-2022_07-28-41
Sun, 7/10 11:46AM • 4:07

[...] What is important to have to feel successful? And thinking about the factory or the laboratory as a cultural site and making it a public site. And perhaps this is especially important when working with invisible materials, or at least not visible without very expensive equipment. But I kept, I think, pushing Aslak like, okay, but what are the outcomes? Like? How do you show that you have value? What can I point to when I talk to Glyphic, and say, look, this company, this biotech company, brought in these artists and look at all these great things that happened to them, like what what do I point at? And again, he came back to me, saying like, that they're more interested in risk as a starting point, rather than outcomes. And thinking long term beyond the core value generation of the enterprise.

What happens if nothing happens? Or what happens if they're working on a six month or 12 month timescale? And you're thinking on a 50 year timescale?

voice_25-06-2022_03-21-28
Sun, 7/10 11:45AM • 2:59

[...] in the afternoon, I hung out with Boyan and David a little bit in the lab. They walked me through some of the experiments that they're doing. There was a lot of pipetting. I warmed DNA up from its freezer temperature in my hands, my gloved hands.

I had this beautiful conversation with Boyan, about simplicity and complexity. He was trying to prove, just explain something to me using an example from my life. And I kept saying, Well, yeah, but you're not considering this. You say, Okay, well consider that and then, oh, yeah, but you're not good at doing this. And then he said to me, that's really nice thing that I'm still thinking about. Which is that, stop complicating things. So you can always add complexity. In science, you want to find the simplest model that can explain what's going on, and you'd like, create the simplest model you can and then you test it against reality. And if it doesn't match up against reality, then you add one factor that might complicate things and you kind of only add just enough that can match up against reality. But you're always looking for the simplest possible most elegant model. And I think different artists are really different, but I definitely have a tendency to complicate things. And to not finish projects with models, but rather finish with like a web, a messy web, how all these disparate things are connected without a clear shape that they take. And without any solution just kind of a reflection or story or experience of....life I don't know. Depends on the project what the project is, but yeah there's something nice about this. This catching me in my insistence on, "well, that's not actually right...you're forgetting this one thing that affects things"...and then the instant opposite instinct, like just simplify to the core elements and omit the little things [...]

voice_10-07-2022_02-40-14
Mon, 8/15 1:56PM • 8:34

[...] How frequently do companies ask their employees existential questions about what they're doing? I think that's a really nice place to land.

l r





What is it?

2. An investigation: what if the artist was brought in as a consultant instead of an artist-in-residence?

How would the relationship be constructed differently?

How would the expectations differ?

How would the result differ?

17

[...] this project is possible just first and foremost, because Daniel and I are good friends. And I think that that's really important. Because every art-science collaboration that I know about, you know, trust is really important and taking the time to develop that trust takes time. And here we have this opportunity where we have that established. But that's also something that I think about a lot because this deep trust is something I value and cherish a lot and turning our relationship also into a collaborative one....not that...Daniel participated in another project I did to not that we've never worked together...but of course, it was really different circumstances, but also potentially a business one can bring up all kinds of issues. And so I wrote here that one very important question for Scope of Work. Sorry, I'm on Flatbush. One very important question is how to balance responsibility to the relationship to the company to the artistic process to the business needs to the societal implications, and to the audience. With a big question of who is the audience? I guess, if you're listening to this, you are the audience.

So beyond a series of meetings, the project, back in February, it was also framed as an investigation. What if the artist was brought in as a consultant instead of an artist in resident into this biotech company? So how would the relationship be constructed differently? And how would the expectations and the results differ? Then it's also the semi-public learning process. So exactly what's happening here, as I pontificate and then Google about crabs. How does the artist learn what is necessary about the science and technology of protein sequencing in order to be able to engage these questions in a meaningful way? So how much do I really need to know in order to add value, if we're going to use the startup speak. How does an artist engage an early stage innovation startup with all of the IP patent PR issues at hand? So this is something that I'm really aware of, because the patents and IP is really important to the success of this company, and perhaps some processes and other things. So, but I'm an artist making public work. So how does all that get balanced, so that all interests are addressed, and nobody gets hurt? What is the frame of a relationship that makes this process useful to the artist, to the company, to the audience, to scare quotes society? And just frankly, like, Can artists be useful to biotech companies? And if so, in what ways? I have a hypothesis that they can be, but perhaps that can also be proven wrong.

Hello, I almost landed in San Francisco, I was hoping to catch up with all of the conversations that were had from March until now, before I arrived in California, but terminal A in Newark, for those of you that live near New York, is some kind of seventh circle of hell. So there was nowhere quiet enough to do that. I'm gonna probably leave a bunch of voice notes later tonight. But I just wanted to leave one here in the bathroom of the plane that's landing, which is blue and smells vaguely of urine, which I guess has a lot of proteins that can be sequenced in it. Because the movies system wasn't working on the plane, they had free Wi Fi for all of us. So I spent the entire five and a half hours working, mostly making a presentation for the scientists tomorrow at Glyphic, which is the first presentation I ever made, where I put lots of the logos of all of the three letter institutions I have degrees from and other institutions that have funded me to kind of validate my expertise. Partly, I suppose, so that they take me seriously and partly because Daniel is really worried. I shouldn't say that. But Daniel has some concern that it doesn't seem like I'm just there because I'm his friend. But that I am actually qualified to be doing that work so that's an interesting thing. But I actually do believe that one of my qualifications is that we are friends and we have this trust. And so we can start the work, you know, halfway in already in some ways. But the last thing I wanted to share is I really feel like I'm becoming a corporate consultant because I've never taken such a long flight and literally worked the entire time. So maybe this is me hindering entering commercial consultancy activity. But the plane is landing. I should go sit down and I'll talk to you soon.

[...] One thing that Kathy High told me, which I think is really good advice, was it was important to explain to the scientist what an artist actually does, and also how I as an artist work because there are, of course, many different kinds of artists and many different kinds of ways of working. And we don't have, you know, a set protocol, like a scientific method that is totally established and shared across the discipline. And then this question came up, you know, how does Kathy work. And one of the way Kathy works is really through storytelling. And so, in some ways, in some of the collaborations inside of the labs, Kathy is kind of the artist telling their version of the story of what's happening inside this research lab. Right. So there's stories told through scientific papers. Many Research Labs also have like, let's say press marketing teams, some do, that are doing kind of the public communication of the story, but that the artists perspective has this other really important story. Really important perspective, telling the story of what's happening inside this research lab. What's the science being worked on? What are the methods by which the scientists are working? What are their findings? What does it mean? What could it mean? And I think this rat laughter work is such a beautiful example of that now, it's like caring and funny and beautiful and, and just a way to, to both think about rat communication and the lives of these these scientific instruments in really lovely ways.

I'm at the Glyphic offices in the conference room. It's very gray and blue and white, and kind of fake wood colored in here, and lots of glass. I'm going to try to catch up a little bit. This next note is going to be about a conversation I had with Robert Strohmaier, I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly. Robert is a consultant that I first met through the Artists Have the Answers? workshop that Artist Project Group ran last Fall, a consultant based in Vienna, working on...well from the website, I'm just gonna read: "I help individuals, teams and organizations to experience their solidarity and to draw strength from it for sustainable cooperation, to work together in a spirit of trust, to establish helpful orders and structures to discover and fulfill the real meaning of work."

So, of course, what Robert is doing is really consulting. But I thought it was interesting how much overlap there are, although quite different words, and the kinds of things I was thinking about, the kinds of things other people are thinking about what artists can provide.

But in our conversation a couple of weeks ago now, it was nice to talk to Robert and to really think from this other perspective, I kind of asked about his work, but also got advice for me. And he said, you know, you're trying to get an assignment. Which I'm not sure that that's what I'm trying to do. But let's say if I'm working as a consultant, or let's say if I want to get the scope signed, and continue doing this work, and be paid by Glyphic in it...but even if I find another way to be paid, but I'm invited to participate with Glyphic...I kind of am trying to get an assignment.

So he told me see what they really want you to do, or will allow you to do. So and how am I supposed to do that? And Robert, suggested I ask questions like "in case my work adds value to your work, what would happen? What would you expect to get out of this process? What did we achieve together? What is the ideal final state? Imagine that we finished this process, what would you really like to see that would make you happy and proud that you would share over dinner with your family about something that we did together?" With these suggestions to focus on emotions..."what would you share it with family and friends?" That I can kind of trigger the fantasy of, of people working here, by asking questions like this, "what is your preferred future? How do you really want to work?" And that it's very important that I asked questions that make people think differently about what they're doing that this is how I show that I'm valuable.

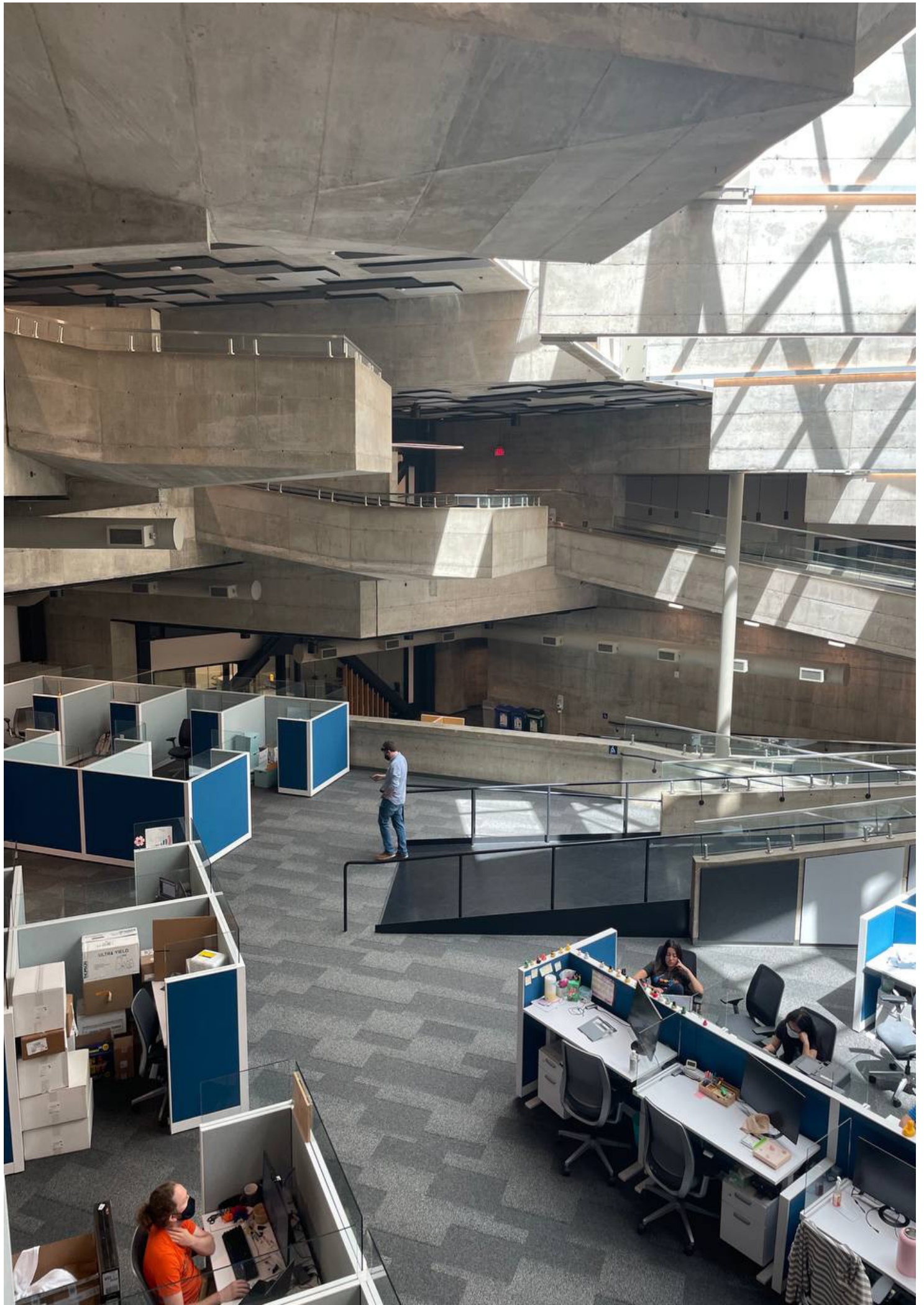
So I mean, I find all this super interesting. And I think I kind of do that, sometimes, when I'm, when I'm on, well, you know, ask questions that maybe encourage people to think differently about what they're doing. But I have to say there's something about the explicitness of naming that in such a way, maybe combined...and I hope, Robert, you understand but combined with this...massaged...like this very specific language, of talking about it, that that feels strange to me. And makes me think about the role of ambiguity in art making. And makes me ask the question, if this whole thing can work, and still really remain ambiguous, and makes me remember Aslak again, about resisting the attempt to define everything, and kind of doubling down and demanding for ambiguity and just focusing not on preferred or desired outcomes, but rather on establishing the context and the conditions of the situation. Or maybe thinking about outcome as Kathy has suggested, what did the artist and the scientist and the company get out of this experience? So really focusing on the conditions that create the best experience.

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Sun, 7/10 11:46AM • 4:31

[...] And last, Robert was telling me about how some consultants would kind of, I guess, working with internal employee relations would watch how things function and then they would make a role play and kind of exaggerate certain things that they observed in order that the management team could then clearly understand what was going on. And this perhaps gives them motivation and ideas about how to redesign their process. And then I just really liked the these words, finding the best ways to give them insights from the outside. Insight from the outside. Insight from the outside. Yeah, there's something nice about that.

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3. A (semi-public) learning process:

How does the artist learn what is necessary about the science and technology of protein sequencing in order to be able to engage in these questions in a meaningful way?

How does an artist engage in an early-stage innovation start-up, with all the IP, patent, PR issues at hand?

What is the frame of a relationship that makes this process useful to the artist? To the company? To the audience? To "society"?

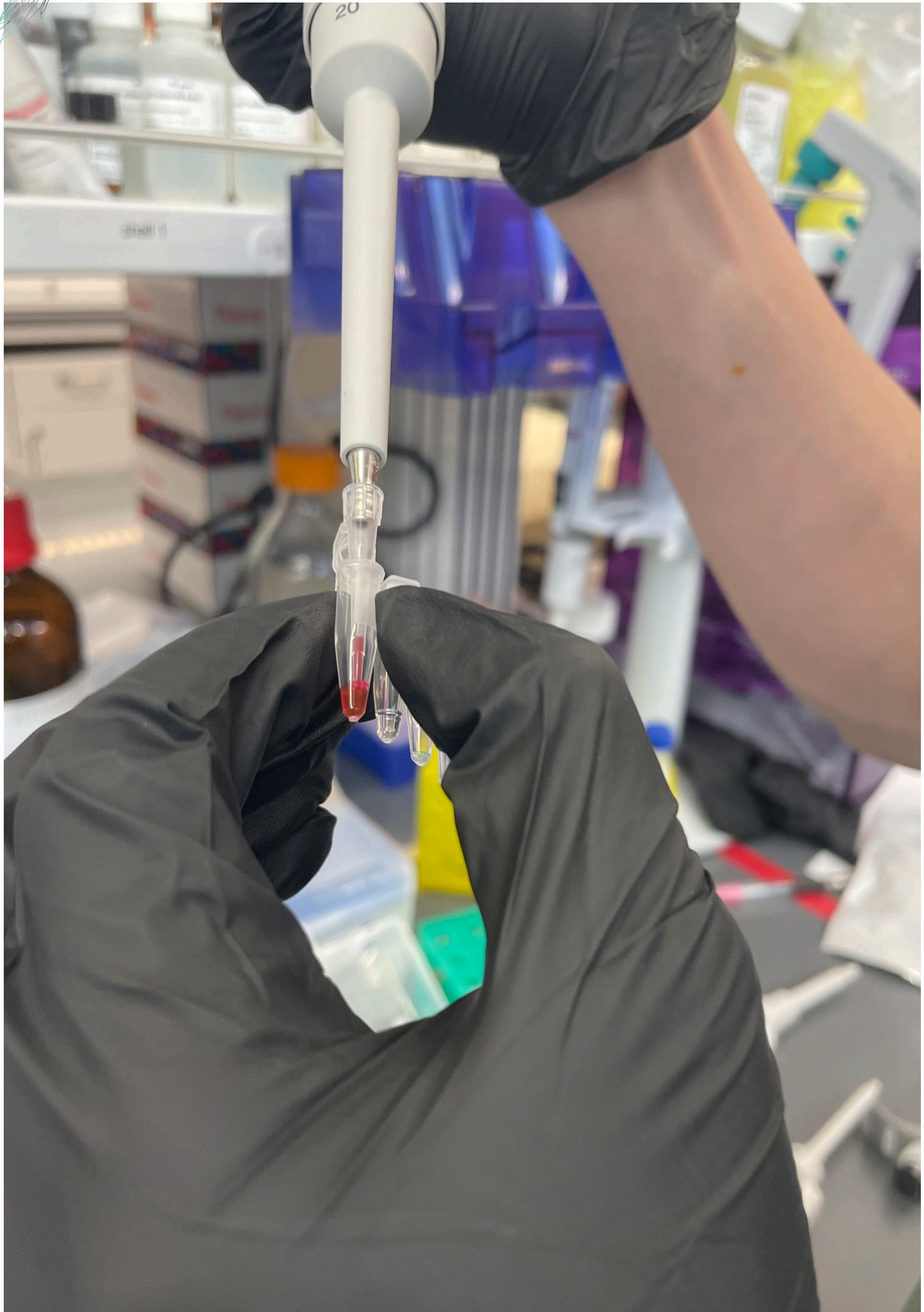
Can artists be useful to biotech companies? In what ways?



So because it was Daniel's PhD project, while he was at MIT, he has the patent. So does MIT has the patent, he has a non exclusive patent, meaning that MIT can sell the patent to other companies. And so one of the business legal strategy questions that Glyphic is dealing with right now has to do with these patents. So do they give a percentage of their company to MIT as payment in order to have exclusive rights to the patent that was developed during Daniel's PhD research process? Or another possibility is that they build what's called patent walls around this patent, which just basically means can you create a series of patents for the various processes that you need to do in order to do the process for which they don't have the patent? So you basically, even though the actual process...you could buy that patent...because all of the steps around it that you would need to do are available for you to buy, you basically block anybody from using that method.

Yeah, so you see also how quickly one goes from science to business strategy. And it feels a bit as they learn more and more about this whole process and glyphic that it's this kind of pinball bouncing off of various constraints, whether they're technical, scientific, business, strategy, legal, financial, and that kind of this innovation process and how this technology gets developed, and then of course, to what ends ultimately, how it is going to be applied, really kind of emerges from this, also feels like evermore becoming smaller and tighter space, where the pinball is bouncing off all of these different walls.

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Sun, 7/10 11:47AM • 2:16

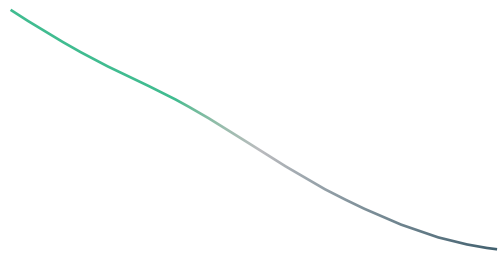
So one quick aside is, a question that I have, as an artist entering this scientific innovation process / biotech company, is how much science do I need to understand? I definitely need to understand more than I do currently. But of course it is, it is a question, no, because we are experts in something else. It's unreasonable and perhaps impossible, and perhaps unnecessary to have an artist fully understand all of the science in order to, to work with the scientists. But of course, some basic understanding is needed. And it is a question of how much, right? How much do we learn to speak their language? How much do they learn to speak ours?

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Sun, 7/10 11:47AM • 5:05

A protein is a chain of amino acids, there are 20 or 22 basic amino acids. So every protein is a different sequence of those 20 amino acids. The..one of the kind of challenges from a technical perspective in sequencing each amino acid is that they are very, very small. And they're very, very close together. So whatever method you have for detecting which amino acid it is that you are identifying, your results can be affected by what Daniel called the local environment problem. So local environment is already a term within biology that talks about, you know, this very small space which these amino acids are in. And while it has become kind of a term, Daniel talks about how, when he was interviewing people, it was funny to hear them using this term that he invented said back to him, basically, he said, he just took the term that was already being used, "local environment" and added the word "problem." And what his, what their, what Glyphic's method for protein sequencing does is deal with this local environment problem by basically using a specific lead designed chemical that clips that amino acid from the chain, but then keeps it in the local area. And then, so then the amino acid is further away from the chain, the receptors that are being used to identify the amino acid can bind to that amino acid and know that it's really identifying that acid in particular, and not the ones next to it, because it's a bit further away. And then you just do that amino acid by amino acid, as far as I understand. This is the process that they patented.



[...] And then we started talking a little bit about Peter Weibel's book Molecular Aesthetics. So, this is not about his book, but let's say like the back of the cover of the book is something about kind of how technology allows us to transcend the limits, transcend the limits of natural perception and see what was previously unseeable. And that like this molecular scale, creates a new aesthetic experience. [...] But in this conversation that Aslak and I had, he actually said that he disagrees with kind of the end result of his viable argument. And the actually tech is not like, if we look at the 20th century, technology won the war on representation, not art, which is a really interesting argument. And so thinking for the 21st century, where does art fit, maybe it's no longer in representation, but instead using the role of aesthetics to create agency or to push for an imaginary switch in how we think about progress...that word...I...yeah, with everything, with all of the issues that the connotation that word has, or the role technology has in society, let's call it that. And yeah, art has an ability to push imagination in a way that engineering or science or business or public relations can't, that it's really about finding new forms.



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What will be the outcome?

1. A text document clearly outlining the goals, outcomes and scope of work, should the company hire the artist as a consultant to “solve the problem” of building useful imaginaries and/or thinking/ intervening/designing the biotech startup as a site of cultural production

2. A series of documentations (medium tbd - drawings? maps? photographs?, Samples - proteins, chemicals, DNA) of the series of conversations - between artist and biotech company, and between artist and interloper, between biotech company and interloper? (probably not the last, given time constraints of biotech company)

3 X 4



The first person that I spoke with was Aslak Helm. Aslak is part of a team running this project called Primer. Primer, based in Denmark is an artist residency housed within or beside maybe is a better word, Aquaporin A/S, which is a global water technology company that's using biotech to do water purification. [...] one of the first things he asked me was, what happens if nothing happens? And this is a super interesting and good question. And a great art question. And perhaps an important question to pose to business. But you know, on some level, for example, for Glyphic, if nothing happens, the company folds, right. So I wonder if part of the space and privilege to ask that question, as much as I love it, and as much as I would love to be engaged in that way, is working with a more established company, as opposed to a brand new one, working in Europe, as opposed to working in the US. Working with a, I don't know, Aquaporin's financials, but I know that in Europe, it's more common to have kind of public private partnerships funding. Businesses, especially innovation ones, and so then the fact that you get public money means that you have some responsibility to add value in the public realm, and not just only responsibility to your shareholders. That this configuration also allows for kind of, let's say, a little bit more space. But this is something I've been I'm continuing to grapple with, what does it mean to have defined outcome or to kind of expect a defined outcome and to really push for that, especially in the context of making art? And what does it mean, to insist on ambiguity and space for experimentation and not defining things too early? And I think one of the big things I took away from the conversation with Aslak was really about not defining things too early and letting things emerge. Another key question, Aslak shared with me is, what if the purpose emerges by simply getting the most interesting people together in the same space? And I love this question. And I think that's a bit actually where we've landed now. So me and Aslak spoke in February. I was in Switzerland, it was a lot quieter there, to think. And actually, that's somehow interesting. It's, it's really different to ask the question, what happens if nothing happens by Lake Geneva with no one around versus on Flatbush with all this noise around and at a different speed? But yeah, sorry, I lost my train of thought. Welcome to Live Telegram messages.

M: Hi, I'm with Daniel in the car, we're driving to the office. And we're going to answer this question from Bernard about Daniel taking part in transhumanist cephalopod evolution. So the question was around what was there? What was the value of his experience participating? Did it affect his research, maybe? And would he recommend a similar experience to his employees?

[...]

D: Yeah, I thought the becoming an octopus. I mean, there's a bunch of different elements to that there is the element of being in this group, and kind of, almost this meditative aspect where you're lying on the floor, you're feeling what their hands your body, like in a different way, across the room. And I felt like that was a very kind of meditative, meditative situation. Also with the intermix of like contact dance and like with the intermix of just exploring your senses. And so I thought that was many thing, I've felt very powerful and like my own personal sense.

D: I feel like if it affected my research, it was similar to, like, how meditation may affect my research, or...

M ...which is how...

D: ...hobbies, which is...like, provides time to like, not think about the things that I'm working on. So it's like a step away, like meditation is supposed to be, like, a method to destress and like not think about maybe the typical things that you're thinking about...

M: ...why is that valuable to the research?

D: ...I think it's valuable to the research because...I mean, I, I feel like during grad school, I practiced many times to keep the balance again, and to not just do work for work purposes, because I think it's important to step back and evaluate with a refreshed mind. So you're just not....because I feel like there's been a lot of people in grad school that were just extremely stressed. And I feel like that kind of hurt them. So I feel like doing things like this...during meditation, doing dance was my

personal method of stepping away. So that's why I felt like it was valuable to me and valuable to my research. Did it have direct implications? It's kind of hard to say, other than what I was just describing.

M: So what you're saying is participating in transhumanist cephalopod evolution is what gave you the mindset to start a multimillion dollar company.

D: Yeah.

M: You heard it here first, folks.

[...]

Yeah, so like, the, the cephalopod thing was, there was so many things that we talked about, we talked like experiences that we didn't like....I remember at one point, when you're talking about activities, you're talking about arms and as, as independent brains that are moving, and like learning to coordinate. And of course, that is what a group is a group is independent brains learning to coordinate to achieve some sort of task. And so like, focusing on how, how one, how a group can achieve what maybe a single all the arms of octopus can do...is...would be interesting, like, how do you how do you get to that, like collective knowing to be the most efficient system?

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Mon, 8/15 1:56PM • 7:26

Lastly, I just had a conversation about this conversation with Bernard from Artist Project Group, who I've been talking to throughout this process. Before we even started, it was actually Bernard's idea, because I think at some point I just started leaving him voice notes. And chose Bernard's idea that we do this voice not thing, which I love. Although maybe I'm saying I say too much when I do voice notes, but maybe it's better in some ways. And he sent me notes of our conversation and there's like something weird happening, hear about the conversations about conversations about conversations, and like all of these lenses that these things are getting through. I think it's really interesting somehow. Yeah. So first, I just said, you know, I was really touched, I told Bernard, I was really touched to understand that like, all these people work at Glyphic, that have families and had careers and like, move to countries or moves across the country and move their kids and rearrange their lives, to join Glyphic. You know, because they believe in this approach. And Bernhard had this really nice thing about rearranging life on many levels, right that like, once you begin to sequence a protein on the single molecule level, you open the doorway, it's towards a super drastic rearrangement of life. Also, then if you scale up a bit, if you think about how the patenting works, that's like a certain rearrangement of life. Yeah, so just this idea of rearranging life on many levels.

What is the scope of this work of rearranging lives? And then Bernard has this really nice point about my point, it's, yeah, like this thing just keeps coming out this jazz thing of Fred Moten, that the knowledge is really created, always in between, right? Like, I'm having conversations with employees and talking about those conversations with Daniel and Josh and telling Bernard about my conversation about them with them. And Bernard pulls out yet another thing, and anyways, I'm really obsessed with this like sticky, sticky substance between us. That is where innovation, if you want to call it that...I guess 200 years ago, they might have said "truth" and not been blushing or like, feel cheesy to say that looking for a truth. But yeah, so when I told Bernard about all these conversations I had about the employees and how they're sharing some personal stuff, and that it was really nice, but also it felt strange that I shouldn't be the holder of this knowledge. He wrote, what is the relationship between these secrets that I hold -- In quote, like, just this, like personal stories that might be private -- and the culture of intellectual property? So it's a super nice question.



Yeah. When I mentioned that one idea that had come up was like, “art exercises” for different forms of problem solving for the scientists when they get stuck, which actually is a thing I’ve found out about that, that there are artists that teach scientists, art practices, that they can find new ways to think about their problems in the lab. And I said that there’s something about the instrumentalisation of how I think and like, I guess then in some ways, the packaging or commodification of I think that makes me feel gross. And that probably would really alienate me from my own thinking processes. So that’s maybe not the way I want to go. Even though I think the process of doing thinking exercises with this group of people will be super fun and enriching to me too. Then this question, again, with the patents, I mean, I kept asking different scientists at Glyphic “What do you do when you get stuck with a problem?”

And you know, some people say, oh, like, I go for a walk or this or that, but really, almost everybody said, I Google, I look at papers, I look at what people have done before I look at people that have worked with this particular chemical or molecule I work with, I look at what people have done working with this process. This question kept coming up, they are able to look for that because there’s a system of academic journals and publishing. So if all knowledge becomes patented, then like, suddenly don’t have the tool that you need to move through a problem. And yet, of course, things need to be patented for there to be money to do them. So yeah, just this kind of paradox or duality or impossible reality that we find ourselves in.

Bernard asks...and this is cute..Is there a C? Where’s the C for culture in ESG? Yeah, I don’t know. Am I betraying my being birthed in Silicon Valley to say that it feels like the environmental and the social questions of like, not destroying the planet and not exploiting people are so huge, and so far away from being solved by ESG regimes that it feels like culture is not the most important thing to think about here? Yeah, there’s many other ways to answer that question, but it’s a very good question.

And then Bernard sent me a PDF about metaphysical pragmatism, which we talked about, which I’m looking forward to reading. So this is where we’ve landed at the end of this visit. I don’t know what the scope is going to be. I have a feeling that the timescale of this festival, which is about one more week, is shorter than it’s going to take for me to come up with the scope. But I have a few ideas and I guess I’ll leave one last note. Coming next, which will be some vague outline of different ideas of what I could do, and propose as a scope of work for Glyphic.

And that related at some point to a follow up question I had asked Daniel and Josh, which was like, What are your values as a company? Have you made them explicit? You know, the Google, quite famously, in the beginning made a set of values. And I think like, number three was don't be evil. And then they quite famously quietly removed that some years later. And so we talked a little bit about their values, like hierarchies (not having them); well, yeah, diversity, equity, inclusion, different things. And one question that came up is like, when you're doing ESG, and if you have to quantify it, how do you compare it, you know, carbon emissions to diversity in hiring, like, how do you quantify and compare that. But something that was kind of interesting is like, they haven't made their values, you know, there's no document that says like, this is like what our values are. And yet, I just felt certain values present in my week there. And of course, like, everything can change. But that was really nice. And I do think that there's a value to two things being implicit too. And I wonder as the company grows, what that means?

Some things that came up in our conversation that feel important. So one was, not thinking about the result of this collaboration as this art project or this art object, or this piece of consulting work, but rather, what did the experience give the artists and scientists involved in the collaboration? Another: what does it mean to be paid by the company versus by a science grant, or by an outside artist grant, that there are really benefits and costs to both. And that, you know, this whole question of like, being implicated in the company's agenda, because you're being paid, that really even if you're being paid as I am, by an outside arts organization, there's still some ethical and human social responsibility to these people that are sharing their time and sharing their space and opening that process to you. And also the question of who, you know, what do you owe the outside funders?

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20 Just a follow up something about the vast and drastic difference in feeling in embodied experience in the kind of thoughts that go through your head in the way you relate to your surroundings, that happens in a laboratory or in an office versus on the beach, being surrounded by meeting horseshoe crabs and all the birds that are trying to eat their eggs....makes me think about the spaces in which innovation happens. The contexts and and feeling that the people doing this work have and yeah, well. What would it could it be different if you're having your meetings on the beach or in the forest versus in the office or in the lab? Yeah, like does the innovation process happen in a different way, but what new ideas might come like new obligations might be felt? Yeah. Just the thoughts here late night in Brooklyn.


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And so one of the, you know, one of the things that they're really thinking about Josh, in particular, but also Daniel, is how as they grow, and they're growing very quickly, and they're going to start growing even more quickly, if all goes as planned, by the end of the year and early 2023: How do they remain nimble and able to come up with new ideas, change directions, and so forth? Because, in fact, some, I think they realized, and other people have told them, that one of the reasons why Glyphic this very small, very new company is doing so well in this protein sequencing space, while the large pharmaceutical companies and other competitors that are much larger are kind of... their technology seems to be less promising at this point, is because they're so small, and so if they get the results back from an experiment, and it's not what they expected, or is what they expected, but new ideas come they're very able, very quickly able to just come up with new ideas, explore those ideas, change directions, reorient. And that as the team grows bigger, as people don't know each other, as well as maybe, you know, there's more hierarchy and kind of objectives get set out more, there's more layers between between people, it might be hard to keep this kind of nimble, flexible, easy to change direction, quality that's enabled them to succeed so far. So they I had asked, How can cultural organizations learn from tech or biotech companies, this quality, and it's actually a quality that, that Glyphic itself is really keen to keep as they grow bigger.

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Then on Tuesday, I had another series of meetings, it was my last day. It was already a bit sad, I think, to leave like, both because I had just gotten to know these people, and I wanted to spend more time with them. But also because I understood, yeah, that it takes a lot more time. That I think ideally, I would have spent the month just hanging out before making any big moves. But life is life and reality is reality. And we work within the constraints we have. So some sweet things that came up was...one was a discussion with David about transhumanism that came up partly because of the visit to the exhibit, because of the work that was displayed there, I reappropriate transhumanism. And what it means, and we got into a discussion about disability, and the different positions one can take to disability and so that there's a way to think about not being more or less human, but just a different way of interacting with the world, which makes me really think about protein sequencing. And what it means once we have the capacity to know the specific makeup and sequence of every protein in our bodies and others bodies and in things in the world. And what will be the different way that we interact with the world, because of this, both scale...So I started talking a lot about scale and kind of seeing things on the single molecule level...but also what I'm now realizing, different temporality, right? Because genetic sequencing has enabled us for decades, I guess you can say now, maybe one decade, if you think about how widely available it is to understand let's say the plan of life forms, but the protein sequencing will enable us to kind of see in the current moment, what is actually happening with all kinds of forms of life. So, this immediacy is a huge shift. And what happens, as a result of that, is an interesting question to be answered.

But the other thought that I had is, well, a couple of things. And I'm really speaking out loud here, thinking out loud. First, is that, like, what are the main values or goals -- well, I can't speak for all tech companies -- let's say for Glyphic, as opposed to for a cultural institution. I mean, for Glyphic, everybody I talked to, they're trying to solve problems. And in some ways, it doesn't matter if the problem is "we have a backlog of orders and how do I know how to prioritize? which scientist, you know, which scientists orders should I put in first?" versus this very difficult chemistry problem, and we don't know what's going on with the experiment. Right? It's all it's like, it's really was interesting to see how all flavors of problems it's like really about finding solutions. And I'm not sure that in the arts we're oriented in that way. Right. And I can see how if your orientation is just like, we want to find the best, most effective, most efficient, most healthy, most, feels the best, most financially viable solution, you don't really, you're open to trying new things, right. And you're open to trying anything maybe. And you're not wedded to a process or a method.



I've only worked as an artist inside of cultural institutions never as any other role. But in my experience, you know, cultural institutions have.... It's not all just about solving problems. Certainly, when you're putting on an exhibition, I think there's this moment of install that I really love that is about just like, Okay, we just have to solve it and make it work. But you know, there's tradition and values and audiences and board members and all kinds of important people that you, you have to keep happy. And also like, what the space represents what the exhibit is saying, anyways, I'm not going to do it justice at this moment. But I do think that there's something about this solutionism. And the fact, also, I'll add that, for now, at least, inside of Glyphic, everybody really does have one single goal, which is to get the operation, working as best as smoothly as fast as possible in order to build this tool. And I can't say that within a cultural institution, you can say that every person there has one goal, right? There's like a lot of different desires. Maybe rightly so, right? ..that have to be navigated and accommodated and accounted for. So I can imagine then, how certain organizational structures become important because they're, in some ways, a way of negotiating between all those different ways. Nothing is being pulled. Whereas if we're all on this ship, just trying to get to this one island, maybe we're more easy and happy to change direction 1000 ways if it means we'll get there faster, or better. My two cents.

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(Artist Bio) Miriam Simun works at the intersection of ecology, technology and the body, spanning multiple formats including video, performance, installation, drawing, writing, and communal sensorial experiences.

Trained as a sociologist, Simun spends time in communities of experts, including biomedical engineers, carnivore conservationists, hunters, cephalopods, freedivers and breastfeeding mothers. Taking on the role of 'artist-as-fieldworker,' much of the process is rooted in research as lived experience, forefronting sensorial ways of listening, learning and knowing.

The resulting works are concerned with the collision of bodies (human and non) with rapidly evolving techno-ecosystems. If collision can be understood to be a form of disturbance (in the ecological sense), then in disturbance we move through damage to an opportunity for renewal. Simun's work explores the role of the sensory in this renewal.

Simun's work has been presented internationally, including Gropius Bau (Berlin), New Museum (New York), Himalayas Museum (Shanghai), Momenta Biennale (Montreal), The List Center for the Visual Arts (Cambridge), The Contemporary (Baltimore), Bogota Museum of Modern Art (Bogota), Ronald Feldman Fine Arts (New York), Museum of Fine Arts (Split), Museum of Arts and Design (New York), Robert Rauschenberg Gallery (New York), and the Beall Center for Art + Technology (California). Simun is a recipient of awards from Creative Capital, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Joan Mitchell Foundation, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, as well as a 2022 La Becque Artist-in-Resident, 2021 Onassis Foundation fellow, a 2019 Gulbenkian / Carpintarias de São Lázaro Artist-in-Residence, a 2018 Visual Arts residency at the Headlands Center for the Arts, a 2016 Artist Residency with OMI International Arts Center in New York, a 2015 Food Justice Residency at the Santa Fe Art Institute, and a 2014 Art Professionals in Athens residency in Greece.

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Simun's work has been recognized internationally in publications including the BBC, The New York Times, The New Yorker, CBC, MTV, Forbes, Art21 and ARTNews. Simun is a graduate of the MIT Media Lab, ITP at NYU Tisch School for the Arts and the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Sketches of a face and a large abstract shape.

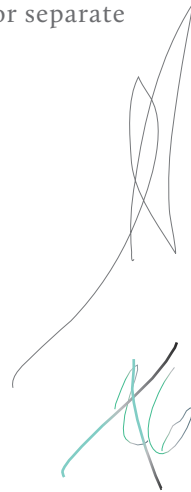
(About - Artist Project Group) The curatorial collective Artist Project Group (Bernhard Garnicnig, Lukas Heistingner, and Andrea Steves) interrogates phenomena of capitalism through curatorial and artistic methods, in an attempt to build platforms for resilient aesthetic and artistic practices. In our project for curated_ by with Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman and within the framing of Kelet, we continue to investigate the capitalist overproduction of meaning, including the recuperation of crisis phenomena into the market, and ask “What Can Artists Do Now?”

Following the workshop “Artists Have The Answers?” and the online festival “What Would Artists Do?”, the exhibition integrates recently developed works—developed from the vantage point of the Artist-as-Consultant and/or offered as services—into the context of a contemporary art gallery. The exhibition troubles notions of audience, participant, material, and impact. In presenting what these artists are doing now, the works connect to a multitude of current crises— both acute and wide-ranging—that are inherent in capitalism and continuously producing its resultant conditions and intensifications. The works hook together and offer an overall landscape of the present phenomenon and epiphenomenon of capitalism.

The Cybernetics-based model of business consultancy services is one of the most pervasive yet invisible global exports from the incipient Western Cold War information industry. Today, consultative industry continues its expansion into increasingly differentiated services, with its methods and services pervasively influencing decision making processes that govern public life.

In the 90s, artists started to critically affirm their transforming role as service providers to institutions, yet their collective movement towards self-regulating their practice was often sidelined by discourses of critique and politics, putting an end to emancipatory initiatives to improve working conditions of artists. Artist Project Group is interested in replacing the concept of innovation with practices of maintenance, that is, maintaining practices through crisis by developing projects in which artists extend their performative knowledge practices as services to institutions, organizations and businesses.

Artists are purported to hold an important role in a changing society, yet their expertise is often undervalued, and their practices are rarely integrated with the processes where change happens. The constant expansion of capitalism continues even through war and crisis, an expansion that doesn’t exist outside of or separate from crisis and war, but rather intensifies through these periods.



WHAT CAN ARTISTS DO NOW?

John M Armleder, Eglė Budvytytė, Juan Blanco
(memeclassworldwide), Mateusz Dworczyk
(memeclassworldwide), Thomas Feuerstein, Bernhard
Garnicnig (Artist Project Group), Lukas Heistingner (Artist
Project Group), Julia Haugeneder, Lucie Kolb, Ramona
Kortyka (memeclassworldwide), Jens Van Lathem (Bureau
of Analogies/TWIID), Mary Maggic, Walter Pichler,
Scott William Raby (Bureau of Analogies/f.eks), Tobias
Van Royen (Bureau of Analogies/TWIID), Jennifer Merlyn
Scherler (memeclassworldwide), Miriam Simun, Paul
Spendier, Peter Sandbichler, Seth Weiner, Franz West,
Lois Weinberger

curated by Artist Project Group:

Bernhard Garnicnig, Lukas Heistingner, Andrea Steves

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Illustrations: Bernhard Garnicnig

WHAT CAN ARTISTS DO NOW?

The background of the slide features abstract, organic shapes. A large, light teal shape occupies the upper right and bottom right portions. A grey shape is located in the upper left. A thin, dark grey line curves across the middle of the slide, separating the upper and lower sections.