# The Nature of Breath

Respiration is an indicator of life at all scales - from single celled organisms to human beings. Whether involving oxygen in the conventional sense of breath, or operating at the cellular level, the process of energy production is essential to life as we know it. Taking breath, the most natural of human movements, into close consideration, this work examines the relationship between what is natural and what is, or has been, alive.

While the simple and natural act of human breath may be just that, the external acts of human existence which follow breath quickly leave behind the common ground of what is natural. Every step of the anthropocene has been and will be fueled by breath in growing numbers - each exhalation pulling us further from some basal state of coexistence.

In this light, what does breath mean in the absence of life? Is the act of breath still natural when invoked by the artificial?

This work also asks us to consider how fragile breath can be. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic humans, as a species, have become obsessed with breath. For many of us, this fascination materialized overnight. We watched and read on distant screens of others struggling to breath and then fading away. This reality soon became our own and unpoliced, unfiltered breath became a luxury reserved for our most private spaces.

In these moments we ask; who holds power over our breath? Whose actions dictate whether this simple act is easy or sharply, drowningly painful?

If the COVID-19 pandemic can be taken as an indicator of humanity's relationship with the natural world, then reevaluation of this dynamic is imperative. We need to talk. As we begin this discussion afresh and continue centuries long debate, we must ask; what breath do we hold power over? Whose respiration do our actions touch from one moment to the next? How can we help the world around us to breathe more easily?

How can we

Has the relationship itself exceeded the bounds of what is natural and entered a new realm altogether?