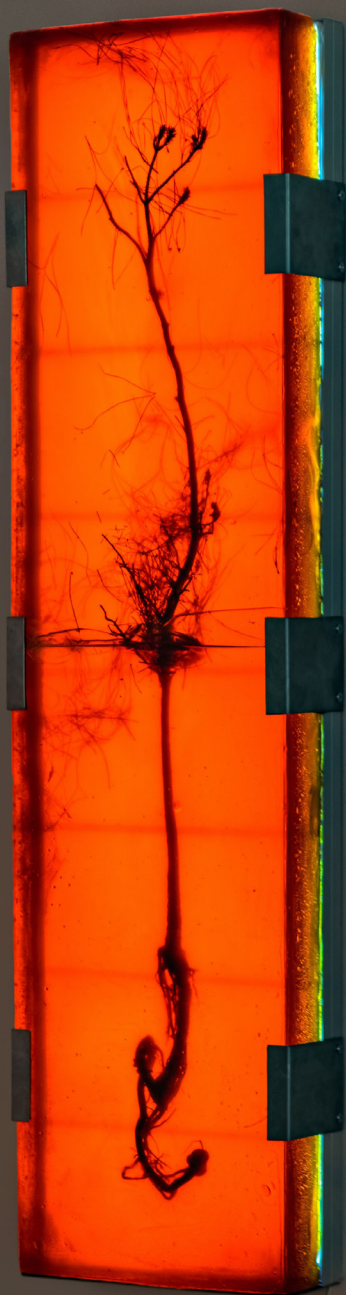


Goldin+Senneby: Flare-Up

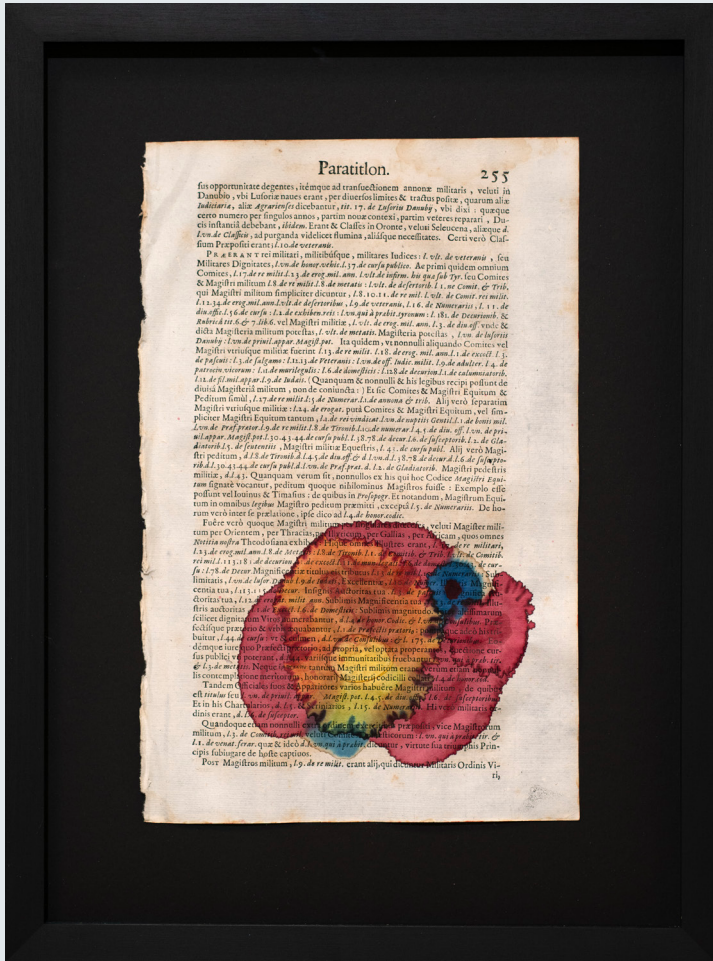
October 24, 2025–March 15, 2026, Hayden Gallery



MIT List Visual
Arts Center

Goldin+Senneby: Flare-Up

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Goldin+Senneby, *Starfish and Citrus Thorn (Immunity of high ranking military)*, 2021. Tissue dye on Roman law (carmine, indigo, and picric acid on *Codex Theodosianus*, 1665 edition), 19 1/8 × 36 3/16 × 1 3/16 in. (48.5 × 36 × 4 cm). Photo: Eric Moretti / CFHILL

Front cover:
Goldin+Senneby, *Crying Pine*, 2025. Devitalized pine (pTerp-UK2 mod) sealed in pine resin with backlight.
Installation view: Accelerator, Stockholm University, 2025. Photo: Jean-Baptiste Béranger

Flare-Up presents recent works by Goldin+Senneby, a Stockholm-based artist duo whose practice investigates illness, ecology, and the metaphors through which they are made intelligible.

For over two decades, they have examined the speculative and narrative logics (or “[il]logics”) of finance and fiction. In recent years, their practice has emphasized considerations of care, ecological interdependence, and the politics of diagnoses, while remaining attentive to what they describe as the “insurgency of life,” or the ungovernable forces inherent to living systems.

The exhibition's title, *Flare-Up*, relates to the experience of living with the autoimmune condition multiple sclerosis (MS). A “flare-up” describes a period of increased inflammation in which symptoms worsen or reappear (another phrase that shares the same language—“put up a flare”—also signals distress or danger). When Jakob Senneby had his first flare-ups, doctors told him he had an “overactive immune system” and that his body was “at war” with itself. This language is not incidental: Metaphors of immunity and protection have long structured the way we imagine health, disease, and risk. Yet, as Goldin+Senneby's work reminds us, “immunity” was originally a political and legal concept that identified privilege or exemption. The shifts of vocabulary between political philosophy and scientific thought underscore that the way we speak of bodies, environments, and economies is inseparable from the ideologies through which they are valued or governed.

Goldin+Senneby extends these lived experiences into other conceptual terrains. Frames—whether legal, medical, or cultural—produce and limit what can be seen, felt, and imagined. Just as “immunity” migrated from law into medicine, the term “landscape” originally described a painting of a landscape before it came to define the terrain itself. Goldin+Senneby's recent work asks what happens when these frames falter: when the immune system turns against itself, when the picture of the landscape becomes more valued than the landscape itself, or when attempts to engineer resilience can generate dangers of their own.

In asking (and framing) these questions, collaboration and fiction remain central to their practice. Their processes of research and fabrication enfold collaborators near and far, ranging from the Somerville-based DIY biolab BosLAB to experts in art conservation and neurodegenerative disease. Writing (both the artists' and others') also plays a role in their practice, and the works in *Flare-Up* are conceived in relation to a collaborative novel by writer Katie Kitamura, with whom Goldin+Senneby has worked since 2018. Goldin+Senneby's practice has inspired Kitamura's fiction, which, in turn, has influenced the duo's artistic output. Fiction, in their works, is not an escape but a method—a way of inhabiting uncertainty, of staging what cannot yet be fully known.

Resin Pond, 2025

One ton of pine resin appears to flood the gallery floor, forming a glassy amber pool that invites and obstructs the visitor's movement. A contemplative site flanked by pine benches, the pond is composed of a material of protection and repair. Resin has been used in myriad ways, ranging from folk medicine and perfumery to shipbuilding and the medium and varnish of painting. Central to the pine tree's immune system, resin is a protective toxin that helps keep away unwanted pests and fungi, as well as healing wounds and injuries. But the scale of *Resin Pond* (2025) evokes an immune response in excess, a flood of healing that becomes harmful. For both people and trees, resin is a substance of utility that harbors the possibility of perilous

excess—and the exhibition's title, *Flare-Up*, is also a reference to resin's flammability.

A previous iteration of the work at Accelerator, Stockholm University, was traversed by a pinewood ramp—both underscoring and temporarily remedying an access barrier in the institution's architecture. Here at the List Center, the pond is positioned near the Hayden Gallery's large window, placing it in relation to the outdoors. What viewers might contemplate, looking toward the pond, however, is not the kind of picturesque vista that landscape paintings have trained our eyes to see but nature's uncontainability—what the artists have called the “insurgency of life.”



Goldin+Senneby, *After the Artist's Garden in Giverny*, 2024. Climate frame with red paint and glue, reconstructed by Fernando Caceres (painting conservator), 35 7/8 × 40 1/8 × 1 1/2 in. (91.1 × 101.9 × 3.8 cm). Photo: Eric Moretti / CFHILL

After Landscape, 2024—ongoing in collaboration with Fernando Caceres (painting conservator)

For their *After Landscape* series (2024—ongoing), the artists worked with painting conservator Fernando Caceres to meticulously recreate climate activists' attacks on famous landscape paintings, the traces of which remain on their protective “climate frames.” Caceres previously encountered some of these incidents in his professional role, where his job was to erase all traces of protest. Here, the marks of dissent—canned soup, paint, and oil-like gunk—become objects of study to be reproduced, preserved, and recast as artworks.

By isolating these protective “climate frames,” the artists expose an unsettling irony: An image of idealized nature is carefully shielded,

while the environment it depicts faces irreversible damage. Unlike the iconoclasm of previous centuries, today's actions do not touch the paintings themselves but stop at the protective glass. The artists interpret these as attacks not on images of nature but on the very frames—physical and cultural—of how we see and construct nature. As they have noted, “landscapes” initially only existed within a frame: The Dutch word *landschap* referred to painted scenes decades before the word was used to refer to the natural world. If frames once gave birth to “landscape,” the frames in *After Landscape* memorialize both the genre and the natural world, their title and voids suggesting the wake of ecological collapse.

Crying Pine, 2025

The work presents a loblolly pine genetically engineered to provide a renewable source of biofuel. This process relies on modifying the tree's immune system so it overproduces resin, the tree's natural defense against pests and pathogens. However, altering the pine in this way poses unpredictable consequences should such an organism be released into the wild; over time, the trees risk drowning themselves in their own protective toxins. And a forest with such energy-dense pines would pose a profound fire hazard—an environment made combustible for the sake of reducing carbon emissions.

In January 2020, Goldin+Senneby persuaded a biolab in Florida to release two of their

genetically modified pine saplings under strict USDA containment protocols. Housed in the home of fiction writer Katie Kitamura and the offices of the art publication *Triple Canopy*, the trees became muses for an unfolding series of artistic and literary collaborations. When the USDA permit expired after five years, the pine was devitalized as prescribed, and the remains were cast into a block of pine resin, transforming this organism into a sculptural monument that coalesces research, narrative, and metaphor. Sealed in a block of resin and illuminated from behind, the tree appears as a quasi-sacred specimen captured in its own defenses, a materialization of its own overactive immune system.

Lego Pedometer Cheating Machines, 2019

This work brings together Goldin+Senneby's longtime explorations of financial capitalism and labor precarity with their recent focus on illness and disability. These realms become intimately entangled when experiences of sickness and impairment are mediated by the profit motives of insurance companies.

Instructions for building these Lego devices were sourced from online patient forums and YouTube. They wiggle in place, activating the pedometers on the attached smartphones and enabling patients to subvert eugenic

requirements for healthful "activity" imposed by insurers. This low-tech, collectively sourced "hack" contrasts with the highly specialized research conducted by the healthcare and biotechnology industries—often for the furtherance of profits, rather than public health. Scattered throughout the exhibition space, these DIY robots might correspond to a dispersed community of patients, united by a strategy of creative masquerade.



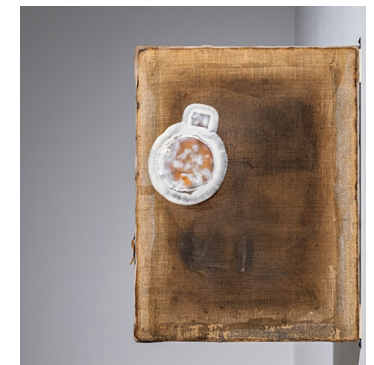
Goldin+Senneby, *Lego Pedometer Cheating Machines*, 2019. Lego Technic, mobile phones with step counters. Photo: Tobias Fischer / Moderna Museet



Goldin+Senneby, *Swallowimage* (verso man in cave with skull, 19th century), 2025; *Swallowimage* (verso man in ecstasy with skull, 17th century), 2025. Photo: Jean-Baptiste Béranger

Swallowimage, 2025

Goldin+Senneby's *Swallowimage* series (2025) reinterprets seventeenth- to nineteenth-century oil paintings depicting scenes of death, disease, or healing by literally turning them inside out: Canvases are reversed and their unpainted backs are inoculated with the parasitic fungus *Isaria sinclairii*. Just as religious images have long functioned as objects of devotion or healing, *Isaria sinclairii* has been used for centuries in traditional Chinese medicine, believed to be a potion for eternal youth. In the 1990s, its active substance was patented by a pharmaceutical company that developed the first pill for treating MS. *Isaria sinclairii* embodies the



Goldin+Senneby, *Swallowimage* (verso man in ecstasy with skull, 17th century), 2025. *Isaria sinclairii* on canvas/oil on canvas, 17 3/8 × 13 in. (44 × 33 cm). Photo: Jean-Baptiste Béranger

tension between harm and protection: It suppresses immune activity in order to thrive as a parasite (and kill its host), but the same property is harnessed medicinally to treat disease. In *Swallowimage*, too, the fungus unsettles images of healing even as it carries the potential for actual healing, making the interplay of harm and care tangible. The series' title is a literal translation of

Schluckbildchen, eighteenth-century German devotional portraits of saints that the faithful would ingest for their supposedly curative effects. Drawing a line to contemporary MS treatments, *Swallowimage* reflects on how even contemporary healing remains mediated by (diagnostic) images and (pious) acts of ingestion.

Flare-Up by Katie Kitamura with Goldin+Senneby, 2023

Since 2018, Goldin+Senneby has collaborated with writer Katie Kitamura to explore experiences of autoimmunity and the metaphor of a "body at war with itself." *Flare-Up* is the working title of the as-yet-unfinished novel Kitamura is writing in collaboration with the artists. The novel comprises two parts set in parallel versions of the same world. One revolves around a mysterious pine tree with a supercharged immune system, while the other tells of a stranger whose sense of self—and biological coherence—comes into question as he seeks a novel treatment for

his illness. Both explore overactive immune systems and the tensions between control and fragility, protection and risk. The first two chapters from each part are published in a takeaway booklet for the exhibition, offering a narrative companion to the artwork's material investigations into immunity, ecology, and bioengineering. The collaboration with Kitamura is commissioned by *Triple Canopy*, an online magazine that works closely with artists and writers to develop experimental works across media.

Starfish and Citrus Thorn, 2021

For two thousand years, "immunity" was exclusively a legal and political concept, rather than the biological and epidemiological meanings we know today. In the winter of 1882, zoologist Élie Metchnikoff pushed a citrus thorn under the skin of a starfish larva and referred to the accumulation of cells around the thorn as an "immune defense." This introduced an entirely new medical theory that understood the body as being at war with its surroundings. In this series of paintings, Goldin+Senneby has used the same tissue

dyes that Metchnikoff used to stain the transparent starfish and applied them to the word *immunitas*, as it was first used in Roman legal texts. The titles of the individual works include a translation of how the concept of immunity is used on that particular page of the *Codex Theodosianus*.

Much of Goldin+Senneby's work seeks to challenge the metaphors of war and defense that have structured our understanding of our bodies for the last century and a half.

"Let's be clear, this is not a presentation against metaphors," the artists caution in an accompanying lecture-performance, also titled *Starfish and Citrus Thorn* (2021). As opposed to eschewing metaphor entirely, their work both probes and proliferates the strange images that mediate our knowledge of ourselves. In the lecture, the artists reference a line from the poet Isidore Ducasse that was later claimed as a slogan of Surrealism: "As beautiful as the chance meeting of a sewing

machine and an umbrella on an operating table." The artists conclude by self-diagnosing a condition of "Surrealism" and suggesting that a better title for their talk might have been: "Beautiful as the Chance Meeting of a Starfish and a Citrus Thorn Under a Microscope." This unlikely encounter of living matter emblemizes the artists' drifting search for what they describe as "postwar metaphors."

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Goldin+Senneby, *After Death and Life*, 2025, Protective glass with black food coloring, reconstructed by Fernando Caceres (painting conservator), 220 x 200 cm. Photo: Eric Moretti / CFHILL

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Goldin+Senneby (since 2004) is an artist duo whose work has explored how economic structures shape our society. In recent years, their practice has increasingly shifted toward questions of care, ecology, and the politics of diagnosis. The duo consistently returns to the models, systems, and metaphors that structure and frame how we understand the world. A recurring question for them is how we see rather than what we see. Goldin+Senneby has exhibited at the São Paulo, Istanbul, and Gwangju biennials and held solo exhibitions at The Power Plant in Toronto, Kadist in Paris, e-flux in New York, and Tensta Konsthall in Stockholm. Their works are included in the collections of Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Goldin+Senneby: Flare-Up is organized by Accelerator, Stockholm University, and curated by Richard Julin, Artistic Director, Accelerator. It is produced in partnership with MIT List Visual Arts Center. This presentation is organized by Natalie Bell, Chief Curator, with Zach Ngin, Curatorial Assistant.

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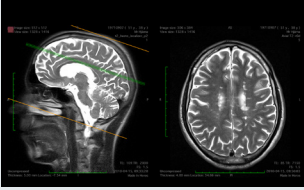


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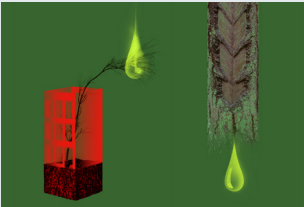


Gallery Talk: Miranda Dawson

Postdoctoral Researcher at MIT McGovern Institute

November 6, 2025, 5:30–6:00 PM

Public program – Hayden Gallery



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