

FIELDBOOK

EN

# CRITICAL ZONES

OBSERVATORIES FOR  
EARTHLY POLITICS

23,5,2020  
–28,2,2021

## OWN HORIZONS

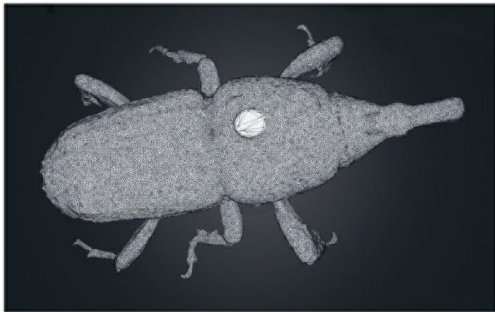
The ground beneath our feet consists of different layers – so-called *soil horizons*. These horizons allow us to trace a history of the soil: telling the history of rain, drought, plant roots, soil organisms, all of which shape the soil and its composition.

- Draw your own layers and horizons.
- What conditions have shaped you?  
Can one read from your soil horizon which processes have molded you?

Tahani Nadim / Sybille Neumeyer

Mixed media installation, two-channel video, objects from the State Museum of Natural History Karlsruhe, drawings and archive materials, dimensions variable  
Produced in collaboration with the ZKM | Karlsruhe and the State Museum of Natural History Karlsruhe

"Nowhere [...] is the relation of a creature to its surroundings a matter of a single cause and effect; each living thing is bound to its world by many threads, weaving the intricate design of the fabric of life."<sup>1</sup>



→ 3D model of a  
*Sitophilus oryzae*,  
Digital Archive  
of Natural History,  
Darmstadt

*Souvenirs Entomologiques* [Entomological memories] is an inquiry into the lives and histories of insects and spiders. On their journeys from habitat to natural history museums and into datasets, organisms undergo many metamorphoses: they become specimens, taxons, metaphors, bioindicators, models, and data points. This video essay follows insects, spiders, and their companions on these journeys, examining how politics of collection, concepts of nature, technologies, and cartographies coevolve along the way.

In times of increasingly disturbed ecosystems, insects emerge as central protagonists. *Souvenirs Entomologiques* speaks to the interconnectedness of arthropod and human worlds, and reappraises processes of mapping and monitoring natural histories and ecological futures.

<sup>1</sup> Rachel L. Carson, *The Edge of the Sea* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1955), 14.

Sonia Levy



Two-channel video installation, color, sound, 25:40 min.

Corals are highly endangered due to rising sea temperature and acidification. Within this context, the Horniman Museum and Gardens in London has become a pioneer in breeding certain coral species in vitro by stimulating their sexual reproduction. Sonia Levy takes us into the basement of the museum, into the labs where the scientists breed the corals. In her film she pays equal attention to the corals, the instruments used in the process, and the scientists meticulously taking care of them.

In a time of massive destruction of living things and habitats, natural history museums have become a place where the once familiar – animals and plants of our childhood – is haunting us. What is the responsibility of a natural history museum in an accelerated present and past? The term "conservation of a species" may change its meaning in this context. Should museums keep displaying extinct species, or should they attempt to help preserve species from extinction? And therefore redefine our perception and relation to what we used to call nature?



## UNKRAUT MIT SCHLANGE UND SCHMETTERLINGEN [WEEDS WITH A SNAKE AND BUTTERFLIES], N. D., BEFORE THE 1800S

Otto Marseus van Schrieck



Painting, oil on canvas, 41.8 × 44.2 cm  
Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe

Otto Marseus van Schrieck was an expert in a branch of still life painting called *sottobosco*: up-close, snail's-eye glimpses of a forest floor. Virtuoso portraits – chiefly – of plants, insects, reptiles, and amphibians cast in a flickering chiaroscuro, Schrieck's canvases feature conflicts among the creatures – here between a snake and butterflies. At once spectacles of nature as a dynamic process and emblems of cosmic enmities between body and soul, nature and counter-nature, vice and virtue, etc., these small-scale agons engaged timely scientific debates. It was Schrieck who first observed that tiny flies escaping bizarrely from butterfly pupae were born from eggs laid by parasitic wasps. This discovery disputed Aristotelian theories of spontaneous generation by proving that these insects, like all of God's creations, reproduced "according to their various kinds" (Gen. 1:11).

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ONE WAY TO  
STOP SEEING  
TREES, OR  
RIVERS, OR  
HILLS, ONLY  
AS ›NATURAL  
RESOURCES‹  
IS TO CLASS  
THEM AS  
FELLOW BEINGS,  
«