

# Astro Morphs *Ctrl + H* 27 March — 9 May 2021

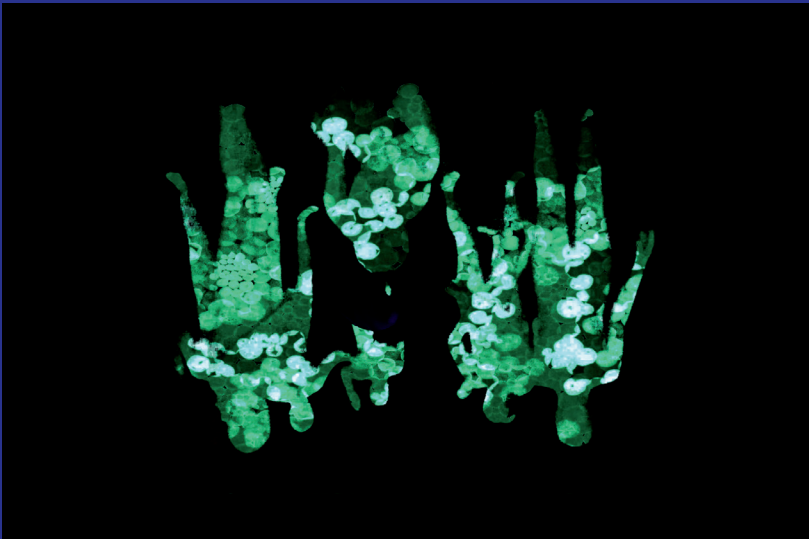
The artists wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of Goolugatup Heathcote, the Beeliar people of the Noongar Nation. The artists also wish to thank the Sharkey and Dunn Family, Amanda Nella at Gumber Studios, Lyle Branson, Dalkeith Primary School, Joseph Landro at Joe's Printing and Dr Megan Lloyd. The development and realisation of this work has been supported by the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts and Goolugatup Heathcote studio programs.

**A welcome from Astro Morphs**  
From their inception Yow and Sox have ventured across the galaxy in search of a planet where they could achieve mutualism with the local ecology. Newly hatched from an alien rockpool, as polymorphic neonates, they must cross the environment with only their preference for their surroundings to guide them to a new home. Pacifists with a hunger for survival are they replacing a vacancy in the ecology or remembering an origin? Were their memories wiped? Inspired by aspects of Petit's 1967 *Paradise Lost*, space opera, sci-fi, biology, microbiology and the heroic narrative of a turtle making its way to the sea and home again, we welcome you to enjoy the show.

- Astro Morphs



Astro Morphs, Still from *Ctrl + H*, 2020—21, single channel video, dimensions variable.



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GOOLUGATUP  
HEATHCOTE



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Goolugatup Heathcote acknowledge the Bibbulmun people as Traditional Owners and pay respect to the Whadjuk people, and Elders past, present, future.



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### Forced harmony

We all have a city living inside; populations of microbes reside in our intestines. They live symbiotically, competing, helping others, living together in forced harmony. Their life is instinctive, and they align to where existence makes the most sense – where their preferred food source is the most abundant and away from competitors and growth restrictors – seeking a microbial utopia in an evolving landscape.

Microbes are defined by need. An individual can't overconsume, but they will increase in number in response to excess within the system, a greedy, needy mass. One population in excess can alter the landscape irreparably in microbial timescale. Increasing numbers will inevitably exhaust nutrients and the population will plummet, until only a few – those most suited to the neoteric environment – will establish a niche and start again.

Stability is best, every species living in harmony (best for them, and best for us too, cue those rumbling, gaseous insides). Oxygen acceptors protecting those for whom oxygen is poison, one species consuming the waste from another, producing fodder for others. These complex communities are living in flux, an undulating mass, a wild but controlled dance.

Lives can be measured in minutes, in hours, in days.

### Boom and bust.

Eat too much fried food: some microbe that loves a lipid will rejoice. Binge on figs: all of that fibre and slightly alcoholic sugar will make some populations move along more rapidly.

But what if, lurking in the background, one species exists in harmony in a complex population, but which, feeling its way, finding its nutrient in excess starts to reproduce, instinctive, uncontrolled growth. Some will produce toxins, potent chemicals that damage the very bedrock of the population, the intestinal cells – and there goes the environment – down the toilet!

### How can you fix an environment when everything is wrong?

You can add some microbial friends and hope that they stick around long enough to restart the collective, repairing the bedrock, grasping for stability, helping those around them, overwhelming the foe. No anthropomorphism – there is no feeling, no intent, no mindful domination, no submission, no planning; just movement, digestion and excretion, life and death, give and take, symbiosis, perfect use of resources.

### Can we learn from microbes? I think so.

Boom too much and eventually there will be a bust. Stability comes from the appropriate use of resources – all resources, including those altered as a result of prior use by someone else. Unencumbered greed can alter the bedrock of the population and risk all members of the community. Surely there's a lesson here.

– Dr Megan Lloyd