

# Think Art – Act Science

SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE

800 CHESTNUT STREET  
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94133  
WWW.SFAI.EDU

**sfaia**  
san francisco. art. institute.  
since 1871.

## MONIKA CODOURY

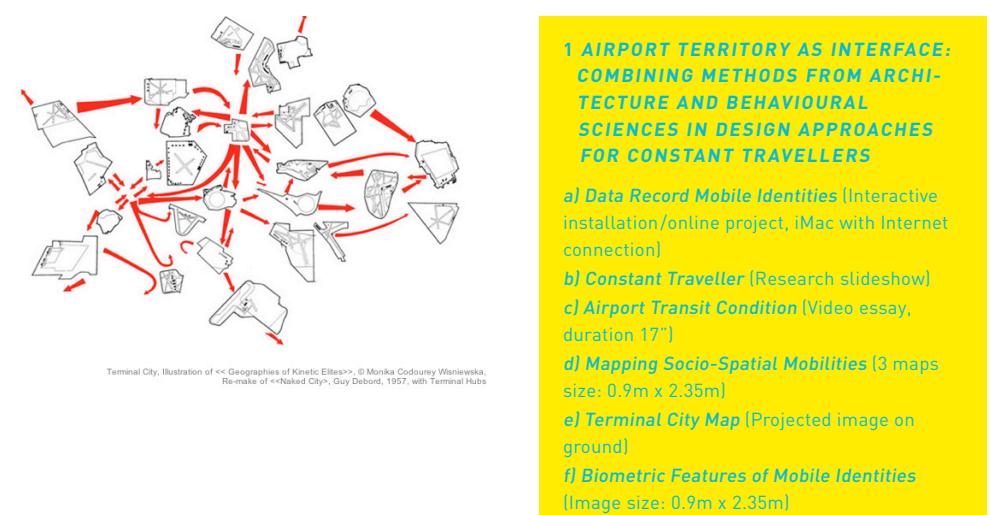
Artist-in-lab at the School of Life Sciences, Brain Mind Institute (BMI) at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL)

THEME: SPATIAL AWARENESS AND EMOTIONS

Monika Codourey's work traces the emergence of new socio-technical practices (e.g. surveillance, social sorting, biometric authentication), which influence the patterns of our movements and presence within transportation systems. The interactive online project Mobile Identities is part of a science-based investigation to assess emotional, cognitive, and behavioral states of air travellers ([MOBILE-IDENTITIES.INFO](#)). The research slideshow Constant Traveller Syndrome as well as the video essay Airport Transit Condition elaborate on Codourey's empirical data and reflect upon the spatiality of the airport environment and our socio-emotional interactions with it. By generating questions relating to movement and interaction patterns and reflecting on the impact new socio-technical practices have on our lives as constant travellers, Codourey opens up reflexive zones to come to terms with our interpretation and understanding of these practices.

**BIO** Monika Codourey was born in 1966 in Warsaw, Poland, and lives and works in Zurich. She worked as an architect in the United States, Canada, and Germany before settling in Switzerland in 1998. Codourey holds a degree in Architecture from the University of British Columbia, and pursued postgraduate studies in Information Architecture at the Department of Architecture, ETH Zurich. Codourey has lectured in the field of Urban Media and Information Spaces at the New Media Faculty of Zurich University of Arts. Currently she is pursuing her PhD research at Z-Node of the Planetary Collegium, University of Plymouth and at the Institute of Cultural Studies in Arts, Zurich University of the Arts.

[MONIKA.CODOURY.INFO](#)



**I AIRPORT TERRITORY AS INTERFACE:  
COMBINING METHODS FROM ARCHITECTURE AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES IN DESIGN APPROACHES FOR CONSTANT TRAVELLERS**

- a) Data Record Mobile identities [interactive installation/online project, iMac with internet connection]
- b) Constant Traveller [research slideshow]
- c) Airport Transit Condition [video essay, duration 17']
- d) Mapping Socie-Spatial Mobilities [3 maps, size: 0.7m x 2.35m]
- e) Terminal City Map [Projected image on ground]
- f) Biometric Features of Mobile identities [image size: 0.7m x 2.35m]

## CHRISTIAN GONZENBACH

Artist-in-lab at the Physics Department of the University of Geneva and the Centre of European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), Geneva

THEME: SPATIAL AWARENESS AND EMOTIONS

**QUARC** (*Quantum Art Crystal*) is a mechanical random generator, symbolizing the interaction of particles and their surrounding space. In particle physics, photons (light) are the messenger particles for electromagnetic interaction. Electromagnetism is the force responsible for most of the phenomena encountered in daily life (with the exception of gravity). Electromagnetism is also the force that holds electrons and protons together inside atoms, which are the building blocks of molecules; ordinary matter then takes its form as a result of intermolecular forces. During the collaborative process it became apparent that for both the scientist and the artist, observation, reflection, and experimentation were the underlying and fundamental principles of their work. With **QUARC**—in which the neon tubes of the crystal switching on and off resemble a Newtonian motion that creates a quantum-situation—Gonzenbach has created a powerful image and metaphor for the mysteries that seemingly will always surround the human quest for reasonable answers to unresolved questions of our universe.

**BIO** Christian Gonzenbach was born in 1975 in Geneva, where he currently lives and works. He graduated with a Bachelor of Design from HES Switzerland in 2003 and with a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Arts London in 2005. His practice, which includes sculptures, installations, and videos, is concerned with the transformation of ordinary things and everyday objects. Gonzenbach teaches at the University of Art and Design (HEAD) in Geneva and internationally as a guest lecturer at University of Art and Design, Kyoto, EPF Lausanne, ENSA Versailles, and Royal College of Art London. Recent awards include the Irène Reymond Foundation Award in 2010, the Lissignol Award from the City of Geneva in 2008 and 2003, and the Arcordis Grant for residency in Cuba in 2003. He has exhibited his artwork in Europe, Asia, and Cuba. [CLAYTV.NET](#)



**I QUARC (QUANTUM ART CRYSTAL) (2010)**  
Neon tubes, magnets, switches, starters

## NICOLE OTTIGER

Artist-in-lab at the School of Life Sciences, Brain Mind Institute (BMI) at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL)

THEME: SPATIAL AWARENESS AND EMOTIONS

Representing the "self" in a self-portrait is an attempt to localize not only the self (the mind as a consciousness) but also the body. The act of doing a self-portrait demands a change from the first to the third person perspective—in other words, it is an entity (body) interference as well as the inquiry: who am I? The *Mind's Eye* installation (in several parts) is a self-portraiture of the virtual body modus (out-of-body). As setup, the artist employed the neuro-scientific experiment "Video Ergo Sum: Manipulating Bodily Self-Consciousness" (Lenggenhager et al 2007, Lab of Cognitive Neuroscience at EPFL in Lausanne), which demonstrated that conflicting visual-somatosensory input in virtual reality could disrupt the spatial unity between the self and the body.

**BIO** Nicole Ottiger was born in London in 1969, and lives and works in Zurich. She is an artist, teacher, and art psychotherapist. She graduated in 2004 with a Master of Arts in Art Psychotherapy from London University Goldsmiths and in 1998 with a BA in Fine Arts from Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts. She has received the following art grants: 2010 Swiss artists-in-labs, 2009 Studio Art Grant Cité des Arts Paris, and 2008 Studio Art Grant Fundazion Nairs. In 2002 her artist book *Squint/Silberblick* was published with ars pro toto Verlag, Luzern. [NICOLEOTTIGER.COM](#)



**1 THIRD PERSON, NO. 1**  
Drawing, 1.12 x 1.505m  
**2 THIRD PERSON, NO. 2**  
Drawing, 0.80 x 1.25m  
**3 THIRD PERSON, NO. 3**  
Drawing, 1.5 x 1.36m  
**4 THIRD PERSON, NO. 7**  
Drawing, 1.5 x 1.15m  
**5 PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST:  
MIND'S EYE**  
Projected image; size variable



## ALINA MNATSAKANIAN

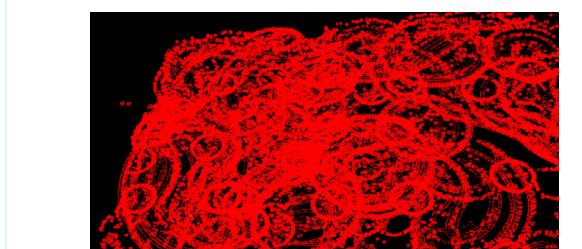
Artist-in-lab at the Dalle Molle Institute for Artificial Intelligence (IDSIA), Lugano

THEME: EXPLORATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

We go from one place to another by adapting to new situations. The environment constantly changes, as if the sun had moved to a new location. Movement and change themselves are the essence of life; the heart palpitates, pumping blood through our veins and creating movement, which enables us to live. With her installation, Alina Mnatsakanian explores visualizations as manifestations for this principle and extends its connotation with the aspect of human/machine interaction. In the piece, 9 small, wheeled robots follow a choreography by "dancing" and sometimes interacting with each other. A tracking software captures the movement of the robots and projects the result in real-time, creating a meditative visual performance where shifting colors, lights, and shapes produce different compositions. In numerology, "9" is the symbol of the beginning and the end, the cycle of life and rebirth. The installation is thus essentially a metaphor for life—the traces created by the moving "creatures" are their contribution to it, their marks on a changing environment.

The work was developed with support by Frederick Ducatelle, Jérôme Guzzi, Alessandro Giusti (IDSIA), and Renzo Cancho (Politecnico di Milano), along with David Grunenwald and Gérard Huguenin (University of applied sciences, Neuchâtel/Jura, Switzerland). The artist also wishes to express special thanks to IDSIA directors Luca Gambardella, Carlo Lepori, and Jürgen Schmidhuber, as well as to Gilles Caprari, GTronics, Mendrisio, Switzerland, manufacturer of the robots.

**BIO** Armenian artist Alina Mnatsakanian was born in 1958, and lives in Neuchâtel, Switzerland. She has also lived and worked in Tehran, Paris, and Los Angeles. A recurring topic in her work is the theme of movement in its formal and socio-political aspects, encountered through various media, such as painting, video, installation, and robotics. Her research about identity in relation to territory and language sometimes takes an autobiographical form. The accumulation of information and experience translates into ideas, shapes, and colors: layers of still or moving images, sounds, or simple brushstrokes. [ALINAMN.COM](#)



**1 WHEN I WOKE UP THE SUN  
HAD MOVED (2009-2011)**  
Performance with 9 robots and a digital live projection

## WENFENG LIAO

Artist-in-lab at the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL, Birmensdorf as part of the Sino-Swiss residency exchange

THEME: ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

In his works, Wenfeng investigates the complex and sometimes paradoxical relationship between the natural "outdoor" space and its "indoor" counterpart, turning these spaces inside out and documenting the process on photo and film. The video for *From Here to There* was created at the laboratory of the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research, when an ant from a forest was taken to the laboratory. It lost its orientation between the machines and research devices and on the clean ground searched for a way to escape.

The video work *Kanshu Kanshu* is a witty comment on the processes of translation, both between art and science and between the spheres of human thought and immediate action. "Kanshu" is a Chinese expression that stands for both "reading" (看书) and "cutting" (砍树). In the video the artist combines the physical action of cutting a tree and reading the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1889–1951) book *Philosophische Untersuchungen (Philosophical Investigations)*, 1936–46 at the same time. The video presents an absurd situation in which both an explicitly physical and mentally challenging action happen simultaneously.

**BIO** Born in Jiangxi Province in 1984, Wenfeng Liao lives and works in Shanghai. He graduated from the China Academy of Fine Art in 2006. Mostly working with video or photography, Liao explores the ambiguity of reactions to artistically modified spaces. Recent group exhibitions include *The Wedding of the King at Wahlverwandt*, Berlin in 2010; *Intrude: Art & Life 366* at the Zendai Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai in 2009; and the Lianzhou International Photo Festival in Lianzhou, Guangdong in 2007.



**1 FROM HERE TO THERE (2010)**  
Five-channel video installation,  
Duration: video 1/2/3: 1'31",  
video 4: 3'21", video 5: 6'31"  
**2 KANSHU SANSHU (2010)**  
Single-screen video, duration 04'33"

## PE LANG

Artist-in-lab at the Swiss Centre for Electronics and Microtechnology (CSEM), Alpnach

THEME: EXPLORATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Pe Lang's access to the latest developments in micro-systems and -technology inspired him to develop kinetic speakers to analyze site-specific attributes and our human perception of sound. The installation *Kinetic Speakers* permits the variable listening and processing of external sound-sources. Four specially designed speakers are individually controlled by highly accurate motors and position sensors allowing for precisely calibrated positioning and rotation. The mobile speaker system thus generates a dynamic sonic environment in which the visitor can explore the acoustic properties of the room according to his or her position. The primacy of sound and the sparse, focused nature of the visual apparatus sensitize the observer to the processes of listening and hearing. Even a small physical motion within the loudspeaker array is then understood in its relation to sound.

The *Kinetic Speakers* are a prototype, which were initially intended to also process external stimuli and actively gather sonic material from their environment through membranes and microphones.

**BIO** Peter Lang was born in 1974 in Switzerland and lives and works in Berlin. Working under his artist name Pe Lang, he has been a performing artist since 1997. A skilled electrician and versatile sound artist, Lang began to play music with software and broadened his work to sound installations and self-made kinetic objects. He has exhibited and performed in several important museums, galleries, and festivals in Europe and North America such as the Gossi Koscielak Gallery, Chicago in 2008; the Espacio Menosuno, Madrid in 2007; the Transmediale, Berlin in 2009; and the Elektra Festival in Montreal in 2008. Recent honors include the sitemapping/mediaprojects award in 2008 from the Swiss Federal Department of Culture (BAK). [PELANG.CH](#)



**1 KINETIC SPEAKERS (2007)**  
Kinetic speakers, motor drive,  
amplifier, audio interface

## ALEXANDRE JOLY

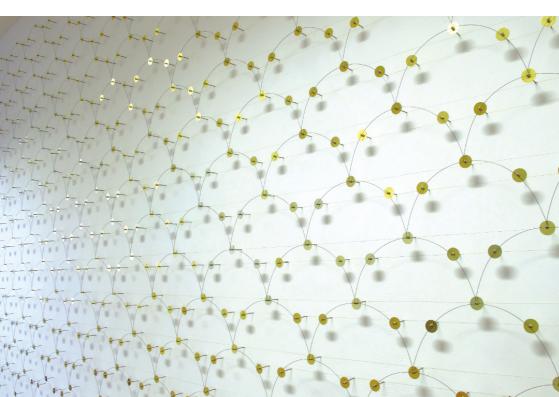
Artist-in-lab at the Chengdu Institute of Biology (CIB), Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) as part of the Sino-Swiss residency exchange

THEME: ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

What images can sound create? The fresco entitled *Fish Skin* is drawn with piano strings, forming waves around a series of piezos—little low-tech speakers in form of pastilles. It presents itself like a mural painting and generates sound—a spatial object as sonic fresco. The artist's composition orchestrates sounds that are recorded while studying amphibian's vocal communication at the research institute and on field trips with the scientists. The sound follows a physical pattern—abstract in its aesthetics—that becomes animated by sonorities filled with life, power, and rhythm. With *Sacred Peanuts* Alexandre Joly creates an imaginary landscape under a glass dome that might remind the viewer of traditional Chinese landscape painting. The micro-world of sounds is filled with a poetic narration and inhabited by a sense of fragility, revealing both the microscopic and the macroscopic aspects of the research processes the artist encountered in the lab.

**BIO** Born in 1977, Alexandre Joly lives and works in Geneva where he studied industrial design and fine art. Investigating sound, Joly's installations and performances have a recurring theme of the exploration of possible interactions between material and sound, setting up bewildering orchestrations for uncommon ways of hearing. In the last decade he has received several grants and prizes including the Prix de la Fondation Irène Reymond in 2010, the Lauréat du concours artistique pour l'aménagement permanent du parc des Ouches à Genève in 2006, and a scholarship of the Fondation Simon I. Patino, résidence à la Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris in 2006. [ALEXANDREJOLY.NET](#)

**BIO** Born in 1977, Alexandre Joly lives and works in Geneva where he studied industrial design and fine art. Investigating sound, Joly's installations and performances have a recurring theme of the exploration of possible interactions between material and sound, setting up bewildering orchestrations for uncommon ways of hearing. In the last decade he has received several grants and prizes including the Prix de la Fondation Irène Reymond in 2010, the Lauréat du concours artistique pour l'aménagement permanent du parc des Ouches à Genève in 2006, and a scholarship of the Fondation Simon I. Patino, résidence à la Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris in 2006. [ALEXANDREJOLY.NET](#)



**1 FISH SKIN (2010)**  
Nails, magnets, piezo speakers,  
copper wire, mp3 player, piano  
strings  
**2 SACRED PEANUTS (2010)**  
Glass bell, peanuts, moss, mp3  
player



**1 THE ROCKET FOR THE  
REST OF US (2010)**  
16:9 HD video loop with stereo  
sound, duration 20'



**1 KINETIC SPEAKERS (2007)**  
Kinetic speakers, motor drive,  
amplifier, audio interface

SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE

EXHIBITION DATES:  
SEPTEMBER 22–NOVEMBER 12, 2011

OPENING RECEPTION:  
SEPTEMBER 21, 2011, 5:30–7:30 PM

CURATED BY:  
IRENE HEDIGER IN COLLABORATION WITH  
HOU HANRU AND MARY ELLYN JOHNSON

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
[WWW.SFAI.EDU](http://WWW.SFAI.EDU) / [WALTERMCBEAN.COM](http://WALTERMCBEAN.COM)

# Think Art— Act Science

**Walter and McBean Galleries**  
San Francisco Art Institute  
800 Chestnut Street  
San Francisco CA 94133

**Gallery Hours:**  
Tues–Sat: 11 am–6 pm  
415.745.4563  
[www.waltermcbean.com](http://www.waltermcbean.com)  
[www.sfai.edu](http://www.sfai.edu)

**sfai**  
san francisco. art. institute.  
since 1871.

The international exhibition *Think Art—Act Science* brings together a selection of works and collaborative processes from artists who have engaged in a long-term creative dialogue with scientists. During an immersive nine-month residency in a scientific research institute as part of the Swiss artists-in-labs program (Zurich University of the Arts/ZHdK), they have all been exposed to specific discourses within the scientific community and gained deep insights into the methodologies and processes of scientific research. The institutes' research areas range from biology and biodiversity to cognitive neuroscience and psychology to nanotechnology, robotics, artificial intelligence, and physics—some are among the leading research facilities in their field.

The Swiss artists-in-labs program provides a framework for artists to investigate relations among contemporary art practice, science, and society. Many artists currently explore the scientific, technological, and cultural developments of the 21st century and engage in critical and ethical debates. The intention of the Swiss artists-in-labs program is to raise awareness of the contributions both artists and scientists can make to the larger challenges of our time, and to encourage the development of the primary creative forces shared by both disciplines: the quest for interpretations of nature, matter, and human desire, as well as the ambition to comprehend, explore, reveal, sustain, create, and build. Through these common goals, each side can reflect upon its own ways of working and seek new potential in a mutuality of receptiveness. The program is a collaboration between the ZHdK Zurich University of the Arts, Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts (ICS), and the Federal Office of Culture (FOC).

*Think Art—Act Science* enables a broader public to comprehend the exchange of perspectives and ideas by making scientific issues accessible through artistic interpretations. The exhibition is arranged around three

themes addressed by the artistic investigations: ecology and environment, spatial awareness and emotions, and explorations of new technologies. The works challenge the visitor to think about issues such as quantum physics, body consciousness, human/machine interaction, and nanotechnology from an aesthetic and individually generated perspective in order to reflect on the role of technological progress in our globalized information societies.

From a total of 24 artists who have participated in the Swiss artists-in-labs program since 2007, eight are featured in San Francisco. Since two of these artists took part in a Sino-Swiss residency exchange in 2009 between Switzerland and China, the exhibition not only builds a bridge between different cultures of knowledge but moreover points towards promising exchanges between art and science on a global scale.

Each work in the exhibition is accompanied by a short documentary and extracts taken from interviews with both artists and scientists. The videos are an integral part of the exhibition, mediating the reflective and emotional experience of both scientists and artists, as well as the development of the artwork itself.

For the duration of the exhibition, participative and engaging programming such as workshops (student and public), conferences, performances, and lectures, including events presented in partnership with the Bay Area Science Festival, will extend the exhibition and strive to implement context-based exchanges within the local community.

Visit [www.sfai.edu/events](http://www.sfai.edu/events) for the schedule.

Exhibition scenography by Fontana Hunziker Design Works

SFAI's exhibitions and public programs are made possible in part by the Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. Think Art—Act Science is generously supported by swissnex San Francisco and the Swiss Arts Council, Pro Helvetia and is a project of the U.S.-wide program ThinkSwiss—Brainstorm the Future.



hdk  
Zürcher Hochschule der Künste  
Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts  
swiss arts council  
prohelvetia



swissnex  
san francisco

Switzerland.