

## Nina Waisman: The Laboratory for Embodied Intelligences



Following a thrilling year of research and experimentation in SETI Institute's Artist in Residence Program (SETI = Search For Extraterrestrial Intelligence, an institute allied with NASA), Nina Waisman has started up the Laboratory for Embodied Intelligences (LEI) here in Los Angeles. She is joined by founding member and movement expert Flora Wiegmann.

In Spring of 2017, LEI will be offering site-specific performances, along with workshops that offer perspective-shifting meditations and embodiment exercises to the public. Both activities aim to make physically palpable LEI's ongoing discoveries around the following questions: How can humans "try on" non-human behaviors in order to perceive them viscerally, gaining knowledge unavailable through classic data analysis? What can we learn from the highly successful behaviors and communication methods our microbial colleagues and ancestors employ? How do animal and human logics and languages compare to microbial behaviors?

We evolved from microbes, but only recently did we learn that "all mobile unicellular organisms possess the fundamental characteristics of nervous systems" (Dr. Lori Marino). Perhaps fundamental cognitive capacities and "modes of reason" we think unique to humans belong in some form to microbes. We know that they communicate - in fact, they are multi-lingual. They have survived and communicated with each other over 3.5 billion years. Surely there are a few things we can learn from cultures exponentially more long-lived and adapted than we are? Looking into the future, astrobiologists agree that microbes are the most likely form of life we will encounter out in the cosmos. Can our terrestrial bacteria help us communicate with or understand these extraterrestrials?



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Through performances, along with science-driven meditations and movement exercises, LEI seeks to give us access to some of the vast treasure of behaviors and communication techniques invented and enacted by microbes. Cognitive scientists have found that to exercise a new behavior is to open the mind to a whole new suite of logics - so, we hope you'll join us!

The 2017 performances will feed into video and installation-based artworks to be shown internationally in museums and other venues.

Nina Waisman's residency and its associated collaborative public events and performances are made possible by The 18th Street Arts Center, with funding provided by City of Santa Monica Cultural Affairs Department, the California Arts Council, and The James Irvine Foundation. 18th Street Art Center is the leading artist residency in Southern California, with a mission to provoke public dialogue through contemporary art making.

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

Nina Waisman, Director

As a former dancer turned multi-media artist, Nina Waisman is fascinated by the critical roles that movement and sensation play in forming thought. Her interactive sound installations, videos and collaborative performances highlight the subliminal training and possible hacking of such embodied thinking. These works focus on related issues including surveillance, invisible labor, machine-human feedback loops, nanotechnology. Venues include House of World Cultures, Berlin; LAXART; CECUT, Tijuana; OCMA; the Beall Center for Art & Technology, Zero1 Biennial, the San Diego Museum of Art, The New Children's Museum in San Diego. She has taught at institutions such as Cal Arts, SFAI, UCSD, and spent 2015 as an artist in residence at SETI Institute. Waisman is starting a new series of collaborative artworks exploring the role of embodiment in forming non-human intelligences, ranging from microbial on through plant, animal and extraterrestrial intelligences.

Flora Wiegmann, Principal Collaborator

Flora Wiegmann is a Los Angeles-based dancer and choreographer. She works in both live performance and film, often making research-based work that is specific to its particular site. She has had the opportunity to collaborate with artists such as Fritz Haeg, Silke Otto-Knapp, Alix Lambert, Amy Granat, Miljohn Ruperto, Nina Waisman and Tom Lawson. Her projects have been presented at the ICA, Philadelphia; The Kitchen, New York; the California Biennial and LA><ART in California, The David Roberts Foundation and The Camden Arts Centre, London; The Banff Center for Creativity in Canada, and Université Rennes in France.