

Organic art

Maria Medina-Schechter

For over twenty years, Maria has worked with colour, language, text and various textures. Her primary media used to be oils, collage and resin, but today she works only in organic and living materials. Trained in painting and sculpture, she enjoys both equally, and loves to inspire curiosity, joy, and engagement through her work. She became disabled in a car accident in 2018. Because the disability affects sensory capacities in her hands, Maria's works have become more organic and textural, utilizing objects from nature to create forms intended for healing and raising the human spirit.

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<https://www.ecologicalcitizen.net/artworks.php?v=5&n=2>

Maria Medina-Schechter is an organic painter and mycelium explorer. Her fungi journey began when she learned about the work of mycologist Paul Stamets from a talk he gave at Burning Man in 2011 (<https://paulstamets.com/>). She later joined a mycological club in Redwood City, CA, in 2014, but she never thought that in 2021 she would be growing a well out of mycelium – the web-like vegetative structure from which mushrooms flower and grow. After seeing *Fantastic Fungi*, a 2019 American documentary film directed by Louie Schwartzberg (<https://fantasticfungi.com/>), a major takeaway for Maria was the acknowledgement of solid scientific study backing the use of mycelium as a natural resource. Recent studies of mycelium have confirmed its ability to send and receive communication between fungi, trees and other plants, a decentralized form of thinking without the use of a central brain.

As a recent recipient of the Fantastic Fungi Global Summit Scholarship, Voices From The Underground, Maria is sharing her important findings with the public. The scholarship has informed her work in such a way that she cannot imagine her introduction to mycelium without it. Experiencing this living matter was a beautiful experience, and without the scholarship material and its many participating authors (such as artists, scientists and anthropologists Jack Kornfield, Michael Pollan, Rob Garza, Tiokasin Ghosthorse, Paul Stamets, Andrew Weil, Deepak Chopra and Merlin Sheldrake) she wouldn't have grasped the importance of mycelium as deeply. Highlighted in her workshops are the importance, value and artistic opportunities of the fungi kingdom. That is not something you learn simply from holding a bag of

mycelium, but only from working closely with this living material.

Maria is creating a series of mushroom paintings she calls 'recipes'. This work is organic painting with recipes composed of coffee and carrots; green tea or pomegranate; blueberries and mycelium on watercolour paper made entirely from post-consumer waste. The works are experiments in the chemistry of local colour. She shares the science and art to inspire new ideas. Her process includes the use of only organic fruits and vegetables which she boils down into inks. She uses alcohol, and lemon to change the pH, as well as heat and oxidation to bake the work and seal the mycelium that has been grown into the paper.

The primary goal of ecologists is to improve their understanding of life processes, interactions and the biodiversity of organisms; as an eco artist, Maria pursues the same goals to improve our understanding of life processes and create adaptations so we use healthier materials for a healthier world. She believes that eco art is important because it raises awareness of the dangers facing the planet and promotes conservation.



Purple turkeytail

On watercolour paper made from 100% post-consumer waste (8 × 8 inches).
Recipe: blueberries, coffee, carrots, mycelium, clay, mica minerals and salt.



Orange mycena

On watercolour paper made from 100% post consumer waste (12 × 12; 2021).
Recipe: beets, oranges, mica minerals, salt, clay and ink.



Orange mycena (detail)



The Well-Within

Living sculpture, made of mycelium, which took 554 hours to grow (19 × 20 inches).

The Well-Within (detail)

