MARIA KRUGLYAK

Portfolio

About

I'm an art writer, researcher and editor specialising in contemporary art and culture. I founded *culturala* in 2022 to create a network-based art and cultural theory journal which experiments with a direct, welcoming language for contemporary art.

I've written art critical pieces, interviews, exhibition reviews, art historical essays and columns reflecting on the current state of the arts. These have been published on platforms such as maat extended, Futuress and Superglue, in the form of forewords to artists' books and in journals such as *Historiskan*, *Russian Art Gallery*, *The Gallyry*, *Russian Art+Culture*, *Grrrl Zine* and *culturala*. Here you can find a small selection of these pieces, chosen so as to show one of each kind.

Email: maria@culturala.org
WhatsApp: +44 7424 662563
Mobile: +351 912 349 205 / +44 7784 971779

2018-2020	MA History of Art, SOAS, University of London (First) *Specialising in East and Southeast Asian contemporary art with the dissertation Three women artists negotiating Japanese modernities: Yuki Ogura, Fuku Akino and Toko Shinoda.*
2014-2017	BA History, King's College London (First) Specialising in intellectual and cultural global history with the dissertation *Art of Independence: Transformations of Image in 1970s Guyana.*

2021-Present	Editor-in-Chief, Culturala
2021-2022	Curatorial & Editorial Paid Internship, MAAT
2021-2023	Artist & Resident, The Steamship Project Space Collective
2020-2022	Assistant Editor, WATA Publishing
2020	Editorial Production Assistant, Hangar Books

Contents

Desejos Compulsivos: A Extração do Lítio e as Montanhas Rebeldes Ressurreição

contemporanea.pt/en/editions/04-05-06-2023/desejos-compulsivos-extracao-do-litio-e-montanhas-rebeldes

Withstanding the compulsive capitalist dream of unlimited expansion, *Compulsive Desires: On Lithium Extraction and Rebellious Mountains* fosters intersectional alliances across disciplines in the face of climate emergency. Curated by Marina Otero Verzier for Galeria Municipal do Porto, the exhibition balances research, documentary and community works by drawing on global collective resistance to lithium mining and its contested use as palliative medication. The exhibition's critical approach, based on Otero's long-standing lithium research in Atacama, Chile, and beyond, combined with its timely opening, transforms international art views of the green energy transition into an active voice of collective resistance, supporting current protests over the six planned lithium mines in northern Portugal.

Its context in Porto as well as in the current lithium debate makes the exhibition incredibly important. Currently, the planned mining would create so-called "environmental sacrifice zones" to extract lithium, a key component of batteries in electric cars and other "green" solutions, to support Europe's transition into green energy.[1] It also holds geopolitical implications, with Portugal's lithium reserves estimated to be the largest on the continent—offering an EU-based solution replacing the current reliance on Chinese production of lithium for electric car batteries.[2] However, lithium extraction

also consumes immense quantities of water and energy, pollutes waterways, produces toxic waste and destroys ecosystems and biodiversity in what is already an ecologically vulnerable territory.

The flagship of Portugal's future lithium mining is planned by the British Savannah Lithium's mega-sized open mine in Covas do Barroso. Driven by the urgency of the situation with Savannah submitting their Environmental Impact Report weeks prior to the opening of *Compulsive Desires* and the ongoing protests against the mine, the exhibition underlines its temporal and local context with the resistance song *Brigada da Foice* performed by activist group Unidos em Defesa de Covas do Barroso playing throughout the exhibition's first floor. The song comes from a three-part triangular video installation featuring *Brigada da Foice* (2023), directed by Paulo Carneiro, the commissioned animated film *Montanha Invertida* (2023) by Grupo de Investigação Territorial, which reveals the ecological and social destruction of lithium mining, and the documentary *Não às Minas – Barroso, um Povo em Resistência* (2021–2022) by collective Medios Libres con la Gira Zapatista.

The triangle, three-way and thus the critical *third way* are recurring symbols of the show, encountered already at the exhibition entrance. Here, three ways of seeing lithium are introduced via three glass podiums at the entrance showcasing a small lithium-ion battery, a lithium-rich crystal spodumene from Minas Gerais in Brazil, and a small lithium carbonate PLENUR pill prescribed as a mood stabiliser, respectively. These represent the curatorial interpretation of society's compulsive desires of lithium as the driver of the green transition; as an element to be extracted at our will; and as a tool for mood optimisation and population management.

Created within a booming eco-political contemporary art movement, *Compulsive Desires* positions itself within a radical futurist movement criticising an underlying, Western colonialist mindset that drives green capitalist "false" climate solutions through research-driven installations,

video, performance and painted pieces by local and international artists, ecologists, psychologists, researchers and communities. The exhibition thus follows T. J. Demos' approach "ecology-as-intersectionality": a process which serves to overcome "reductive framings of ecology as present in the diverse articulations of green capitalism, technoscientific rationality, and environmental art history."[3]

Compulsive Desires differs nonetheless from related eco-political exhibition in its focus away from speculative futures. Instead, Otero brings our attention to community-based practices and stories of resistance that inspire hope. Examples are multimedia installations such as Medios Libres' documentary *Não às Minas*, which draws on their previous lithium activism to speak on the destruction lithium mining will cause in Covas de Barroso, and Godofredo Pereira and Lithium Triangle Research Studio's *The Ends of the World* (2020), which shows farmer, biologist and indigenous leader Rolando Humire speaking of his successful activism in resisting the ecological destruction of lithium mining in Atacama, Chile, among other inspirational and educational pieces. The exhibition's basis is likewise one of community, with its prologue in May 2022 in the form of a seminar programme titled "Compulsive Desires: On Lithium Extraction, Endless Growth, and Self-Optimisation," which, just like the exhibition, brought international and local speakers to engage in collaborative, open-ended practices to counter the effects of extraction.

The seeds of successful climate crisis solutions are, the exhibition implies, already present in alternative, indigenous, traditional or local communities. Instead of inventing new approaches or satisfying itself with intellectual critique, *Compulsive Desires* sets out to build alliances and points of knowledge exchange between alternative, traditional, local communities across countries, political convictions, species and even mountains, which, as microbiologist Cristina Dorador implies in the featured multimedia piece *The Ends of the World*, will fight back against penetrative extraction.

The strong, fact-based beginnings of the show are followed by research- and community-based works by internationally famous artist names. Here we find photo documentation of Tomás Saraceno's and Aerocene Foundation's *Aerocene Pacha* project in Salinas Grandes, which featured a hot air balloon powered solely by sun and air from the commons rather than relying on fossil fuels, batteries, solar panels or extracted elements. Orlando Vieira Francisco's 2023 series *The Observers' Plateaus* presents almost simplistic acrylic pieces in primary colours representing flattened mountains envisioned by the extractivist mindset as merely layers to be exploited—while Carlos Irijalba's installation *Pannotia (Lithium)* (2023) includes a sculpture of broken pieces of used lithium mining drills that invoke an uncanny feeling of rape, penetration and wreckage.

Most impressive are Lara Almarcegui's pieces *Derechos Minerales: Volcán de Agras* (2023) and *Gravera* (2021). The former documents Almarcegui's successful obtainment of exclusive mineral rights on ore deposits through a certificate and technical drawings of the mountain's subsoil. While drawing attention to questions of ownership, Derechos Minerales also implies the possibility to obtain extraction rights ahead of eco-colonialist mining conglomerates. Gravera is an earlier work showing the quarry excavation in La Plana del Corb in Spain being stopped by the artist for a day to welcome visitors—a practice Otero tells me Almarcegui continued, repeatedly halting works to slow down the excavation process and uncannily visualise the destruction. These interventions—ecoventions, to use Amy Lipton and Sue Spaid's language[4]—are the contemporary evolution of environmental art acting to restore environments by actively hindering its destruction. In fact, the *Compulsive Desires* exhibition as a whole acts as an active intervention into the local environmental disaster that the lithium mines will bring with more supposed globalised implications due to the destruction of the ecosystem.

The nature of the featured works of the artists and collectives as happening in the real world of art and activism rather than in the gallery space creates a difficulty common to contemporary eco-political art: the impossibility of containing, explaining and emotionally impacting viewers through documentation of site-specific actions. This is in part overcome by Jonathan Uliel Saldanha's mega-sized synthetic toxic lake, *Psych Op Pump* (2023),

which transforms the museum space into an extracted inverted mountain, acting as a bridge of comprehension by visualising the lithium mining.

With this basis in documentation of the geological, ecological and social effect of lithium mining and its resistance, the exhibition continues on the second floor with a more philosophical and psychological approach. Upon entering, we are met with two rows of poles that face the viewer in a—once again triangular—militant formation. On the left they bear bright yellow posters, each with an illustration of a species extinct due to colonial crimes and signed with the word “comrade” in a different language for each poster. The piece, *Comrades in Extinction* (2021), is the artists Jonas Staal’s and Radha D’Souza’s public demand for collective understanding and alliance-building across species.

The opposite row holds up traditional masks from the Trás-os-Montes and specifically Bragança regions carved by Amável Antão and Isidro Rodrigues, among others. The masks’ origin is in the midst of the contested mining region, where they are worn during festivities to invoke devils and animalistic figures, embracing the human and non-human alliance across worlds of being. In Otero’s words, “As their ecological and social degradation is presented as the lesser evil, communities in Covas invite devils into the public domain through the carnival. … If mining results in social breakdown, the political performativity of carnival alongside artistic expressions breaks social order to create counterworlds.”[5] Their activist use is, however, not seen by the media in a positive light, which instead brands the ancestral and spiritual traditions of the communities instead as animalistic practices of communities that cannot comprehend the boom of jobs that the mining industry will bring.

The formation of comrades of extinct creatures and mountain devils is balanced with a meditation on obsession, *The Grid* (2018–2019), on the side wall. The series, created by psychologist Natalia de la Rubia during a period of mental health recovery, shows initially miniature watercolour

squares becoming bigger and freer for each new piece. In the final part of the exhibition, we find Susana Caló's *Mad is Beautiful* (2023), featuring a curtain stamped with pages of zines by mental health and bipolar groups fighting for the right to multiple mentalities instead of reductionist lithium-based medication, which primarily acts against manic episodes.

The show is completed by an archive of thermalism in Portugal, showcasing the longstanding history of the medicinal, lithium-rich water of local springs in the regions of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro. Scattered throughout the two floors of the show are video and painted works—the videos telling stories of successful resistances and the paintings showing simplistic yet impactful drawings of lithium- and mining-related symbolisms, proposing interconnection between humans and beasts, and a repeated theme of the Zapatistas as in Ranguy Pitavy's commissioned piece *Aujord'hui est un fauve, demain verra son bond* (2023).

In these loving references to the region and haunting symbols and stories of mining, *Compulsive Desires* presents a critical question: how can we sacrifice one environmental zone for another? And is it not on grounds of economic, social and racial inequalities that some areas remain protected while others are sacrificed? To quote T. J. Demos: "How might cultural phase-shift infuse, energize, and direct new political organization, bringing militant and insurrectionary actions into relation with coalition-building and reclaiming an otherwise-corrupted electoral system?"[6] *Compulsive Desires* manages to tackle these questions of inequalities without crossing over from interdisciplinary, research-based art into politics by concerning itself instead with the very existence and alliance of humans and non-humans.

Herein lies the exhibition's power and critical importance both for the localised debate on lithium mining and for a wider debate on what an ecologically viable solution to the climate emergency may look like. As Professor Marco Tedesco writes in a news article from the Columbia

University's Climate School, "Our dependence on lithium recalls that of oil and coal that transformed our society in the past."[7] And *Compulsive Desires* speaks to this very incompatibility of a green transition as the compulsive nature of extractivism of the earth being no different from colonial, world-dominating and psychiatric violence in other areas of our society: past, present and future.

Similarly, the recently published report from the UN Special Envoy for Human Rights and the Environment reads that "zones of sacrifice are completely incompatible with the human right to health and ecologically balanced environment" as enshrined in the Portuguese Constitution.[8] The paradox of sacrifice zones and environmental destruction becomes all the clearer with *Compulsive Desires'* repeated imagery of penetration that sets the emotional backdrop of the exhibition through the mountain drills of Irijalba's *Pannotia (Lithium)*, as well as documented and illustrated imagery of open mines that literally replaces mountain tops with acid lakes alike Saldanha's *Psych Op Pump* installation. If this is the result of green mining and a necessary sacrifice, then there must be a better technological solution—or even better yet, a shift in global understanding. Perhaps we ought instead to follow in Otero's footsteps and build bridges, alliances and networks of community action, as solutions to the climate emergency might already be there.

Notes:
[1] Aline Flor, "Da Avenida da Liberdade às minas de lítio em Boticas, os alertas da ONU a Portugal," *Público* (26 March 2023).
[2] Jack Lifton, "China Controls the Lithium Market and All the West Can Do (For Now) is Watch," *investor intel: the stock source* (27 March 2023).
[3] T. J. Demos, "Introduction," *Beyond the World's End: Arts of Living at the Crossing* (Duke University Press, 2020), p. 11.
[4] Sue Spaid, *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies* (Contemporary Arts Center, 2002).
[5] Marina Otero Verzier, "Compulsive Desires: On lithium mining and rebellious mountains," exhibition brochure (Galeria Municipal do Porto, 2023).
[6] T. J. Demos, "The Great Transition," *World's End*, p. 171.
[7] Marco Tedesco, "The Paradox of Lithium," *State of the Planet: News from the Columbia Climate School* (18 January 2023).
[8] Aline Flor, "Da Avenida da Liberdade às minas de lítio em Boticas, os alertas da ONU a Portugal," *Público* (26 March 2023), my translation.

Images:
Desejos Compulsivos: A Extração do Lítio e as Montanhas Rebeldes. Exhibition views at Galeria Municipal do Porto. Photos: Dinis Santos. Courtesy Galeria Municipal do Porto.

This review of *Desejos Compulsivos: A Extração do Lítio e as Montanhas Rebeldes* at Galeria Municipal do Porto in Porto 2023 was commissioned by *Contemporânea,* Portugal's foremost art critical publication.

THE RULE OF NO RULES

Gene Bernofsky and Richard Kallweit Reflect on Drop City

ext.maat.pt/longforms/rule-no-rules

ECHOING THE GROUNDWORKS TIMELINE AND THE VISUAL NATURES MAPPING: 1965–1973

Drop City is considered the first rural hippie commune and was very influential although it only lasted for 8 years. It started in 1965 as one filmmaker and three art students bought a 7-acre plot of land to live and work in together. Avoiding hierarchies, Drop City stood for the post-Vietnam War growing desire to "drop out" of consumerism, individualism and the US way of organisation. Two of its founders, Gene Bernofsky and Richard Kallweit, shared some of their memories of what Bernofsky calls "an UNintentional non-community of a few youthful rebel fools striving to avoid the macabre military draft of the Vietnam war imposed upon the youth by the warmongering United States Government".

Communication with them was established through Tim Miller, the author of *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond* (Syracuse University Press, 1999). Acknowledging Drop City's fit into Visual Natures, he happily forwarded our inquiry to get in touch with some of the founders and a few other people who lived there that he is closest to, with a warning: "Some of them are sceptical of projects like this, but it is hard to predict just how they will respond. ... If they decide to work with you further, they can contact you directly."

As it turned out, Richard Kallweit and Gene Bernofsky were more

than happy to share photographs and miscellaneous writing, including a piece from a memoir-in-progress and forwarded email correspondences – as well as a book recommendation: *Droppers: America's First Hippie Commune by Mark Matthews* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2010).
— Maria Kruglyak

All images, unless noted otherwise: Drop City, 1966.
Courtesy of Gene Bernofsky.

From Richard Kallweit on 15 December 2022. A piece that, he admitted, is part of a booklet in progress.

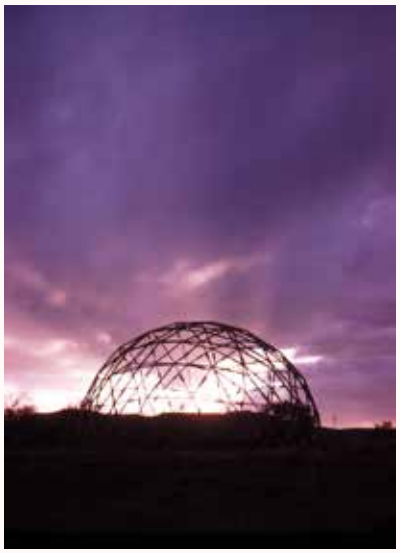
RICHARD'S DREAM

I saw recently a movie *Christiana* about a commune in the center of Copenhagen that has been going on for forty years. It started as squatters on an empty army base. I began to think of Drop City as lasting fifty years as an actual place than as a virtual place. And, anyhow, is an actual place more real than a virtual place, as in a book, movie, poem and so on? A few reminiscences. People are always saying that I was at Drop City the longest. But actually, I was there a shorter period of time, out a lot in Colorado, New

Mexico and New York. I will talk about some of these adventures later. A lot of people would come to Drop City and say they were someone else: who was to know?

One of the main facts about Drop City is that we were really really young, only in our twenties. One of the funny things that always happens is that stories are important. But oftentimes they become appropriated by someone else so that years later I might be sitting in Charlie's studio in New York and he would be telling me about the day he spent with the "child actor" Brandon DeWilde. I would look at Charlie [DiJulio] and say, "Charlie, that was me." And he would say, "Not anymore", and laugh in his usual way. A lot of the stories would center around "famous people". Who wants a story about an ordinary person? Well, for one, I do! So much more interesting! Also, a lot of people would come to Drop City and say they were someone else: who was to know? I remember Mike recounting a whole musical night with Jim Morrison. I said "Are you sure?" and he said "I think it was him, there was a crazy dude who really knew music". Here's the classic gap of logic and words failing to meet memory, dreams and expectations.

Here are two of the well-known ones. There were Billy Hitchcock and Tim Leary. They flew into Trinidad and came out to Drop City. There'd been a huge drought for about two months before they showed up and, when they did, we had a monsoon. So all the droppers went around saying, "Tim, you brought the rain, Tim, you brought the rain". Of course, he got irritated, not wanting to walk around as kind of a hero. Our youth showed. Another time, we were sitting in one of the domes with Tim and his friend, passing a joint around. I was sitting next to Leary and when the joint got to me I was so stoned I'd send it back the other direction. So, it never got to him. Finally, somebody lit up a new joint and handed it directly to him.



Before we decided to build domes, we had an idea of just building A-frames. We were all up at University of Colorado in Boulder which had a conference on World Affairs and [Buckminster] Fuller was one of the main speakers. In the lecture hall, where he was going to speak, we put up a banner that said "The Droppers endorse Bucky Fuller". Which was funny, because we were nobody at the time, and he was somebody.

Here's an example of how things happen. A postcard from NYC comes in the mail, with the greeting "Hello, my name is Jalal and I'm an artist, looking for a place to live with my five-year-old son," I write back, "Sure, you can come out." I don't know how the logistics worked out; maybe we had a telephone at that time. How she got there is her story. She became a permanent resident and, as it turned out, my wife. She was in for a shock. She expected a retreat, a kind of a Yaddo but, as Clark [Richert] said, "it wasn't like that. It was rice and beans."

In many of the photographs I've seen of early communes, there's a picture of about ten guys and four women. Happily, that would change as Drop City evolved. One pattern though that seems universal is that some people stayed for years, others for days or weeks, and in between, the process of assimilation of people into the community which in itself is interesting, the movement from the margins to within, like later when I lived with my family in a car in Placitas New Mexico and over months moved into a home.

I wistfully looked back on those times as we all do on our strong experiences of youth before our long thirty-year jobs of sustaining ourselves into maturity and see how so much of what we were thinking about is mainstream: scrounging, domes, acceptance of soft drugs, connecting to the land, revitalizing areas forgotten like the seven acres we first built domes on, revitalizing the arts.

On 31 December 2021, Gene Bernofsky forwarded a correspondence between himself and Elizabeth DiJulio, the daughter of Charles DiJulio, who lived at Drop City as a little girl. Her father was a close friend of Gene's and also a co-founder of the commune, Elizabeth asked Gene: how come all the write-ups on Drop City never mention Charlie's name as a co-founder or even a participant?

First off, all of us were financially destitute...from beginning to end. Jo [JoAnn Bernofsky] and me [Gene Bernofsky] and Clark [Richert], just the

three of us, showed upon the DC land in May of 1965. We lived in our car and a neighbour's barn until we got our first dwelling halfway up. That first year we put up that first dome, the kitchen dome and the big dome structure. About halfway through that Richard Kallweit, a friend of Clark's, showed up.

Elizabeth, it wasn't until June of 1966 that your family moved from Boulder onto the land. That was over a year since the so-called founding. [Peter] Douthit, an old friend of Charlie's, showed up soon after your family came. Now Douthit and Clark were both very self-promoting. Me and Charlie were not. We wanted only a quiet place where we could simply make things without a lot of distraction and noise. Clark and Douthit wanted recognition and to become famous. That self-promotion led to the Joy Festival of June 1967.

Charlie and I were pretty upset and disappointed that DC [Drop City] had taken the route of self-promotion and recognition. My family and your family left DC after the first insane night of the "joy festival". It was heartbreaking for me to leave. The original vision I had for DC was totally upended by the self-promoters. I tried and failed to stop all that noise. Douthit was the main instigator of the drive for fame and Clark followed along. Your dad was a gifted and talented artist. He hated the self-promotion bullshit, as did I. It ruined DC.

Consider all the negative activity after our families left. The killings, the suicides, the fights etc. Elizabeth, I never knew about all that awful stuff until I saw Joan Grossman's film. I know it's a good film. Joan is my friend. But I can't stand watching the second half of her film. Through it all Charlie and I became close friends. He welcomed me and Jo and May onto your land at Thorn Lake. No questions asked.

Jo and I came to love your family. You're right about those bonds still strong. I have loving memories of you and Christina and Carol and Bella! It was your family that founded the real dropcity [sic] on your beautiful land. I wasn't strong enough to fight off the self-promoters in DC. But with the help from your family, Jo and I were able to put it all behind us and make a fairly good life. Though we really never accomplished much financially, I don't regret that and I'm not bitter about it. It was your dad who turned me on to filmmaking. Charlie gave me his 16mm camera and I never looked back. Wound up making over forty films.

Richard Kallweit on 12 January 2022.

We really did not have rules as such. Maybe some unwritten ones and the rule of no rules. I think one of the reasons DC was to keep on being sort of interesting is that it initially was to be an artwork.

> Mark Matthews' *Droppers: America's First Hippie Commune* is based on two years of interviews with Gene Bernofsky as well as several other Drop City artists, but also short stream-of-consciousness paragraphs of historical context pieced together from newspaper articles, novels, and biographies month per month as well as longer contextual texts. Introducing the book to me, Gene wrote: "At first I told him I would not be interviewed unless he wrote the book in the context of the Vietnam War. He agreed to that stipulation and in consequence he did a brilliant job."
>
> Before the founding of Drop City, Clark Richert and Gene Bernofsky met at the University of Kansas, where both Richert and Bernofsky's wife studied. In 1962, Clark invited Bernofsky to move in with him in his loft.

"Clark [Richert] and I [Gene Bernofsky] defined our art as 'droppings'. We weren't artists, we were 'droppers'. A lot of times we would tie a rope to stuff and drop it down to the street and sit up there and watch the reactions of passers-by. We thought we had invented a whole new approach to making things. It was a way to cope with the disgusting elitism of art. Our pieces were just droppings, others called them collages. It was funny.

Once we set up an ironing board with an iron and a shirt on the street and then stuck the plug into the slots of a parking meter. People would come by, and some would stop, and try to iron the shirt, and laugh, and have a good time. Another time we cooked up a breakfast of bacon, eggs, toast, juice, and coffee, and set it out on the sidewalk in front of the hotel across the street from us. No one removed it all day long – not even the hotel people. People would walk up to it and look to see what was going on. Finally, someone rode their bicycle right through it and smashed it. Later that day we went and cleaned it up." (p. 40)

> In 1942, Gene Bernofsky moved out of town and bought a farm to grow marijuana – which turned out to be hemp – and then came to New York to sell it. A brief and unfortunate stint in North Africa and Europe later, the Bernofskys came back and together with Clark Richert began the adventure of Drop City.

During the remainder of the spring of 1965, Bernofsky sold his few remaining bags of marijuana. "A few weeks later", he said, "we decided to get into our car and drive around the West to find a rural piece of land where we could build a meaningful civilization. I had raised a couple of thousand dollars selling the last of the marijuana crop, and we took off for Montana." By going rural, and especially in heading west, Bernofsky bucked a trend being set by his contemporaries. Ever since World War I, rural Americans had been migrating into the cities as technology wrought a sea change in

farmer productivity. During the fifties, the nation lost more than 1.6 million farmers, and almost 1 million more during the sixties, thanks to mechanization. A few months before Bernofsky's departure, Time reported that the population drain was most pronounced in the West: "Fewer and fewer Americans, about one out of three, live in the great outdoors now celebrated almost entirely in never-ever television westerns. In a curious miracle of abandonment, Americans have become strangers in a landscape that they believe has built their national character." (p. 54)

> Instead, the droppers ended up in Trinidad, Colorado, where they bought a plot of land.

While working on the structure [of the first dome], Bernofsky and Richert often discussed what they should name their new community. For inspiration, they went back to their undergraduate days when they had started dropping painted pebbles from the rooftop of the building on Massachusetts Avenue down to the sidewalk in Lawrence, Kansas. Once a dropper, always a dropper, and Drop City instinctively rolled off their tongues.

"Those were the real roots of Drop City", Bernofsky said. "The dome was our first official dropping. This was going to be Drop City, and we were going to be droppers. We felt as if we were functioning within the cosmic forces so much that we were actually influencing them." (p. 73)

An editorial piece, 'The Rule of No Rules' was produced in Spring 2022 by weaving together paragraphs and quotes from my email correspondences with Richard Kallweit and Gene Bernofsky as well as Mark Matthews' *Droppers*.

It was published on maat extended [ext.maat.pt] during my internship at the museum.

An Expanded Space of Disappearance

Where the Disappeared Appears

In Japanese 15th century art, *showing* that something isn't there is a way to show that it's important – say Mt Fuji or the Emperor would always be disguised by mist. In contemporary art and culture, the absence or disappearance of things is more complex. It takes on a range of meanings and forms.

Since the 1980s/1990s, theorists of postmodernity, cosmopolitanism and globalism have found disappearance everywhere. Cosmopolitanism became a *thing*, everyone was writing about it, working with it. Defined as a unity or combination of cultures, cosmopolitanism entered our vocabulary as a contrast to nationalism, patriotism and rural life: the uprootedness of city life and migration, the embodiment of globalism. A cosmopolitan is at once at home everywhere and nowhere. Invisible and visible at the same time; a shapeshifter just as the buildings, cars and data that fly by and change form before their eyes.

Disappearance found its place in discourse in connection to the cosmopolitan, mostly in close dialogue with identity, roots and grounding. Then came the scholar who made disappearance into a state of culture, a cultural phenomena so to say, Ackbar Abbas.

Abbas saw disappearance in the culture of post-1997 Hong Kong, when China and the UK had shaken hands over the future of this cosmopolitan city of all cities. Apart from being a defining event in world history, something unusual happened here that made Abbas say that disappearance is a state of HK culture. Something unprecedented. The thing is, this agreement came with a 'timer': 'one country, two systems' for 50 years, and then Hong Kong officially becomes Chinese.

Today, that timer seems to have gone off prematurely as mass arrests and persecution haunt the city with horror story after horror story. But even in the late 1990s, the 50-year-timeline aspect of the agreement created anger and confusion. In culture and art, it took the form of a fast-paced frenzy eroding traditional, modern and contemporary culture all in one go. What happens to a place that has to change fast enough to stay as a financial and cultural centre for x number of years? What happens when a city needs to reach its sky limit in a set period of time? What would you act like if you were given a space to rearrange and create in as you wish but only for two years before it's brutally taken away from you and remodelled after someone else's ideas? Would you scramble to make

the most of it, abandoning one half-finished project for the new shiny idea, again and again?

Imagine, it's a city. A city placed in this precarious position after a complex history of colonialism, capitalism and revolt. A city having their status quo on an official timer, a status quo about to *disappear*. The 'about to' is the clue, the password, to understanding disappearance, and this is where Abbas comes in. Abbas saw Hong Kong as being in a continuous state of disappearance where change itself is accelerated, sped up until everything becomes almost invisible. In the way that a motorcycle speeding on the road in front of your eyes seems to be blurred, disappearing in your vision. This rushing around characteristic of any city increased by the common knowledge of a 50-year-timer has a curious effect. It creates mirages, ghosts, and a fertile ground for artistic explorations of time and change.

Naturally, it also fosters art that speaks of these very mirages and erosions of the present and this lack: lack of stability, lack of knowing, lack of a set future, lack of a foundation, lack of a continuation.

It sounds quite familiar, don't you think? Everyone scrambling for the next kick, every street having a new shop opening up and an old one closing down, a new development here and some refurbishment works there... Things changing, shifting, faster and faster as we consume

information at an ever-increasing speed. From the late 1990s and into 2021, each year has brought about faster and faster changes, accelerating into the state of... disappearance.

It seems to be a logical end point of human nature and of cities – especially megacities. As we move into the 2020s, this state of a continuous disappearance and uncertainty for the future seems to have travelled across the globe to various places, taking various forms.

I started following this idea by taking Abbas' framework of disappearance to the arts elsewhere, because it just seemed so familiar to me: isn't the skyline of New York in a constant state of disappearance, while New Yorkers are forced to move further and further away from the city centre? Isn't the financial centre of São Paulo experiencing the same as the gap between the city and its inhabitants grows wider and wider? The pandemic may have temporarily frozen this phenomena, but if I'm right, then this freeze would be of an overexposed image, half-there, half-not. Is that not just a snapshot of London, I thought, half-invisible, almost nonexistent and definitely surreal, frozen amidst changes?

Turns out, this wasn't quite the case. I gathered data, searched biennales, exhibitions, private collections and digital works, looking for the disappeared...and found something else: the disappeared being framed, outlined, appearing.

Let's take a step back here. Abbas found the disappearance, felt the disappearance, of Hong Kong and saw it reflected, duplicated through various schisms: in the architecture, urban development, films and art of HK culture. Since then, he's taken his – revolutionary – theory into the paradigm of other arts and (sometimes) exported a variant of it such as at a talk at Moscow biennale in 2015. I've heard others say about Hong Kong that it has this quality of not quite being present, so there's no doubt he struck gold here. This state of disappearance is very much real and felt elsewhere too, in Johannesburg, in São Paulo, in Santiago de Chile and in Bangkok, to varying degrees and with
varying effects.

However, its reflection in art shows not so much, I'd argue, a sense of being unable to connect with that which was (as, for example, HK films portraying a ghost of a lover from a past that cannot be returned and has nowhere to come back to – I'm talking about *Rouge*, 1988, dir. Stanley Kwan, that Abbas refers to) but a making appear that which has disappeared. That which has been made invisible by history, by society, by inequality.

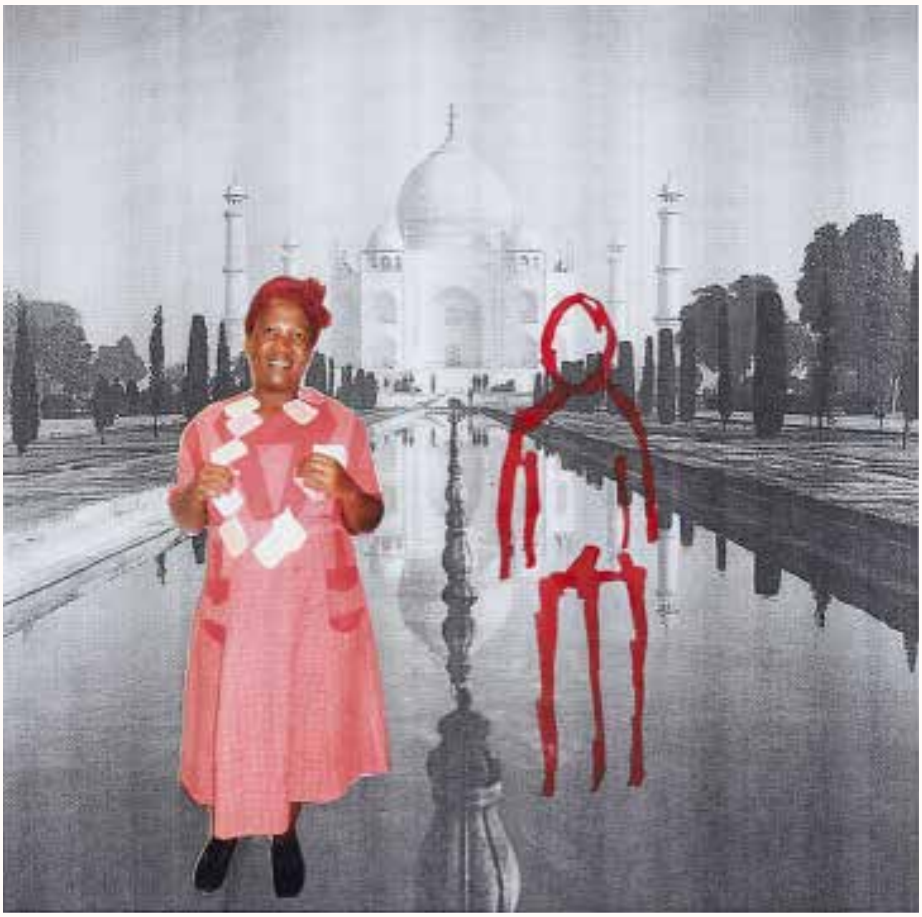
A ghost from a past that comes back is also a way to make disappearance appear, but it's an appearance that is intangible, unreal. What we see now instead goes one step further: forgotten or hidden histories or realities that have been lost in time appearing as something real and tangible that artists can shine a light on. It's Paola Paredes' (Ecuador)

Until You Change – a 2017 photo series that sheds light on hidden and censured correctional facilities for LGBTQ+ Ecuadorians. These are places where no cameras are allowed. So the artist instead replicates scenarios from first-hand accounts, portraying the victim by taking on the role in front of the camera herself. Paredes makes the otherwise anonymous victims reappear in full view and with all rights to their life. Instead of disappearing, which these facilities make people do, the art brings the oppressed back into appearance.

From *Until You Change* by Paola Paredes (2017).
Courtesy of the artist.

Here we also find Senzeni Marasela's exhibition at Zeitz MOCAA, *Waiting for Gebane* (2017-2019; exhibited 2020-2021). This exhibition has a row of hangers of pink-red dresses that the artist wore over six years, re-enacting the lives of married women in South Africa. There's also another row of empty hangers showing the dresses that never got to be worn – dresses that in their framed absence are made to appear. Then, amongst it all, mixed media collages of photographs of women with outlines of other women drawn onto the photo in the deep red of womanhood: the only visibility of these other women are their red outline. Just as in HK cinema, these 'others' are ghosts, but they're not brought in by

the artist to serve as a substitute for a distance to that which we cannot see, but to be brought to life, to reality, to action. They don't go through walls as ghosts, their contours are clearly defined. They fill the space actively taking part in their new-found life of appearing.



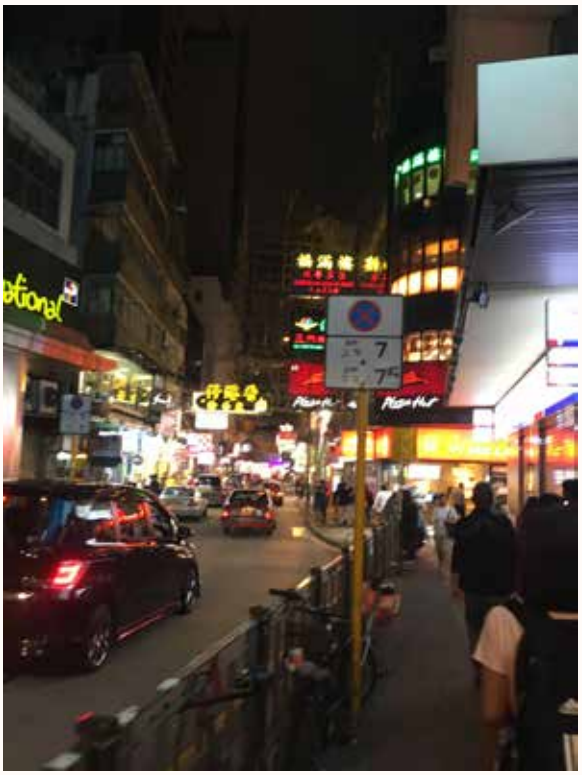
From *Waiting for Gebane* by Senzeni Marasela (2017-19). Courtesy of the artist.

Turning to the two young photographers featured in this issue, we have Jasper Jones (UK) framing the invisible, covered face of the artist himself and Anna Cherednikova (Sweden/Russia) whose photographs shed a light on the unseen, unwanted, 'wanted to disappear' weeds.

In more conceptual works, we find a continuing booming trend of the 'found object' and the use of recycled materials: art created out of that which previously had been made to disappear into the vast waste of our global lives. That which is lost is, through art, made to take space. To take action. To become visible.

Yes, the world of megacities does inhabit a space of disappearance. Perhaps artists are responding to this state of disappearance, this acceleration, by slowing down the process. Perhaps artists are asking their audience to stop and reconsider. Artists begging us to visualise that which cannot be seen. Inviting us to partake in making appear that which has or is about to disappear.

If you think about it, it would seem that this is a natural progression from the 1990s: from discovering and reflecting on the disappearance, to taking action to make that which is not appear.



All photos of Hong Kong taken in 2017 by Leanne Stuart.

An essay written for and published in the first issue of *culturala,* 'An Expanded Space of Disappearance' was written in winter 2021. It takes its title and starting point from Rosalind Krauss' seminal essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (*October*, 1979), and references other essays in the issue that can be found here.

Inês Zenha: *Ressurreição*

contemporanea.pt/edicoes/01-02-03-2023/ines-zenha-ressurreicao

Inês Zenha, *Trespassing the armed gaze*, 2023. Detail. Photo: Bruno Lopes.

Inês Zenha's *Ressureição* connects complexities of gender and transformation to critical questions of persistence and survival.[1] The artist's first solo exhibition in Portugal presents an acute philosophical statement through a multifaceted all-white installation of a bath. A shower curtain obstructs the initial view of the main installation, which consists of an abandoned shower, a set of basins with water pouring from one to the other, and a tiled platform connected to the side walls via lifelike tubes, in addition to an altar with a sculpted orchid flower and several basins mirroring the first basin set. The installation is completed by sculptures of plants growing from the drains and tiles of the platform in its midst.

A constant sound of running water pervades the exhibition, evoking the uncanny serenity of an unfamiliar shrine. It is this sound of water that the viewer first encounters, as it is heard from behind *Trespassing the armed gaze*, which obstructs our initial view. This piece is an enlarged shower curtain armour made out of wired ceramic tiles. Upon closer inspection each tile reveals itself to be a factory-made ceramic replica of a breast, apparently a copy of the artist's. The curtain's rigid form is disturbed by a slight opening in the top right corner—as if someone has torn it down when invading a space not intended for the public.

The most striking piece is seen directly upon entering past the curtain: *A body remains in confession*, which represents a turned-off shower. Here, the same breast tiles make up six neat columns, three on each side. The two middle columns have been torn down, forming a heap of mud and broken tiles—broken breasts. Although the rupture of order may metaphorically represent a liberation, the repetition of this disruption strengthens the feeling of the viewer-as-trespasser entering a hurriedly abandoned space.

Inês Zenha, *Trespassing the armed gaze* and *A body remains in confession*, 2023. Exhibition view Kunsthalle Lissabon. Photo: Bruno Lopes.

On the backside of the wall of *A body remains in confession* is *Raise my voice*, a vertical fountain structure of basins followed by a tiled platform that connects to the altarpiece at the back wall of the room. It is this sound of water pouring from one genitalia-shaped basin opening to another in the vertical structure that shifts the viewer's feeling from curiosity to uncanniness, as if we're overhearing someone relieving themselves through a bathroom door cracked open. This first half of the installation is completed by big, blooming weed plants that have made their way through the tiles and drains of the vertical platform. Their perseverance harkens to the initial question of feminism, the question of survival,[2] and connects directly to the non-Christian definition of the word 'resurrection': a new beginning for something which has disappeared, grown old or become unwanted. It also relates to rebirth and the connected terminology in trans discourse referring to transitioning as the gender assigned at birth; the name and so on is left behind for the new life as one's new self.

Seen through the lens of Judith Butler's defining discourse on gender studies, *Ressurreição* insists on the desire of continuous resurrection that at once invites and rejects any witness to the transformation thereto. The broken state of the tiles of *A*

body remains in confession and the emptiness of the space amplified by its whiteness indicates that we enter the bath *after* a transformative event. The resurrection has already taken place, and we as an audience become one with a society that continuously penetrates people's inner space of self-reinvention. The armour of the initial shower curtain is, it would seem, not strong enough to prevent this penetration, any influence of which on the resurrection itself rendered impossible by the space, already having been abandoned.

Inês Zenha, *Raise my voice* and *Purify me in your becoming-water*, 2023. Exhibition view Kunsthalle Lissabon. Photo: Bruno Lopes.

According to Butler, this very paradox of agency between the I and society 'is the condition of its impossibility. // As a result, the "I" that I am finds itself at once constituted by norms and dependent on them but also endeavours to live in ways that maintain a critical and transformative relation to them.'[3] The paradox appears in our invasion of a space of rebirth and resurrection, unwillingly but purposefully performed for and by the audience. By formulating this encounter, *Ressurreição* differs from other small-scale exhibitions in its philosophical depth and the wide range of emotions that it evokes.

The title's duality continues that of the paradox. Its Christian definition as the resurrection of Jesus Christ and of all people when the world ends is a direct reference to the show's Portuguese context—as is the prevalence of tiles, once again contrastingly white instead of the traditional coloured pattern of *azulejos*. The altar part of the installation that speaks to this second meaning of the resurrection, *Purify me in your becoming-water*, is purposefully placed furthest away. In a resistance to the Portuguese Catholicism that for many remains a limiting, unaccepting space, it subverts the Christian altar: in the place of a cross with a pre-resurrection Christ is a blooming orchid, while the basins below subvert the act of baptism with the sculpted growth creating surreal sculptures of survival despite all odds.

Zenha tells me that the orchid is, in fact, *Orphys*, which biologists have long labelled as 'strange,' 'wrong' and 'morally corrupt.' To this day the *Orphys* is commonly referred to as 'prostitute orchid' as the flowers mimic the scent, appearance and texture of female bees.[4] Instead of giving its pollinators nectar, it uses the resemblance to attract male bees to attempt fornication, depositing pollen onto their heads while they are engaged in the sex act. The same bees come back over and over again, for pleasure rather than for need, a biological scenario that the boxed patriarchal order continues to find provoking.

Instead of being limited to specifically queer matter as the press surrounding the show may suggest, *Ressurreição* expands queer theory into acute human and posthuman questions related to the process of becoming.[5] It is through the shared understanding of the continuous inner transformation that informs performativity, as much as the performativity itself, that we are invited to engage with emotionally and critically.

The days after visiting the exhibition, I was left with a gnawing frustration of the show providing a static, calming place instead of political action and anger. It took some time before I realised that my demand of the space to be an active political agent had made me into a perpetrator of this sacred yet repeatedly violated and forcefully politicised process-space of rebirth, self-definition and resurrection. *Ressurreição* builds this locus by embracing both sides of the paradox: static-moving, whole-broken, seen-unseen, rigid-disrupted, defined-undefined. It shows us that only if we embrace this paradox of resurrection as the location of both transformation and remaining oneself can we begin to untangle our own liberation.

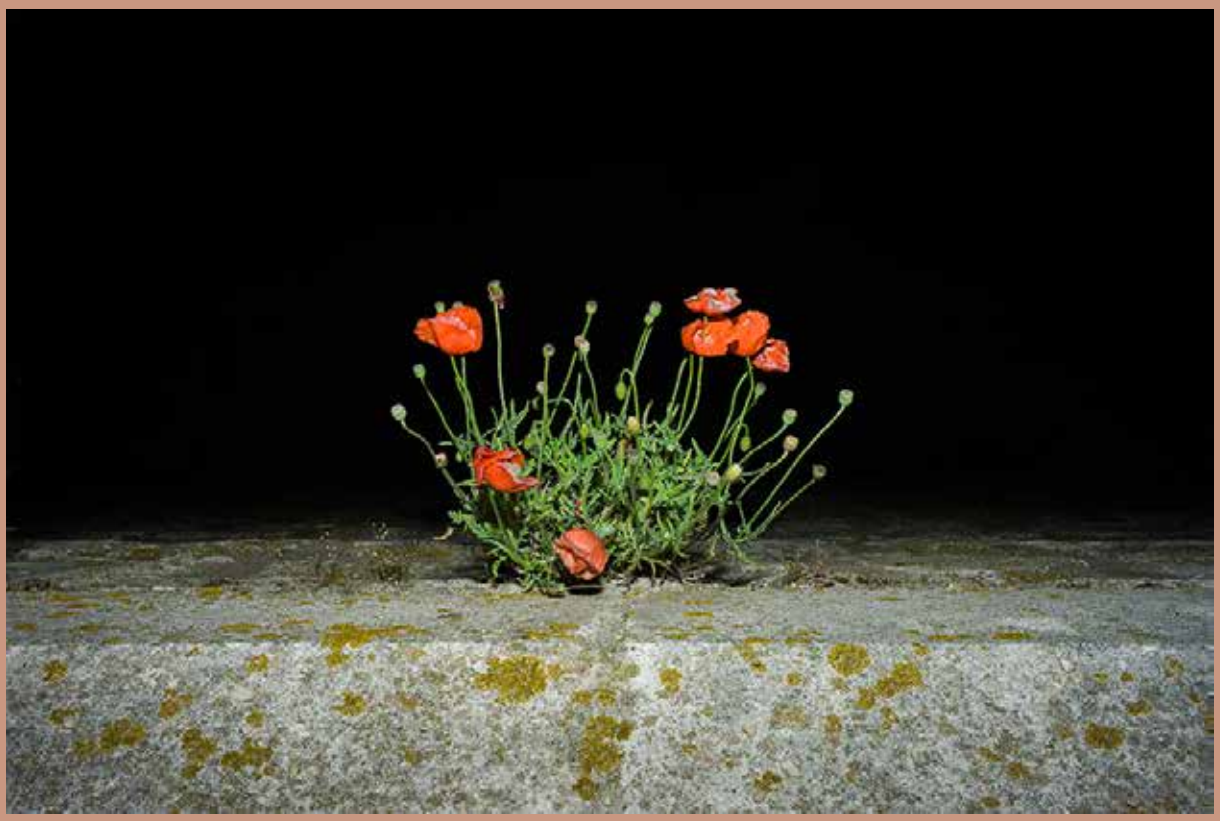
Notes:
[1] A play on a sentence in Judith Butler's introduction to *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2004), p. 4: 'The essays in this text are efforts to relate the problematics of gender and sexuality to the tasks of persistence and survival.'
[2] Butler, 'The Question of Social Transformation,' *Undoing Gender*, p. 205.
[3] Butler, 'Introduction: Acting in Concert,' *Undoing Gender*, p. 3.
[4] Conversation with Inês Zenha, 25 February 2023.
[5] It is the questions of 'who and what we are actually in the process of becoming' that, according to Rosi Braidotti, relate directly to the 'posthuman condition [that] urges us to think critically and creatively about' these very questions. See Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Polity, 2013), p. 12.

This review of Inês Zenha's exhibition *Ressurreição* at Kunsthalle Lissabon in Lisbon 2023 was commissioned by *Contemporânea*, Portugal's foremost art critical publication.

Lessons from Gaia

The Recognition & Hope of Nature within the Urban Setting

supergluecollective.com/2021/10/13/lessons-from-gaia-the-recognition-and-hope-of-nature-within-the-urban-setting/



Anna Cherednikova, *Unwanted: #68 Papaver rhoes* (2018). Courtesy of the artist.

When SuperGlue Collective first asked me to write a piece on nature and art, I was a little bit lost on where to start. So much art has been made about, with, from nature in the recent decades. Eco-art, environmental art, earth art. How do we define it? Is it decolonising? Is it historical? Is it attuned to the survival of our planet and the fear of climate change?

On a global scale, oceanic art has been gaining popularity in the eye of the public in symbiosis, perhaps, with the UN Ocean Decade 2020-2030. Here we find beautiful videos shot in the depth of oceans, often combined with digitised renditions – an art and technology parallel that's very much in vogue. While artists working near and by the ocean have long had an acute interest for its magic, the amount of money allocated by sponsors and grants to these (expensive, to say the least) art projects has been steadily increasing as fears for the future of our planet and our oceans become more and more widespread.

Hand in hand with oceanic art, works from deserts, mountains, landscapes, have become deeply entrenched in our understanding of nature and art. Something, however, didn't fit right with me. While the hidden treasures of our planet are fascinating, there has always been a part of me that can't fully relate – perhaps it's too breathtaking to remember when you wake up every morning hearing the sound of the motorway and the DLR.

So I began to search deeper in my experience of the relationship between art and nature: art as the man-made, nature as that around us. Here, I found questions that have been resurfacing all the more frequently in the past fews years: what of the nature that is in the city? What of the fact that we, too, are of nature? And who should we listen to – the Earth, or the humans?

Abigail Burt, *Earth Vessels Series* (2020). Courtesy of the artist.

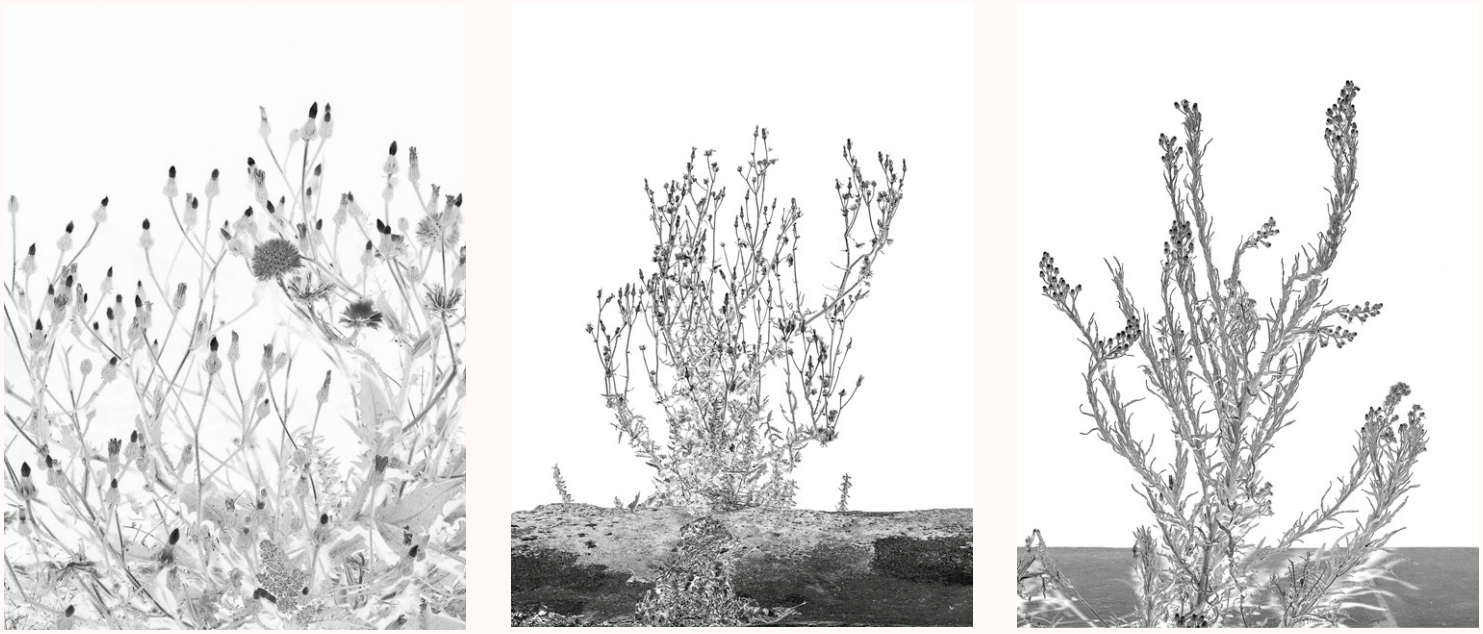
It all boiled down to one big question: *what can we learn from nature if we lean in and listen?* To my great joy, two artists that I've got to know lately had been working with this very question: Anna Cherednikova and Abigail Burt.

Working together with nature, Anna through photography and Abigail through pottery, sculptures and collective art, their artistic practices feel like invitations not of fear and stress over the disaster of climate change, but of hope that perhaps nature will be the one to guide us on our way not only to save our planet, but also to save ourselves.

Anna Cherednikova is a Russian-Swedish photographer exploring weeds. Yes, that's right, weeds. Beautiful portraits of weeds growing between cracks in asphalt, walls, boulevards. Her works beg us to listen, and to ask: what can we learn from weeds? Like the line from a poem by Marina Tsvetaeva, *'what can a bush want from me, the one who has from the one who has not?'* (my translation), Anna's work asks: what if the weeds are the ones that have, and we the ones that don't? What can we learn from the plants we deem as unwanted?

Anna's series *Unwanted* is inspired by her personal history of migration, adaptation and – this is my reading – survival. It's a project that explores the relationship of the urban landscape and the wild plants that grow within it even though we fight for their extinction from our lawns, roads and pathways. What makes a plant a weed? And why are they seen as undesirable? She writes, 'They resist strong winds and temperatures; we try to prevent them from growing both in gardens and in public spaces, but they resist and grow and bloom.'

There's a reciprocal relationship between the weeds and the artist. If we actually look around us, really look, we find nature everywhere. Unwanted nature, perhaps, but valuable nonetheless if we care to see it. Valuable if you're seeking solace, inspiration, or strength. What can we learn about survival and adaptation by looking at these amazing plants? Can we find hope that will help us through the day when we don't feel like we're welcomed?



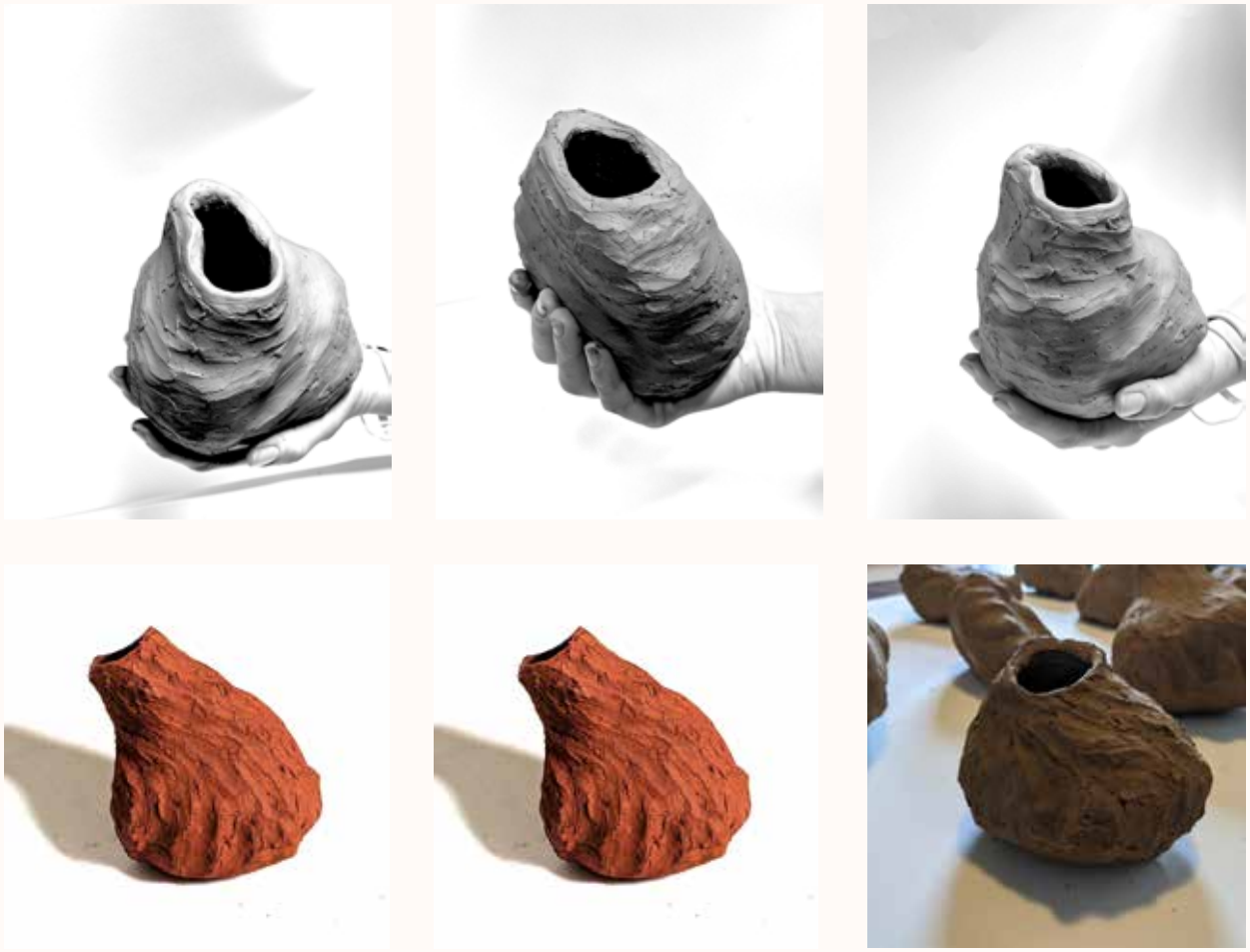
Anna Cherednikova, *The Garden of Migrations* (2019). Courtesy of the artist.

The Garden of Migrations takes a similar tone, exploring the new species that are formed by the movement of goods, people and animals. As we migrate, so do seeds, plants, seedlings. 'Only 1 of 1000 among these species will survive in new conditions because of the difference in environment and climate,' Anna writes. Those that do are the most resistant and adaptable, some multiplying so fast that they become a problem for the local environment or agriculture. These are species that take over, but they are also a sign of the reciprocal relationship of humans and nature and how it can be both of harm and of good – and, without doubt, beautiful.

In a later series, *How to Question a Plant?* Anna explores the topic further. On one of the most expensive streets of Stockholm, she finds weeds growing between cobblestones and peaking out in between pavement cracks. She notes down their addresses, as if they, too, were residents of that street and marks them down on a map. Some she takes back to her studio, scanning them, questioning them. A metaphor, perhaps, for how much attention we could be giving them.

Abigail Burt, on the other hand, works with collective art making that invites a direct dialogue between humans and the Earth – or Gaia, as the earth is often referred to when it comes to theories and practices that build on the reciprocity of material and living beings of the earth.

Abigail's *Earth Vessels Series* project began when she found clay discarded by builders who were digging out the foundations of a house in Camden, and were more than happy to give it away. After a long process of purifying the clay, she used it to make earth vessels – first big ones, then smaller ones. The result was a series of ongoing projects connecting the soil found underneath our feet, the soil that builds up the very foundation of London, with an audience of passersby, gallery goers and workshop participants.



Abigail Burt, *Earth Vessels Project II* (2020). Courtesy of the artist.

Abigail writes, 'in an act of reciprocity, I hope that the daily rituals will inspire a network of expanding gratitude'. Part of her Earth Vessels Series involved making a large-scale earth vessel placed outside. The vessel, whose shape grew 'organically as a conversation between the artist and the Earth', was acting as a receptor for Gaia. Abigail then invited passersby to take small clay tokens, make a wish, and place them in the vessel. With time, the vessel and the tokens would return to the soil in a ritual of giving your wishes to the earth – a wishing well for Gaia. As small children, teenagers and adults came together to ask Gaia to grant their wishes, they were invited to thank the Earth and to rely on her for their desires to come true.

A more recent part of the *Earth Vessels Series* goes further in reconnecting us with the Earth. Instead of the audience being the ones speaking, we are invited to listen in, to tune in to what it has to say – similarly to how Anna first drew inspiration from the weeds in *Unwanted* and then began to ask the weeds questions in *How to Question a Plant*, the locus of power moves from the audience or artist to nature in Abigail's work, too. For this project, Abigail created 40 small earth vessels from the clay that were then used in workshops (still ongoing, so keep an eye on her instagram @abigailiburt if you'd like to join!).

The workshop starts as a guided meditation with the smaller vessels acting as the object of focus, an object that came from the very soil under our feet and that represents Gaia. As participants meditate on the presence of the Earth within, around and underneath us, they are asked to place the vessels to their ears and listen to the sound it makes. When you place a shell to your ears, you hear the sea – when you place an earth vessel and feel the rough surface of the clay, you hear the land, the earth, Gaia.

Abigail tells me that many participants were grateful for this moment of silence and thought, for this pause from hectic life. Perhaps meditation is not for everyone, but when you have something very concrete to focus on, an earth vessel to listen to, it eases calming your thoughts.

Afterwards, participants are given an earth vessel to take home and invited to take some time to listen to it and remind themselves of the earth below their feet. Central to the Earth Vessels Series is this idea of reciprocity, of giving: from the giving of the clay to the artist to the giving of the vessels to the participants, but also giving the Earth our attention. In both projects, attention and imagination are an entry point into the reciprocal relationship we are invited to find with Gaia.

Amongst artistic practices on nature, Anna Cherednikova's and Abigail Burt's work tell us something we hear all too rarely but that strikes a note of recognition and hope. Many of us live in cities, far from the grandiose ocean waves, sand dunes and mountain ranges we find in a lot of the eco-art that has been gaining attention. Nature feels quite distant, perhaps a place we'd like to escape to but in the every day it's something we know we need to care about by recycling and changing our habits, something we're willing to fight for politically.

As both these artists work tells us, there's more to it. Nature is all around us: it's in the weeds growing between cobblestones, in the fishbones on the shore of the Thames, in the planted palm trees in Peckham's front gardens and in the clay dug out from foundations of the houses. All we need to do is pay attention, lean in and listen. Question a plant, put an earth vessel to your ear, or just look around you.

For the sake of climate change, for the sake of mother earth, for the sake of the world and our own lives, perhaps we should try to stop listening to our own voices and learn from the nature that surrounds us? What would we learn if we lean in, listen and trust Gaia?

A profile on Anna Cherednikova and Abigail Burt, 'Lessons from Gaia' was commissioned by Superglue Collective for their series on eco-art in 2021.

REJECTING THE NATURE/ CULTURE DICHOTOMY

An Interview with Robert Horvitz

ext.maat.pt/longforms/rejecting-natureculture-dichotomy

An interview with the writer, artist and editor, Robert Horvitz, speaking about his early years as a writer for *Artforum* and his friendship with Alan Sonfist, his disagreement with Jack Burnham about separating nature from culture, and his fourteen years (1977–1991) as arts editor for *Whole Earth* magazines.

ECHOING THE GROUNDWORKS TIMELINE AND THE VISUAL NATURES MAPPING: 1968

maat / Maria Kruglyak
You wrote extensively for the Whole Earth publications *Whole Earth Catalog* and *CoEvolution Quarterly* as well as for *Artforum*, but I'm curious about how it all started. I understand that Jack Burnham was a big inspiration. How did you two meet and what was it that made you start writing?

Robert Horvitz
In school I didn't think I was a particularly good writer, nor did I enjoy it, so I hadn't thought about writing as a career. But I met Alan Sonfist at the Akron Art Institute in 1972. I had a drawing show there, which was followed by a show of Alan's; so our visits to Akron overlapped. I liked his work and knowing that he was a city boy who loved nature, I invited him and his girlfriend to share a house with me in a beautiful forest in Massachusetts that summer. I had promised to take care of the house so the owner could go on holiday. We got to know one another that way and at some point Alan asked if I would write about his work and I said yes.

To make *Artforum* think I had something more to offer, I decided to submit an interview with George Kubler at the same time. Kubler had written a book called *The Shape of Time*, which was really popular among art historians and intellectuals. I knew him through Yale. In fact, we ate lunch together regularly because he was affiliated with my residential college and got free meals there. At some point I asked him if I could record some of our lunch conversations with the idea of splicing together the interesting parts as an interview and he agreed. So I finished the Sonfist article and edited the Kubler interview and mailed them together to *Artforum* in the spring of 1973.

When both articles were published, I sent copies to Jack Burnham to introduce myself and ask if he had anything to say about them, because both touched his interests and we had a mutual friend in Donald Burgy. Jack had written an essay for the catalogue of an exhibition Burgy had at the Addison Gallery of American Art in 1970. I met Burgy just before that

show [*Art Ideas for the Year 4000*] and we've been best friends ever since. Jack sent back a really gracious note, saying, among other things, that he wished he had written the Sonfist article, not because he liked Alan's work, but he liked my argument against the nature/culture dichotomy. We continued writing to each other until about 1980.

maat
That is a great way to meet, and an impressive argument too. How would you say that you understood the relationship of nature and culture? How do you understand it now? And how did Jack Burnham understand it?

Robert Horvitz
It's unfortunate that Jack isn't around to answer for himself, but he wrote on this subject extensively in *The Structure of Art*. However, his thinking evolved significantly after that. It'll take a while to summarise, so bear with me while I quote him:

> "The fundamental dichotomy expressed in mythic forms is that of Nature and Culture. Culture represents all categories created through or by man: family or tribal members, domestic animals, and artifacts. Entities falling outside the control and domain of man belong to nature... Culture is the conceptual means for distinguishing man from nature... In art, on the other hand, any entity, natural or cultural, can be naturalized for use as subject... Undoubtedly conscious knowledge of the rules of art would dispel the illusion of art at once, since these deal with unconscious mechanisms concerning the use of objects, materials, and concepts in mediating reality, namely, in defining the artist's relationships to nature and culture... [Art's] efficacy is in conjoining permissible cultural and natural phenomena through the agency of the artist..."

So the artist conjoins and balances but does not resolve the nature/culture dichotomy. That's based on Claude Levi-Strauss' ideas, which Jack turned to in response to criticisms of *Beyond Modern Sculpture* [BMS]. On the first page of *The Structure of Art* he wrote:

> "Much of the impetus behind *The Structure of Art* results from my own as well as others critical examination of my first book, *Beyond Modern Sculpture*. By last year the internal inconsistencies of that book were very much on my mind. And just as vexing is the fact that I believe that many of its theories remain creditable. Its historical presumptions impelled me to study the writing of Claude Levi-Strauss with more than casual interest..."
> "[BMS] defines chronological parallels between science and art as responsible for shifts in visual expression. Chronologically there are some strong correspondences between artistic and scientific innovation, but these are coincidental not causal relationships." (2nd ed., p. 24)

Really, Jack? If you read BMS, you know that it argued for something a lot

stronger than coincidental correspondences and chronological parallels. Jack's critics accused him of technological determinism. He seemed to accept that criticism and embraced structuralism instead.

As far as I'm concerned, he was led astray by Levi-Strauss' idea that nature and culture is "the fundamental dichotomy" and he followed that into a rabbit hole of increasingly tenuous refinements. "Nature as Artifact: Alan Sonfist" interested him because I rejected that dichotomy. I see humanity and all cultural expressions as part of nature. And I can say from our correspondence that Jack realized one should not – cannot! – separate nature and culture. But in terms of his intellectual re-positioning, that realisation came too late. The revised edition of *Structure of Art* came out in June 1973 and my Sonfist article was published in November 1973. But he never outgrew his interest in structuralism, and in fact, he pushed deeper into even more esoteric non-causal systems of explanation, like Kabbalah.

The reason wasn't clear until much later, and here I must paraphrase because he never gave a full written account of his mystical turn. But the gist of it was that he realised the part of art history that you can explain as a rational response to the impact of technology is less important than the part that you cannot explain that way. Artists like Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Beuys have outsize impact precisely because their work cannot be explained by technology's influence; there's a lot more there. Jack told Lutz Dammbeck in 2002 that "art works not from what you see and what can be said about it but what you see and you don't understand." That puts critics and historians in a difficult position, because the only way to talk about such work is with explanations that evade understanding. And that's what Jack started producing after *The Structure of Art*, and fewer and fewer places wanted to publish such articles.

maat

Returning to Alan Sonfist, what is your understanding of his *Time Landscape* within this dichotomy of nature and culture?

Robert Horvitz

Time Landscape combines plants native to Manhattan which co-evolved long before humans became the dominant influence, so it shouldn't surprise anyone that they thrived when re-assembled. The first time I saw it, a few months after the initial planting, it was already clear that it was going to look very different from an abandoned lot; it had a vitality that was greater than the sum of the parts. It certainly made Alan's point that such references are needed to show us what our environment was and what it might be like without us. It also showed "re-wilding" can work even in a city centre.

Let me come at this from a different angle. Alan was sensitive about his work's similarity to Hans Haacke's. But I always saw them as different. Hans was exploring systems, and he realised very quickly that the concept of a system is a bridge between nature and culture. He crossed that bridge very early to explore social and political systems. Alan worked with systems too and crossed the same bridge occasionally. But he was motivated by a love of nature which one didn't feel in Haacke's work, which was rather more, can I say, systematic. Some people found Alan's work

more naive because of that difference – its "tree hugger" aspect. I saw that as simply an honest difference between them and over time I think Alan's love of nature has been recognised as something that gives his work meaning. I'm sorry I didn't bring that out more in my article. Instead, I over-intellectualised his work for my own purposes, mainly to challenge Jack Burnham.

maat
Turning to your many years of involvement with *Whole Earth,* how did that begin?

Robert Horvitz
After that summer with Alan, I lived with a woman who was a big fan of the *Whole Earth Catalog* and when they announced that they were going to start a magazine, she subscribed. I started reading *CoEvolution Quarterly* from the first issue, too, and I saw it getting better and better. But it had one very odd weakness: their coverage of the arts was poor-to-non-existent. So I wrote to Stewart Brand about that, and cited earthworks as an important development in sculpture that his readers should know about. I sent him a sketch of *Time Landscape* that Alan had made for his proposal to the City of New York; photos of a work by Charles Ross; a photo of one of my drawings; and texts by Donald Burgy and Henry Flynt. About a month later I got a postcard from Stewart. It said they loved everything I sent. They'll publish everything but spread over the coming year. Keep sending us stuff and how about if we list you on our masthead as art editor? I sent a postcard back saying "Great, great and GREAT!!". And that was the beginning of a fourteen-year relationship, which lasted until I moved to Prague in 1991 and saw that I wouldn't have as much time for gathering and preparing material for them as I had in the 1980s.

During that time I was art editor of *CoEvolution* and the *Whole Earth Review*. I only contributed reviews to the Catalogs. But I also hosted the Whole Earth conference on the WELL, which was the online community we started in 1985. In any issue of the magazines I had 2-4 pages to present artwork, and then I started writing about the radio spectrum and electronic communication. So after a while my title on the masthead changed from "art editor" to "Washington correspondent" and then to "contributing editor."

maat
What was your experience working with Stewart Brand?

Robert Horvitz
Stewart was already starting to phase himself out of *Whole Earth* around the time that I came onboard, though that wasn't clear until the 1980s when he really wasn't involved at all. He wanted to focus on his Global Business Network, which aimed at changing the thinking and behaviour of large corporations. When he was still *Whole Earth*'s publisher and editor, we hardly ever spoke, so I felt that I had complete autonomy in selecting work for the magazines.

You have to understand that I didn't live in the San Francisco area. I lived on the east coast, so my relationship with *Whole Earth* was by phone, mail and, after the mid-1980s, text conferencing through the WELL. I did visit the office a few times to meet people in person, and participated in some events they organised. Stewart and I discussed very early on whether I should move to California, but he felt I would be

more useful staying on the east coast because it gave me access to different people and projects and I could run errands that would have been inconvenient or costly to get someone from California to do. I worked much more closely with Stewart's successors than with him, especially with Kevin Kelly. Kevin and I spoke almost every week to brainstorm ideas for the magazine.

maat

You mentioned in our earlier conversation how one edition of the *Catalog* was created in a campervan as an experiment, but that this was not how it was usually produced. What was the process otherwise and could you tell that particular story?

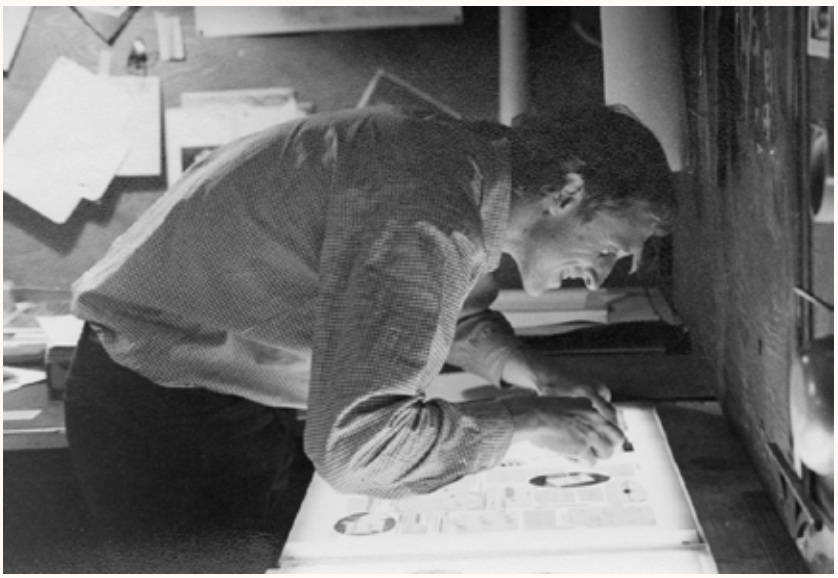
Robert Horvitz

The *Whole Earth Catalogs* were pasted up the old fashion way: by hand, with beeswax or rubber cement spread on the back of small strips of paper and typeset words on the front. Our typesetter was an IBM Selectric typewriter, because it had variable spacing and a variety of fonts.

This first photo shows the *Catalog* production in 1971. Stewart's on the left, talking on the phone.

The *Whole Earth Catalog* production, 1971. Unknown photographer, courtesy of Robert Horvitz.

Stewart lines up a block of text:



Stewart Brand pasting up the *Whole Earth Catalog*, 1968. Unknown photographer, courtesy of Robert Horvitz.

Creating each catalogue's page was like solving a jigsaw puzzle, except there is no unique solution. Here is Al Perrin trying to organise a page in the *Whole Earth Epilog* (1974):

Al Perrin (Alwyn T. Perrin) organising a page of the *Whole Earth Epilog*, 1974. Photograph by Stewart Brand, courtesy of Robert Horvitz.

Office manager Andrea Sharp used a card file system to keep track of all the products (candidate and chosen) for review. What you don't see are the plastic bins used to sort and store the products themselves, which filled a small warehouse:

Office manager Andrea Sharp with her card filing system, 1974. Photograph by Stewart Brand, courtesy of Robert Horvitz.

In 1971 Stewart had the crazy idea to produce the *Last Catalog* in a desert seventy miles from the nearest telephone and with no access to electricity, just to show it could be done. They brought a geodesic dome in pieces to assemble there…

Geodesic dome assembled next to production location for the *Last Whole Earth Catalog*, 1971. Photograph by Stewart Brand, courtesy of Robert Horvitz.

…and a large inflatable building…

Inflatable building brought to production location for the *Last World Earth Catalog*, 1971. Photograph by Stewart Brand, courtesy of Robert Horvitz.

But the wind was so strong that it promptly blew these structures away and production had to move into the small AirStream campervan that Stewart and his wife Lois used to transport supplies to the site. Only two people could fit in the van at the same time, which slowed the work so much that the idea had to be abandoned.

maat

Fascinating. Could you also share some images of the pages you created for the magazines with us?

Robert Horvitz

Here's one you're familiar with already. This is the first presentation of *Time Landscape* in print, from 1977:

TIME LANDSCAPE

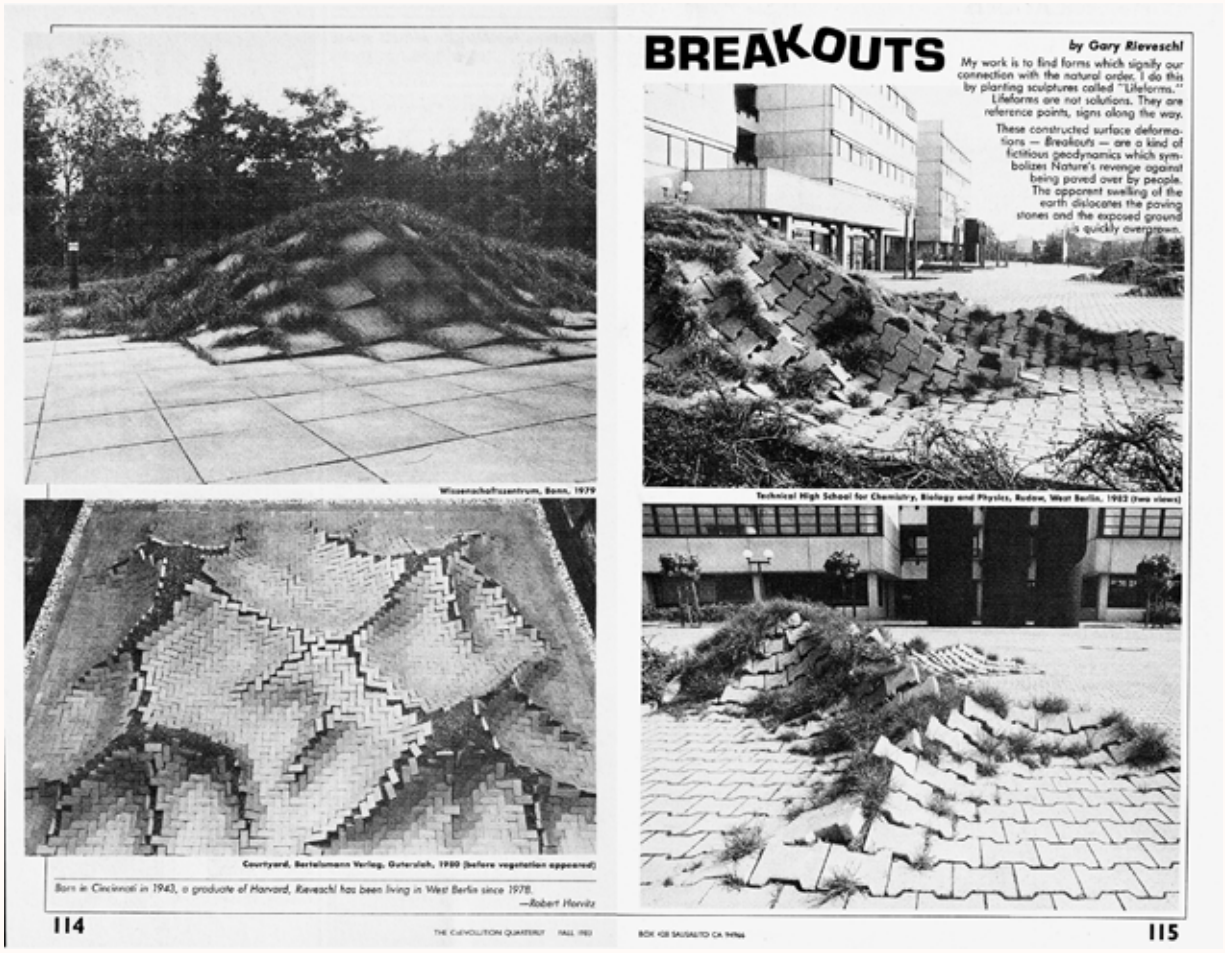
Alan Sonfist, *Project Director*

10 YEARS

58

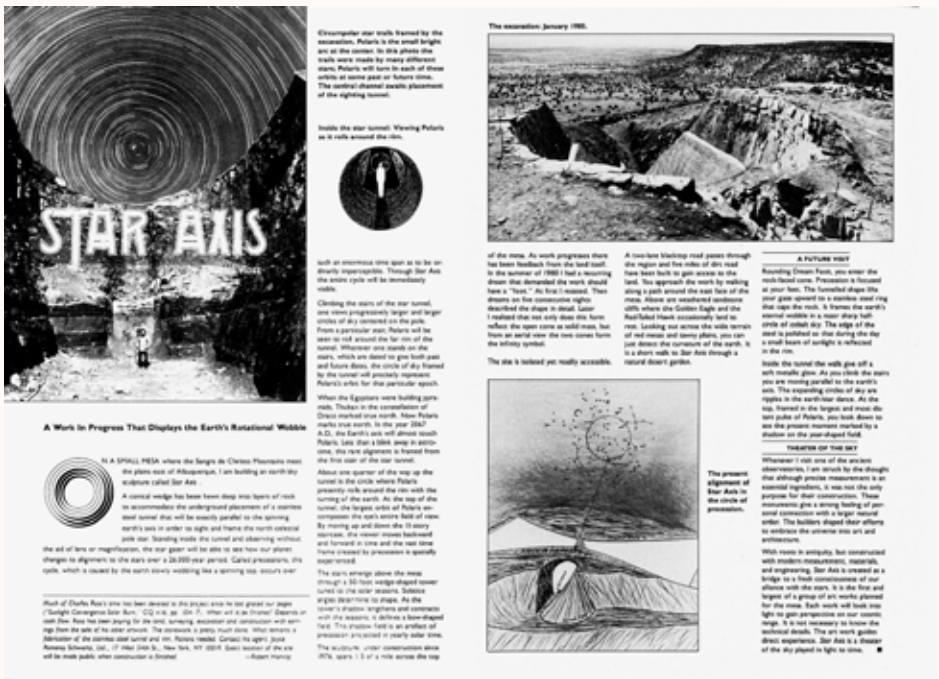
Time Landscape by Alan Sonfist in *The CoEvolution Quarterly*, 14 (Summer 1977) introduced by Robert Horvitz. Courtesy of Robert Horvitz.

Here are a few pieces by Gary Rieveschl, an American who was living in West Berlin:



Gary Rieveschl's Breakouts in *The CoEvolution Quarterly* (1983) introduced by Robert Horvitz. Courtesy of Robert Horvitz.

Charles Ross' work was featured in both *CoEvolution* and the *Whole Earth Review*. This is the second layout, from 1985. Ross has been working on *Star Axis* for about forty years. He hopes to finish it in 2025:



Courtesy of Robert Horvitz.

It's not an art layout, but here's a short piece I wrote for the 20th anniversary issue of the *Whole Earth Review* (1988) which is relevant to maat's survey of environmental sculpture *[Visual Natures]*. Kevin Kelly asked regular contributors and staffers what they were working on and this is what I sent:

Robert Horvitz

is our man in Washington, DC, and our far-ranging scout for the unreported story. He's been reviewing unconventional art and science for Whole Earth since 1976. He captioned the picture to the right: "Peep," a 5-year old Guimo (guinea pig) from Peru, with his pet. "Robert Horvitz."

What am I working on now? Researching topics that may turn up as articles in these pages sooner or later. Don't want to blow any surprises, but one item on the list may work best as a capsule preview anyway.

An article by Philip J. Hilts in the *Washington Post* last June described a new remote-sensing technique called "seismic tomography." Developed about two years ago, the concept is similar to the CAT scans used in medical diagnostics. But instead of X-rays, seismic recordings from monitoring stations around the globe are integrated by computer to create 3-D images of the Earth's interior. So for the first time, we can peer into this huge hidden volume, which is the bulk of our planet. Compared to the vague generic model of the underworld we were taught in school, some of the features revealed by seismic tomography seem like science fiction.

Take the Earth's core — a red-hot sphere of liquid iron, right? Wrong, magma-breath. According to Adam Dziewonski, a geophysicist at Harvard, vibrations passing through the core behave as though the iron at the very center is compressed into "a single thousand-mile-wide crystal" swaddled in liquid iron. The rocky mantle around the core seems to have an irregular in-facing surface some 1,800 miles below us. "Anti-mountains" six to seven miles tall poke into the potato-shaped core, along with "anti-continents" that may be ringed by "anti-oceans" of iron. As the Earth spins, the mantle's rough underside could generate currents and turbulence in the core. That may account for small fluctuations observed in the lengths of days, and the geomagnetic "storms" that disrupt our radio communications from time to time.

It used to be that we could only guess about the circulation of matter in the Earth's mantle. But differences in density and temperature make it possible to track these processes tomographically. Our understanding of plate tectonics and continent formation should improve rapidly as we fill in the blank regions in our 3-D map of the planet.

Reading about seismic tomography for the first time gave me a rush of awe quite like the first photos of the Earth from orbit. As the "picture" of our planet's no-longer-inscrutable interior gets clearer, it's likely to have a similar unifying and reorienting effect. Since tomographs are more indirect and artificial than photographs, they may never be quite so compelling. But that also may stop them from becoming cliches.

In any event, completing the image of the Whole Earth that initially inspired this Publishing Empire is a mighty fine way to mark our 20th anniversary. For the 30th, let's add animation. ■

maat

Going back to Stewart Brand moving away from the *Whole Earth Catalog* already in the 1980s, that was not something I had heard of. You also went on to work with a different cast of characters if I understand correctly?

Robert Horvitz

When Stewart started publishing the *Whole Earth Catalog* he said he would only do it for 5 years, and he really did try to end with the *Last Whole Earth Catalog* in 1971. But public demand was insatiable and he went on to publish the *Whole Earth Epilog*, the *Whole Earth Ecolog*, the *Electronic Whole Earth Catalog*, the *Whole Earth Software Catalog*, the *Next Whole Earth Catalog*, the *Essential Whole Earth Catalog* and quarterly supplements. This was an increasingly repetitive burden, so in the early 80s he wanted out. But his exit was so gradual that many of us believed it would never be complete. Eventually it was. He just slowly shifted responsibility to others that he thought were

ready to operate without his judgment as a safety net. Kevin Kelly's coming in as *CoEvolution*'s editor made a big difference. Kevin seemed to restore the energy of *Whole Earth*'s early years without repeating what Stewart had done. So Stewart just got out of his way.

My post-*Whole Earth* transition was also pretty smooth. In 1989 I was putting together a 40-page section for the magazine called *Radio Earth*. It was about living in an electromagnetic environment. We're normally not aware of it but the Earth has a huge permanent electrical charge, some of which manifests as lightning. The section had other topics too, like radio astronomy, deregulation of broadcasting, the health effects of radio exposure, etc. A TV journalist called while I was putting this together to ask if we would be interested in an article about pirate television in Eastern Europe. This was right around the time of the anti-communist uprisings, so I said yes definitely. The journalist was Evelyn Messinger, one of the founders of Internews. Internews had pioneered the use of live interactive satellite TV programmes as a way to improve relations between hostile countries. They organised discussions between members of Congress and the Soviet Politburo, between Israelis and Palestinians, between religious leaders in Iran and the US. Brilliant, daring, big-league stuff. Internews wanted to get involved in the changes happening in eastern Europe and when we finished editing her article, Evelyn asked if I would join them. They had won a contract from the US government to write a report on what it would take to de-monopolize broadcasting in post-communist societies. I agreed to co-author that report and create a manual for people with no technical training about how to build and operate low-power radio stations. The *Local Radio Handbook*, as it was called, was a real hit. It was translated into six languages and went through multiple printings.

Evelyn then introduced me to the editor of the *New York Times*' Sunday magazine, who wanted to create the Center for Independent Journalism in Prague. This would offer training and facilities for new Czech journalists and visiting foreign reporters. I was picked to be the Center's "director of radio activities" and moved to Prague in 1991. A few months later, George Soros hired Internews to develop a programme of support for journalism in the countries where he was creating foundations. Evelyn and I ran that programme: she handled television, I did radio, and together we started TransNews, a daily satellite video newsclip exchange for TV stations in eastern Europe. By 1995 our work was less about starting new stations and more about helping existing stations share programmes, lessons learned and how-to information. That led very naturally to expanding internet access throughout the region.

maat

Fantastic. You mentioned at one point that when you moved to Europe and started this new line of work, your perspective on *Whole Earth* changed. What caused that shift after fourteen years?

Robert Horvitz

Almost everyone on the staff believed the *Whole Earth Catalog* was a big step toward planetary culture, and we really did make an effort to include resources and ideas from outside the US. But the reality was that everything we published was in English and nearly all the publications we reviewed were in English, too. That bias was more obvious when viewed from eastern Europe, where Russian and German were more common second languages than English.

David Marx just had an interesting thread on Twitter about the *Whole Earth Catalog*'s impact on Japanese fashion magazines, which apparently was huge even

though they had no idea what the *Catalog* was about. They didn't get the philosophy behind the *Catalog*, its content or purpose, because of the language barrier. They just liked the style of presentation. So clearly language differences limited development of a truly global culture and that's something we couldn't overcome. Conditions have really improved since then, with the spread of the internet, online publishing and Google Translate. But magazine publishing on paper hasn't benefited from these changes. Quite the opposite.

The challenge we faced was: are there enough readers interested in both practical tools and advanced concepts – a combination essential to *Whole Earth*'s appeal – to sustain the production of first-class magazines which carry no advertising? That formula worked for 20 years, but eventually costs and competition rose, and we were no longer able to break even. Eventually we couldn't even pay the printer, let alone the staff, so publication had to stop. The last issue appeared in 2002 as a PDF file and that was the end.

Still, it was clear from the vantage point of Prague that *Whole Earth Catalog* was an inspired team effort, thanks mainly to Stewart Brand's farsightedness, with great diverse input from a whole lot of other people. That doesn't happen often enough, so I'm extremely glad to have been part of it.

This interview with Robert Horvitz was done in winter 2021/2022 and published on maat extended [ext.maat.pt] during my internship at the museum.

“The War is Inside Us”

futuress.org/stories/the-war-is-inside-us/

I grew up thinking that there could be a better way to live. I also grew up thinking no, *knowing*—that this was inevitable. That a large-scale invasion—like we’re witnessing now—would happen one day.

It’s now March 26, 2022, the 31st day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Sitting in my kitchen in Lisbon, I desperately browse through the pages of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Indian author Arundhati Roy, trying to cage this turmoil inside me to put my thoughts into words on paper. My family in Sweden is following the news day and night, trying to reach friends from long ago in Odesa and Kyiv. My friends’ families are in Poland, in Kyiv, in central Ukraine, scrambling for ways to survive or to get out.

“The riot is inside us. The war is inside us. Indo-Pak is inside us. It will never settle down. It can’t.”—Arundhati Roy

“The war is inside us,” writes Roy, describing the India-Pakistan conflict in Kashmir. “The riot is *inside* us. The war is *inside* us. Indo-Pak is *inside* us. It will never settle down. It can’t.” Watching the events unfolding in Ukraine, I can’t help but feel this same way—that the war is playing out within me, is inside me. India is not Russia, Pakistan is not Ukraine, and Kashmir is not Crimea, yet all of us who are from or have ties to these lands carry the war—these *wars*—inside us.

Don’t get me wrong. All my heart, soul, and effort are with the people of Ukraine—the country where my dad was born, in the Black Sea port town of Odessa. Still, it’s hard to call it a Russian-Ukrainian war. It’s not that it’s more complicated than that—it’s just that it’s *more* than that. There’s a continually ongoing-turned-disastrous Soviet/post-Soviet conflict in the region, spilling over into Russian aggression towards ex-Soviet republics. I understand where the conflict came from. I saw Ukrainian history being dispelled from the history books, and how the Russian state failed to get rid of its Soviet KGB shackles. Since about a decade ago, when I was a Russian-born immigrant teenager with the typical Cold War inheritance, I was sure that we would soon be in an almost-nuclear situation. Even back then, I believed that all we could do to prepare ourselves was to know as much as possible. Because only knowledge can save us.

“I believed that all we could do to prepare ourselves was to know as much as possible. Because only knowledge can save us.”

Today, we are in a war of information. We have also reached physical, modern warfare, with real people dying. In Ukraine, the army and the people are fighting with all their might to stop the Russian troops—and they will never give up. In

that I trust. And for that, I greatly thank them. Anything I can ever do to support this, I will. And I urge you to, as well. But there is also another war, a very real war waged against authoritarianism—not necessarily for neoliberalism, but for real freedom—playing out in the protests in Russia. It is playing out in Kashmir and Ukraine, in Burma and Burkina Faso, in Hong Kong and Palestine, in Iran and Syria, in Afghanistan, Tigrinya, Yemen, West Sahara, and many more places not mentioned in the news headlines. Ongoing post-colonial, post-imperial, and imperialist conflicts are playing out on the fringes of the Western-centric world.

"It was peacetime. Or so they said," writes Arundhati Roy. Her writing puts into words these conflicts that are at once ours and not ours. In the book, we see the Kashmir war through the story of a trans woman, where her inner conflict of being assigned male at birth becomes a metaphor for India's internal discords of being Muslim and Hindu, being socialist and capitalist, both within and outside of the caste system. They said it was peacetime, and yet all these conflicts are happening. With Russia and Ukraine, too, until recently we were also told that the post-Soviet years were a time of peace—forgetting the years of bloodshed: the 2008 invasion of Georgia, the 1999-2009 Second Chechen War, and of course the barely-opposed and only-now-remembered 2014 invasion of Crimea. That was peacetime, they said.

It has been a while since the West bothered to understand these wars as real phenomena, because now the proxy war hits a little too close to home. Somehow, I end up in between. It's not just that I'm Western and Russian. It's not that I'm half-Russian and half-Ukrainian. As with many families from the USSR, mine is from all over: from Lithuania to Yakutsk, Jewish and Orthodox, Northern and Southern. I'm speaking out now, because this is now happening in my land. It is my Ukraine. And my Russia. They are both falling to pieces, into despair, into nothingness—Ukraine, while fighting for survival; Russia, while giving up in the face of increased mass arrests going on for decades, and the censorship, blocking, or restricting of access to Twitter, television channels, independent media, Dozhd and Echo Moskvy, the BBC, and the German Wave. Any semblance of access to real knowledge is crumbling.

"Let us speak about it. Over, and over, and over again. Let us find words for the wounds, and words for the sorrows."

Yet as Ukrainians are standing up, so are the Russian people, and both need our support. Let us speak about it. Over, and over, and over again. Let us find words for the wounds, and words for the sorrows. If you can write about the war and rank your writing on mail.ru or yandex.ru, if you can hack Russian media, if you can write anywhere at all—do it. Anything small that will reach ten people on the other side will help because today, information in Russia means *everything*.

The Russian troops have invaded Ukraine. They came in a big convoy, attempting to take over a country in one fell 15-day swoop—and they have already failed. Instead, we see shelling. Bombs falling on cities, day in and day out. Civilian deaths, and a wave of over three million refugees scattered across Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Moldova, Lithuania and beyond. Maybe this time, Europe will finally change its understanding of asylum.

The Russian troops are falling. Young boys dying, en masse, in a place they did not know they would be sent. The soldiers mainly come from what we call the republics in Russia, i.e. the old colonized states: Dagestan and Ingushetia, Chechnya, Tatarstan, and others. Seventeen- and eighteen-year-old boys. Some protest in their own way, pouring out gas from the tanks en route. Others just shoot.

It doesn't legitimize their actions, but rather points to an imperial power controlling peoples as puppets and pitting them against each other. The Ukrainian army is fighting a modern war. I hope that it will hold out against the Russian troops. I hope that all of us far away from Kyiv and Moscow can protest loud enough for the Russian government to get scared. Because the only thing that they could fear—more than the nuclear weapon they are threatening the world with—is the people. Nothing is more powerful than the people. And nothing can ever be.

"I call you to know. Read about Ukraine. Learn about its history. Understand its people, its culture, its way of life."

So I do not call you to unite. I call you to know. Read about Ukraine. Learn about its history. Understand its people, its culture, its way of life. Hang the flags from your windows. Speak in the pub, in the café, in the bar. If you can write, write. If you can paint, paint. And believe strongly enough, so that this strength goes to those fighting and protesting. Power to the people of Ukraine. Power to the people who dare protest in Russia. Power to all of you who still believe in a better future.

This opinion piece was an adaptation of a newsletter column response to the outbreak of the Ukrainian war combined with resources to support refugee and artistic help centres in Ukraine. Its adapted form was commissioned by *Futuress* in March 2022.

A SCATTERED SEARCH FOR A UTOPIA

My search for a utopia probably started when I first read about queer theory as a 12-year-old and found the desire of freedom and fluidity of being as an independent individual in open collaboration and co-life with others. Through the years, this quest for a utopia has taken me down a range of different theories and dreams of a better way of life. Here are some, mainly feminist, fragments from my search for a way to discard society's shackles in future utopias.

The first utopia I adopted was Anaïs Nin's, the Spanish-Cuban writer of long, introspective, psychological journal entries. If you know her, it may be because of the erotica published posthumously with her permission and introduction: *'Rereading it these many years later, I see that my own voice was not completely suppressed. In numerous passages I was intuitively using a woman's language, seeing sexual experience from a woman's point of view. I finally decided to release the erotica for publication because it shows the beginning efforts of a woman in a world that had been the domain of men.'* A struggle for a beginning of a dream, rather than the dream itself.

Anaïs buys paint *'that can be used on glass, and we painted all the windows like modern stained-glass windows, fourteen windows in all. The studio looks like a pagan cathedral. Each one of us painted on windowpane.'* The horrors of the outside world, of the news, of the harshness of New York haunt her. *'I could not believe that there could be, anywhere in the world, space and air where the nightmare of war did not exist.'*

I became obsessed with Anaïs, dreaming about her, quoting her sporadically, drawing portraits of her and writing about her books, her essays, her diaries. In 1939, Anaïs returned to New York from Paris, escaping the looming war and in search of a new way of living. Money was scarce, and although her first three books had been published and her literary contacts were superb, the possibility of gaining wider acclaim seemed impossible. She found herself a flat and a studio with fourteen windows.

Shutting herself off from the cold world of New York City, Anaïs creates a world of her own – not just the inner world she'd been carefully constructing in the wildly edited diaries, but in her apartment

and studio. She buys a printing press, and with her lover Gonzalo sets out to print three hundred copies of *Winter of Artifice* on an old, hand-peddled printer. *'We learned the hard way, by experience, without a teacher. Testing, inventing, seeking, struggling. ... We worked seven and eight hours a day. We dreamt, ate, talked, slept with the press. We ate sandwiches with the taste of ink, got ink in our hair and inside our nails.'* In the heavy meticulous labour of printing, Anaïs finds her happiness and peace, her refuge, and her world. *'The relationship to handcraft is a beautiful one,'* she writes in her diary in January 1942. *'You pit your faculties against concrete problems. The victories are concrete, definite, touchable. A page of perfect printing. You can touch the page you wrote. ... Solving problems, technical, mechanical problems.* Which can be solved.' As her diaries disclose, the physical solution to her problems was not enough. She found an escape in this inner world and in the world of labour and writing, but depression and complicated relationships continued to haunt her life. Perhaps we can never escape this world fully – perhaps it is only in the artistic life we create for ourselves and the dreams we live out in our minds that we can reach our utopias.

'In the beginning, woman was the sun' – the ancient Japanese sun-goddess Amaterasu – *'Now she is the moon, a wan and sickly moon, dependent on another,'* wrote Haru Raicho Hiratsuka in the Seito manifesto, calling women to join her in the fight to return rather than go forward to the bravery, splendour and life of the ancient heroines. *'Together, we shall build a domed palace of dazzling gold atop the crystal mountain in the east of that land where the sun rises.'*

Front cover of the inaugural issue of Seito (September 1911) and 9th issue (date unkn own). Illustrated by Naganuma Chieko. Courtesy of Fuji Shuppan and Hokk Fabrica, respectively.

A few years after Anaïs, *Seitō* took over my thoughts and dreams. A 1911-1916 Japanese radical literary journal founded by a group of five women who called themselves the *Seitō-sha*, the Bluestocking Society: Haru Raicho Hiratsuka, Yasumochi Yoshiko, Mozume Kazuko, Kiuchi Teiko, and Nakano Hatsuko. The journal called for a liberation for modern women from within, from the spiritual, whilst referring back to the (semi-mythical) powerful female characters and literary figures of Japanese antiquity. The *Seitō-sha* came to be known as *atarashii onna* (new woman), a name given them by the media that scandalised their lives in uproar over their fluid sexualities, support of abortions and free

love theory. In 1916, *Seitō* was banned by the National Polity for being 'disruptive to society', their office ransacked and many of the members jailed in subsequent strike efforts or due to ties to women's associations and anarchist groups.

Liberation from within and in their personal lives, but with repercussions in the real world. Some of the non-founding members ended up in mental hospitals, either placed there by their husbands or too unstable after continuous difficulties. One, if I'm not mistaken, died in jail after her and her lover were found with communist and anarchist papers.

For the women who read *Seitō*, the journal meant everything. A sense of belonging. Of community. Of something else being possible. They, too, printed their issues themselves. Yet their utopia was a short-lived struggle, impossible to fulfil in the public realm.

Many years later, the May Day Archives provided me with pages upon pages of 1970s socialist lesbian, queer and women's magazines. I went in with the idea of getting inspiration for how to set up something collaborative, how to find real ways to work together, how to build my own utopia. Instead, I found a treasure trove of letters, thoughts and stories of women finding their sexuality, their selves, their confidence and their independence. *Spare Rib* (1972–1993) caught my attention, and I spent hours devouring the confused stories of exploring sexuality at a time when it was everything but easy. *'In Boston, she [Marilyn] lived with people who believed in non-monogamy and were all having relationships with several people of both sexes. "I was involved with a woman who had a lover, and with a man who was involved with two other people. We struggled a lot, but I found having male and female affairs at the same time was not good. It was like having two roles clashing." ... "I haven't been able, and I don't know anyone who has, to have a heterosexual relationship and still be independent. There's a point at which even the strongest women stop. Bit by bit, they relinquish their autonomy."'* (Sara Davidson, '4 Women, Four Years On', *Spare Rib*, issue and date unknown).

> Another story was that of a young woman having sex for the first time with another, older, woman. She was thrilled, but the older woman quickly pawned her off as soon as she realised it was her first time. It caused years of confusion and distress, but when they spoke again years later, it turned out the older woman was terrified of "corrupting" her.

It reminded me of myself, all of it. But it also reminded me of the first time I encountered a women's liberation movement that stuck with me – *Grupp 8*, or Group 8 as they're called in English. A Swedish feminist group founded by eight women who self-published *Kvinnobulletinen*

(Women's Bulletin). Between work and childcare responsibilities, they would piece the writing together letters, essays and advertisements on big sheets of paper, printing the bulletin by hand in a tiny cellar, just like Anaïs Nin did years before them.

Group 8, too, were shunned by the mainstream despite 15,000 monthly printed issues as book owners refused to sell a bulletin that featured open descriptions of sex, theories on sexuality and calls for a different kind of childcare, work equality and sex workers rights. In the founders' later recollections, you'll find the tragedy of how, despite the support of their male, female and queer partners, time and time again they encountered the same relationship issues of inequality, of shame, of guilt.

I've spent the past year trying to establish my own utopia by living free in body and mind, and through a cultural theory project, culturala. I found its name in the idea of a feminine form of the word cultural – a utopia of a cultural theory / language / understanding that has no hierarchies, that welcomes all and that interconnects audiences, artists and writers. In the process of building the network of culturala, the same questions brought up by these utopian memories have returned: how do you create something together that lasts, and that works, and without the inherent inequalities of this world's relationships? How do you live a utopia, and why do we, do I, and maybe you, too, still fall into the same traps where we give up and give in, where we limit ourselves, even if we've put all the labour and thought into being *limitless*? And can we fight to become limitless and free? Somewhere, I still believe we can.

A personal essay commissioned by *Grrrl Zine*, a queer and feminist zine series, activist and facilitator platform run by Lu Williamson. It was written in 2022 and scheduled to be published in March 2023.

HERE'S TO NEW BEGINNINGS

mailchi.mp/culturala/to-new-begginings

Edie Flowers, *ZILCH* (2020)

Dear Friends,
Speaking about the year that's passed and the year to come with friends, colleagues, family and acquaintances, I've heard time and time again **how tough 2022** was. It was **a year of challenges, and an almost epidemic mental health crisis** for so many, perhaps as a response to the end of the pandemic and the lockdowns.

But it's not just that. **We're living in a time of rapid change** and as with most change, it's not all that positive. More often than not, those with the means to tackle the challenges have scrambled to once again come out on top. The war in Ukraine perpetrated by the country I was born in has had a devastating impact on so many lives, not least leading to a vibrant Kyiv-based art community being forced to disperse all over the continent. As bills and cost of living has gone up in most countries, a lot of art and cultural funding has been cut. Studies are showing yet again how much harder it is for creatives from working-class and marginalised backgrounds to enter the 'art world' despite seeming efforts to rebalance it all.

But this is also a time of possibility. I, for one, have hope for 2023. We've all been learning how to **create resilient communities ourselves**, and while grassroots communities have taken a hit in funding cuts,

I think we've all given up on counting on institutions and are ready to take that change into our own hands.

Edie Flowers, *After the storm* (2022)

A fantastic new free housing initiative has been blossoming in London, Autonomous Housing Network, despite being kicked out from their initial location in Waterloo. Lisbon associations, many of which responded to the cuts and redistribution of art funding by turning to crypto, have seen that money dry out in the past months and have been building plans for new, sustainable and independent sources of income.

Iranians all around the globe have been fighting against a violent regime – a revolution ignited and led by women. The response to the war in Ukraine and the desire to help refugees has been remarkable, and it's brought people together in often unexpected and heartwarming ways. The criticism of that response being so different from Europeans' response refugees from Africa, the Middle East and Asia has also been useful – many communities seem to have changed their tune about refugees in general if not on a governmental level then on a human-to-human level. The climate crisis, while getting worse, has finally got supporters and champions the world over, especially in the arts. **There's a lot left to do, but for once I think we're all willing to fight.**

For culturala, we've also been through a lot of changes. In response to the mental health challenges of the past year, we've decided to change

pace and **seek more sustainable ways of working** as we realise we don't need to have to follow a strict schedule (we're not a corporation after all, we're an alternative art theory journal!). We've also been looking for new ways of working together, restructured, got new team members and said goodbye to some old ones.

After publishing our first issue in 2022, we know so much more know as a team, as a network and as a community. **In this year to come we'll be finding yet other ways to encourage a shift in the way we all speak about contemporary art – and to ensure that we can have that impact in a long-term, sustainable way.** So if you have ideas for how to do this, would like to work with us or just connect, please, please, never hesitate to get in touch. That's what we're here for.

So here's to new beginnings!

With love,
Maria

The artworks in this newsletter are by the amazing artist and sculptor Edie Flowers who's currently embarked on the RISD Drawing Marathon at the Rhode Island School of Design after a year at the Royal Drawing School. Her work addresses moments that are hard and loving, rust and feathers. We've been following Edie's work for a long time now, and it's amazing to see the subtle, distraught and poignant style she's developed that speaks so much of our time.

This column was the 2023 New Year's newsletter for *culturala* which is written as a column by a member of our community. For the New Year edition, I wrote this reflection as the editor of the journal and platform.

Thanks for reading!

Maria Kruglyak

Email: maria@culturala.org
WhatsApp: +44 7424 662563
Mobile: +351 912 349 205 / +44 7784 971779