

# EXHIBITION GUIDE

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# *The* ARTWORK *as a* LIVING SYSTEM



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**TITLE:** The Artwork as a Living System

**ARTISTS:** Christa Sommerer & Laurent Mignonneau

**PLACE:** Azkuna Zentroa - Alhóndiga Bilbao (Exhibition Hall)

**DATE:** 7 February - 26 May 2024

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## ARTISTS

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Laurent Mignonneau and Christa Sommerer are artists and researchers.

They work together and have been among the first to make what is known as **interactive art**.

Their creations combine the natural sciences, technology and art.

**Interactive:** It allows the exchange of information between a person and a computer, as if they were talking.

## Education

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Mignonneau studied video art in France.

Sommerer studied botany, anthropology and sculpture in Vienna.

They have been artists-in-residence in various centers in the United States and Japan, such as the MIT CAVS, the National Center for Supercomputing Applications and the NTT-Intercommunication Center.

## Academia

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They were professors at IAMAS in Japan, the Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Science, for 10 years.

They are professors at the University of Art and Design in Linz, Austria. In 2004 they created a new department at this university, the Interface Cultures Department.

## Awards

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Throughout their careers as artists they have created some 50 interactive works of art. These works have been shown at 370 exhibitions in countries all over the world.

They have received many awards for their work:

- 2021: Austrian State Art Prize  
in the category of Media Art (Austria)
- 2016: ARCO BEEP Award (Madrid)
- 2012: Wu Guanzhong Award for Innovation  
in Art and Science 2012 (China)
- 1994: Golden Nica Prix Ars Electronica Award

## Art

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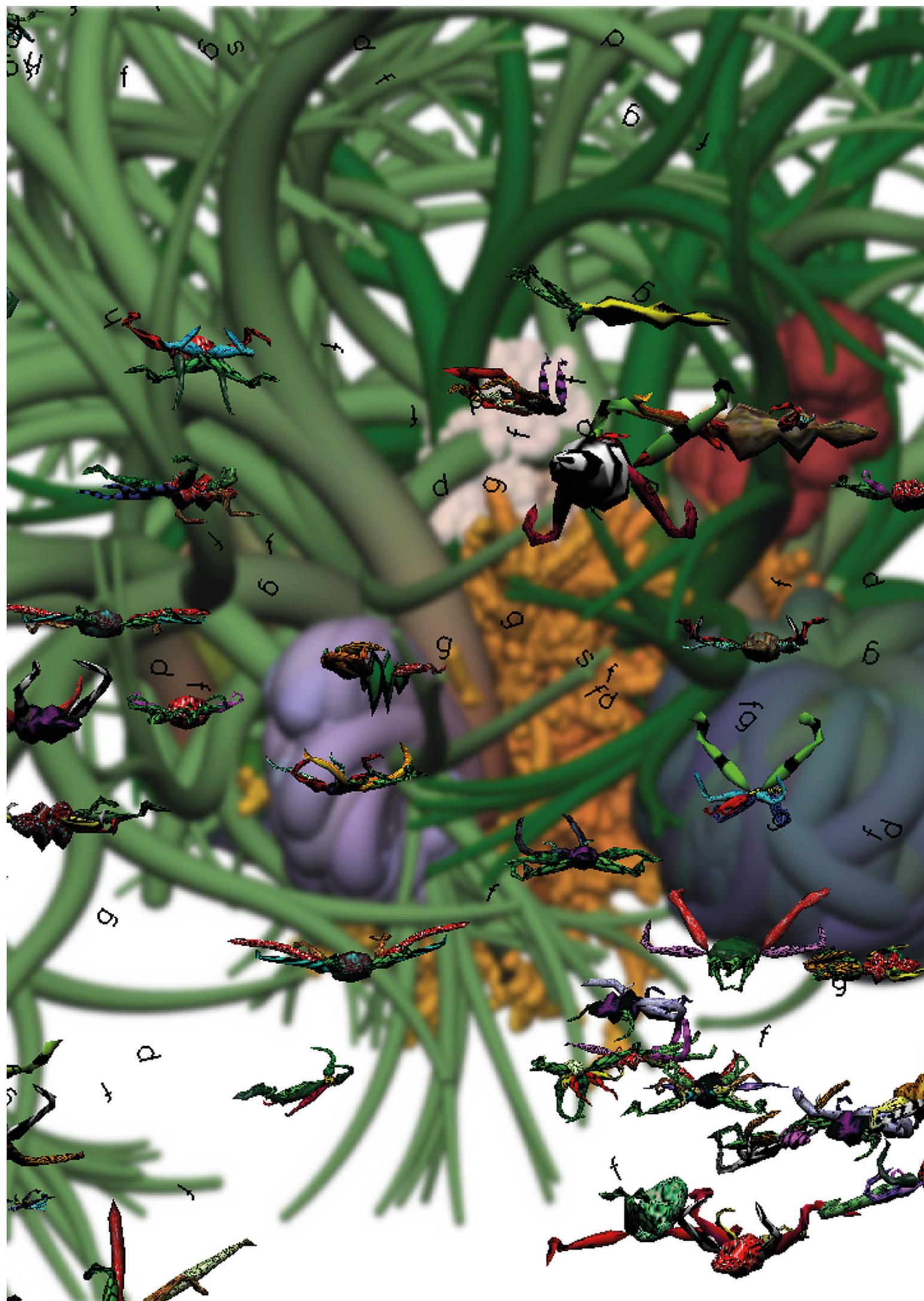
The creations of Sommerer and Mignonneau are considered highly relevant in the history of art.

Their interactive works of art are greatly innovative, that means, novel and rarely seen until now.

When designing the **interfaces** of their creations, they take into account aspects related to the world of science.

For this reason their works are known as “The Art of The Interface”.

**Interface:** Used in computing to denote something that connects two systems, programmes or devices to communicate and exchange information. For example, a computer screen, a mouse, etc.



## THE EXHIBITION: Introduction

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The title of this exhibition is

“The Artwork as a Living System”.

It is coming to Azkuna Zentroa

after stops at other art centers in Germany,

Belgium and Austria.

The exhibition reflects a blend of the long-standing themes

of art and nature with the latest techniques

related to the **virtual world**

and interaction with the public.

The exhibition is the culmination of 30 years

of research by these two artists.

During this time, they have developed

artificial life systems and interfaces

to create spaces where two worlds

can interact: the artificially created visual world

and the realm of people’s natural senses.

The central theme of the works

of Sommerer and Mignonneau are on display

in this exhibition: works of art

are alive and function as living systems,

because life can be seen

from many points of view.

**Virtual world:** A computer-simulated space, and therefore not real, where people can interact with other people, objects, places, etc.

For them, art is not a product  
of the artist's personal creation  
but something that is open  
to change when someone interacts  
with it.

## **What will you see at the exhibition?**

The exhibition has 16 art installations.

Not only can people see them  
but they can also interact with them.

The journey through the exhibition  
takes us from the nineties up to the present day,  
in terms of the use and development of technology.

You will see installations from 30 years ago  
when computers were not used  
nearly as much as they are today;  
and others that show how technology  
is advancing and having an impact  
on the economy and society.

The Internet, mobile technology and  
artificial intelligence is now available.

Most of the installations:

- **Are immersive.** They encourage the public  
to participate and experiment with them.  
People can interact with the work in a digital  
space where plants, water and lighting  
can change and create new spaces.

- **Create a sensation.** Visitors experience their own personal relationship with nature and become aware that every decision a person makes can lead to changes in the natural ecosystem.
- **Are classics of “media art”.**  
Known as new media art.
- **Introduce people** to new and complex fields of technology and science such as quantum physics, molecular genetics, nanoscience and artificial life.

