

**Gwenneth Miller**

***Under the surface***

I propose an online exhibition of my ongoing research which will span the themes

- spaces of unknowing
- tacit knowledge and artistic research

My artworks probe modes of representation of the fruiting of fungi – mushrooms. The developing process and images recall mycelial growth in earth or wood, and as such suggest a hidden world. The mycelial network is the body that lives beneath the soil. Mushrooms as its fruit release spores that contribute to the micro elements surrounding us. Each group of fungi has focused needs, behaviours and climates. Similarly human societies develop around specific interests and entangled relationships. These are cultivated where nourished, or perish when exposed to unfavorable conditions. This emerging research draws comparisons between the complex biology of our own emotional experience, embedded the folds of synapses and fungi's imbricated patterns.

Reading about "stories that gather stories" (Haraway 2016), there are links between real and imagined ecologies. Although much of Haraway's writing in this source relates to inter-species symbioses, I am intrigued by the idea of imaginative thinking. In my body of work I follow the intuitive regeneration of visual stories in relation to the bio-studies and mycology - the study of fungi, which neither plant nor animal. Through layering techniques, I search for mechanisms that can present a sense of obscuring. Translucent layers are collaged, and then sections are scrubbed off with steel wool. Examples of mixed media works are placed next to prints which are images of embedded layers of the same work. These adjacent works search for equivalents to articulate a sense of our own oblivious perceptive (in)abilities. In some instances of the artwork, prints are the hidden back of mixed media works. This research, which develops artistic processes, thus considers how material and handling can impact concepts, an idea widely written about in practice-led research (Carter 2004, Barrett and Bolt 2007, Collins 2001). Mycelial thinking is a set of images, a story about a story, and a methodology.

In my thesis (Miller 2015:xi) I contextualise mycelium:

„Mycelium,, as a metaphor of porosity and constructive support echoes the reciprocal character of tacit and cerebral knowledge. The metaphor of the mycelium is described by Tim Ingold (2011) as an appropriate image for social theory, for it acts as a mesh to connect different roots. Cultural anthropologists state that collaboration may be equated to mycelia as it acts in-between root and host

(Tsing 2012:416). My research proposes mycelium as an addition to the concept of the Deleuzian rhizome

Estelle Barrett (2007) writes about art as the production of philosophy in action and thus emphasis knowledge as perception and „doing“. Keeping in mind the inevitable unpredictability of outcome in art, I see the proposal as a starting point, yet it builds on a body of work which has started earlier. In the emergent theme I tentatively integrated organic materials with photography and created three-dimensional drawings, solidifying form with glue and resin. I consider ideas of reciprocity developed in my doctorate studies: the sense of complicity, response and affect. For visual processes, see <https://www.gwennethmiller.com/mesh2021> as the start of the project and <https://www.gwennethmiller.com/sketchbook> as later work.

Present studio work is ongoing.

### **Keywords**

Mycelium, fungi, translucent, scrubbing, eco-aesthetic, materiality, tacit knowledge, process art, reciprocity.

### **Biographical note** (not exceeding 50 words)

As senior art lecturer (Unisa) and practicing artist, I work primarily in inks, photography, and digital processes. The most recent award was in 2021 for Outstanding Creative Output from Unisa. I participated in over 170 exhibitions and curated various projects. My doctorate in practice-led research structured a model for intermediality.

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