William Myers remarks, Border Sessions festival, 2019

**Sex shells: Gender fluidity in the modern age**

*Jon Ho*

_In collaboration with Joris Koene (Department of Ecological Science (DES), VU Amsterdam)_

This project takes on a topic with obvious political dimensions, and makes it a celebration of beautiful forms, variety, and discovery. In the hands of Jon and Joris, we see that snail sex is no laughing matter, but instead a ladder to an enlightened view of contemporary hermaphroditism. Their intention to create a modern temple, as they put it, and to invite viewers to see the potential of fluidity in themselves, is a resonate poetic gesture. The jury was impressed by the open-mindedness and cooperative spirit of the team as well as the thoughtful way the proposal drew links between the intended experience of the viewer and traditions that reach back to Greek and Roman antiquity. Indeed, they conjure a spirit of eternalness by undermining the artificial taboos civilization has acquired like a bad infection, and their project recalls the words of Alfred Kinesy published in 1948: “the only unnatural sex act is the one you can’t perform.”

**COATING EXTRAHUNTUR A FUNGI**

*Emma van der Leest and Aneta Schaap-Oziemlak*

_In collaboration with Paul Verweij and Sybren de Hoog (Center of Expertise in Mycology, Radboud UMC/Canisius Wilhelmina ziekenhuis)_

This project seeks to capitalize on the vast potential of microbe-produced leather material, to overcome its need for synthetic coating and deliver a 100% natural solution. This may, at last, lift a much lauded biodesign creation out of the purgatory of prototype-hood. The jury was impressed by the improbability of achieving such a feat with a human pathogenic fungi, which they intend to do, introducing a pleasing duality, that something legitimately feared can in fact help humankind, by making fashion more ecologically sound. There is also palpable enthusiasm and commitment, equal across all members of the team, that was clear during their presentation. Their tenacity and vision, we find, are reason enough to hope that the world we transmit to future generations may in fact be better than that which we have inherited.

**CMD: Experiments in Bio-Algorithmic-Politics**

*Michael Sedbon*

_In collaboration with Raoul Frese (Biophysics of Photosynthesis & Hybrid Forms, Department of Physics and Astronomy, VU University Amsterdam)_

This philosophically-rich project stages a metaphor for the modern machinations of late-stage capitalism in which we all find ourselves ensnared. The jury recognizes how the team deftly condensed far-flung concepts: from oscillations between competitive and cooperative behaviors to algorithmic adaptation and mechanization of resource distribution. The project challenges and rewards in equal measure, and the jury was particular impressed with the application’s solid intellectual grounding and the track record of the artist who has effectively translated macro phenomena into engaging installation.