

## Portraiture at the intersection of art, science, and society

Exhibit at MIT's Koch Institute attempts to make visible the luminary personalities behind major scientific and engineering advances.

Koch Institute

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Internationally acclaimed German portrait photographer Herlinde Koelbl's exhibition "Fascination of Science" is now on display at the Koch Institute Public Galleries.

Photo courtesy of the Koch Institute.

“For me, this project is about making science visible in society,” says Herlinde Koelbl, a renowned German photo artist whose portrait series, “Fascination of Science,” is now on display at MIT.

Koelbl set herself the goal to photograph scientists and to show their motivation, influences, and ways of thinking — through the eyes of an artist. The portraits juxtapose the subjects’ faces with scientific concepts, advice, or reflections playfully inscribed on their palms. Individually,

each picture or phrase speaks to the researcher’s personal quest for knowledge — everything from nucleotide base pairings and “learn from failures!” to “make malaria history!” and a sailing vessel beset by sea creatures — but collectively, the broad sweep of disciplines and backgrounds represented in the portraits reveals the interconnectedness of the scientific endeavor across institutions, geography, and subject matter.

The MIT venue for Koelbl’s work is the Public Galleries of the Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research, a research center that combines MIT’s rich traditions of interdisciplinary inquiry and technological innovation with discovery-based biological research to develop new insights, tools, and technologies to fight cancer.

Through Koelbl’s lens, MIT’s “mind and hand” motto is made visible, along with the diversity of ideas that fuel society’s collective fascination with science. The exhibit includes portraits of MIT scientists Sangeeta Bhatia, Ed Boyden, Sallie “Penny” Chisholm, Wolfgang Ketterle, Robert Langer, and Robert Weinberg, along with other internationally acclaimed scientists such as George Church, Jennifer Doudna, Emmanuelle Charpentier, and 2022 Nobel laureate Carolyn Bertozzi.

Visitors are welcome to view Koelbl’s work at the Koch Institute’s [Public Galleries](#) (open to the public on weekdays 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.) through Jan. 20.

*This article was updated on Jan. 20 to correct the closing date of the exhibition.*