

mono

curated by Jule Kurbjeweit

PLANT-THINKING  
Anne Büscher, Joana Viveiros, Márcio Vilela,  
Marco Pires, Pedro Vaz, Sanne Vaassen  
16.02.2024 - 01.03.2024

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Photo: photodocumenta



When we ask if plants are conscious or sentient, we essentially ask whether, or to what extent, they are like us: we search for ourselves in them. But could we instead encounter them “on their own turf,” as philosopher Michael Marder suggests – without invading their space? In his book *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life* (2013), plant-thinking is understood as:

*“(1) the non-cognitive, non-ideational, and non-imagistic mode of thinking proper to plants (hence, [...] ‘thinking without the head’); (2) our thinking about plants; (3) how human thinking is, to some extent, de-humanized and rendered plant-like, altered by its encounter with the vegetal world; and finally, (4) the ongoing symbiotic relation between this transfigured thinking and the existence of plants.”*

Such plant-thinking contrasts with the kind of anthropocentric thinking that views the plant-other through the lens of human constructs and questions of utility, where appreciation is a function of serviceability for human use or recreation; and where this very appreciation tends to engender the vegetal other’s appropriation, colonisation and destruction.



Photos: photodocumenta





Sanne Vaassen, *X*, 2021

The delicate aesthetics of Sanne Vaassen's work both hide and reveal layers of complexity, pointing to the non-neutrality of the plant world. *X* (2021) shows seemingly innocent images of flowers that have been subject to colonialism, cultural appropriation, climate change and landscape management for centuries. Far from neutral, images of flowers carry symbolism and cultural-political significance.



Anne Büscher's *Forest Glass* (2022) is a collection of glass pieces that the artist found in a Swedish forest around a former glass factory. Thrown into the forest until the 1960s with the intention to let them become part of nature again, these pieces can be found like pretty stones or crystals and are admired for their beauty. Yet they release poisonous substances into the ground and bear stories of industrial pollution.



Anne Büscher, *Forest Glass*, 2022



Anne Büscher, *Forest Glass*, 2022. Photo: photodocumenta



Joana Viveiros, *Feeding Ground*, 2024. Photo: photodocumenta

What happens when humans and plants enter a relationship of mutual transformation and care?

Exploring the intimate connection her father has with his garden, Joana Viveiros draws attention to the real, tactile, felt dimension of a relationship defined by the acts of planting, nurturing and harvesting. The gardener transforms the garden, and as the fruits are eaten, they nourish the gardener (and his family), transforming him from the inside out. In *Feeding Ground* (2024), banana leaves are transformed into paper, the colour and texture of which resembles the soil to which it will eventually return.



Joana Viveiros, *Feeding Ground*, 2024





The documents that give form to Marco Pires' engagement with landscape are not direct representations of natural spaces. The map is an abstraction and so is the scientific definition of a species; they are tools to grasp (mentally and concretely) the landscapes and beings they describe. But can we know a landscape through its mapping? Can we know a plant through its scientific description? Or do such representations tell us more about ourselves than about the other? The way Marco treats these representations, overdrawing and overpainting them, reveals them as the anthropocentric fictions that they are.



Marco Pires, *Untitled*, 2017 (detail)



Photo: photodocumenta

Marco Pires,  
*Untitled (after vascular plants of the Azores by Ruy Telles Palhinha)*, 2017  
 Acrylic plaster and printing on Fabrian paper  
 74 x 51 cm

Marco Pires,  
*Untitled (Slow Atlas)*, 2019  
 Photo printed on cotton paper (Ed. 1/3 + 1 A.P.)  
 64 x 44 cm

Marco Pires,  
*Untitled*, 2017  
 Graphite on paper  
 58 x 78 cm

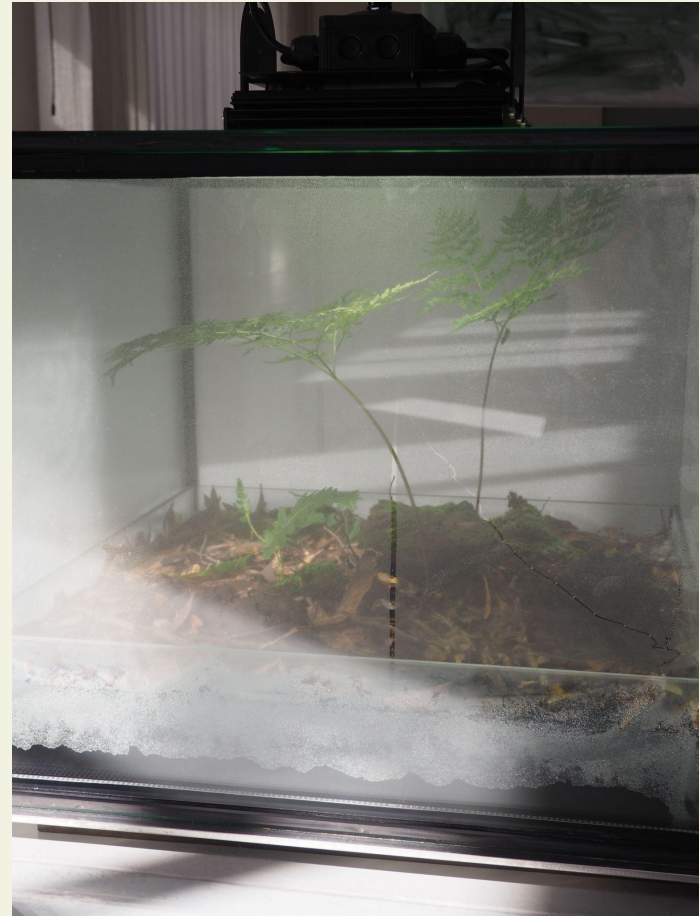


Marco Pires, *Untitled (Atlas)*, 2019. Photos: photodocumenta





The perhaps illusory attempt at comprehending nature (from Latin *comprehendere*, “to grasp”, from the prefix *com-* and *prehendere*, “to seize”) is returned to us in Pedro Vaz’s *Contained Nature* (2021). This artificial ecosystem is composed and confined for the purpose of observation. As the observation draws us in, we realise not only that the object is alive and sentient, but also that, by seizing nature and containing it behind these glass walls, we create a separation between the non-human and ourselves – that by trying to comprehend, we won’t encounter, won’t know it; we will miss it.



Pedro Vaz, *Contained Nature*, 2021



Pedro Vaz, *Contained Nature*, 2021. Photos: photodocumenta





Márcio Vilela's *Superflora* is the result of the artist's immersion in the forest surrounding Recife between December 2020 and April 2021. The work speaks of the artist's encounters while walking through the woods, the niches that 'appear' and 'disappear' according to the light that penetrates the treetops. The plants reveal themselves to the artist and give permission to be photographed, thus becoming subjects.





Tea Ceremony with Anne Büscher

mono

Super Natural Voices  
- Alice dos Reis, Daniel Godínez Nivón, Joana Patrão, Rosanna  
Helena Bach, Solimán López, Yota Ayaan -  
19.04.2024 - 26.04.2024

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Who are the Others? What do they have to say, and where do we meet them?

The group exhibition *Super Natural Voices*, with works by Alice dos Reis, Daniel Godínez Nivón, Joana Patrão, Rosanna Helena Bach, Solimán López and Yota Ayaan, is an invitation to listen to those most alien to us: those on the ground and those from outer space.



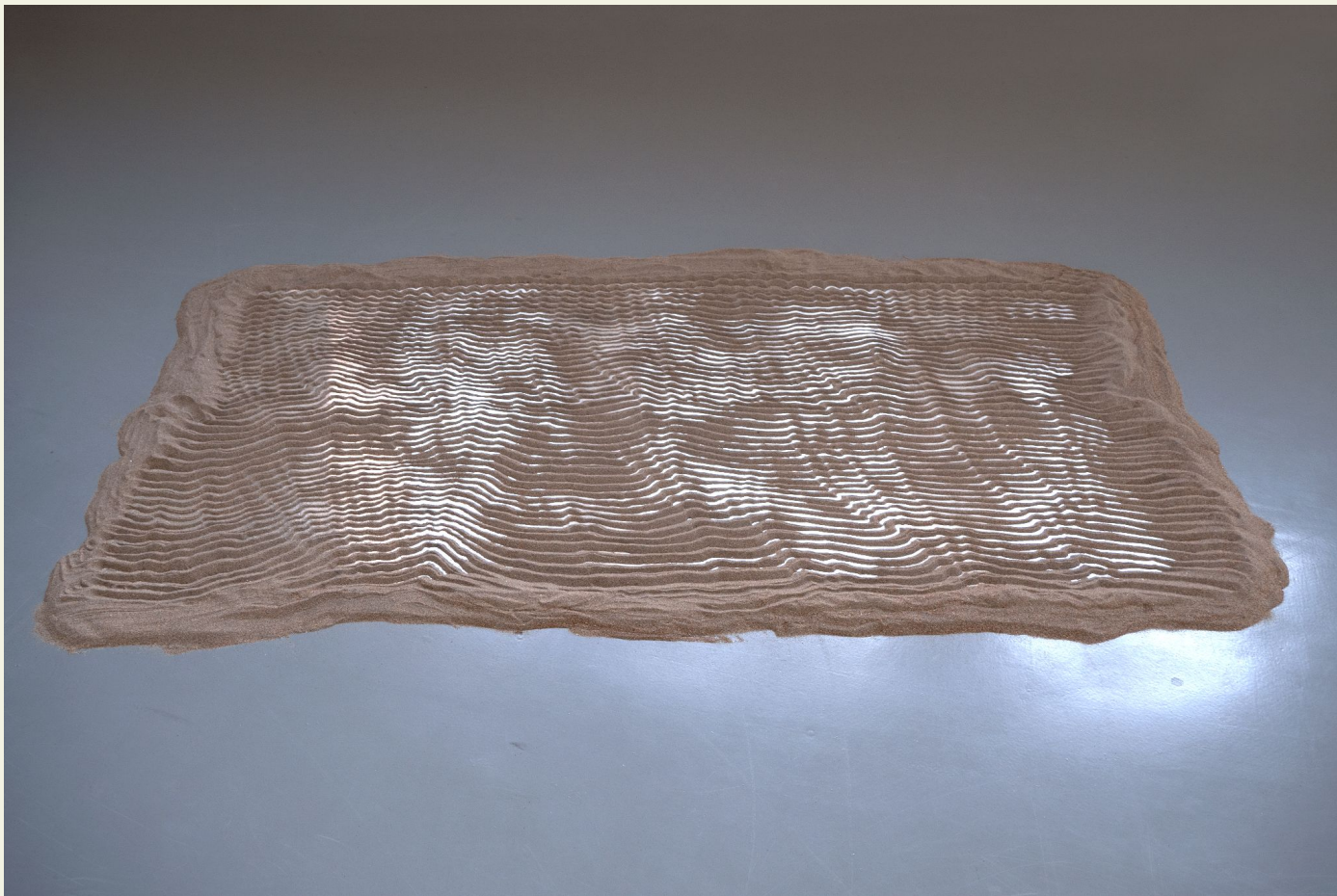




Joana Patrão, *O sopro fóssil* [*The Fossil Breath*], 2022

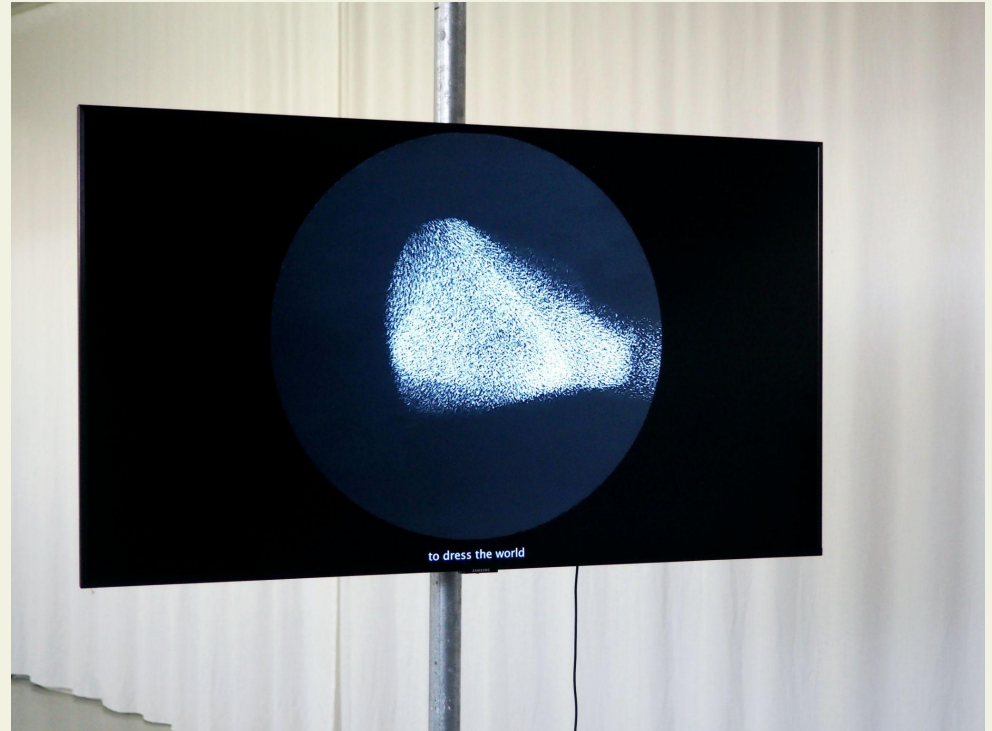


At the beginning were the fossils: beings from other times, solidified in the lioz marble. In Joana Patrão's work *O sopro fóssil* [*The Fossil Breath*] (2022), they become undone, eroded, become sand, the sand of time, of geological time. An echo breathes over the rippled sand and evokes the memory it carries.



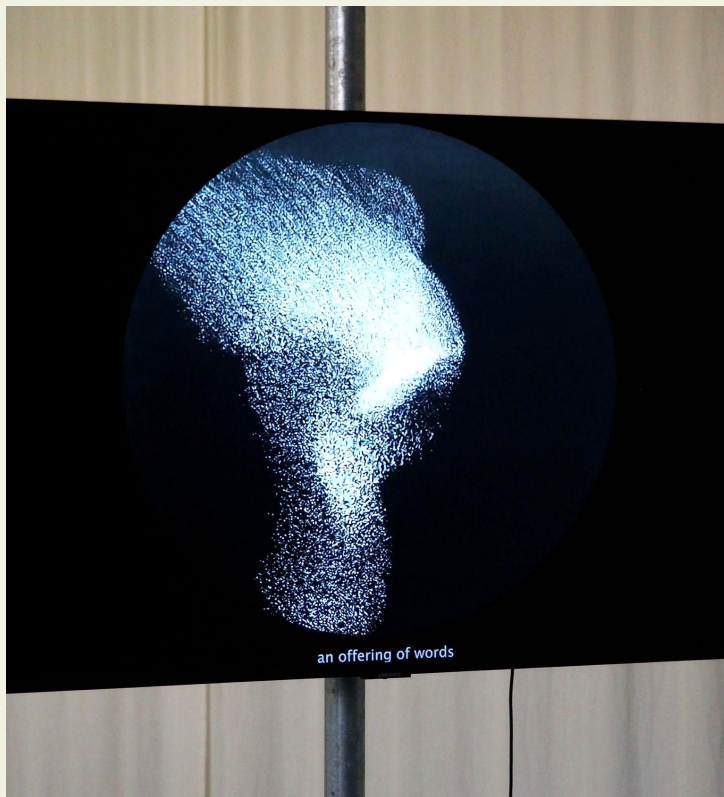
Joana Patrão, *O sopro fóssil* [*The Fossil Breath*], 2022

*Dreamwind* (2022) by Daniel Godínez Nivón is a meditation on the songs of other beings and on collective dreaming. Scientists have found birds that sing in their sleep. What do they sing of at night? And if birds dream, what do they dream of? Might they have nightmares?



Daniel Godínez Nivón, *Dreamwind*, 2022





Daniel Godínez Nivón, *Dreamwind*, 2022

This project adds to the effort, reflections and previous experiences made by artist Adrián Gama and poets Andrés González and Yaxkin Melchy.

Voice and instruments: Ute Wasserman

Voice poem: Amalia Nivón

Music: Fernando Viguera

Edition: Sergio Espinosa

Colour: David Camargo

Poem: Daniel Godínez Nivón

Translation: Sophia Krugman E

Collaborators: Leonie Cornips, Frank Selten, Pim Martens, Peter Albas and Chris Thomas.

Advisers: Sueli Brodin, Adrián Gama, Andrés González, Yaxkin Melchy, Félix Blume and Rossana Lara.

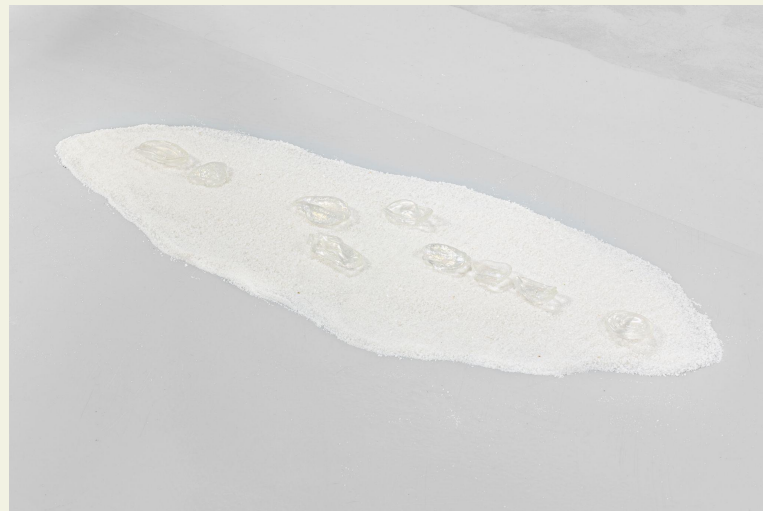
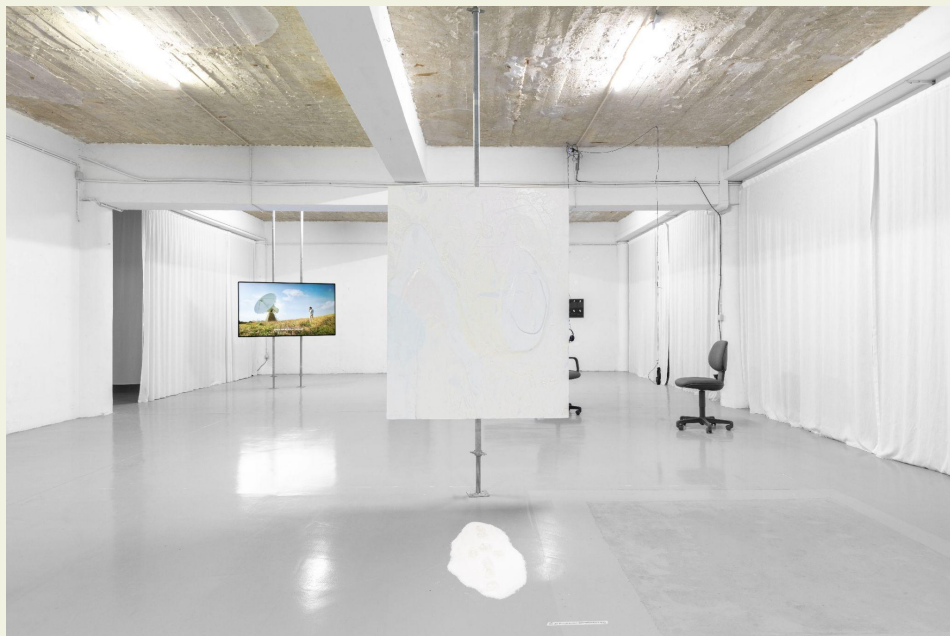
Text by Amanda Saroff

Project made during residency at Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, Netherlands

Listening is internal in Rosanna Helena Bach's *Maps of Meaning IV* (2024). White, in her painting, is anything but an absence; and silence is charged with presence. On a bed of salt, glass objects, like translucent shells in the sand, invite the visitor to touch, engage, listen.



Rosanna Helena Bach, *Maps of Meaning IV*, 2024



Rosanna Helena Bach, *Maps of Meaning IV*, 2024. Photos: Samuel Duarte



For the present exhibition, artist Yota Ayaan asked a clairaudient medium to listen to the 'unseen,' speaking to a future artwork. *Reading* (2024) is based on the resulting transcript, transmitted through headphones that hang down from above. A poem of sorts.

The sound work features voices of Šalnė Bučiūtė, Francisca Sousa Soares and João Jantarada and was produced in collaboration with Francisco Pedro Oliveira.



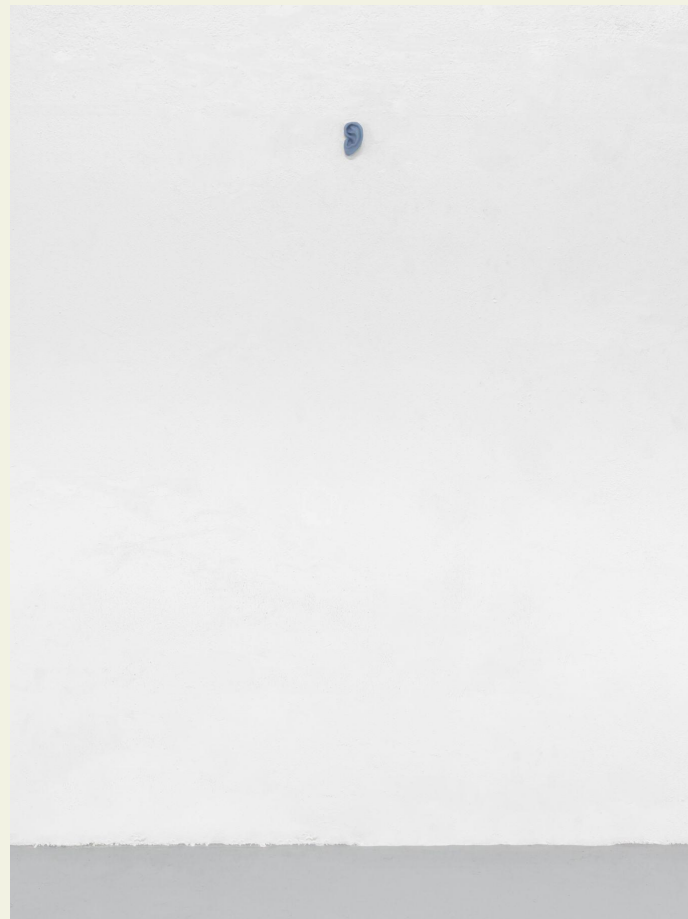
Yota Ayaan, *Reading*, 2024. Photo: Samuel Duarte



Yota Ayaan, *Reading*, 2024. Photo: Samuel Duarte

000	Strands strings many voices
1:23	New horizons
3:33	Interconnected harmonies notes, numbers, happenings
4:44	Together beyond time
1:17	Mystery surrounds us
22	I am
999	Time waits for no one
00:12	Empty places
007	Voices of reason
11	Aspects of truth
11:08	Unifying pieces
3:47	Changing timelines
9:13	Resting in wisdom free in truth
00:13	Storms shift new landscapes
222	Only just beginning
2:28	Great wheels new cycles
11:11	Clarity is gardienné filling air
1:47	Together piece-by-piece unity calling
10:10	Faith trust love moving oceans
888	Still
12:13	Unseen strands of gold the sun
1:55	Never lost always somewhere
0	Threads of mystery
10	Whole complete unfolding
00:01	Who am I
777	Signs symbols synchronicity
5:55	Masking self
666	Pure ones illumination
33	Peace
11:25	Completion

The *Manifesto Terricola* (2023) by Solimán López is an artistic document, which presents information on the current situation of humanity. The document assumes a particular materiality, being stored in DNA and encapsulated in biodegradable 3D ear produced for preservation in the Svalbard Island in the Arctic.



Solimán López, *Manifesto Terricola (Replica)*, 2023. Photo: Samuel Duarte





Solimán López, *Manifesto Terricola (Revealing)*, 2023. Photo: Samuel Duarte



Alice dos Reis, *See You Later Space Island*, 2022

The film *See You Later Space Island* (2022) by Alice dos Reis is a narrative-ish work of science fiction that tells the story of a friendship. Set on the Azorean island of Santa Maria, an astrophysicist's space investigation brings the vast distance of exoplanets into seeming proximity to the island's geology.

Stó:lō/Xwélmexw artist, curator and writer Dylan Robinson describes certain indigenous listening practices that are about feeling at least as much as about hearing. He makes reference to “the importance of listening with ‘three ears: two on the sides of our head and the one that is in our heart’” – a hearing-feeling. If listening is not only hearing but also feeling, then our deafness to many others is not only a question of hearing capacity and frequency ranges but also one of feeling capacity, of attention, attitude and sensitivity.

To speak is to affirm one’s subjecthood and sovereignty. To listen is to allow and desire the other’s existence and expression. What have we failed to hear, and what can we perceive when we expand the capacity of our hearing-feeling, our sensitivity towards others and aliens of different kinds?



Photo: Samuel Duarte

# SUPERNATURAL NATURAL

Text by Inês Ferreira-Norman

Super natural voices are those who whisper the majestic in the intricacy of nature's relationships. Choosing to see those relationships in a world of capital imperialism that values individualism, egotism, and violent responses to community making is an act of *superness*.

Feeling the super natural is to let yourself be invaded by the grandiose of Nature, an inflated sense of normalcy by the sheer force of what is living, or exists, in *fractal* scales: atoms on a microscale and galaxies at a cosmological level. However, acknowledging the supernatural is seen as laughable and farcical. How can super natural and supernatural mingle and intertwine?

'Super' is defined by the Oxford Concise Dictionary as a combining form that means above, over, beyond, to a great or extreme degree, extra-large, of having greater influence or capacity than another of its kind, or a higher kind. Super is that which we admire, that which we consider above our standing. For once, I can see a glimpse of humbleness in our relationship with nature, by calling certain phenomena supernatural. Why a biased taxonomy though? Why should our unknowledge of the novelties of the deep sea or of galaxies far away be more super than the ant who carries twenty times their weight or the wind that scatters seeds everywhere? Why should the unseen living be more super than that we can touch with our eyes?



We need to have ways of discerning, but where does that end and where does discrimination and supremacy begin? In an era where we are redefining our relationship with nature in profound ways, trying to re-place ourselves within the natural world, redefining what actually is the natural world by definition, should we be looking at any phenomena around us as super natural at all? If we are to consider that what we produce is natural on the one hand, shouldn't we be giving allowances at the other end of the spectrum in order to consider that what is beyond our empirical reality is natural as well?

The existence of a spiritual world in Nature, secularly denominated as life force, is a fact that is still embedded in a taxonomy of belief systems. If only seven percent of the world population (560 000 000 people) is estimated to be agnostic and/or atheist (project sociologists Ariela Keysar and Juhem Navarro-Rivera), how can the supernatural be considered a belief that can be disbelieved? Indigenous peoples from all over the world, from Mongolia to the Amazon, can tell you otherwise: that nature is not solely secular, and that it carries a mystical dimension. It has been the silencing of First-Nation voices en par with the secularisation of Nature, the reinforcement of our expulsion from the Garden of Eden and the separation of the forces of life from a holistic whole, that have particularly impacted our living and existence as a society. The acknowledgment of Nature's divinity has been a taboo, and I would argue that calling it supernatural is not congruous with its own nature.



Solimán López, *Manifesto Terricola (Replica)*, 2023. Photo: Samuel Duarte



Yota Ayaan, *Reading*, 2024

It would be comforting to know that 7 440 000 000 people are believers in the supernatural, if we acted our beliefs wholesomely. Instead, we get stuck on the details of what divides us, and not in what brings us together. Not that it is carried out behaviour, but what brings us together is the natural world in which we live in, and which makes our lives a shared experience. We all have to deal with the forces of nature, we all have to deal with the climate even if there are stark differences throughout the globe, we all have to deal with gravity, death, loss and illness, the emotions we feel, learning and growing, with the rain, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the soil we step on and that we must eat and shelter to survive. These fundamental tenets have been studied in the form of sciences, geology, biology, psychology, hydrology, and countless other -ologies; but before this systematisation, there were other systematisations which included occult realms and journeys into a world in which neither human, or plant or animal is super. In a place of timelessness, of compassion and utter ontological intangibility, hierarchical relations are meaningless.

Contrastingly, in a world of matter and egos, we seek out comparisons that promote violence and decadence, the decline of large-scale well-being and harmonious values. I see that it's possible to reconcile the intangibility of the divine, with the fact that we need tools, technological ones, to see beyond what was 'naturally' given to us to peruse the universe, or our own body even. I speak of microscopes and telescopes for example.

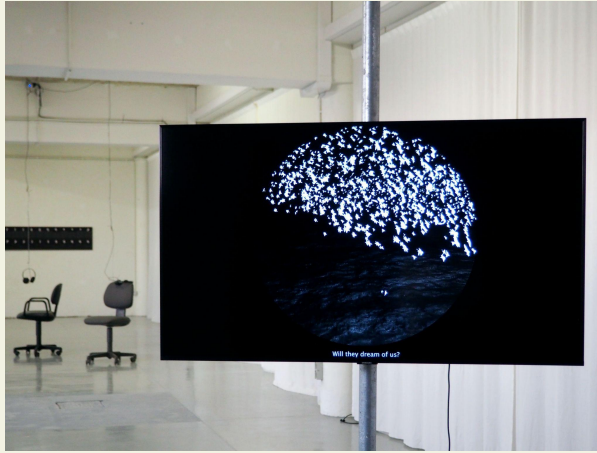
Only with these, are we able to see beyond what we naturally see. How is a planet different from bird song, or Zeus? They are all invisible aspects of our lives: say Jupiter, up there in the Solar System, which in its turn is in the Milky Way, is only visible to a group of people, who own or have access to telescopes; bird song is not visible, so our auditive perception verifies its existence, and that is only perceptible to those who are able-bodied; Zeus is a mythological god that has a role in the story of the creation of the world, most relevant to the people who lived in the context of Greek culture. They exist as much as nature spirits exist. Our world is made of truths that are perceptible in groups of people, and more frequently than not, they all include immaterial, intangible, ethereal aspects to them.

Science has been for many years in search for the world's creation story from a material point of view, where physics and matter tell that one story. Culture tells us another story. These stories we tell, from different experiences, different times and spaces, don't have to be incompatible while different. The idea of a being that is half-human and half something else (from mermaids, to centaurs, to Merlin or Jesus for example) is as old as time immemorial. With the current CRISP technologies available, it is only a matter of an ethical framework lenient enough for design babies to become ubiquitous. What is then the difference between a being that is half 'natural' and half 'synthetised' and Jesus who was half the son of Mary and the other half the son of God?



Alice dos Reis, *See You Later Space Island*, 2022

Daniel Godínez Nivón, *Dreamwind*, 2022



Joana Patrão, *O sopra fôssil*, 2022



They both contain a half that is created to justify our existence, in essence, stories that we tell ourselves that we believe we need for us to thrive.

The Oxford Concise Dictionary defines supernatural as ‘(of a manifestation or event) attributed to some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature; unnaturally or extraordinarily great’, but I would argue that something that is supernatural cannot be attributed to anything beyond the laws of its very own existence. For anything to be supernatural, it must contain natural. And then some! It’s an extension, expansion, multiplication of what natural encompasses and not something outside its ontologies. Supernatural is natural.

We are natural, therefore we too are supernatural. There is no need to separate and secularise a relationship that is wholesomely divine. In times of a paradigm shift, when apocalyptic nuances cloud our political and societal spectrum, the role of Nature is paramount as a reference to what *superness* can be: a recognition that the systems we live in include the supernatural, which is inspired by the super natural, but that needs to be integrated as just natural. Something extraordinarily great to strive towards.

Inês Ferreira-Norman  
30 May 2024



Jule Kurbjeweit  
[jule.kurbjeweit@gmail.com](mailto:jule.kurbjeweit@gmail.com)

mono Lisboa  
Rua Feio Terenas 31A, 1170-176 Lisbon  
[info@monolisboa.com](mailto:info@monolisboa.com)