

# Keynotes

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Three personalities were invited to give their views on current developments in the fields of creation, technologies and sciences, on the role of these in society, and to present their most recent work.

## Ionat Zurr (artist-researcher, Symbiotica, Australie) – Symbiosis and the fallacy of a nature-free existence.

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In times of ecological emergency, solutionist fantasies of nature-free human existence promise salvation and repair. The innovative paradigm offers “products” such as lab-grown (animal free) meat and artificial automated surrogates to replace reproductive biological bodies.

These so-called innovations require special artificial environments to host, nurture and culturally articulate this “new” nature-free, decontextualized and colonised life. The entanglement of life with its surrogate environment/apparatus, echoing human relationships with living and semi-living agents; when control and care are employed to counter resistance.

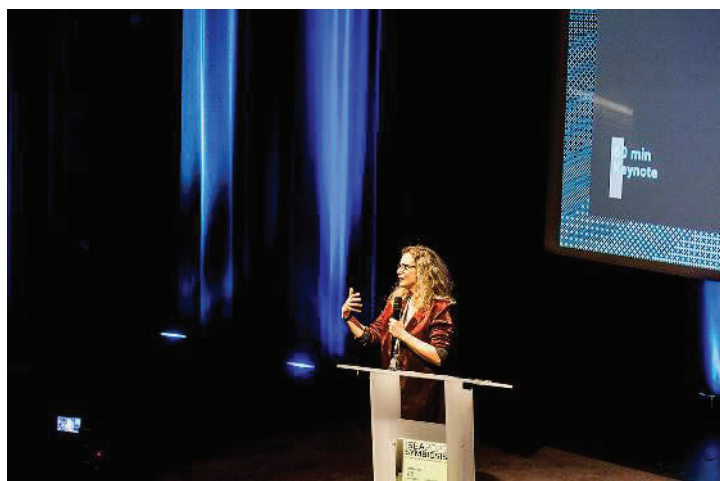
Artists, scientists, designers and engineers all play their part in this transformation and its effects on human relations with life and the environment. This creates a range of ontological conundrums and fantastical expectations as to what technology can provide and to whom. Using examples of artistic research that deal with emerging technologies and new knowledge, Ionat Zurr narrated artists’ symbiotic and parasitic relationships with such post nature.

This talk was framed by the imminent closure of SymbioticA, the first artistic research laboratory based in a life sciences department. SymbioticA began as a symbiotic act, embodied in an academic institution, to enable critical, yet mutualistic, relations among artists and scientists. Many of SymbioticA’s alumni have continued to establish their own laboratories and artistic practice in other academic institutions around the world, leading to the growth of the field of Biological Arts.

SymbioticA is now being treated as a parasite by a changed host body. Is this a ‘natural’ survivalist rejection against a foreign body or can we detect symptoms of an autoimmune disorder?

**Biography:** Dr Ionat Zurr is an artist-researcher. She is the Chair of the Fine Arts Discipline at the School of Design & SymbioticA academic coordinator at the University of Western Australia. Together with Oron Catts she established the Tissue, Culture & Art Project in 1996 and their co-authored book *Tissues, Cultures, Art*, published by Palgrave MacMillan this year. Her collaborative work was exhibited by Pompidou Centre, MoMA NY, Mori Art Museum, Ars Electronica, National Art Museum

of China and more. These ideas and projects reach beyond the confines of art and the work is often cited as inspiration to diverse areas such as new materials, textiles, design, architecture, ethics, fiction, and food.



Ionat Zurr © Nadia Rabhi

Viktor Ruban  
(Choreographer, independent culture diplomat,  
Ukraine) –  
Coping potential of creativity and art-practices  
in times of war: culture diplomacy, fundraising,  
curatorship and art-therapy force project.

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If symbiosis is an essential notion, it is even more so in today's geopolitical context. War, terror and massive extinction of people in Ukraine by Russia is a global challenge shaping our global future at this very moment. In this situation performing artists in Ukraine keep on strong commitment to help in any possible way. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion in 2022, the situation is forcing us to search for not only new ways of dealing with challenges creatively but to discover new ways of implementing our art practices and skills to completely new levels and spheres, such as resistance in information wars, culture ecology maintenance, new forms of fundraising and help with physical and psycho-emotional recovery — same as military and civilians —.

During his session Viktor Ruban, shared information about initiatives that he initiated or is involved in, such as the European Culture Parliament, and culture diplomacy challenges that he faces on different international events; Ukrainian emergency performing arts fund and funding challenges for the independent performing arts scene in Ukraine; international solidarity events and visibility of Ukrainian actual art scene—why it is important; actual creations in Ukraine and trends seen through the actual national theater prize season; the development of the project for training “psychological first aid instructors for military from the front line” and Art therapy force project— a range of activities implementing art-practices and working with creativity for psycho-emotional health recovery, coping with stress and panic attacks as well as preventing self-destructive behaviors and PTSD for diverse groups of people.