



## Sym-bi-o/ living together at the limits of science

**Thursday, March 18th 12.00 - 4.00**

**This is an invitation to please join us for a live Zoom event, study day, Sym-bi-o/ living together at the limits of science, it would be great if you could join us for this exciting day of talks revisiting The Incident exhibitions and symposia held in 1995 & 1996 to consider their intergenerational themes in relation to artistic and political questions of our time**

**Convened by Kathleen Rogers, UCA Professor of Media Art and Sciences with moderator and international curator Rob La Frenais, renowned anthropologist, writer and activist for the rights of Amazonian peoples, Jeremy Narby and Birgitta Hosea, UCA Professor of Moving Image as the respondent.**

Sym-bi-o/ living together at the limits of science will revisit the artistic, intellectual and transformative contexts of The Incident exhibitions and symposia held in 1995 & 1996. Looking back over 25 years from a world changed by a pandemic, and from the newly developed 'cyberculture' of the '90s which engaged with mapping out the future of the 'post-biological age', the two Incident events were an ambitious attempt to engage with the power of the arts to offer a sympathetic yet critical environment for debates on parapsychology, ESP, dream research, healing, geomancy and UFO research. The events offered a fruitful and catalytic encounter between artificial intelligence experts and UFO researchers, net-surfers and psychics, physicists, dissident scientists and conspiracy theorists.

The Incident events sought to explore speculative thought going beyond the limits of established science and included multi-disciplinary approaches to consciousness studies, anomalous phenomena, the extraterrestrial hypothesis, parapsychology, ethnobot-

any, DNA molecular biology and the influence of indigenous Shamanic cultures on western technological thought and art. What survives is an agreement that post-colonial indigenous knowledge can inspire us to transform ourselves.

Rob La Frenais directed these two radical events; at the Belluard Bollwerk, Fribourg, Switzerland (1995) and at the ICA London (1996). Each sought to chart radical paradigm shifts in human evolution and featured artists, scientists, musicians, visionaries, philosophers, psychologists and critical theorists. In the '90s Rob La Frenais and Kathleen Rogers worked closely in producing their intellectual framework and themes. The Sym-bi-o/ living together study day reunites them as intellectual convenors alongside previous Incident participant, the anthropologist and activist for the rights of Amazonian peoples, Dr Jeremy Narby. Former Incident participants included - Terence McKenna, Roy Ascott, Rod Dickinson, Kathleen Rogers, Anne Bean, James Turrell, Marko Pelikan, Linda Montano, Minnette Lehmann, Connie Samaras, Bruce Gilchrist, David Peat, Beata Bishop, Eduardo Luis Luna, HR Giger, Robert Fischer, Homer Flynn (The Residents), Jacque Vallee, Jeremy Narby, Ulrike Rosenbach, Kristine Stiles, Michael Lindeman, Keiko Sei, Michael Lindeman and The Shamen.

**The context of the incident - then and now - engages in speculative content from then to now. Here are some examples:**

- **Gaia: a physiological system - the environmental crisis - connections across species boundaries - reading Donna Haraway**
- **Symbiosis is the way of Life - the cell (not DNA) controls the organism - speculative fables and hybrids – reading Margulis**
- **Amazonian Shamanic ways of knowledge - ayahuasca research - reading visionary knowledge - looking at the world in a new light beyond anthropocentrism - learning to live with our dying - ethics – storytelling – reading The Cosmic Serpent**
- **In 2021 The extraterrestrial hypothesis returned in the shape of 'Oumuamua' - embracing how little we know/no certain pedagogies - "it would be arrogant to think we were alone in the universe" Avi Loeb, former Chair of Astronomy at Harvard University, who in his new book, conjectures we have been visited by an object from an extraterrestrial civilisation in 2017 when the first interstellar object was sighted in Hawaii and showed anomalous behaviour – reading Avi Loeb**

["And Yet It Deviates" – Rob la Frenais discussing extraterrestrial life and Oumuamua with Avi Loeb](#)

## **Schedule**

**Schedule. 12.00 - 16.00 (GMT) 13.00- 17.00 (CET) Timings given in GMT.  
13.00 Opening.**

**Brief introductions to the day by Kathleen Rogers and Rob La Frenais (5 mins each)**

**13.10. Brief introductions by speakers and respondent (5 mins each)**

**13.30. Rob La Frenais. The story of The Incident. (25 mins plus 5 mins urgent questions)**

**14.00. Kathleen Rogers. Entangled Dimensionalities. (25 mins plus 5 mins urgent questions)**

**14.30 Jeremy Narby. Plant Teachers (25 mins plus 5 mins urgent questions)**

**15.00 Response by Birgitta Hosea. (15 mins)**

**15.15 Discussion between all the participants and audience moderated by Rob La Frenais (45 mins) 16.00 Close.**

## **Participant Bios**

### **UCA convenor Kathleen Rogers, Professor of Media Arts and Sciences**

Kathleen Rogers is Internationally known for artworks, philosophy-poetic enactments, installations and exhibitions – she operates as intra-disciplinary arenas of art, philosophy and the sciences making artworks that explore the entangled dimensionalities of radical matter. She pioneered telecommunications art in the pre-web 80s, working with Roy Ascot to provide designs for telematic networking curricula that engaged with theories of cybernetics. For more than two decades she has worked in the exponentially expanding fields of media art, gaining international recognition as an artist and scholar in communities of practice ranging from performance, video art and virtual reality, telepresence, the sensory interfacing of the human body to bio-art. Her interest in molecular science developed from her research in the 90's looking at the mythical status of the maize plant in pre-scientific cultures and making links between biotechnology, the environment and concepts of the gene in ancient and contemporary Mayan culture in Mexico. She produced two new original installations for the Incidents in Switzerland and the ICA, London, The Memory of Water and 'Viperscience'

as well as a collaboration with Jeremy Narby. Her site-specific work Psi Net , made in collaboration with spirit mediums in a site-specific remote performance in an in a former mine building, in an early art and technology event 'Earthwire' (1993) helped to create the thinking that went into the creation of 'The Incident and as well as producing new work for the accompanying exhibitions she was a special advisor on the project, alongside the artist James Turrell. Her current work is a commingling autobiographical artistic practice, trans-human new materialist theory and philosophy. Her current artistic practice - writing in the body - the dark matter of the genome, explores memory, inheritance and evolution that intersects with critical auto-theory and studies in intergenerational epigenetics.

<https://www.kathleenrogers.org/>

<https://www.uca.ac.uk/staff-profiles/professor-kathleen-rogers/>

### **Moderator Dr. Rob La Frenais – International independent curator, writer, lecturer**

Dr. Rob La Frenais is an independent contemporary art curator, working internationally and creatively with artists entirely on original commissions. He believes in being directly engaged with the artist's working process as far as possible, while actively widening the context within which the artist can work. In 1979 he founded the influential contemporary cultural journal Performance Magazine, which he edited until he became a curator in 1987, when he developed a number of new projects with artists like Helen Chadwick, Mona Hatoum, Stelarc, Cornelia Parker, Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Coco Fusco and Marina Abramovic as well as directing 'The Incident'. From 1997-2014 he was curator of the Arts Catalyst, the science-art organisation, where among other things he organised zero-gravity flights for artists such as The Otolith Group. Since 2014 he has independently curated exhibitions internationally including the site-specific 'Exoplanet Lot' in the Lot Valley, France, Tomas Saraceno's 'Aerocene' in White Sands Desert, New Mexico, and the large-scale 'No Such Thing as Gravity' at FACT, Liverpool and the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Art. He organised the conferences 'Earth Lab' at Westminster University in 2017 and 'Art After the Collapse' for Dartington Arts School in 2019. He was a Fellow at the Saari Residence, Turku, Finland, where, after rethinking his trajectory he is now taking part in artistic collaborations with artists such as Anne Bean and making performances. In August 2020 he led and mentored undergraduate students for Srishti Institute, Bangalore, India as part of his Future of Transportation project. In October 2020 he delivered an online keynote with Saraceno for UNAM, México City.

[www.roblafrenais.info](http://www.roblafrenais.info)

### **Dr Jeremy Narby - writer, anthropologist, examining Amazonian Shamanic systems of knowledge, indigenous rights activist**

Jeremy Narby is a renowned anthropologist and activist for the rights of Amazonian peoples who has written four books, as well as sponsored an expedition to the rainfor-

est for biologists and other scientists to examine indigenous knowledge systems and the utility of ayahuasca in gaining knowledge. Since 1989, Narby has been working as the Amazonian project's director for the Swiss NGO, Nouvelle Planète, working in defence of indigenous rights of Amazonian Peoples in helping first nations develop their own political, economic and cultural institutions and projects. He was radically transformed by several years spent living with the Ashaninka people in the Peruvian Amazon. His work and writing consider the intelligence of living beings and wrestles with his own culture's anthropocentric concepts. Narby uncovers a universal thread within the natural world, and asks: What can humanity learn from nature's economy and knowingness? Narby is a regular speaker at events platforming social and scientific innovators with practical and visionary solutions for the world's most pressing environmental and social challenges. He was an active participant in both 'Incidents' and along with Luis Eduardo Luna, helped to bring a 'decolonial' context to what might have seemed at the time a rather Western approach.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKwzYQm-OuY>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremy\\_Narby](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremy_Narby)

#### **Professor Birgitta Hosea UCA Professor of Moving Image, Director of the Animation Research Centre - Respondent**

Birgitta Hosea is a time-based media artist working with expanded animation and experimental drawing to create durational images, live performances, experiential installations and short films that expand the concept of animation out of the screen and into the present moment through the use of interactive technology, holographic projections onto live performers, database characters and live video feeds. This has taken many forms including creating laser light-drawing concerts of visual music with a live audience, a lunch party where participants are invited to have a conversation with a cartoon character and a séance with a medium who channels digital doubles and emits electronic ectoplasm. Recent exhibitions include National Gallery X; Venice & Karachi Biennales; Oaxaca & Chengdu Museums of Contemporary Art; InspiralLondon and Hanmi Gallery, Seoul. Included in the Tate Britain and Centre d'Arte Contemporain archives, she has received an Adobe Impact Award, a MAMA Award for Holographic Arts and an honorary fellowship of the Royal Society of the Arts. Previous to working at UCA, she was Head of Animation at the Royal College of Art and prior to that at Central Saint Martins, where she completed a practice-based PhD in animation as a form of performance. She has written a number of publications on performance drawing, expanded and experimental animation, most recently as co-author (with Foa, Grisewood and McCall) of *Performance Drawing: New Practices Since 1945*(Bloomsbury, 2020).

<https://www.uca.ac.uk/staff-profiles/birgitta-hosea/>

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