



ESTING

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|---|--|--|
|  Introduction <i>Elena Agudio</i> |  Dancing with Grief / Cultivating Joy <i>Marleen Boschen</i> |  Early Summer, Entanglements <i>Leone Contini</i> |
|  The Living Recipe Book <i>Daniela Zambrano</i> <i>Almidón</i> |  A Bunch of Seeds... <i>Monai de Paula Antunes</i> |  Firenze, 11th of April 2024 <i>Saverio Cantoni</i> |
|  Chōri Dance ~Garden Table~ <i>Yuni Chung</i> |  Ray <i>Yuni Chung</i> & <i>Gabriella Hirst</i> |  The Garden is a Body, the Body is a Garden <i>Gabriella Hirst</i> |
|  Healing Garden <i>Isabella Devetta</i> |  The State of Vexation <i>Yeni Ma</i> |  Afterword: Passaparola |

Introduction
Elena Agudio

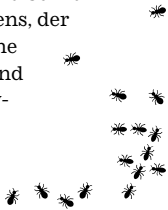
This booklet is a collection of texts. An assemblage of artistic reflections and perspectives that grew through and together with the collective experiences of inhabiting a garden in a phase of transformation.

Villa Romana's park has a long history and trajectory as a space of artistic engagement as much as a kaleidoscope of ecological imaginations: since 1905 artists coming from the north have been encountering a different air, a distinct vegetation and another kind of biodiversity, and have been confronting a culture of relating to nature that was in most cases radically different from theirs.¹

Rummaging in the archives, throughout the 120 years of history of Villa Romana we can fathom the communal life and the convivial processes that were constantly embraced in the green of this artists' house, and we can surmise that the role played by its ecosystem in the unfolding of the artistic practices thriving in the house has always been paramount.

A garden of an artists' house is not a leisure garden for bourgeois sentiments and aspirations, but a place of experimentation,

1 In Germany, as in other countries in Europe, after the evident effects of the industrial revolution on health, the importance of spending time in nature was promoted as a way to support health care, and to assure food security in large European industrial towns. In Germany, in particular the tradition of the Schrebergärten emerged as a therapeutic and functional tool. In 1864 Daniel Gottlob Moritz Schreber founded the Schreberverein zur Förderung des Jugendpflege, des Familienlebens, der Volkserziehung und Volksgesund (Schreber Association for the Advancement of Youth Care, Family Life, Public Education and Public Health), which also promoted the construction of playgrounds within the community gardens.



collaboration and radical imagination: across the years, we can observe how many projects evolved in the outside of the house, how much digging, planting, collaborating with other species, testing grounds, and caring happened in the open space of Villa Romana. We can see that many artistic reflections, ponderings, deliberations, ruminations, cogitations, and questions, arose from the constant conversations with and in the garden.

In the early years, the plot of land that encircled and surrounded Villa Romana was smaller and more rustic, farmers in the northern part of the garden were breeding small animals like chickens, sheep or goats, and the main form of relation for the different inhabitants of the house was one of extracting materials – harvesting wood and produce, but (I presume) also pigments for colours and medicinal plants for healing. The plot became bigger and was arranged in the guise of a more representative park in the 1970s and again in the '90s.

We can recall for example – thanks to the rich photographic and archive material that we hold about it – an iconic series of interventions organised by the Fellows and their guests in the summer of 1977, the event *Künstler arbeiten für Künstler*, where wonderful research, performances, sculptural works and pieces took form and place in the garden of Villa Romana.² We can imagine ourselves sitting at the numerous lunch and dinner tables that we

2 During that evening Ulrike Rosenbach wrapped a 1370m long red thread ten times around the house, a measure to represent the distance from Villa Romana to her home (1370km), wrapping the remaining part around her legs while laying down on a labyrinth of candles and showing the symbol of the Italian women's movement with her hands in the air. The next day she used the same thread that she cut to cover the head of the "dumme (dumb)" (as she calls her) Medici-Venus at the end of the driveway to Villa Romana.

see in the many pictures in our catalogues and files, and we can sense the important ecological considerations and questions that presumably often arose from their conversations. Maybe also the exchange of seeds, and of secrets.

The garden of Villa Romana is a pulsing ecosystem fully intertwined and boosted by artistic imagination since its early years. Between 2008 and 2022 it became a site of cross-disciplinary encounters and of gardening-art curated by the landscape architects of Atelier Le Balto, in conversation with the director of Villa Romana of these years, Angelika Stepken: they embraced an idea of the garden as a space of movement, of observation and in particular, of conversation and action. A space where art could thrive.

In 2023 we reopened Villa Romana with the motto and the programme *A House for Mending, Troubling, and Repairing*. In times of ecological devastation and disaster capitalism, in an age of rising social conflicts and the reckoning with the impossible containment of climate change, we have been asking ourselves what ecological imaginaries can a garden give rise to and foster? In conversation with the curator and artist Marleen Boschen and with a growing community of people – scientists, artists, activists, team members and alumni of Villa Romana – we have been exploring the question: what can this garden be? How can we activate and encourage joy through co-cultivation, enact belonging through access to land, and support biodiversity and regenerative practices? With the exhibition "Ecological Imaginaries for Agropoetics and Co-cultivation in the Garden of Villa Romana" (2023) and with a long-term programme under the title "Testing Grounds / Seeding Worlds" (2023-ongoing), we took seriously the responsibility of caring for a large garden

while trying to reckon with the climate grief and the effects of a certain shared eco-guilt, confronting the consequences of anxiety and grief on mental health. Here are some passages from our statement:

We draw from the privilege of access to a large piece of flourishing and abundant land. We seek to use this space to amplify the voices of those involved in environmental resistance and in keeping marginalised knowledges alive. In this way we seek to build collaborations and conversations with local diasporic communities and solidarity groups in encouraging the garden's ability to sustain many, both human and non-human collaborators.

Villa Romana opens its doors to practitioners and people interested in attuning to the poetic, experimental and radical practices of artists working with cultivation, to embrace a space for slow learning and un-learning with plants, people and other lifeforms and their respective worldmaking.

We imagine the garden as a testing ground for agroecological and agropoetical practices that are grounded in collective care and intergenerational and interspecies knowledge sharing. The programme begins by slowly learning from the diversity that's already present, understanding the dynamism of the garden as a place that has been in the making for decades, soil that has been made and remade for hundreds of years, and that will keep holding and giving ground for the life of the Villa and in the Villa, and for its ecosystem³

3 Extract from the curatorial note of the Villa Romana exhibition Testing Grounds / Seeding Worlds, curated by Elena Agudio and Marleen Boschen last May–June 2023.

With our ecologist and agronomist Isabella Devetta, part of the garden team of Villa Romana, we drafted an ecology survey and a manifesto for working with biodiversity, while also in conversation with the artists of the house, we have developed a healing garden that can function as a collective resource – with medicinal and dyeing plants to support the well-being and the creativity of our community. Bees, insects, cats, rabbits, many kinds of birds, fish and other animal beings, together with the different species of plants and flowers, contribute to the vivacity of our interspecies collaborations.

Alongside three different artistic ongoing researches and contributions that we activated with Daniela Zambrano Almidón (*The Living Recipe*), with Leone Contini (*L'Orto Continuo*) and with a collective of artists initiated by Monai de Paula Antunes (*The Seed Bunch*), this Spring 2024 we hosted our first Garden Residents: Yuni Chung, Gabriella Hirst, and Saverio Cantoni. Thanks to the financial support of Culture Moves Europe, we could host them for three months in the house, sharing the garden as a space of research and co-habitation, as a space of repair. The artists not only contributed to the life of the Künstlerhaus and to its intellectual and artistic thriving, but also developed projects and art pieces, embracing the potentiality of the garden as a studio and an open laboratory.

In the pages of this book, it is the artists themselves who narrate, curate, and restitute with words (and often images) the work that unfolded during their residency and stay. Together, despite the safe situation of the region, the privilege, and the climate in the house and around us, we lived through very unsettling times in terms of world conflicts. In 1946, against the backdrop of war, Vita Sackville-West described the dogout

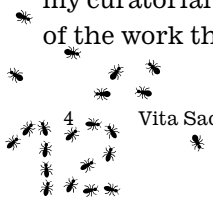
gardens during the WWI as an attempt “to hold the graces and the courtesies”, despite their use to fulfil a clear need for food of course: “Small pleasures must correct great tragedies, therefore of gardens in the midst of war I boldly tell.”⁴

Keeping in mind these considerations, the artists that worked and lived with us throughout these intense months of 2024, all understood and embraced the garden not as a retreat from a broken ecological and socio politically troubled world, but as a form of critical and personal+collective engagement. They all somehow reckoned with Jamaica Kincaid’s statement, that the garden is a heap of disturbance. Our former Villa Romana Fellow Diana Ejaita is the artist who illustrated the publication of Kincaid’s essay *The Disturbances of the Garden*. In the garden, one performs the act of possessing on August 31, 2020 in “The New Yorker”, and this pushes me to a more personal reflection. On that day, my younger son Jacopo was turning four years old in his hometown Berlin. I was going through one of the toughest times of my personal life, trying to metabolise the separation from his father as much as the sudden death of my father. It was in that time that I was unfolding with colleagues curators, artists, and activists practices of grieving connected to fights against the dispossession of land, imagining new possible relations of empowerment across agroecological, artistic, and liberation struggles. Reconnecting to the history of the Guinean-Bissau liberation fighter and agronomist Amílcar Cabral, we invoked the epistemological force of his Agropoetics to inspire our research. This project revealed itself to be a vital and fundamental core of my curatorial investigation and practice, one that inspires much of the work that I am tasked with while serving as director of a

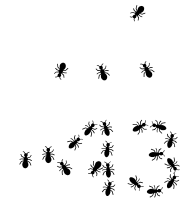
particular institution such as Villa Romana. Together here, in the house of the Fellows, where artistic imagination continuously sets the tone and co-habitation becomes an opportunity for ecological and social transformation, we found a fertile humus to continue the co-cultivation of agropoetics and embody the figure of those “mad gardeners”, in Donna Haraway’s words, that are mobilising on a planetary scale.

The unfinished Chthulucene must collect up the trash of the Anthropocene, the exterminism of the Capitalocene, and chipping and shredding and layering like a mad gardener, make a much hotter compost pile for still possible pasts, presents, and futures.

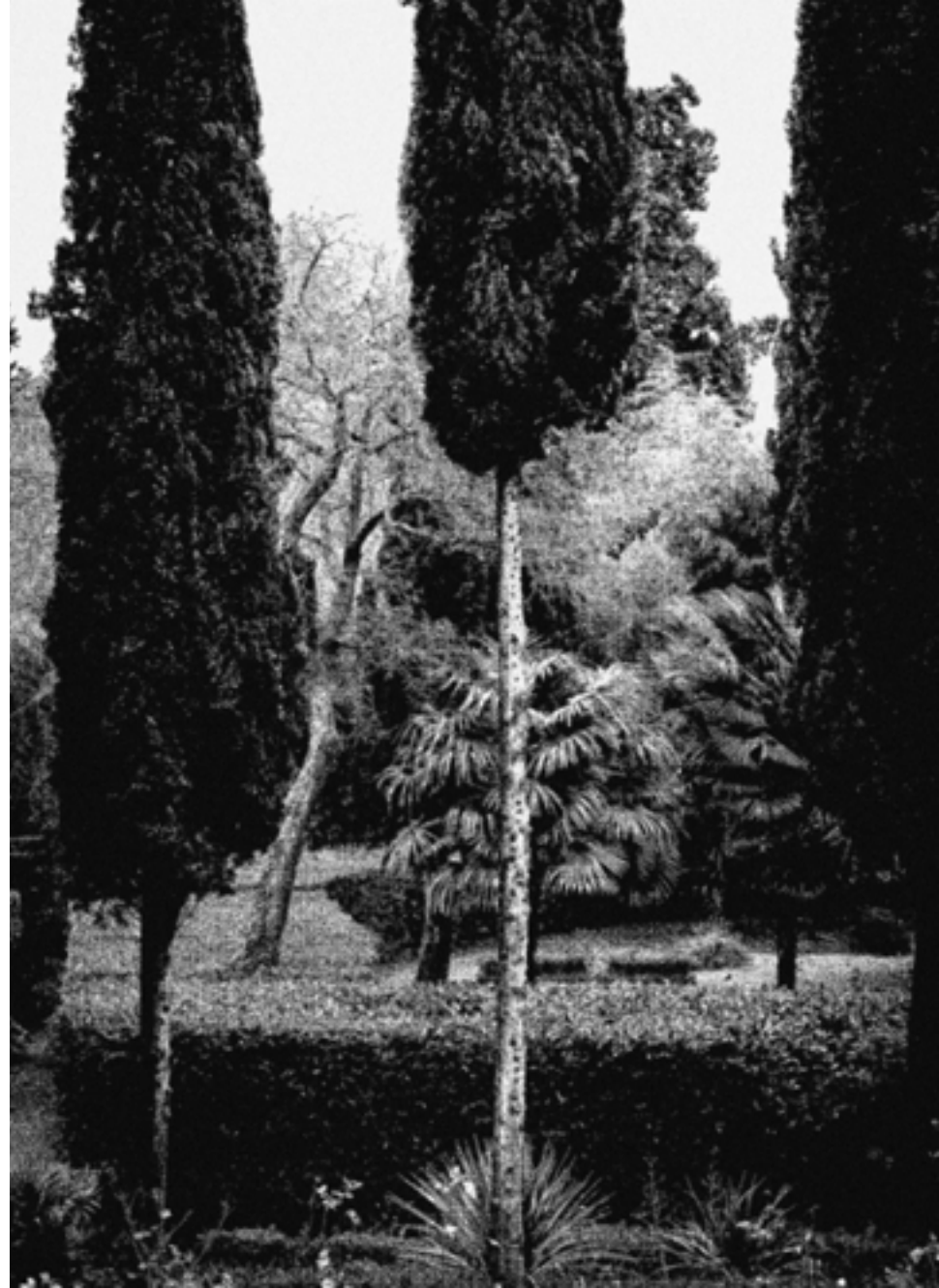
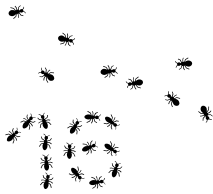
Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 57.



Vita Sackville-West, *The Garden*, London: Michael Joseph, 1946





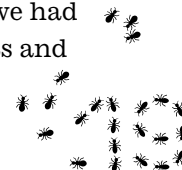




Dancing with Grief / Cultivating Joy Marleen Boschen

A red glow over a nocturnal garden. Leone's flashlight illuminates fragments of plants; a long stem here, a chaotic tangle of seed pods there. We can't see where one plant ends and the next one begins. The light leaves room for shadows and creates a strange sense of movement. We're meeting this messy nocturnal garden in the middle of a chaotic dance. Leone ^{p.26} Contini, Elena Agudio and I have come to look at the seed garden. It's 10pm at night and the days have been incredibly hot in mid July. Even now the air feels hot and heavy. Earlier that day I read in the news that, as a planet, we were moving through the hottest week in the last 10,000 years. It's a few months before Italy will elect a new far-right government. Looking over the seed garden in its eerie light, Leone mentions the red light should be less disturbing for all the lifeforms we share this garden with, many of which are trying to rest right now. What remains in my mind is this strange sense of vegetal animacy, of being moved by abundant growth, of moving together through air as thick and heavy as water.

We planted the seed garden in early May. It's an experiment, a performative seed library initiated by artist Monai ^{p.50} de Paula Antunes (who writes about the *Seed Bunch* beautifully in this publication) that also draws from the wisdom of artist and seed librarian Zayaan Khan. To initiate the first round of planting we had invited seeds from artists who are working with plants and cultivation in their practice. We received seeds from



Portugal, Germany, Brazil, Mali, Sweden and the UK. Many parcels arrived with hand-written notes, often sharing how these seeds had been cultivated, changed hands, and adapted to new localities. Each parcel was unravelled with joy. Each seed is a promise of a future plant. Each seed 'both design and magic', as I once heard seed librarian Vivian Sansour describe the unique captivating power of seeds.

Earlier, at the beginning of this very hot week at Villa Romana, my grandad passed away. He was a gardener in his way, weaving and working with the land as a cartographer. We were close. In the following days I tried to see this grief, as it came and went in waves, through the garden: tracing a passing-on, cycles of vegetal life that require death to continue, seeds that remember the ecologies of their parent plants, following a bodily rhythm as old as time. I buried a flower under a rosemary bush, a plant that remembers, medicinally and in its longevity.

This text is a personal sensing into what it might mean to move with a garden. To follow and learn from its lifecycles. To root and uproot in thinking through land, closeness across distance and belonging, and how a feeling of ecological grief and the cultivation of joy might come from this. Weaving together moments in a non-linear flow from the last two-and-a-half years, this text offers my personal lens on the artistic projects that have taken root and grown in this garden since January 2023. Each of the artists delves into these works in their texts in this publication.

I first met this garden during a rainy January when little streams were flowing down its slopes. The Villa Romana house was quiet—the new fellows hadn't arrived yet—and the building felt dormant and cold. It struck me

that the soil of this garden (which has been an artists' house and residence since 1905) remembers many artworks, performances, gatherings. The reminders of which still co-constitute the garden's fabric. In many ways it might have always been an experiment in what cultivating a social and ecological otherwise might mean; of growing and nurturing imaginaries for different ways of being together. For the last two-and-a-half years we have explored what an ecological imaginary of togetherness might feel and look like in times of the increasing loss of lifeworlds and rising waves of othering.

The smell of hot bay leaves fills the garden. It's an unusually hot day (again!) at the beginning of October and we've gathered in the garden to celebrate a harvest. Throughout the spring and summer Quechuan artist Daniela Zambrano^{p.40} has cultivated varieties of corn, sweet potato and chilli with Quechuan ancestry from the Peruvian Andes in the garden of Villa Romana for her project *The Living Recipe Book*. The steaming bay leaves make up one of the many layers of the underground Pachamanca preparation. They are covered by hot stones and cooking underneath them is a cosmic pot; a celebration of belonging through food, of deep and vital connection to the Land, following the motto to feed is to love. As we tried to grow corn in the garden, Daniela centred on reciprocity and interconnection, learning in conversation with the Quechuan diasporic community members and elders in Florence. Now there's a sense of deep joy as Daniela unburies the cooked food and removes it from the Earth. It has been a slow journey, months ago we weren't sure if the corn seedlings could grow in the dry Tuscan soil. We kept having to bury the new roots which emerged like small little toes out of the corn's stems. This moment of sharing food is about re-viving a connection to Land in the face of colonisation.

and erasure. Of, in a sense, swallowing, and thereby becoming, togetherness.



Beans growing in my mother's garden in the summer of 2021. Credit: *Barbara Boschen*

The spring of 2020 is extremely hot and dry (again and again) in the South of Germany, where I have returned to my mother's garden in the early days of the unravelling global pandemic. Trying to work out how to finish my PhD on seed saving practices from this new stillness, far away from the organisations and seed custodians I was writing about, I turned to my grandad for an experiment in cultivation. I started growing some of the plants that had come up during the research process; a Cherokee Nation Trail of Tears black bean (which had recently been deposited in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault) and a

snake cucumber from Palestine. I needed a bodily way of meeting the plants I had been writing about. My grandad was curious about this growing experiment, that someone was interested in his curved bean climbing poles a few years after he had retired his once abundant garden (for him, the work had become too hard). A whole new neighbourhood had shot up at the back of his garden. The black beans end up thriving in the dry soil of that summer. My mother keeps sending me updates long after I've returned to London. We harvest enough beans for one meal. After he passes away my mother tells me of my grandad's detailed planting designs he used to map out every spring. She never ends up finding them while she goes through his belongings left in the house.

During those strange hot summer days that are so wrapped in grief for me, we end up planning and drawing another garden; a healing garden envisioned and later carefully planted and cared for by ecologist Isabella ^{p.124} Devetta. In the shade of the large magnolia tree in the courtyard of Villa Romana we draw an oval map of this healing garden that we imagine becoming a community resource for the many artists and practitioners that move through the villa. There are a lot of calming plants in this garden, a soothing garden for distressing times. By June the following year the healing garden will be abundant, bursting in colour and life with the first medicinal harvest of St Johns Wort already underway.

Bleeding Heart. Aspirin Rose. Feverfew. Nerve plant. In the meantime another bodily garden has emerged within the Villa Romana garden. Gabriella ^{p.100} Hirst's *Body Garden* is one of the afterlives of Gabriella's three-month residency in the garden, exploring together with Yuni ^{p.90} Chung and Saver

io ^{p.60} Cantoni how we can foster and nurture the garden as a site for longterm artistic research and co-cultivation. The *Body Garden* is close to the perimeter walls of the villa, near where a colony of wild cats has lived for a long time. It is a living sculpture and home to a collection of plants that are vernacularly named after body parts, based either on their shape (following the old Doctrine of Signatures), use, or mythological association with the body. Some are healing, some agricultural, some poisonous, some absurd. It feels like a space for reflecting on illness. On the ways we seek to understand, yet often fail, to grasp our interiors, our organs, bodily functions, and the questions of where a body begins and ends, or when care turns into control. To me it also feels like an invitation to consider when individual parts turn into a collective body, seeping into the wider rhythms and seasonal dynamism of the surrounding vegetal space. During the summer solstice celebration in the garden, Gabriella Hirst reads from a text that reflects on the knowledges of the body and of plants that have been historically eradicated, often alongside their female custodians, in the name of Enlightenment science.

Who belongs to a collective body, place, a nation, a people, and who is declared as other, as alien and invasive? Before Daniela Zambrano's Pachamanca celebration of belonging and keeping cultural memory alive we gather for a different meal and conversation during that hot October weekend. Leone Contini invites us to the *Orto Continuo*, a continuing garden that responds to the evictions of Chinese migrant farmers from their farms in Prato and the surrounding region. As Leone prepares a meal from Chinese bitter gourds over an open fire he describes how this continuing garden has come about. Growing on a bamboo structure (harvested from Villa Romana's bamboo grove, also an invasive plant) are varieties of gourds that Leone

has collected from forcibly abandoned farms, or farms that are constantly threatened with eviction. Giving these plants a place to establish roots is a comment on how Chinese migrant communities, and the plants they care for, have been violently othered by state institutions and media. A year later, while the gourds are still climbing the structure, Leone establishes a rice bed and pond near the *Orto Continuo*. It is also a continuing garden across geographies and different soils: Leone was trusted with a heirloom variety of rice from Chongqing during a visit to China. Slowly and delicately small rice plants have emerged, floating in a bed. It's hard to tell yet how they'll respond to the Tuscan heat and the particular lifeworld of this garden.

This reciprocity, of observing exchanges with plants and exploring what a collaboration with vegetal agency might feel like is also at the heart of Yuni Chung's residency in the garden. At the start of this text I described finding the seed garden mid-dance; Yuni's work in the garden has tapped into a different notion of dancing and moving with plants, 'fermenting' through, gently undoing, the artificial structures of a classical Italian garden that still resonates in the garden of Villa Romana. One moment has stayed with me. Led by Yuni, we explored different scores in the garden, rhythms and movements for tuning into the more-than-human. I remember swaying next to a honeysuckle bush, responding to the micro-movements of the petals. The film that Yuni has created during her residency, a playful dance with the garden, ends in a shot of the olive grove. I've been struck by this olive grove since the first time I came here. Surrounded by almost 100 olive trees it's a space that feels private and personal. To me it feels like a space that holds both the lightness and the heaviness of cultivation, of imagining an otherwise and sustaining it daily.

The artists and artworks I've mentioned here tap into this gardening as worldmaking, as attending to a collective body, where grief and joy fold into each other and where belonging and loss can sit in a relation, in a seed, in a sprinkle of water. As the two year-old daughter of one of last year's fellows waters plants with me, I wonder: what can this garden be? How do we cultivate joy and belonging in the face of collapsing ecosystems and rising facism? How do we move together, beyond controlling and sometimes violent care, towards more-than-human solidarities?

+

An activation for shared memory

*When you feel something slipping, fading,
when someone is leaving
maybe only briefly, maybe for a long time*

Pick the head of a flower

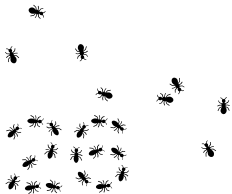
And find a bush, or a tree, that offers comforting shade

Share with the flower what you'd like to share with this person

then place it in the shade under the bush, or tree

allow it to be composted, to move on, to be carried away

Dancing with Grief / Cultivating Joy



Giunchereta, Prato's countryside



Floating Ricescape.

Plants of kang xi yan zhi mi and wang jing rice varieties, sprouted out of seeds provided by Seeds Rescue in Chongqing. The aim of this extra-geographical cultivation, which is taking place both in Villa Romana (Florence) and Giunchereta (Carmignano), is to provide a sort of back-up of rare rice varieties. Every step of

this process is coordinated with activists in China.



ucuzza's tendrils have become very active lately, claspng wild fenel stems, so that their wines can hoist up towards the sun.



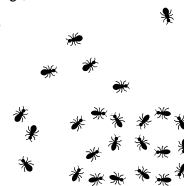
ice plants are lush, floating in a pond with their roots constantly immersed in waterlogged soil. Jin

Lipeng gave me the seeds in December, while I was on residency at Sichuan Fine Arts Academy in Chongqing. The seeds were collected in a remote countryside, a local variety that is still farmed despite the country being flooded by engineered rice. I promised him that I would do my best to sprout and grow them, and to guarantee him a back-up of this precious variety at the other end of Eurasia (redundancy is always better than scarcity, when it comes to seeds). They look happy here on the farm of Giunchereta, a toponym that can be translated as "reed marsh".



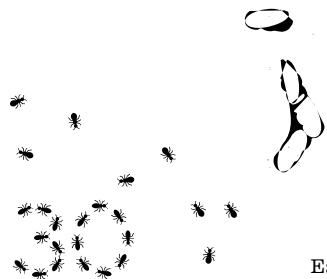
ummer is getting hot, we are on the edge of a heat wave, likely the first of many, as we got used to in the last years. The rabbit is sheltered inside the house and he's constantly attended to. He's a big "production" type rabbit, meaning he was meant to become meat.

He lived in a cage in a peri-urban barrack in the outskirts of Florence for a long time (maybe two years), together with many others of his peers. But he was lucky: his 'owner' had postponed his killing for months, maybe because he's a found rabbit and thus his age is unknown (his meat could be chewy?) or because he's a beautiful specimen suitable for reproduction (thus he was more valuable alive). But also, over time, he may have developed some sort of affection towards him, to the point that he gave him a name. I received Ghigo for free, when my previous rabbit died. It took for him two years to feel confident in the house, and to take over two rooms (my studio and my bedroom), where we now cohabit. Here, in the former farm where I live, rabbits had a very different treatment and fate, in fact farmers relied on their no-cost proteins. Rabbits can in fact just live out of dried grass, unlike chickens for example, that require specific and expensive nourishment. The chickens were raised to be sold, and the income was shared with the landlord, fifty fifty. In the sharecropper's unfair contract (contratto mezzadrile) rabbits and pigeons were the only animals that fully belonged to the farmers. It's no surprise that their consumption was so rooted in this part of Italy, where the agency of the farmers was able to unfold only within the crackles and at the margins of the exploitation device called mezzadria. However, this is no longer a necessity, and the rabbit is finally honoured and attended, his existence being now a goal and an aim.





A wasps' nest appeared about a month ago, hanging from the external frame of my bathroom window. It seemed small and harmless at the beginning but now it is huge. The wasps are now a dozen or more, they are very active and aggressive by day, while at night they 'freeze' and I can open the window to observe them from a close distance, for a long time – only in red light, not to wake them up. They stand guard, entirely devoted to their ethos, to defend their species. Should I also defend mine? Or should I cohabit with this fast-expanding nest in my window? Maybe there is some good novel about this experiment, or maybe there isn't. Most certainly their presence is a constant philosophical trigger in my everyday routine. I can't stop looking at them, meditating about their organicist society and the endless metaphors that (illusorily?) connect us with their (inaccessible?) existence. When they perceive my presence they start vibrating together, all at once, while turning in my direction, with small mechanical movements, like gears of a body-machine which is about to attack. I see their sting pulsating in and out of their guts. I feel hypnotised by the abyss of our filo-genetic distance, it's a vertigo mixed with subtle disgust and curiosity. If compared with them, we mammals are just parvenus in the bush of animal life (and highly likely wasps and hornets will survive our extinction). Despite the red light they are now fully awake. I shut the window just a second before they unleash their strike.



I grew up with this formula: bees are good and useful, they provide us with honey, wasps are pointless and harmful.

Early Summer, Entanglements



Memories from a school trip to a farm, close to Florence: a man stands nearby the hives, he's a priest (or behaved like one), he tells us not to be scared of these 'creatures', meaning they were 'created' (by God) to be good, friendly and useful. At that very moment a bee stung him.

Contested Neighbourhoods.



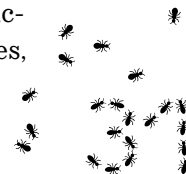
A wasp nest is thriving in the external frame of my toilet window, triggering my daily routine with philosophical dilemmas and likely dangerous amusement.

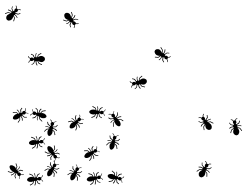
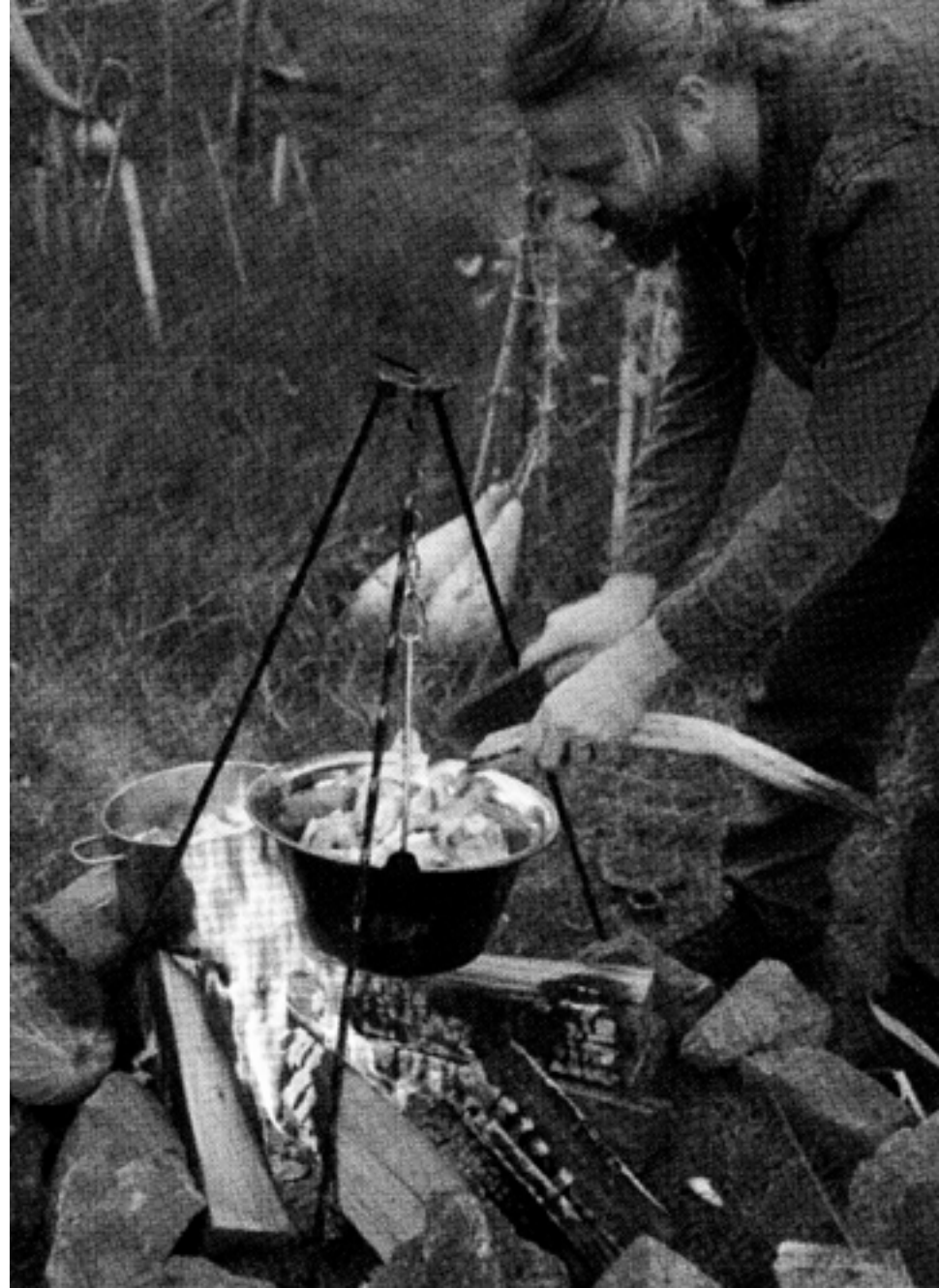
Elsewhere, Nearby



Villa Romana, Florence. *Orto Continuo* (Continuous Garden) is in full growth. Its reed/bamboo structure was first built in spring of 2023, and seeded a few days later with seeds from nearby family farms. Last summer, despite the extreme hot, the gourds' vines made their way to the roof of the shack, to intercept as much sun as possible and to blossom at night. Some of their many fruits dried out through the fall into winter, hanging down from the bare structure that meanwhile reappeared under the dead leaves, like bones of a carcass. However, each of the dried

Leone Contini





Early Summer, Entaglements



gourds now contained hundreds of newly regenerated seeds. What seemed to be dead was in fact at the peak of its life. The seeds were protected during the next rainy, cold months, inside the dry, hushed environment of what are in fact lignified sacs. Beneath, in the lower strata of *Orto Continuo*, a winter-manure thrived, unseen, to regenerate the soil, to later give way to a new summer garden when, in springtime, some of the seeds reproduced in the previous cycle finally sprouted again. When their green shoots pierced the soil to become plants, the broken thick skins of the old gourds that once contained them were scattered all over the place, disappearing quickly into the growing grass.

It's early summer again. The first cucuzza's dusk-blossoming flowers of the new season just got pollinated, likely by some night insects a few hours before, they look like little snakes already.

The Peremptoriness of Evil.



A few years ago local newspapers launched yet another media campaign against Chinese farms in the countryside of Prato. In the image, a fragment of an article urged citizens to spy on their neighbours: "Have you noticed anomalies in the vicinity of Chinese gardens?" This call was followed by email and phone number for reportings. A few days later many farms were confiscated. Not even fire seems able to erase this shame.

Early Summer, Entanglements



My connection with this variety of gourds is personal and contextual, dating back to the mid 80s, when my grandmother used to farm cucuzzas in her garden not far from here – actually on the very next hill on the way to what are now the pleasant suburbs of Galluzzo (Florence's rough periphery back then). The seeds were shipped to her by our Sicilian relatives, good cucuzza seeds from the village of Cammarata, perched on the homonymous mountain in the middle of the island, and later reproduced locally in this foreign soil, year after year. I vividly remember the green snakes growing fast, for the amusement of myself and my cousins, and the delicate taste of minestredda, a light soup made with the pulp of the young gourds cooked with onions, tomatoes, basil and olive oil from our trees. We children always tried to avoid minestredda, but after eating it, a gentle breeze would start blowing from our

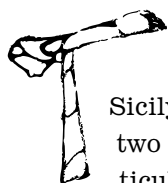
belly, to spread and refresh the entire body, despite the summer heat. This is only one of the many magical qualities of this gourd. Another feature of this plant is its ability to connect people from different geographies. When, at the end of my residency in Khoj, Khirki Extension, New Delhi, I cooked for the audience the same kind of gourd, farmed locally on the Yamuna banks, people were thrilled to taste 'Sicilian lauki' – according to its Hindi name. Lauki are shaped slightly differently from Sicilian cucuzzas, often resembling a big green pear, but both varieties tend to be polymorphic, thus there is a good chance



Seed Swap with Jin Lipeng, Chongqing. Courtesy Edoardo Delille, 2023.

Leone Contini

that their appearances will merge midway, resulting in a similar club-like shape – you can still tell the difference from their seeds though, while I think the taste is identical. In Delhi, I followed my grandmother's recipe by sticking to the very simple rule of a tutto rintra, meaning that the ingredients should be dropped into the pot all at once, including basil, a bit of water and olive oil. No soffritto nor spices are needed. For my Delhian friends this was likely an unexpected culinary experience, which nevertheless took place within the homely horizon of lauki-cucuzza. This is how this gourd is able to create common ground for people who have never met before.



The corner of (an imagined) Sicily in which I grew up (only two hills from here) was meticulously carved by my grandparents into the Tuscan landscape, but it was all but pure: a few meters from my grandma's garden Egidio was growing Florentine zucchini and Tuscan black cabbage, while Paolo, the owner of the first Chinese restaurant in Florence, was farming baicai and spring onions – another extra-geographical bubble perhaps. This is how a Florentine retired factory worker, a Wengchengese chef and entrepreneur and a Cammaratese woman came to meet each other's knowledge and skills daily, on the ground, for many years, by the



Bitter Heal. How a smuggled seed turned foreign soil into home, Carmignano.

Early Summer, Entanglements

means of plants. Some of Paolo's seeds went wild and naturalised in the new environment, giving birth to a local variety of feral onions, which still survives in the very vicinity of where his garden once was.



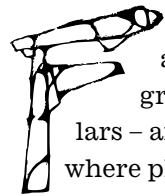
ecades later many more seeds crossed the skies to land in Tuscany, not here on the hills though, as if this landscape, constructed over the centuries by generations of farmers, would not easily allow something new to root and prosper. These far-away-seeds

made instead the Florentine-pratese plane their home at the other end of the city, as if the unshaped lowlands, cyclically reset by floods and less implicated in the poiesis of the (Tuscan) landscape, were more hospitable. While the southern limen of Florence is locked, fortified by anthropised-historicised hills, the north-western border is in fact open. Nevertheless, the entire area where Florence, Prato and Pistoia are nowadays was the bottom of a large quaternary lake. The steep climb of Villa Romana was likely part of the underwater slopes of this basin – and its park was somewhere above or beneath the shoreline. It's on that very lakebed that Chinese seeds sprouted into family farms since the early 2000s, able to fulfil the local demand for fresh seasonal vegetables, both in Florence and Prato. These inter-continental daring experiments injected the local horticultural patrimony with new biodiversity, for the first time after decades of rural abandonment and standardised agriculture, a phenomenon of genetic impoverishment that constantly narrowed down the variety of cultivated vegetables to those able to fit the requirements of the mainstream chain of production and distribution. However the reaction to this newly-landed biodiversity was of fear, as if the new seeds could trigger a mutation

Leone Contini

in the essence of the soil itself, able to affect the collective (human) body that feeds on the plants that feed on it. The plants are here the knot that ties blood and soil together. The outcome of this ideological entanglement was a constant pressure on this new rural entrepreneurship, with media campaigns cyclically unleashed against Chinese farms over the last 15 years, resulting in countless confiscations of gardens, and in the gradual confinement of this inter-continental rurality in increasingly remote areas of the countryside, which are less visible and thus less appealing for power's demagogic show-off. At the end of the day the plane is too big to be controlled, the soil is too rich and the gourds are too delicious. Some of their seeds, given to me by Wenzhounese farmers, are now growing in *Orto Continuo*, together with the descendants of my grandma's cucuzzas, while the pollinators will do the rest, feeding on their night flowers to mix them up into new varieties.

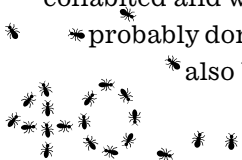
We are seeds



Far away from here a beautiful place was razed to the ground, or better to say razed to concrete, by caterpillars – and it happened while I was writing this. The soil where plants thrived together with the minds of young researchers was dumped somewhere together with construction waste – a soil created over many years of composting and care. Administrative offices will take the place of what was a corner of healing and critical reflection, where different species cohabited and worked together. Their struggle goes on, and they probably don't need extra visibility by the means of my words, also because exposure is sometimes counter-productive to a cause that needs long temporalities to unfold. They just need a new, fertile ground, and the sunlight to grow. Moreover, as some of them just wrote to me: 'this is an opportunity to learn resilience, and how to cope with uncertainty [...] the good thing is we still have a lot of seeds, we are seeds'.

Acknowledgments: Orto Continuo is part of Semenzaio, a research project supported by the Italian Council (2023).

Early Summer, Entanglements





The Living Recipe Book Daniela Zambrano Almidón

The Pachamanca,
My Grandmother and I

Only the '~~Indios~~' eat with their hands,'
said my grandmother. 'Pachamanca is best
enjoyed with hands; it has more flavor,' she added, with a look of
complete satisfaction on her face.

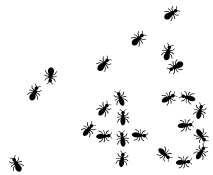
She continued eating, and at that moment, Daniela interrupted:
'But mom, didn't you say that only ~~Indians~~ eat with their hands?'

My grandmother looked at me intently, with eyes gleaming in-
finitely, and in the silence, it seemed as if she was saying,
'We are the ~~Indians~~, the ~~Serranos~~*.'

She responded, 'We should eat other meals with a plate, fork, and
knife to avoid judgment. But Pachamanca is always enjoyed with
the hands.'

Thanks to Pachamanca and my grandmother, from that day at
the age of 7, I knew who I was.

*derogatory term to refer to people from the Andes.



Food products that arrived in Italy with the voyage of Columbus during the 15th century.
Alimentos llegados a Italia con el viaje de Colón durante el S. XV

Food intended for the lower classes, slaves, animals, etc.
Alimentos destinados a las clases bajas, esclavos, animales

Andean foods extracted/introduced in colonial contexts.
Alimentos andinos extraídos/introducidos en contextos coloniales.

There was no recognition of the contribution and value of the knowledge of indigenous agriculture and technology.
No existió reconocimiento del aporte y valor del conocimiento de la agricultura y tecnología indígena.

Historical memory of Andean food and its transatlantic transport.
Memoria histórica de los alimentos andinos y su transporte transatlántico.

Trans-oceanic identities
Identidades transoceánicas

Diasporas

Andean Migration in Italy
Migración Andina en Italia

| | |
|------------|---------|
| Perú: | 127 738 |
| Ecuador: | 85 272 |
| Argentina: | 71 880 |
| Colombia: | 18 375 |
| Bolivia: | 15 794 |

Number of migrants from Andean countries registered in Italy.
Número de migrantes de países andinos registrados en Italia.

Identity /
Identitario

Affective /
Afectivo

Migration Stories / Historias de
Migración

Displacement / Desplazamiento

Displacement during dictatorships, post-colonial violence.
Desplazamiento durante dictaduras, violencia post-colonial.

Cosmivision /
Cosmovisión

Collective relationships /
Relaciones colectivas

Family/Community Food
Comida Familiar/Comunitaria

Emotional relationship through food
Relación emocional a través de la comida

Memory of the body
Memoria del cuerpo

Personal stories
Relatos personales

Languages/
Lenguajes

Transatlantic traffic / Tráfico transatlántico

Historical memory of Andean foods and their transatlantic transport.
Memoria histórica de los alimentos andinos y su transporte transatlántico.

Papa/Potato

Maíz/Mais

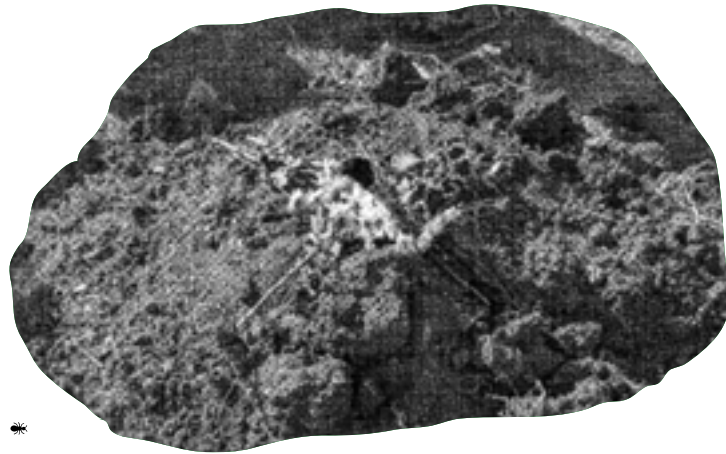
Aji/Chili

Tomate/Tomato

PACHAMANCA AS A FORM OF RESTITUTION, OF MEMORY AND OF CREATING NEW CONNECTIONS

Ancestral community-food-action 2023 with the support of the Andean-Peruvian community of Florence, Italy.

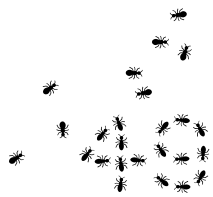
The Pachamanca, *the pot of the cosmos*, would be an interpretation / approximation of what Pachamanca means in Quechua. The Pachamanca (*Pacha* = Time and Space) *Manka* (= container, pot, hot container) is a celebration and collective ritual that dates back more than 4000 years. The evidence of the oldest pachamanca is the one celebrated by the women and men of Lauricocha, in the central Andes of Peru. One of the most important things about this form of cooking is that it is done underground, with hot stones that are cooked together with a series of ingredients native to the Andes and the Amazon.



From my artistic and life practice, it is very important to me to regenerate the connection with the Earth and its natural rhythm of life. In the spring from 2023 I planted native varieties of corn, potato and chili peppers in the garden of Villa Romana and in Chianti (Italy).

Pachamanca / A Cosmic Pot recreates a moment to share food and reconstruct the memory of Andean diaspora communities in the context of displacement. Based on the Quechua concept of *Ayni* as a practice of reciprocity and interconnection, *Pachamanca / A Cosmic Pot* celebrates a moment of connection with the land for migrant families. Pachamanca is a celebration that takes place during harvest time. Respecting the rhythm of the earth, and with the hope of harvesting the migrant species planted, the Andean community was invited to participate in this celebration that connects our roots with the land, our histories and identities.

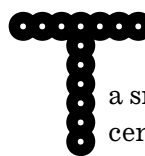
This celebration of the cosmos, flavors and memories is also a recognition of the migration of food of Andean origin. The sharing of these foods is with gratitude to the ancestral knowledge that the indigenous communities of the Andes and their diasporas – throughout Europe and the Global North – preserve in practice, or in memory, and that are indispensable to safeguard life. This cosmic pot is the living recipe that closed this agricultural year and opens a path to connect with the earth.



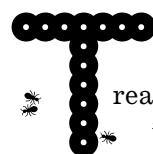


A bunch of seeds...
Monai de Paula Antunes

Florence, Summer 2024

 he seed garden is a small plot not centered around human consumption

tion or ornamentation, but on the cycles of seeds. Wherefore this lot has been, since 2023, sketching a performative seed library: a system for reproduction, collection, storage and distribution of seeds that doesn't fit into cabinets and classifiers. In 2023, Marleen Boschen and Leone Contini planted the first interaction of the garden library in the gardens and with the support of Villa Romana. The initial assortment of seeds were donated, mostly per post, from some artists' personal collections (see list on p. 57). Later in 2023, the planted garden had become a voluptuous and boundless entity with a life and presence of its own. This year, we are still half way through most of the seeds' cycles, but growing towards collecting seeds in their own time and redistributing them. Soon, seed mail will start being sent across to the seed enthusiasts that were once so kind to share their gems. That means that the people that once took the gesture of partitioning seeds, preparing notes and envelopes and sending them per post to Villa Romana after Marleen Boschen's invitation, will later this year receive a letter with a variety of children seeds from this bunch.

 he library's dispersed architecture of dispersal also incorporates the phases when each plant has seeds ready to be collected. In those moments, the ever-changing and ever-growing network of interested people from the house and the region gathers around the seed

garden in a disalienated process of seed exchange. This interrelation is the garden – is the library – is the archive – is the correspondence – is the distributing system – and is also an artwork. Through mailing threads and in the garden, the library is made of decentralised parts that can never be fully comprehended nor individualised.

 nasmuch as the artistic research aims to change the balance between human and environmental agency to decrease human dominance, there are still several human impositions that are worth being honest about. For instance, inspired by the aesthetics of the garden later in the Fall of 2023, the seed gardening has taken a sculptural tone working with the verticalities and horizontalities, and disobediences of certain plants towards remaining within their designated area. In that, many human decisions are taken in expectation of particular outcomes that are pertinent in an artistic and politicised context.

 lso, the gardening/archiving process involves a permanent need to categorise in some way the endless work and permanent growth in the garden. Here comes a very personal input of the main caretaker of the garden this year – me, Monai, conceiver of this project and Villa Romana Fellow of 2024, therefore, willing and able to devote myself to this encounter on an everyday basis. My own obsessive disorganisation, clumsy controlling tendencies, empathic narcissism, which contribute to what I am calling 'absurd informatics', have maybe been allowing a bit of channeling and reconfiguration of in some way suppressed information around those seeds. Ros Gray and Sheila Sheikh describe the emergence of scientific botany as a vast 'project to universalise the system by which we understand life'. In this process, plants were given Latin names, often stripping away local knowledge and erasing its sources.

This renaming erased not only local names but also the context in which those plants existed, reflecting a colonial project that destroyed entire worlds. With this reflection in mind and my own lifelong sabotage of method – and also recognising the displacement of the seeds that made them end up in my hands – I instinctively disrupt my own orderings, and by doing so, life prevails. I keep changing storage, losing track, mixing up, going back and forth to the point that most of what is left is happening in the garden, beyond my control. The absurd informatics of the seed garden may not be restituting worlds, but in a very small scale allow information of a second nature to emerge through everyday engaged, yet oftentimes irrational, encounters.

This project addresses missing connections, knowledge gaps, and silenced histories that constitute and are constituted by archives, borders, and infrastructures that have been imposed upon naturecultures, recognising them as apparatuses of power. As such, it aims to reformulate their ontology and display an adaptive and affective embodiment of them, in which objects are not exteriorly defined but emerge from within. Thinking of infrastructures as emergent and continually folding into ecologies of connectivity², and as ‘things and also the relation between things’³, the seed bunch represents an art that understands itself as infrastructural: an artistic practice that decentralises and connects by producing an artwork anchored in a vast understanding of communication, but also through the reforming and interweaving of things as an art form.

1 Gray, Ros, & Sheikh, Shela. *The Wretched Earth: Botanical Conflicts and Artistic Interventions Introduction*. Third Text, 32(2–3), 163–175, 2018

2 Carla J. Maier; Kate Donovan and Monai d. P. Antunes ‘*Listening towards ecologies of connectivity*’. III International Conference on Sonorities Research, 2023

3 Brian Larkin, ‘*The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure*’. Annual Review Of Anthropology Volume 42, 2013



Thinking and becoming with seeds reveals mysterious aspects of life, only possible in gardening once harvest or ornamentation are no longer the main purpose of the system. By implementing a garden that is designed and fostered around seedling cycles and exchanges, we embrace seed's ontological relationality⁴. Orienting the gardening towards seeds, their unruly boundaries and their temporality, we delve into a responsive and transversal human-environment relationship, in which human agency comes through not as formal engineering processes, but dynamically developing into, as well as together with, the garden. Breaking out from an anthropocentric and eurocentric understanding of borders, archives and infrastructures, the living library blooms from consecutive material-discursive collective engagements. Considering time as imperative in gardening, this artwork is categorically long-durational and process-oriented. In times of an art world dominated by quick exhibitions that are taken down and public programs that are rather 'party animations' rendering art ever so consumerist, this project is deliberately unfinished, as a garden is never complete.

This performative and participatory art project engages with unfamiliar aspects of plant life and exposes uncomfortable human positionalities that slowly adapt in engaged feedback. It embraces a notion of responsibility that questions the technocracy and natural-

4 Zayaan Khan, "From seed-as-object to seed-as-relation.", Environmental Humanities South, University of Cape Town, 2023

5 Monai de Paula Antunes, "Wild Design: gambiarra, complexity, responsibility", Environment, Space, Place, University of Minnesota Press, 2023

6 see Dave Hickney, "Earthscares, Landworks and Oz", in Art in America, September-October 1971

ism which are very present in the environmental discussions of our times, understanding responsibility as the openness of a system to another. By trial and error, the garden and its cycles grow out of its initial human design towards a display of more-than-human intelligence and exuberance. Its tendencies and events are gradually invoked by the environment and circumstances, distancing from its initial plan and placing humans in the role of caretakers rather than engineers and extractors. By inhabiting the arts, the garden distorts, even if on a small scale, a stagnated model of human-environment relationship, praising the ambivalent potency of seeds, as they represent both beginnings and ends to cycles.

Troubling notions of 'wild' in dialogue with paradoxes shadowing human creativity⁵, the seed bunch also contests land art and landscaping in art. Rewilding has been a polemic ground in the last decade, highlighting limitations in critical theory, activism, policy-making and regulation in human definitions of nature and rewilding's criticism about its own agency. Landscaping on the edges of Villa Romana's garden is a way of taking over land art from a masculinised presence marked by artists from the global north⁶, engaging collectively with dilemmas of human control and human centering through gardening – in a process of co-domestication that deviates the meaning of domestication from a civilisational or naturalist vocabulary into a grammatic of co-constitution. The seed bunch embraces a notion of domestication based on a long-durational dialogue that operates in feedback, enabling a space of co-constitution between humans and more-than-humans. This approach is also feminist, recognising in the traditions of processual care and landscape maintenance a gendered history, that is also a history of empower-

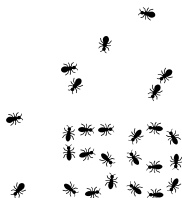


ment and politicisation of the domestic sphere. The notion of the more-than-human supports here a suspended intelligence that has not resulted from a sum of parts, but is inherent to the entanglement that defines the architecture of the world, of life. The aesthetic experience of this project pushes the importance of art beyond appreciation, towards embodiment of a sublime lust that has been so consistently deflected.

Seed donations (so far) from:

Leone Contini • Antje Majewski • Asa Sonjasdotter • Sara Rodrigues & Rodrigo B. Camacho • Landra • Gabriella Hirst • Saverio Cantoni • Kate Donovan • Somankidi Coura - Cooperative Agricole Multifonctionelle Somankidi • Tuli Mekondjo • Le Rize • Niko de Paula Lefort • Kátia Pessoa

If you want to become part of the seed bunch, send some seeds to *Archipel e.V., Tempelhofer Ufer 16 10963 Berlin Germany.*





Firenze, 11th
of April 2024
Saverio Cantoni

Dear C,

I woke up this morning in the rain. I could see the water running on the window, and I imagined the tickling sound of it—it must have been loud. This skylight window is just glass with a rusty steel frame.

I pulled out the phone and checked the time and the notifications immediately after; this is how I found out I have twenty-four hours to write you a letter. How will you respond to it, and how am I responding now? Then, I started swiping across the news with less hope than yesterday. It has been months since my early morning Deaf space was a flood of live-streamed genocide reported by its victims. I cannot tell you how I am getting on with the rest of the day, I don't know. I keep doing a lot of things, but nothing seems meaningful to happen in this parallel world that offered me the privilege to ignore genocides and even question that these horrors are happening. How do you feel about it? How do the people around us get away with this? Please, let's hold each other' across all of this. Sometimes, I take screenshots and save messages, not because I fear forget-

ting, but because I wanted to write you this letter before knowing it. I chose an old one; @earthpreservationproject posted it on the 23rd of February.

Wet, clean beds of freshly plowed and sewn soil are surrounded by rubble and debris from recent bombardment. The text reads: "The land is loved." And below: "Amid Israeli bombardment, a Palestinian man returns to his ruined home in Gaza, removes the debris from his piece of land and cultivates the soil."

These days, I am working in a studio with windows all around. Its minimal aesthetic is quite disturbing, but luckily, it is a pavilion without foundations, and the soil refuses the weight of all of this glass. The minimalism is cracking open, water spills in, and the raindrops I am listening to give this day's rhythm. A beautiful garden surrounds me; today, the soil is soaked wet, and the leaves of pale green are brighter than joy. Hundreds of different plants cut out everything else; the portion of houses I see around are secured to the landscape by leaves, branches, and flowers. Beneath the green, there is soil that is well hidden. And I think of those exposed, wet, clean beds of freshly plowed and sewn soil. And I look at the olive trees and think of Palestine, of

Saverio Cantoni

freshly plowed and sown soil surrounded by rubble and debris. I must cultivate something here. Will it be poppies? What do you think of the implications of having flowers and edibles from the Mediterranean region? Will a garden of spices be where people can gather to make za'atar? Will it be a place for plants to intertwine the White Sea and the Mediterranean? Which roots hold the soil around The Black Mediterranean?

In two weeks, on the twenty-fifth of April, we celebrate the Italian Resistance in Italy. We honor the memory of the Italian struggle against Nazifascism. Red poppies blossom in the fields, and they are one of the symbols of this historical resistance. Red poppies will blossom for the Palestinian Resistance. Why I am living between Germany and Italy now, and these countries forbid me to praise and celebrate the liberation of the Palestinian People and their Resistance, is impossible to understand. Last Sunday, I found two posters at the flea market in Arezzo and a map of Palestine. The map was too expensive, but the posters are with me now; I am framing them and hanging them on a big window so they can look at the garden where the poppies will grow—with *origanum syriacum*, thyme, oregano, marjoram, and Noor suggested *salvia* for the morning Tea. Two days ago, there was

a talk here in Firenze with – among others – Laila Hassan, a member of the “Giovani Palestinesi d’Italia” movement, who proposed celebrating the 25th of April in solidarity with Palestinian resistance. How can it be different? Why is Italy selling weapons and technology for genocide? Questions needing no answers but a riot. And I think about how long the path I need to take to (un)possibly eradicate the Hitler that haunts my conscience and my privileges still is. Aimé Cesaire’s words¹ are on me, on Europe.



I am writing this letter sitting by these two posters. Once I send them to you, I will hang them. Then I will keep working on a sound piece that is only fragments now, and you will receive it before sunset.

And with this letter, I send you the warmest hugs, the most dedicated thought to build a chain of solidarity that may change this damn Europe we inherited, to scream we are the periphery of the world. We stand on such a small piece of land; I hope we will hold hands on the path of allowing the liberation of the world's majority and walk behind them toward justice.

Hugs,
Saverio

Conversation with *Júlia Ayerbe*

Júlia Ayerbe works in the field of contemporary art with subjects related to disability, feminisms, and editorial practices. In Brazil, she worked as the senior editor at the museum Pinacoteca de São Paulo (2010-2016). She also collaborated with institutions such as Casa do Povo, Sesc, Prêmio Indústria Nacional Marcantônio Vilaça, Museu da Imagem e do Som, among others. She was a founding member of the independent publishing house Edições Aurora / Publication Studio São Paulo (2014-2018). Since living in Madrid (2017), she has developed projects for European institutions like CA2M, Galerias Municipais de Lisboa, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Sophiensaele, Tabakalera. She has published essays in cultural magazines such as Utopia Revista de Crítica Cultural, A*Desk, Nossa Voz, Metode. She is a PhD student at Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM) with a grant from La Caixa Foundation working on the intersection between Latin American art and disability. She is a disability justice activist in the collective Sickness Affinity Group (SAG).

J: Yesterday I was talking with some disabled friends about how summer can be an issue for people with disabilities. And I was asking myself what my body would desire in the summer, because actually, I don't know very well. It's very weird to not know what your body desires. There are a lot of things that people do in summer, like being in a park, being at a pool, being

on a beach – and all of this stuff for me is super stressful. So, I was asking myself whether I don't like these things because they are not accessible, or if I don't like them because they're just not my thing. I was thinking about the public pool where I used to go: Imagine if there were places to lie down that were higher than the beds that you usually have around the pool, which are usually super low. Of course, this is specific for my body; I can say that only from my perspective.

S: I understand the historical value of what used to be called “universal accessibility”, or the institutional parameters that exist. There is a specific legal framework for how a space should be made accessible. And there are a lot of exceptions around that legal framework, if a building is historical. I look at this as a real issue because there is this monumentalisation of the old building; it becomes untouchable. Then the monument is more important than the people – I don't think that's acceptable. So, the space will become accessible because someone followed the law and made the door wider. And there is the ramp and nobody can complain because

the legal package is there. This is a bit scary for me because as you said, it's always about individual experiences.

J: Yes, it's something that I ask myself a lot. There are basic parameters that are good for everybody, like a ramp. We don't have to explain why a ramp is so much better than stairs. But a ramp still can be a problem for somebody; it's impossible to include everybody. You have to deal with this idea. As disabled people, I think we do deal with it; we learn to understand that some things are not possible. For example, I've been to Venice once, and I don't know if I can go back there, if I can be there, and if I can see the biennial with dignity. And we can discuss that it's my right to go there, but in the end, you give up and say, I'm not going to Venice anymore.

I think accessibility is very important. But sometimes I ask myself: do I want to do this? Or do I want to do this because people are doing it, so I feel that I have to do the same? Lots of times in my life, when I was grieving

to lose the ability to do something, I figured out that some people also just don't like this thing; why am I suffering so much that I can't do it? All the time, you feel excluded, and the exclusion is a painful experience. But if you put so much effort into thinking about this thing that you can't do, then maybe you're not looking at the other stuff. So I ask myself, for me, would it be important to collect cherries? I don't know. I think accessibility should open up these questions. It's okay to say I don't want to do this or that. So, I think it's more about finding this balance between the impossibility, the possibility, the accessibility, the inaccessibility, and how to manage all these different stages of access.

I'm from Brazil. And for me, of course, it's hurtful that I can't access nature. I come from the country of tropical forests, and I know there are a lot of things there that I can't access. It's hard, but it's true. I have to deal with it, and sometimes you have to say, okay, I will see it from the outside. I will

hear the sound. I will access the forest in different ways. But I cannot be there as a person that walks and has strength to be there; it's a totally different experience.

S: I think that it's sometimes a sort of flattening urgency that whenever able-bodied people realise that something is not accessible, they start to insist that every able experience should be disabled-conforming, which it is actually not. As you say, it's a matter of individual experience, of placement in the world that we have. So, also disabled people should be granted the right to say that they are not interested in something. I'm imagining after my experience here, instead of using the idea of "let's make Villa Romana accessible", I would be more interested in the question "I want to invite my friend to Villa Romana. How are we going to be there?" And then I will keep in mind the idea of having a raised lounge bed where we can chill in the park. Because otherwise, we won't chill together in the park. That's what matters to me.

J: I really love what you said about how disabled people don't have to like things. Because I feel that what

ultimately is missing is our culture. It would be easier for me if I already had a culture, because it is not the first time that a body like mine is in the world. There have been other bodies in different ways, and they were in this world. And I don't know how they felt or how they navigated. It's true that if you are constantly trying to access other cultures, it's very hard for you to develop your own, which other people can access, too. We are still discussing such basic stuff about how to have diverse bodies in a space, instead of really opening up space for the creation of other cultures, disabled cultures that can point to more specific experiences, other ways of being in a space or being together and create or deal with time. We are talking about crip time all the time, it's almost a standard thing by now. Like, "oh, it's kind of a positive time. It's like a non-capitalist time." For me, that's not enough. Because when it's time to have a bit of fun, everybody is just exhausted, as we've had to manage and to deal with the most basic things like having a toilet.

Conversation with Júlia Ayerbe

The real conversation that I would like to have is not going to a place and say, "oh, it's beautiful." My question would be, "it's beautiful but for whom?" But if I would say all the time what I really think, then my life would be a rant. And then people wouldn't want to hang out anymore because, yeah, it's a rant. And it's not like I'm criticizing my enemies – I have to criticize the institution, the people that I work with whom I admire in other regards. I'm working at Reina Sofia, and there's a lot of stuff that I admire in this museum, but they are super ableist. And it hurts because you feel like it's not that you have to fight with somebody that you don't care about. But that's also interesting in terms of what it deeply means, caring culture. Besides the stereotypical and pointless, very Western idea of care as an act of devotion, I'm interested in the caring space as a site where attention is offered. With all the hard and difficult conversations that need to happen. When the conversation is avoided, then yes, it can be the fanciest place in the world. But it's useless.

Saverio Cantoni

Conversation with *Ilaria Crippi*

Ilaria Crippi was born in Ferrara, Italy in 1988. A disability activist and lesbian, she has lived between Emilia and northern Europe working with various organisations promoting the rights of people with disabilities. She trained as a disability manager and social planner, becoming passionate about disability studies and emancipatory research. She is particularly interested in accessibility and independent living, which she explores by interweaving sociological and legal perspectives. When she can, she crosses, and sometimes facilitates, transfeminist and antiablist confrontation groups.

S: I always struggle with the idea of ‘universal accessibility’, which is something I personally don’t believe in (rather, I find it can be an extremely dangerous discussion), and the glitches of the functionality of legal accessibility: all those spaces where maybe it’s true that the architectural space has been made legally accessible, but then it’s impractical, unpleasant, uncomfortable on a personal experience level. Starting from that idea, I’m wondering: I’d like to return to Villa Romana and its garden, I want to return with friends and comrades that would not be able to access the space as it is now, so I’m trying to collect individual experiences to prepare this space so that it’s welcoming, at least a small part of it. Do you have

experiences with accessible parks or gardens, in Italy or abroad?

I: Well, I know that it’s something that is being attempted, for example, some administrations in public parks organise a small area that is particularly accessible. There are various experiments, some focused on sensory experiences; specific scents of certain plants that create recognisable paths for those who cannot see, for instance. These are attempts to create an experience that is accessible to various types of people. From the perspective of motor disabilities, which I know better, it’s not impossible to create parts of a garden or orchard that are accessible. There are elevated garden beds, it’s quite a simple thing. I take a lawn, make it flat, create a slightly smoothed path, not full of stones, not too narrow, even better if it’s paved, put something raised along the path, and those who wish can water the tomatoes. So, there are ways – I know it’s something that has been attempted, done, it exists as an idea.

You were telling me that as a building, Villa Romana doesn't have even basic accessibility features?

S: No, not even basic ones. In fact, my proposal is to create conditions where the ground floor of the villa – where they hold the exhibitions, where there are already two apartments and the common kitchen, and which has the most important access to the garden – and the garden itself would become accessible spaces for people who use a wheelchair.

I: Accessibility has a lot to do with the actions you then perform in the context: what experiences you need to be able to participate in, what someone who comes here needs to be able to do. There is the risk of something done just to say “I made something accessible” but if I make a beautiful accessible garden but then this person can't participate in the residency because there's no accessible apartment for them, nobody will come to the garden. So it's something to think about holistically.

There's a principle anecdote that I'd like to share to reframe things. When I participated in collective experiences in places not completely accessible, I felt a lot of frustration from participating in the 'official' part of the event, the assembly moment, which maybe happens in the accessible hall – but then the really interesting moment was when everyone went to have coffee and that was the moment when you really wanted to be there. But instead, the bar, considered something a bit ancillary, wasn't accessible. I'm giving you this example to say why I think it's important to think about the actual experience that happens there, and it's an experience not just constituted by the official institutional objective of the activity but also by everything that revolves around it that has to do with human relationships.

S: In this context, I'm interested in making a direct critique of what the legal parameters are.

I: My experience is that even the legal parameters aren't respected, you know? Sometimes saying "the legal parameters aren't enough," which is

certainly true, can be a strategy for not even respecting those. People say “No, but we want to think big, we want to do more,” but in the meantime, do something, please. It’s like saying we want to talk about the view from the terrace, but we can’t even participate in this artist residency. Who cares about the view, we want to be there. I think we need to be careful not to go into the abstract when what’s needed is to remove the gravel, put in the ramp, widen the bathroom. These are basic things, but we have concrete needs, and in my opinion, if you don’t first address those, there’s no point in having grand ideas, intellectual fantasies, let’s focus on what people need.

So, creating limited accessible spaces ties back to what I was saying at the beginning about thinking about accessibility at Villa Romana, always translating it into concrete possibilities, but keeping in mind the entirety of the activities that take place there and thinking about a person who doesn’t experience just a part of it but somehow

has to be able to participate in an experience similar to what other people have, with at least the same freedom of choice. So I can decide not to water the tomatoes, but if others can do it, I’d like to have the option to decide to do it, too. Anything else limits the spontaneity of interactions, limits opportunities, and things that happen.

A mental experiment I sometimes invite people to do in this context is to try to remember the occasions when we met important people in our lives, relationships, friendships, whatever, and think, if having had a disability, we would have met them the same way. That is, if I were in that situation, would I have been able to interact with that person, or, did I interact through a dating app that is not accessible to the blind and therefore I couldn’t have used it, or, did I meet them in a place that is not wheelchair accessible and therefore I couldn’t have been there, and so on. Similarly, in a situation like this, things can happen, professional encounters, friendships, of any kind, if I’m not in

the right place at the right time, they might not happen. So, I need to be able to access places and situations as much as possible in the same way as others.

Chôri Dance ~Garden Table~ Yuni (Hoa yun) Chung

Room. Space. Open Stage. An extension of the body and a reduction of the world. My room, at the same time someone else's room; one body that calls bodies intertwined inside. Every time, I end up returning to the same room. To that space where all senses are stained white. A child is sitting in that space. The face of the child cannot be seen, covered by the light. I realise that is - a garden in Italy, where I spent a season. There are many ingredients on this white paper. It is between spring and summer, so the paper is a little transparent. I roll it up carefully and take a big bite. This is a recipe from the summer garden, a dish for our open table.

Conversation with Ilaria Crippi



Recipe for Summer



(1)
*Find a space
of silence*

(2)
Record it

(3)
*Move in
a wave with it*

Table

The word Garden (정원/庭園) in Hanja is a combination of "Jeong(庭)", meaning yard, and "Won(園)", meaning hill. The radical for "Jeong(庭)" is "Um(广)", which signifies a building with one open side, and the radical for "Won(園)" is "Wi(口)", indicating an enclosed boundary like a wall. Thus, a garden is a space where openness and enclosure coexist. The Hanja "Wi(口)" has a similar shape to the mouth "Gu(口)", but there is no obvious etymological connection. However, when I first learned Hanja, I understood it as a large mouth. Is that why a garden feels like a mouth to me?

There are many similarities between a mouth and a garden. A garden is a space that extends the boundaries of a house while simultaneously separating the outside from the yard. Our per-



Chori Dance ~Garden Table~



Yuni Chung

spective on a garden reflects the way we bring nature into human space, that is, how we deal with the 'other'. The mouth is always wet with water. Through the mouth, we invite, inhale, and exhale other bodies. Sounds reverberate from the opening.

Ingredients

Yuni Chung:

Before I begin, I warm up my body, counting in my head out of habit. 하나, 둘, 셋, 넷, 둘, 둘, 셋, 넷. I first learned to count in elementary school during 국민체조 (National Gymnastics of Korea), and I used a similar count in ballet. National Gymnastics of Korea is deeply intertwined with the complex colonial history of East Asia and Korea's dictatorship era, appearing in similar forms in Japan, Taiwan, and China. During the pandemic, it became trendy again, and many schools and organisations still use it. The gymnastics consists of 12 movements, each named after a body part. It begins with a step in place. I start walking slowly.

Italian Cyprus:

The most striking presence in the garden is the Italian cypress, growing straight up as if piercing the sky. Here, these trees symbolise death and eternal life. They adorn the garden and add a certain vertical rhythm, like the eerie sense of harmony I felt when looking at meticulously arranged taxidermy in a museum, hearing a perfect chord, or seeing a neatly organised chart in the hospital of my childhood. They give the satisfaction of a beauty that seems as if it will never fade.

Iris:

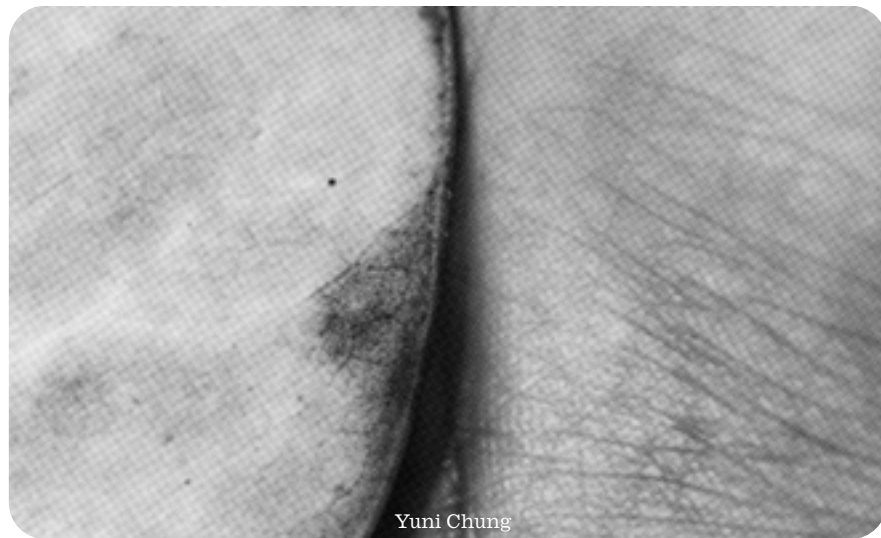
But if asked to choose the most beautiful plant here, many would say the Iris. In mythology, Iris is the goddess who personifies the rainbow, serving as a messenger between heaven and earth. The Iris symbolises the golden age of Florence and has also been used as a symbol of French royalty. When I wanted to understand the beauty spoken of here, I spent time with the irises. Sometimes I felt like they were talking to me, though I'm not sure they liked the way I understood them. I tried to understand the meaning of beauty in the broadest sense possible.

Agave:

Further into the garden is a very large agave. Its body is marked with split wounds, reminiscent of a ballerina's feet. Their thorns



Chōri Dance ~Garden Table~



Yuni Chung

look like fingernails. When I need to talk to someone who speaks a different language than me, I look for our similarities and try to reach out to them. Through my fingertips, I attempt to share the ballet movements I've trained in, such as pointe or flex, until we become accustomed to each other's bodies.

Bamboo:

Bamboo remains green all year around and grows very straight. It was the standard for many musical notes and units of measurement in ancient East Asia. The old paper, musical tones, lengths, and units of length and volume were all made from bamboo. Bamboo represents the spirit of sages who defined the integrity of their times and has inspired many poets and scholars. Their bodies grow with nodes like scales, but when sounded, it resonates.

In the West, bamboo has become a symbol of the exotic, the oriental, and the feminine. People make labyrinths out of it, call bamboo pillows 'Dutch Wife', and regard it as an ecological tree. In Korea, I never felt very close to bamboo, but here, I feel I could become more of a friend to it.

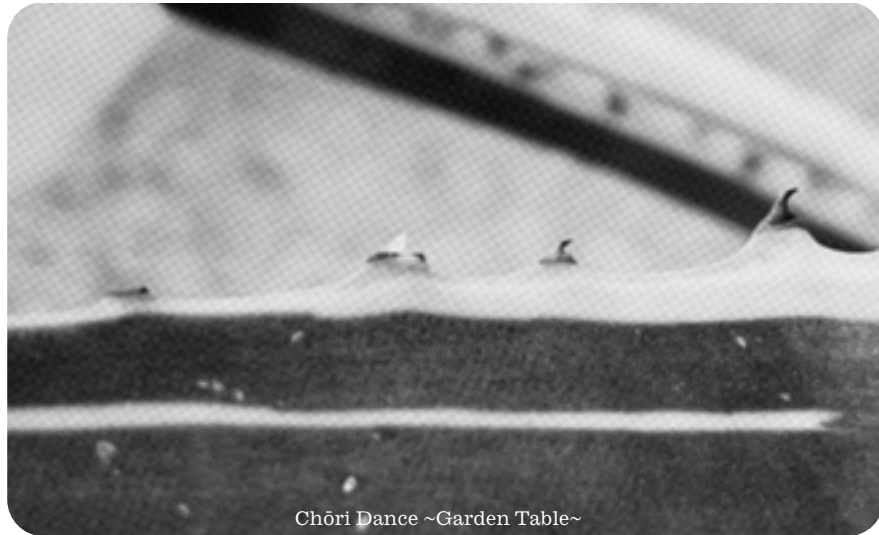
Ailanthus altissima: Also known as the tree of heaven or faux bamboo in Korean. They grow throughout the garden, with new shoots displaying a red hue, and when the stems are cut, they emit a strong, pungent scent reminiscent of garlic. They grow as fast as bamboo, but are often pulled out because they hinder the growth of other plants. They were brought here because they are decorative in gardens, and have survived because they are survivable. The word invasive conveys an attitude.

Ivy:

They wrap themselves around the other inhabitants of the garden, as if dancing with them. Following their moves makes you dizzy, as if your vision is turning black. They always invite me into the night. In the shadows we are indistinguishable from each other. Ivy's other name is Love plant. They symbolise Dionysus.

Sohui Jeong:

She told me that she played the violin before studying composition. I introduced her to the performers I encountered in the garden, and she choreographed for each of them through the strings of the violin.



Chōri Dance ~Garden Table~



Yuni Chung

Olive trees:

They are growing everywhere as a certain silence, a certain voice, a certain echo, and we listened with many bodies in the garden to understand that space.

Ray:

p. 90 / 21 June 2024

Cooking - Fermentation

‘조리Chōri’ means cooking in both Korean and Japanese. It isn’t about cooking where one chef dominates the whole kitchen, it’s about collaboration exploring how we can see possibilities with ingredients we don’t even fully know.

It’s summer when the sun is very high. The flesh burns, the shadows deepen, and many people long for the night.

Many olive trees grow in this garden, many are cut down in some places. They were a symbol of resistance for someone long ago, and still are now.

In this space, I have been recreating the 12 movements of the National Gymnastics score. The breathing score and the olive tree score form the beginning and end of the film. A space where the sense of breath, rhythm and sound come together and ferment.

One could write that the intense sun of summer ripens the olive, turning them into fruit. It could be an invitation to harvest and digest them, but such images are not enough in this garden. I decided to stand next to the olive tree and slowly move my body, in a rhythm that is inscribed in my body and called breathing. On count, we are cut into the frame. Our bodies merge in the shadows. A shared breath. Chōring – fermenting together. Here, the heat becomes the force that fuels our fermentation.



Chōri Dance ~Garden Table~



Yuni Chung

Solstice

Solstice is a combination of 'Sol', meaning sun, and 'stice', meaning stillness, marking the longest day of the year. Gabriella and I spent a month exploring how to dance with the sun, shadows, wind, and grass. How could we invite this seemingly still sun into our dance?

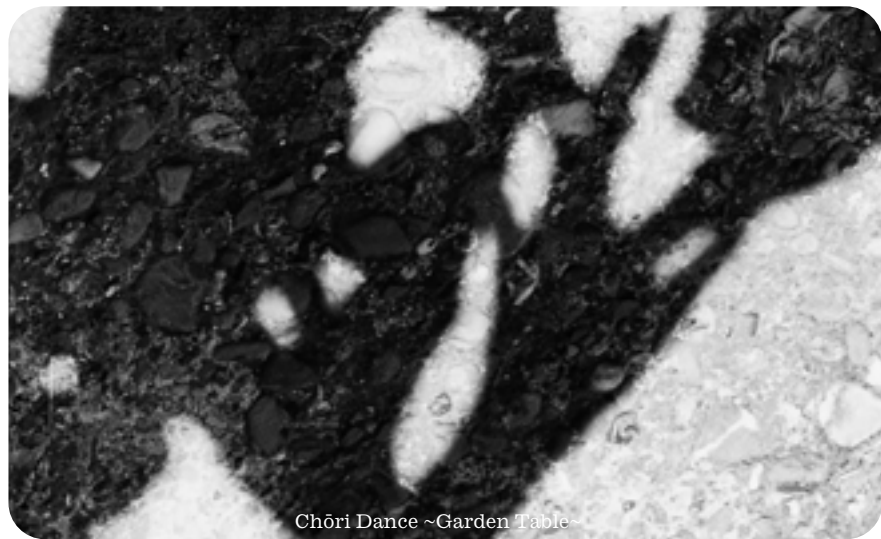
At the beginning of the event, we brought light from the ceremony at the Church of San Miniato to the villa. Holding our mirrors, we exchanged light, held hands through shadow despite the distance, illuminating the silhouettes of small grasses, and seeping into the shadows of the garden. The event continued in the garden, listening to sounds by the olive trees, fermenting together, watching the fireflies, talking under the full moon, letting the sun pass by. In that way, I could also write the light.

Sævaŋg

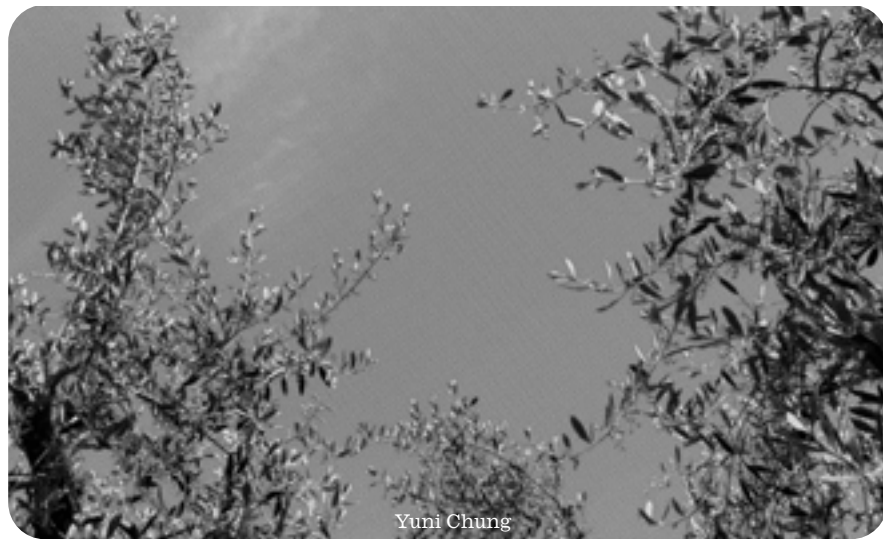
When I turn my body into a space, there is a silence. I've read it as a wave and as breath. Those readings took me to other bodies and allowed me to blend into the world.

Voicing, speaking as a body, resonating the body to create waves. The way of my voice is not a clear sentence, not a labyrinth of languages colliding and encountering. To inlay the body into the world through metaphor, to merge into it, so that beautiful scenes can be excavated. To speak as part of the world and as us, that these scenes are also the part of this world, that we must believe in them because they have always been and will always be with us.

It is summer now, and I breathe with the olive tree. It seems I will stay in the garden a little longer.



Chōri Dance ~Garden Table~



Yuni Chung



Ray is a series of performed sculptures, formed by bodies and mirrors, working with sunlight and shadow. Using mirrors found in the Villa Romana bedrooms, three performers – Yuni Chung, Gabriella Hirst and Yeni Ma – redirect the summer solstice sunlight from the highest point in the Villa Romana

Ray

(the rooftop terrace, the site of a permanent architectural sundial) down two floors into the shadowed garden courtyard, as a theatrical manual sun-spotlight. The borrowed rays are passed between the performers, visibility flickering and faltering with the coming and going of clouds

Yuni Chung & Gabriella Hirst



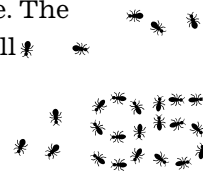
and the wind. A choreography between sun, glass, body and the garden foliage is formed as the performers try to capture the sun, hold it steady, and pass it onwards.

On the 21st of June, between midday and 1pm at the hilltop Basilica San Miniato, Florence, visitors can



Ray

view the apparition of a beam of sunlight which illuminates the crab-shaped cancer symbol on a circular zodiac mosaic on the basilica floor, marking the high summer solstice. The phenomenon is formed by a pinhole gnomon, a small opening high up near the building's ceiling, which



Yuni Chung & Gabriella Hirst



creates and projects a camera obscura image of the sun onto the marble floor – an instrument of light and space that was used to measure and help set Julian calendar time. There are other such solar calendars marked in holy buildings in Florence – evidenced year round as slender lines of bronze embedded

Ray

in marble floors, their celestial timemarking function only apparent at certain brief moments in the year. The continued functionality of the gnomon of San Miniato, created in the 13th Century, was only 'rediscovered' by monks some years ago.

Yuni Chung & Gabriella Hirst



Ray reperforms this solstice sunlight phenomenon, capturing the sun's beams on the same day, some hours after the midday time-keeping apparition, as a dancing form, a theatrical spotlight. We stretch this beam into lines of light across the pebbled floor, we exchange it between us, we redirect

Ray

it onto a curtain and blend our limbs with those of trees as silhouettes. It remains unclear who is following, and who is leading. The sunlight and mirrors erase us and double us. We cast the sunlight from above upwards into the shaded foliage below, redistributing its energy. We wear

Yuni Chung & Gabriella Hirst



sunglasses for protection. We rehearse when the clouds clear.

* *'An apple, a pear, a potato: these are small extraterrestrial lights*
* *encapsulated in the mineral matter of our planet. This same light*
* *is what every animal seeks in the body of the other when it*



Ray

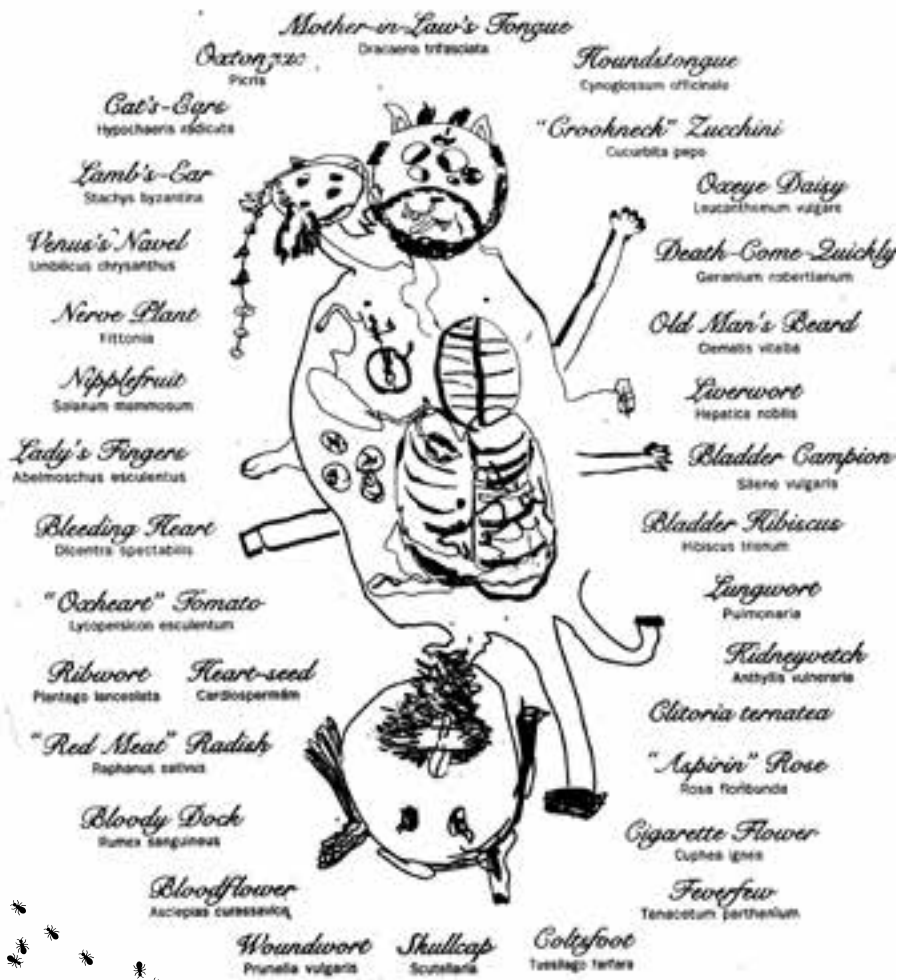
eats (regardless of whether it eats other animals or plants): every act of nutrition is nothing other than a secret and invisible commerce of extraterrestrial light, which by its movements, circulates from body to body, from species to species, from kingdom to kingdom.'

— Emanuele Coccia in conversation with Nicolas Truong, 2020.

Yuni Chung & Gabriella Hirst



Body Garden, planted spring 2024





Rudolf II of Habsburg
as *Vertumnus*,
Giuseppe Arcimboldo,
1590

¹ Holland, Michael (Head of Education, Chelsea Physic Garden). *Chelsea Physic Garden Though the ages*. Transcribed lecture, Gresham College, 14 March 2016. <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/watch-now/chelsea-physic-garden-through-ages>.

I

The Chelsea Physic Garden in London was founded as a living apothecary in 1638, and was once the main testing ground for medicinal plants of the British Empire, its seeds redeployed globally following the wounded bodies of advancing imperial armies.¹ The plants which grow in it today are still largely organised according to medical use. In one section, I came across a series of neatly planted beds, each bed titled with the name of a human body organ: the Spleen Bed, the Brain Bed. The beds were kept tidy, so that up in the sunlight the plant groups and their useful relation to human anatomy were distinct, but I kept thinking that below the surface, underground, the unprunable root systems of these plant-organs would be tangling around one another, a dark wet mess.

I read that towards the end of the Middle Ages a shift in mainstream anatomical thinking was ushered in. The shift was one of division: the body, previously considered as a whole, albeit leaky vessel, was split up into mechanical parts, each organ reimaged as a productive cog in a machine of labour. Silvia Federici talks about this shift as intimately connected to the development of early

capitalism, and the criminalisation of female-led practices of healing, and care associated with reproductive labour – the witch-hunts. I read about this during the height of the Covid 19 pandemic, whilst, meanwhile, the mechanisms of mass public healthcare were becoming more apparent than I – and I would venture, most people – had ever previously experienced, and as alt-wellness culture, often aligned with conspiracy thinking, gained traction. Strange contradictions and confusions emerged. Federici's Marxist feminism suddenly uncomfortably rubbed shoulders with Querdenken anti-vax neo-witch individualism. There is a mental somersault here I am still mid-air within – about care and a collective social body, trust and fear, a reckoning with the borders of an individual organism in a society. I have noticed that the Doctrine of Signatures is currently having a revival amidst health and wellness personalities on social media.

II

Travel down Via Senese and continue through Porta Romana to the Specola Museum, on the top floor there is a room with perfect wax replicas of fruit and vegetables – varieties that had been brought to Europe in



Wax models
La Specola



the 1500s as part of the Columbian exchange, the transfer of plants, animal, human and microbial bodies between South America and Europe at the outset of transatlantic Colonialism. Taut and shiny, these wax fruits have been ripe since the 1790s. They were produced alongside the museum's more famous wax models of dissected human and animal corpses. Some of the models depict magnified specimens, fine cell structures and veins rendered perfectly in pale wax. Displayed side by side, it is easy to blur animal and vegetal anatomy. The wax matter itself is also a blend of fruit and fauna flesh, spermaceti, palm and beeswax melted together.

² Raffaelli, Mauro (ed.). *Il Museo di Storia Naturale dell'Università di Firenze – Le collezioni botaniche*. Firenze University Press. 2009.



Also housed in the Specola Museum is the The Andrea Cesalpino Herbarium. Created in the 1500s, the herbarium is supposedly the “first comprehensive systematic collection of plants”, a precursor to Linnaeus. It comprises 266 pages upon which are glued 769 plant specimens. Unlike previous classification systems, which were based on use (medical or nutrient) Cesalpino organised Tuscan flora according to physical characteristics (the shape of leaves, the length of stamen)². Apparently, over the following centuries, a large portion of the herbarium species were eaten by moths, who mixed and mulched Cesalpino's precisely ordered collection into their tiny moth bellies, the tidy system digested

The Garden is a Body, the Body is a Garden

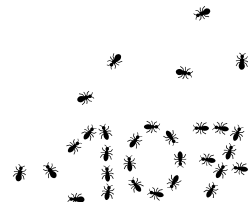
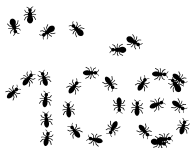
and disintegrated by stomach enzymes. As fodder, all these carefully organised specimens were returned to a singular use value, as moth food, all other language and meaning masticated away.

III

A few years ago I went on a trip to Sicily. I arrived at my destination in the south late in the evening, having driven through a storm down unpaved and unlit roads. The next morning, the sun revealed what the night had kept hidden: the nearby countryside was encrusted with a particular type of agricultural architecture – row upon row of tunnel greenhouses, plastic arched ribcages stretched with translucent plastic skins, threaded with vascular irrigation systems. It was as if the ocean tide had retreated after the previous night's storm, and left behind thousands of translucent whale carcasses, beached and sweltering in the morning heat.

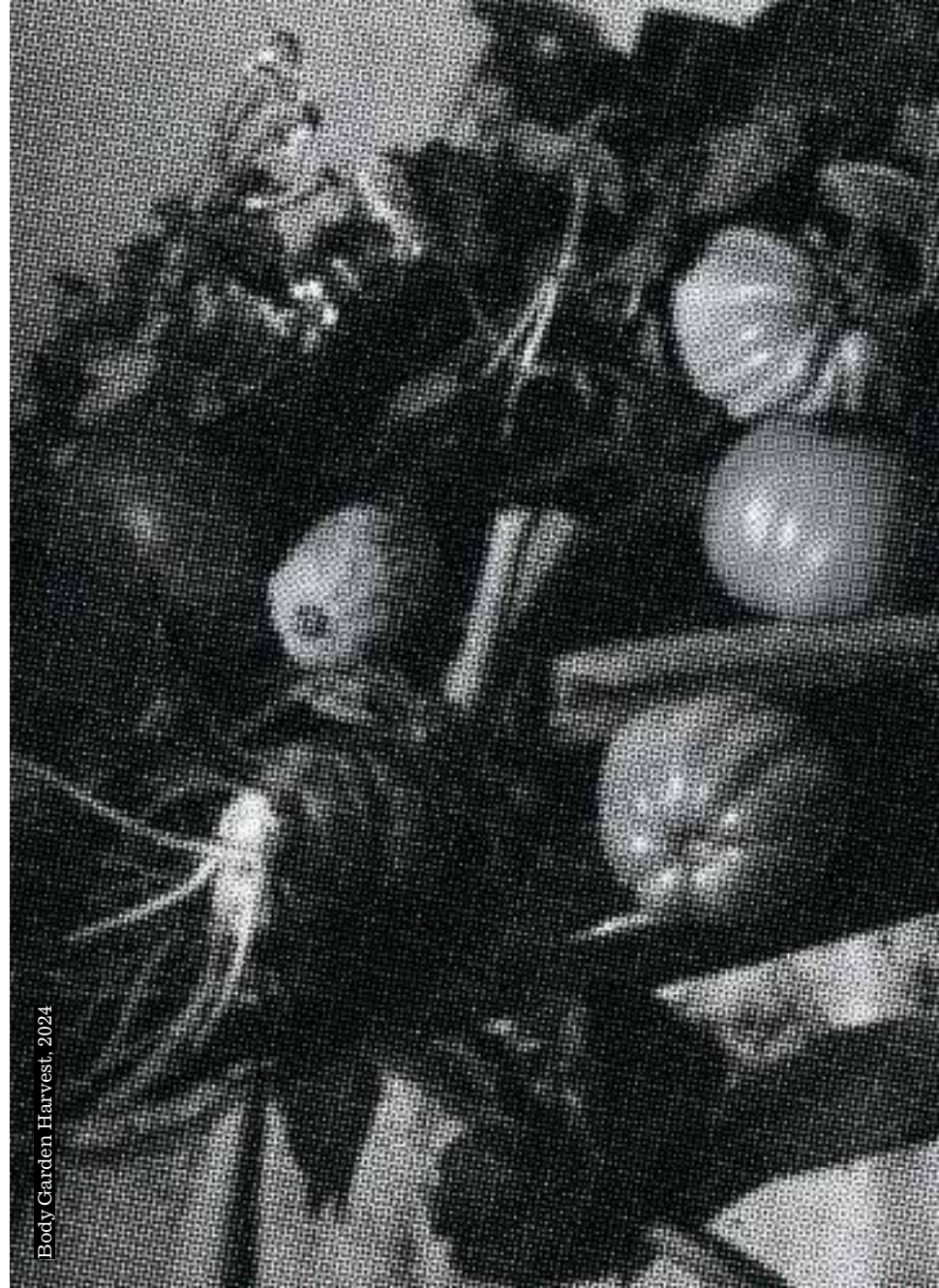
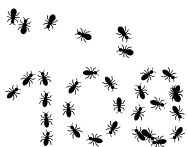
For many communities historically, a beached whale would be considered a gift, a bounty of flesh and energy washed up upon the shore: an ocean harvest. The flesh picked from the Sicilian hothouse torsos is, instead, vegetal – tomatoes, aubergines,

Gabriella Hirst



cucumbers, zucchinis, the great great great great grandchildren of those varieties mirrored in wax in the Specola Museum. Of these, the plant most commonly grown in the Sicilian greenhouses is the tomato – San Marzano, Oxheart, cherry, egg, red red red, swelling and sweating in polythene chests. When they first were brought to Europe in 1548, tomatoes were imagined to be dangerous, associated with ‘flying ointments’ that women/herbalists were accused of using in witchcraft, and categorised as a cold fruit capable of leeching heat from the inside of the body. And now Italy is the world’s second largest producer of fresh tomatoes for processing, 60% of which is produced for export³, shipped northwards to fill the budget supermarkets of the European Union, to be channelled down the oesophagi of those with secure paperwork. In Sicily, ripe fruits and vegetables are harvested by workers without rights or the right papers. A greenhouse of young plants is called a forcing tunnel – the humidity forces their quick growth and speedy fruiting. In the middle of summer the temperatures inside these hothouses regularly reached 50 degrees Celsius. The regular temperature of the human heart is 35.

³ Gentilcore, David. *Pomodoro!: A History of the Tomato in Italy*. Columbia University Press, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.7312/genti15206>



Body Garden Harvest, 2024

IV

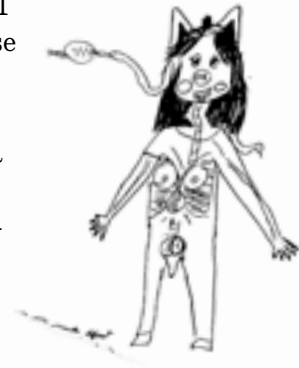
My mother had breast cancer in her late 40s, whilst I was a teenager, and I remember distinctly a phrase of hers from this time, a common one of those who find themselves suddenly unwell – that her body had betrayed her. I understood this as your body doing something malevolent, behind your back, a back-stab, but under your spine, that you only find out about after the deed is done. The body as a criminal, a thief, a cat-burglar, sneaking around under the cover of darkness of ones own flesh. To avoid betrayal one must continually observe oneself, if one watches oneself closely enough, the malevolent deed may be avoided.

If I am honest, I only have the slimmest faintest idea of how the inside of my body functions. It shocks me that I know so little about it, and that I can't really envision it, its colours, shapes, spaces. I'm disturbed that even if I were to read as many Wikipedia articles as there are out there and watch medical emergency shows and dog my two doctor friends for scraps of insight, I still won't really know what it looks like inside me. And that I thus can't watch it, keep an eye on it. When I imagine the inside of my

body, I think of the children's TV show The Magic School Bus, where the teacher shrinks down her students and they spend the day riding platelets like white water rafts and gurgling in baths of stomach acid. I imagine my organs as a pile of grocery vegetables.

As a teenager I was told how Da Vinci would have his assistants steal the corpses of the recently deceased, who as I learnt later, were often poor, criminalised women, so that he could open them up and draw the interiors. I was told that the church forbade this because the human body was considered sacred: we should not see or depict what is beneath the skin. This lesson in art history was used as a key explainer for the transit from the Dark Ages into the Enlightenment. Da Vinci literally bringing daylight into the dark interior of the body. His assistants in the morgue would have scrambled with surgeons and medical students for lukewarm skin.

Medical Enlightenment happened slowly, it continues to happen slowly. Various parts of human bodies remain in relative darkness. Light takes the form of medical funding, the coin is a torch. It astonishes me that to confirm whether or not I have Endometriosis I would need to have surgery. The gynaecologist who inserted the ultrasound stick into me told me afterwards that to make any





concrete diagnosis they would have to 'go inside and have a look'. With a torch, or an oil lamp, I imagined. My father recently had surgery to try to remove an awful thing. They did numerous exhausting tests before he was opened up. Afterwards, my sister relayed some of the surgeon's notes, and what stayed with me the most was that, apparently, inside, even for this genius surgeon, all flesh, good or evil, is very similar in appearance. The malevolent body blends into the functioning, productive body, even once opened and in full light, betrayal, theft, in the broad light of day.

V



Body Garden sketch,
GH 2023

The *Body Garden* is a living sculpture, it is a site to care for over time, to think about the edges of a body, where it begins and ends, the troubles of caring for your own or those of others. It is made up of a selection of plants that reference (in their names and forms) different parts of a body, and various different attempts to treat and tend to its inner workings. The body parts and treatments referenced are not at all straightforward and not at all purely anthropological. Ribworts and Lungworts were named in the Galenic tradition, whilst Oxheart tomatoes were

patented as such to appeal to a meat-starved post-war market. Some plants are toxic, some are healing, some are both. Cancer Weed (*Euphorbia peplus*) has qualities that can be used to treat skin cancers. Cigarette Flower (*Cuphea Ignea*) has no medical properties but its blooms resemble tiny burning rolled cigarettes. Heartsease (*Viola tricolor*) is said to heal a broken heart. There are a few Tongues – Cat's, Larks, Ox and Mother in Law – two Bladders and various species of Blood.

There are two *Body Gardens*. One grows in Cammeraygal soil, in Sydney, Australia, planted in October 2023 by the house I grew up in and tended to by my family. The other is in Florence at Villa Romana. They have different plants in them, with some crossovers. In Florence, the *Body Garden* contains some plants introduced as seeds or cuttings, and others transplanted from where they were already growing elsewhere in the Villa Romana grounds. The selection was developed in conversation with the other spring 2024 house inhabitants.

To make the *Body Garden*, we first needed to prepare the soil. One machine whipped away the existing leafy growth, another churned the earth to pull up roots. We then turned the soil daily to expose the torn roots to the



sun's rays, to burn away the life of what had only recently been designated a weed, that is, a plant growing in the 'wrong' place. The soil turned out stones and pebbles, I sorted through them and created an edge for the *Body Garden*, a skin from extracted lumps.

"I tend to the *Body Garden*, I cover it, I watch it every day, I wait for the seeds to germinate," I wrote in early June. Some plants grew faster than others. Some have not (yet) grown at all. Some started and then died. As the seeds began to sprout, the hardest thing was knowing which growth was a seedling I had sown and which was growth from another plant that had crept in from beyond the low stone-skin border.

In May, I did a workshop with the four children who live at Villa Romana – Lila, Joia, Jaki and Edoardo. I asked them to draw a body comprised of the organs and features listed in the *Body Garden*. The resulting wonderful, imagined beings burst with cat's ears, wandering nipples, approximated livers and lost kidneys. They reminded me of a quote by Anne Carson, discussing the perception of women in antiquity:

"Woman was regarded as a creature whose boundaries are unstable, whose power to control them is inadequate. Deformation at-

tends her. She swells, she shrinks, she leaks, she perforates, she disintegrates...Think of the monsters of Greek myth, who are mostly women with deranged boundaries, like Skylla, Medusa, the Sirens, the Harpies, the Amazons, the Sphinx." — Anne Carson, excerpt from *Dirt and Desire: Essay on the Phenomenology of Female Pollution in Antiquity*.⁴

The final drawing was made collectively by all four children. It was transformed into a brass sign, which is now attached to the limonaia by the *Body Garden*, where it will, for now, remain. The *Body Garden* itself will, of course, continue to change over the coming months and years. Negotiating the garden-artwork's perpetual incompleteness is an exercise of ever shifting relations of care and control. How do we archive a garden-artwork? How do we make it still? How do we keep a body safe, alive, loved? After I leave the residency the garden will continue to be watered and looked after, but over time (and not much of it) the stone-skin-border will deteriorate. The carefully selected and sourced organ-plants may seed and spread out into the Villa Romana grounds, whilst weed 'intruders' will creep into the bed and maybe take over.

Whilst I was away from the garden for some weeks in early July, the tomato plants be-

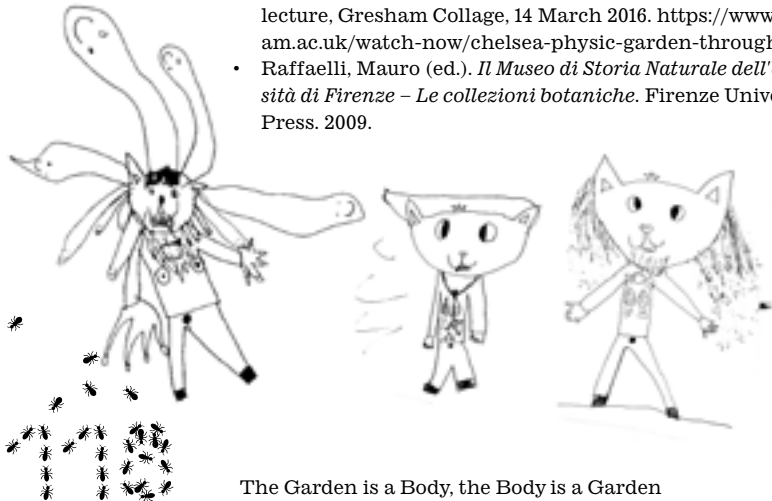
⁴ Carson, Anne. "Dirt and Desire: Essay on the Phenomenology of Female Pollution in Antiquity." *Men in the Off Hours*. Alfred A. Knopf Inc. 2000.



came enormous. The zucchini plants went rampant and fruited rapidly, lumpen necks arching and slumping over branches, vast leaves sucking up sunlight whilst others, shaded, remained tiny. I had returned to Villa Romana for the first *Body Garden* harvest. “Crook-Neck” zucchinis, Oxheart tomatoes, Lady Fingers okra, “Red Meat” radish, “Bull’s Blood” beetroot, Bloody Dock. We made a small feast of the *Body Garden*. We digested it’s small systems of order, consuming all this love, this continual confusion.

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The Garden is a Body, the Body is a Garden

Body Garden Plants

“Golden Crookneck”
zucchini
(Cucurbita pepo)

“Red Meat” Radish
(Raphanus sativus)

Bladder Hibiscus
(Hibiscus trionum)

Kidneyvetch
(Anthyllis vulneraria)

Liverwort
(Hepatica nobilis)

Nerve plant
(Fittonia)

Bladder Campion
(Silene vulgaris)

Oxheart tomato
(Lycopersicon
esculentum)

“Aspirin” rose
(Rosa floribunda)

Woundwort
(Prunella vulgaris)

Feverfew
(Tanacetum parthenium)

Death-Come-Quickly
(Geranium robertianum)

Nosebleed plant

Lungwort
(Pulmonaria)

Cigarette Flower
(Cuphea Ignea)

Houndstongue
(Cynoglossum officinale)

Mother-In-
Law’s Tongue
(Dracaena trifasciata)

Oxtongue
(Picris)

“Lark’s Tongue”
Curly Kale
(Brassica oleracea)

Bleeding Heart
(Dicentra spectabilis)

Heart-seed
(Cardiospermum)

String of Hearts
(Ceropegia woodii)

Heartsease
(Viola tricolor)

Bloodflower
(Asclepias curassavica)

“Bull’s Blood”
beetroot
(Beta vulgaris)

Clitoria Ternatea

Bloody Dock
(Rumex sanguineus)

Oxeye Daisy
(Leucanthemum vulgare)

Old Man’s Beard
(Clematis vitalba)

Venus’s Navel
(Umbilicus chrysanthus)

Lady’s fingers
(Abelmoschus esculentus)

Coltsfoot
(Tussilago farfara)

Lamb’s-ear
(Stachys byzantina)

Cat’s-Ears
(Hypochaeris radicata)

Toothache plant/
Eyeball plant
(Acmella oleracea)

Cancer Weed/Radium
(Euphorbia peplus)

Ribwort
(Plantago lanceolata)

Skullcap
(Scutellaria lateriflora)

Nipplefruit
(Solanum mammosum)

Broken Heart Gardening Instruction

Plant Oxheart tomato seeds
in early spring,
into soils or a pot kept
in a sunny spot.

Water daily to keep the
soil damp but not wet.

Once they start to
grow, Prick out the small
plants so the remaining
ones have enough space
to grow.

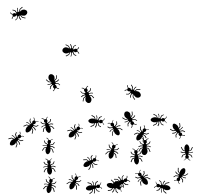
Trust that they will grow.

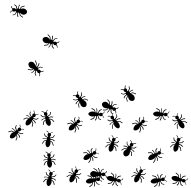
Support the new growth
with bamboo sticks and
soft string.

After flowering,
once the fruit begins
to ripen, Place a Paper
bag around tomatoes
to protect them from
birds and insects.

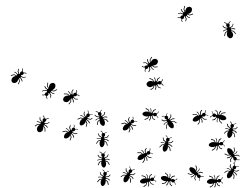
Eat the tomatoes with
salt and oil.

Put on the most tragic song
you can think of,
on loud, on repeat,
and as you swallow,
think about every
heartbreak, great or
small, you have ever
endured and/or inflicted.





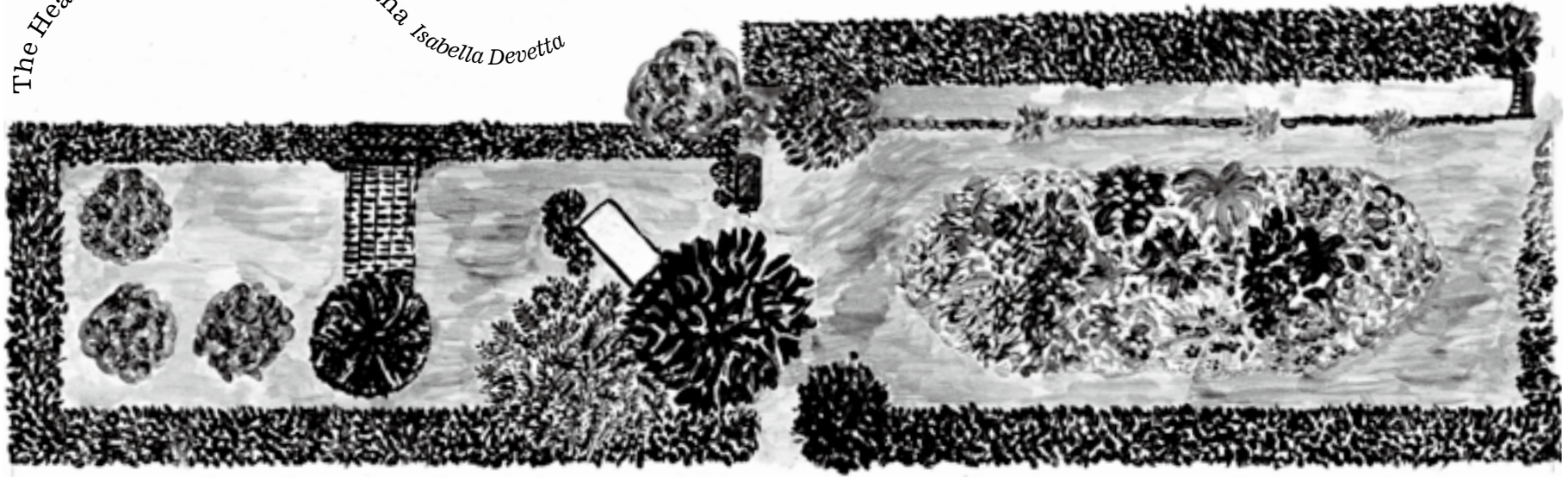
The Garden is a Body, the Body is a Garden



Gabriella Hirst



The Healing Garden at Villa Romana *Isabella Devetta*



How can an artists' house become a space for collaborative healing and learning from plants?

Drawing from the pre-existing biodiversity in Villa Romana's garden we have created a medicinal garden, put differently, a garden for healing both for humans and the villa's nonhuman inhabitants. With the expert knowledge of agronomist Isabella Devetta we mapped the biodiversity of the garden and learned about the pre-existing species with medicinal properties. Exploring what the reasons and conditions are that might make us turn to plants – such as stress, anxiety, pain, digestion, sleep – we created a space that offers both an aesthetic experience of being held and belonging as well as a space for collective

gatherings and practical learning from plants and people with herbal medicinal knowledge. In the spring of 2024 we started using this garden actively, sharing knowledges around the plants with Villa Romana's audiences and visitors and creating moments of collection, processing and experimentation.

In the Healing garden, the central flowerbed and shady flowerbed plants were chosen according to the following criteria, which are not always coexistent for the same plant:

- Predominantly European flora species
- Possibility of simple domestic use (infusion, decoction or home preparations for external use).

- Particular significance from a medical point of view
- Possibility of viable combinations for garden aesthetics, also using non-medicinal plants.
- Toxicity, when present, is indicated.

MEDICINAL PLANTS

Achillea millefolium (yarrow)

Aromatic bitter, digestive properties, antispasmodic and sedative of the gastrointestinal system, thins biliary secretion. Pharmacological properties similar to chamomile.

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | flowering tops |
| Internal use: | Infused 4 g in 100 ml boiling water, one cup 2–3 times a day, as needed |
| External use: | Suitable for external washings in cases of hemorrhoids or anal fissures |

Calendula officinalis (marigold)

For reddened skin and mucous membranes, sunburn. Traditional internal use to promote menstruation, as an antispasmodic and antihemorrhagic is not confirmed by current studies; data on safety of use (side effects, interactions with other drugs, contraindications) are lacking.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | flower heads |
| External use: | Decoction 6 g flowers in 100 ml water, soaked washes or compresses for 30 minutes on affected parts. Fresh flowers bruised on the part. |
| Oleolite: | Take a certain amount of fresh flowers, chop them, mix with a good amount of coarse salt and cover with olive oil, possibly add a few drops of vitamin E as an antioxidant. Leave to macerate for about 10 days, stirring often, in a warm place (40–50°C) such as over a radiator or in a bain-marie. It can also be made with dried flowers, let macerate for 1 month. |
| Food use: | Petals of the flowers to add to salads or to make raw sauces. |



The Healing Garden at Villa Romana

Chelidonium majus (celandine, leek grass)

TOXIC PLANT. Eliminates warts and corns. Some of its alkaloids have become drugs with antineoplastic activity.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | orange-yellow latex |
| External use: | Applications to the wart of the fresh juice obtained from the stems. |

Echinacea purpurea (echinacea, purple coneflower)

Boosts immune defenses during colds and flu, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antibacterial effects. Mother tincture, properly titrated. Dried petals can be used in herbal tea, mixed in modest amounts with other herbs, but with little or no therapeutic efficacy.

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | root |
| Pharmaceutical product: | Dry extract titrated in polysaccharides, 200–44 mg 2–3 times daily |

Eschscholzia californica (California poppy, golden poppy)

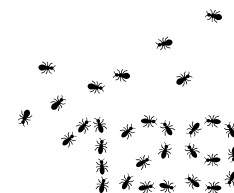
For painful states of the visceral abdominal muscles, tension headache: only under medical supervision. Difficulty falling asleep.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | flowering tops |
| Internal use: | Infusion of the petals, one teaspoon to 1 cup boiling water, 1–2 cups before bedtime |

Foeniculum vulgare (wild fennel)

Cramps of the digestive tract, hiatal hernia, flatulence, slow digestion, constipation. Wild fennel fruits are richer in active ingredients; infusion of the leaves is also pleasant, but less effective.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | fruits |
| Internal use: | Infusion of the fruits, one teaspoon per 1 cup of boiling water, 1–2 cups before bedtime |



Isabella Devetta

Helichrysum italicum (helichrysum, perpetuini, curry plant)

Sedates coughing fits and promotes the elimination of bronchial catarrh, generally anti-inflammatory and anti-allergic of the respiratory system. For soothing sun-burns, eczema and psoriasis.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | flowering tops |
| Internal use: | Decoction of 2 g in 100 ml water, 2–3 cups daily, or as an aerosol, do not use for young children and pregnant women |
| External use: | Decoction of 6 g in 100 ml water, apply with compresses to affected parts. |
| Oleolite: | 20 g dried flowering tops in 100 ml olive oil, macerate for 10–30 days in a warm place away from light. |

Hypericum perforatum (St. John's wort)

To treat sores, wounds, sunburns, senescent skin. Antidepressant. May interfere with other drugs.

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | flowering tops |
| Internal use: | Only under medical supervision as an antidepressant in the form of standardised dry extract. |
| External use: | 30 g fresh flowering tops in 100 ml olive oil, with 10 g white wine. Leave in the sun for 15 days, shaking occasionally, then strain. |

Lavandula x intermedia (lavender)

Sedative and antispasmodic properties, for headaches, abdominal cramps, nausea, thins bile and helps liver. Helps sedate cough in the form of aerosol with essential oil. Purifies the skin, improves blood circulation to the scalp.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | flowering tops |
| Internal use: | Infusion of 1 g flowers in 100 ml boiling water as a mild sedative and bile stimulant. |
| External use: | Tincture 20 g of dried flowers in 30° alcohol, steeping for 8 days, as a skin and mouth disinfectant, for rubbing oily hair. Flowers in bath water (for those who can still do it occasionally). |

Lilium candidum (St. Anthony's lily, Madonna lily)

For burns and inflammation of the skin, itching

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | tepals, bulb |
| External use: | Tepals 10 g in 100 ml almond oil, not specified if fresh or dried, soak for 5 days. Light rubs on affected parts. Uses of the fresh or cooked bulb are inadvisable because they destroy the plant. |

Malva sylvestris (mallow)

Anti-inflammatory action on mucous membranes, especially digestive system (oral cavity, esophagus, stomach, intestines).

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | flowers, leaves, roots |
| Internal use: | Flowers and leaves infused one tablespoon in a cup of boiling water, infuse for 15–20 minutes. Fresh chopped root macerated in water, 5%, at room temperature for 5 hours. For colitis and states of increased inflammation. Again, the plant is destroyed. |
| External use: | Infused to make rinses, washes or gargles, emollient and moisturizing baths. |

Melissa officinalis (lemon balm)

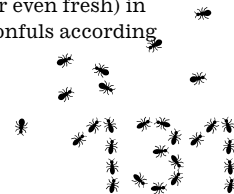
Sedative action on the central nervous system, inhibiting thyroid functioning: anxiety, insomnia, irritable bowel. Essential oil in capsules as an antispasmodic under prescription.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | leaves and stems until beginning of flowering |
| Internal use: | Infusion with one teaspoon of dried or fresh crushed leaves per cup of boiling water, infuse for 15 minutes. |

Papaver rhoeas (poppy)

Sedative.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Phytotherapeutic part: | petals |
| Internal use: | Infusion 5 g shade-dried petals (or even fresh) in 250 ml boiling water. Take by spoonfuls according to body weight. |



Rosa à parfum de l'Hajj (very fragrant hybrid of *Rosa rugosa*)
Digestive and intestinal astringent, soothing. The *Rosa gallica* species is the one most traditionally used for medicinal purposes.

Phytotherapeutic part: petals
Internal use: Infusion of the fresh or dried petals, also mixed with other herbs as a digestive, mild in effect but very pleasant. 1–2 g in 100 ml of boiling water.

Salvia officinalis (sage)
Disinfectant, digestive, balsamic, anti-inflammatory. The essential oil has a high neurotoxic thujone content, so take under medical supervision.

Phytotherapeutic part: leaves
Internal use: Infusion 1 g of chopped leaves in 100 ml of boiling water (with honey and lemon peel)
External use: Infusion 4 g of leaves in 100 ml of boiling water for rinsing, gargling, washing.

Clary sage
Aromatizing, aperitif, digestive, antispasmodic, balsamic. Not to be used continuously, but only as needed. Its essential oil is used in perfumery. The essential oil is also used as an anti-inflammatory in vaginal ovules in cases of vaginitis.

Phytotherapeutic part: flowering tops
Internal use: Infusion 2 g flowers in 100 ml boiling water
External use: Decoction 6 g flowers in 100 ml water, make rinses.

Sempervivum tectorum (greater evergreen, common houseleek)
Corns and calluses, bee or wasp stings, minor burns. They can also be used for food purposes on an occasional basis.

Phytotherapeutic part: the fresh leaves
External use: The fresh leaf, stripped of epidermis, placed on the spot to be treated. Rub lightly for stings and irritations, apply daily, holding the leaf as long as possible for corns and calluses.



The Healing Garden at Villa Romana

Silybum marianum (milk thistle)
Hepatoprotector in toxic hepatopathies, chronic or viral hepatitis, liver cirrhosis, as an antidote in intoxications by the fungus *Amanita phalloides*. The active ingredient is silymarine. For these uses only under medical supervision in the form of a phytocomplex extracted from the fruit and titrated into silymarin.

Phytotherapeutic part: fruit
Internal use: May be used occasionally as a decoction of the fruit 3 g in 100 ml of water. 2–3 cups daily. Use with caution, however, due to possible side effects.

NON-MEDICINAL PLANTS

- *Aquilegia vulgaris* - TOXIC PLANT, especially the seeds
- *Campanula trachelium* - edible species
- *Cyclamen hederifolium* - TOXIC PLANT
- *Hedera helix* - TOXIC PLANT
- *Lunaria annua* - edible species
- *Myrtus communis var. tarentina* - aromatic species
- *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* - TOXIC PLANT
- *Nigella damascena* - TOXIC PLANT, except for the seeds that can be used as an aroma
- *Osmanthus fragrans* - ornamental
- *Sedum spectabile* - ornamental
- *Silene vulgaris* - edible species

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Isabella Devetta



Saint John's Wort oil & its properties



During the period between 20 and 24 June, between the summer solstice and the feast day of St John in Florence, you can harvest the flowers and a few leaves of *Hypericum perforatum* and prepare Saint John's wort oil. This oil has a strong healing, anti-inflammatory, soothing and antiseptic action and is therefore perfect for sunburns, burns, wounds, skin inflammations and irritations such as erythema. It is also very useful for easing muscle contractures and joint pain. It is an excellent after-sun and anti-wrinkle.

The recipe for St. John's Wort oil requires only two ingredients: fresh Saint John's

Wort flowers and olive oil (can be replaced with sunflower or sweet almond oil).

The flowering tops of the plant are picked by hand, making sure they are well dried. They are then placed in glass jars and completely covered with oil. These jars are left outdoors, in the sun, and shaken once a day to stir the contents. After a few days, the oil magically begins to turn red.

After 40 days, the contents must be filtered, using a sieve and gauze, and can be bottled in smaller bottles. The resulting oil is ruby red in colour and has an intense aroma.

The Healing Garden at Villa Romana

The State of Vexation *Yeni Ma*

"How agitated I am in the garden, and how happy I am to be so agitated. How vexed I often am when I am in the garden, and how happy I am to be so vexed."

Jamaica Kincaid, *My Garden*¹

I have taken care of a small garden attached to my apartment since I moved in this year. As I always wanted to have my own garden, I approached it with enthusiasm, hoping to create a lush and thriving space. However, I quickly realised that gardening was more challenging than I anticipated. My plans for a vibrant garden did not come to fruition, and my initial excitement turned into frustration. The garden, perhaps a paradise, I envisioned remained out of reach, replaced by a persistent struggle against so many elements, such as light, water, coldness, soil, and my lack of experience.

During a visit to Villa Romana in Florence, I saw gardens that were the opposite of mine – well-maintained and full of life, especially the olive tree community and healing garden, which has a lot of pharmaceutical plants and herbs. I felt a mixture of admiration and envy. It was there that I met the gardener who takes care of the beautiful healing garden in Villa Romana. I

¹ Jamaica Kincaid, *My Garden* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1999), 14.

told her of my desire to be a good gardener, and she responded, "Everyone can be a gardener, but gardening is always challenging for everyone."

Her words and all my garden situation made me realise: garden-making is not determined exclusively by human desires, but is the endeavor of many different species. Gardening involves careful attention to the needs and desires of the many beings essential to its development. Even the most meticulously planned garden may not unfold according to human will. Through numerous failures, I have learned about companion planting and the intricate relationships between plants, humans, pollinators, and soil, and 'gardens are as much about humble, sensitive, and agile response—and 'response-ability', in Donna Haraway's term—as they are about even the most thoughtful human planning.'²

At Villa Romana, the artists' projects which were shown at *ECLITTICA: Exercise of Cosmic Attunement and Transitions*, engaged with the garden and also reflected this uncontrollable multispecies co-creation. They made their own small garden-world, collected sound from many beings in the garden, and performed with these beings. They had to compromise with the desires of many species – the individual participants – and the uncertain circumstances, and embrace the unexpected outcomes. Their disappointment, dissatisfaction, and frustration are important parts of their works, reminding us of more-than-human involvements in world-making beyond human intentions.

Some of the works did not disconnect the small garden-world from the larger sociopolitical worlds. The global movements of

² Catriona Sandilands, "Worlds," in *On the Necessity of Gardening*, ed. Laurie Cluitmans (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2021), 180.

plants and the history of gardening itself implicate unbalanced and exploitive relationship intertwined with imperialism and colonialism. Gardens were often used as tools to impose order and control, transforming landscapes into spaces that reflected the coloniser's ideals of productivity, structure, and rationality. This history tells us that gardens are not merely spaces of beauty and purity but sites of discomfort and resistance.

In a time defined by climate crises, as a small garden-world maker, I know I cannot retreat from the larger worlds' issues. As I reflect on my journey with multispecies co-creation, I understand that being in the state of vexation is a fundamental part of world-making, whether it is small or large. Today, I am agitated again with the wilted petals and stubborn weed in the garden, but I am also happy to be agitated.

PASSAPARDOLA
(TRANSCRIPTS OF MESSAGES)

[III:05, 21/06/2024] DEAR MARLEEN,
ONE CAN FIND MANY ANALOGIES BETWEEN SEED
DISPERSAL, COLLECTION AND EXCHANGE, AND
PASSAPARDOLA - IN ENGLISH: WORD-OF-MOUTH.
THE SEED GARDEN HAS ALSO BEEN TRANS-
FERRED LIKEWISE. FROM AN ELABORATION BY
SOMEONE ELSE, AND MANY DONATIONS SENT PER
POST BY A NETWORK YOU STRENGTHENED OVER
THE YEARS. YOU AND LEONE MATERIALIZED
THE BEGINNING OF A STORY. AND BECAUSE
A TALE NEVER LOSES IN THE TELLING, THIS
YEAR POTATOES FROM SWEDEN AND TOMATOES
FROM RUSSIA MADE UNANNOUNCED VISITS TO
A NEW VERSION OF THIS STORYTELLING THAT
HAS GROWN IN BEANS AND CORN. AND OKRA,
AND COTTON, AND OTHER BORDERLINE UNETHI-
CAL FABULATIONS THAT MAKE ME WONDER IF
IT ISN'T GOSSIP WHAT WE ARE DOING. WELL,
FEDERICI ALREADY REDEEMED GOSSIP, AND IT
CAN'T BE A BAD THING TO BRING TOGETHER SO
MANY GESTURES OF LUST FOR LIFE. MAY THE
WORD CONTINUE TO SPREAD...

[III:02, 21/06/2024] DEAR LEONE,
EVERY DAY WHEN I WALK PAST THE RICE POND
I THINK OF THE FISH IN THERE. THERE ARE
SO MANY MOSQUITOS NOW THAT I IMAGINE THEY
ARE CONSTANTLY FEASTING. IT'S SO DARK IN
THE POND THAT YOU CANNOT SEE THEM, BUT

PERHAPS BY NOW THEY ARE HUGE, BIG WET
CATS OF FISH.

[III:13, 21/06/2024] TO LEONE
I HAVE LOVED OBSERVING THE CARE YOU'VE
PUT INTO THE RICE CULTIVATION POND, SEEING
THIS EXPERIMENT IN ADAPTATION, HOW THESE
CHINESE RICE GRAINS THAT YOU WERE TRUSTED
WITH ARE SLOWLY GROWING, AND HOW YOU HAVE
ADDED LITTLE FISH TO THE POND TO FOSTER
OTHER RELATIONS AROUND THEM, AND HOW
THEY'RE SEEPING INTO THE WIDER RELATIONS
OF THE GARDEN, THROUGH THE MOSQUITOS THEY
EAT, THE LIZZARDS THAT COME TO DRINK AT
THE POND ETC. IT HAS MADE ME THINK ABOUT
HOW BEING TRUSTED WITH SEEDS EXTENDS SO
FAR BEYOND AN INDIVIDUAL PLANT, TO THE
LIFEWORLDS THAT COME WITH THEM, AND HOW
BY SHARING SEEDS WE'RE ALSO SHARING THE
RELATIONS THEY COME WITH

[III:18, 21/06/2024] FOR YUNI:
IT'S ABOUT A WAIT TO COOK A VERY SPECIFIC
VEGETABLE (I CAN'T MENTION IT OR I WILL
SPOIL MY IDENTITY I'M AFRAID). YOU DON'T
WANT TO MAKE SOFFRITTO IN ORDER TO RE-
SPECT THE DELICATE TASTE OF IT. YOU JUST
CHOP IT, AND YOU ADD ONION, SOME TOMATO
(ALL CHOPPED), BASIL AND A LOT OF OLIVE
OIL AND YOU COOK IT WITH LITTLE SALT AND
LITTLE WATER. I GUESS YOU CAN USE THIS
RECIPE WITH ANY VEGETABLE.

[II:28, 21/06/2024] ANNOUNCEMENT: THE GAMBUSIA FISH JUST REPRODUCED ALREADY! MEANING THAT THEY APPRECIATE THE POND...

[II:22, 21/06/2024] ALSO TO YUNI:
YOU HAVE OBSERVED THE RHYTHMS OF THIS GARDEN OVER THE PAST MONTHS, WATCHING YOUR PROCESS HAS MADE ME MORE ATTENTIVE TO THE SOUNDS AND PATTERNS OF ALIVENESS AROUND ME. AFTER THE SCORE WE TESTED IN APRIL I KEPT PAYING A DIFFERENT KIND OF ATTENTION TO THE RHYTHMS OF WINDS AND INSECTS IN MY GARDEN, ALMOST LIKE A PRACTICE OF DEEP LISTENING, TRYING TO SHIFT OUT OF THIS ALL-TOO-HUMAN HEAD. THANK YOU FOR AT-TUNING US.

[II:24, 21/06/2024] DEAR MARLEEN,
YOU JUST ARRIVED HERE, BUT LUCKILY I THINK YOU WILL STILL GET THE CHANCE TO SEE SOME FIREFLIES! IN THE PREVIOUS WEEKS THERE HAVE BEEN MANY MORE, BUT LAST NIGHT I WALKED THROUGH THE GARDEN AND I NOTICED THAT THERE ARE STILL A FEW DANCING ABOUT IN THE EVENING. I COUNTED ONLY THREE, PERHAPS IT'S BECAUSE NOW THE TRUE SUMMER HAS ARRIVED AND THEY, LIKE US, JUST WANT TO BE ASLEEP. LETS SEE THE LAST MOST ENERGETIC STRAGGLERS TONIGHT

[II:29, 21/06/2024] DEAR GABRIELLA,
I THINK THAT MANY „BODY PARTS„ OF YOUR

GARDEN WILL SPREAD IN THE PARK IN UNEXPECTED WAYS

[II:29, 21/06/2024] DEAR MONAI,
I WONDER IF YOU CAN SEE FROM THE GARDEN SALON WHERE YOU ARE SITTING, THE MAGNOLIA TREE IN THE COURTYARD. YESTERDAY I WAS SPEAKING WITH ALA AND SHE TOLD ME IT IS HER FAVORITE FLOWER, IT IS ALSO MY MOTHER'S FAVORITE FLOWER. I ALWAYS THINK IT LOOKS PREHISTORIC AND GRAND BUT SLIGHTLY AWKWARD, THE FLOWERS ARE LIKE BIG WHITE BIRD'S WINGS. THE FLOWERS DON'T LAST LONG, I WAS HAPPY THAT ALA POINTED THEM OUT TO ME.

[II:30, 21/06/2024] LOVE NOTES TO YUNI AND GABRIELLA,
I WANT TO TALK ABOUT MOSQUITO. I KNOW YOU CAN'T LOVE THEM. I CANNOT EITHER. BUT I HEARD THAT FOR BIODIVERSITY, THEIR EXISTENCE IS ALSO IMPORTANT.... LET'S HOPE THEY ARE NOT DISAPPEARED AND NOT EXTINCT.

[II:32, 21/06/2024] TO GABRIELLA TOO:
ADDING TO THE PREVIOUS ANONYMOUS NOTE, THE BODY GARDEN THAT YOU HAVE TENDED TO AND NURTURED OVER THE LAST WEEKS HAS GIVEN ME SO MUCH FOOD FOR THOUGHT ALREADY - WATCHING GROWTH EXPLODE AS IT SLOWLY CHOOSES TO BECOME ITS OWN BEING. THERE'S

SOMETHING VERY BEAUTIFUL ABOUT DISSOLVING
A BODY INTO THIS GARDEN, LETTING ALL THE
ORGANS TAKE ROOT.

[II:33, 21/06/2024] DEAR MOSQUITOS,
CAN WE LEARN TO LOVE YOU? THE COLLECTIVE
YOU? IN A WAY YOU ARE BRINGING US TOGETH-
ER BY SHARING TINY DROPS OF BODY FLUID
BETWEEN US. SO, WE TRY.

[II:36, 21/06/2024] DEAR SUN.
WE WELCOME YOU AS OUR MOST HONORED GUEST
SPECIFICALLY BETWEEN 4- 7 PM. THANK YOU.

[II:41, 21/06/2024] DEAR TEAM THAT RESCUED
THE WILD KITTEN
THANK YOU! I'VE ALWAYS IMAGINED IT WOULD
BE WONDERFUL TO CREATE AN ARTWORK IN THE
GARDEN SPECIFICALLY FOR THE COLONY OF
WILD CATS, WEAVING INTO THE TEXTURE OF
WORKS THAT HAVE BECOME PART OF THE GAR-
DEN FOR DECADES. A SMALL CAT COLLECTIVE
HOUSE NEXT TO THE VILLA COLLECTIVE HOUSE.

[II:45, 21/06/2024] MOSQUITOS LOVE US, NOT
ONLY OUR BLOOD BUT ALSO THE „DEAD„ WATERS
THAT ANTHROPIC ENVIRONMENTS ALWAYS CREATE

[II:48, 21/06/2024] DEAR MISTURA,
I THINK ABOUT YOU HAVING GARDEN ALLERGIES
AND I HOPE YOU ARE OK NOW THAT EVERYTHING
IS IN FRENETIC FULL BLOOM. I ONCE HEARD

THAT IN LONDON, THE ALLERGIES TO POLLEN
ARE SO EXTREME BECAUSE THEY ONLY PLANT
'MALE' TREES, NOT SO CALLED 'FEMALE' TREES,
WHICH WOULD FRUIT. THEY DO THIS BECAUSE
THE FRUIT WOULD SUPPOSEDLY FALL AND SPOIL
AND BE A HEALTH HAZARD WITH VERMIN, MESSY
AND ROTTING. BUT THE PLANTING OF ONLY
'MALE' TREES, WHICH ALL LET OUT THEIR POL-
LEN AT ONCE IN SPRING, ALSO CAUSES HEALTH
PROBLEMS, THE SEEDS STICK IN OUR THROATS
AND OUR LUNGS. I AM NOT SURE ABOUT THESE
GENDERED DESIGNATIONS FOR PLANTS BUT I
THINK THE PLANTING OF ONLY MALE TREES IN
CIVIC SPACES SAYS SOMETHING SIGNIFICANT.
ANYWAY, IN THE MEANTIME AMIDST ALL THIS,
I HOPE YOUR ALLERGIES STAY CALM.

[II:53, 21/06/2024] A MESSAGE TO YOU! (MONAI)
THANK YOU FOR INITIATING THE SEED GAR-
DEN - IT HAS BEEN SUCH A GENERATIVE AND
FUN WAY TO SPEAK TO ARTISTS, GARDENERS
AND OTHERS ABOUT THE SEEDS THEY COLLECT
AND THE PLANTS THEY CARE FOR. I REMEMBER
LOOKING AT THE SEEDS YOU COLLECTED IN
BRAZIL AND ALL THE SHAPES AND SIZES THEY
CAME IN, THE FURRY TEXTURES. I'M NOT SURE
IF WE MANAGED TO GERMINATE ANY OF THEM,
AND THERE'S A GREAT MYSTERY IN THAT, NOT
BEING ABLE TO WORK OUT WHAT MIGHT ENCOUR-
AGE A SEED TO RESPOND BUT TRYING ANYWAY.

[III:53, 21/06/2024] (ELENA) IS THE SOUND
OF CELESTIAL SPHERES CELESTIAL? IF WE
TEND OUR EARS TO THE COSMIC RHYTHMS AND
SOUNDS, IN TIMES OF ECOLOGICAL DEVASTA-
TION, WOULD THEY SOUND HARSH AND LOUD?

[III:57, 21/06/2024] VERY NICE, LOVE TO EVERY-
ONE

[III:58, 21/06/2024] DEAR THE SOUTHERN HEMI-
SPHERE,
WHILE I HAVE THE LONGEST DAY OF THE YEAR,
YOU PROBABLY EXPERIENCE THE LONGEST NIGHT
TODAY. WHEN I MEET THE SHORTEST DAY OF
THIS YEAR, I WILL THINK ABOUT YOU AGAIN.

[II:00, 21/06/2024] A MESSAGE TO BREATHING
THINGS
MAY WE FINALLY FEEL A NEW SENSE OF FREE-
DOM, AND SHED ANY INHIBITIONS AND FEEL
CONFIDENT TO EXIST IN THE WORLD JUST AS
YOU ARE.

[II:00, 21/06/2024] A FINAL WORD FROM THE
MOSQUITOS 'WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO CELE-
BRATING WITH YOU TONIGHT'

COLOPHON

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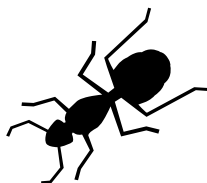
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