

# The Metabolising Analogue

Michaela Davidová

11. 12. 2024 – 16. 2. 2025

The House of the Lords of Kunštát Brno

In her artistic research, Michaela Davidová combines art, science and nature in the processes of analogue photography. She uses unconventional natural materials and procedures reminiscent of an alchemist's kitchen where various materials and ingredients are mixed, a research laboratory, investigating the properties and reactions of individual substances. Their interaction and metabolic transformation consciously refer to the metabolic processes of living organisms and bodies. Davidová's work has long been concerned with the question of nutrient and waste utilisation in the ecosystem, based on her thesis-related research *Constructed Wetlands & Deconstructed Borders*. She does not seek to create representational works, but rather she reveals the ecology of the materials themselves and their properties that can replace the chemicals used in traditional analogue photography. Among other things, she reexamines the non-ecological practices and the colonial era with which the production of analogue photography has been associated since its beginnings, taking inspiration from the approaches of transcorporeality (Stacy Alaimo) and vibrant matter (Jane Bennett and Anna L. Tsing) that have influenced the shape of contemporary art. Metabolising in the exhibition's title refers not as much to decomposition as

Michaela Davidová (\*1988) is an artist and researcher originally from Ostrava, who now lives and works in Tilburg, the Netherlands. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and Crafts from the course: Artist, Designer: Maker, at Cardiff (UK) and a Master of Arts in Art and Science in Ecology Futures at Den Bosch (NL). Among other things, she is a lecturer for workshops on alternative photographic processes, coordinator of the Bio Art [MI] Lab at CARADT and co-curator of projects at the SEA Foundation in Tilburg. She collaborates and supports the community collective Sustainable Darkroom (UK) and is also a member of the Filmwerkplaats film lab in Rotterdam.



[website of Michaela Davidová](#)

to the metabolic transformation, remediation and circulation of both natural and waste material, which has as important a place in the natural ecosystem as any other substances and processes. Davidová replaces materials of animal origin with plant ingredients such as agar-agar, starch or glycerine, which act as binders for light-sensitive materials. The analogy of the body is the photographic darkroom itself, which becomes a living organism at the moment of developing the image forms. It crosses light-impermeable walls, escapes through waste pipes or air-conditioning tubes, inviting living or vibrant materials to insert their stories into it. Inside the dark chamber, substances, minerals, mycelia, physical and chemical processes and the artist's own body interact with them meshed through her own fingers. Michaela Davidová is a co-actor of these changes, the outcome of which involves an unpredictable process within the organisms that leaves a unique visual trace.

The multimedia installation *The Metabolising Analogue* presents a selection from two projects of the artist's ongoing artistic research, in particular: *Blue Sand* and *Filamentous*. In *Blue Sand*, Davidová has based her experiments on using an expired cyanotype solution to leach and filter soil materials and wetland root systems, in which a thin layer of Prussian

blue was trapped onto grains of sand. Ingredients and procedures are substituted by the author with plant materials in which, through various accidents and experiments, mutual and unexpected reactions occur. Just as Prussian blue is used in the photographic process, it is used in a different way in medicine, where it serves as a filtering substance that traps and eliminates radioactive contamination in the human body. This adaptability of substances and their frequent mutualism inspired the artist to create artworks manifesting the ability of substances to pass through and affect bodies and the environment.

In her body of works titled *Filamentous*, Michaela Davidová works with filamentous fungi known as white-rot fungus (*Ganoderma resinaceum*) growing primarily on plant hosts. In a biolab, she obtained a sample from a national fungal archive which was extracted from a beech tree in 1974, in van Heemstralaan Street in Baarn, in the Netherlands. In the summer of 2024, Davidová went to the same street and captured the community of beech trees on natural fibre photographic paper, and then developed the pictures through the cyanotype process, so that the sample, preserved for fifty years, was brought back to life through the photographic process. She left the photographs, inoculated with the fungal culture, in a dark and damp environment, and the

fungus then fed and grew on the paper fibres. In other cases, she has worked with kombucha, which she treated with silver nitrate and a cyanotype solution to watch the substances absorb and produce images. The biomatter used thus represents an active beneficial agent in the photographic process.

The *Metabolising Analogue* exhibition does not propose a clear-cut definition of environmental photography but offers a distinctive perspective of its possible form. The forms are created by combining analogue photography, natural processes, intuition and the artist's distinctive approach. Michaela Davidová reminds us that photography can also be a living, changing and surprising organism that reveals new dimensions and meanings based on the necessity of forming a responsible relationship with the environment.

#### ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME

10 Dec 2024, Tuesday, 7PM  
Guided tour with the author

11 Dec 2024, Wednesday, 5PM-8PM  
**PHYTOGRAMS: Workshop with Georgy Bagdasarov from labodoble lab**

5 Feb 2025, Wednesday, 6.30PM  
Guided tour with the curators

16 Feb 2025, Sunday, 4PM  
Exhibition closing accompanied by screening of a curated selection of experimental videos and guided tour with the author

- 1 - From *The Metabolising analogue* series, 2021-2024
- 2 - From *Filamentous* series, 2024 photograph encapsulated ganoderma
- 3 - From *The Metabolising analogue* series, 2021-2024 black tea sediment on glass, 2023
- 4 - From *Filamentous* series, 2024 light-sensitive papers coated with ganoderma
- 5 - From *The Metabolising analogue* series, 2021-2024 *Ganoderma resinaceum* on glass, 2024
- 6 - Blue sand, 2024 microscopic photograph of mint roots
- 7 - Blue sand, 2024 cyanotype on glass with plant emulsion, 2024
- 8 - *Becoming a medium, becoming a yogurt chemigram* photo, 2022
- 9 - *Untitled*, 2024 Prussian blue accumulated on glass
- 10 - *Untitled*, 2023 glass installation

