

georgiana barcan
project proposal
lens-based media
2021



Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg *The Experiment* (2009)



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Introduction

At the root of my project stands the ecosystem of a garden, one that exists in Romania, in my grandmother's courtyard, where I grew up. The garden is a source of storytelling, where both the imaginary and real meet. It is a cruel, yet naive universe of radical openness, vulgarity, melodrama, grace and love. Through its macro and microscopic creatures, humans and non-humans, it has shaped my identity and understanding of the world. Besides being a whimsical world in which I found solace as a child, it has also developed into an index of metaphors for my real-life experiences. Mothers make love to red mites, candle-flowers light the path, ladders are impossible to climb by humans, letting only plants touch their steps, while I become a lace bug.

I wanted to sketch out how ingrained the notion of 'the wild' is within our childhood reveries, to recognize that we consider children to be close to wildness in a way that adults are not supposed to be.

- Jack Halberstam

What I want to make

The project consists of a form of expanded cinema containing a short central video piece, an installation of mixed media sculptures and an accompanying publication. The project will draw closely on fiction that I have written for the thesis, that itself is an exploration of my grandmother's garden (more information about the writing process can be found in my thesis proposal). The thesis will be printed and included in the installation for visitors to take and read.

In the video, the audience will be able to see representations of the stories that I am writing and the universe I am creating based on speculations about a better ecological future/present as well as recollections of my childhood memories and traumas. The moving image and the sculptures are in dialogue, as I imagine that the space will look as if the characters of my world walked off screen,

beyond the virtual space. Mites will be the same size as flower stems, which will be the same size as humans.

How do you plan to make it?

Before jumping into the making, I plan to take a **research trip** back home, to my grandmother's, and document the elements of the garden that will inspire the stories, film and sculpture. I would like to flip through the tales she read to me as a child and talk to her about gardening and the gathering of medicinal herbs.

Important to my process is writing the "**legsicon**" (term proposed by Laure Provoust which I explained more about in the thesis proposal) and defining the symbolism of my world. From there on I will continue writing the stories in the thesis on which the project is based.

Based on the written stories I will **sculpt** some of the plants in clay and glaze them, giving them a distorted size than the one they have in reality. I will use a variety of materials for different elements in the sculptures such as: metal, textile or wood. I plan to make them in the **WDKA** workshops, some of which I am already familiar with (clay sculpting techniques, carpeting, hand sewing).

The installation will consist of a display of sculptures on soil resembling someone's garden in the courtyard. The audience will be able to walk through the installation as if they would walk through a garden.

At the center of the garden there will be a **video projection** of the characters in the story/garden speaking to the audience and with each other or re-enacting the action in the stories. To represent the creatures in my stories on screen, I will create costumes for the actors to embody the beings through anthropomorphism.

At this point the video piece will consist of:

- Anthropomorphic characters speaking or doing other activities
- Some elements of the installation
- Intricate light and set design (within the possibilities of time & budget)
- Possibly some elements of animation, 3D or stop motion
- Humans
- Costumes
- An original score



costume idea, J. Pieter Kaptein - *the second self-laboratory* (2013)



costume idea, Jack Smith - *Flaming creatures* (1963)



costume idea, unknown



costume idea, unknown

At this point the installation will consist of:

- blown out of proportion ceramic and textile sculptures of plants from the garden, insects, bacteria, and other being from the garden
- a large scale red velvet mite
- a fragile, impossible to climb ladder made out of metal
- grass and soil
- a human skin made out of textile that was shed on the floor
- a small fountain
- maybe jars fermenting different foods [here the emphasis is on the fermentation as a process that defies death].



clay sculpture I made representing a candle flower



xolo cuintle- *Weeping sun* (2020)



Christian Ovesen – *Onkruid* (2021)

Why do you want to make it?

My work was very autobiographical. In the pieces about birth I was trying to reconcile an ambivalent relationship to being here on earth because earth is a difficult place to be sometimes. Individually the pieces are about other things, but I know they're basically about me saying I have to learn to be here.

- Kiki Smith

It is difficult for me not to wake up late in the morning and think that the planet might be inhabitable for humans and non-humans in the foreseeable future. It is a persistent thought that I carry through a lot of the things that I do. I know the future will be quite bleak, but I somehow dream that there

still a way to find kindness and kinship. Through my project, as I am trying to understand my existence in the world, I am asking: Can storytelling encourage and help us find other ways of co-existing with other species?

Can we find ways of writing real inter-species stories without destroying anything in the process?

This project is also a way to preserve the teachings and aura of my grandmother.



Stan Douglas - *der sandmann* (1995)

Who can help you and how?

- I will ask a local ceramic artist, who works in the same studio with Leslie, to give me advice on clay sculpture techniques.
- I would like to approach Tai Shani and ask if she could mentor me through my project. She is a video and installation artists living in the UK, who creates large scale, immersive sculptures which also have an autobiographical element.

- **Renee Turner**: She is currently writing a thesis about her garden, and I would like to speak to her and exchange ideas;
- **Natasha**: <3 fiction writing queen & all my tutors
- **My musician** friends who can compose a score for the film;
- **my grandmother** just by being with and listening to her;



Korakrit Arunanondchai - *Workshop for peace* (2018)

Relation to previous practice

My projects, including my graduation one, usually start outside of myself, from an interest in a specific subject (e.g.: internet cultures, ecology, etc.) and as I delve deeper, I find my **personal story** there.

In the first year of the masters, I created a written and visual autobiographical publication titled “Kid of Internet” about being raised by the developing technological landscape in a post-industrial, derelict town in South-East Romania. In this sense, **storytelling, narration and biography** have become a main theme in my work.

Although **theatre making** is a practice I have not spoken about or actively used since I started the master’s, it plays an important role in what I make (it was one of my main areas of study during my BA). Although I am still unsure about the specific details, the characters of the film will be dressed as or impersonating animals and plants using costume.

Relation to a larger context

At the base of the imaginarium I am creating stands the **Romanian folklore tales and myths** that I am currently revisiting.

In my project I also take inspiration from the recent turn in humanities towards **ecology and ecofeminism**, as well as from older, **non-scientific practices** of understanding nature, discussed by thinkers such as: **Robin Kimmerer, Timothy Morton, Michael Marder, Donna Haraway, Deborah Bird Rose, Val Plumwood, Jane Bennett, my grandmother’s teachings on how to take care of plants.** At this stage looking at and researching other artist’s work dealing with similar ideas is essential to my process. I have been channeling and taking inspiration from artists such as: **Laure Provoust, Kiki Smith, Korakrit Arunanondchai, Derek Jarman, Nathalie Djurberg, xolo cuintle, Christian Ovesen.**

What is your timetable?

November

- Finish writing the “Lexicon”;
- Make possible sketches of the space, draw the characters [I use drawing a method to visualize the position and interaction of the objects in the space before actually making them];
- Start writing the stories;
- Restart the process [which I began last year but stopped over the summer break] of making clay sculptures for the installation

December

- continue writing short stories and giving them to different readers for feedback;
- start scripting [the script will draw heavily of the stories I will write];
- continue making clay sculptures;
- go back to Romania to see my grandmother for inspiration;

January

- start writing the **script** based on the short stories and lexicon;
- work on a storyboard, especially since the film will rely on studio/green screen shots and heavy costume work;
- continue making sculptures [some of them might be props for the film];

February

- make prop, equipment, cast, location, budget, crew lists;

- start filming;

March

- filming;
- making sculptures;

April

- filming;
- editing;
- working on installation elements;

May

- editing: sound, color grading, special effects/animation;
- start trying installation out all together and getting feedback;

June

- assemble entire installation;
- from feedback see if there is anything else that needs improving.

References

Artist:

- Kiki Smith
- Korakrit Arunanondchai
- Nathalie Djurberg
- Nam June Paik
- Derek Jarman
- Stan Douglas
- xolo cuintle
- Jack smith
- Jonas Mekas
- Laure Provoust

Theory:

- Michael Marder - *Chernobyl Herbarium* (2016), *Plant-thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life* (2013)
- Robin Kimmerer - *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013)
- Timothy Morton - *The Ecological Thought* (2010), *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (2016), *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World* (2013)