



THE INTERPLAY OF WATER,  
ART, SCIENCE AND INDIGENOUS  
KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

## OPEN CALL FOR ARTISTS

Application process is now open for a residency in

- BRAZIL
- SOUTH AFRICA
- SWITZERLAND

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: 14th July 2024**

## **Curatorial Statement**

Water is a key element for life, but in some ways also a threat.

Water has defined the human experience for millennia and is an important element in religions, rituals, stories, artistic and scientific contexts.

Water is thus at the core of what this project aims for: to create a common space for transcultural and transdisciplinary collaboration through explorative processes, exchange, and reflection.

By bringing together participants from South Africa, Brazil, and Switzerland at the intersection of art, science, and indigenous knowledge systems, we respect each other's situatedness and diverse cultural perspectives with a focus on decolonial practices.

The Fluid Boundaries Project residencies aim to honor and critically examine and engage with the role that water plays in different disciplinary practices and beyond. By bringing together participants from the arts and sciences, and from different types of knowing and knowledge production, we hope to deepen ongoing examinations of questions on the ecological crisis, the separation of human and non-human life, the political and societal legacy and continuities of colonialism, as well as the aesthetic potentials of water - be it solid or fluid, abundant, scarce or absent.

Just like the nature of water that is to be able to take all kinds of different forms - our commitment to transdisciplinary collaboration asks for receptiveness and willingness to change viewpoints and (rigid) approaches to enrich, shape and foster dialogue to allow transformative potentials.

We are indigenous/ancient knowledge convenors, scientists, and curators from South Africa, Brazil and Switzerland. To complement our group, we are looking for artists ready to engage and join the conversation with their expertise and perspective.

Driven by curiosity, we are looking forward to engaging with you, the human and the non-human, and to vivid discussions and ideas that will materialize through our collaborative work.

## **Fluid Boundaries - Who We Are**

### Curatorial Board:

- Artists-in-labs program (AIL) at the Zurich University of the Arts, Switzerland
- Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre (VIAD) at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa
- AiRSA Artist in Residence South Africa, Tankwa Artscape Residency
- Portas Vilaseca Galeria, Brazil

### Indigenous Knowledge Conveners:

- Dr. George Mahashe, South Africa
- Dr. Kássia Borges, Brazil

### Scientific Partner Institutions:

- Swiss Federal Institute for Aquatic Research (Eawag), ETH domain, Switzerland
- University of the Western Cape, South Africa
- University of Johannesburg, South Africa
- Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Brazil

### Third Space Residency Partners:

- Masi Lugano
- IBSA Foundation



swiss arts council

Fluid Boundaries is supported by  
the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia

**prohelvetia**

The **Fluid Boundaries International Residency Program** is now accepting applications for three residencies, of which the first part will take place from March-May 2025. In autumn 2025, the second part of the residency (Third Space Residency) will be taking place with all participants in the Southern Part of Switzerland.

## **1. General Conditions**

### **Brazil Residency**

- Eligible are artists with Brazilian citizenship who are resident in Brazil or artists with non-Brazilian citizenship living in Brazil for two years or more
- The artist commits to be present during both residency periods in 2025 in Brazil and in Switzerland
- During the Brazil Residency, the artist will be working full time at the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (FIOCRUZ), Environment, Diversity and Health Research Group, Rio de Janeiro, exchanging with the researchers daily as well as participating in field trips
- Duration of the Brazil Residency: three months from March to May 2025
- Duration of the Third Space Residency: Two weeks of workshops and collaborative work with the other artists, the curators, scientists and indigenous knowledge conveners in Autumn 2025 in Lugano, Switzerland
- Expenses for travel for both the Brazil Residency (1 roundtrip + local travel) and the Third Space Residency in Switzerland (1 roundtrip + local travel) will be covered
- Accommodation in Brazil (if needed) will be provided
- Accommodation in Switzerland will be provided
- A stipend will be issued monthly during the three months Brazil Residency
- A stipend also covers the artists' attendance in a series of online meetings and the two-weeks Third Space Residency in Lugano, Switzerland. It will be issued after the Third Space Residency has ended.

## **2. Background information on the residencies**

About the Brazil, South Africa and Switzerland residencies:

- The residencies will take place from March to May 2025 simultaneously in the three partner regions
- The residencies' unique settings open up the possibility for a transdisciplinary dialogue that is brought about by juxtaposing concepts and procedures, cultural knowledge and backgrounds
- The residencies offer the artists significant time and space to develop a project idea and to critically reflect as well as to explore a range of scientific topics, methods and technologies
- During the residencies the artists will be immersed in the research and developing their project alongside scientists of the respective research group
- There will be a coordinator at each research group available to the artist for more general issues
- Mentoring will be provided by the indigenous knowledge conveners and curator before, during and after the residencies, to facilitate, support and reflect the artists' and scientists' process.

### **About the Third Space Residency**

- In October 2025, the three artists, indigenous knowledge conveners, curators and representatives of the scientific research groups will come together in Lugano, Switzerland for a two weeks long Third Space Residency
- This format aims to create a common "Third Space" environment for sharing, developing and prototyping across disciplinary and cultural backgrounds
- The Third Space Residency will focus on interfacing, interacting and possible artistic outcomes from the process. The output(s) forms and materials are open and might include notes, sketches, rapid-prototypes, models, archives etc.
- Two field trips in the region are planned
- Travel expenses (roundtrip) are covered
- Accommodation is provided
- A per diem will be issued to each participant

### 3. What we offer and what we expect

#### The Residencies - What we offer

- A workplace in the lab at the scientific institution in the respective partner region
- An immersive, intensive collaboration and exchange with scientists for a 3-months period
- Access to the facilities, infrastructure and technological equipment of the research group(s)
- Participation in meetings, conferences, field research, etc. (if offered during the residency period)
- Documentation of the residency
- Different outreach formats and possibilities to engage within science community and with a diverse public
- Mentoring and support by curators and indigenous knowledge conveners

#### The Residencies - What we expect from you

- A meaningful work relationship with the science lab based along the lines outlined of the submitted project proposal
- An immersion into the research of the science lab and a time spent fully committed to both residencies
- A written report at the end of the residency and documentation (photos, sketches, notes) and a prototype resp. a project plan to further develop the project. The written report illustrates and reflects the processes and results of the residency.

### 4. Your application - What we need

The application have to be written in English

The applicants are required to submit a full proposal.

The proposal should include the following documents and should be sent all in one PDF-file (max. 8 MB). Incomplete proposals will not be reviewed.

- CV (including education and - if applicable - exhibitions, prizes, publications, residencies, etc.)
- Application Form (stating your motivation, your field of interest in relation to the field of research as well as your intention during the residency)
- Portfolio (selection of artworks. Videos should be accessible through online links (vimeo.com, youtube.com etc.) included in your portfolio.

## 5. Evaluation Criteria for the Curatorial Board

- The curatorial board allocates the available residency slots. The board takes the following criteria into account when making its decision:
- Innovative and original conceptual ideas relating and engaging with the research topics and the overarching topic of different knowledge systems
- The interest in the transdisciplinary dialogue with the scientists, indigenous knowledge conveners, curators and artists
- The ability to communicate creative ideas, processes and methodologies
- A realistic project scheme relating to the complexity of the research and the length of the residencies
- The potential to develop the project further in the future and to exhibit or publish the result.

## **Fronteiras fluidas**

Água é vida, é um ser sagrado. Nosso corpo é feito de água, sem água ninguém vive. É preciso pensar a memória da água ligada as histórias de vidas. Quais as formas de ver e sentir a água.

Como capturar a água tão fluida. Pensar as Concepções plásticas, conceituais e ambientais é de grande importância, vamos pensar a plasticidade, mas também a sustentabilidade desse uso. É necessário construir diálogos entre arte e preservação desse recurso, pensar a mercantilização e sobre quem tem acesso a essa água.

A Água é um ser da natureza. Ela é um ser vivo como a terra. Para o mito de origem do povo Karajá (Iny) nós saímos de dentro de um buraco dentro do rio Araguaia. Saímos da água para enfeitar as margens do Araguaia essa é nossa missão.

**Texto de Dra. Kássia Borges, Artista e professora  
em IARTES - UFU Universidade Federal de Uberlândia**



**Abstract of “Environment, Diversity and Health”  
Research Group from Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz)**

**Overview/introduction**

The “Environment, Diversity, and Health” research group, led by Dr. Paulo Cesar Basta, operates within the National School of Public Health, situated on the campus of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Fiocruz, a renowned teaching and research institution linked to the Brazilian Ministry of Health, is dedicated to generating, disseminating, and sharing knowledge and technologies to bolster the Unified Health System (SUS) and enhance the health and quality of life of the Brazilian population, thereby reducing social inequalities and fostering innovation. Central to Fiocruz’s mission are the principles of health rights and broad citizenship.

Our research group specializes in conducting teaching, research, and technical cooperation activities in the field of public health, with a focus on aspects related to health, rights, and the promotion of the cultural heritage of Brazil’s indigenous peoples. Our endeavors aim to expand understanding of the impacts of environmental changes, including climate change, global warming, atmospheric pollution, and heavy metal contamination, on human health. We employ interdisciplinary approaches, with particular attention to traditional populations from the Brazilian Amazon and Central Highlands.

**Most important/relevant research topics (in regard to water)**

Given the thematic focus of our research group, water holds a pivotal position in our inquiries. Serving as a vital resource for sustenance, health, and vitality, water is indispensable to the livelihoods of numerous traditional communities inhabiting the Amazon region. However, the encroachment of economic expansion fronts into the territories of indigenous peoples has led to a diminishing availability of clean water sources. Deforestation, land encroachment, wildfires, the proliferation of agribusiness activities coupled with indiscriminate pesticide use, and the expansion of illegal gold mining utilizing mercury have all contributed to the contamination of natural water sources, posing escalating challenges to local communities.

Confronted with these looming threats and in response to appeals from associations representing indigenous populations, our research group has embarked on investigations aimed at elucidating the adverse impacts stemming from the presence of intruders in traditional territories and the indiscriminate use of mercury in gold mining, both on communities and the local environment.

Moreover, our endeavors encompass assessments of water quality utilized for human consumption within communities, taking into account the presence of chemical and biological contaminants. Upon detecting elements compromising water potability, our group collaborates with communities to devise alternative water supply systems rooted in social technologies.

A noteworthy aspect of our methodology entails fostering close dialogues with local leaders and honoring traditional knowledge systems, along with considerations of the worldview intrinsic to indigenous peoples and their potential harmonization with academic expertise. This collaborative approach seeks to unearth solutions to identified challenges by harnessing the synergies between traditional wisdom and scholarly knowledge.

Statement why there is an interest to work/exchange with an artist, including indigenous knowledge and the transcultural dimension and what the research group offers and hopes for.

In addition to scientific research projects, we engage in an intercultural initiative named "Science and Poetry," through which we conduct artistic residencies and exchanges. These activities result in the production of communication pieces such as theme songs, animations, video clips, and cultural performances. We also provide support for various cultural expressions of indigenous peoples in Brazil.

Our team comprises 19 researchers and 5 students from diverse fields of expertise, including medicine, nursing, biology, psychology, nutrition, geography, engineering, and music, among others. Our research activities encompass literature reviews, fieldwork in indigenous villages across the Brazilian Amazon and Central Highlands, individual interviews, and collection of human biological samples (e.g., blood, hair, oral mucosa cells) and environmental samples (e.g., water, sediments, fish). Subsequent analyses of these samples are conducted in research laboratories at partner institutions. We also perform statistical analyses of collected data, participate in seminars and conferences, launch studies and communication pieces, engage in interviews with national and international media outlets, and disseminate research findings to the studied communities.

Our field research primarily focuses on the states of Amazonas, Pará, Rondônia, and Roraima in the Amazon region, as well as Mato Grosso do Sul in the Central Highlands. Finally, our participation in the transdisciplinary, decolonial collaboration involving artistic and scientific practitioners from South Africa, Brazil, and Switzerland is driven by our aspiration to exchange knowledge with researchers, activists, and traditional leaders from diverse nations and people. Our aim is to forge cooperative bonds aimed at bolstering the advocacy for water conservation and fostering a more equitable and sustainable global community.

Through this collaborative endeavor, we seek to transcend geographical boundaries and cultural divides, uniting in a common cause to safeguard water resources and promote environmental justice. By sharing insights, expertise, and experiences, we aspire to cultivate mutual understanding and solidarity among participants, thereby fortifying our collective efforts in advocating for the protection of water and the pursuit of a fairer, more sustainable world.

In embracing a transdisciplinary and decolonial approach, we acknowledge the multifaceted nature of the challenges facing water conservation and recognize the importance of integrating diverse perspectives, knowledge systems, and methodologies. By harnessing the collective wisdom and creativity of artistic and scientific practitioners, we aspire to catalyze transformative change and advance towards a future where water security is upheld, and social and environmental justice prevail.

## **Bibliography/Links**

Achatz RW, de Vasconcellos ACS, Pereira L, Viana PVS, Basta PC. Impacts of the Goldmining and Chronic Methylmercury Exposure on the Good-Living and Mental Health of Mundurucu Native Communities in the Amazon Basin. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2021 Aug 26;18(17):8994. doi: 10.3390/ijerph18178994

Basta PC, de Vasconcellos ACS, Hallwass G, Yokota D, Pinto DODR, de Aguiar DS, de Souza CC, Oliveira-da-Costa M. Risk Assessment of Mercury-Contaminated Fish Consumption in the Brazilian Amazon: An Ecological Study. *Toxics*. 2023 Sep 21;11(9):800. doi: 10.3390/toxics11090800

Basta PC. Gold mining in the Amazon: the origin of the Yanomami health crisis. *Cad Saude Publica*. 2023 Dec 22;39(12):e00111823. doi: 10.1590/0102-311XPT111823

Hacon SS, Oliveira-da-Costa M, Gama CS, Ferreira R, Basta PC, Schramm A, Yokota D. Mercury Exposure through Fish Consumption in Traditional Communities in the Brazilian Northern Amazon. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2020 Jul 22;17(15):5269. doi: 10.3390/ijerph17155269.

Basta PC, Souza IMC, Benites A, Meinberg A. POHÃ NANA: NÃNOMBARETE, TEKoha, GUARANI HA KAIOWÁ ARANDU REHEGUA / PLANTAS MEDICINAIS: FORTALECIMENTO, TERRITÓRIO E MEMÓRIA GUARANI E KAIOWÁ. Instituto de Pesquisa Aggeu Magalhães, Recife, 2020, 352p. Available for download on: <https://portolivre.fiocruz.br/poh%C3%A3-%C3%B1ana-n%C3%A3nombarete-tekoha-guarani-ha-kaiow%C3%A1-arandu-rehegua-plantas-medicinais-fortalecimento>

Youtube channel of Science and Poetry project: <https://www.youtube.com/@cienciaepoesia/videos>.

**Paulo Cesar Basta**

**Physician, Public Health Researcher and Cultural Producer  
Coordinator, Environment, Diversity, and Health Research Group**