

**STEFANIE HESSLER**  
**APPOINTED CURATOR**  
**FOR MOMENTA 2021**

Montréal, April 1st, 2020 – MOMENTA | Biennale de l'image is delighted to announce the appointment of Stefanie Hessler as curator for its 17th edition, which will take place in September and October 2021. Drawing on a theme titled ***Sensing Nature***, curator Stefanie Hessler will explore earth systems as narrators of their own logic. The exhibitions, the publication, and all of the activities for the public will be organized around this theme. A curatorial team will be formed to conceptualize the thematic components and the artistic program.



Stefanie Hessler. Photo: Brittany Nelson.

***Sensing Nature***

The 2021 edition of MOMENTA | Biennale de l'image, titled *Sensing Nature*, is informed by a desire to unsettle the divide between nature and its representation. The exhibitions will be guided by the works of artists deeply invested in decolonizing strategies and examining queer ecologies to reimagine environmental politics and notions of the natural. MOMENTA 2021 will work towards decentring the often-foregrounded Western human creator of knowledge about the natural world to make room for stories that dwell in the blurred boundaries between culture and nature, weaving in different forms of knowing, both human and nonhuman. Audacious and hopeful, these “other” stories propose a shift in perception toward the sensibility of earth systems as narrators of their own logic. In turning toward nature’s own enunciations, the biennale explores new, caring sensitivities.

The upcoming edition of MOMENTA proposes nature as a maker of images representing itself. Today, many depictions of nature are testimonials and elegies to the loss of biodiversity, the climate, and the myth of progress. They provide messy evidence of anthropogenic climate change introduced and sustained by capitalism and colonialism. Images are important in communicating this moment of planetary urgency. At the same time, images of presuppose the possibility of defining and speaking on behalf of an Other constructed as passive—be that nature, womxn, indigenous peoples, people of colour, queer communities, among others. To retire such narratives and conjure alternatives in art and beyond, different imaginaries are urgently needed.

When an image is extracted from the natural world, it is detached from its ecological, cultural, and spiritual entanglements. Aided by technologies of visibility, it becomes decontextualized and is often mobilized for political and economic interests. It tells certain stories, while the voices of indigenous peoples, people of colour, queer communities, and others often go unheard. Some images fade overnight, while others linger for years to shape perceptions. Similarly, water retains chemical spills for decades and radioactivity for millennia. Yet, exhausted soil can also regenerate. Like film registering light, nature is a matter through which stories are recorded and from which they emerge.

The artists in the biennale will trace and sense muddled worlds. They will be attuned to the time of geology, the textures of a coral, the perspective of a swallow, in order to fathom different futures. The exhibitions will probe the image as something more-than-visual, be it sound, taste, or smell. In doing so, the biennale hopes to calibrate visitors' senses to the possibilities granted by speculative fictions in nature and through art. *Sensing Nature* longs for responsivity with planetary ecologies not as something to be represented, but as something that we are part of and “become with.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This idea, elaborated by philosopher Gilles Deleuze and biologist Lynn Margulis, among others, proposes that identities are not fixed but constantly in the process of becoming. As such, we are not just becoming by ourselves, isolated; rather, we become *with* others, human and nonhuman beings.

## About the curator

Stefanie Hessler (Germany) is a curator, writer, and editor. Her work focuses on interdisciplinary systems from an intersectional feminist perspective, with a focus on the ocean and other ecologies. Hessler is the director of Kunsthall Trondheim in Norway. Her recent curatorial projects include the exhibition “Joan Jonas: Moving Off the Land II” at the Museo Thyssen in Madrid (2020); the 6th Athens Biennale (2018); and the symposium “Practices of Attention” at the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo (2018). Between 2017–2019, she was a guest professor in art theory at the Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm. Her book *Prospecting Ocean* was published by The MIT Press in 2019.

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**MOMENTA 2021** will encourage conversations, encounters, and exchanges initiated by a selection of artists from all over the world, with particular focus on artists from Quebec and Canada. Produced in collaboration with numerous exhibition partners, a thematic exhibition and many solo exhibitions will present the work of more than thirty artists in total. The exhibitions will be accompanied by a publication and an extended program of activities for the public.

A **call for submissions from Canadian artists** will run from April 2 to May 24, 2020. All the details can be found at [www.momentabiennale.com](http://www.momentabiennale.com).

In the context of the global COVID-19 crisis, we wish to foster safe cultural exchange as a way to connect people rather than isolating them. Even if we're physically distant from each other, we think that moving forward with the upcoming edition of the biennale is a way to engage dialogue and interaction.

We feel great empathy for those in the cultural field—artists, cultural workers, those working at art events and institutions, and others—whose work has been stopped due to the situation. We hope that this announcement will be received as an opportunity for artists to connect once again with their creativity, and for all of us to envision a future after the pandemic.

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## About MOMENTA | Biennale de l'image

MOMENTA | Biennale de l'image is an international contemporary art biennale devoted to the image, taking place in various venues in Tiohtiá:ke - Mooniyang - Montréal (Canada) every two years since 1989. Founded as Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal, the organization was renamed MOMENTA | Biennale de l'image in 2017. Its activities include exhibitions, public events, educational programs, artistic and social collaborations, and more. Over the last nine editions, the biennale has presented more than 500 artists and 2,300 artworks, and attendance totalled 2 million. More than 100 partners join the biennale for each edition, and almost 200 actors from the cultural field participate in it. More precisely, the 2019 edition of MOMENTA reached 210,028 visitors, presented the work of 69 artists, and offered thirty activities of mediation and audience development.

For more information:

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

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## Press relations

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