



Berrigan, *Viral Shelter*, 2007–08.

"Biological Agents"

Gallery 400, through Nov 22.
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It takes a scientist to conquer the complexities of biology but an artist to show us how science plays a role in our daily lives. That's the gist of "Biological Agents: Artistic Engagements in Our Growing Bio-Culture," which examines what it means to be human (and animal) and to connect with your environment when solving its woes seems nearly impossible.

To "befriend" her hepatitis C diagnosis, Caitlin Berrigan presents *Viral Shelter*, a tent-size model of the infectious disease. Irony intact, the twentysomething MIT-based artist lures viewers inside her silky yellow hut with "viral" chocolates in her mission to demystify "the ruptures of the body's grotesque form." Brandon Ballengée's research into the environmental and genetic causes of amphibian deformities resulted in MALAMP UK's disturbingly beautiful photographs: Seeing frog skeletons with crooked spines and missing limbs prompts you to question the health of the species in your own backyard.

New York artist and engineer Natalie Jeremijenko's *Peace Declarations for Pigeons* has an intriguing concept—facilitating human-bird communication—but the viewer feels disconnected from it while waiting for a pigeon to land on a designated perch outside the building and trigger recorded music inside. Jeremijenko's *Keeping TaBs* succeeds, however, in establishing that we are what we drink: The tadpoles swimming in the installation's two tanks of Chicago water are named after the BP bureaucrats involved in the Lake Michigan pollution scandal.

Many shows position science-inspired art as a highbrow trend du jour. We prefer the accessible demystification of "Biological Agents."