

MANUAL ON SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES AND RESIDENCIES

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INTRODUCTION

You cannot hold this manual in your hands. It has no weight, no smell of fresh print, no binding that will ever loosen. It lives only on your screen: an e-book, an e-manual, a collection of traces. And perhaps it is fitting – a light, dematerialised form for a project that has spent three years questioning what it means to practise sustainability within the arts.

Sustainability is in the AiR is a Creative Europe collaboration between four residency centres: MGLC Švicarija (Slovenia), Snehta (Greece), Matadero Madrid (Spain), and MeetFactory (Czech Republic). Over its course, two artists or artistic duo (eight in total) from each country were supported through residencies, each developing new work while the institutions themselves experimented with the conditions of caring, hosting, and producing, but also recalibrating and rethinking.

We did not aim for grand institutional reinventions. As curators and cultural workers within large centres, we are aware – sometimes reluctantly – that our very practices of mobility, production, and exchange contribute

to carbon footprints, waste, and (over)consumption. Instead, our attention turned to what we like to call *baby steps*: subtle shifts and slow processes of learning and unlearning.

Think of this not as much as a manual, but rather as an anthology of different perspectives. A place where fatigue and frustration are translated into modest, generative practices. Where sustainability is explored not only as a strategy and buzzword – reuse, DIY, green mobility, site-specific experimentation – but also as a way of thinking, a cultivation of reflexes and sensibilities. Sustainability here means imagining cycles not only of materials and artworks, but also of relationships and collaborations.

The first chapter of this manual features a text by Zuzana Révészová, a member of the feminist collective of architects and sociologists Spolka, based in Košice, reflecting on her experience with residencies. The second is written by Danica Sretenović and Gaja Mežnarić Osole from Krater, an 18,000 m² patch of feral nature in Ljubljana, Slovenia, located on a formerly degraded construction site. Their contribution reflects on a year-long negotiation between the organisers of the 35th Ljubljana Graphic Biennale and the collective, in which, instead of constructing new infrastructure for the Biennale's public programme, the collective asked for support in sustaining the infrastructure already created by the community and by nature itself.

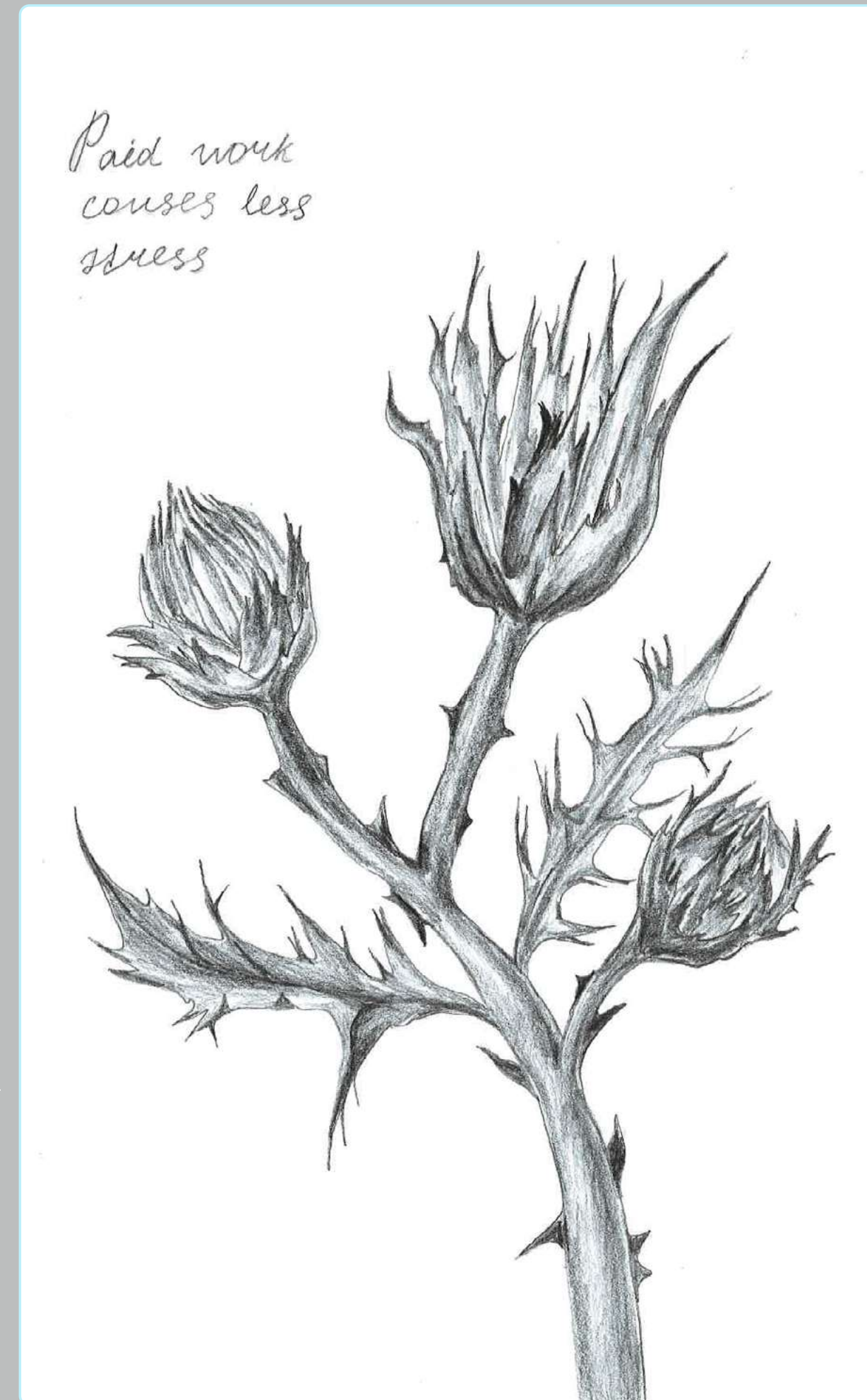
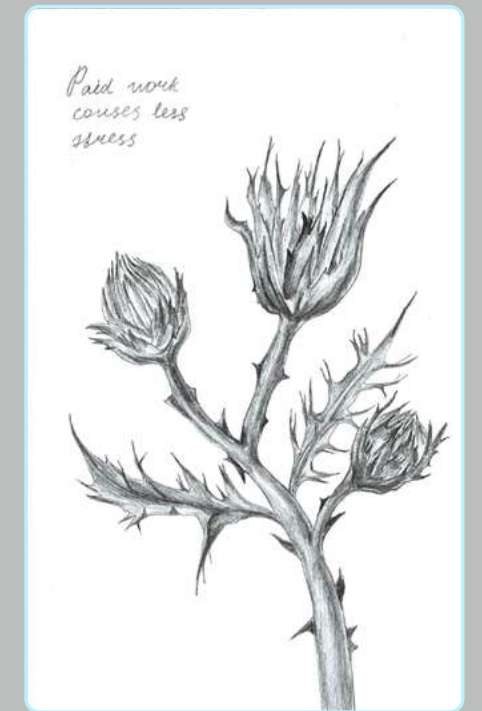
Another chapter gathers texts that grew out of the workshop cycle *Rehearsing Faith*, organised by Matadero Madrid and curated by Alex Alonso Díaz.

It includes contributions by Amelie Aranguren, Andrea Rodrigo, Anna Manubens, and Blanca de la Torre, who also facilitated a series of online workshops in spring 2025.

The following section presents interviews with the participating artists (Lea Culetto, Sara García, Lenka Kubelová, Maria Nikiforaki, Small But Dangers, Olga Staňková, Adrianna Szojda, and Christina Zampoulaki), focusing on the projects they developed over the past three years.

The final section is written by us – the curators, producers, and cultural workers behind the project. These texts turn the lens inward. Because *Sustainability is in the Air* has been an experimental platform, we reflect on what worked, what could have been otherwise, and where we stumbled. Through this introspection, we search for ways to make our institutions more responsive and functional. Throughout, we return to the values of reciprocity and compassion. We trust in the generative force of subjectivity: the idea that the way we think and feel together can alter the material realities of the places we build and inhabit.

This book doesn't summarise or represent the end of the project, but is rather an open process. We hope that in reading it – whether you skim through a single chapter or follow every page – you might discover steps worth carrying into your own practice. Not as prescriptive answers, but as possibilities: beginnings, invitations, new intentions, tiny little seeds. After all, sustainability is never a final achievement. It is a practice of rehearsal, of negotiation – something we learn, unlearn, and re-learn together.



StonyTellers, *Burnout Space*, 2025.



GAJA MEŽNARIĆ OSOLE, DANICA SRETENOVIC (KRATER COLLECTIVE) FERAL OCCUPATIONS: OUR LABOR IS OUR INFRASTRUCTURE!

The following text was written on the occasion of the 35th Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts (GB35), hosted by MGLC, with Ibrahim Mahama as the artistic director. It reflects on a year-long negotiation between the Krater Collective – led by Danica Sretenović and Gaja Mežnarić Osole – and the art institution. Such an extended negotiation is, in itself, not a sustainable practice for artistic collectives. However, it reveals the extensive groundwork that collectives must undertake – alone, and time and again – due to the lack of supportive policies and political frameworks, simply to ask for sustainable ways of relating when in positions of unequal power. The demands we made recognise biennials not as self-contained events but as temporary residents* embedded in specific eco-cultural contexts, with a responsibility not merely to represent, but

to sustain collective artistic work. That is why we don't talk sustainability in terms of decarbonisation, but in terms of nature, city, venues, labour, economy, power, time, and – art.

**After all, isn't the Venice Biennale merely a temporary – and relatively young – resident of the Giardini and the lagoon?*

PS In 2023 we failed to meet the deadline and consequently never really published the text for the Ljubljana Graphic Biennial Reader. Overwhelmed by installing three artworks and hosting opening events we couldn't possibly reflect on our work at the same time. Instead, we did it on our timeline, a QR code was stamped on the catalogue cover, allowing readers to access the text online in its drafted, unrevised form and to contribute comments and reflections. Invited by the SAiR initiative to reflect on sustainability in culture, we now offer this revised version of the same text – publicly accessible at [this link](#) – and invite you to keep the conversation alive.

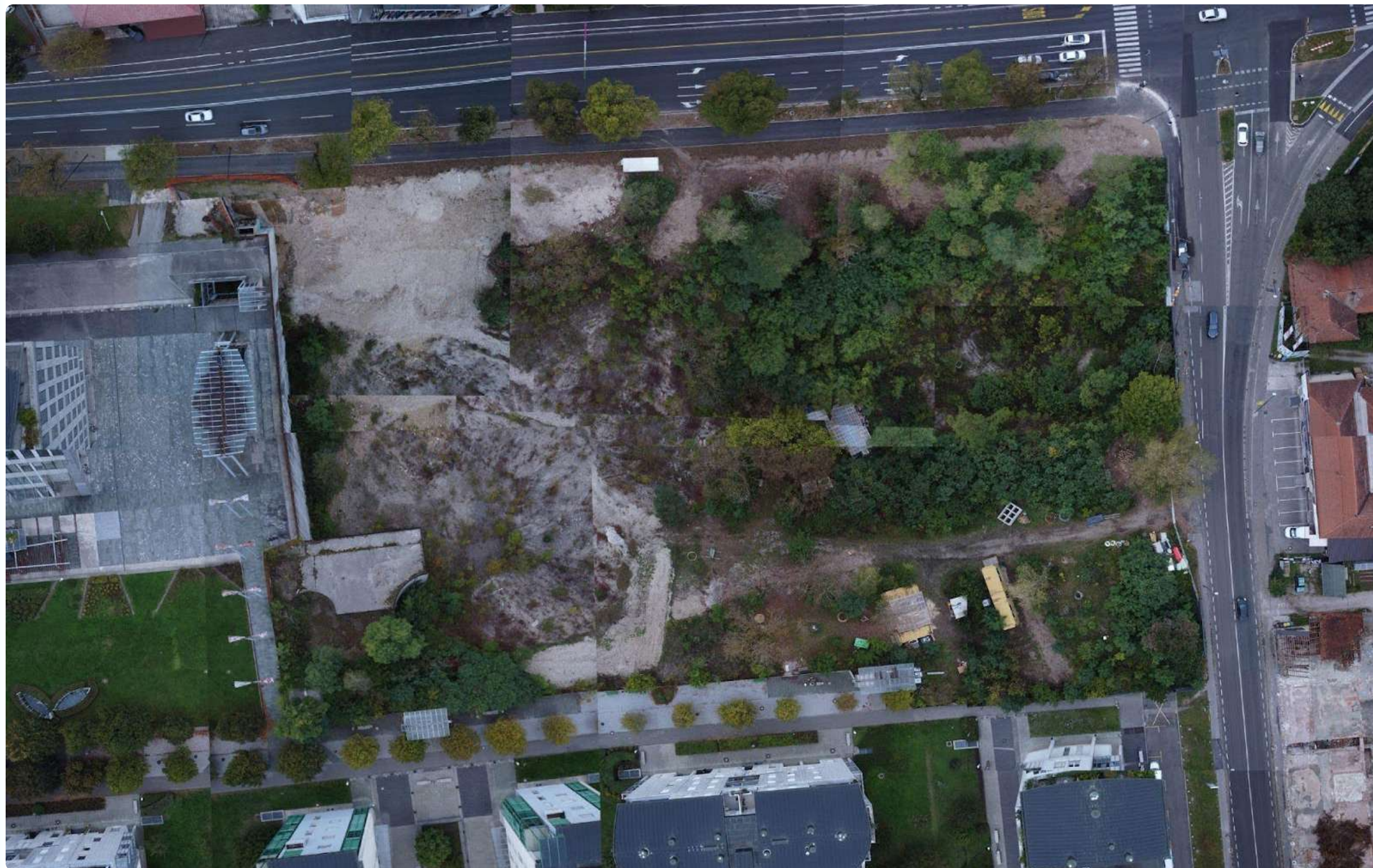


Reader occupation: 'Scan to Occupy', unpublished article for the Biennial's reader, 2023.
Location: Biennale press. Danica Sretenović and Gaja Mežnarić Osole. Photo by Amadeja Smrekar.

1. NON-ALIGNED IS SUSTAINABLE

DANICA SRETENOVIC

Krater, an 18,000 m² area of feral nature situated in Ljubljana, Slovenia is an eco-social construct and creative practice on what had otherwise for decades been known as a degraded construction site. Krater's maintenance demands constant physical, conceptual, and discursive labour, while its ecosystem passes through stages of succession. Krater is highly fragile, invisible to authorities – it is planned to be built over and erased.



Events of Slow Disturbances: Former Military Complex, administratively pending construction site, planned as the Palace of Justice, actually Krater's self-sustained nature, 2021.

Encounters with Ibrahim Mahama, the artistic director, and Beya Othmani, a curator of *the 35th Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts*, placed Krater on a previously unthought scale – that of the post-Non-Aligned world. They opened the question of what remains from once-shared politics, alliances, and courage. Many hours of conversation revolved around the idea of emancipation embedded in built, long-lasting public infrastructures – serving as a counterpoint to the privatised landscape of Tunis, where Beya is from, and as a vital presence in Tamale, Ghana, where Ibrahim builds not only cultural and educational centres but also railways, responding to the absence of such public structures.

For the post-Yugoslav generation, however, the problem lies elsewhere – not in the lack of, but in the inaccessibility of public infrastructure. What was created to last as common heritage during socialism has been minimised, destroyed, or made increasingly unavailable since the 1990s. Krater is a manifesto of this process – a former military site, indefinitely fenced off from the city for more than 30 years. The work that the Krater Collective took upon itself in 2020 – to transform degraded land into public land – is to sustain the labour that renders Krater visible as a living infrastructure, one performed both by nature and by the Krater Collective.

But what does it really mean to sustain a “sustainable practice”? To keep the Krater Collective as a resident of the urban ecology while insisting that urban ecology itself remains a participant in the neoliberal city? And what is the role of the Biennale in all this?

It is not a lighthearted effort, being part of the collective – and thus claiming collectivity within the culture that thrives on competition and market that thrives on object-obsession. No wage is there for the work that goes into perpetuating the collective.

It is not a lighthearted effort, being part of the collective that works from a pending construction site, overloaded with interests and futures, while trying to insert practices of critical thinking and formats that open up space for the public. No wage is there for the work put into creating public discourse, into reclaiming public space.

It is not a lighthearted effort, being part of the collective, thus perpetually relating your own thinking-processes, knowledge-histories, inspiration-strikes, (in)abilities, and time-control to others. There is no recipe for this.

It is not a lighthearted effort, being of the post-Yugoslav generation, dispossessed of its social heritage built on the enthusiasm and manpower of previous generations: the right to accessible housing, public infrastructure, self-management, stable workplaces, non-commercialised health care, transnational comradeship, anti-colonialism, and anti-fascism – fighting individualised precarity by producing both the object of the work and the conditions for work to happen at all.

In this sense, a mere translation of Krater into the gallery for the sake of the Biennale would be insufficient, as its practice is situated and alive, yet on the verge of extinction without structural and systemic support.

Instead of working on representations of Krater, we suggested direct engagement with its material presence – its site, practices, and practitioners, which enable Krater to be seen and to exist in the first place. Instead of building a new infrastructure for the Biennale's public programme, we asked for help in sustaining the existing infrastructure produced by the collective and by nature. Instead of momentary exhibition exposure, our contribution to GB35, titled *Feral Occupations*, aimed to set conditions for the continuation of the art-work Krater.

Exactly here lies the potential for the Biennale to enable the continuation of the production of “feral” concepts – in that sense, Krater's artistic contribution lies in the very existence of the site and the conception of its programme. We asked the 35 GB to become the guardian of Krater, as it facilitates its very existence; Krater, in turn, contributes through its heterotopic presence – a place like no other in the near vicinity – its “feral” actions and programmes. **Instead of allocating funds to ephemeral installations, this approach allows for the very survival of the Collective's creative labour.** 18,000 m² of what was previously seen as a “pending construction site,” now hosting an ongoing nature-culture programme, is declared an exhibition venue in itself through the authority of an art institution.

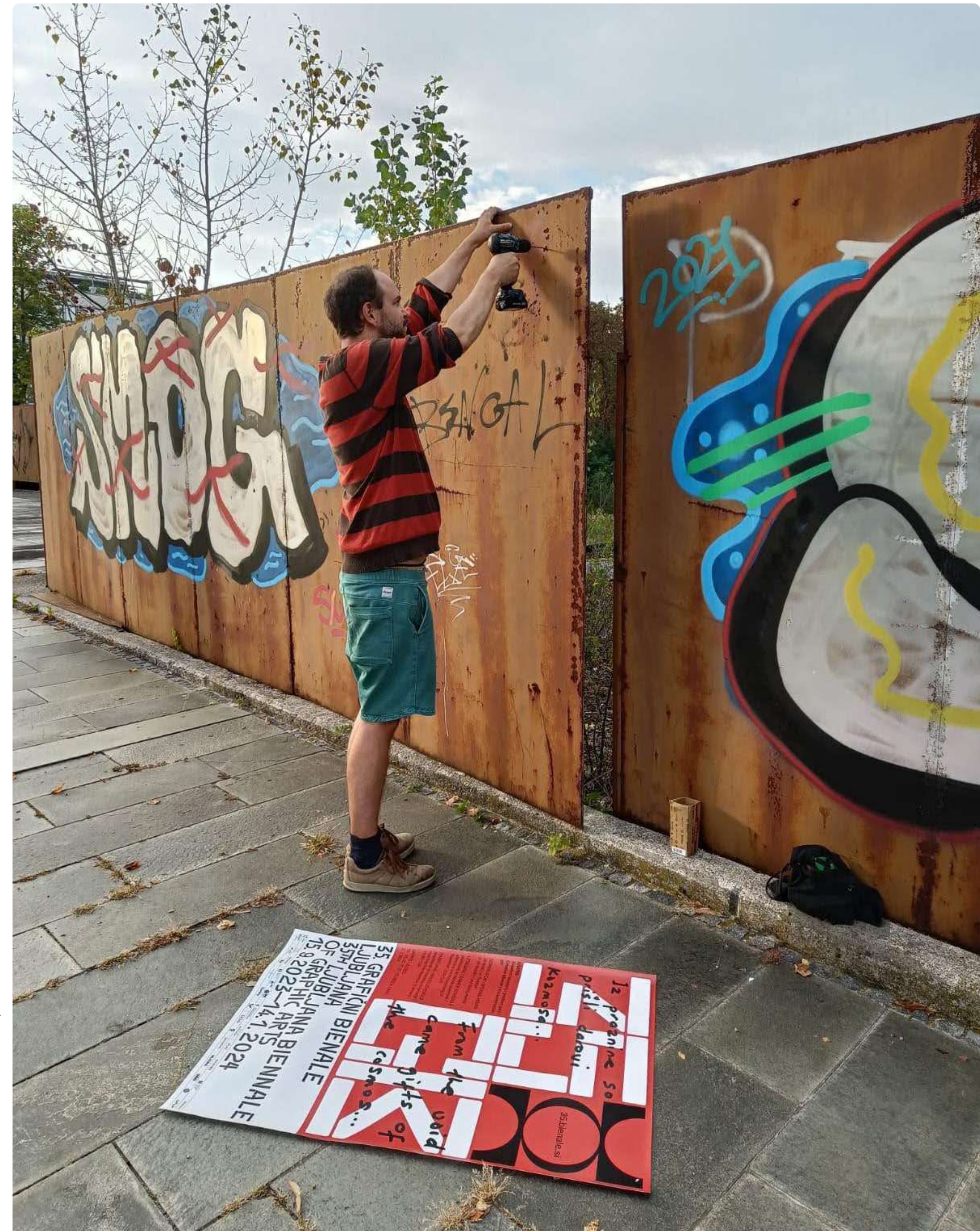
Over the course of eight months, *Feral Occupations* of GB35 encouraged the Biennale's capacity to enter into interdependencies with autonomous creative practices,

while reframing the protocols and economies of hegemonic cultural models – though not without friction.

With *Feral Occupations*, we intentionally entered what often appears out of reach: legal agreements, cultural politics, programme policies, the institution, the city. We did so through a series of gestures, tactics, and interventions that tested the readiness of power infrastructures to abandon extractive practices, to work on reciprocity, and to enter long-lasting relations with typologies of critical creative work. The Feral Contract relocates object-oriented production budget to fund the too-often overlooked and unpaid “maintenance” labour.

Feral Occupations is an intervention into the inertia of cultural politics, leaning toward the reproduction of relations that keep power positions intact, in order to situate Krater's feral logic as proof that things can be done the third way, the way Nonaligned

Banquet of Feral Occupations, Feral Cartography Cycling Tour, Japanese Knotweed Cartographies, Take-away Feral Contract, Institutional Occupations, Speaking Mushroom Manifesto, Events of Slow Disturbances, Guerrilla photography & Uninvited Projections all suggest the desire of the Krater generation to engage with what appears to be out of reach: City. Economy. Cartography. Production of discourses. Appropriation of history. Modes of working. Institutions. Mowing regimes. Administration. Relations. Art venues. Short-term commissions. Politics of exposure.



Events of Slow Disturbances: Proclaiming art venue at a pending construction site, 13 September 2023.



Events of Slow Disturbances: Collecting Japanese knotweed to produce paper for the Biennale's Reader, 14 October 2023.



Events of Slow Disturbances: Feral Occupations Banquet, 6 October 2023.

2. BUDGET OCCUPATIONS: WHAT DO WE NEGOTIATE FOR? THE FERAL CONTRACT

GAJA MEŽNARIĆ OSOLE

As eco-social designers, makers, and architects, we have pioneered work across museums, academia, and municipal projects, developing urgent spatial discourses, products, concepts, and circular economy systems. Yet without systemic support, these efforts are too often reappropriated by institutions, reinforcing existing power structures rather than enabling long-term transformation. This failure limits their ecological and societal potential while placing ethical, material, and personal strain on those producing them, often without adequate pay. To avoid this, change must occur at a fundamental level: within institutional operations capable of enabling systemic shifts to support equitable collaborations.

Distancing ourselves from the extractive economic arrangements of artistic production – through biennials, exhibitions, or other forms of institutional collaborations – we asked whether GB35 could open space for a different relational approach with the hosting cultural institution. How might we creatively engage with the Biennale's economic, contractual, and administrative structures so they could support the situated practice of the Krater Collective? To address this, we intervened in the artist-institution relationship embedded in the contract and its budget. Rather than rejecting the collaboration over fees that failed to account for collective practice, or fearfully accepting the given conditions, we chose to treat the Biennale's "offer" as a site for creative action.

After a discussion about the Collective's precarious situation without any secured public funding in 2023, the curators suggested producing artworks as physical infrastructure – such as a library or assembly space – that could serve Krater's needs beyond the exhibition framework. Yet our pressing need was not material infrastructure but paid labour to sustain practice and keep the site open as a cultural venue. In response, we declared: *"Our labor is our infrastructure!"* **By reframing labour as infrastructure, we redirected production budgets to support the work of cultural programmes on site.**

Through a demanding process of negotiations (they lasted almost 8 months!) with a group of visiting and hosting curators, we **secured agreements that enabled Krater to remain open and accessible to the Biennale's visitors and local residents for nine months** during the course of the event. The Biennale's financial support sustained a series of "events of slow disturbance," including open hours at the *Sanctuary of Abandoned Plants*, knotweed-picking actions for papermaking, Feral Cartography bicycle tours, and the *Banquet of Feral Occupations*. Additionally, the Collective intervened in the Biennale's communication funds by offering Trajna's *Notweed Paper* for its publications, which materialised on the cover of the Biennale Reader, further embedding our practice within the institutional framework. Beyond financial transactions, non-monetary arrangements proved equally important. With the institution's reputation, we secured legal permits for actions that would otherwise



Feral Contract: Budget Occupations, 2023. Talking Mushroom. Location: MGLC. Gaja Mežnarić Osole, Danica Sretenović. Photo by Amadeja Smrekar.

have been considered guerrilla interventions, while close collaboration with the PR team enabled us to redirect communication about upcoming events through institutional channels.

To shift power relations and establish a reciprocal attitude, we drew on a wide range of skills surpassing expected creative expression, including cultural diplomacy, law, business, project management, and administration. Beyond artistic production, our involvement encompassed participation in frequent curatorial meetings, shaping arguments, navigating challenging communications, and following guidance from a legal expert. This multifaceted effort ultimately culminated in the creation of a final agreement – the contract with MGLC, the hosting cultural institution.

Attached to the contract, the *Feral Occupations Budget Blueprint* served as an appendix mapping all economic transactions between Krater and the Biennale. Inspired by Kate Rich's *Feral Budget Generator* and Gibson-Graham's community economies theory, it also documented non-monetary contributions that supported the work alongside financial resources. At the same time, it highlighted our financial deficit, despite all alternative strategies undertaken to avoid it, **showcasing the extent of sponsorship required from cultural workers to support Slovenian cultural institutions.**

The effort to turn the contract and budget blueprint into a public artwork, *Budget Occupations*, was not met with enthusiasm by the hosting institution, but we eventually managed to exhibit it at MGLC as takeaway documents.

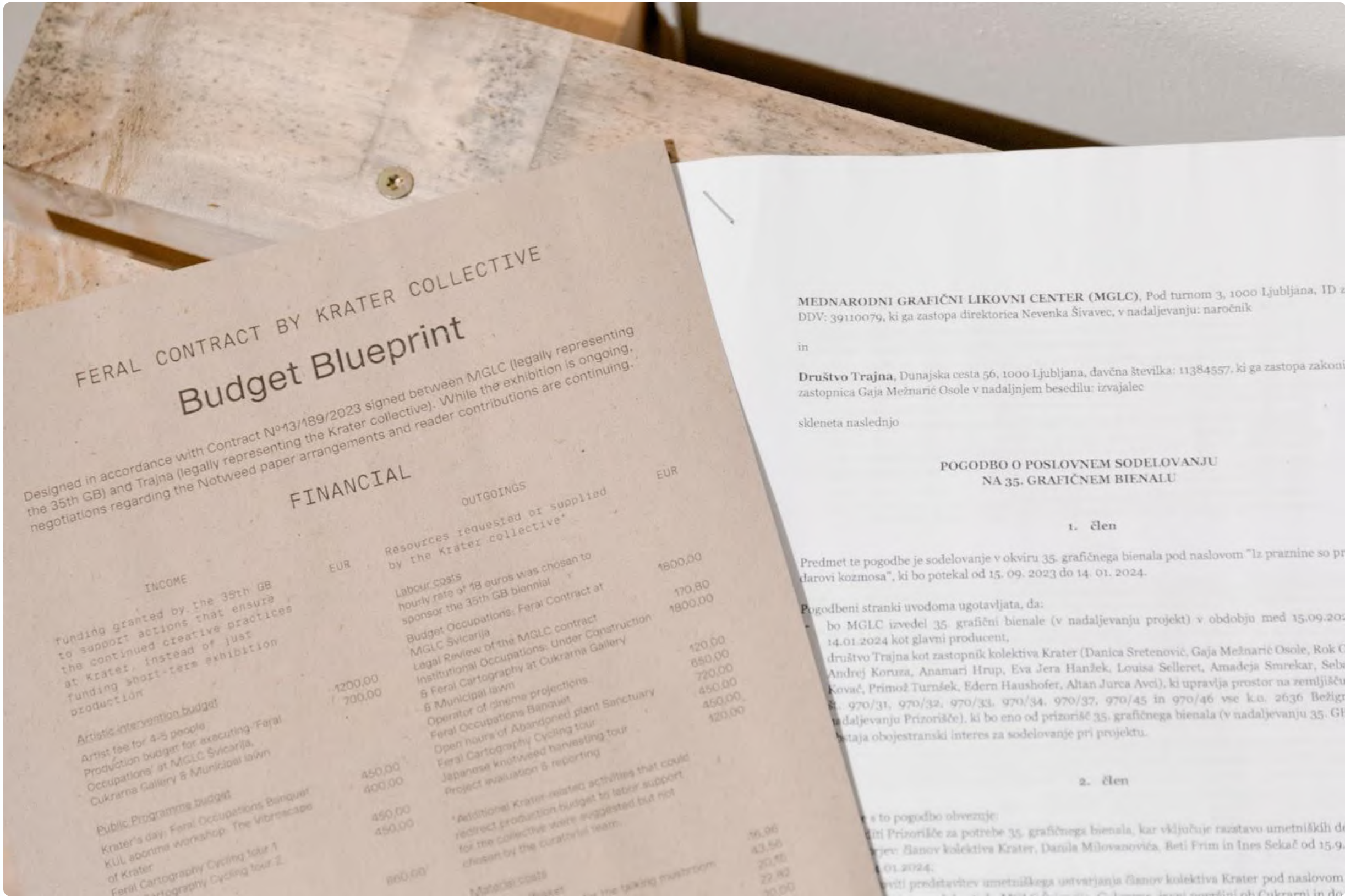
Rather than presenting our negotiations as a success or failure, the exhibit became a provocation, sparking uncomfortable conversations about labour politics within culture. Accompanied by the presence of a “talking tree mushroom” reciting a manifesto on cultural work, it evolved into a tool of collective resistance, forging alliances with other contributing artists to advocate for their fees. More than 700 copies were taken by visitors, extending the conversation beyond the gallery walls.



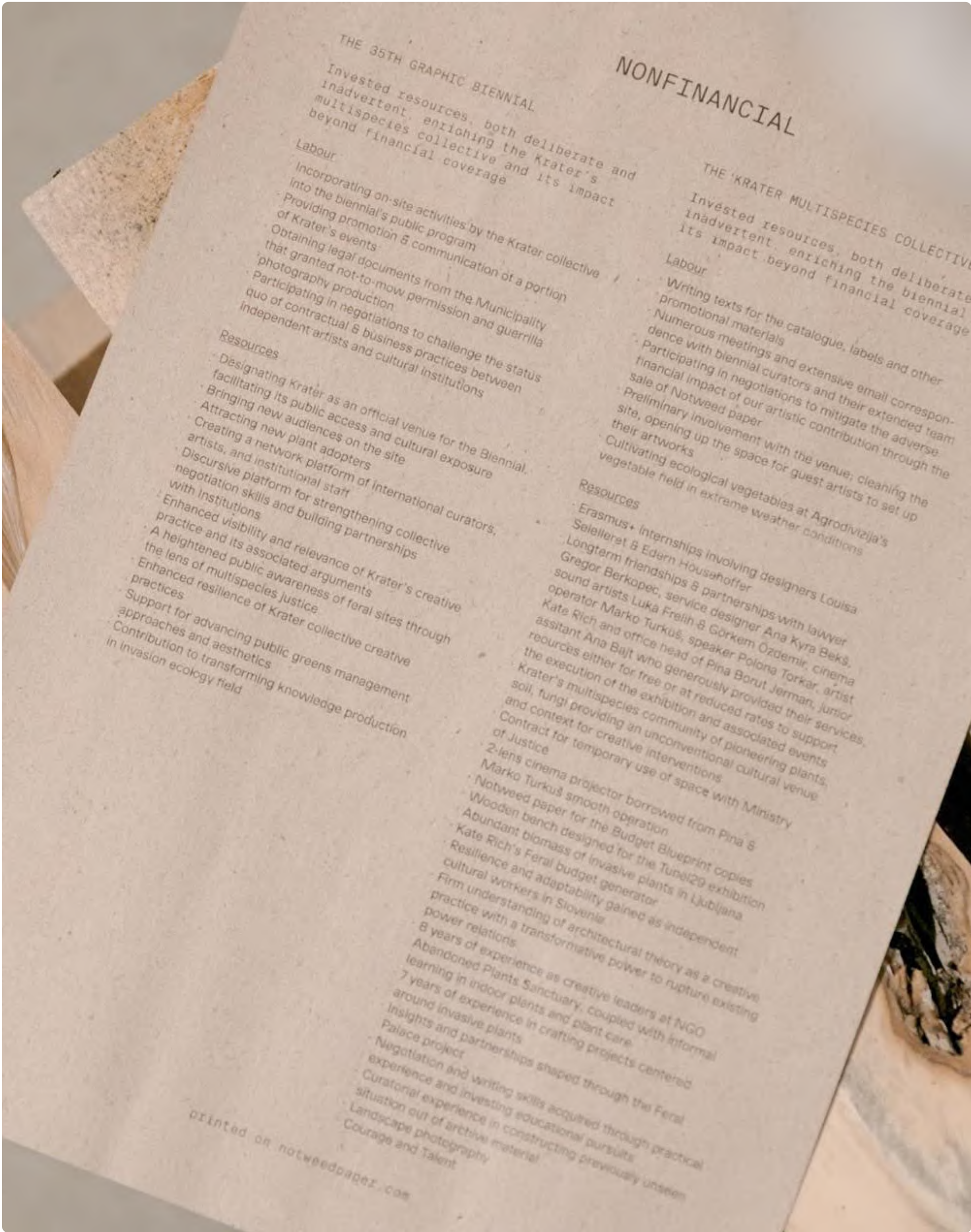
On-site occupations, 2020–2023, events of slow-disturbance: Banquet of Feral Occupations.
Location: Feral construction site. Krater Collective. Photo by Amadeja Smrekar.



Feral Contract: Budget Occupations, 2023. Archive of economic negotiations and calculations.
Location: MGLC. Gaja Mežnarić Osol, Danica Sretenović. Photos by Amadeja Smrekar.



Feral Contract: Budget Occupations, 2023. Archive of economic negotiations and calculations. Location: MGLC. Gaja Mežnarić Osole, Danica Sretenović. Photos by Amadeja Smrekar.



Feral Contract: Budget Occupations, 2023. Archive of economic negotiations and calculations. Location: MGLC. Gaja Mežnarić Osole, Danica Sretenović. Photos by Amadeja Smrekar.



Reader Occupation: Notweed Paper, 2021. Location: Biennale Press. Gaja Mežnaric Osole, Andrej Koruza. Photo by Amadeja Smrekar.



On-site occupations, 2020–2023, events of slow-disturbance: Feral cartographies of Japanese knotweed & collecting the biomass to produce paper for the biennial's reader. Location: Feral plot next to Golovec hill. Krater collective. Photo by Amadeja Smrekar.

3. INSTITUTIONAL OCCUPATION: UNDER CONSTRUCTION BY NATURE

GAJA MEŽNARIĆ OSOLE

Let me start by recounting a memory of Cukrarna's extinct feral land that has stayed with me to this day. Almost ten years ago, I watched a woman carefully collecting herbs against the backdrop of the old, crumbling Cukrarna building, her quiet work allowing nature to slowly reclaim the space. Inspired, I returned years later with colleagues and project partners to gather dried knotweed stems and experiment with their potential as a local source of cellulose. Those early experiments sparked what would become Notweed Paper, a local initiative that transforms an invasive plant into a sustainable alternative to conventional paper – and turns a small act of reclamation into a larger story of possibility. I hold the memories of this place very close to my heart.

Today, the feral site has been transformed into a cultural institution overseen by the municipality. The transition unfolded with an effortless, familiar rhythm – erasing the ruins of the past to impose a homogeneous vision of the urban future. What was once a feral ecosystem, where pioneering species, soil organisms, foragers, the homeless, and entrepreneurs coexisted among the ruins, has been replaced by a parking lot and a manicured lawn designed to accommodate the visitors and staff of the new cultural venue.

When we heard our work would be exhibited in Cukrarna, we felt puzzled. In the face of these ongoing transformations, how can we engage with the venue without conforming to an urbanisation model that, in the name of "culture," erases

unregulated spaces and their spontaneous uses in the city? Our response became clear when, on a walk past Cukrarna toward home, Danica noticed that a small portion of the institutional lawn had been spontaneously reclaimed by an "indigenous" resident: Japanese knotweed. In support of its uninvited vegetal gesture, to take back what had been taken, we decided to protect it by making the plants' efforts to reclaim the lawn's ecology visible. A legal permit for the alternative use of public space allowed us to install a fence resembling a construction site, signalling "nature at work" and preventing the city's mowing regimes from cutting down the plants' presence.

Treating the work of invasive flora as a form of creative labour may seem radical, but embracing the agency of these feral beings allowed us to challenge anthropocentric notions of "construction" and "urban development". Our green spaces, shaped by machinery-intensive maintenance regimes, generate heat islands, drive gentrification, and disconnect people from nature. We urgently need to recognise and support the productive work of nature to create microclimates, repair soil, provide food, and offer unexpected ways to engage with both urban and more-than-human life. The installation invites us to consider feral, weedy plants as a potential ally in shaping healthy cities – or, perhaps, to reflect on how far we remain from that ideal – since, just weeks before the Biennale's closure, the knotweed was mown again following a call from an angry biologist, forcing the municipality to remove the fence, even though the same plants thrived abundantly on state land just a few metres away, next to the river.



Under Construction: Institutional Occupation, 2023. Japanese knotweed bush, permission not to mow. Location: municipal lawns. Gaja Mežnarić Osole, Sebastjan Kovač. Photos by Amadeja Smrekar.



Knotweed picking at Cukrarna feral land, 2015. Photo by Nataša Košmerl.

4. INSTITUTIONAL OCCUPATION: FERAL CARTOGRAPHY - AN EXERCISE IN URBAN MEMORY.
WHAT DO YOU FORGET TO REMEMBER?
DANICA SRETENOVIC

Krater feral ecosystem: to be replaced by the Palace of Justice
Bežigrad Stadium: to be replaced by Bežigrad Sports Park
Rog Autonomous Factory and historic three line: replaced by RogLab (New Center Rog)
Old Rice Factory feral ecosystem: replaced by a parking lot
Kolizej feral construction site: replaced by luxury housing
Beyond Construction Site urban gardens: to be replaced by a housing development
Cukrarna feral land: replaced by the Contemporary Art Gallery public space

...

I once took a cab to Krater, but the driver distrusted my destination, asking why I was going to a place "where there is nothing". I replied that he was driving toward the most notorious green space in Ljubljana, where vegetation overgrows the construction fence by 15 metres. He trusted me only upon arrival, when he saw it with his own eyes. He confessed that he drives past Krater every day and was seeing it now for the first time. And I wondered - why do we forget to remember places in our cities?

...

Once a construction fence encloses a territory, it is rare for anyone to ask what happens beyond it. The fence states: there is an authority inside, taking care of the place, and it is not to be seen or interrupted. The fence is a corrective measure,

propaganda of urban transition, and a signal that there is something unfit behind the fence.

Then again, it is not a lighthearted effort, constructing a steady critique of the way our cities are taken over by the real estate market, alarming friends and publics that being in space is ever more exclusive, claiming that gentrification and segregation are invisible and, in most cases, irreparable, nasty by-products of urban regeneration. It is not a lighthearted effort, searching for models from the past and resiliencies from the present that prove an alternative is not only a future scenario but already practised here and now. Our society fails to recognise and fund such engagement as the work of the architect; architects must take on this work uninvited. For this, we engage with self-sustained ecosystems, ones that are not programmed, cultivated, or maintained by the authority of urban planning. These feral lands cannot be predicted; they too operate uninvited, as a rule, at sites that have experienced anthropogenic stress, environmental and societal damage. For this reason, feral activities are often left out of sight and bureaucratic documents.

Feral, in this sense, is the concept of self-reliant resistance, uninvited action, and the introduction of an unforeseen future. It is not only the emergence of unplanned ecosystems, where pioneering and invasive plants stimulate new biotic and spatial relationships; it is also a political, living practice that interferes with the notions of context, user, zoning, and mainstream planning, while exposing the existing administrative framework of urban regulations as insufficient.

Following feral principles, Krater carried out night projections at several contested city sites. The projections superimposed photographs of feral land onto the facades of the buildings that had replaced those very lands. This superimposition of the past onto the present made these transformations visible, as many such developments had gone unnoticed and failed to enter public consciousness. Repeating the projection at six different locations, creating a rhythm, offered an insight into the systematic extinction of places that once interrupted what was otherwise seen as a moderately ordered city. The buildings that served as canvases, each considered an emblematic example of urban prosperity, became, for a moment, conscious of their unwanted past.

There was something therapeutic in the act of projecting the past of the buildings onto their current state. It was an act of "soft terrorism," as described by Marko Breclj. A certain feeling of hopelessness was replaced by the sense that we can still occupy space that has been taken away, displaced, or at least inscribe the presence of other logic into the dominant one, into what seems inevitable. It gave us the sense that the unexpected can eventually take over the inevitable.



Events of Slow Disturbances: Feral Cartography Cycling Tour, 17 September 2023.



Institutional Occupation: Feral Cartography, cukrarna Gallery.



Guerrilla photography, 6 September 2023.



Institutional Occupation: Feral Cartography, cukrarna Gallery Opening, 16 September 2023.

ZUZANA RÉVÉSZOVÁ

THE LETTERS

PREFACE

Hi,
I wrote a couple of letters. Letters are not addressed, as I am writing to you, feeling open to tell you how I feel and act and share experience and expertise, as these are the same for me. These letters are written with the intent of using fiction, or imaginary narration and literary writing, as an approach to discuss how cultural residencies can be more resilient and sustainable. As a sociologist, I am often holding up to keep my ethnographic eye on at all times, staying observant and participant and keeping the notes going. All events mentioned are authentic, however, some have been adjusted for literary purposes.
If you feel, write me back!

Zuzana from Spolka
zuzanar@spolka.cc

FIRST LETTER, ABOUT THE SITUATION

Dear,
I am all settled now, and lower adrenaline levels now allow me to write to you and express what has been happening in the last couple of days after my arrival to this residency. I have been meaning to start keeping a diary like I did last time on my fellowship in Belgrade, but unfortunately, this has been much more hectic and has actually kept me disorganised for much longer.

Being a part of this institution with my creative self and being a first-time mother and primary caregiver has been a challenge. I have to admit that my professional life will face more challenges than I planned, although I have always claimed it will not affect me as much as people say. Well, most people with parenting experience know what they are talking about. It is important to double the efforts to provide quality of life when adding people to the batch. So here I am, juggling all our dreams and fears, and I hope we can also share our story so that others might stay with the trouble¹. Baby is turning 8 months now, such an exciting time!

SECOND LETTER, ABOUT FREEDOM

Dear,
Some time has passed since I have been able to find the time to write again. I am well, and the baby is doing fine. We have been a little concerned about his health; as you know, young children are prone to all kinds of frailties. However, it seems there are treatments to keep his condition under control.

¹ Haraway, Donna. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble*. Duke University Press.

I am now more open to thinking in terms of my work. Having this residency is kind of my last chance to remain in a career as an artist. After all, surviving the pandemic and the follow-up of drastic cuts in public funding has put many of us in doubt as to whether it is really worth it. I feel like my own stability as a creator was shaken back then, but maternity has also made me even more sensitive towards what I want to say and how I connect with myself.

Much of what we are going through as a family has been brought to the common table here at the residency. Other folks assured me that survival mode, so iconically connected to the imaginary of an artist, is a strategic tool in most neoliberal countries in order to keep critical voices to the very minimum. A residency is a great opportunity for artists, but it cannot substitute stable structures for artistic production. As one of the co-residents said, “here and now”, this presence of being is so particular.

Last night we volunteered to cook dinner, as so far we have been mainly profiting. Making food for the others after such a long time made me feel very comfortable. Repeating the movements I learned as a kid, and am able to come back to, is a way of connecting to myself. Cutting the onions, the same way regardless of quantity, the environment, the equipment of the kitchen. A strange way to feel at home even so far. Sharing meals and stories has always been my favourite part of residencies; as for practicality, it allows us to cut the costs and time of making a meal for one person, but also makes us notice the others, their existence beyond the profession.

If there is no shared meal, I feel like I might easily forget to feed myself, and moreover, with the baby, this erupts in a crisis.

THIRD LETTER, ABOUT THE PLACES

Dear,
Besides the good cooking, I have been wanting to tell you about the place I stayed at. This one is vogueish, being an emblem of contemporary social order. Everything here feels so artsy, edgy, and particular that I have the feeling the place itself intimidates me with the imperative to produce something so creative and innovative that it deserves to exist. The very existence of the residency, however, makes it quite detached from the local community. I feel like we are on a spaceship, like lab rats, doing something protected. I have to make an effort to be the person who came to live with and amongst the locals.

I am asking myself: who am I, as a body, as a soul, in this kind of productive setting? Do I contribute to the pantheon of gods of creativity? Can I opt out, and just be on the ground? Andreas Reckwitz² puts creativity at the centre of contemporary social norms. When everything now needs to reinvent itself, be particular, aesthetic, and innovative, artists become more like factories of production for these indispensable values. Creative economies often benefit from government subsidies utilised to regenerate post-industrial neighbourhoods. At the same time, public funding for actual artistic work is still a fight and a source of precarity. Those are the paradoxes. Here I am, in a fancy

² Reckwitz, Andreas. 2017. *The Invention of Creativity*. Wiley.

district, but still fragile and still unsure what will come next. At least the sleeping arrangements are nice, and I can reflect calmly.

I have been thinking a lot about it, because of the difference it made compared with my last stay in Belgrade. Of course, financially Belgrade is a nightmare and a classic Eastern European story. The flat I was given was somehow offered through friends of friends of the management and had a serious plumbing problem, and some kind of insects climbed up the installation in the bathroom. Even with all my patience, I had to act responsibly (I hate to resign my carelessness, but things recently reached their limits because of a child, even unborn at the time). I moved out and then, due to a limited budget, I moved between different Airbnbs. Everything was booked for the longer period of time. For the last stretch, I stayed in a fancy 1930s apartment in Vračar, the gentrified part of Belgrade, but with a family of three adults: a married couple and the man's father. With me, a pregnant lady, all for one bathroom. No issues, no comments, just small talk in the kitchen.

I find some strong force is hidden in sharing people's homes. In Never Never School, the summer school Spolka³ organised in 2023, we again didn't have the finances to offer participants housing. We used this as an asset and tested the concept of housing by offering our apartments to the participants. This not only immediately changed the way they experienced the city but also created an invisible bond between permanent and temporary residents. As Spolka, the

four of us managed to leave our apartments, then we asked friends, and as people could also share rooms sometimes, we were able to offer housing for 13 people. When we talked, there was a lot to process: what it means for different people to share their beds. It was connected to certain anxiety but also great trust. I remember how participants appreciated the different arrangements in our homes, how they took pictures of decorations, and asked about the plants. The notion of home extended to a short-time stopover.

FOURTH LETTER, ABOUT THE PLANET

Dear,

I am delighted. I could not imagine that my stay will bring me so much joy. Running into all those amazing people, exchanging ideas, and creating something meaningful for the place and for us. One thing that makes total sense for me now is to use the travel for things that could not be done at home, or simply could not be created in any other circumstance. Though, traveling itself is not innocent, I know. Do I believe there needs to be a strong social purpose that balances the debt I am creating to future generations? Right?

Not that I necessarily want to lead into metaphysical discussions with you, I am just really doubting the purpose of everything I do in the current social and political context. I put myself in comparison with others, how lucky I am to live in peace. There is only an extent to which I am able to offer solidarity to other artists I meet from Gaza, from Ukraine, or to people who escape oppression in their country, or are

○ simply fed up and exhausted from constant political protests. I don't know how to put it, but last year in Serbia and Georgia we silently shared how regimes in our countries operate in a similar way, with the same kinds of narratives, but the levels of oppression in those two countries and the reactions of civil society are incomparable. I just stare at my phone and share stories, paralysed to come up with a specific action. And with the genocide in Gaza, I feel like all my beliefs in humanity fail, and therefore, I fail.

Although, together with Donna Haraway, I believe it is not over with our world. I believe there is a space for thinking, for finding new ways of existence with the human and the more-than-human in the prolific mass of bodies and thoughts. This is what drives me to continue my artistic practice, to think with the existent, think otherwise, think! = To stay relevant to myself, I stick to the notions of care, as we were taught by Joan Tronto. That without the repetitive returns to oneself, to the environment around us, towards acts of calm towards others, compassion, we are preserving what has value to be preserved.

○ There are underlying causes of why so many people are struggling and not well, I mean, globally, which might be called Capitalism or Neoliberalism, but I think have more to do with
○ how we organise our societies and our minds towards profit
○ and productivity. Although artistic practice can seem the most futile, it is at the same time still our nook of declared
○ resistance and open arms for good fermented branches
○ of forgotten objects and stories, and things that are yet

○ to develop in the future – maybe destroyed, destructed, deranged, broken, maybe crip, but ours to make relationships with and to coexist with in the future.

FIFTH LETTER, ABOUT THE END

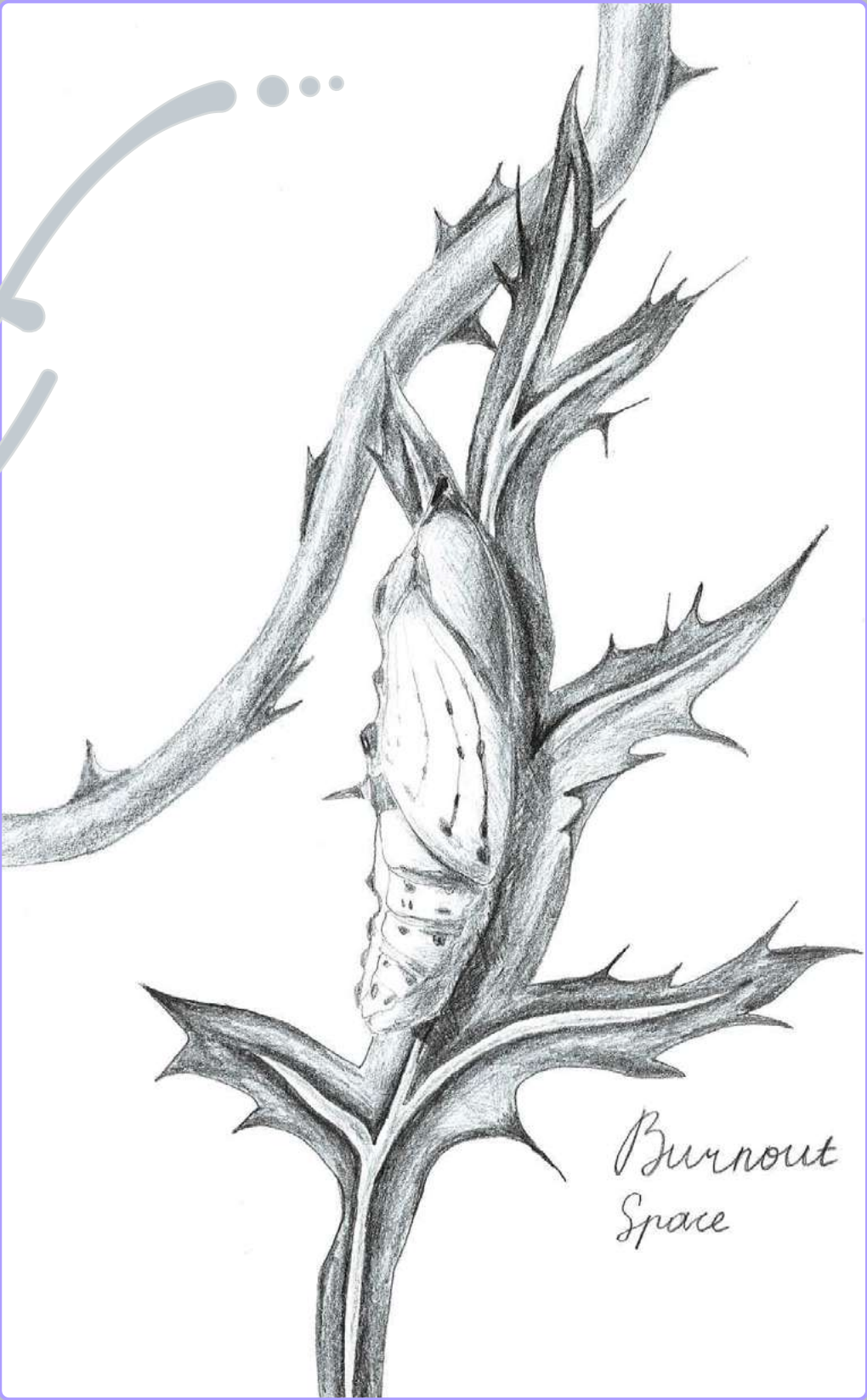
Dear,

This is my last letter from here. We have packed all our stuff and feel it is time to move on. Three months have passed, the locality has become part of our lives: we are now touching the stone on the corner of our street repeatedly, saying goodbye to the downstairs bodega owners, enjoying the last views from the window. Part of me is staying here and continues life as a local. I take part of here with me to come back unexpectedly in moments that will resemble how I was, what I saw, and what I did.

Take care and see you soon!



REHEARSING FAITH



ALEX ALONSO DÍAZ

NOTES TOWARDS AN IMMATERIAL BECOMING OF SUSTAINABILITY

Throughout four sessions, the seminar *Rehearsing Faith* responded to the institutional nature of the four organisations involved in SAIR, rethinking sustainability through immateriality. Although Snehta Residency, the International Centre of Graphic Arts, MeetFactory, and Matadero each have their own peculiar identities, they all share a common point as process-oriented institutions. They are not museums with collections, nor are they primarily oriented towards object-centred programmes. When considering the notion of sustainability in this specific context, the institutions were approached as environments whose temporal and spatial dimensions extend beyond the purely material.

How, then, do we deal with things we cannot see? There are issues related to scale and perception that we need to embody, rehearse, and practice in order to detect some of the forces at play. The four online sessions that

made up the programme speculated on strategies for producing environments – sensorial, critical, economic, political, aesthetic, somatic, and otherwise – that operate within a holistic and mostly immaterial dimension of art and art institutions, reflecting on the potential impact such environments might establish with the wider natural sphere.

We cannot see climate change as a clearly visible process, and in fact, this very characteristic is used by many reactionary policies as an excuse not to respond to it in this contemporary wave of neo-fascisms. We see more and more how societies struggle to deal with processes that, however material and real they may be, do not manifest in the realm of the visible. This ongoing process is so vast and overwhelming that speaking of it, as philosopher Michael Marder puts it, as monolithic or homogeneous, is misleading. In this regard, art – as a type of knowledge that engages with forms (aesthetic, social, political, and otherwise) – provides a space for delving deeper into the textures and specificities of this invisibility.

There are many subtle layers in how we relate to each other, how we relate to the environment, how we care about things, and how we build systems and structures that are material but not only material; these layers form the central core of this seminar. Today, with the educational and public-programming turn undertaken by art institutions, intangibility becomes one of the central axes in the production and consumption of contemporary culture, thus affecting the notion of sustainability and its need to encompass the non-material dimensions of life.

Some see immateriality in the conceptual and linguistic layers of post-contemporary culture, others in the corporate and logistical value attached to the circulation and speculation of art. Some, on the contrary, argue that this immaterial activity relies on the system of relations, affects, and connections that art – as “precarious” and volatile immaterial labour – entails. This seminar proposes that all these forms of immateriality are unequivocally, intimately, and intrinsically tied together. It is fundamental to consider them in their complexity in order to develop a notion of sustainability that would allow us to transform our frameworks and practices.

Contemporary art, as both an industry and an institutional regime, extracts imagination, desires, ideas, and feelings, while simultaneously producing the impression that it should operate as “creative” services. These processes and forms of making are incompatible with the practice of sustaining. An immaterial turn towards sustainability must emerge as a self-conscious practice in which the tangible and intangible activities that define contemporary art are synchronised with the rhythms of a joyful life.

However, we should not forget that very often the field of “non-commercial” or public art (which frequently fails to distinguish art from social activism) is also not where a sustainable practice resides. The bureaucratisation of life by public institutions, and their power to distribute time, attention, and energy according to their own imperial logics, segregates material and immaterial work – with a hygienic division of departments, processes, and procedures –

that could only achieve a more desirable and sustainable functioning if gathered holistically.

In the first session, Amelie Aranguren traced the notion of sustenance as a way to practice care. Delving into the roots and operations of Paisanaje, the collective she co-founded and runs in Madrid, Amelie spoke of the transformation of the individual notion of “care” towards community-based, collective, and participatory art. As we heard in her presentation, this extended its ramifications to food production and consumption, rural sovereignties, and social justice.

During the following week, we gathered with Anna Manubens, former director of Hangar, a centre for artistic research and production in Barcelona whose current lines of work include InfraMaintenance, which looks at infrastructures as devices of governance. Maintenance – as an often invisible or invisibilised sphere of our societies – confronts us with a perspective on sustainability and productivity rooted in the time, attention, and effort that it demands. The work Anna has been doing at Hangar dedicates resources to creating, repairing, maintaining, or even dismantling material, technological, legal, administrative, methodological, or temporary infrastructures, with the conviction that maintenance is a way to recover the capacity for political transformation. Achieving this requires removing maintenance from its overshadowed and minor cultural status and approaching it as a political practice that operates on an infrastructural scale.

On the 18th of February, Andrea Rodrigo shared her vision on coexistence and politics in user-centred structures, drawing on her experience at PAF (*Performing Arts Forum*), a space for professional and not-yet professional practitioners and activists in the fields of performing arts, visual art, literature, music, new media and the internet, theory and cultural production, and scientists who seek to research and determine their own conditions of work. Considering sustainability from the optics of labour, relationality and performativity, Rodrigo explored how configuring a platform that allows everyone to expand possibilities and interests within their own practice can foster awareness and commitment to wider environments and networks.

In the last session, Blanca de la Torre approached sustainability at the intersection of visual arts, political ecology, and ecofeminism through the specific example of the Helsinki Biennial, which she is currently co-curating. She focused on how to apply theory in practice, such as developing guidelines to reduce the ecological footprint in art projects and creating more sustainable horizons that bridge the gap between theory and action.

Together, these four perspectives configure faith as a practice that is not so much about believing or not believing in something, but about developing a methodology for “how to deal with the patterns, events, and processes that, even if invisible, still govern us.”

AMELIE ARANGUREN

CARING THROUGH THE ECO-SOCIAL CRISIS

Paisanaje is an exploration and action group that addresses the eco-social crisis through art, optimism, and possibility. It seeks to frame the city as a place of coexistence, a welcome space for all forms of life—without disregarding the countryside and its inhabitants—in which we can learn from them and recuperate traditions, knowledge, and ways of doing things in which the collective always prevails. Its aim is to create imaginative actions that relate these two realities, proposing a responsible and conscious consumption that dignifies producers and respects ecological limits.

In everything Paisanaje does, from cooking to dancing, from knitting to transhumance, it is inspired by traditions that—both in the countryside and in other places in the Global South—help make life in our cities more just and bearable. From its base of operations in Madrid, Paisanaje works through art to build alternative economies as well as other ways of producing, eating, and living. Artists, curators, artisans, refugees, and activists are part of this collective work.

Paisanaje's work is articulated through different lines of action that address the climate crisis and are oriented towards fairer transitions. The practices and debates aimed at promoting food sovereignty are based in **Eating and Power** (Comer y poder); **Situated Exploration** (Ensayos situados) are those practices that investigate urban transitions. **Creating Knowledge** (Hacer el saber) focuses on recovering traditional knowledge, and **Communal Luxury** (Lujo comunal) is dedicated to the activation of possible imaginaries of the common and the celebration of the collective. All of these lines of action are interrelated in many of our projects thanks to the fact that they are always grounded in the practice of everyday life.

That is why our actions are as diverse as: collective walks; the transformation of dairy products into yogurt, cheese, and other derivatives; our communal meals; publications; workshops; meetings; celebrations; or exhibitions.

EATING AND POWER

At Paisanaje we approach the issue of food through artistic experimentation. We are interested in generating models that fairly rebalance the relationship between the semi-abandoned and overexploited countryside and the cities, where food is fast and bad quality. Through debates, workshops, collective meals, creative residencies, workshops with schoolchildren, and markets, we ask ourselves about the value of food. Who decides what we eat, the benefits of the farmer, the rights of day labourers, animal exploitation, and our role as consumers. Food is a cultural act that shapes relationships, ways of life,

and rituals. For the necessary mutation of habits, we trust in art for its capacity to change customs by introducing new rituals, gestures, recipes...

CREATING KNOWLEDGE

Through projects that investigate ways of thinking about doing, we want to recover, rework, and update knowledge from popular culture. This action line is centred around doing and observing actions in processes of transformation, allowing a rhythm outside the logic of urgency and productivity as an end, but understanding the process of manipulating materials as the moment of connecting these elements with the territory, with traditions inherited from body to body through trial and error, understanding the expansion of knowledge as a collective benefit and a moment of meeting through action.

SITUATED EXPLORATION

This action arises from the desire to test just, habitable cities, to raise awareness of the ecological processes present in urban environments in order to promote an ecological democracy. It seeks to overcome artificial divisions between countryside and city, man and nature, to reconnect with the environmental dimension of our daily surroundings, to learn to see other ways of life in order to promote coexistence/cohabitation, and to dream of desirable urban futures. Urban development often—especially in recent decades—involves erasing or hiding the natural systems on which the city was

originally sustained. In this work we seek to rethink these dynamics and to answer them collectively.

COMMUNAL LUXURY

Paisanaje is a space where hospitality, joy, and mutual support create contexts for reflection to reinvent sovereignty. In our daily work we try to connect knowledge and know-how, theory and practice, putting not only intellectual work but also manual labour in the foreground. This makes it a transdisciplinary space where one can smell cheese, risograph ink, or freshly cut wood. This concept of 'communal luxury' is inspired by the Paris Commune, from which we draw ideas such as: 'He who handles a tool must be able to write a book, to write it with passion and talent. The craftsman must be able to rest from his daily work through artistic, literary or scientific culture, without ceasing to be a producer.'

These lines of work have materialised in projects such as:

FULGOR DE OSCURO TEMBLOR

Fulgor de Oscuro Temblor (2023) is a new celebration of the transhumance of the Los Apisquillos flock, which walks every year from Puebla de la Sierra to the city of Madrid to spend the winter in the rich pastures of Casa de Campo. It is a collective creation project channelled by Ana Cortés, in which musicians, artisans, artists, designers, dancers, and shepherdesses unite the Sierra del Rincón with the city of Madrid through art.

By claiming shepherding as a contemporary practice necessary to face new cultural and environmental challenges, using phenomenological observation as a source of inspiration, and recovering from contemporary creation these uses of wool that were so fundamental to our culture, society, and economy, we have shaped an apparition that walks through the streets of Puebla de la Sierra and the city of Madrid, announcing the moment of the flock's journey.

VINEYARD SCHOOL

The Vineyard School is a project that proposes to convert an abandoned vineyard in Villa del Prado, in the Community of Madrid, into a space for artistic and agroecological (un)learning. In this environment, the land itself becomes a teacher through the cycle of the vine and speculative winemaking practices. Through collaborative workshops, the project proposes to explore our relationship with the land, agricultural work, ritual, and artistic creation, with the aim of reimagining the viticulture of the future.

The vineyard, with its stories and potential, becomes a laboratory for experimentation and reflection on sustainability, eco-social justice, and community revitalisation. In the face of increasing desertification, the industrialisation of the countryside, and labour exploitation, this project offers an alternative: a space where ancestral practices are combined with artistic experimentation to create a new worldview of a vineyard that is more just, regenerative, and deeply connected to a broader community of tangled and vine-growing links.

ÁGAPĒ

Emerging within the framework of Manifesta 15 in Barcelona (autumn 2024), Ágapē was an investigation into the Escola de Bosc, which opened its doors in 1914 in Barcelona as part of the New School movement that travelled around the world. This public and secular school prioritised outdoor education and the integral well-being of students. Paisanaje's proposal focused on the school's distinctive approach to cooking and food as a pedagogical and social task. For the project, recipes from the Escola de Bosc canteen were recreated using local products from the Sierra de Collserola to reflect on the culture associated with these food consumption customs and the supply chain. Throughout the biennial, interventions were carried out in different school canteens, transforming the moment of the canteen into a celebratory and cultural act.

ANDREA RODRIGO

PAF: A SCORE FOR SELF-ORGANISATION

As a curator and researcher in the field of dance and contemporary choreography, my practice is articulated in long-standing projects of curatorial research which materialise in different formats and gestures. My work is motivated by the desire to deepen the meaning of choreographic practices today, taking into account the specificity of their production conditions.

PAF (Performing Arts Forum) is an ongoing experiment in self-organisation and liquid property in Saint-Erme, in the north of France. Since 2015 I have been a co-organiser of PAF, and from 2021 to 2023 I was responsible for its administration and coordination alongside Giulia Tognon, Frida Laux, Daniela Bershan, and Aubrey Birch, in close dialogue with the president of the association, Valentina Desideri, its late director, Jan Ritsema, and other peers such as Bojana Cvejić, Simon Asencio, Lyor Askenazi, Christian Töpfner, Berno Odo Polzer, Magdalene Solli, and Fallon Collet, amongst many others.

This short account of what PAF is and what it can do is inspired by Marina Vishmidt's discussion on an infrastructural

mode of thinking and action. As she argues, any organisation 'can be a type of infrastructure, but the shift needs to be understood as moving from a standpoint which takes the institution as its horizon, thus accepting the moralised premises that perpetuate it, to one which takes the institution as a historical and contingent nexus of material conditions amenable to re-arrangement through struggle and different forms of inhabitation and dispersal.¹ Infrastructure, as the convergence of force and value in patterns of movement that repeat and hold the world up, is admittedly a broad category and can be addressed in many registers. Through my involvement in PAF I ask myself: Can we offer a different approach, one that more intimately inflects the necessary with the desired?

WHAT IS PAF?

PAF is a place for professional and not-yet-professional practitioners and activists in the fields of performing arts, visual arts, literature, music, theory, cultural production, and science who seek to research and determine their own conditions of work. It is a platform for those who can monitor their own artistic production and knowledge production instead of merely responding to the opportunities provided by the institutional market.

The building itself is exceptional—a late nineteenth-century former convent and boarding school measuring over 6,400 square metres, surrounded by 1.2 hectares of grounds. Purchased by Dutch theatre maker Jan Ritsema in 2005, its property model was collectivised in 2015 through a structure

¹ Marina Vishmidt "Only as Self-Regulating Negativity": Infrastructure and Critique', *Journal of Science and Technology of the Arts* 13, No. 3, 2021, pp. 13–24, here p. 14.

called SCI (Société Civile Immobilière) THE BUILDING. This model allows PAF users to buy into the building, establishing a lifelong base while keeping usage 'liquid'—meaning easily penetrable, flexible, and open to all.

Partners don't buy specific square metres but rather shares in the entire property. In 2015 fifty people became shareholders committed to furthering PAF's principles. In this way, PAF has somehow become an experiment in practicing property. The partners agree upon an interpretation of ownership that is broader than its standard conception. Whereas ownership—of whatever property—typically imparts the exclusive right of use solely to its owner, the partners of SCI THE BUILDING want their property to be used by and available to others. Ownership in this instance is seen as the satisfaction of maintaining, improving, and intensifying the building's capacity to be used by many, while renouncing the full say about who can use it and when. In practice, it could be considered an attempt to be a guest in one's own property.

THE SCORE

PAF operates on three core principles:

Reversibility:

Things at PAF exist for you, and you exist for them

Exchange:

Of knowledge, expertise, space, time, and resources

Liquidity:

Making fluid what is fixed, whether mental or material

These principles manifest through four rules that serve as PAF's score:

Don't leave traces

Clean up after yourself in order to leave every square centimetre (that is not your private room) always available for everybody else whenever you are not using it. Traces are unwanted or uninvited marks (material or immaterial) left in the space or in others.

Make it possible for others

Think of this as an opportunity to open up space(s) by showing a rehearsal or a movie, giving a lecture, starting a discussion, cleaning a corridor, or helping somebody.

The doer decides

But not alone! Things are decided by the ones who do, more so than by the ones who talk; however, the opportunity to do is not without limits, and action should be taken in consideration with others.

Mind asymmetries

PAF is made of asymmetries. People come from different places, inhabit different bodies, have different experiences, are situated differently in power structures, and have different boundaries. Take this into account, challenge your own position, and let it be challenged, while respecting other people's boundaries.

Think of these rules as interrelated.

We conceptualise PAF as a performance: Its four rules are the score we play by, and the building is its stage. Anyone and anything that makes PAF possible is a performer, and PAF is nothing more than the shape the air takes at any given moment.² We call this shape self-organisation, for lack of a better word. Perhaps it's because of our theatre and dance background that we think of the doing of PAF as a performance, as a kind of improvisational practice, one that asks you to pay attention to the shifting circumstances, to all the elements that are simultaneously composing a given moment, knowing that attention is what has already shaped your next move. This dance, too, we call self-organisation.

Self-organisation is not a good term, because the word 'organisation' gives the feeling of a schema or a flowchart or an Excel spreadsheet or some kind of template or architecture that we can rely upon, while the word 'self' implies both a subject and an autonomy we cannot claim.

PAF AS AN EROGENOUS ZONE

PAF is an autonomous zone but also an erogenous zone: a zone of contact, exchange, and pleasure that is far from frivolous. Its autonomy is constantly contaminated, corrupted, and deviated by the currents of people and interests that continuously circulate within the space. The contamination of its autonomy and will (the autonomy and will of all its doers) keeps PAF going in multiple directions at once, allowing very different ways of understanding and inhabiting the place.

² An expression that appears in Valentina Desideri and Jan Ritsema's 2021 text 'CARE IS IN THE AIR', in which they discuss the reformulation of the model of governance of PAF.

And the complexity arising from this cohabitation of differences is highly erotic as it stimulates and energises desire, interest, conversation, and knowledge. It motorises a parallel kind of self-education, so as you learn and make—both on your own and with others—what you also practice and 'educate' is your idea and sense of self: a self that gets practiced by the place and its temporary inhabitants, its rules and tools, in a form of radical openness that undoes one's self, body, practices, and thinking. It is an experiment and experience to let oneself be opened by a place, a performance, a strange social construction³.

ACCESSIBILITY AND MEDIATION

In this line, we work from a materialist-feminist perspective to consider the foundations of daily existence—from sustenance to sex—as necessarily interdependent. I would like to approach it from the point of access: What does it mean to enter a building—let alone a society—that doesn't account for bodies that can't be abstractly homogenised? Bodies in wheelchairs, bodies with different social arrangements, bodies that depend on other bodies. Those bodies raise a whole set of needs that challenge holistic or unilateral notions of a general public.

PAF's experiment in self-organisation has always refused to reproduce the pre-existing authority-based institutional corporate forms of governance that we see in other institutions with which we are involved as professionals working in the arts—such as universities, museums, and

³ This excerpt appears in Valentina Desideri and Jan Ritsema's text SPACE AND PLACE: Performing Arts Forum for Movement Research Performance Journal Issue #47 Fall 2015.

festivals, amongst others—and instead bet on the possibility of creating, inventing, and growing other forms. In this sense, as mentioned before, we speak about PAF as a performance, as it takes seriously our improvisational, sensuous capacity to organise and to grow a less violent sensibility than the one we are forced to rehearse in all the institutions we are part of.

In recent years, PAF has confronted how patriarchy, misogyny, and racism were embedded in its structure. As more diverse people participated—particularly BIPOC and LGBTQI+ people—the limitations of its experimental form became visible, spurring growth and transformation.

My work accompanying the organisation of PAF has shown me how the gestures and transformation of the institutional infrastructure—and its ways of relating—construct new tactics and aesthetics that need to be coherent with the form and content of the pieces and materials that are shown in the programmes. Co-organising and curating these programmes and spaces, I continue to explore and understand how the gestures of structural intervention (the way we do the administration, the formats, the contracts, the reading of spaces) go hand in hand with the aesthetic and ethical positions that can be unfolded in the public programmes.

In keeping with an interest in de-individualised and collective modes of acting, making, and being together, this text is composed of notes that belong to many voices and produce a layered and complex view of the organisation.

ANNA MANUBENS INFRASTRUCTURAL MAINTENANCE AND THE QUESTIONING OF CONSERVATION

I started as director at Hangar in the aftermath of the pandemic, at the end of 2021. This experience was still very vivid as we shaped what I called InfraMaintenance. I had the feeling that, for the most part, institutions had missed an opportunity. In their generalised desire to participate in the creative, social, and psychological elaboration of such an exceptional time, the focus had been on the creation of online content and the formation of a remote connection with audiences. However, the fact that most spaces were closed to the public allowed for a very unusual time during which the focus could have been put instead on that which is never urgent, that which doesn't show, the tasks we never find the time for. It was an occasion to ponder what the agency of an institution is in addition to—below or above—its programme.

In her essay 'The commons: Infrastructures for troubling times' Lauren Berlant writes: 'All times are transitional. But at some crisis times like this one, politics is defined

by a collectively held sense that a glitch has appeared in the reproduction of life. A glitch is an interruption within a transition, a troubled transmission. A glitch is also the revelation of an infrastructural failure.'¹ The relationship between glitch and infrastructure—the former being a symptom of the failure of the latter—was a huge inspiration. According to this understanding, what would such a glitch demand? Maintenance.

Hangar is not an exhibition space. Should its mission be expressed in a few words, one could say it generates and sustains the conditions for artistic practice to develop. Therefore, we are not as concerned with the presentation of results as we are with the elements required for the practice to exist and flourish. Hangar is a backstage, and as such, it seems more coherent and easier for us than for other art institutions to explore what maintenance would mean and do.

InfraMaintenance is grounded in the belief that infrastructures have become increasingly inaccessible (or intend to appear as such), by virtue of which they have also become increasingly efficient at governing our working and living conditions. Infrastructures are far more efficient than discourse or statements at world-making, and this is why we seem to endure what could be called a 'coherence gap' within the art world: Very often there is a clash between statements and operative principles or systems. The infrastructure is always heavier than the intentions. With this in mind, InfraMaintenance was conceived to shift the energy from sophisticating discourse to practically

¹ Lauren Berlant, 'The commons: Infrastructures for troubling times', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34, No. 3, 2016, pp. 393–419, here p. 393.

modifying infrastructures. This strand of the programme dedicates attention, time, and means to create, maintain, or even dismantle infrastructures (whether they are material, technological, legal, institutional, architectural, or otherwise) with the certainty that maintenance is a mode of political transformation.

Since we started in 2022, we have been busy with a series of infrastructures such as the institution itself, software, or administrative work. All of these are existing infrastructures that we are working on, but we are also addressing a missing infrastructure—or a desired infrastructure—under the title *The poetics and politics of storage and circular use*. This is a research group composed of three artists (David Bestué, Lucía C. Pino, and Francesc Ruiz) and three members of Hangar's staff (Esther Doblas, Antonio Gagliano, and myself). *The poetics and politics of storage and circular use* is not so much concerned with knowledge-production as it is with the real manufacture of an institutional hypothesis. Could we imagine an institution that would stand as a sustainable alternative to the heritage-driven and ever-accumulating conservation paradigm of the modern museum?

We started by cataloguing the numerous symptoms that show how storage is a generalised problem in many different layers and for many different agents within the art world. Artists reuse elements from one artwork to the next, and this also holds true between works by different artists. Sharing a studio often means recycling someone else's materials. Some artists are confronted with the

extreme scenario of destroying a work when they cannot afford to ship it back or simply because it is far too large. Indeed, artists are expected to work on more and more monumental site-specific commissions that overflow their living scale—their homes and studios. Artists with long careers are anxious at the idea of leaving behind too much or at the idea of having no one or no means to look after their works. As a collateral effect, aesthetic decisions are taken because of limited current or future storage. At an institutional level, museums are struggling to contain and preserve the increasing amount of works they own. Open storage spaces have proliferated, such as the monumental Depot of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, which was the first of its kind in 2013.

In the face of all this, our work has consisted in developing an institutional prototype that would depart from our heritage culture—an institution that would not be concerned with the presentation or advent of artworks but rather with everything that can happen after that. It is an institution that would not stand on collecting and conservation as its core tasks but rather grow around operations of temporary storage, scrapping for reuse, and destruction undertaken as a ritual—as a collective wake or farewell.

What has slowly taken on more significance for me has been the questioning of conservation as the only mode of producing a work of memory. It has allowed for an observation of museums as producing what Fernando Domínguez Rubio would call an illusion of stillness that could not be more distant from reality. According to him, 'A museum is not a collection

of objects but a collection of slowly unfolding disasters.² Gradually my focus has shifted from the institution that stores to guarantee a longer life for an artwork and emancipation from overproduction to how we could achieve what Caitlin Desilvey calls 'entropic heritage practice' or 'heritage beyond saving'³—a concern for the persistence of an artwork rather than its preservation. And by the same token, we would align with decolonial 'post-museum', as defended by Françoise Vergès, since we are questioning the ideology of conservation as a process that plunders, withdraws the object from its world, and detaches it from its social use and community.⁴

Our institutional phantasy shows that by othering infrastructures, entire systems of belief and practice can be transformed. Infrastructural maintenance, dismantling, or imagination is thus a key element for institutions to regain political agency and relevance.

² Fernando Dominguez Rubio, *Still Life: Ecologies of the Modern Imagination at the Art Museum*, Chicago, 2020, p. 6.

³ Caitlin Desilvey, *Curated Decay: Heritage Beyond Saving*, Minneapolis, 2017.

⁴ Françoise Vergès, *A Programme of Absolute Disorder: Decolonising the Museum*, London, 2024.

BLANCA DE LA TORRE

CURATING BIENNIALS IN TIMES OF ECOLOGICAL TURMOIL

The lecture's foundation is built upon the concept of 'sustainable curating', implying the development of site-specific projects that integrate ecological principles in content, form, and attitude. Creating climate-engaged artistic practices can stimulate collective action, rethink cultural norms, and promote environmental empowerment.

Curatorship is a tool of political imagination, but it cannot rest solely on a discursive level and instead requires the development of situated methodologies that attend to environmental, social, and cultural sustainability. An eco-sophic approach in our projects must go hand in hand with an integral systemic route.

The biennial model may appear to epitomise an unsustainable approach; however, I contend that there are pathways to transition it towards more situated, ecological, and community-driven alternatives. In this context, I will draw upon my experiences with two biennials: my role as head curator of the 15th Cuenca Biennial in Ecuador and the one

I am currently working on, the Helsinki Biennial 2025 in Finland, where I am serving as head curator alongside Kati Kivinen.

The third edition of the Helsinki Biennial, scheduled to open in early June 2025, will take place across three major venues: the HAM Helsinki Art Museum, Esplanade Park, and Vallisaari Island. As curators acutely aware of the current ecological crisis, we are committed to researching and exploring innovative strategies to engage with contemporary art as a pragmatic tool for addressing climatic and ecological challenges. The Helsinki Biennial aligns with the city's strategic goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030, and consequently the biennial is grounded in principles of environmental responsibility. These values will guide all aspects of the event's production, and the practical realisation of each artwork and the selection of materials are being undertaken in collaboration with specialists from the Finnish Forest Agency, Metsähallitus, and the Finnish Heritage Agency. The Helsinki Biennial has also been awarded an EcoCompass certificate for its commitment to managing and enhancing environmental practices.

Turning to the 15th Cuenca Biennial in Ecuador, the curatorial starting point was the concept of the Biocene, which advocates for a new era that places life at the centre—as a counter-narrative to the Anthropocene. The subtitle, *Changing Green for Blue*, served as a symbolic proposition to respond to greenwashing, a strategy that has appropriated the colour green in the name of ecological credentials. In the Cuenca Biennial, water assumed a central role, followed by

resistance to extractivism, the preservation of biodiversity, as well as the stewardship of ecosystems in the context of pollution and habitat destruction. In general, the biennial addressed a much more complex and interrelated socio-environmental narrative than the convention equating green with the colour of ecology.

The curatorial framework was centred around three axes:

Ancestral epistemologies. Paying homage to the traditions of communities, the wisdom of First Nations and Indigenous peoples, as well as non-hegemonic epistemologies, vernacular knowledge, and ruralities.

Ecofeminisms. Emphasising eco-dependency and interdependency, underscoring the importance of the wisdom of the Pachamama.

Futuribles. Believing in art to construct probable and possible scenarios, fostering the development of alternative futures.

As part of my curatorial hallmark, I developed this Sustainability Decalogue:

Ecofeminisms: We were a team of 70% women, and 67% of the featured artists were female, believing in eco-dependence and interdependence.

Less is More: We significantly reduced the number of participating artists while dedicating more space to each of them. We condensed the number of exhibition venues to create a more approachable experience, emphasising walking as an integral part of the event.

Reducing the Ecological Footprint: We paid close attention to minimising the project's carbon footprint and resource consumption throughout its duration.

Local and Zero-Mile Production: We encouraged local production, promoting zero-mile production to minimise emissions and support local economies.

Natural and Biodegradable Materials: We prioritised the use of biodegradable materials such as cornstarch, bulrush, plant resin glue, and wooden waste supports.

Community Engagement: We actively involved the surrounding community as an integral part of the biennial and our ecosystem.

Positive Discourse: Given the saturation of dystopian narratives, we advocated for an eco-social discourse that aligns with alternatives and positive action.

The 10 R's of Sustainability: Reduce, reuse, repurpose, recover, recycle, redistribute, reflect, refuse, reclaim, reinvent.

Degrowth and Sumak Kawsay: We embraced the principles of degrowth and drew upon the Quechua concept of Sumak Kawsay, which is related to environmental justice and living in balance with the natural world.

Circular Economy: We aimed to approach a zero-waste model by upcycling materials and making donations to various local communities and organisations.

Some of the foundational points that were explored in the Cuenca Biennial are also reflected in the framework of the Helsinki Biennial. Kati and I decided to focus on the transformative power of displacing the anthropocentric gaze. To achieve this, we made the challenging curatorial decision to position non-human agencies exclusively at the centre of the artistic proposals.

In recent years, multispecies approaches and interspecies philosophies have gained prominence in biennials, exhibitions, and art events. We have opted for a more radical approach by excluding human figures from a leading role in the presented

artworks, thereby prioritising forms that extend beyond the human. This emphasis constitutes an important post-anthropocentric gesture aimed at transforming the paradigm that has significantly contributed to our current ecological and climate crisis.

Within this context, the notion of *SHELTER*, with its multiplicity of meanings, serves as the title for the third edition of the biennial. 'Sheltering' implies a re-evaluation of our approaches to listening, speaking, showing, and displaying, with the goal of constructing new spaces of protection. The title derives significant inspiration from the rich biodiversity of Vallisaari Island, which has been free of human habitation for decades. Today the island, with its long history of military use, presents an opportunity to imagine what occurs when humans withdraw from the stage and non-human actors take the forefront. This notion is further articulated by the subtitle: *Below and Beyond, Becoming and Belonging*, which encourages us to examine not only the surface of things but also what lies 'below' and 'beyond', emphasising the significance of 'becoming with' and 'belonging to'.

In this case, we have also created a sustainability decalogue that reflects the philosophy behind the project:

1. Integrative Footprint

We consider not only the carbon, energy, and water footprints but also the more nuanced and often invisible footprints—those related to emotions, care, and the sense of community.

2. Protect, Repair, and Heal

We view art as a shelter where we can find new formulas for protection, remediation, and healing.

3. Environmental Justice

We consider the environmental, social, and cultural life cycles of projects, using climate justice as a guiding principle.

4. Pluriversal Knowledge

We embrace the multiplicity of cosmovisions that comprise our pluriverse, ensuring that no entity—human or non-human—is left behind.

5. Ancestral Wisdom and Vernacular Doing

We recognise the value of non-hegemonic knowledge and subaltern epistemologies as essential heritage in addressing the eco-social transition.

6. Well-Being

We champion art as a promoter of the idea of 'well-being' referring to the ideal and beautiful fulfilment of both the planet and a life of dignity.

7. Think Local, Embrace Community and the Commons

We prioritise local production, viewing the biennial as a shared community initiative encompassing both human and non-human participants.

8. Eco-centric Vision

We acknowledge our eco-dependence and interdependence, advocating for cooperation as an evolutionary principle, favouring symbiosis over competition.

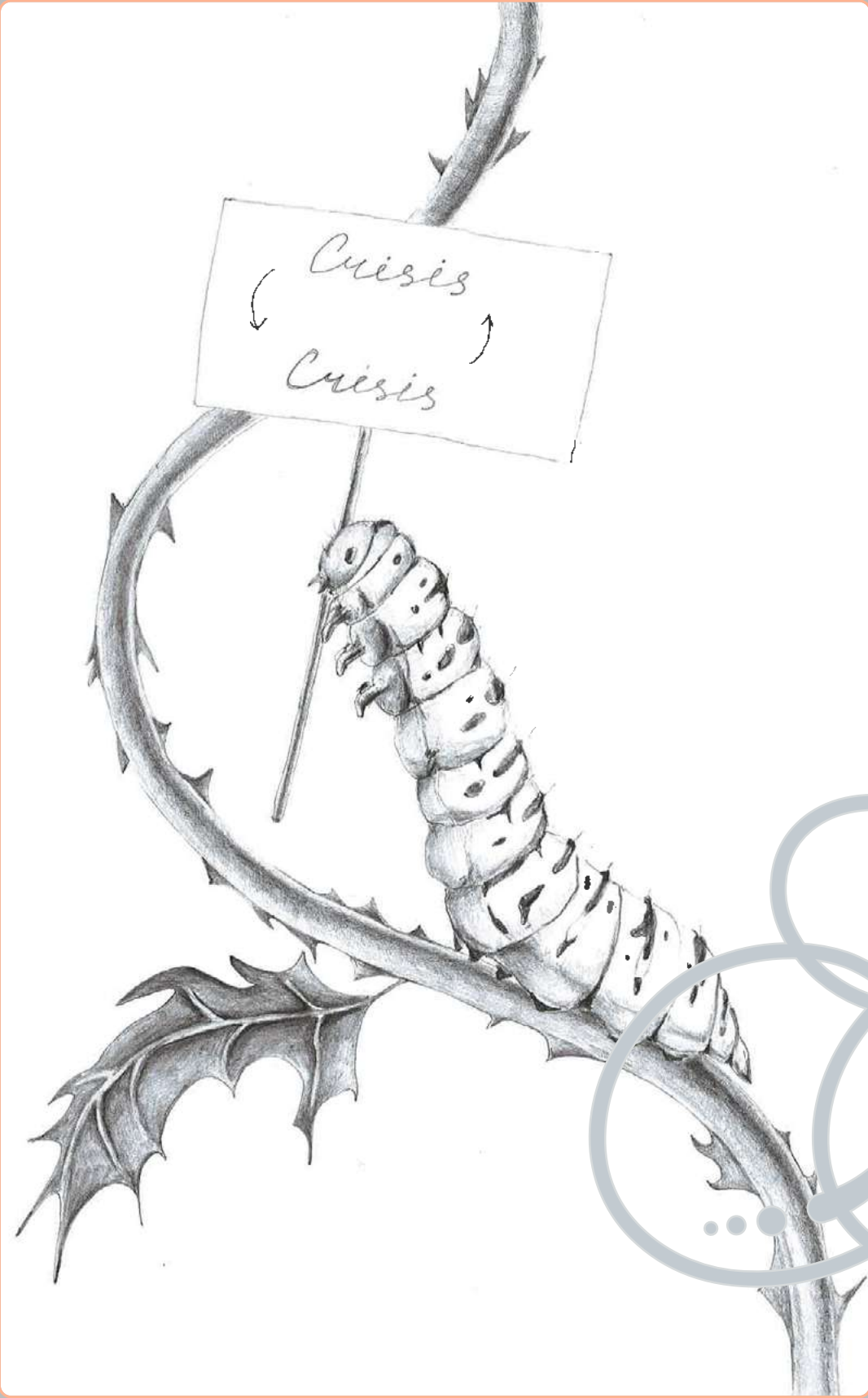
9. Conscious Offsetting

Recognising the impossibility of achieving a zero footprint, we aim to compensate through ecological actions that extend beyond conventional environmental finance systems.

10. Ecological Empowerment and Optimism

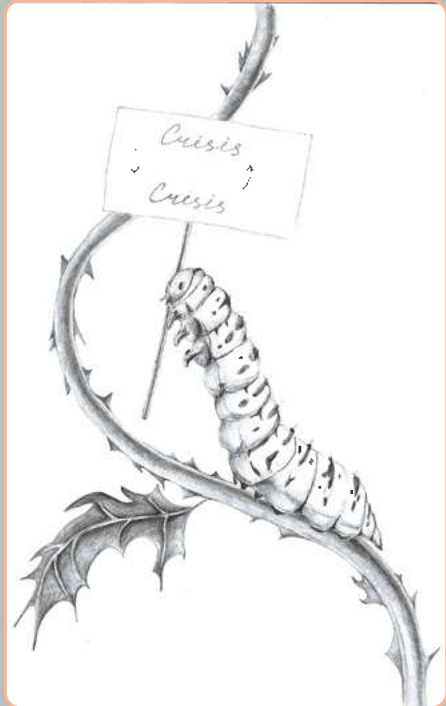
We reject climate negativism and encourage positive action.

Underpinned by this decalogue, our model seeks to cultivate a situated and slow biennial that fosters long-term relationships between art and community, challenging the dominant culture of immediacy and hyper-productivity.



StonyTellers, Burnout Space, 2025

MEET ME AT SAIR PROJECT:
INTERVIEWS WITH ARTISTS



LEA CULETTO COMBINING THROUGH

THE INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED BY URŠKA APLINC AND LARA PLAVČAK, CURATORS OF LEA CULETTO'S SOLO EXHIBITION COMBING THROUGH (ŠKUC GALLERY, LJUBLJANA, 11 APRIL–6 MAY 2025), WHO WERE INVITED TO CARRY OUT THE CONVERSATION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THIS PUBLICATION.

URŠKA APLINC & LARA PLAVČAK: Your work often weaves together feminist perspectives with humour, the aesthetics of kitsch, and a strong engagement with textile-based practices such as embroidery, smocking, and sewing – mediums traditionally associated with domesticity and so-called 'women's work'. How do you relate to these materials and techniques in your practice? Do you see them as a way of questioning or reconfiguring ideas of femininity and resistance, even with regard to the canon of art history?

LEA CULETTO: I have felt a close connection to textiles since early childhood. My grandma worked in a sewing factory, so

a sewing machine was always present on the kitchen table. I started sewing buttons on scrap fabric at the age of four. I still remember my mom teaching me how to cut a pant pattern for my dolls. At one point during my studies at the academy, I started using textile as canvas for my paintings, and the rest is herstory. All these so-called handicrafts were looked upon and marked as women's work – not worthy of being called fine arts. For me they are empowering. They represent more than just a 'simple' technique; they hold shared stories, family history, and knowledge. With their help I try to question the position of women in today's society, and I see them as a tool

of resistance. And it's not just about learning new techniques or materials, it's also about sharing the knowledge and being a part of the community that forms around it.

UA & LP: During your residencies, you explored biomaterials, creating bioplastics from agar and combining them with human-sourced pigments like body hair and menstrual blood. The resulting objects, such as bioplastic pearls, formed part of a broader material exploration that also included screen printing and engraving. Could you walk us through your working process during these residencies? Was your focus primarily

on material experimentation, or did these explorations also serve as a way to deepen your conceptual research around the body and feminist practice?

LC: I usually start my work with research about a specific topic that intrigues me; for this residency programme the initial idea was to focus on bodily leftovers. The starting point was Victorian mourning jewellery, since I already knew a bit about it. This led me down the history of different practices, symbolism, and rituals connected to human hair. Other times I start with learning a new skill. Biomaterials intrigued me, but I had never had the time nor the space to dive in. And this residency programme was the perfect occasion for exploration. So, I would say my work process varies. At MeetFactory I focused more on exploring the world of biomaterials, at SNEHTA I spent two months just on research, and at Matadero I did it simultaneously, focusing on a common theme that I observed during my research and which fascinated me:

corporal and mental punishment through (in)voluntary hair removal. The whole process also depends on the capabilities of the space. Residencies often provide an opportunity to work in other workshops – like the screen-printing studio at MeetFactory or FabLab at Matadero. This gave me the possibility to experiment with techniques that I'm unable to do in my home studio. The topics of my interest are intertwined and often connected to the body; in a way each project stems from the previous one, meaning that I am constantly trying to expand my practice and deepen my knowledge.

UA & LP: In your exhibition at Škuc Gallery in Ljubljana, you delved into the socio-cultural significance of hair and hairiness, particularly the disciplining of the body through the trimming and removal of it. Your practice is critical of societal norms and body image. You've described the final project as 'a kind of love letter to your own body'. Could you speak more about what that means to you? How does this intimate relationship

with your body guide the materials you use, the narratives you build, and the emotional tone of your work? Has your evolving practice affected your relationship with your body over the years?

LC: It's all about accepting your own body. Especially as it ages. From stretch marks to the first tiny wrinkles to the first grey hair – they all tell a story. And I think we shouldn't be afraid of the change. With this project I even try to go a step further. I was fascinated with the stories of the memories stored in hair (even if they are not scientifically correct), of the magical power they hold – it intrigued me. And instead of being afraid of how many hairs I lose during combing or feeling disgusted by stray hairs on the bathroom floor, I started to collect them. When, during my student years, I started to question all the weight we put on body hair, I decided to let my body hair grow for a longer period – like a year. I honestly didn't really know how my body would look or how long the hair on my legs would grow

or even what colour it would be. At first it was difficult. I started to ask myself all these questions: Why do I dislike it so much? Can I wear heels with hairy legs? I realised that beauty standards are deeply rooted in us. We observe these rituals from early childhood (for instance, I can still hear the sound of my mother's first epilator), and if you don't want to be scrutinised and made fun of, you need to remove your body hair. It took a while for me to not be self-conscious during the summer and to not mind occasional comments and/or stares on the street. Now, many years later, I don't care anymore; I could say I've finally accepted it. I still remove my leg hair sometimes, but now it's more intentional than just out of a need to fit in.

UA & LP: During your residency in Madrid, you engraved a stylised image of armpit hair onto leather and later developed a unique typography inspired by the shapes of scanned removed body hair. Could you tell us more about this part of your research and the process, how

these materials and visual experiments emerged? As part of your ongoing research, you have also been developing an archive of connections – knowledge about hair as it relates to the body, society, science, and lore. Can you elaborate on how the research process guides your work?

LC: In Madrid I was thinking a lot about (body) hair removal as a punishment through history. This practice was present in a lot of stories, and it was done mostly to women. This gruesome corporal punishment was seen as stripping someone's beauty and shaming them for something they've allegedly done. This practice often happened during wars, including the Spanish Civil War, and it was also done during the Inquisition to search the body for the so-called devil's mark – a birthmark or a mole. In my opinion this is connected to the ancient belief that hair stores power, and women accused of witchcraft needed to be stripped of that power. A picture of my armpit hair reminded me of wild

grass dancing freely in the wind. I took that image and engraved it onto some leather scraps that I found in a local store; it's permanently burned, like a scar – a tattoo of remembrance, power, resistance, and adoration of our bodies. Research played a crucial part in this project; every piece I created is somehow connected to a certain tale, symbolism, or myth. There is something in a text, poem, or image that pulls me and gives me an idea for a new creation. The more connections that I find, the more layers are added to the project. Sometimes the initial idea stays unchanged, quite simple, uncomplicated... but powerful nonetheless.

UA & LP: In your recent exhibition, you touched on themes related to witchcraft through symbols like the kitchen witch, talismanic objects, and rituals of care and transformation. How does witchcraft, both as a cultural reference and as a set of practices, inform your work?

LC: After reading and exploring the history of mythology, tales, and religion, connections to powerful women and witchcraft started to emerge. Ritual is something we instantly connect to witchcraft, but we forget that we do rituals all the time, like washing hair on Sundays. We still cut the baby's first lock and keep it in a memory book – sounds like a talisman to me. People are intrigued and afraid of all magic-related items, mostly due to our upbringing in Catholic European countries, which throughout history have loved to punish knowledgeable, untraditional, powerful women and mark them as witches. This, to me, bears a strong resemblance to feminism. Could a witch be the ultimate feminist, and can its meaning be reclaimed? This is a question I'm interested in right now. And I'm not the first or only one.

UA & LP: Your work involves slow, labour-intensive processes such as sewing, felting, and smocking, which are deeply tactile and intimate. These methods stand in contrast to fast production

and also align with your use of second-hand materials, natural dyes, and biomaterials. How do slowness and sustainability come together in your practice?

LC: I guess I need to be in touch with my work – literally. These techniques consist of repetitive motions that I find meditative. I forget about time and sometimes I even forget to take a break. My brain shuts off as I completely submerge. Since I can remember, I have always loved making things with my hands – playing under the table with pins and sewing needles as a child or hunting for vintage clothes and weird knick-knacks as a teenager. Using second-hand materials in my work came naturally. I relish rummaging at flea markets, where I often find inspiration for my projects. So it's no wonder my favourite activity during my residency in Athens was going to the flea market every Sunday. I think sustainability is not only about materials but also about slowing down, reflecting, and creating mindfully.

SARA GARCÍA

MOULDING MOURNING MOUTHS

KATEŘINA PENCOVÁ: *moulding mourning mouths* is a project that explores planetary grief and food ethics, with bread playing a central role as a reaction to wheat production. Could you start by telling us how this project came about and what it means to you?

SARA GARCÍA: I was researching *moulding mourning mouths* in Athens, Ljubljana, and Prague. Since then, its possibilities have become more complex. The relevance of a food as basic as bread, its relationship with climate change, and its ritual use constitute a network that involves multispecies justice, edible relics, endangered ecosystems, and extractive dynamics.

The seed of the project was planted in my mind many years ago, when I witnessed the Day of the Dead in Mexico (where I lived for five years) and tasted *pan de muertos*, a delicious sweet bread decorated with two bones in a cross shape, which is left as an offering to the dead on 1 and 2 November. Since then, I've wondered how they had such a strong tradition with a food made from wheat and not corn (which is the staple of the local diet and is part of many traditions and rituals there). Not long ago, I discovered that in northern Spain, bread was also brought to graves instead of flowers, and that many places have a special bread for funerals.

With this in mind I wonder: Can we

rewrite this tradition and adapt it to the present?

KP: Let's stay with bread for a moment. It's such an important part of the food cultures in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Spain, and Greece, and it often symbolises hospitality and sharing. Bread also carries such deep symbolic and historical weight, from Neolithic ritual loaves to genetically modified wheat. How do you navigate this tension between bread as a sacred object and as a mass-produced, industrialised commodity within your work?

SG: I've been working with bread for a long time. It's possible to understand

Western society through the origins of bread. It has a strong connection with the origins of agriculture. It's believed that the cultivation of wheat in the Fertile Crescent brought about our transformation from nomads to sedentary people, which, in turn, some consider to be the seed of our planet's irreversibly damaged state. However, researchers found remains of bread made 14,000 years ago in Jordan, before agriculture existed. It appears they made bread from wild wheat, and it is believed that it was used in rituals.

It is known that in many places some type of ritual was practiced in which bread was distributed when a loved one died – *pan de ánimas*. In fact, some of the gods who constitute part of the imaginary that shaped our Western thought are related to grains and/or death.

Demeter, the Greek deity of agriculture and fertility, upon losing her daughter Persephone, deprived all humanity and the gods of food by preventing any grain from growing in the fields until her daughter's return.

Persephone had been kidnapped and taken to the underworld, and although Demeter managed to recover her daughter, she had eaten some pomegranate seeds in the world of Hades, so she must now spend a third of the year in the underworld. This time corresponds to winter in temperate zones, and during this time we would have barely any food if it weren't for the devastating mega-industry of agriculture.

Isis and Osiris, siblings and spouses, were gods of Ancient Egypt. Isis was the most venerated female deity, nicknamed 'mother of grain'. Osiris was the deity of resurrection and fertility and is credited with the discovery and spread of agriculture. It is believed that he died each year, only to be reborn in the form of an ear of grain. Egyptian harvesters would call out Isis's name amid wails and beat their chests in melancholy as they cut the first ears of wheat. It is believed that these cries were lamentations for killing the god of grain.

All rituals surrounding these gods are accompanied by grain or bread as a symbol of death and rebirth. And this is just a small example of all the rituals that exist in which bread or grain appear.

The research on *moulding mourning mouths* explores the different offerings we, the living, make to the dead and the extinct and the relationships we establish to continue providing them with an existence among us, the living. I worked with bread, given its nature as an offering and its connection to hospitality, as well as with the relationship between intensive wheat farming and climate change.

KP: How did you come to work with food as a medium, and what led you to approach it from such a critical perspective?

SG: I'm interested in the table metaphorically for its potential for coexistence. It's a space that allows us to ponder ethical questions about the best way to approach one another –

a space where it's possible to propose a hospitality open to difference, seeking responsibility and acceptance towards and from Others. Basic foods distance us from the inhospitable and the void; they bring us closer to protection, intimacy, and the Other, with whom we share the table, the bread. I believe there is a small act of resistance in sharing food, a gesture of attention and care.

Besides, sharing food raises the question of how we address one another around the table, the affections that are built, and the sense of community that is generated within it. Researching hospitality, commensalism, and care, I wonder: Who do we invite to the table? With whom do we share our food? And what kind of food? What about the power relationship between host and guest? Where do we receive the Other? Our house, our state, our body? And, of course, who is the Other? Are we able to receive any kind of agency? When we eat, we internalise the culture of what we put in our mouths, but it also connects us with all life on the planet. When we eat, we enter an ecological network in

which we *interpenetrate one another, loop around and through one another, eat each another, get indigestion, and partially digest and partially assimilate one another, and thereby establish [...] ecological assemblages* (D. Haraway).

Furthermore, I believe that the use of food in artistic practices allows for a familiar and relatable response, which enables the emergence of an intuitive system of thought beyond reason. Finally, I like to think that by consuming these foods, the artwork becomes part of the participants' bodies, and an exercise of hospitality is generated by receiving something unknown within us.

In my latest works I have fed a wide variety of Others, including bacteria, yeasts, fungi, dogs, and humans. I have shared strange and unrecognisable food with those who have felt ready to receive the Other. Some of these foods did not have a good taste, others were toxic to them, others had no flavour; because rather than seeking pleasure through taste like gastronomy does, these gestures are about how the unknown gets into our bodies.

KP: You delve into the interspecies and human relationships that emerge through the act of eating and sharing food. Could you speak more about how these interactions inform your work and what they reveal to you?

SG: In recent years, commensalism with more-than-human beings has taken a central role in my artistic practice. A key focus is the political-ecological implications of the foods we choose to put into our bodies. Specifically, in *moulding mourning mouths*, working with bread, I approach multispecies gastronomy, which reveals our interconnectedness with other forms of life. Both growing and eating are gestures that deeply connect us to ecologies in which both we and Others feed.

When we look at this aspect of bread, we see how it changed at the same time as wheat agricultural production changed, from grain selection to modifications during the Green Revolution. The genetically modified farming process, the separation of

flour, bleaching, and accelerated rising go hand in hand with climate change driven by the desire for accelerated production and the pursuit of profit at all costs, moving away from the slow, wholesome, whole-grain sourdough bread that then coexists with the community of bacteria in our bodies.

As we can see, in bread we can find extractive relationships, but we can also build interspecies companion relationships (the word 'companion' comes from 'the one with whom we share bread'). From the selection of the seed in the cultivation of the cereal, the care of the soil in which it grows, the manner of milling the grain, the microorganisms that help the bread rise, the relationships at the table when sharing the bread, its leftovers, or the ceremonial uses of it.

Finally, with the project *moulding mourning mouths*, I wanted to give us a moment to mourn due to the harsh reality we are experiencing. We are facing different levels of planetary grief: on the one hand, the sixth great extinction caused by the destructive

capacity of humans, and on the other, our own possible extinction caused by our species or the loss of what makes us human.

LENKA KUBELOVÁ

FERMENTATION, SEASONS, AND COMMUNITY

KATEŘINA PENCOVÁ: Fermentation plays a vital role in your practice – not only as an artistic method but also as a form of social and ecofeminist engagement. During the SAIR residency, you led a pair of workshops that involved the collective preparation of fermented foods. Could you share more about this initiative and the ideas behind it? Have you noticed differences in how fermentation is understood or practiced across different cultural or geographical contexts?

LENKA KUBELOVÁ: Both at Snehta in Athens and MGLC in Ljubljana I held a workshop on collective fermenting, where we and the participants shared stories about

our relationships with food as well as family stories, and we exchanged practices. During these workshops I aimed to introduce several hands-on practices and facilitate moments of sharing. Another goal was to raise awareness and navigate participants to a few 'aha moments' regarding how we obtain food, what ecosystems are related to agriculture and shopping culture, and how these models reflect other models in our society. During the residency and when talking with people at the workshops, I tried to discover some local differences. Fermentation is, on the one hand, a very universal practice (cucumbers and fermented vegetable of all kinds are a traditional

practice all over the world, and kimchi is also in fashion in certain circles everywhere), but on the other hand, southern countries are not forced to preserve crops for winter very much. As highlights from each country, I would mention the discovery of kumquats in Slovenia, fig ferments in Greece, and the use of pineapple peels as starters in Spain. For me, Spain also opened a window to the fermenting world of Latin America. What I found especially interesting there were the interpretations of traditional drinks like chicha, tepache, guarapo, or pulque as symbols of resistance against colonialism.

KP: Your residency in Athens culminated in a joint exhibition with Lea Culetto titled *Coniunctio*, which is the alchemical symbol of a union of unlike substances. As part of the exhibition, you presented the project *Hungry Ghosts and Pomegranate Seeds*, which explored the theme of satiety alongside the Mediterranean autumn, a season you perceive as inherently contradictory – symbolising both mortality and fertility, endings and new beginnings. The exhibition also featured a zine/diary of the same name. Have you created a similar kind of record or reflection for each of your residencies?

LK: I published a small zine at the end of each residency. They reflect my creative process and also serve as a diaries that include 'recipes' both for food and for DIY pigment making, drawings, short texts, books, and recommendations of resources.

At MGLC in Ljubljana I was working with the rhizosphere, and at the end of the residency I had a small exhibition in Švicarija called *Rhizosphere* and the

zine also has the same name. I collected pigments at a nearby hill called Šišenski hrib, experimented with mushroom dyes, and made wooden, stone, and ceramic palettes in natural shapes for DIY watercolour sets made from those foraged pigments. Also, with the help of Jakob, the master printmaker at MGLC, I prepared a non-toxic printing medium from the pigments and printed patches with it. All of these things are documented in the zine.

In Snehta in Athens I published the zine *Hungry Ghosts and Pomegranate Seeds*, the main hypothesis of which was that we live in a society of so-called hungry ghosts. These beings can never have or do enough, and my mission was to find some artistic means of satiating them. I worked with honey and wax, experimented with textile and wax batik, and used red madder root for dyeing. Of course, I also made some local ferments reflecting the terroir, and the zine includes a story called 'A Conversation with a Volcano' and links to nourishing meditations', which I wrote and recorded during the residency.

Finally, at Matadero Madrid I published a zine called *Body of Earth*, which reflects and documents my discoveries with inks made from seasonal fruits, vegetables, kitchen waste, and spices. Building on my fascination with the medium itself, I made a series of ink drawings that play with the similarities between the metabolic organs of humans, plants, and the planet as a whole.

All of the zines have a format originating from a human hand, and they are printed with soy-based inks on a Risograph. I collaborated with local Riso studios and printed on special or recycled papers; in Slovenia I discovered a knotweed paper – paper made from the invasive plant Japanese knotweed – which is produced by a local collective called Krater.

KP: What role did the changing seasons play during your residencies? Did seasonal rhythms – such as the harvest or the shifting light and temperature – shape your creative process or the themes you explored?

LK: Sure, I work very consciously with cycles and seasons:

Winter in Ljubljana at MGLC was about diving into the depths. The topic of the rhizosphere is about the section of the soil where the roots are. The winter seems quiet, but invisible processes are happening in the soil. Since everything was pretty frosty, I collected pigments from uprooted trees and foraged winter mushrooms for ferments, like birch polypore, turkey tail, or enoki for mushroom kimchi. The palettes I made have shapes inspired by these mushrooms and lichens too. To capture the tastes of winter, I made pine resin cider and the warming drink oxymel by extracting flavours from the simplest winter harvest – the branches of trees.

Autumn in Mediterranean Athens was very special for me – I learned that autumn in this region is shaped by the tension between decay and new beginnings. Autumn flowers are blooming, there is a second harvest of citrus fruits... It is time connected to Persephone, the goddess who lives half the year in the underworld and

half the year in our middle world. I also worked with this tension in the symbols connected to my project *Hungry Ghosts and Pomegranate Seeds*.

And spring and summer in Spain were connected with fruits and ripening. The kitchen inks are about visible things, maturity, processing, and digesting.

KP: During your residency in Spain, you also organised a workshop titled Tintas de la cocina, which was aimed at a broad audience and focused on making kitchen inks from seasonal vegetables, fruits, kitchen 'waste', and spices. What role does the audience and community play in your practice? Are all your public projects inherently community-oriented, or do some emerge from a more solitary process?

LK: I like to work with people – I actually prefer it to creating artefacts for gallery spaces. I believe that working with people has a greater transformative potential, and I also encourage participants to exchange amongst themselves. I see it as my

mission to teach everyone to ferment and to establish natural art mediums (wild clays, foraged pigments, flower inks, kitchen inks, natural dyes and prints) as an equal alternative to the much more praised toxic mediums at all levels of the educational system. Nevertheless, I enjoy and need solitary processes, such as listening to a space and discovering what abundance it offers us, simple walking, all the slow processes like foraging, preparing mediums, fermenting, reflecting, drawing, creating zines...

KP: You also work as an educator, and you recently led a seminar titled How to Connect Art and Everyday Life in Times of Social and Environmental Crisis as part of the course Thinking and Acting for the Future at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. How do you personally navigate these challenging themes in your own life and work? Do you have strategies for coping with environmental grief or the emotional weight of these issues?

KP: I have been teaching for a decade now, in different settings and with different age groups, from afternoon schools to community centres to workshops in community gardens and contemporary art spaces, and my current wish is to run my own small educational space. It also seems important to me to integrate these approaches more into academic contexts. In addition to being motivated by my fellow colleagues who are walking on this exciting path with me, I am also inspired by the work of the eco-philosopher Joanna Macy. Her teachings helped me to find coping mechanisms for my personal environmental grief, and her Work That Reconnects forms the basis of my public activities. Whether I am teaching people to make their own ferments or forage their own pigments, the mission is to reconnect with something greater – with the Earth. If we do that, we can no longer behave in a way that is harmful to our environment or our fellow beings.

KP: One of the significant challenges of this project was the rising cost

of accommodations and the broader housing crisis, which led to some residencies being shortened by a month. This understandably affected your workflow, plans, and overall logistics – and highlighted some of the less sustainable aspects of how residencies and the art world are currently structured. From your perspective, what measures could be taken to organise residencies in a more truly sustainable and sensitive way – both environmentally and in terms of the human effort required of artists and organisers alike?

KP: The housing crisis is a painful issue, which arises from the extractive, individualistic mindset of our society and our ignorance of social issues. The situation is also dynamic – the crisis is growing every year – so I can imagine that a several-year-long project like this was not designed from the outset in a way that enabled it to cope with the housing crisis. A simple suggestion would be that residency spaces should have their own housing, and people

who want to make art and participate in residencies should have their own housing. However, in the current situation this also leads to the 'open scissors effect' and makes public things elitist and exclusive, and I do not want to support this. I would prefer it if the housing crisis and social questions were more of a public issue. For me, it was very interesting to have the chance to experience very different institutions (public, private, large-scale, artist-run) and gain insight into their advantages and limitations – or, more generally, into their ways of operating. I perceive the art world as space of heightened sensitivity to current issues and also as an incubator of possible practices, so one of my suggestions would be to focus not only on the topic and outcomes themselves but also on the processes. This was actually part of this project too, in a lot of good ways (for example, with generous time frames or not having to focus solely on quick and abundant output), but – parallel to other problems we are facing in the world now – the pace of

implementing new procedures is often not as fast as the destructive forces. Still, we can appreciate what has been done so far, maintain our sensitivity to current issues, be aware of our own limits and capacities, support good practices, point out harmful ones, learn from each other, and just... keep going.

SMALL BUT DANGERS ARCHIPELAGO EUROPE

KATEŘINA PENCOVÁ: Could you describe your project *Archipelago Europe* and the different 'islands' that form parts of it?

SMALL BUT DANGERS: *Why Archipelago Europe?* From a geographical point of view, Europe is not an archipelago. But neither is it a continent. It is a peninsula in the far west of Asia. Europe is called a continent in order to be presented as a whole and as fundamentally different from Asia. When we call it an archipelago, we reject the idea of the wholeness and cultural unity of Europe. We emphasise its diversity. Thus, the title indicates the essence of what we tried to achieve in this residency.

To shatter the impression that we know what we are talking about when we use certain words. In order to open up the possibility of a new search for content. In the case of this residency, the word in question is sustainability.

By fragmenting the concept, we exchanged the harmony of the hegemonic view for the polyphony of diversity.

Artists are increasingly expected to take a clear stand on certain social topics. The content of these topics is so distorted that it is difficult to take a clear position. It is obvious that topics which until recently had emancipatory potential have become part of the ruling ideologies. Our response to

this is to try to dismantle these topics beyond recognition so that they can once again become a source of imagination.

We tried to shape the theme of sustainability as something we haven't defined. We tried to present it as a possibility. Something that needs to be constantly reshaped. By constructing a clear meaning, the possibility of manipulation is eliminated. The possibility of manipulating the content is the main aim of our work.

We started the project on the island of Athens. On the island of Madrid, and later on the island of Prague, we simply continued where we left off. And very intuitively. Without a specific plan.

In this way, we left the process open so that it could lead to results that we did not expect.

The programme is designed in such a way that after visiting all three islands, the artists have time to round off the project and present it as a whole in a group exhibition that will follow later. However, in the same manner as we started – though, in fact, we didn't start but simply continued the work we were doing before the residency programme – we will also leave the conclusion of the project open enough so that we can continue our work in the future based on it.

KP: Language clearly plays an essential role in your practice. What is your approach to using or subverting language in this project?

SBD: When we talk about language in the context of our work, we mean language in the broadest sense of the word. But above all, we mean the language of images and the objects that build these images. Of course, language in

the narrow sense of the word also plays an important role in what we do.

In the language that has a monopoly on life we look for blind spots. We take advantage of their potential, which remains potential only if it is unfulfilled. We do not look for the content behind the surface. Instead we reveal it in the form of cracks in the language. The content of the word sustainability is of a precarious nature. The metaphysics of the meaning was reached through poetic thinking, where the coherence between object and thought is constantly challenged. The emancipatory potential of language lies in the difference between language and life, between art and life. In this abyss between the two a small individual can manipulate systems of norms, meanings, and values. We present art as a dead background on which life can sprout again. Faced with art, a person recognises her/himself as its opposite – a thinking, emotional living being.

KP: In your cover letter, you described conventional residency programmes

as inherently unsustainable, temporary in nature, reliant on long-distance travel, and disconnected from local communities and everyday practices like tending gardens or preserving food. After three years of engaging deeply with these questions, how has your understanding of sustainability – and residencies – evolved? In your opinion, what would a truly sustainable residency structure look like? Or is it a complete utopia?

SBD: First of all, the problem is that when we talk about sustainability, we don't know exactly what we are talking about. Are we speaking of the sustainability of solidarity practices or the durability of exploitative strategies? The word has taken on a green hue, although it is often unfounded. Something conservative can be detected in it. The word sustainability has recently been used primarily by power structures, so we find the content that is being formed around this word extremely suspicious.

As for sustainability in the field of art, again, we will not talk about the

'green' ideology that the funders of programmes like SAIR impose. The imaginary eternity of art is based on the precarious conditions of most of the workers in its field. After the experience of the SAIR programme, we are even more convinced that this is so. Art, as it is, is part of the prevailing exploitative system. Of course, this art is not eternal, homogeneous, and also not omnipresent. There are cracks (institutions and especially people) within the system that manage to invent relationships that subvert neoliberal logic or that parasitically operate within this system in different, positive directions. During this residency programme, we had the opportunity to meet some of them, and that is why it was worth participating.

KP: Collecting and reducing both seem central to your way of working. How do you approach these two methods?

SBD: It is essentially one method. Collecting always involves ignoring or rejecting what you do not choose.

This rejected part that is not visible is implicitly present in the collection of selected materials.

Due to the analogue technologies and retro aesthetics, our art is at first glance quite uncontemporary. However, collecting and selecting are the main methods of dealing with media reality in contemporary society. We do not mean collecting art or collecting as a hobby here but rather, for example, collecting photographic images on a phone, likes on social networks, attention, et cetera. This kind of collecting is ideologically conditioned.

Our selection of found objects – as well as the selection of themes, technologies, and styles in the artworks we produce ourselves – is based on aesthetic criteria that we do not understand well. We do not understand well why we choose something. Nevertheless, it is not a matter of the principle of 'anything goes'. It matters what is and what is not in our collections. We usually choose those elements that are generally understood as trash – something that has served its purpose.

These are elements that have freed themselves from their civilising role.

It is a kind of playful archaeology of the everyday. The materials of this world are imprinted with the ideas or contents of those who shape these materials. Even when a part of this world breaks off, a trace of the whole remains. Since these elements are only small details of a much larger whole, they do not allow us to deal with concrete memories that would be captured in them but only with memory as such. They are like memory without clear content. Through the invention of emptiness, memory as a form of thinking is actualised. The form of remembering becomes a mental model for thinking about the present. New ideas and thoughts are formed through thinking similar to remembering.

Since we do not have the power to cut down the giant, we tickle him to his knees. We mix up his details so that he no longer knows what came before and what came after.

The selected elements testify to the fact that what they broke away from is falling apart. This fills us with optimism.

KP: You are based in Cerkno, a small town with no major art institutions. How does this environment influence your artistic decisions and the ideas you are developing during your residency, which mostly takes place in big cities?

SBD: In our regions the differences between the countryside and the city are not that great. Education, political orientation, social status, et cetera have changed a lot in the countryside since World War II. At least in Slovenia, this is the case. As for contemporary art institutions, it is true that they are more concentrated in larger cities. However, the mobility and accessibility of information are so great that we in the countryside do not feel any significant deficit. Those social structures that emphasise the differences between the city and the countryside are essentially creating them. The motive for this is, of course, the destruction of solidarity between people. That is why the differences have been growing again recently – however, not so much between the countryside and the city but between

residents within individual communities.

Of course, we take advantage of living in cities to visit museums and other cultural events, which are more prevalent there. There are also no large flea markets in the countryside, for example. The same applies to garbage, which we often use in our work. 'Alternative' communities in big cities are better organised and somewhat easier to access.

Above all, we observe that it is not true that changes start in cities and then move to the countryside. Cities develop by moving people and cultures from the periphery to cities. These cultures are commodified in the city and later have a feedback effect on the countryside. This pattern is the one that interests us most.

KP: Has the project culminated in an exhibition in Slovenia? If so, what shape did it take?

SBD: There will be no exhibition that would consist solely of the *Archipelago Europe* project. However, individual works or

sets of works will be included among other works in future exhibitions. In this way, we follow the concept of the sustainable development of our work. Each individual project introduces possibilities for new inputs and relationships. It is interesting how things that are created in different locations with different motifs are connected into a complex whole. It gives rise to a polyphony that is coordinated not in the sense of harmony but quite the opposite – elements are connected according to the principle of differences.

OLGA STAŇKOVÁ

FLUID NATURE

KATEŘINA PENCOVÁ: In your project *Fluid Nature*, you explore the growing desire to reconnect with nature alongside the societal need for several forms of escapism. Do you see parallels between these contemporary tendencies and the Romantic movement? In your view, how do current artistic approaches reflect the state of nature today and perhaps respond to its ongoing transformation and fragility?

OLGA STAŇKOVÁ: In my forms of creation I work with escapism as part of the tax for living in this capitalistic era of over-production and over-consumption. We are escaping from something to find what is missing – which can sound very

mysterious or even melancholic. But I do not see nature in a romanticised position. Nor do I relate through my art to the Romanticism of the eighteenth century or Mácha's landscapes (a Czech poet who was inspired by melancholic, mysterious, gloomy, and dramatic scenery, which mostly tends to mirror human emotions like loneliness, fatality). I relate to nature poetically, but I tend to emphasise its own power, which is not under human control and will never be. I work with post-nature, damaged ecologies, and the entanglement of humans with ecological crises. I feel it is necessary to see nature as another actor, not something which has to be tamed or even enslaved by our hands.

In every step of my work there is ecology in the background; my art pieces may sound or look very beautiful, but they often lie on facts or small details which hold the metaphors of truth.

It is necessary to stop thinking about nature in a romantic way as a passive platform for human activities because in that way of thinking we would continue in our lustful approach to our resources – but our resources were never ours in the first place. Nature – the environment – is web of complex mutual influences which is more than just a spectacle.

We usually tend to record what is around us – and within us – even if we would prefer not to, or even when

we intentionally try to go against the current or fashionable direction. Looking back at history, there are always at least two artistic tendencies unfolding side by side: one that directly reflects what is happening and another that, when the 'what is happening' feels too heavy, seeks comfort in something less recognisable, where the presence of the global situation is still hidden there.

When we look at the current situation of today's world, we can agree that it feels *very* heavy. This weight – political, societal, ecological – along with the current state of nature, is visible in much of today's art. At the same time, I feel I cannot generalise further because every artist responds and works in their own way.

I see a lot of professionals using soft and natural materials combined with pure chemicals and synthetics. Sometimes nature emerges into technology, other times technologies learn from nature. Artists tend to work more with nature instead of just exploiting it, and the field of artistic expression in relation to nature is

expanding into very different fields.

I am in contact with artists who map the integrity of nature and verbalise its law or who try to claim nature's ownership (Lucia Bergamaschi). People are overall much more gentle toward nature and consider which materials are they using. Some of them worship parts of nature and seek a relationship with humans (Lucie Králíková), while some create exhibitions which try to establish a religion of nature (*Natural Faith / Naravna vera*, MGLC). Some are inspired by an apocalyptic sci-fi view because in every futuristic idea there is also some part of a possible future. Some do not work with the word nature, but if we were to talk about it more, we would find the same interest.

As you see, there are many approaches and many translations of what nature is, and each artist has their own language of expression.

KP: Your project unfolds through a layered process: investigating, exploring, experiencing, and perceiving. Could you describe how these phases

shape your artistic research, both conceptually and materially? How do they guide the way you engage with natural environments and translate those encounters into your work?

OS: For me it is important to observe, to gather as much knowledge as I can, to see the relations, and with this knowledge to experience, and through experiencing and perceiving to start to create. In some art I fully immerse myself in just one of the named steps, but I feel that the most important thing for my creation is to go through the whole cycle: Investigating (gathering knowledge), Exploring (observation, recognising connections and logical structures), Experiencing (understanding), Perceiving, Translating, and Expanding Knowledge (the new full knowledge becomes an inspiration), Application and Variation (with art and texts).

It's more about finding words and ways of explaining things that we all see but which are so normal that we do not pay attention to them anymore.

When you walk along the coast, you see little pathways created by the water in the sand/microplastics, but the pathways are probably more than that. They were created because of the particular kind of sand, the speed of the water, the high and low tides, nearby traffic, the local weather, the weather over the ocean, why the weather is like that...

Or if I grieve because the deep, rich, fascinating forests of my childhood are gone due to the bark-beetle calamity, I am not just mourning the beautiful view; I am mourning the whole process of agricultural forest production and what caused it. I am grieving over the hands who grew it with a thought for a better future, but I am also celebrating the great power of regrowth and resilience.

KP: Trees and forests have played an important role in your artistic research. During your residency in Slovenia, you were based in Tivoli Park and worked in close proximity to the surrounding forest. In contrast, the landscapes of

Athens and Madrid, where you've also worked, are shaped by totally different ecological conditions. How did these distinct environments influence your artistic development and the way you approach your work?

OS: It is very visible in the series *Forest of Knowledge* from MGLC Ljubljana, where I was in deep stillness and allowed myself to rapidly slow down and concentrate on the creation, but at the same time I had the possibility of a beautiful public space to present my work. *The Cluster of Tenderness* (which was part of *Opening Days* at Matadero) or *Common Dreaming* (which was a reversible event at the Crystal Palace of Arganzuela, which I then repeated in Vienna with totally different results) were created in much busier cities.

I feel that I cannot compare Spain and Slovenia; these two countries each have their own beautiful and crucial environments which also influenced my hands to create totally differently.

I have not been to Athens yet, so I cannot add anything about it.

KP: In your practice, you often engage with subtle transformations in nature, its resilience, withering, and regrowth. From your experience in residencies such as Švicarija, Matadero, or Snehta, what role do you believe slowness, observation, and rootedness play in cultivating long-term sustainability within artistic practice and residency models?

OS: It plays a huge role in terms of the residents, but quite the opposite for the caretaker or gallerist. Sustainability always has to try to be long-term, otherwise it is not sustainable. Long-term residency models are important (even longer ones), but they also have to provide a calm and safe space to live, a studio which can handle drastic operations, and a curator who tries to connect the artist with other similarly oriented individuals in the artistic field. They also must think about how to transport all the art without degrading its value.

From my experience, a three-month model for residencies, spread across

three winters, is a very demanding project. It is very complicated to live in another country, and then another. Each one gave me a specific manner of time, filled with slowness and observation, but in each one the matter of these factors works differently. I feel that slowness, observation, and rootedness are the answer to sustainable residencies. To live in a different country for three months is a very precious time and aim. I am not there as a tourist, I am not there as a resident – I am there as an artist, so it is a special kind of manipulation with time and opportunities.

I do not wish to rush – if I do, my art will look hasty. I am very much aware that it is not necessary to produce art at any cost, otherwise it is not sustainable. If the main aim is to get rid of everyday stress and have the space and calmness or whatever else the artist needs in order to create, then it is a successful residency. I would do it again, but I am probably going to need to rest afterward. One day I wish to have the opportunity to create in my true

approach, without violating the safety policy of the studio building or having to worry about the transport.

KP: *Fluid Nature* touches on the limits and transformations of natural systems as metaphors for artistic expression. In your view, how can artists-in-residence contribute to ecological awareness not only through their artworks but also through the ways they inhabit and interact with the residency environment itself?

OS: Exactly as you said – through the ways they inhabit and interact with the residency environment itself. I would also add through speaking and interacting with people on a daily basis – with other artists, curators, et cetera.

KP: A slightly more practical question – I know you're currently completing your dissertation, and part of your research took place within the framework of the residencies. Balancing academic work with a demanding art project must have been quite challenging. Do you see

your dissertation and the residency as two separate trajectories, or did they influence and inform each other in meaningful ways?

OS: I feel one cannot be taken from the other. I am not able to separate academic work and artistic work precisely because they are one thing. In the same way, I cannot divide my residencies and my dissertation because they complete each other. My dissertation is not standing just on work I have done during my residencies. Thanks to the opportunities I had in my residency destinations, I was forced to work differently and sometimes with more intensive concentration and hyper-focus.

I also discovered great thoughts through my conversations with the other artists in the residency programmes, which I would never have been able to come up with on my own. I will be forever grateful for that.

ADRIANNA SZOJDA IN BETWEEN SOIL AND DEBRIS

KATEŘINA PENCOVÁ: Your project *In Between Soil and Debris* embraced regenerative practices and methodologies for a damaged world, centring on both human and more-than-human life. Through close collaboration with local communities, you work to identify specific needs and challenges. You also position yourself as a mediator, and during your residency, for instance, you facilitated a session with our team at MeetFactory where we reflected on our emotions and the dynamics of our working environment. Based on those conversations, observations, and your time spent within various institutions during your residencies, what recurring themes or 'hot spots' have

you observed in terms of institutional culture, care, or collective well-being?

ADRIANNA SZOJDA: I still have a residency at Snehta in Athens ahead of me this autumn – and a whole summary of all three residencies after that – so at this stage of my work this question seems to be one of the most difficult as I don't want to give mid-way answers.

But you already mentioned two themes in your question: time and conversation. Is time homogeneous and the same for all, or are there rather many times? If there are many, how do we take into account our different times? Who imposes the dominant timing? Where does our time go?

What does it depend on? How do we find a shared time (and place) for a conversation? What is/isn't a waste of time? What can other communities, other more-than-human beings, teach us about time? How could recognising and being with other (and others') temporalities help us to reflect on our own?

I'm still cohabiting with those and many other questions and letting them resonate.

KP: In your practice, soil emerges not just as a material but as a metaphor – one that speaks to the ecological condition of a place and reflects on its 'health'. Alongside your work with

soil and plants, it becomes a lens through which to imagine shared and multifaceted futures. I'm curious: How do these organic materials shape the way you approach themes of community, care, and interdependence in your work?

AS: Soil itself is a community based on dynamic ongoing relations – a multiple plural body. The shape of soil depends on who/what is present and what kind of relations occur between them. How do they express their needs? How do they come to an understanding? How do they react to danger? How do they make collective decisions? In that way soil is a metaphor and an ongoing inspiration.

But – paraphrasing your question – I would say that my wish is to make the soil emerge in my practice not just as a metaphor but as a being, as a subject.

A being that is hard to name and get to know from our human perspective and sensoriality.

Furthermore, our lives and bodies are entangled very tightly.

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing wrote that ruins are now our gardens, and that's how I see my project *In Between Soil and Debris* – as long-term research on how to cultivate hope. Some of the questions I'm posing in this project are: How can we strengthen resilience in the face of the eco-social crisis? What kind of practices could help us nowadays? How can more-than-human beings, including the soil and plants, guide us towards multiple, more diverse and inclusive futures? I feel that learning from and with the soil and other communities could bring us strength and hope in these difficult times that we are facing.

KP: Let me stay with the theme of soil for a moment. Could you tell us more about how you use chromatography in your work? What kinds of insights does this technique offer, and how do you see soil functioning as an indicator – not only of environmental conditions but also of the deeper social, political, or even spiritual layers of a particular place.

AS: To me, the technique of soil chromatography seems to be a way to try to understand the soil from our human perspective, which is dominated by ocularcentrism. I'm trying to take advantage of this condition and use it to call and later pay attention. In my experience, I have observed that soil chromatographies provoke curiosity. And the closer that people approach this circular image, this expression of soil, the more curiosity emerges. And I think curiosity might be the first step towards interest and a desire to understand.

I consider chromatography to be one of the possible ways to interview the soil. It allows us not just to learn about the presence of minerals, microorganisms, air, and organic matter but, above all, to see the relations between those elements that are occurring in that very soil at that very moment.

What I also really enjoy about the technique of chromatography is its ease and affordability. It's easy to set up a DIY lab almost anywhere, and the basic materials are not very

expensive, which makes the access to knowledge – which is usually expensive and reserved for professional laboratories – accessible.

KP: Your practice is notably participatory, your encounters are rarely frontal, and direct engagement with the audience plays a central role. Could you describe some of the key methods or strategies you use to involve the audience? How do these interactions shape the meaning or outcome of your performances?

AS: I don't really know if I use any key methods or any particular strategies to engage the public. The only thing I can say with certainty is that I always try my best to make the encounters as accessible as possible, within my own limitations, of course. I think about it like preparing a common field where we can (but are not necessarily obliged to) meet.

Participation is important in my practice because it enables more relations. And I feel it is in the relations – in those dynamic, unpredictable

moments – that a change happens. I believe we are always *becoming-with*, as Donna Haraway states. For instance, one of my proposals for the second public event in MeetFactory was a garland made of nettles harvested in the neighbourhood. I encouraged people to smash the leaves with their hands to help produce a ferment, a microbe-filled bio-stimulator, which was later returned to the soil – to the places from where I took the samples for my chromatographies. In that way the gesture of returning to the soil became common and shared.

It might sound very obvious, but another thing is that participation means making room for plurality and diversity, and that's what I'm always looking for in my practice.

So, maybe my mediation is a gesture that invites relation?

KP: Embodiment seems to play an important role in your methodology – whether through working with organic materials, facilitating mediation sessions, or engaging audiences

through performance. How do you understand the body – as both a site of knowledge and a tool for navigating complex emotional, ecological, and institutional terrain?

AS: For me, the body is everything that you just mentioned and more. The body is in everything. The body is present, always in relation. It communicates, receives messages, questions and breaks dualities, affects and is affected. It's where the resistance, tension, and action become visible, palpable – it's where the response formulates.

To feel and be able to read these responses to what occurs is very powerful as it could be our tool of resistance against exploitation and inequalities.

One of my great interests is interspecies communication, with art as a tool to speculate on its possibilities. I believe the body is where the possibility of this communication that I'm looking for starts. Marta Tafalla uses the concept of plurisensoriality, which

I find extremely inspiring and useful. I understand plurisensoriality as the use of other senses to divert our usual ways of knowing, to see what emerges from this shift. If our ways of knowing are also ways of doing, so could this shift have effects on our gestures beyond the particular encounter?

CHRISTINA ZAMPOULAKI AFTER DINNER

KATEŘINA PENCOVÁ: During your three residencies, you explored the evocative and synaesthetic potential of food as a way of reflecting on how our eating habits relate to climate change. How did this critical and speculative investigation into food politics, the aesthetics of abundance, and the unpredictable nature of working with living matter shape your project *After Dinner*?

CHRISTINA ZAMPOULAKI: *After Dinner* is an ongoing exploration of our biases around food and our eating habits. *After Dinner* refers to the afterlife of the food that we throw away and reimagines what other lives it could have. In this sense, food becomes

animate, a living entity that reserves the right to continue its life cycle. The project suggests that our ideals of beauty and abundance are learned, they are not ours, and as such it strives to create spaces for people to explore and experiment with unknown textures, flavours, and aesthetics that they usually avoid.

KP: You've already spent time at all three residency venues, starting at Matadero Madrid, then MeetFactory in Prague, and finally MGLC Švicarija. Each place brings its own context, approach, and atmosphere. Alongside these differences, have you also noticed varying perspectives or practices when

it comes to food waste and food politics in each city or country?

CZ: Interestingly enough, I have. I found each city to be very different from each other, both architecturally and climatically, which is what I would think to look at first when thinking of food within a city context. At the same time, each country had very different historical and economic points of reference. However, what stood out was, that no matter how different the cultures, food waste was always seen as a practice against the culture itself. Whether because of climate change, financial pressures, or embodied generational trauma, we have all been

raised to never waste food within our households. This is what made me realise that food waste is a systemic problem and not an individual one.

KP: Your main focus was food waste and everything connected to it. You explored speculative ideas around a “food paradise” and imagined what happens to food after it’s no longer used to feed and nourish us. You also questioned the misconceptions surrounding food waste – how easily we choose to discard food, and yet how difficult it is to truly get rid of it. So, tell me: what does a real food paradise look like?

CZ: What I learned from *After Dinner* is that food paradise is not a place but a practice. In nature, what does not get eaten decomposes and in return feeds the organisms that gave birth to it. I think that’s what food paradise is all about. To be valued as a whole and not be discarded.

KP: Your food-related installations often appear wild, uncanny, at times

even slightly repulsive. I remember you once shared your discomfort with the notions of food design and fine dining, particularly in the context of food waste and the way food is frequently reduced to something merely aesthetic or beautiful, stripped of deeper critical engagement. At the same time, however, your events and installations continue to cultivate powerful sensory and social experiences. Could you elaborate on this tension between criticism and pleasure, between the grotesque and the social in your work?

CZ: We eat with our eyes first, but the beauty etiquette of food that we follow is a learned behaviour from the food industry. That is not to say that a lot of professionals are not concerned with the climate crisis, but still, the food we are served usually has to pass specific beauty standards. I see this as an opportunity. Our expectations of how our food should look, smell, or feel mean that there is a world of sensations we have not experimented with. Indeed, my work focuses on what we have learned

not to like, in order to find out what how much of it is actually learned and how we can learn to play in order to get out of our own biases.

KP: During your SAIR residencies, you often created food menus using some of the most commonly discarded ingredients, such as potatoes, rice, and bread, as well as leftovers and scraps you found in our shared kitchen spaces. This really resonated with us, as food waste has been an ongoing concern at MeetFactory, for instance. We’ve tried several times to introduce composting systems, though these have always proved unsuccessful for various reasons. How do you view this kind of approach – working with waste and circularity – within the context of cultural production and residency spaces? Do you see potential for these places to take on more responsibility, or even become models for sustainable practices?

CZ: I was very happy to see the MeetFactory community’s efforts in

this matter. I think a lot of cultural institutions support artists working around sustainability, but the institutions themselves don't work on them within their capacity. Sometimes sustainability is seen as a theme rather than a system of living and operating. I think that's a shame. Since cultural centres are hubs for creativity and community building, they are the best places for experimentation. In the future, I hope to see more institutions asking themselves these questions and collaborating with creatives to create new practices and ideas.

KP: Speculation plays a significant role in your practice. In your view, what might new communal practices around consumption and sustainability look like? How might they operate – both in concept and in everyday life?

CZ: The possibilities are endless. There are so many ways to live in harmony with the planet, and a lot of them are not new, they are ancient. What is new is the pressure of our time. So for me,

the challenge has become more a question of finding new ways to be with each other despite the challenges we face, and of seeing both the human and the natural worlds as one entity that needs to heal together.

MARIA NIKIFORAKI

RITUALS FOR NEW FUTURES

KATEŘINA PENCOVÁ: *Rituals for New Futures* weaves together performance, spirituality, and ecological inquiry, often in collaboration with other performers, researchers, and sound artists. How does collaboration shape the development of each chapter? What does working collectively allow you to explore or express that might not be possible in a solo practice?

MARIA NIKIFORAKI: Each chapter of *Rituals for New Futures* draws inspiration from the unique locations of my residencies and the people I encountered there. In Madrid I was deeply influenced by the vibrant Latin American dance communities I joined and whose classes

I attended. Collaborating with Peruvian and Cuban artists, I explored how movement connects with nature, imparting meaning to the human-nature relationship.

Conversely, my time in Prague sparked an interest in the myths of nature and spirits – particularly the goddess Morana and female spirits. Here my work evolved into a more performative and presentation-based piece, leading me to seek collaboration with another professional artist. Collaboration is fundamental to my creative process; it is the only way my work can exist. Engaging with others allows me to approach the arts in an anthropological manner, offering

inspiration and creating the social and political context that my work inherently relies upon.

KP: Throughout this project, you've explored the intersection of spirituality, natural elements, and sustainability. In the first chapter, *La Creación de Una Heroína*, developed during your stay at Matadero Madrid, you introduced a goddess character representing the element of air. In Prague you focused on the element of soil, with a particular interest in coal and the coal-mining industry. Which other elements do you plan to explore next, and how might they manifest in your narrative?

MN: The elements explored in this project are air, soil (fire), and water, with a particular focus on water as the final destination. The concept of using natural elements to delve into ritualistic practices that can shape a better future is an ancient one, prevalent in both ancient cultures and contemporary indigenous societies. These rituals often involve air, water, soil, and fire, serving purposes such as invoking blessings, predicting the future, and connecting to dreams and desires.

Rituals for New Futures aims to create performances that rekindle our connection to nature and spirits – even within our modern Western context – and explore sustainability through alternative perspectives and intuition. The narrative I've developed centres around a female scifi hero who harnesses the elements of air, fire, and water to learn from her ancestors and address the future through their wisdom. This narrative is often female-centric, reflecting my recent exploration of scifi feminism.

KP: In Prague you also drew inspiration from Morana, the Slavic pagan goddess associated with seasonal rituals and the cycles of death and rebirth in nature. The heroine you created embodied the element of fire through a performance at Milada Lake, later presented at MeetFactory's Public House event accompanied by an original score composed by Czech producer LostDog. The themes of birth, rebirth, and death were central to this chapter. Could you tell us more about how Morana influenced your work in Prague? And looking ahead – what can we expect in your final residency in Ljubljana?

MN: The tale of the goddess Morana, which I encountered in Prague, deeply resonated with me. The ritual dedicated to Morana requires her body, a symbol of fertility, to be dismembered and burned and her remains to be cast into a lake. Historically, the female figure has often been demonised and portrayed as evil, necessitating destruction. This narrative stirred thoughts of witch-burning in my mind.

The work I developed there was a ritualistic performance aimed at bridging the gap to the 'burned women' – the silenced voices of those oppressed by patriarchy and capitalism. This performance took place on the eve of 30 April, during the 'Burning of the Witches' festival. The theme of death and rebirth is pivotal to this chapter as it follows a heroine who must die to be reborn, thus forging new connections with the world. This marked the second phase of her journey.

The third part, set in Ljubljana, will focus on water. While I am still uncertain about the direction, Slovenia is home to a fascinating phenomenon: bioluminescence. Found in the Adriatic Sea, this occurrence, rare in Europe, involves organisms that emit their own light, creating a unique visual spectacle. I believe my research will centre around this phenomenon, with the heroine exploring the sea and her connection to the marine world, potentially uncovering passages to other dimensions.

KP: Your practice clearly engages with ecofeminist themes, especially through the lens of ecological concerns and marginalised voices. What drew you to intertwine these themes with science-fiction narratives? What does feminist scifi offer us in terms of imagining or expressing?

MN: The scifi narrative serves as a powerful vehicle for exploring feminist themes, unconstrained by political boundaries. My heroine strives to think beyond human essence, delving into the unknown.

The scifi genre encourages an open dialogue that embraces all possibilities within the feminist narrative, while also creating a cyclical sense of time. The female hero's journey diverges significantly from the stereotypical male hero's path, providing a rich platform to craft stories that challenge patriarchal structures and explore marginalised perspectives, including those of nature and ecology.

On this journey the female hero not only encounters various elements but

also engages with specific locations, deepening the connection between humans and nature. For example, in Madrid the story unfolds along an old river, now transformed into a highway, where the spirit of air is invoked. In Prague the narrative takes place by a lake, where a fire is lit to awaken the spirit of Morana, embodying the themes of death and rebirth.

KP: In your view, how can movement and performance serve as tools of resistance or expressions of political thought? Do you see movement as having transformative potential? In one of your texts you reference Hannah Arendt, noting that we have yet to discover the kinetic knowledge that could lead us towards freedom – where the true essence of politics might be revealed. Could you expand on this idea?

MN: For me, freedom is intrinsically tied to movement. Dance, as a form of resistance, vividly illustrates this connection. When communities perform their traditional dances in

public spaces, they engage in a form of political expression, asserting their presence and identity within the public sphere. The act of moving our bodies and choosing how to physically interact with the world is, in itself, a political statement.

During my time in Madrid, I participated in queer salsa classes where the traditional roles of male leader and female follower were dismantled, allowing queer couples to experience freedom within the dance. Additionally, I witnessed Latin dancers performing on public streets, connecting with their identity even when far from home. My interactions with immigrant communities further highlighted how dance can serve as a powerful vehicle for resistance and expression.

Hannah Arendt's insights suggest that knowledge rooted in movement and action is essential. She implies that true freedom and the essence of politics lie in our physical and dynamic engagement with the world. Personally, I interpret this as a deeply personal and abstract concept. For me, freedom

and resistance are inseparable. My work is inspired by observing people resisting societal norms and the creativity that emerges from such resistance.

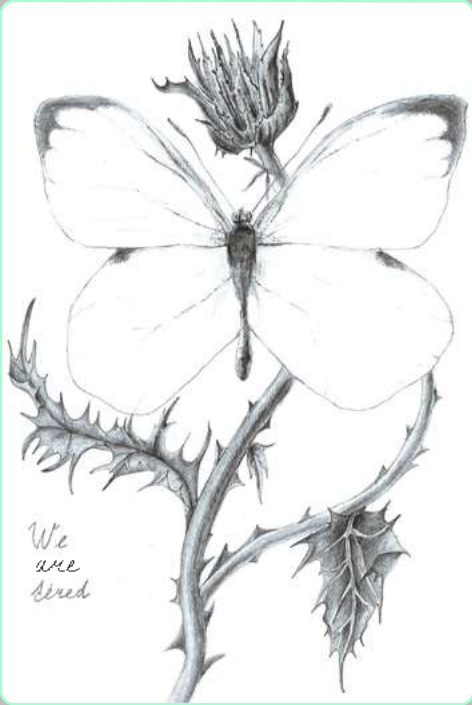
KP: Your performative practice often explores the intersection of the personal and the political. If I may get a bit personal – your first residency in Madrid took place during the first trimester of your pregnancy, which inevitably added another layer of meaning to the project. Did pregnancy and the experience of impending motherhood consciously or subconsciously influence the direction and development of your work?

MN: I believe it did a lot subconsciously, yes. I believe there is an underlying thread, and reflecting on it now, it feels clearer. During my pregnancy in Madrid, I had an intuitive sense that the baby was female. This intuition sparked the idea of creating a female hero – a decision that profoundly shaped my project. This work is deeply rooted in an

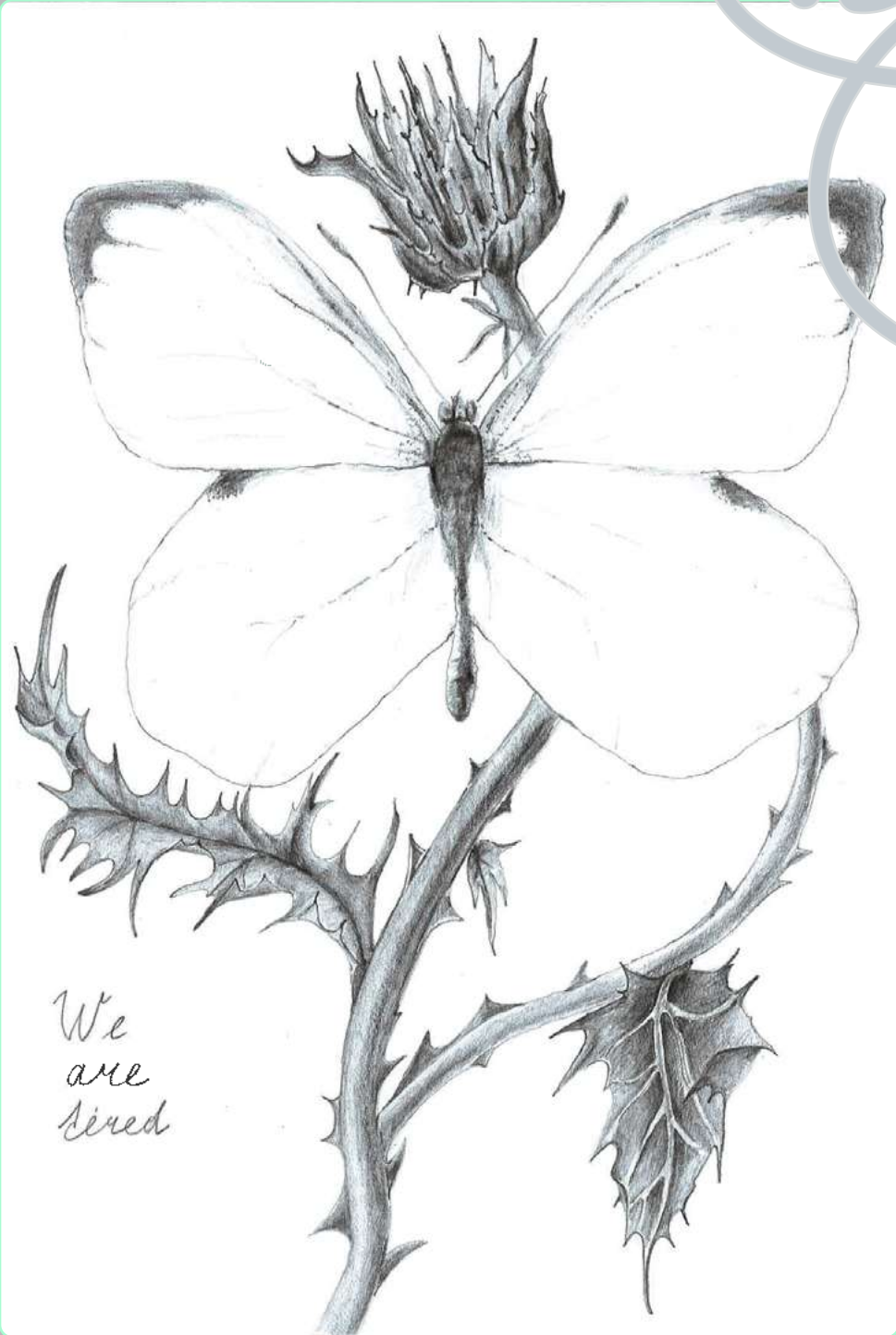
inner search and personal journey.

In Madrid, as I embarked on this project, I was 'creating a female hero'. In Prague, I symbolically 'killed' one phase of myself and 'gave birth' to another, mirroring my transition from my pre-pregnancy to post-pregnancy identity. In Ljubljana, the final element is water. It may explore the freedom and balance between my past and present and my journey towards freedom within the context of motherhood.

When I create a work, I rely heavily on intuition, often without knowing the outcome. I trust this method and have always let it guide my early project decisions. For this work, I intend to create a trilogy with a consistent style, completing the heroine's journey in three acts. This project has been a journey of learning and exploration because of my personal circumstances as well, and I believe this learning process has significantly impacted the final outcome.



LEARNED A THING OR TWO: REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATIONS



MGLC ECHOES OF SUSTAINABILITY

The International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC) develops its international cultural engagement through its annual exhibition programme and production in the MGLC Print Studio, the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, and by running the creative and residency centre MGLC Švicarija. In particular, through the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, we focus on cultural and artistic worlds that are less known in the Slovenian context and offer new perspectives on social reality. In recent years, we have successfully carried out international cooperation at the European level through three completed projects supported by the EU programmes Creative Europe and Erasmus+: the *Perennial Biennial, In from the Margins*, and *Printmaking for Everyone*, within which we established networks with related biennials and graphic arts production centres. Through international projects, we encourage new ways of involving diverse communities in our artistic programmes, while strengthening co-creative partnerships.

International collaboration allows residency centres to become dynamic hubs that respond to the challenges of contemporary times. Since its opening in 2017, MGLC Švicarija has been a special model – perhaps even a unique example – of connecting contemporary visual arts and cultural heritage, and local artists with international residency guests. MGLC Švicarija houses eleven working studios used by artists from Ljubljana for a period of five years, with the possibility of extension. These are complemented by two residential studios for young Slovenian artists under the age of 35, providing them with space to live and work for up to two years. This is further enriched by three residency apartments for international artists. The combination of short-term and long-term use of space at MGLC Švicarija brings both many advantages and challenges.

One such challenge arose through the project *Sustainability is in the AiR*, which connected MGLC Švicarija with three other residency centres: MeetFactory in Prague, Snehta in Athens, and Matadero in Madrid. As the lead partner, MGLC coordinated the project, organised partner meetings, and managed the residencies at MGLC Švicarija for selected artists from Greece, Spain, and the Czech Republic.

THE FRAMEWORK OF AIR

The residency artists selected through the public call share a focus on sustainable artistic practices, “do-it-yourself” (DIY) and “do-it-together” (DIT) approaches, an emphasis on process and material, and – most importantly – the ability to take time

for the gradual development of their projects beyond time pressures and deadlines. Through this project, we offered the artists time and space, the support of professional staff, and funding for the production of new artworks. The decision to work with a smaller group, planned already during the project's design phase, proved to be both practical in terms of implementation and beneficial for the career development of the artists. Throughout the project, professional and personal connections have been formed, allowing for what we call "curating with care".

At MGLC Švicarija, we hosted Lenka Kubelová and Olga Staňková from December 2023 to March 2024, Sara García from September to November 2024, Adrianna Szojda and Christina Zampoulaki from January to March 2025, and Maria Nikiforaki from September to October 2025. At the same time, we coordinated the residencies of Slovene artists, Lea Culetto and the collective Small But Dangers (Mateja Rojc and Simon Hudolin), in Prague, Athens, and Madrid.

Lea Culetto works in the field of visual arts with a focus on feminism. Using textiles and mixed media, she creates objects and installations that question ideals, taboos, and perceptions of the female body, often drawing on personal experience. In addition to presentations during her residencies in

Prague, Madrid, and Athens, she also showcased her work in a solo exhibition in Ljubljana, titled *Combing Through* (April 11-May 6, 2025, Škuc Gallery; curators: Urška Aplinc, Lara Plavčak; produced by: *World of Art/SCCA-Ljubljana*, Škuc Gallery). Her solo exhibition was an unexpected addition to

the project and a testament to the fact that, throughout the project, new opportunities for collaboration and career development were opening up for the artists. The artistic collective Small But Dangers (Mateja Rojc and Simon Hudolin) captivate with their subtle and humorous approach to giving discarded and obsolete objects new purpose, meaning, and value. They draw attention to the ordinary things present in our everyday lives that often go unnoticed. During their residencies, they used their artistic method of appropriation and reuse – with minimal resources and interventions – to create new-old works. To mark the 21st anniversary of their artistic practice, a retrospective exhibition will be held at the International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC) from November 2025 until the end of March 2026 – another gesture that reaches beyond the bounds of the project and echoes our commitment to supporting the continued career paths of the participating artists.

On the open day of MGLC Švicarija, held on 8 February 2024, Lenka Kubelová and Olga Staňková presented their work in the form of exhibitions that remained on view for a month. Lenka Kubelová's exhibition *Rhizosphere* explored what happens in the sphere of soil, roots, and associated microorganisms. The artist found inspiration in the winter nature of Šišenski hrib and Tivoli Park. Deepening her recent research into natural pigments and dyes, she created pigments collected from the root systems of uprooted trees. She also fermented an oxymel with pine branches, exhibited winter mushrooms, and wrote an ethical guide for harvesting

and preparing juices from natural ingredients. Through illustrations, screen prints on eco-friendly paper, and an art zine, she emphasised ecosystems as inspiration for human civilisation.



Olga Staňková, *Fluid Nature - Forest of Knowledge*, exhibition, MGLC Švicarija, 08.02.-03.03.2024.
Photo by Urška Boljkovac. MGLC Archive.

Olga Staňková titled her exhibition *Fluid Nature - Forest of Knowledge*, in which she displayed transparent paper painted with forest motifs. She, too, was inspired by the Tivoli forest, where she observed specific parts and forms of natural structures. The result was a dynamic visual world – a forest within Švicarija – where the drawings subtly engaged visitors through movement and transformation. Stillness, observation, subordination, withering away, acceptance of loss, recovery, appreciation of the smallest accomplishments, resistant growth, and creative continuation were the core messages of her exhibition project.

Sara García concluded her almost three-month residency on 12 November 2024 with a performance, *moulding mourning mouth*. The project in Ljubljana reflected on planetary grief through multi-species feeding, the importance of coexistence, and food ethics. While in Slovenia, she worked with buckwheat – a pseudocereal that has been part of the region's edible culture since the 15th century. In the MGLC Print Studio, she created screen prints featuring motifs of a table and offerings, experimenting with natural dyes and using beetroot juice as ink. Her poetic performance consisted of a recitation of a poem and a specially made garment adorned with baked goods made from grains, through which she addressed the audience and invited them to the table. Visitors were able to taste the baked goods as well as the prints. The artist crafted an intimate, sensory experience that explored the concept of hospitality and, consequently, our relationship with the Other.



Sara García Fernández, *moulding mourning mouth*, performance, MGLC Švicarija, 12 November 2024.
Photo by Urška Boljkovac. MGLC Archive.

A participatory community event, held on the forest edge and within the woods of Tivoli Park, was organised on 19 March 2025 by Christina Zampoulaki and Adrianna Szojda. Adrianna's project, *In-between soil and debris: regenerative practices and methodologies with and for the damaged world*, changes and adapts depending on the location in which it develops, but always seeks to do the same: trace regenerative practices that already exist within the community, understanding each community as a set of dynamic interspecies relations. The artist invited us to send messages from soil to soil. During her residency at MGLC, she prepared screen prints on compostable paper produced by the PAPLAB workshop, made from the introduced plant *Fallopia japonica*, using soil from the forest and a local organic farm. Using plant-based ink, visitors wrote a message onto the print and were later encouraged to bury it somewhere. According to the artist, as the print decomposes, it will release both the message and the memory of the regenerative potential of healthy common land, in which lies our shared future. Christina Zampoulaki invited us to *After Dinner*. She explores the interconnectedness of living organisms, focusing on food systems and the supply chains within Western capitalist structures. During her residency, she examined our personal and collective perceptions of household food waste and the possibilities of transforming waste into (edible) bioplastic. Inspired by the natural environment around Tivoli Park, she has been exploring the (after)life of food by creating an imagined mythological reality of it. In the residency apartment,

she presented her work and invited us to the table – to a feast of forgotten forms of life, from bio-leather to newly imagined species. All the dishes, made from household food waste, were prepared by the artist herself – dried, chopped, sliced... – so that we could ultimately taste meals made from banana peels, onions, and more. Christina's message is clear: food is both a political tool and a living ecosystem that shapes our identities and reflects global systems of power.

Maria Nikiforaki is a visual artist working at the intersection of performance, film, video, and dance. During her residency in Ljubljana, she created the third chapter of the project *Rituals for New Futures*. Her fictional character, a sci-fi-inspired female protagonist – the Heroine – descended in Slovenia into the water and the underworld.



Adrianna Szojda, *In-between soil and debris: regenerative practices and methodologies with and for the damaged world*, participatory community event, Tivoli Park, 19 March 2025. Photo by Urška Boljkovac. MGLC Archive.

FOUR CITIES, MANY RHYTHMS

Throughout the project, as partners we have come to understand our differences: MGLC and Matadero are public, city-run cultural institutions with stable funding, while Snehta and MeetFactory are private non-profit organisations dependent on project-based and often unpredictable funding. MGLC and MeetFactory manage their own in-kind residency infrastructure (both working and living studios), while Snehta and Matadero must rent accommodation for their residents. Matadero hosts a large community workspace for its residents in a revitalised industrial heritage site, as does MeetFactory, where interaction among residents is intense. At MGLC Švicarija, residents were “left” to the peace and nature of Tivoli Park, whereas in Athens, artists found themselves in the creative chaos of a once-ancient, now-urban metropolis. These differences should have been taken into account already during the development of the project and while preparing the application for support from the European Commission.

MGLC Švicarija proved to be a space of creative retreat, where artists could deepen their research into environmental issues and questions concerning the future of nature and humanity. The artists managed to transform the residency apartments into improvised working laboratories and took advantage of the technical capacities of the MGLC Print Studio and the expertise of our printmaker, Jakob Puh. They brought more processual, immaterial, and participatory working methods into the residency centre – a place usually

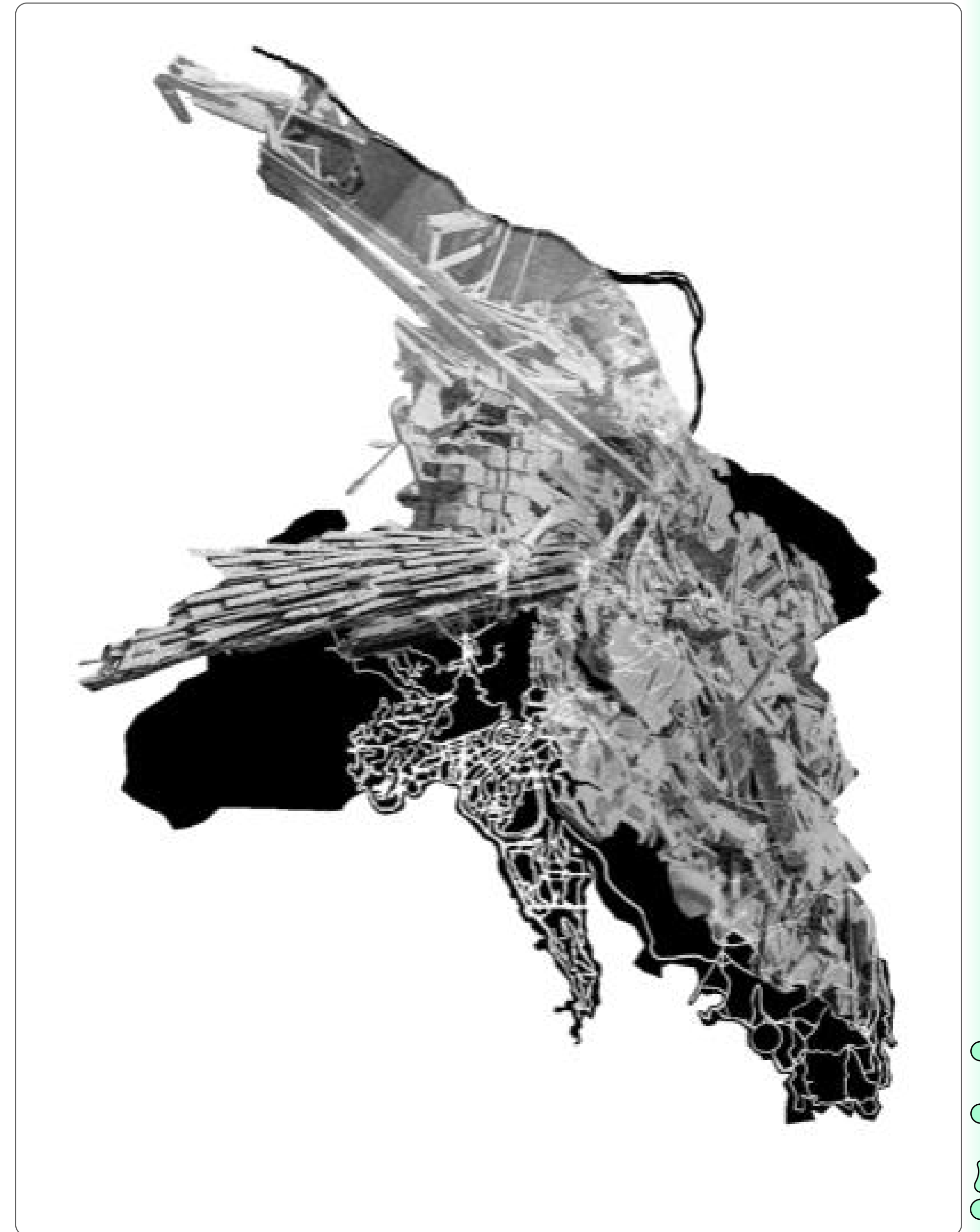
dominated by established, older-generation artists and more traditional forms of visual art, such as painting, sculpture, and printmaking. Unfortunately, intense interaction between the long-term users of the residential centre Švicarija, MGLC staff, and international residents did not always happen in an intensive way (except in the case of the last residency and project by Maria Nikiforaki), partly due to the limited engagement to foster connections by the residency centre's coordinator. At MGLC, we are constantly shifting between projects and daily tasks – from exhibitions and organising the biennial to coordinating residencies.

With the help of the project SAiR, MGLC is reshaping its residential operation mode by introducing green and sustainable practices into artistic production and promoting so-called slow mobility. Still, we have succeeded in nurturing a sensitivity and empathy for artistic practices that move beyond the visible and the tangible. While the artists were, to varying degrees, able to pause within the space and time offered by three years, four residency programmes, and four European capitals, we are still learning how to do the same. It is a lesson – one that invites us to reflect, to continue the project with greater awareness, and to seek new connections among ourselves.

Dušan Dovč
Coordinator of Residency Programme,
The International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC)

SNEHTA MATERIALITIES, TYPOLOGIES, AND FUTURES: SUSTAINABILITY LESSONS FROM ATHENS. MATERIALITY AS A SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE

What would an artist do on their first time in a city like Athens if not touch and sense the concrete walls or masonry, or let their gaze drift across the broken pavement? What would an artist do if not combine those first haptic impressions – the feeling of temperature (usually warmer than anywhere else in Europe) – with the experience of aimlessly peregrinating through the newly encountered cul-de-sacs and outmoded city-centre streets?



Snehta Athens Map, interpolated with ruins. Initial design for a Snehta artwork or project.
Created by Augustus Veinoglou.

MATERIALITY

The substances, textures, and objects that shape our everyday lives have always been the most direct way to enter and become immersed in a place. It is the most obvious yet also the most subterranean in terms of its effect on artists. Some recognise this immediately; others only later realise that such sensory encounters with unfamiliar materials can themselves become *materia prima*. It is no accident that when artists think of Greece – and Athens in particular – they encounter an interplay of materialities that vary across technological registers and chronological layers.

With this in mind, Snehta residencies are never the same in structure: Each is shaped by the invited artists and by the theme at hand. In the case of *Sustainability Is in the Air*, the subject had to be approached within the residency by connecting the artists' interests with local expertise in relevant fields, allowing material, knowledge, and practice to meet in unexpected ways.

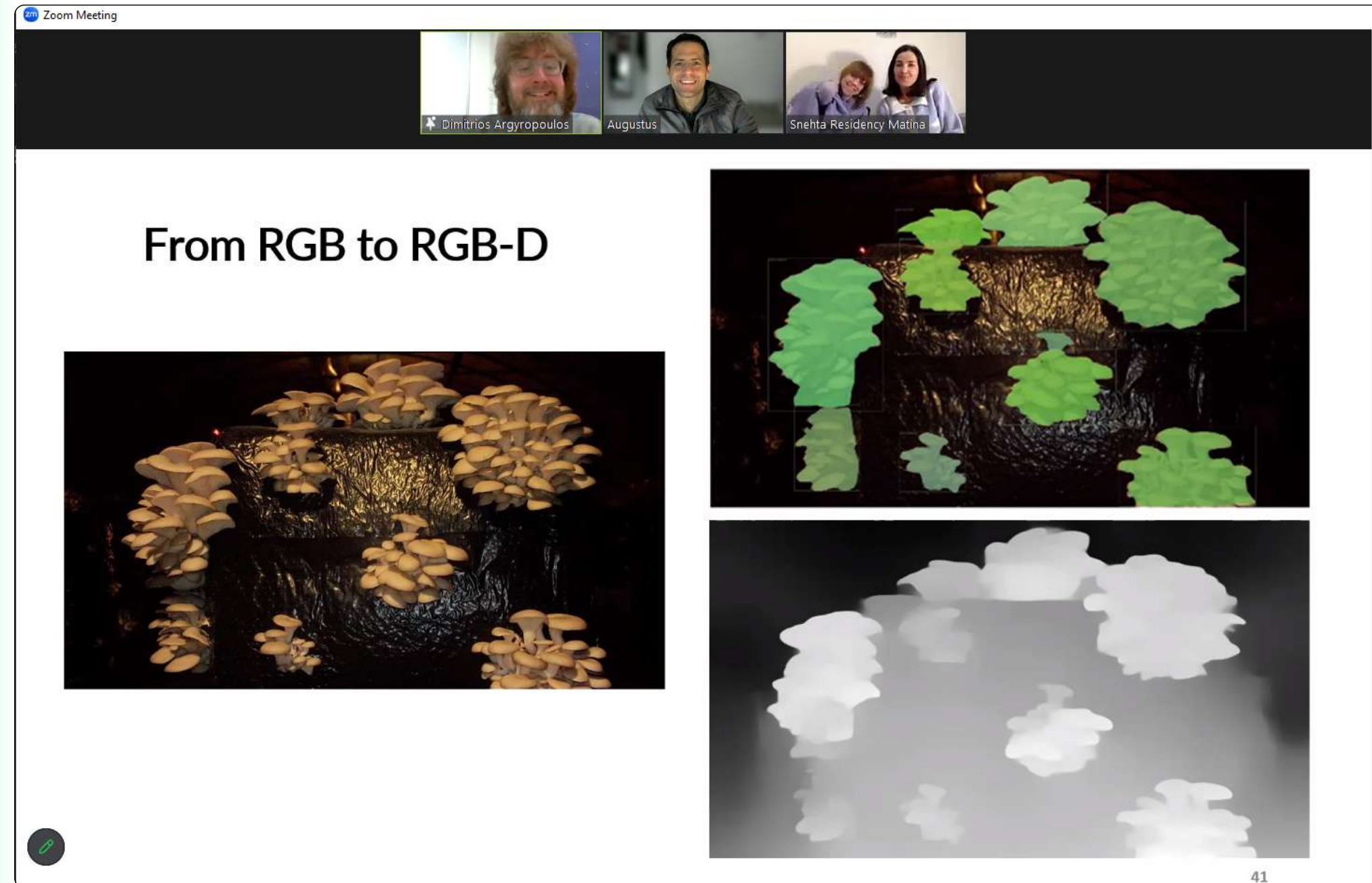
The residency itself unfolded in two distinct phases – or ultimately in three, although at the time of this text's presentation in the manual, the third phase is still forthcoming, scheduled for October 2025.

Phase I featured Sara García and the artistic duo Small But Dangers. Small But Dangers engaged with improvised compositions of 'homeopape' materials – paper waste and other forms of soft sheet material, akin to what sci-fi writer Philip K. Dick would call 'kipple': overflowing paper waste, dust, and particle-like materialities that seem to self-generate.

García, by contrast, worked conceptually with bread rituals and, like Kubelová later on, developed a culinary and participatory approach, inviting people to consume rather than simply observe. Their residency was reinforced by the presence of independent curator Daphne Dragona, who introduced the notion of degrowth and created space for the artists to reflect on their practices, as well as Dr. Dimitrios Argyropoulos, an assistant professor at the UCD School of Biosystems and Food Engineering, who presented cutting-edge research on mycelial networks and the potential technological applications of his work in agriculture and the food industry.



Daphne Dragona giving a talk on the subject of degrowth. Photo by Augustus Veinoglou.



Dimitrios Argyropoulos giving an online presentation on mycelial networks.

Phase II brought in Lenka Kubelová and Lea Culetto. Kubelová pursued fermentation processes inspired by the Athenian flora, while Culetto developed her bioplastics and made regular visits to flea markets in an effort to discern new synthetic materials, presumably to inspire further artistic ventures. Their cycle also included a talk by the curator of the Greek pavilion at the Venice Biennale, who discussed the communication hurdles, institutional complexities, and accomplishments involved in formulating a large-scale, multi-institutional project.

Across both phases, these activities deepened the artists' explorations of materiality, situating their practices

in dialogue with scientific research, curatorial perspectives, and the Athenian context, thus highlighting the ways material, knowledge, and sustainability intertwine.



Panos Giannikopoulos presenting his experience of curating the Greek pavilion at the 2025 Venice Biennale.
Photo by Martina Charalambi.

IMMATERIALITY

Therefore, one must also include – alongside the tactile and the more synthetic complexities of materialities, whether material or institutional – all the ocular and non-tactile senses as well as the materials of an immaterial nature. These are new experiences that inspire new dreams and unconscious states such as sleep. Yet even these are inevitably touched by the burdened notion of classical Athens, clashing with its contemporary sensory nemesis – a re-livened post-mythos, an alternative narrative borrowing its form from old, time-tested artistic apparatus.

In this collision we are invited to reflect on the city's underlying mental and conceptual particularities: its hidden strata of thought, memory, and imagination.



Terrace view of Kypseli, Snehta's neighbourhood. Photo by Augustus Veinoglou.

CITY TYPOLOGIES: UNDERWORLDS, HIGH PLACES, AND WASTELANDS

The artists' initiation to Athens had to be set in a place like Kypseli, the prime location of the residency. The word *kypseli* means 'hive' – as in beehive – and it forms a perfect human allegory when one speaks about the area, which is

indeed dense and multi-ethnic. Beyond its name, which is not a recent place name, Kypseli is comfortably located on the northwestern fringes of the city centre, becoming a great refuge or safe haven from which artists can explore both the underground and the higher places of the city.

These two typologies are fundamental to the landscape of Athens. From the high places one can gain a sense of totality, of the city in miniature; whereas the underground, with its defunct and leftover archaeologies, offers a tactile relationship with aged matter. Intentionally, these two typologies form a core aspect of Snehta's introductions when new artists join the programme.

I can't help but think that this was difficult for artists to discover themselves as these locations offer a sense of escape from the saturated and scantily busy city streets – a setting that resembles a European orthological town-planning dream gone south.

With the exception of a few artists who embarked directly on their research, the SAIR artists also ventured to Eleusis, where they were introduced to a contemporary city, formerly a European Capital of Culture, with all its problems, both environmental and social. In Eleusis, the emblematic city of Demeter and the Dionysian mysteries, the peripheries are swarming with historically illicit industrial activity, mostly revolving around petroleum, plastics, and the infamous yet now defunct shipyards of Eleusis.



Glyfa, ship graveyard, sighting by artist Sara Garcia. Photo by Augustus Veinoglou.

An epitome of this Greek city micrography is the shipwreck of the ironically named *MS Mediterranean Sky*, which stands as a material witness of this urban peril. Equally striking is the Glyfa ship de-installation facility, where during our visit artists found themselves in a pier-like universe filled with dilapidating skeletons, fossilised keels, and heavily polluted still waters.



The shipwreck of the MS Mediterranean Sky and Samsun in the distance. Photo by Augustus Veinoglou.

I notice that artists are often unable to engage directly in conversation with these subjects, nor even to articulate them immediately in the aftermath of their visits. It is deeply rooted in artistic research methodology that the linking of ideas and project concepts tends to manifest latently. This is the way human experience works: Artists process what they see and feel cerebrally, often with a delay. In that delay lies a kind of

sustainability – an enduring after-image – where one remains baffled and still, knowing that what was witnessed holds meaning but not yet knowing exactly what.

My intention in offering these moments is not to place artists in the role of protesters or direct respondents but to confront them with phenomena that resonate on a material and temporal level. These encounters offer the possibility of engaging with cycles of matter, ‘witnessing the decomposition of modern materials’, seeing their effects and traces in the natural landscape, and reflecting on what future remnants they may leave behind. In this sense, sustainability is understood not as an immediate solution but as a space of awareness and reflection, where artistic practice becomes a way of holding and transforming these impressions over time.



Part of the Themistoclean wall in the basement of a building in the centre of Athens.
Photo by Augustus Veinoglou.

For that reason, I find it fitting to take artists into the bowels of the city centre, where they can trace elements of symbiosis in the Themistoclean wall – its porous stone battling against time alongside the freshly poured concrete of the modern era. These places, often baffling in their very location, are mostly underground and not classified as strictly archaeological sites.



Mixed materialities – part of the Themistoclean wall in the conference room of a hotel. Photo by Augustus Veinoglou.

By entering them, one gains access to two fundamental concepts. The first is the notion of preservation: whether something should be preserved at all and what systems of preservation solutions exist. The second is the contradictory, heterotopic nature of urban space – where different uses (private, public, commercial, mercantile) coexist in tension with the institutional stillness of ancient ruins. The Themistoclean wall, moats, graves, streets, aqueducts, and wall-side homes become juxtapositions: fragments of antiquity colliding with contemporary functions, raising questions about what is sustained, what is erased, and what is allowed to remain in-between.



Lea Culetto and Lenka Kubelová exploring sections of the Athenian fortification in the basement of the Benaki Museum's Islamic art complex. Photo by Augustus Veinoglou.

RESIDENCY AND EVERYDAY SUSTAINABILITY

Another concept I want to touch upon is seamlessness. I have previously described topics and activities related to sustainability in our residency structure, including the dynamics of the area. Artists not only have their studio but also, fundamentally, their accommodation – and this is important, because a residency should never separate the curated artistic experience from the lived, everyday one. Studio life and daily routines such as transportation, meals, or per diems are all part of the residency experience.

Seamlessness therefore refers to the integration of these different forms of experience. Living spaces, for instance, can provide another window into local culture – through decoration, neighbours, or the rhythms of the street. At the same time, a negative living experience can colour one's overall perception of a place. For this reason, we have always insisted on keeping artists close to the studio by renting nearby spaces, ensuring proximity between work and daily life.

However, the city's post-crisis mentality has resulted in an unchecked rise in property prices, making this increasingly difficult to sustain. Here, sustainability is not only ecological or cultural but also economic and infrastructural: How do we preserve this seamlessness in a city whose housing market is becoming less accessible?

At this point I would stress an old remark a professor once made – and it remains a matter of personal taste – that to embark upon a problem is itself a useful tool. One should strive to use difficulties to their advantage rather than

ruminate endlessly over them, because residencies are never perfect, nor can facilitators perfectly predict or prevent potential issues.



The entrance of the Snehta space. Photo by Augustus Veinoglou.

This particular issue falls under a broader category of challenges that small-scale residencies like Snehta inevitably face. These often revolve around questions of funding and staffing as such initiatives rely heavily on personal time, commitment, and sacrifice in order to run. In this sense, sustainability also demands recognising the limits of our capacity and finding ways to adapt within them. Moreover, for Snehta, a dedicated team consisting of multifaceted, talented individuals willing to take on all aspects of the residency is essential. The Snehta team is critical to orchestrating the programme. It was a pleasure to work with art historian and independent curator Matina Charalampi in the structural and thematic organisation of these residencies, as well as to receive additional yet vital support from our interns: Pavlina Temcsáková, Marina Márquez, Miriam Díaz Cruz, and Kitty Leadley.

REDISCOVERING THE CITY: ETHOS AND METHODS

In that same vein, I want to dwell on something that is a fundamental aspect of Athens: its booming young artistic scene, from which our internship programme, with its large number of applications, directly emerges. I have been a first-hand witness to this development since 2007, observing its steady growth up until its explosion in 2015, a symbolic year for Greece on many levels. That moment brought the commons to the forefront of artistic discussion and cultivated an ethos of extroversion as well as what I would call 'tycoonship' – an influx of opportunities from abroad. Although I use the term

somewhat critically, it must be recognised also as a positive outcome.

At the same time, one must also acknowledge a critical gap: the inability of the Greek state to formulate a coherent mission for contemporary art and visual artists. This remains an issue of failed artistic sustainability, though it is perhaps a matter for a different discussion.

Nonetheless, the Athenian art scene has been remarkably forgiving, open, and receptive to new artistic initiatives. This openness has for the most part produced positive outcomes. It is important to note that the artists who joined us on this journey openly declared the value of their participation. Their voices and practices stand as a testimony to the strength of Athens as a city to be rediscovered again and again.



The group exhibition *15' Kneading*, featuring works by Sara Garcia and Small But Dangers.
Photo by Matina Charalambi.



The screening event *'Leaf - so let me speak as an adam'*. Photo by Matina Charalambi.

ATHENS'S ART SCENE AS AN ECOSYSTEM

Therefore, I feel it is fitting to share a few words about this newly formed ecosystem. A key constituent of this self-reflection is the *Sustainability Is in the Air* programme. For me, it has been a personal accomplishment to be part of a three-year-long European initiative, one that confronted us with challenges we had never previously tackled.

I am left thinking that residencies can endlessly grow, shift, and transform - taking different shapes, undertaking different projects, and becoming springboards for research into a wide spectrum of contemporary concepts that concern us deeply, both as citizens of Europe and as members of local communities. One can only wonder what the new face of the Athenian art scene will look like a few years from now.



Friday Open Studio Event, Lenka Kubelová and Lea Culetto. Photo by Martina Charalambi.

Sustainability, as this programme has shown, is not just a matter of resource management. It is also a means of more effective communication, targeting integration and building common ground for the sharing of mutual concerns. The European margins of such projects are not always clearly justified, and while the consensus on matters of travel, sustainability, and cultural exchange may appear singular, it will inevitably be challenged and redefined.

There is, therefore, much ground still to be covered, even within Europe itself. The programme certainly brought these challenges to the surface. At the same time, it highlighted shared issues rooted in our economic and institutional structures, which – let's face it – are often depressive in their mentality and at times totalitarian in their rigidity.

Therefore, as my fellow residency colleagues will also note, accommodation having become a primary source of income in a production-impooverished Europe has been one of the harshest challenges to overcome.

LESSONS LEARNED: CONTINUITY AND TRANSFORMATION

I want to conclude by returning to the concepts of continuity and transformation. Adaptability is a must – and I believe the answers are often right in front of us. Still, I choose to close by looking back at the contradictions of material, the traps, and the overall heterogeneity of opinions and views. One such contradiction lies in the differing perspectives of residency facilitator and artist, each serving distinct structures and purposes. Yet this heterogeneity should be celebrated, embraced as a subject of learning, for that is what Athens has taught us.

Looking at its materiality, one could imagine novel concepts: 'bastardised' or modernised myths, strange material hybrids, disparate ideas and thoughts, contradictory characters and ways of living. Blocking architectures, daft urban cul-de-sacs, and economic dead ends – all these become the *materia prima*.

Perhaps residencies, too, should be thought of as a kind of ship adrift in this intoxicating ocean of possibilities: a vessel that provides balance, a steady keel over the surface. At times, they may even resemble – in sight if not in spirit – the ghostly silhouette of the *MS Mediterranean Sky*, that abandoned shipwreck which itself has become the source of many incomplete artistic projects.

Augustus Veinoglou
Snehta residency founder and artistic director
29/8/2025, Athens



Team with the artists on an excursion in Eleusis (Small But Dangers and Sara Garcia).
Photo by Augustus Veinoglou.

MATADERO RESIDENCIES ARE IN THE AIR

Space, time and resources are three of the main characteristics of the residencies. They offer artists a way to disconnect from the daily routines and reflect on them. This distance allows them to overcome the productivity-driven mindset that prevails in today's society and to free themselves from the pressure of an immediate exhibition. Residencies are also moments to delve into new research, to experiment, take risks, and even to make mistakes with much greater freedom. They provide opportunities to move around the world, take part in other artistic scenes, and create a richer network of contacts and colleagues with whom to build an artistic career, often in the face of various obstacles.

Matadero's Centre for Artists in Residence (CRA) is a public programme run by Madrid City Council's Department of Culture and Sport, where artists, musicians, educators, and cultural agents coexist. The residencies vary in duration and are organised through open calls in collaboration

with a panel of experts. When the European project, SAiR (Sustainability is in the AiR) began to be designed, CRA was in the midst of a process of internationalisation, with several agreements and residencies already underway with other European programmes in Porto, Marseille, Berlin, and Prague – a framework in which participation in this project made perfect sense.

It also meant adding a thematic layer to the work that had already been developed, focusing on the environment – something that has been amplified through new open



Photo by Fernando Tribiño. Matadero Madrid.

calls for eight Spanish artists who have worked alongside the SAiR residents. Thus, during 2024 and 2025, CRA has been transformed into a space for creation and reflection on issues such as flora, the air we breathe, endangered landscapes, the impact of agricultural models, listening to the oceans, and the supply and composition of the food we eat. All of this has been shared with different professionals and experts – artistic collectives, university professors, curators, gallery owners, art critics – who have accompanied the process.

Another of the most relevant aspects of this project concerns the possibility of sustaining the residents' careers, something essential in the context of Spanish art, over a longer period of time and with stays scheduled well in advance. SAiR has enabled eight artists to develop their projects in very different contexts.

Challenges have also arisen along the way, perhaps one of the most evident being accommodation issues, especially in the case of the two centres without their own facilities. Rising housing prices are not only a challenge for artistic



Photo by Fernando Tribiño. Matadero Madrid.

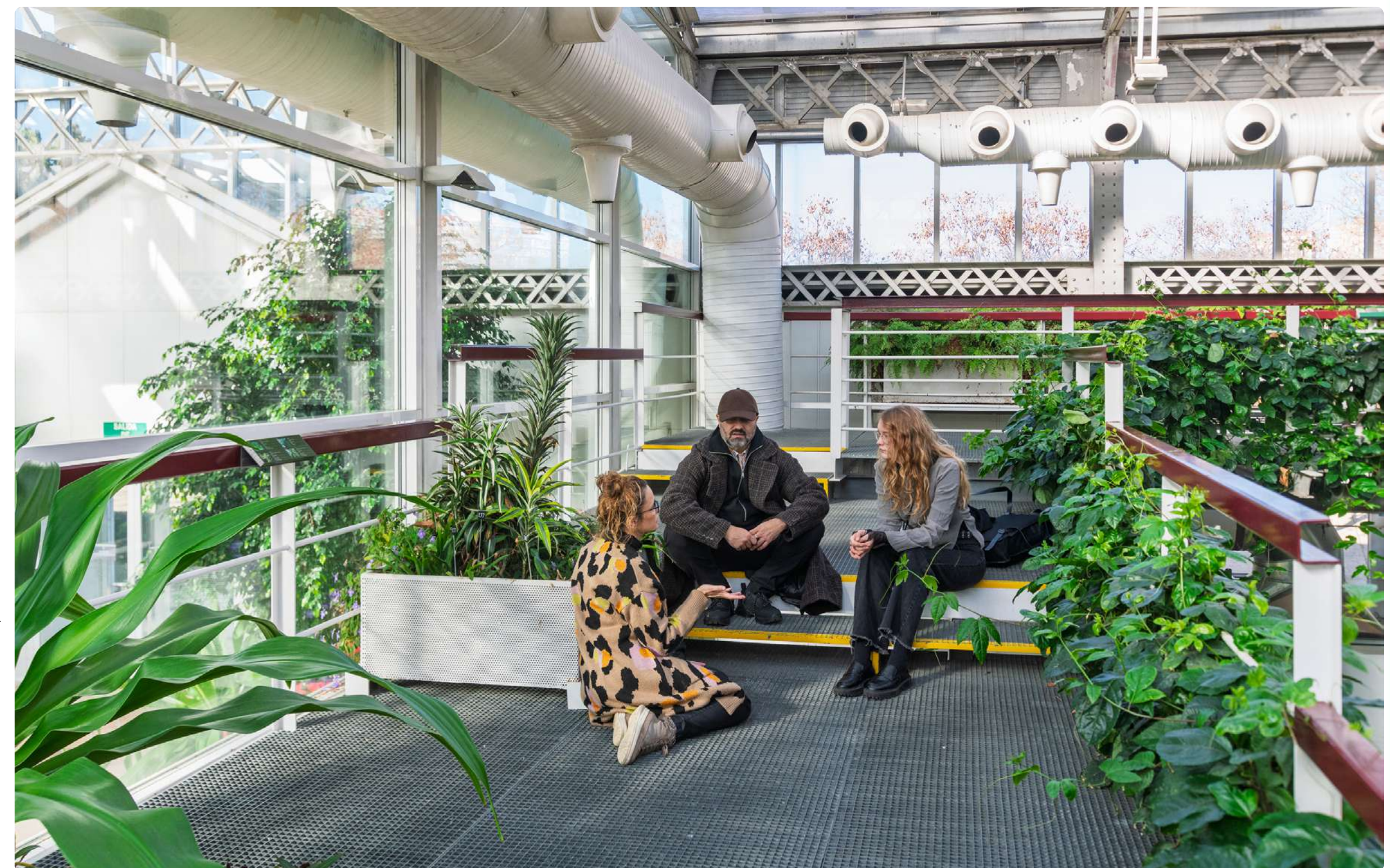


Photo by IDC studio. Matadero Madrid.

institutions today but also for much of Europe. Besides, a closer relationship with the SAiR national artists could have been fostered, as they completed residencies abroad but did not spend quality time within their own hosting residency programme. These are some of the lessons learned for future projects, along with the importance of facilitating more communal moments for the eight participating artists.

Among the other positive aspects were the bonds forged between the four residency programmes. We have shared experiences, difficulties, ways of doing, and models that are quite different yet complementary.

Luisa Espino

Head of Matadero Madrid Centre for Artists in Residence

MEETFACTORY YOU DO YOU: THE SUSTAINABILITY OF METHODS AND LESSONS FROM SAIR

One might say that the pilot phase of *Sustainability is in the AiR* had been tested at MeetFactory within the framework of *Sustainable Studio Practice*, launched in 2020. This residency cycle was designed to create a safe space where artists could develop projects addressing sustainability within artistic practice. These projects were not necessarily about artistic production – in fact, the residency cycle sought those that explored art thinking, offering new ways of imagining how studios might operate in times of climate crisis. What mattered most was the sustainability of the method, not the subject. One of the ambitions was to produce a manual for running a sustainable studio, which we hoped could serve as a model for the future. This never materialised; however, the curated residency gradually and organically transformed into the SAiR project.

Through SAiR, we hosted artists from Spain, Slovenia, and Greece at MeetFactory. As they usually spent two to three months in Prague, I came to recognise that residencies

can only be truly sustainable if they involve enough people, sufficient resources, and – above all – enough time. Residencies function as “time gifts” in economies otherwise dominated by acceleration. Time is what transforms a residency from a brief encounter into a meaningful process: it allows trust to build between the artist and the institution, it makes room for research without the immediate pressure of production, it creates permission to recalibrate and try again, and it lets curators listen rather than simply coordinate.

Short stays of only a few weeks often produce polite exchanges and surface impressions, whereas longer residencies cultivate real entanglement, deeper conversations, and even shifts within the host institution itself. Space, of course, is also important – I increasingly recognise how exceptional MeetFactory’s position is compared to many European residency centres, thanks to our year-round accommodation for international artists. But it is ultimately time – to slow down, to experiment, or just to reconnect with one’s practice – that enables the distance and shift in perspective artists so rarely have access to.

That is why I appreciated the setup of the SAiR programme. Each artist or duo was able to work for three years and spend a total of nine months in three different cities. I believe it gave them a chance to develop their practice without having to worry so much about day-to-day issues (at least during the residencies). Still, I know there were many invisible steps behind the scenes: maintaining or renting

a home, dealing with self-employment paperwork, paying insurance, or juggling other projects and side jobs between residencies. It didn't always go smoothly, and I can imagine how difficult it must have been at times. I hope that the time between the results of the open call and the start of each residency gave the artists enough time to prepare – and that the programme offered something precious: the freedom to focus on their work and let it develop at its own pace. In this sense, SAIR resonates with approaches to slow curating, slow producing, or slow thinking, where duration itself becomes a method, artistic (and maybe even a political) tool.

Yet the capacities and energy of the organisers are, of course, finite. Each year we host more than thirty artists, and SAIR has always unfolded alongside several other residency programmes. This became especially tangible during our conversations with Adrianna Szojda, who supported our four-member team through mediation and helped us name the most pressing challenges we encountered in our work. It was during this process that we began using the motto “You do you” – a phrase that quickly came to embody the ethos of the MeetFactory residencies. For us, it signifies putting relationships and community at the centre rather than



Public House at MeetFactory, in Lea Culetto's studio, 2024. Photo by Richard Hodonicky.



Public House at MeetFactory, in Adrianna Szojda's studio, 2024. Photo by Richard Hodonicky.

predefined artistic outcomes. It means recognising that every artist arrives with different needs: some thrive in solitude, spending long days immersed in their studio practice, while others benefit from closer dialogue, guidance, or even a bit of “hand-holding”. By embracing “You do you”, we acknowledge these diverse ways of working and create space for artists to shape their own rhythm, pace, and depth of engagement. The motto became both a reminder and a commitment: that the residency is not about producing results under pressure, but about cultivating an environment where artists feel free to pursue what genuinely matters to them.

I see SAiR as a learning process that will not conclude with the publication of this manual, a group presentation in Athens, the purchase of the final flight tickets, or the last financial report. For me, the project was never really about carbon prints, but rather about making the outlines and threads of a network of relationships visible – woven from heterogeneous elements, materials, humans, and more-than-human beings – whose connections, I hope, will continue well into the future. If residencies are laboratories, then SAiR was less a lab for artistic objects and more one for rethinking relations: between artists and institutions, between humans and infrastructures, between care and exhaustion, between ecological imaginaries and the stubbornness of daily routines.

Kateřina Pencová

MeetFactory Artist-in-Residence Curator



MeetFactory Public House, 2025. Photo by Kristina Opalkova.

www.s-air.eu

MANUAL POWERED BY MEETFACOTORY O.P.S.
AUTHORS OF THE MANUAL CONCEPT: SAIR PARTNERS
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ILLUSTRATIONS: STONYTELLERS, BURNOUT SPACE, 2025

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MEETFACOTORY IS SUPPORTED IN 2025 BY A GRANT FROM THE CITY OF PRAGUE AMOUNTING TO 12.000.000 CZK.

