

Materializing Precarity, Sustainability, and Care: The biodiverse feminist theoretical materialisms of Petra Maitz's Lady Musgrave Reef.

By Alexander I. Stingl

Existing in precarity means that an individual lifeform, an ecosystem, or a social group does have, receive, produce, or is allowed to retain enough to reproduce its fundamental living conditions to continue its existence. Countering the pervasive state of exhaustion and the precarization of both the planetary ecosystem and human social groups that co-exist on it with countless other life-forms, researchers and policy-makers have spent the past decades thinking in terms of “sustainability”, a concept that is meaningful if and only if it is filled with life. Those who can fill it with life are, to evoke a global thinker like Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, people who conduct *practices of care*, who are involved in *matters of care*. Feminist thinkers and artists are often the first to perceive and articulate how *care matters* and articulate the practices of care through which sustainability comes to life.

Petra Maitz, a renowned artist and curator as well as being respected researcher in the field of aesthetics – especially on the intersection of aesthetics and the biological sciences – has gifted the world a project in her *Lady Musgrave Reef* that illustrates from its inception, through its original elaboration to its continued curatorial presence in exhibitions across the world the entangled relations of ecological precarization and human exhaustion, and the generation of sustainability through practices of care.

Lady Musgrave Reef is a both a *careful* deconstruction of precarity and precarization as well as a bountiful celebration of sustainability. It is both representing the fragile construction of coral reefs, yet representing the durability of its mode of production. It reminds us, therein, that sustainability materialized

in and through *matters of care* mean not simply a return to a previous fragile state or the endless continuation of precarity, but instead a continuation of care and the topographical complexity that underly a living system such as a biological or crocheted coral reef, such as the Lady Musgrave Reef.