

A rack of test tubes is shown in a dark environment. The tubes are arranged in two rows. The top row contains six tubes, and the bottom row contains five tubes. Each tube contains a different specimen, which is illuminated from below by a warm orange light. The top of the tubes is lit with a cool blue light, creating a strong contrast. The specimens include what appear to be human figures in various poses, small plants, and other biological structures. The overall atmosphere is scientific and mysterious.

IN VITRO

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Video installation

Andrea Santini & Francesca Sarah Toich ©2015

A video projection is mapped onto laboratory glassware, where images gain an holographic quality thanks to the combination of liquid, glass curvature and rear-projection film material. The size and position of the rack prompts viewers to draw in near and observe the different processes that seem to take place 'in vitro'.

Humans and plants are seamlessly generated and dissolved 'in vitro' from particles of projected light. Forms of life 'escaping' the art laboratory to remind us of ancient myths perhaps still deeply embedded in current research, be it for ambition, desire for gain or fear of loss and time.

Inspired by themes and issues surrounding the extraordinary achievements in the fields of genetic engineering and genomics, the work raises a number of questions on the reasons and outcomes that drive such research. It also alludes to centuries of alchemy and experimentation, all the way to Paracelsus' notion of the Homunculus and it's subsequent developments in Nineteenth century fiction.

A miniaturised female body condenses in one of the tubes and searches the tiny space around her, attempting to escape and establish communication with the viewer. As new clones are generated in adjacent vials, each shows varying degrees of awareness and agency and each seems to adopt a slightly different behaviour. Following dissolution in-vitro some eventually re-consolidate as plants, and viceversa. An ikebana style composition appears as a symbol of mankind's need to imitate and manipulate nature. An anthropomorphic dead trunk fluctuates in a sort of Danse Macabre with a human miniature in fetal position ...

Modern genetics seem to somehow embrace the idea of the body as an artificial 'home' for what we are, a place that can be planned and fixed at will, as opposed to a 'natural' shell or shelter, subject to the cycles of time and chance. Such a degree of manipulative control over our bodies and organs is extremely fascinating and tempting, yet the long term prospect of being surrounded exclusively by 'instances' of perfectly and similarly designed young and healthy humans has some rather disquieting implications. Possibly very appealing to economic forces as a way to secure a highly predictable consumer base, the idea might not be as universally attractive as it seems if one truly paused to assess its potential impact.

Video preview link: <https://vimeo.com/114225789>

Requirements and technical specifications:

Venue requirements: In Vitro is best presented in a low light environment. The ideal venue would have neutral gallery space walls or elements that can be associated with the laboratory/medical/industrial feeling of the piece.

Technical specifications (all components provided by the artist)

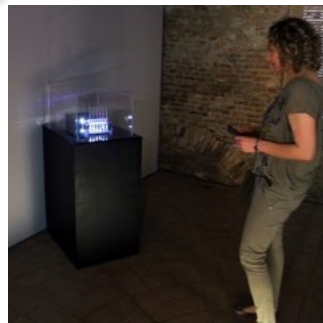
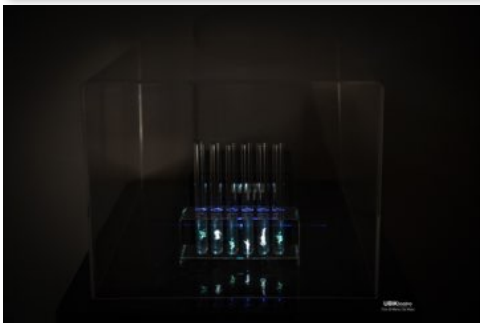
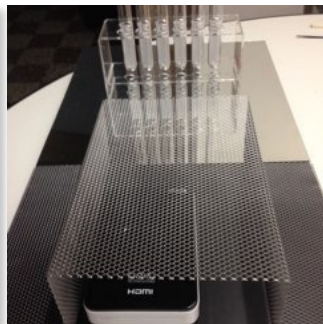
- Power supply requirement: 220V AC, 16A
- Video Projection: rear projection, 1280x720 min res (built in)
- Built in media player with loop feature.

As shown in the pictures below In Vitro is a stand-alone piece that comes with a built in pico-projector, test tubes rack and a dedicated protective plexiglass case for a total height of 30cm. All of this is placed on a glossy black perspex base measuring 50x70cm.

The installation must be mounted at a height of approximately 90cm (to prevent the projector from blinding the viewer) on a plinth or a clean neutral (aluminium, black, white) desk, stand or shelf. The plinth would ideally be black, with a top surface area of 50x70cm and a height of 90cm

Selective lighting can be designed in the installation room to enhance the context (architectural elements, visitor walkway area etc) without interfering with the rear projection.

The installation is self-contained and incorporates a video-projector running a 7' approx video loop.





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Artist Contacts:

andrea.santini@ubikteatro.com
francescosarah@ubikteatro.com

Production:

UBIK associazione culturale
P.I. IT03743200275 / C.F 93031350270
Via Rolle 80, 36100 Vicenza, Italy
tel: +39 3479882954/3478029517
www.ubikteatro.com
info@ubikteatro.com