

SPECIAL ISSUE

THE GATHERERS:
GREENING OUR URBAN SPHERES



FALLEN FRUIT, *ELYSIAN PARK*, 2005

YBCA IMAGINES THE FUTURE WITH AN EXHIBITION THAT EXAMINES
GRASSROOTS ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM FOR URBAN POPULATIONS



#1 BAY AREA NOW 5

#2 IMAGINING OUR FUTURE

#4 RITUAL & REDEMPTION

BIG IDEA #2

In the midst of an ever-changing world, we wonder about what the future holds and what we can create to make our lives more enriching. Artists help us to imagine a future that is as complex, rich and challenging as the present, but also one that may surprise and even startle us. We've brought together a group of artists whose visions of who we are, the kind of world we have created, and what our future could be within it are thought-provoking and often profoundly moving. The metaphorical power of art to help us imagine the unknowable is at the heart of their work. Like us, these artists are driven by a sense of urgency about our future.

Curating around these Big Ideas allows us to draw connections and associations between the works and the art forms. We hope it will help you do the same. An expanded series of public programs this season are designed to get us talking about art, ideas, the world today and about what these artists are trying to tell us.

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CURATORS

BERIN GOLONU
VERONICA WIMAN

ARTISTS

FALLEN FRUIT (Los Angeles)
AMY FRANCESCHINI (San Francisco)
w/ WILSON DIAZ (Cali, Colombia)
THE NATIONAL BITTER MELON COUNCIL (Boston)
ODA PROJESI (Istanbul)
MARJETICA POTRC (Ljubljana/Berlin)
PUBLIC MATTERS (Los Angeles)
TED PURVES & SUSANNE COCKRELL (Oakland)
REBAR (San Francisco)
ÅSA SONJASDOTTER (Tromsø/Berlin)
ROOMSERVICES (Istanbul/Stockholm)

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DESIGN

CRYSTAL AM NELSON



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LETTER FROM THE CURATORS

The Gatherers looks at a diverse array of artists and their motivations for greening the urban sphere. What ties their work together is a combined interest in using cultural production and activism to investigate issues of sustainability in urban habitats. These artists often work in collaboration with other activists and grass-roots organizations to examine a broad range of interlinking matters, from environmental issues to biodiversity to urban spatial justice.

Concerns and topics vary, from a study of how green pockets of public and private space can develop in urban locales, to experiments in urban agriculture, to architectural prototypes for cities recovering from environmental disaster, to an investigation of how low-income urban dwellers

find affordable sources of high-quality nutrition. *The Gatherers* brings together practitioners from various cultures to examine how different urban populations address interlinking concerns around sustainability around the globe. This publication includes a collection of articles, interviews, plant growing tips, project descriptions and exhibition materials written by the artists who hope to inspire public action and responsible cultural production by visitors to the exhibition.

~Berin Golonu and Veronica Wiman

The curators would like to acknowledge The Gatherers artists, Julia Calderon, Gokcen Erguven, Aaron Terry and Irene Tsatsos for their help, guidance and support with this project.

YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

YBCA presents a full calendar of upcoming, exhibition-related Public Programs. Learn to make your own jam, join a conversation with featured artists about sustainability and green activism in your neighborhood or embark on exciting tours of local neighborhoods.

Click www.YBCA.org/programs for more info.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

PUBLIC FRUIT JAM
Sat, Nov 1, noon–5 pm // YAAW Lounge // FREE
Bring your own fresh fruit and clean jars and learn to make jam with the collective Fallen Fruit. **Limited capacity.**

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE GREEN?
Tue, Nov 11, 6 pm // Grand Lobby // FREE
A lively public conversation exploring the complexity and contradictions around greening urban environments. Panelists include Matthew & Terces Englehart, Founders, Café Gratitude; Lynda Grose, Eco-fashion Instructor, California College of the Arts; Eliza Thomas, Editorial Director for *Common Ground Magazine*/Lime Network; and Casey Harve, *Slow Food Nation Jam* curator; and Nwamaka “Maka” Agbo, Ella Baker Center’s Green Jobs Corps.

OFF-SITE TOURS

A SALT APOLOGY
Sun, Nov 2, 2 pm // Tour begins in Terrace Galleries // FREE
A South of Market Neighborhood walk hosted by the National Bitter Melon Council (NBMC) and South of Market Community Action Network (SOMCAN). **Limited capacity.**

BUSHWAFFLE TOUR
Sat, Nov 8, 2008 & Wed, Jan 7, 2009, noon // Tour begins in Grand Lobby // FREE
Rebar hosts a public tour with Bushwaffle, a modular inflatable outdoor furniture piece, demonstrating the power of Bushwaffle to soften any urban surface and provide space for freedom and play. **Limited capacity.**

ARTISTS InSIGHT

FALLEN FRUIT
Sun, Nov 2; Fri, Nov 7 & Sat, Nov 8, noon to 5 PM // Gallery 3 // FREE w/ gallery admission
Conversation with the collective Fallen Fruit about their *History of Colonial Fruit* project.

JOHN BELA
Thu, Nov 13, 6:30 pm // Gallery 3 // FREE w/ gallery admission
Talk with John Bela, designer of the Civic Center Victory Garden.

AMY FRANCESCHINI, KEVIN DREW, BOB BESSO, TED PURVES, SUSANNE COCKRELL AND THE MY VILLAGES COLLECTIVE
Thu, Nov 20, 6:30 pm // Gallery 3 // FREE w/ gallery admission
Conversation between artists Amy Franceschini, Kevin Drew, Bob Besso, Ted Purves, Susanne Cockrell, the My Villages collective and gallery visitors.

PUBLIC MATTERS COLLECTIVE W/ THE HEALTHY EATING ACTIVE COMMUNITIES (HEAC) YOUTH AMBASSADORS
Sat, Nov 22, 2 pm // Gallery 3 // FREE w/ gallery admission
The Public Matters collective in conversation with the Healthy Eating Active Communities (HEAC) Youth Ambassadors from Los Angeles about their efforts to combat urban “food deserts” with “Market Makeovers.”

TED PURVES AND SUSANNE COCKRELL
Sat, Nov 22, noon–5 pm // Terrace Galleries // FREE w/ gallery admission
Artists Ted Purves and Susanne Cockrell conduct interviews with gallery visitors for their project, *My Meadow Network*.

AMY FRANCESCHINI WITH WILSON DIAZ
Wed, Dec 3, 8 PM // A.T.A @ 992 Valencia St // \$6 at the door
Artists Amy Franceschini and Wilson Diaz discuss their collaboration, the *Movement of the Liberation of the Coca Plant*.

THE GATHERERS ARTISTS AND YOU
Thu, Jan 8, 6:30 PM // Gallery 3 // FREE w/ gallery admission
Conversation between *The Gatherers* artists and gallery visitors, hosted by artists Ted Purves and Susanne Cockrell.

★ WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA??
SAT, JAN 31, 2009, 8 PM–MIDNIGHT // FREE
Looking for something different to do on Saturday night? YBCA offers an evening of music, entertainment, films, gallery tours, conversations with artists and snacks for FREE! Cash bar also available. You can't afford to stay home!

Tickets are still required for events as FREE. Call the YBCA Box Office for information: 415.978.ARTS.

THE WORLD

DISPATCHES FROM COLOMBIA

THE GARDENER

By Wilson Diaz

ONE OF THE most problematic factors in Colombia amidst globalization is the paradoxical relationship between production and consumption. Countries such as Colombia, which are economically depressed and easily exploitable (due to cheap labor and equally cheap land), turn out to be suitable for production. In the land of the so-called “War on Drugs” led by North America, this polarization has created an explosive military, injustice and isolation. In order to eradicate illicit crops, the Colombian government has decided to attack nature, farmers, natives and the rural countryside with the use of poisons like Roundup Ultra which contaminate ground, air, water and food supplies, annihilate orchards, animals and fish, and destroy biodiversity in both flora and fauna. In 2000, when Plan Colombia began, the US Congress recommended the use of the Fusarium fungus to eradicate cocaine crops in Colombia. This caused an international debate on the uses of a biological agent of this nature that would violate the world-wide prohibition of biological weapons and bring unforeseeable consequences for agriculture, ecosystems and human health. In December 2006, the American Congress authorized tests with *mycoherbicidas* destined to eradicate cocaine cultures.

The coca plant, known by the natives as Hayo, Jayo, Maase, Hibianga, etc., goes by the scientific name *Erythroxylon Novograntense*, which reveals its colonial past and its relationship to the territory of the *Virreinato de Nueva Granada* (the Great Colombia). According to the observations of chroniclers and Spanish conquerors, the cocaine culture is the most important farming culture of equinoctial America. The coca plant, consumed over centuries by some South American natives, was used in exceptional form by pre-Columbian cultures in rituals, for war or on long marches. It is still used in Colombia by indigenous communities in a traditional way. It is also part of the culture of the common Colombian people because of its specific use as a natural medicine. It is a plant that represents a powerful historical, political, economical, social, geographical, natural and symbolic complexity.

Because of the all-out attack on nature to eradicate

cocaine plants in Colombia, it is, in my opinion, necessary to save and preserve this plant. As a result, I have developed projects that, in different ways, attempt to conserve the plant in my home nation of Colombia. Coca comes from a seed-bearing tree that produces fruit every three and a half months. Below is a manual of how to sow cocaine seeds and prune the cocaine hedge.

Note: *In Colombia there are two kinds of cocaine plants: one, popularly known as Pajaita, which reproduces by seed and the second, popularly known as Peruana, which reproduces from plant cuttings. The Pajarita is superior as an ornamental plant because of its magnificent green color, whereas the Peruana is a dark and opaque green plant.*

Sowing the cocaine seeds:

- Collect ripe seeds that are an intense red color and leave them under the sun for three or four days; then plant them.
- Cover the bottom of the seed tray or container with pieces of flowerpots for drainage and fill it with soil up to one centimeter from the top.
- Level the mixture. If it is too loose, compress it smoothly. Do not do this if the soil mixture is of the Turba type.
- Thoroughly water the soil mixture and allow it to drain before planting.
- Plant a few seeds uniformly. Cover the seed with a layer of soil mixture of the same thickness.
- Cover the seed tray with a crystal laminate to keep it humid. Daily, dry the bottom of the crystal of any condensation and water the seeds as needed with a fine spray.
- Keep the seed trays away from sunlight; cover them with newspaper until seedlings appear. Then leave them in total light (but not directly under the sun).
- Remove the crystal a few days after the seeds germinate.
- When the seedlings are big enough to be handled without being damaged, transplant them into individual bags, small flowerpots or collective containers and water thoroughly.
- If seedlings are transplanted into collective containers they shouldn’t be piled up; plant them with a minimum separation of six.

- Allow the seedlings to grow with heat and good light until they are robust young plants. Then transplant them to a permanent location outside.

Pruning the cocaine shrub:

- To prune the branches, always make the cut over a leaf bud from which a new bud will grow. Do not prune it too close nor too far from the leaf bud.
- Make the cut slanted downwards from the leaf bud. Always use a sharp knife or mower so that the branch does not rip. If the shrub is big, prune it with a saw.
- Cover the cuts made on branches or thick stems with paint used to protect the tree against diseases and rotting.
- In the pruning process, the plants can be trained into different shapes, such as shrub, foot semi-tall or tall, palmeta or pyramid.
- Tall plants may need supports to keep their shape, and it could be necessary to tie the stems to canes or wires to keep them in the right direction (in the most complex designs it is necessary to guide the branches into the desired positions to obtain the basic shape over several years before cutting it again).
- Most of the shrubs require pruning on an annual basis. Young plants should be pruned slightly, if they are pruned at all.
- Remove weak and damaged stems, then prune the plant the way you like.

Wilson Diaz is an artist living and working in Cali, Colombia.

NOTES FROM SCANDINAVIA

LEARNING FROM A POTATO PERSPECTIVE

By Åsa Sonjasdotter



ASA SONJASDOTTER, DOCUMENTATION OF *POTATO PERSPECTIVE* PLANTINGS, 2008

IN THE SPRING of 2005, I started to grow a traditional species of potato on Ven, situated in Øresund between Sweden and Denmark. None of the species I planted are on the EU’s list of potato varieties, meaning that cultivating them commercially was illegal, although I didn’t know this at that time.

Cultivating potatoes was, for me, a way to transform and develop experiences I had had through meetings with farming women in India. During the fall of 2004, I had been in India to visit Navdanya (www.navdanya.org), an organic farmer’s organization structured around a biodiversity center at the foot of the Himalayas. These farmers collect, develop and share locally bred species of rice, wheat and beans from season to season,

which is the traditional way of keeping and developing sustainable agriculture all over the world.

In recent decades, Indian farmers have been under pressure to enter commercial farming through The Green Revolution, a program supported by governmental and corporate entities. The farmers of Navdanya have taken a stand against the program and have organized themselves to fight for a non-commercial and non-chemical future in their villages.

I wanted to transfer this experience to the culture and environment back in Scandinavia where I live. I thought the potato would be a comparative basic staple product for the region, so I collected some old species of potato to plant. Soon though, I learned that these potatoes had a different story to tell. I had never actually considered the fact that the potato originated in South America. For me, potatoes were a popular, basic staple that everyone grew in their garden to eat at all times—I thought it was just typical, traditional Scandinavian food until I learned that the potato is, in fact, a colonial treasure from the European invasion of the Americas.

But not only is the potato a global migrant well adapted to the various cultures that have embraced it, it’s also governed by global trade agreements and laws regarding genetics and registration. The descendants of the wild plant from the Andean mountains that I grew turned out to be potential criminal goods. Local farmers in Scandinavia had developed this old species from the time it arrived here from America. Today these old-fashioned varieties face restrictions imposed by the registration regulations of the EU. Most of them are forbidden to be grown commercially, because no one wants to register them and if you are not a registered potato in the EU, you are an illegal potato.

So, from this potato perspective, I found a very different, but at the same time clearly connected situation in Scandinavia compared to the ones of the Navdanya farmers in India or the potato farmers in the Andes.

For information on efforts to sustain potato diversity in South America, one can read about the Association of the Communities of the Potato Park in Písaq and the Quechua-Aymara Association for Nature and Sustainable Development (ANDES) at www.andes.org.pe.

Åsa Sonjasdotter is a visual artist born in Sweden, based in Tromsø, Norway and in Berlin, Germany. She is professor a of contemporary fine art at The University College of Tromsø, Norway. Sonjasdotter’s projects function as social forums linked to a specific site, in which the artist herself often acts and interacts with the subjects involved.

THE WORLD

FROM THE CITY ON SEVEN HILLS

THE HANGING GARDENS OF BABYLON RECREATED IN ISTANBUL

By roomservices

THE HANGING GARDENS project revisits the legendary Hanging Gardens of Babylon by implementing a small, household version of them in contemporary Istanbul. The scope of the project stretches from large-scale visions and political proposals, to the development of a methodology for simple DIY intervention on a smaller scale. The project's aim is to increase the green quality of the urban environment, resist passivity and encourage individual food production. It is a "sustainable" project meant to create deep and systemic changes in people's ways of thinking, living and producing their livelihood, as well as in the local environment.



Traffic pollution due to food transport

Small step: localize production.

Electricity shortage in summer due to air conditioning

Small step: cool the cityscape and façades with greens.

Summer water shortage

Small step: irrigate vegetables with gray water and water from air-conditioning units.

The Hanging Gardens project engages in several experiments in high-rise horticulture, from growing in compost compound soil to total soil-less gardening (hydroponics), and focuses on easy DIY approaches to recycling waste from average households. Experiments in vertical gardening that use rock wool and PVC felt to grow plants onto the building façade will also be undertaken. This type of gardening not only generates a greener urban environment, it also provides a way to add shade and insulation to Turkish homes. The entire project will be documented in a small booklet, in both English and Turkish, which provides simple step-by-step methods for easy implementation that both inspire social learning and enhance agricultural capabilities.

roomservices is the collaboration of Evren Uzer and Otto von Busch on practical research projects that transgress the borders between urbanity, social reorganization, design co-location, applied socio-geography and social and entrepreneurial art work. The projects they make together as roomservices reflect their diverse backgrounds and interests, as well as their shared inquisitiveness for experimenting with tools and techniques that provide a different viewpoint or just celebrate the differences in everyday life. Otto von Busch is an artist and designer based in Goteborg where he is currently working on his PhD with a concentration in social and subconstructive design. Based in Istanbul, Evren Uzer is an urban planner and a PhD candidate working on community participation and risk mitigation.

PLEASE DON'T STEP ON THE GREEN

By Oda Projesi

WE PASS and we witness the “green” that has been somehow spread around the city of Istanbul—the fields in the heart of the city; the little gardens on the balconies of the apartments; the women who pick nettle on the green banks of the highways; the fig tree that grows on the roof of a house; the cemeteries and the military parks that are the greenest parts of the city; the gypsies who sell flowers on the streets; the tomatoes that were planted to grow in a useless boat; the gardens of the shantytowns; the small, organized patches of green in the city’s new gated communities; the parks that have been newly planted on top of the landfills that stretch into the sea. While observing these appearances, we see contradictory uses of urban public space, from official efforts to green the city, to anarchist green stories. We have identified these green sites around Istanbul and organized them into a guide, which takes form as a series of postcards, each describing one of 50 green sites. The guide can also be downloaded at <http://yeskiller.blogspot.com/>.

Oda Projesi is the three person collective of Özge Acikkol, Gunes Savas, and Secil Yersel. Oda has been experimenting with alternative ways of using and producing space, by either creating “the collective game” or trying to find it in the already existent daily life. Istanbul is the main starting point in each and every project, no matter where it takes place. The collective adapts the daily life of the city to its tactics and strategies.

COMING TO YBCA'S ROOM FOR BIG IDEAS



SLOW

FOOD

NATION

OPENS FRI, DEC 5, 2008!

YBCA is proud to feature the art and activism of Slow Food Nation, a nonprofit subsidiary of Slow Food USA, in the Room for Big Ideas (RBI). Slow Food Nation organizes events to introduce the community to issues in the food system and the need to bring more citizens good, clean and fair food. Learn and experience how to build community through the promotion of sustainable and holistic food systems in which aspects of human culture such as music, art and dance are integrated with the agricultural arts of food production, the environment and human wellness and culture.

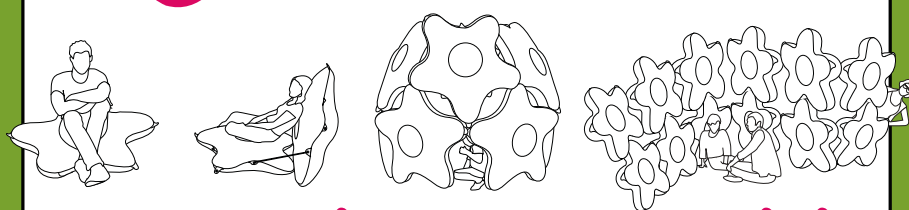
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THE WORLD

ALONG THE MANZANARES

SHEPHERDING SOVEREIGNTY

By Amy Franceschini



“The current industrialized agribusiness model has been deliberately planned for the complete vertical integration and to dominate all agriculture activities. This model exploits workers and concentrates economic and political power. We need a decentralized model where production, processing, distribution and consumption are controlled by the people the communities themselves and not by transnational corporations.”
—La Via Campesina 1

IN SEPTEMBER 2007, a flood of sheep and shepherds from 32 countries traversed across the city of Madrid. Before entering the city, the sheep gathered in a public park on the outskirts of town to fuel up for the trek across an ancient grazing route now threatened by urban sprawl and man-made frontiers. The World Congress of Nomadic and Transhumant Pastoralists, hosting herdsmen from the Masai plains of Kenya and the steppes of Mongolia, has now re-established the right of shepherds to drive their herds through Spain’s capital city. The Congress itself has also developed into a forum for the exchange of traditional knowledge of all kinds and skills such as horse-archery and soda bread baking.

Instigated by artist and organizer Fernando Garcia Dory, the initial gathering became instrumental in mobilizing national organizations like Plataforma Rural, an alliance of stakeholders which includes farm unions, consumer associations, developing NGOs, environmental organizations, and agricultural and industrial workers’ unions, and such international organizations as the European Platform for Food Sovereignty and La Via Campesina [the International Peasant Movement]. The gathering also lead Dory to initiate a shepherd’s summer school in an attempt to revive an age-old human occupation, which is so expressive of the complex symbiotic relationship between humans and

animals in a natural state. Within a decade the school has become highly oversubscribed, as people everywhere come seeking an alternative to the extremes of the European low-land climate, and the chance to spend several months a year in the enriching presence of goats and sheep on the mountain ranges of Europe.

This gathering in Spain is an example of another possible mode of operation called “a collective being of wonder,” 2 a primary experience that goes beyond the imagined and makes visible a collective resistance (a moment of solidarity, a sovereign space) to a particular current that controls the way we move through our lives.

While the re-establishment of the ancient tradition of shepherding is in effect in Spain, to the east an ancient tradition of seed saving seems to be strategically being destroyed. Under the guise of humanitarian aid and reconstruction, a Frankenstein effect seems to be unfolding in the Fertile Crescent. Where humans once began to control the growth of grain in 8000 BC, today 465 metric tons of wheat are being delivered to eastern Baghdad farmers as building blocks for a new economy.

Following the US occupation in Iraq in 2003, the national seed bank in Abu Graib was destroyed and looted. In the same year, Daniel Amstutz, US senior ministry advisor for agriculture, was positioned in Iraq to lead reconstruction efforts. Amstutz was also CEO of Investor Services at Cargill, where he began in grain trading, eventually heading the wheat desk and ending up at Goldman Sachs in grain futures trading. In early 2005 a newsletter of Garst Syngenta reported donations of trademarked seed to Iraq, namely patented strains 8380IT, 8288, 8285 and 8230IT. Under Paul Bremmer III, administrator of a newly created Coalition Provisional Authority, 100 orders were put into effect intending to “help Iraq become a full member of the international trading system known as the World Trade Organization” and to recognize the desirability of adopting modern intellectual property standards. Order 81 specifically states that “Farmers are prohibited from re-using seeds of protected varieties.”

For the exhibition of *The Gathers* at YBCA, I have created a set of sand-filled wheat sacks with a petition silk screened on the back. I will gather visitors’ signatures and send the cloth petitions to Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer, of the Department of Agriculture in Washington DC as a declaration to promote food svereignty and to demand the right for people and countries to define their agricultural and food policy without the unwanted intervention of foreign agricultural commodities. I invite you to conduct further research to uncover the actions of agribusiness in Iraq and elsewhere.

¹ La Via Campesina is an international movement which coordinates peasant organizations of small and middle-scale producers, agricultural workers, rural women and indigenous communities from Asia, Africa, America and Europe.” They are a coalition of over 100 organizations, advocating family-farm-based sustainable agriculture and were the group that first coined the term “food sovereignty.

² Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *Of the Social Contract, Book III, Chapter III.*

In his 1762 treatise *Of the Social Contract*, Rousseau argued, “the growth of the State giving the trustees of public authority more means to abuse their power, the more the Government has to have force to contain the people, the more force the Sovereign should have in turn in order to contain the Government,” with the understanding that the Sovereign is “a collective being of wonder” resulting from “the general will” of the people, and that “what any man, whoever he may be, orders on his own, is not a law,” and furthermore predicated on the assumption that the people have an unbiased means by which to ascertain the general will. Thus the legal maxim, “there is no law without a sovereign.”

IN THE LOW COUNTRY

INFORMAL EXCHANGE

By Amy Franceschini

GILBERT CARDON: POTAGER DES FRATERNITÉS OUVRIÈRES

MOUSCRON, BELGIUM—Every third Sunday of the month, Gilbert Cardon opens his home to his neighbors, fellow gardeners and permaculturists to answer questions, give advice and share his seed archive. Twenty-five to thirty people gather to hear Cardon’s monthly sermons which include a list of what seeds to plant when, how to best plant and nurture each one and what growing methods will achieve the best results for each specific plant with the least amount of intervention. For instance, digging a hole, planting a seed, heavily watering it and then waiting to see what happens may be too much intervention for a seasonal carrot. Cardon claims sowing carrot seeds onto fresh ground and covering them with a thin shower of moist soil is enough to get the seed to germinate. “It just needs a little dark and some moisture and this will be enough to establish itself,” he advises.

His seed library, which resides in his house, contains over 3500 species of plant seeds saved from his 1/8 acre backyard. The yard is a jungle where, upon entering, it is hard to know where one plant begins and another ends. It also provides homes for snails and slugs in piles of discarded plastic bottles and for earwigs in stacks of flattened cardboard boxes to distract them from their usual foraging of the fruit and vegetables he has planted.

The library itself is a self portrait of the man who created it and reflects his “hands off” approach to gardening. He uses empty cat food tins, cereal and other cardboard boxes to house his seeds which are wrapped in hand made envelopes made from recycled computer printer paper, flyers and junk mail. A sense of improvisation and possibility fill the room. Compared to the multimillion dollar Norwegian Svalvard Seed bank, Gilbert’s home is living proof that saving seeds does not have to be limited to a highly protected, privatized sector. In fact, anyone can do it.



THE NATION

IN THE CITY OF ANGELS

CLONING USED TO GREEN FOOD DESERT

By Public Matters

SOUTH LOS ANGELES (the area formerly known as South Central)—This summer, a swarm of masked teens in identical green t-shirts descended upon South Los Angeles’ Los Compadres Market. Who are they? And what are they doing in the store with all that video and audio equipment? Fueled by fervent motivation to improve their local food environment, they are HEAC (Healthy Eating Active Communities) Youth Ambassadors from The Accelerated School, a charter school in South L.A. The HEAC students are involved in a project with Public Matters, a group of local artists and educators dedicated to integrating art with tangible community change. Their mission? To persuade Los Compadres to offer fresher, healthier food choices.

Los Compadres is located directly across the street from The Accelerated School in what is known as South L.A.’s “food desert,” an area that has few supermarkets, low-quality fruits and vegetables and literally miles of pavement between corner stores. The students, through their work with Public Matters, are actually greening the food desert one store at a time.

Building on their first market makeover last year, Public Matters’ collaboration with HEAC focuses on the creation of an online “Market Makeover Toolkit.” The conversion of two additional markets, Los Compadres and El Azteca, another market located nearby, will serve as case studies to provide comprehensive guidelines for “greening” local corner stores. Given the number of food deserts across the country, there are people who are, quite literally, hungry for this information.

Public Matters has worked with HEAC for two years on this ongoing youth media and civic engagement project to provide the community with increased access to healthy food. The project typifies Public Matters’ commitment to long-term community investment and multi-sector partnerships as well as the strategic alignment of its work with broader community initiatives to yield a deep, sustainable impact. Additionally, Public Matters initiates change in ways that are both creative and enjoyable.

The image to the right is a production still from a promotional video for the changes happening at Los Compadres. It will be seen via one of three media “channels” Public Matters created as part of the project: N3 (Neighborhood Network News), YUMTV and MMTV (Market Makeover TV). N3 offers “media fixes” to counteract widely held but often inaccurate perceptions about South L.A. by providing historical, political and socio-economic contexts for how the area came to be a food desert. YUMTV offers a different kind of food for thought in the form of a reality show competition that

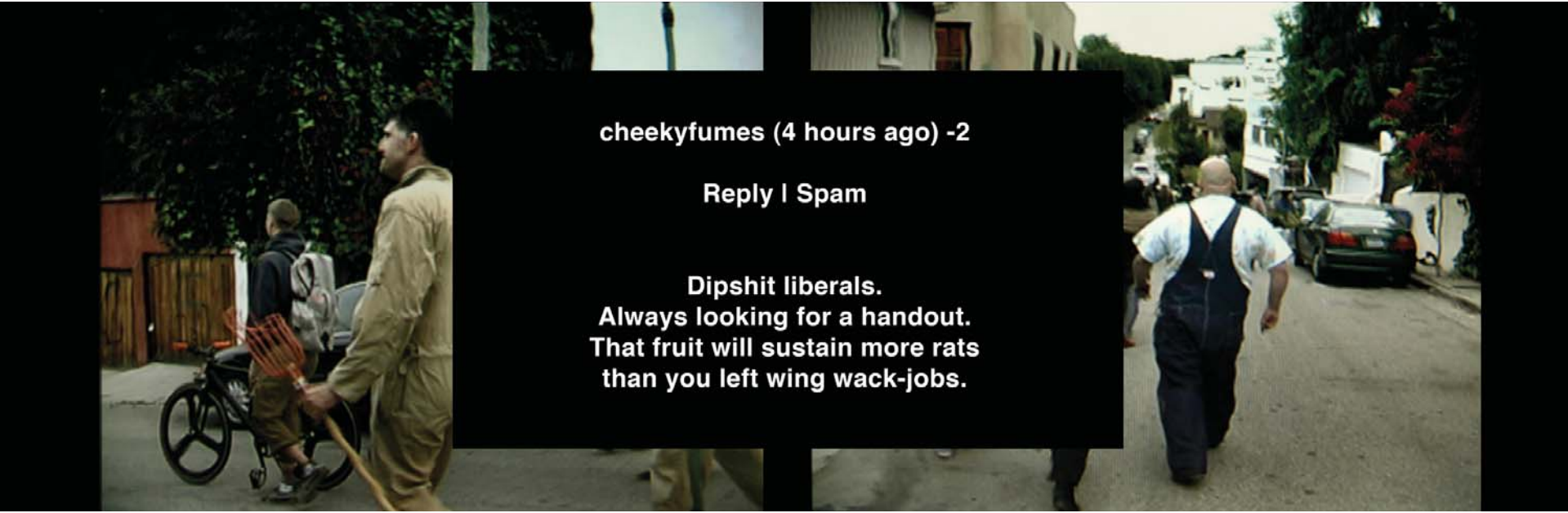


A PRODUCTION STILL FROM A PROMOTIONAL VIDEO FOR THE CHANGES HAPPENING AT LOS COMPADRES.

challenges contestants to prepare a healthy meal for a family of four, using ingredients from a local corner store with a budget of \$10. A combination of *Iron Chef* meets *Amazing Race*, with a little *Jeopardy* thrown in, it shows students racing to the store to use their \$10 to buy the healthiest, tastiest food they can; participating in “Read That Label,” a game that challenges them to define, spell and speed read product labels; and preparing their meals. At the end they are judged on their cooking prowess by a panel of store owners, a local chef, a community health expert and a group of their peers. MMTV chronicles the market makeover process, step-by-step, and offers insight into the business of running a corner store through profiles of the stores, storeowners and customers.

For more corner-store escapades and more about Public Matters, visit www.publicmattersgroup.com.

Public Matters is a California-based group of artists, educators and media professionals who integrate art, education and community development to build informed and engaged neighborhoods and community leaders. Public Matters members include Mike Blockstein, Reanne Estrada, David Lawrence, Ron Milam, McCrae Parker and Rene Yung.



STILL FROM *DOUBLE STANDARD* VIDEO

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN FALLEN FRUIT AND THE OUTPOST FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES—OCT 6, 2008

By Fallen Fruit

FALLEN FRUIT is an activist art project run by David Burns, Matias Viegner and Austin Young. “Public Fruit” is the concept behind Fallen Fruit, which started as a mapping of all of the public fruit in the artists’ neighborhood. Fallen Fruit encourages everyone to harvest, plant and sample public fruit, which is fruit on or overhanging public spaces such as sidewalks, streets or parking lots. Their belief is that fruit is a resource that should be commonly shared, like shells from the beach or mushrooms from the forest. Fallen Fruit has moved from mapping to planning fruit parks in under-utilized areas. The group’s goal is to get people thinking about the life and vitality of urban neighborhoods. On certain days over the course of *The Gatherers* exhibition, members of Fallen Fruit will be in the gallery conducting research with gallery visitors about their individual histories with “colonial fruit.” On Saturday, November 2, Fallen Fruit will conduct a Public Fruit Jam, a collective jam-making session utilizing public fruit. The Public Fruit Jam is free and open to those who would like to contribute public fruit, jam recipes and/or their participation.

OFCA: How did you first arrive at your current work; was there a ta-da or eureka moment?

FF: About four and a half years ago the Journal of Aesthetics & Protest sent out a call for artist’s projects addressing pressing social, political or urban issues. The first iteration of Fallen Fruit was a sort of psychogeographic manifesto about neglected neighborhood fruit and the ways in which it might be used to reimagine the city. At first we thought of it as a one-time project, but then new layers and new directions kept appearing to us. What our work has developed into is a set of examinations of urban space, ideas of neighborhood and new forms of located citizenship and community. From protests to proposals for new urban green spaces, Fallen Fruit’s goal is to reconceptualize the relation between those who have resources and those who do not, to examine nature in and the nature of the city and to investigate new, shared forms of land use and property. We seek to generate new rituals, events and formats to express these ideas in kinetic and nomadic ways, with all of these avenues passing through the lens of fruit in some form. If there was a “eureka” realization, it was when we saw that the simple metaphor of fruit energized the project, offering us a medium that is cross-cultural, “democratic,” classless, transhistorical and ordinary. So the “aha” moment probably came when we coined the term “Public Fruit.”

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OFCA: What was your work like three years prior to starting down this path?

FF: Before Fallen Fruit, the three of us had collaborated in different pairings on a variety of projects, especially videos. These were all one-off collaborations however. For David Burns and myself, a lot crystallized around our collaboration for Fritz Haeg’s Gardenlab show —particularly our interest in the sociocultural interface of humans and the natural world, the use of a sort of playful, pataphysical strategy and a tendency to layer more than one meaning in the work.

OFCA: Who, if anyone, has influenced the direction of your work; historically, and/or personally?

FF: We’ve been influenced by a variety of art and political movements, from Act Up, to General Idea, Group Material and Ant Farm to the Situationists. But overall we’ve made it up as we went along, and we feel very lucky to be part of a sort of flowering of alternative art making —so we take a lot of inspiration from our peers. Los Angeles has come to feel like the epicenter of an emerging, innovative art scene, in which a lot of the work has either (experimental) documentary, collaborative or new performative aspects. We feel very enthusiastic about the L.A. art scene and are a little mystified by why the rest of the world has been so slow in catching on.

OFCA: What do you believe is the most innovative aspect(s) of your work?

FF: The linkage between new ideas and new rituals gives us the capacity to be nomadic and playful, and never be fixed in one place. An example of this might be our Neighborhood Infusions project, in which we take the fruit of one neighborhood or even one block and infuse it in vodka. By proposing that we can capture something as elusive as the “spirit” of a place in a bottle, we can open up ideas of neighborhood, consumption and the local. But it’s also a collaboration with a corporation (360 Vodka at the moment) in the same way as our Public Fruit Jams are collaborations with the public. Not only is there no art object, but also no distinction between artist and audience. We all make the jam, and while we value the results, what we hope we’ve done is laid out a new social ritual that creates relationships more than it imposes an art object or aesthetic system on an audience.

OFCA: What do you believe your work contributes to the current moment? Pardon the vagueness of this question, but your intentions are important.

FF: We’re addressing people’s relationship to the natural world, the city and to each other by proposing new forms of irreverent research. We tend to eschew making

precious finished objects in favor of creating new social spaces, new forms of collaboration and new rituals to address as what we see as a set of urgently pressing questions: public space, democracy and community, the environment and a new urbanism.

OFCA: Name two challenging aspects of your work.

FF: Collaboration is never easy, but we grow in our capacities with each new project. But probably the most difficult thing for us is that as we become more well-known, people often ask us to repeat old projects (or adapt them for new places) rather than asking us for new work, which in some sense we’re more interested in. A lot of our new projects thus get developed outside the museum or gallery context, and we just plug them in where we can.

OFCA: Where do you locate the “aesthetic dimension” in your work?

FF: Good question. We’re actually all aesthetes. One reason we always return to fruit in our work is its aesthetic dimension: color, form and texture. That said, it’s also a remarkable frame, as fruit is already a human/natural hybrid, a collaboration of generations of farmers and tree species. This makes fruit both a natural and a cultural object. Fruit appeals to us for its symbolic values: bounty, generosity and goodness. Not surprisingly it’s the food that appears most often in the history of art. This gives us a chance to work between its ubiquity and also its seeming invisibility.

OFCA: Do you see your work in conversation with the visual arts, adjacent to the visual arts, or no relation to visual art?

FF: We’re certainly outside the mainstream of the art world, which seems fairly self-referential and notably disinterested in one of our prime interests: the ordinary. But in public art there are some very interesting new conversations, and many of them are really happening in L.A. itself. We’re lucky to find ourselves in the context of so much innovative art making here. In thinking about the characteristics of this moment in L.A., some of the aspects we observe is how much of the work is process-based, collaborative, non-objective, often rethinking public space, the environment, science, botany, common wisdom, and deploys the role of craft in modern life. A few of the many participants in the scene are Mark Allen and Machine Project, Fritz Haeg, the L.A. Urban Rangers, Farmlab, Outpost for Contemporary Art, Linda Pollack’s Habeas Index, Ari Kletzky’s Islands of L.A., The Institute for Figuring, Jeff Cain’s Shed Research Project, The Bicycle Kitchen and The Journal of Aesthetics & Protest.

AROUND THE BAY

ARE YOU LINKED TO THE MEADOW NETWORK?

By Susanne Cockrell and Ted Purves

SAN FRANCISCO is comprised of citizens from a myriad of locations and background—some are native, while others have immigrated from all parts of the world. In the experiences and memories of these travelers, there are hundreds of countrysides and many shades of green. These histories will inform the future transformation of the city, from a center of urban consumption into something more sustainable, as the memories of San Franciscans contain visions for farming, markets, preservation and exchange.

The Meadow Network project is rooted in a broad series of interviews with city residents from diverse backgrounds. Over the course of the exhibition, we will visit city farms, open markets, gardening stores and public parks, and talk to people about where they came from, their own memories and connections to rural life. What traditions of growing, preserving, festival and bartering do they hold onto? How can they see these manifesting in San Francisco and their everyday life? What can future urban green space come to resemble?

The interviews will be edited into a series of texts and images and printed as newspapers. These newspapers will be displayed in the gallery and distributed through a variety of public spaces. We will be interviewing gallery visitors at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts on Saturday, November 22.

For more information about the project and news about other Meadow Network interview locations, please visit www.fieldfaring.org.

The creators of the Meadow Network, Susanne Cockrell and Ted Purves make social art projects that investigate the overlay of urban and rural systems upon the lives of specific communities. They ask questions about the nature of people and place as seen through social economy, history and local ecology. Their project Temescal Amity Works (2004–07), facilitated and documented the exchange of backyard produce, conversation and collective biography within the Temescal Neighborhood of Oakland, CA. In the spring of 2008, they created Lemon Everlasting Backyard Battery as an original project for the exhibition This Show Needs You at the San Jose Institute for Contemporary Art. Drawing on the participation of San Jose citizens, Lemon Everlasting was a “bio-active” installation made from a half-ton of yard-grown lemons, preserved with salt, which cured over the course of the exhibition.

A PUBLIC APOLOGY FOR THE BITTER PLACES OF THE SoMA NEIGHBORHOOD

By The NBMC

STARTING ON Sunday, November 2, The National Bitter Melon Council (NBMC) in collaboration with the South of Market Community Action Network (SOMCAN) will undertake a neighborhood performance project that invites the community and public to participate in salting the South of Market neighborhood (SoMA), thereby reducing the bitterness of, or “apologizing” for the bitter places of the neighborhood. The project begins with a neighborhood tour that includes SoMA residents and/or anyone interested in identifying “bitter” places. This project, titled *A Salt Apology*, documents neighborhood emotions literally and conceptually. It encourages the community to express their “bitter” emotions by engaging the public in a journey of neighborhood exploration.

The collective nature of “salting the area” symbolically and literally joins SoMA residents and gallery-goers alike. The NBMC will use this action as a form of urban homeopathy. This homeopathic remedy is informed by the fact that many religions use salt as a tool for cleansing and purification. Salt has been a key commodity and component in economic, religious, spiritual, cultural, social and political development. In this performance project, its references translate into the action of salting the earth and reflect on the shared sentiment of ongoing neighborhood struggles. The salting action is a ritualistic process that asserts and memorializes bitter space sentiments while also removing them in order to bring about more savory associations and meanings.

A Salt Apology calls attention to the shifting line between the SoMA community’s separation and distinction from the redevelopment forces shaping the neighborhood and the diverse invisible and unmet agendas that accompany this process. It provokes a series of questions that will address the demarcation of redevelopment and the neighborhood evolution and changes faced in this community.

The National Bitter Melon Council, based in Boston, is an ongoing art and community development project that applies performance art methodologies within existing social structures in social performances. The food promotional identity of the NBMC provides a structure that guides the format and rhetoric used in social-performance insertions. The NBMC stages events that use the foreignness of bitter melon and the concept of this flavor (which is also an emotion) to investigate situations that through bitterness create and promote an alternative basis for community and engagement.

THE NATION

IN THE BIG EASY

A NEW DWELLING STRUCTURE FOR POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

By Marjetica Potrc



MARJETICA POTRC’S *Shotgun House with Rainwater-Harvesting Tank* was developed in post-Katrina New Orleans, and exhibited at Max Protetch Gallery, New York as well as Van AbbeMuseum in Eindhoven. *Shotgun House* points to two recent trends in New Orleans: the revival of the local architectural style known as the Shotgun House, and the move toward self-sustainability. Both are post-Katrina developments and correspond with the deconstruction of modernist architecture and the search for a new, 21st-century social contract for democracy. Local harvesting of energy resources points to the emergence of new environmental and, consequently, political boundaries. The two caryatids serve as reminders that New Orleans is being rebuilt by its citizens.

Below is an excerpted interview between artist Marjetica Potrc and Kerstin Niemann, co-curator of the *Heartland Project*, an exhibition at the Van AbbeMuseum in Eindhoven.

KM: What does *Heartland* mean to you? What do you think it means to non-US audiences?

MP: To me, *Heartland* means people with open hearts, a very New Orleans thing. Last year, I lived in New Orleans for two months. This was post-Katrina, a slow time in a slow city. Life was difficult—literally all my friends were repairing their houses in their free time. At the same time, life was good, as there was always time to get together. I was lucky to stay with Adrian and Srdjan, both wonderful young artists. I remember vividly how we met. A taxi driver who was unable to read the map—no doubt one of those people who went through the New Orleans school system but still didn’t know how to read—dropped me by a big heap of rubble in front of their bright blue house in a run-down neighborhood. This mountain of bits and pieces taken from the house was so big that at first I couldn’t see Adrian and Srdjan. For us, it was instant friendship. I stayed with them for two months while they were occupied with the seemingly endless task of fixing the house and their lives, walking their two dogs and making

art. The tropical madness of New Orleans and its citizens has a structure, albeit not a linear one. But having lived in Caracas, I know that eventually tropicalism can work very well. I love New Orleans. For me, it was like coming home.

For those who want a taste of tropicalism, I can wholeheartedly recommend the novel *A Confederacy of Dunces*, a cult classic by John Kennedy Toole. It’s something right out of New Orleans.

KN: What role does locality or a consciousness of the place from which or about which you are making work play in your artistic thinking?

MP: It is important, and also a great adventure, to learn from people about their place. I was happy to be in New Orleans in the midst of the rebuilding efforts after Katrina. The people who live there have a new enthusiasm for the shotgun house, their vernacular architecture, and are embracing sustainable methods and the wetlands. In doing so, they are reasserting their roots and acknowledging their survival territory. As you know, sustainability is always practiced on the local level, a fact that will, I believe, have concrete geopolitical consequences in our century. I see New Orleans as an exciting 21st-century city proud of its post-Katrina initiatives, which the citizens of New Orleans trust will put them ahead of other cities.

KN: What are your central concerns as an artist?

MP: I like to connect with people and exchange knowledge. In New Orleans I worked with FutureProof, a sustainable-design consultancy. FutureProof is a small group of designers who were able to think “out of the box” after Hurricane Katrina. They radically support the idea of sustainable practices that residents can practice themselves as well as participatory design, i.e. the process of designing things step by step with the participation of the communities involved. One example is the practice popularly known as “rainwater harvesting.” Residents col-

lect rainwater in their neighborhoods. For instance, rainwater is diverted from paved parking lots into green areas where it is allowed to sink into the ground. Some might say there is no reason to store water in a place like New Orleans, where there is too much water anyway. So why is this important? Today, whenever there is a storm, the sewers flood and sewage gets flushed into Lake Pontchartrain and the wetlands. The good thing about rainwater harvesting is that it slows down the water in the city. Less water is pumped out and the city’s water table is restored. By the way, the city continues to sink. It sounds complicated, but it’s not. New Orleans was settled in the Mississippi River delta a long time ago, and now, after Katrina, its unstable, unique and marshy environment is finally being acknowledged as important. Today everyone realizes that the flood that hit the city was a man-made catastrophe—think of the levees that gave way one day after the hurricane had already left the city. Also, people realize that the wetlands that protect the city from hurricanes are being lost at the rate of one football field every 38 minutes. Today, FutureProof, among others, is redefining the conditions for coexistence between the city and its environment. Reviving the city and restoring the wetlands are part of the same effort.

I passionately agreed with FutureProof about the importance of rainwater harvesting in the city. Working together, we exhibited a 1,500-gallon cistern in the show *Something from Nothing* at the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans in January as a way of popularizing the practice. The cistern was designed for the International School of Louisiana, one of five “green seed schools” that are currently being upgraded to be more sustainable. The cistern will be installed there soon. The rainwater collected from the roof will be used to irrigate a garden on the school property.

The stored water in the cisterns can be used not only for irrigation, but also for flushing toilets and other domestic needs, such as showers, baths, sinks and washing machines. It makes no sense to use

drinkable water for flushing a toilet! But rainwater can in fact also be used as drinking water if the cistern is equipped with ultraviolet filters. This use is currently not permitted in New Orleans. In my opinion, it is important to change the laws that regulate infrastructure and utilities and that were made to fit the previous century. By 2050, America’s population is expected to reach 420 million, which is 50 percent more than in 2000. Growth will take place mostly in metropolitan areas, where the infrastructure that was built in the 20th century is already rundown. New Orleans is there already, since it experienced the collapse of its infrastructure after Katrina. It makes sense for citizens to take infrastructure and utilities into their own hands. Did you know that today, the drinking water in New Orleans comes from the highly polluted Mississippi River? Of course it is filtered before it reaches the water taps, but why not use other available sources too? Take the Lower Ninth Ward, for example, where the Holy Cross neighborhood plans to install water turbines in the Mississippi River. This will make the neighborhood self-reliant in its energy. After all, it is a good thing to be in control of your infrastructure and utilities. “We build the city, we own it!” my friend Kerry said. New Orleans is a test site for a 21st-century balance between the citizens and the society.

Marjetica Potrc is a Ljubljana-based artist and architect whose work has been featured in prominent solo and group exhibitions throughout Europe and the Americas.