

# Ecologies of the In\between

## Resource Guide

### Ecologies of the In\between

ON VIEW \ October 17,  
2025-January 4, 2026

OPENING RECEPTION \ Friday,  
October 17, 5-7 PM

Gallery 51 \ 51 Main Street,  
North Adams, MA

"end of the world how did you  
get in my imagination"  
-CAConrad



Johanna Hedva. Detail. "Let go of me, God, please let go!,"  
2025. Watercolor paper, goose feathers, fish hook, glue.

This exhibition is an invitation to the in\between – a proximal zone of time and space that holds the tensions and potentialities between *what was*, *what is*, and *what can be*. A littoral contact site of relationality where our feelings and capacities shore up against perceived limits, the in\between toggles us in modes of estrangement as capacious as they are disorienting. Texturing what it means to be "living in the end times," the in\between is moved by minor gestures, prompting us to otherly inhabit the late hours of modernity when structures of dominance are simultaneously being reinforced and dismantled. Distancing itself from apocalyptic rhetoric, the in\between reminds us that ends and beginnings coexist, ecologically.

How might we feel, care, create, think, love, teach, act, learn, and relate otherwise if we loosen our attachments to the end? *Ecologies of the In\between* brings together four artists – Johanna Hedva, CAConrad, Kelsey Shultis, and Báýò Akómoláfé – whose work collectively moves across and between forms – drawing, painting, mixed media, sculpture, poetry, sound – in an embrace of plurality, thresholds, and portals. Here, doom exists alongside possibility, resistance moves with surrender, and affinity brushes up against antipathy.

*Ecologies of the In\between* is curated by Dr. Victoria Papa, Associate Professor of English & Visual Culture at MCLA.

## About this guide

This resource guide accompanies the Fall 2025 Exhibition *Ecologies of the In\between* presented by Gallery 51 and curated by Dr. Victoria Papa. The purpose of this resource guide is to introduce the exhibition, including its themes and featured artists, to MCLA faculty. Through resources spanning conceptual frameworks of ecological politics to interviews with the artists and articles analyzing their practices, the guide is designed for application to disciplines and departments across MCLA. The themes of *Ecologies of the In\between* and its featured artists are cross-disciplinary and multimodal, addressing topics and using forms relevant to the fields of environmental studies, health sciences, women's, gender, and sexuality studies, critical ethnic studies, psychology, sociology, English and music. This guide presents entry points and avenues of engagement for connecting the exhibition to syllabi and curricula across academic departments.

## Opportunities for Engagement and Exhibition Programming\*

**October 16th, 1-3pm:** Student Writing Workshop with Johanna Hedva

**October 17th, 5-7pm:** Exhibition Opening

**October 29th, 1pm:** Student Poetry Workshop with CAConrad

**October 29th, 5-7pm:** Occult Poetics by CAConrad, Public Lecture

**November, date forthcoming:** Artist Talk with Kelsey Shultis

**November, date forthcoming:** Event with Báýò Akómoláfé

\*To learn more about events and to make arrangements to attend or bring students to a workshop, please email [victoria.papa@mcla.edu](mailto:victoria.papa@mcla.edu)

## Artists Bios

**Johanna Hedva** (1984 - present, they/them/theirs) is a genre-defying Korean American writer, artist, and musician based in Los Angeles and Berlin. Working across a variety of forms including novels, essays, theory, poetry, music, performance, installation, sculpture, and drawings, Hedva conceptualizes their work as different types of writing, which they define as "language embodied." Across these forms, Hedva's practice draws on deviant knowledges of divination, magic, mysticism and astrology to articulate a politics that subverts existing logics of domination. Theorizing from the intersections of their identity as a queer disabled person of color, Hedva embraces what ableism has cast away: the inevitability of illness and disability, the constitutive relationship between



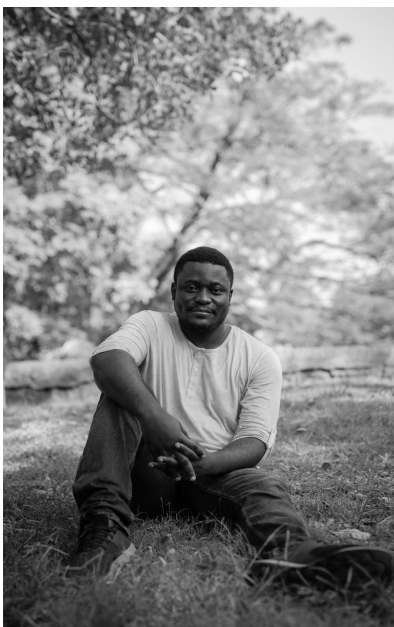
care and pain, the possibilities attendant in failure. Hedva is the author of four books; their 2016 essay "Sick Woman Theory" is a seminal work of feminist disability studies that establishes illness as a politically charged site and their 2024 essay collection *How to Tell When We Will Die: On Pain, Disability and Doom* won the Amber Hollibaugh award for LGBTQ Social Justice writing. Through a visual vocabulary encompassing knives, black goo, hair, and clocks and soundscapes composed of industrial noise and harsh beats, Hedva regards negation and doom as a liberatory force that enables reconfigurations of existing societal arrangements. In a quote from a recent profile in *Art in America*, Hedva says, "there is no beginning and there is no end - just cycles," embracing the possibilities of what exists in between.



CAConrad (1966 - present, they/them/theirs) is a practitioner of the ancient technologies of poetry and ritual and the author of multiple collections of poetry including *Listen to the Golden Boomerang Return* (2024), *Amanda Paradise: Resurrect Extinct Vibrations* (2021), *While Standing in Line for Death* (2017), *Ecodeviance: (Soma)tics for a Future Wilderness*, and *A Beautiful Marsupial Afternoon* (2012). Their poems have been internationally exhibited as sculptural art objects in galleries such as MoCA Tucson, Futura Gallery in Prague, Fluent Gallery in Spain, and Champ Lacombe in London. Conrad is the recipient of the 2022 Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, a Creative Capital grant, a Pew Fellowship, a Lambda Literary Award, and a *Believer* Book Award. Influenced by their upbringing in a factory town where production trumped presence, CAConrad has made it their life's project to disentangle the logics of

capital from creativity and cultivate an ethics of attention. Since 2005, Conrad has worked with an original practice of (Soma)tic poetry rituals, procedures that lead to states of what Conrad refers to as an "extreme present" and generate raw, stream-of-consciousness notes for poems. With rituals ranging from flooding the body with recordings of recently extinct animals while lying on the ground in different areas across the US to blowing queer bubbles on a street corner in North Carolina, the poetry emerging from Conrad's embodied practice inhabits the space between loss and destruction and renewal and healing - of the personal, political, and ecological kind. Invoking spirit guides, dreams, feelings, and rituals while remaining attentive to the natural world and embodied experience, Conrad's work blurs the boundary between personal/political, inside/outside, and self/other.

Kelsey Shultis (1988 - present) is a visual artist based in North Adams, Massachusetts specializing in sculptural paintings. Shultis received her BFA from the University of Michigan School of Art and Design and studied at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague, Czech Republic. Her work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions internationally, including the 2025 Young Masters Invitational Exhibition at the Cynthia Corbett Gallery in London. Shultis creates deeply personal representations of her inner landscape through a practice of tapping into her intuition and the unconscious. Decentering logic, rationality, and conscious thought, Shultis channels her work through a process in which she "asks the image to reveal itself rather than impose meaning or thought onto it." Through landscapes populated with a visual vocabulary of abandoned houses, goddesses, moss, goats, rainbows, forests, demons, mermaids, rabbits, witchcraft, and children, Shultis' work alternates between abstraction and revelation, wonder and horror, creating an aesthetic that she refers to as "haunted innocence." Shultis' pieces activate the unconscious and subliminal in viewers, giving them permission to consider the pluralities of their own inner landscape and attend to pleasure and doom in equal measure.



Báyò Akómoláfé (1983 - present) is a self-described trans-public intellectual, international speaker, professor, and author born to Yoruba parents in western Nigeria. Animated by material feminism, post-structuralist theory, post-humanism, and Yoruba indigenous cosmologies, Akómoláfé's philosophical project offers an alternative way of responding to the civilizational crises of the 21st century. Proposing that conventional methods of activism maintain the status quo and reinforce colonial ways of thinking, Akómoláfé presents a framework of postactivism, which embraces cracks as unanticipated breaks in existing architectures of dominance and sees fugitivity as a path forward because it is marked by uncertainty and surrender. Founder of the Emergence Network, a post-activist



project that embraces interconnection and inquiry, Akómoláfé advances a politics of leaning into the unknown and describes himself as “learning to live in the “meantime,” in the middle, where we must live in confusion and make do with partial answers.” Living and theorizing from this middle space between beginning and end, Akómoláfé uses storytelling, writing, and facilitation as a means of putting into practice alternative ontological and relational mechanisms.

### **Further Reading, Watching, & Listening**

[“Our Lives Are an Endless Series of ‘And’”](#): An Interview with Kathryn Schulz, NYT Opinion, The Ezra Klein Show, May 2025.

Ezra Klein of the New York Times interviews Kathryn Schulz, writer for The New Yorker and author of the memoir *Lost & Found* that explores the opposing poles of loss/destruction and encounter/creation. Schulz proposes applying a conception of “and” to our lives that embraces the plurality and contradiction of the contemporary landscape.

Strand, Sophie. [“We Must Risk New Shapes”](#) *Science and Non-duality*

Writer Sophie Strand draws on ecological phenomena to argue for an alternative way of being premised on processes of relationality and interdependence found in nature. Strand’s ideas exist in dialogue with the artists featured in the exhibition.

Manning, Erin. *The Minor Gesture*. Duke University Press, 2016.

Manning, Erin. [“The Minor Gesture in 12 Movements.”](#) Schumacher Center for New Economics. 2023.

[“How the minor moves us: across thresholds, socialities, and techniques/a conversation with Erin Manning.”](#) Open! Platform for Art, Culture, and the Public Domain. 2019

Erin Manning is a professor in the Faculty of Fine Arts at Concordia University and founder of SenseLab. In these works, Manning sets forth a mode of perception and politics that accounts for ecologies rather than categories and attends to the subtleties of experience found in the in\between.

C. Robert Mesle. [Process Relational Philosophy: An Introduction to Alfred North Whitehead](#), Rutgers University Press, 2008. Available as ebook through MCLA Library database

This book offers an accessible introduction to the mathematician Alfred North Whitehead’s process-relational philosophy, a multidisciplinary philosophical framework that centers interconnection and dynamic creation. Ideas and questions related to Whitehead’s philosophy are taken up by the artists featured in the exhibition as they put forth alternative epistemologies for the contemporary moment.

Torrent, Ignasi. [“Whitehead and Today’s Worlds.”](#) CCCBLAB. 15 March 2022.

An article unpacking the ideas in Whitehead's compilation of lectures *Process and Reality* and examining the text's relevance for contemporary thinkers.

Hale, Amy. "[Communist witches and cyborg magic: the emergence of queer, feminist, esoteric futurism.](#)" Burlington Contemporary, June 2022.

An academic article that examines the history of esoteric art and contemporary queer and feminist artists who are wielding esoteric aesthetics for liberatory purposes. Many of the artists in this exhibition draw on the imaginative and healing potential of alternative forms of knowledge.

Hedva, Johanna. "[Sick Woman Theory.](#)" 2016.

Johanna Hedva's widely acclaimed 2016 essay embracing illness as a legitimate political position and critiquing the entangled forces of ableism and capitalism.

Hedva, Johanna. "[In Defense of Depersons.](#)" 2016

An essay in which Hedva affirms the political agency of those who have been disenfranchised by existing systems of oppression and argues that the conditions of personhood are inaccessible to minoritized groups.

[CARE SYLLABUS Interview with Johanna Hedva](#)

Co-directors of the Care Syllabus Victoria Papa and Levi Prombaum interview Johanna Hedva; the conversation spans genre, deviant forms of knowledge, the relationship between activism and failure, and the capacity for care

["Care in End Times."](#) CARE SYLLABUS module curated by Johanna Hedva, 2021

[CAConrad Interview: Rituals for Poetry.](#) Louisiana Channel. 2018

Excerpts from CAConrad's [Listen to the Golden Boomerang Return](#) (2024)

Ross, Stephen. "[Poetic Dianoia: Epistemic Injustice and CAConrad's \(Soma\)tics.](#)" *AMODERN*.

An academic article that positions CAConrad's (Soma)tic poetry rituals within lineages of poetic dictation and the politics of knowledge.

[Various CAConrad poems](#) available through *The Poetry Foundation*

["CAConrad - Social and Environmental Issues through Poetry"](#) - TedxArchivorum, 202

Akómoláfé, Báýò. "[A Politics of the Third Way.](#)" *The Emergence Network*.

Published by The Emergence Network, Akómoláfé's postactivist network, this article explains the relevance and power of postactivism as an alternative framework for reckoning with contemporary crises.

Olivier Dubosc, Fabrice. ["Onto-fugivity: Grounding Sanctuary in the Cracks."](#) Journal of Indigenous Studies. May 2023.

An academic article examining Akómoláfé's concept of onto-fugitivity in the context of historical patterns of fugitivity and contemporary decolonial practices that resist surveillance culture.

[20s x Atmos Keynote: Bayo Akomolafe](#)

A conversation between Atmos editor-in-chief Willow Defebaugh and Báýò Akómoláfé that considers the ecological crisis through the lens of Bayo's ideas of fugitivity, cracks, and the monstrous.

["Dr. Bayo Akomolafe on Coming Alive to Other Senses."](#) *For The Wild* podcast.