

*Mina Kompisar* ✕



VOLUME I: TANTRUM


Mina Kompisar translates to 'My Friends' in English.

A friend and I, a friend whom I wrote and spoke with daily, would playfully greet one another with the words 'min kompis' before beginning our writing or conversations of the day. The articles I've placed herein are for anyone who is unsettled by the current sustainability discourse. I write to reinvigorate the effort to resolve the 'Climate Change' problem and, to substantiate what sustainability is. Each volume describes sustainability in the domains of Nature, Culture, and Climate Change. At present, Mina Kompisar exists through two mediums: as instagram posts [[@minakompisar](#)] and as the fragments in this magazine. The articles (i.e. fragments) are meant to open discussions on sustainability by emphasizing how individuals and/or small-scale initiatives intertwine local lifestyles and local ecology. In this regard, Mina Kompisar is meant to become an index. At present it is accurate to say Mina Kompisar is a creative-writing platform, its initial fragments are offered to those who want or need a momentary escape from doxa. Be that as it may, my friends and I read and speak of ways of doing things otherwise, to see sustainability through, and to actualize it in daily-life. Mina Kompisar hopes to hear fresh voices resound in the global dialogue on what Sustainability is.



Orkydaceae

Spring 2023



*Mina Kompisar*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A small dense hollow pit hiccups. Suddenly, a white fleck seem to calmly wade upon a deep wall of blackness. Silence cracks. Threads erupt from its core as its rhythm pulsates and, as the infinitesimal strands wiggle, its wrath finds a beatitude...a little captain without eyes grasps the helm and points their vessel into the murmur of the cosmic-sea.

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Rhythms dance beneath and beyond the global orchesrtration of parts and wholes, an untamed concert wildly basking in a vast sea of noise – differences of intensity, passing signs of existence – tortuously enveloping into one another.

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Beauty peers into the world – looming up from the divulging tantrum of chaos, groundlessly shaking to the beat of its own drum – uncovering and disclosing itself in the faintest and most subtle moments, just to disappear but never to be gone.

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Rotating around the sun, seasons appear and disappear as the Earth spins on its axis. Imagine the way Day turns into Night, from Spring to Summer, Fall, and Winter. Our experiences expand and we extend into the spaces we occupy; participating with a flow of life.

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# TO NATURE

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This portion of Mina Kompisar is meant to reinvigorate the gaze towards the natural world so as to change the way it's viewed and, in turn, how it is talked about. In general, the articles have a Process or a Feature at the center of their discussion. However, this is not always true. Since there is not a set format for any writing, the works will range from a single poetic sentence to multi-page article. In any case, the aim is to discuss how a feature is a focal point whereas a process may be several dynamisms performing concerted action bringing content into focus. At best, the work will get as close as possible to discussing its topic in terms of chemistry and physics but what is more important than the use of technical terms is to communicate an understanding so the reader feels closer to nature.

There are many who are fond of Nature, namely, the ones who are enchanted by her majesty. To keep the scale balanced, there are those who've found Nature to be uncanny and distastefully chaotic. My friends, I am of the first type, when I speak about nature I do so because my greatest fascinations come from her, from the particular features and processes that comprise the Whole that I'm not entirely certain of. To become closer to her I contemplate the substrata of atoms (because, even the atoms move on top of the abyss) and yet Nature discloses nothing more and nothing less than all of what there already is. It is strange why this is the way it is. My contemplations are no longer mine alone, they have become guided by thinkers who, aside from myself, I consider to be her greatest champions. I follow these individuals because they discuss the feelings that arise from unlimited emptiness, and the way they write of it exhibits how they've put their experience into word. I would go so far to say that their silences, what they do not say or what they've failed to mention are actually what speak the volumes of their thoughts. To name a few of my friends, I'm referring to Empedocles, Lucretius, Arne Naess, Michel Serres, Isaiah Berlin, Leo Strauss, and Gilles Deleuze. They are only a few of her champions and I'm certain there are many more but I've listed them because our paths, by chance, have crossed and their words resonate with me – I feel we hold a similar regard for Nature.

Min Kompis,

I am here because I am – like I hope you are – seeking a solution to the madness which has been riddled throughout history and progressively turns the unrelenting-clock towards the future. It's not that I think we're doomed, but I have been revisiting the thought that no-one has 'the answer', there isn't one. Rather, solutions are hidden within the silent corners of our minds. When we're confronted by, or encounter, changes in the climate no-one survives alone, together we'll make it, always have...always will.

## QUESTIONS

I remember two distinct cuts. One was executive and pronounced in a question while the other was diffuse and dependent on the first as a foundation. First, the front edge of the cut was etched by ‘what is real and what is not?’ and the incision was completed by a secondary response, ‘isn’t the world made of atoms?’. The conditions of my fascination were set, and I have come to realize that everyone doesn’t think to ask nor to continue to entertain such questions because such heinous questions question everything by putting everything into question. Questions are, in this manner, quests unique to someone. I ask and question the origin of the cosmos and I’ve continued to contemplate the depths of my self in the vastness of the world through the same curiosity which gave rise to these questions in the first instance. What will follow from here is a portrayal of hope: my experience in thought; a contemplation on existence.

## TANTRUM

The Earth revolves around the sun and from moment to moment everything becomes different. The Earth is adorned with unique features, caves and cascades as well as mountains and plateaus. Waves rush onto shore and recede into the ocean’s tide. Tectonic plates collide and mountains erupt while pressure differences in atmospheric temperature send howling winds soaring across the sky. Roots extend into soil and the barks of trees quiver like water flowing around stones. Plants respire. The clouds of the sky are not identical nor composed of exactly the same molecules of evaporated water contracted again and again, the surface of Earth constantly undergoes change. The elements in *On Nature* by Empedocles as well as the phrases of the Lucretian poem reverberate. Deleuze, in a passage on Lucretius, articulates, ‘Nature, to be precise, is power. In the name of this power things exist one by one, without any possibility of their being gathered together all at once. Nor is there any possibility of their being united in a combination adequate to Nature, which would express all of it at one time’. Nature is in the eye of the beholder; the *never-seen* streaming throughout everything. Nature is a word encompassing an unfathomable mosaic of events in terrestrial and aquatic habitats.



# BIOTA

Earth's Biota and Nature's Tantrum coexist. There are seven different biomes on the Earth: Coniferous Forest, Desert, Grassland, Rainforest, Shrubland, Temperate Deciduous Forest, and Tundra. Biotic organisms are encompassed by these biomes and each biome is characterized by the biota as well as the abiotic flows passing throughout geological features. Biologists study the symbiotic relationships in an ecosystem by observing how biota reciprocate with their dynamic habitats. A symbiotic relation may be thought of in a simple oscillatory dynamic: where the habitat pushes the biota recedes, and vice versa...the dilemma of the species/environment dualism appears and has overshadowed a rigorous dialogue on reciprocal relations in a habitat. To speak of how reciprocal relations constitute the seemingly seamless occupation of an ecological niche I imagined that biota were coalesced moments of their surroundings, that they were contracting, and contractions of, the habits of their habitat. When I thought 'the Habits of Habitat' initially I did not know to think in terms of animus or anima, I thought of how the environment molded the animal, and vice versa... where the pre-socratic notion of seamliness is, I thought seamlessness. Biology conceptualizes rare complementarity as 'lock and key' where biota are the 'key' which fit into their 'lock' habitat. I paused because I noticed a seamlessness between the 'lock and key' – I asked how the complementarity came to be. Rather than to continue to think that biota are copies of, and separated from a transcendental-model, I focus on the reciprocity and rare complementarity between biota and their habitats on Earth.

The Herculian world is in constant-change, its stronghold is impermanence. Following Heraclitus' torment I consider that biota endlessly seek to become attuned to the underlying momentum in their habitat. Rhythmically, abiotic dynamics traverse a habitat: rotating around the sun, seasons appear and disappear as days turn into night while Earth spins on its axis. Abiotic dynamics are ubiquitously mixing elements (i.e. carbon, phosphorus, nitrogen...etc.) on Earth. How the mixing occurs in the seven different biomes characteristic of Earth is that which makes each biome unique. Intimately, Biota perceive the mixing of elements in their habitat and moment after moment – by virtue of a perceived similitude – engage the abiotic flows encapsulated in their habitat. In slower moments, a disparity becomes apparent and to overcome discontinuities between themselves and their habitat, biota form symbiotic relations with other biota in the habitat. Intricately, the nuances of a biota's sensory apparatuses translate the abiotic dynamisms they encounter and insofar as biota remain in contact with they dynamics they encounter they, in an inverse manner, become the articulation of that which they are tuning into. Articulating a pathway of morphogenesis, Deleuze delineates the process of differentiation to elaborate how Biota literally embody a problem-question complex. The obscurely different/cation confronts is how the sensory apparatus of a biota tunes into a portion of Nature in a habitat on Earth. Deleuze, to articulate how differentiation integrates biota and their habitat, notes that dynamisms are both spatial and temporal, and based upon spatio-temporal determination the different elements of a habitat integrate into differential rhythms, "A living being is not only defined genetically, by the dynamisms which

## OCTOBER 2014

determine its internal milieu, but also ecologically, by the external movements which preside over its distribution within an extensity” (Deleuze, 1968: 216)<sup>1</sup>. The cornerstone needed to crossover the disparity between the experience of the world and that which actually exists is a conceptualization of how the resemblance between biota and their habitat comes to be. To pass over this fissure, Deleuze lends a face to nature’s tantrum via Artaud’s theatre of cruelty which articulates the relation between Drama and Dream. By observing how biota interact with(in) their abiotic habitat I begin to notice a magnificent drama of dreamers unfold on the surface of the Earth.

I lived in the Chagras Rainforest in Panama. Hiking from the settlement into the old growth rainforest, my task was to survey the diversity of biota in the Chagras. In the depths of the forest, for one moment, I paused, I fixed my feet in place and stood beneath the canopy of trees. I peered into the dense misty jungle and thought to my self ... I can’t see the Chagras. There was not one tree, vine, orchid, or mist cloud that was all of the Chagras. I continued to wander, placing one foot in front of the other, and eventually came to realize that I do see it – it is staring back at me – I see it through all the things in the forest. Ecologists explain the intricacy in forest ecosystems by elaborating the idea of emergene. Two idioms voice emergence: ‘couldn’t see the forest for the trees’ and ‘the sum is greater than its parts’. The meaning of the first is that if you’re paying too close attention to the details you’ll miss it and the other notes that the parts compose something which none of the parts are on their own. Although ecology is a spectacular way to untangle how the dynamics of an ecosystem cause emergence, that which emerges remains nondescript. This was my inital problem, what is that something & what is it that I couldn’t see?! It is a paradoxical element – not there and everywhere – circulating throughout the forest. In that forest its names is Chagras. Like Pythagoras heard a daimon reverberate in the bronze, although there are no trees in my skull, I hear a Forest in my mind. In the fantasy of my mind emerges an imaginary forest where a single tree may be decorated with an array of bromeliads and orchids, looming vines, howler moneys lingering in the canopy eating leaves and howling as a Jaguar draws nearer. I enjoy my Forest because it is lush and its creatures are as bizzare as the Jabberwocky.

1. Deleuze, G. (1968). *Difference et Repetition*. Columbia University Press, New York, NY, USA.

# COFFEA



Why is coffee unique? Origin. The source of a coffee's flavor is the coffee's origin. Origin is the terroir experienced by a coffee-plant, it's the microclimate of a farm. Origin is comprehended by observing the variety of ecological stresses a coffee-plant undergoes or is susceptible to. The stresses which a coffee-plant endures on a farm are what influence how the coffee-plant grows. By reciprocating with their exterior conditions coffee-plants respond to fluctuations in their microclimate by modifying their constitution via chemical reactions. The resulting adaptations made by a plant to pacify or adjust to the disturbances of a microclimate result in chemical compounds that are, in retrospect, the thumbprint of the coffee's origin. Origin is what's tasted through the unique flavors characterizing single-origin coffees.

Aside from having different economic and political configurations, every coffee-producing country has a geologic history that characterizes the differing ecological terrains where the cultivation of specialty-grade coffee occurs. Kaffae clarifies this by correlating a coffee to one of sustainability's three aspects (ecologic, politic, oeconomic). For example, a coffee correlated with ecologic may have been grown in soils that have been enriched by volcanic ash; a coffee correlated with politic may have been produced by a community of women; a coffee correlated with oeconomic has employed techniques that are specific to the region. With every coffee offered by Kaffae the imperative is to not only describe the locality that a coffee comes from but also to display how the flavor of any coffee relates to a locality's ecologic, politic, oeconomic conditions.

KAFFAE is a variation of COFFEA, a genus of flowering plants. Season after season coffee plants flower and produce cherries. Harvest after harvest, coffee-cherries are sorted and processed to transform their seeds into coffee-beans. Kaffae's mantra, Original & Local, voices the notion that the unique flavors of coffee are the foundation of an end-to-end relation between two localities: one end being the locality where a cup of coffee is consumed while the first end is the locality where the seeds to make that cup of coffee were grown. Kaffae offers coffees from different localities because the flavors of coffee change depending on where the coffee-plant grew.

Its aim is twofold, (I) taste unique flavors and (II) preserve the elements of the locality that made this so.

My body relates me to my friends. My bodily form is the archway which confers me to my human condition...that condition of being tethered over an abyss. 'I' experience how one moves through the dynamics of adventures and fascinating moments while being inside this body. For example, one night something precarious happened at a beach I used to visit every summer as an adolescent. An evening storm drew me to the ocean. The low rumble of thunder rattled me as lightning jolts ignited kiwi and peachy hues in magnificent blue and purple clouds offshore. Waves thrashed against the shoreline as I stood watching. Something was out-there, I was not alone although I was standing by myself. I took off, and without a second thought dove into the ocean...I swam out far enough so as to almost effortlessly float over calmer waves, and when I found my bearings in the water I swam towards shore. I did not get out of the ocean, I settled at a waist-deep depth and began to play in shallow waters, that level where sea meets land. At this depth some waves break a good distance before others and with these one must dive towards the bottom and let the wave pass over your back or else you'll be disorientingly tossed ashore. Other waves broke in an almost rhythmic fashion, and their pulse allows one to take a few strides and leap upwards so as to meet the wave at its highest point as its momentum passes and falls onto shore. I was swimming in a storm, the diving and leaping movements were happening quickly - much quicker than an average day - and by the end I was exhausted. Before leaving this swim I turned around and I remember that to that odd point where the storm, sea and sky were meeting on the horizon...I pointed to this cosmic-point and said: I see you. I laughed with a mouthful of joy as I walked home.

# FROM CULTURE

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From Culture explores artifacts (i.e. goods, objects, and products). The goods are selected in two ways. Firstly, they are unique, nobody else is doing the work in this certain way. Under this light, the good appears to be a result of style instead of an adherence to a prescribed method. Secondly, the good is not producible anywhere else. Under this condition, emphasis is placed on the materials and the locality that brought the product about. From Culture focuses on objects of this nature to elaborate how the qualities which they release are precisely what make items unique. The reason artifacts are artifacts is not only to be credited to the influence of an artisan but also to the necessity that prompted the emergence of the artifact in a particular locality at a certain time. The artifacts From Culture articulates bear the ornate markings of a symbolic tomb – they aim to communicate an understanding of the world at large and how one participates with(in) it.

Culture hides in plain sight. From the outside looking in, however, it's the vibrancy radiating from every material thing. I hear it in the laughter of friends, I smell it as food passes, I see it in the configurations of patterns and colors, I touch its texture and taste its variegated tone. It characterizes everything and everything ceaselessly adds character to it. I think it is encapsulated in, and rightly expressed by, the idiom 'there's something in the air'. It's as if it were a secret to no one, but that even those who emulate its excellence more than most were suddenly lost for words when asked to say its proper name. In spite of it being the characteristic mark of a period, it evades the most detailed accounts of history. It is found in the remnants of what has been, for instance, after items are collected together and contextualized by a historian or archeologist, the arbitrator, in one way or another, discloses to the public who the people were. Peering into the past, the difficulty of describing culture sounds similar to the dilemma of addressing it in the present, '...I can't put my finger on it'. Frustrated because I'd really like to contain it, to name it or bind it in the confines of a material object but, I cannot. Let's humor ourselves, even if this could be done, wouldn't such acts diminish it by bringing to a halt what has always been in motion? Isn't what's most precious about it its ephemeral quality? Say a new object were to be made as a vessel and representation of it, would it not appear somehow false – in the same manner as the simulations of a sempiternal realm do? Is it not more natural to let it roam free, to fill space nomadically and, from time to time, catch a glimpse of it as it breaks through the cracks of the concrete? I'm not saying that culture is free simply because it is without a definitive limit and unbindable, rather, I'm merely articulating that its freedom is what decorates civilization as the variety of populations scatter themselves across the surface of the Earth. It's that which is felt, I feel it, like a knot tied at the core my body that is tethered to a willingness to die...just [k]not quite yet.

## ARTIFACTS

Ancient cultures assembled g–ds into grand schemata to not only reign over various domains but to decipher the surface of the Earth. For example, the dominion of water was reigned by Chaac of the Mayans, Tlaloc of the Aztecs, Poseidon of the Greeks, and Neptune of the Romans. Accordingly, the Greeks split Time in half and held its seeming linearity into two measures: the past and the future insofar as they surround a present [Chronos] and, the present which has past and future as its aspects [Aion]. Between these two readings of time a schism opens one to the awareness of impermanence, or, as Heraclitus voiced, 'the river where you set your foot just now is gone – those waters giving way to this, now this'. In Heraclitus' fragment, I notice that the word 'set' is the past participle of 'to place'. Just like the g–ds of the ancients decipher the surface of the Earth, Tense – understood through its grammatical sense – articulates how events unfold in the past, the present, and in the future. Tense enables us to voice how our experiences in and of Time continuously pass. By noticing the verb 'set', I saw a strange correlation between g–ds and tense, both provide a frame to the passage of time. In the essay *Notes on Lucretius* by Leo Strauss (1968), he notes that the function of god(s) was to clarify and substantiate a storyline in the blur of daily–life. In this way, each and every g–d or daimon provided a refuge for one to hide from their fear of one's end or the death of The World. Continuing to question the role of g–d(s), Strauss' dialogue on 'the ancients' explains that the ancients do differ from 'the moderns' but that humans have not differed fundamentally, both attach to 'their world'. The ancients obeyed the will of the g–ds by

noting how they were participating in the world alongside them. However, my friend, Lucretius – a philosophic poet – detached from this worldly attachment and brought Nature to the forefront of thought by way of atoms and void. Lucretius changed the world in the sense that we, “moderns”, attach to ‘the world’ through an atomistic understanding of the world. Accordingly, as a body remains tethered to the surface of the Earth, I’ve found that the empirical objects which display that attachment to a vizable–world are the remnants of the civilization: artefacts. Artefacts are compositions of worldly materials. Artifacts display not only the work of an artisan but exhibit how the experience of existence was translated into a physical perception of how people – ancient and modern – coexist with the Earth. For example, the natural resources used to build the Mayan temples, Egyptian pyramids, the Roman Coliseums, Viking ships, as well as their tools, weapons, musical instruments along with the other miniscule trinkets that accent their tombs and ruins were sourced from the Earth. Archeology conceives artefacts as the material remains of past human life and activities but, to this notion, I’ll add that artifacts, like the fragments of Hericlitus, are residual content. I used–to think that there was a central and tangible point to grasp in each civilization but, I’ve come to realize that artifacts are depictions of a civilizations’ awareness of their finitude in relation to the infinite, Nature. Meaning, I’ve come to realize a grim side to each and every artifact, artifacts are the empirical evidence that display a civilization and exhibit how its inhabitants were dying.

# ARTIST: MARIA HELENA TRAD

Maria Helena and I have been friends since 2011. I lived in a neighborhood called DeMun and, she was working down the street from my apartment. I learned that she had a studio around the corner from the coffeeshop I was working at during this stage of our lives and our proximity was how we became friends. Now, she lives and works in Oaxaca, Mexico. Maria Helena is just as inspiring now as she was then. The following pages contain an interview about the artefacts she makes:

MH, what are your artefacts?

I create Visual Art and events in Public and Open Spaces out of concrete, using substances like metal leaf and pigment powders as painting mediums.

Why do you work with the materials that you do?

My current process with concrete came about after a conceptual, even existential overhaul I went through in 2017. I wanted to work with something elemental and 'base' -- as basic as clay. It was a kind of an instinctual desire where I needed to work with mediums as close to their original origins (chemical and organic) as possible, and at the same time was looking for a material that I could possibly harvest/create myself. Clay initially came to mind, but traditionally it needs to be fired and I didn't have access to a community kiln where I was living at the time in Colorado.

I discovered concrete because it just cures to form without a tremendous amount of resource or energy input -- and it's incredibly ancient. We (our collective ancestors) learned how to use lime or ash (calcium compounds) in combination with other raw materials

such as sand, earth/clay, shells, rocks, and pebbles... From here, they developed a universal formula that transforms an aggregate of organic matter into an extraordinarily strong solid when you add water -- and can even cure underwater.

Concrete is traditionally used for structural purposes, but my headspace was for Artmaking and expression. Visual references and methods that I was thinking about include chiseling in stone like the Egyptian hieroglyphs and also sculptures in the round... An artifact here in México which I love is *Coyolxauhqui* which is sculpted out of Diorite, or cooled magma, circa 1500 A.D. at National Museum of Anthropology in México City ([www.mna.inah.gob.mx/detalle\\_pieza\\_mes.php?id=191](http://www.mna.inah.gob.mx/detalle_pieza_mes.php?id=191)). More contemporarily, I was influenced by the work of Zoë Paul, a Visual Artist who I met in Athens, Greece years ago. During this timeframe, Zoë had just finished *Land of the Lotus Eaters*, 2018 which is a giant curtain-like sculpture made out of semi-fired ceramic beads, steel, brass, lead and Silver (<https://zoepaul.studio>).



Coyolxauhqui  
Photo Credit: CONACULTA, INAH, SINAFO, FN, MÉXICO



By looking into the past to methods before technology/preindustrial, I found concrete as a material and process that felt fluent with this internal, intuitive dialogue of mine and was able to create a series of experiments after I was awarded funding from Telluride Arts District Small Grants Program in 2018. I later discovered Metal leaf (Silver, Gold, Copper, Aluminum) and pigment powders (Quartz sand, Cadmium Sulfide, Zinc Sulfate, etc.) as painting mediums through a ton of free play and discovered that they were all substances that can adhere to the concrete rather effectively, and ‘permanently’, with simple organic bonders... At the same time, I was attracted to the capacity to get closer and closer to their chemical and organic properties that trigger color on the Visual Light Spectrum.

I like this segue here, cause, it sounds like pretty rustic, the way, like just such a ‘base’ material, very basic, one or two, three elements, maybe...

Yes! ‘Base’ as in from the Earth... Our ‘base’.

With that said, what is the message you are currently communicating?

This new way of working isn’t so much about an overarching message as it is an activity to communicate and participate with a space in time... And with that space as it exists in Nature...

How did you arrive at this insight?

If we look at my project at Centro Médico Mazunte, a Public Artwork integrated into an architectural element of a medical clinic on the coast



Mazunte  
Photo courtesy of the Artist

of Oaxaca, there was once a river that flowed on this particular street corner, just two blocks from the Pacific Ocean. Centro Médico Mazunte is located on Mexican Federal Highway 175 which doubles as the main street of Mazunte and goes over a bridge where the river used to be – now a sunken, sandy riverbed.

Apart from the lack of water, it’s extraordinarily striking how recent this change took place because all the vegetation surrounding this riverbed is so lush and healthy, and such a sharp contrast to the rest of the surrounding landscape. The region is classified as Dry Jungle Forest – meaning robust, vibrant jungle erupting near water sources or only after the rainy season has started (approx. May - September).

For my first project in a Public Space, this dynamic was the initial element that jumped out at me when I started working and set a precedent for how the site existed as a location in time and within a larger ecological context and cultural history.

*Fénix Ometeotl*, the work's title, was a commission project with the head physician and owner of the clinic (which has now relocated after Hurricane Agatha, June 2022). The Doctor has a deep interest in his mother's Aztec lineage and the title came together as we were exploring Nahuatl language together. One day, we found an image of the Aztec and Zapotec deity *Ometeotl* looking through one of his books in the clinic's library after we had been to a Temazcal (sweat lodge ceremony) together, where the Guia (guide) was speaking in Nahuatl using the word 'Ometeotl' over a stack of fired, glowing volcanic rocks. Do you know who Ometeotl is?

No, I don't know who they are.



Photo courtesy of Stephen Zamisch

'They', that's important... 'Ometeotl' is Nahuatl for 'ome' meaning two, and 'teotl' meaning energy, as in the duality, balance, and convergence of the two creative forces that are believed to have fueled the origins of our Universe.

Ometeotl was born way before anything existed in time and

space... When there was nothing but a dark, empty void - and then a collision happens and boom... Fire, rock, light, life... Ometeotl is the Nahuatl creation event (linking to the Big Bang Theory) and also embodies polarities such as feminine and masculine, light and dark, chaos and love; death and creation; it's these two entities in one that hit and start everything... And it's this specific moment of them crashing where I chose the title *Fénix Ometetol*. (*Fénix*, or Phoenix, has its own inclusion story/event but namely finds root in my Lebanese and ancestral Phoenician descent).

If your aretfact could speak, what would they tell a viewer?

Let's see... A random passerby told me once that *Fénix Ometetol* looked like an 'electric rabbit', which I really love. Then another person got the feeling that the whole circle was moving or spinning as if tuning into a different frequency. An Artist/friend Kate Maas asked me if the pink gestures were a 'cloud or blood?' which is my favorite so far...

Oh! Children respond the most and get kind of pulled in... They're the ones that like to reach out and touch the work. There's actually one spot on the piece that's darker because it's been continuously touched ever since the work was completed.

Does that answer your question?



Photo courtesy of Braka Skrt

Partially, could you speak from the perspective of the piece about your self, reflect on yourself as an artist from the mural's perspective.

...The Artwork is talking to me?

The mural is telling a viewer something, let's give the mural a voice, what does it say, it could be one word, a sentence, but, what does it say?

I feel its expression is less a vocalization and more like.... An open moment... Like an eye... A mirror... Or a flower.

To get here, do you have any rituals that you perform before, during, or after your studio-time?

I'm not in the studio anymore... Or rather, my studio is outdoors... And I'm really loving it. The whole thing is that I'm only making Art if it's for a site that's live out there somewhere... Publicly/freely accessible or community based. But, to answer your question, I listen to a lot of music when I work, or I need silence. I can also say with this new way of working that I adapt my rituals and creative needs differently in response to each project site.

When I developed *Fénix Ometéotl*, I woke up every day before dawn and only worked for two hours during a window of time when I could be alone on a street corner that gets super busy and hot during the day. All I had were these two cool and quiet hours right at Sunrise. If a ritual could be seen as procuring an environment with specific qualities – then finding that time in space is a ritual for me.

Where does your mind go when you begin your work?

So, let's rewind a little bit... To answer your question, I'll take us back

Colorado, then I can also flesh out your last question a bit more fully too.

After receiving grant funding from Telluride Arts District, I began working in a municipal building/community space called Voodoo Studios (also run by Telluride Arts District) that had a view of Ingram Falls – a high mountain waterfall at approximately 11,000 feet... And in the foreground, right in front of my studio window, was Telluride's Town Skatepark which was always filled with skater kids and often a few Pro and Olympic snowboarders that were all skateboarding for fun... Practicing off-mountain. It was like this wildly visual and energetic environment all around me with bodies gliding and vaulting – and the sheer column of water which looked as if it was falling out of the sky.

Voodoo Studios is a renovated mining depot as the town itself was formed in the Victorian era while echoes of the pre-existing Ute Tribe are known only through a haze of local legend. The region later hosted some of Nicola Tesla's large-scale developments of electricity as Telluride's other waterfall, Bridal Veil Falls, has its own decommissioned generator, the Smuggler-Union Hydroelectric Powerplant – while the earliest industrial size A/C generator that Tesla created, Ames Hydroelectric Generating Plant in nearby Ophir is still operational.

It was confluence of snow and falling water, speed and play and skateboarding along with the history of mining and all the exploitation and development and there... And then Tesla – and the feeling that electricity is still so new and recent, and gained traction by leveraging gravity and water and the abundance of static electricity in the dry alpine air.

The experience was all bit haunting and and time-warping... While at same the time skaters were flying and crashing into my studio window outside.



*Photo courtesy of the Artist*

Then, if we fast-forward to my next project in Oaxaca, it was a much more rigorous and bare experience than creating at an indoor studio – and in the Southernmost reach of continent at Sea Level.

I began the first few phases of my sculpture super slowly, without any guidance other than process and observation, until one day I found a bamboo stick that just so happened to be the exact same length as the diameter of the circular element I was working on. I played around with it for a few minutes until I realized how helpful it would be if I turned it into a visual tool by painting different colors on it... Like a color chart for photography or filmmaking – but more complex and for 3-D.

It was a simple tool but incredibly instrumental. I was able to test out compositions from across the street so I could get an idea of how the painting could change depending on any given distance or angle. Later on, a couple of uncanny things happened with this tool that I'll get into... And a conch shell. The conch is pretty crucial, but this picture of the stick will give you some context...



*Photo courtesy of the Artist*



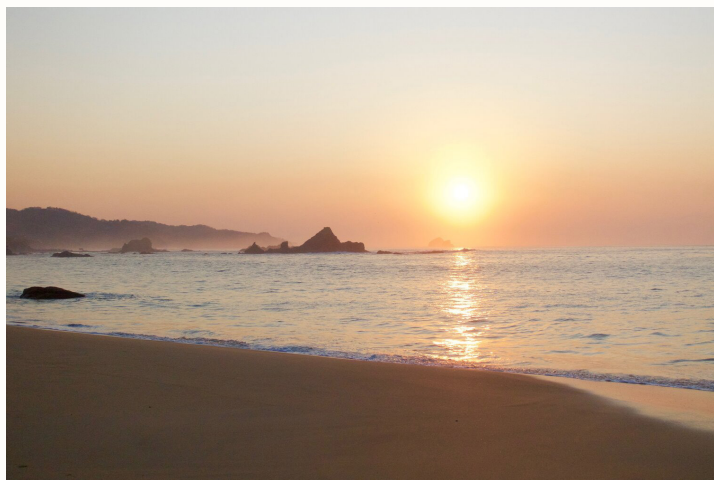
*Photo courtesy of the Artist*

Was there a spontaneous technique, or some kind of method you did to the artifact in order for it to emulate its effects?

My process can be seen as improvisation but stretched out over a long period of time and with a series of different material phases. The first step (for pre-existing sites) is to degrade the existing architecture or wall, then lay the new sculptural concrete surface on top.

After that, I start painting with metal leaf, raw pigments, and acrylic bases. For instance, degrading the existing wall and laying the new concrete is like a whole intensive process with a pretty big arc in terms of physicality. I need to degrade the existing surface so that the new layer of concrete has something to hold on to. Applied concrete performs much better when set on a surface of variegated depths. So, I take the back of a hammer and pierce chunks out of the old surface as evenly spaced as I can. It's violent, dusty, super aggressive, but that's the beginning of the work. From here, I go from a super harsh phase of repeated movements to then mixing concrete, making it liquid and then I have this super soft, much different tactile experience with free-form Artmaking that feels like the polar opposite of what I was just doing.

It sounds like when this work of art was coming into being it was a morning piece – you lived in the morning, you didn't really live in the day next to this, or like its first breaths weren't during noon-time or midday sun. So, how have the places that you've lived – the spaces that you've made your art – influenced your artefacts?



Dawn in Mazunte  
Photo courtesy of Stephen Zamisch,

Yes, morning light. I even kept the work veiled until it was finished... And the Pacific Ocean. I could hear the waves so clearly too at this time... Now, this brings me to the first 'event' that I had with my spacial painting tool which synchronizes with the conch shell later on...

Every morning in Mazunte as the sun glowed below the horizon, I'd pass through a network of dirt roads and walking paths on my way to the clinic where the only creatures awake were cats and dogs and chickens. There was always this one puppy half-black, half-white that would come bounding to greet me. One day, right as I was getting ready to paint the first gestures of color on top of a new layer of bronze, Silver and aluminum leaf, my puppy-friend was frolicking about and bit one of the pink colors on the stick (the same pink as in *Fénix Ometeotl*).

Whereas in the days before this encounter leading up to using color for the first time – I was a bit hesitant and nervous to start painting... And this puppy – this joyful, playful gesture of a bite hold perfectly positioned on the pink of my already peculiar tool was a kind of signal for me. So, I just ran with it... And as the painting came together, it remained the only color besides those tones of metal that came through – which brings me to the significance of the conch shell.

My friends, Ome Tochtly and Elian Cohuatzpali held an opening ceremony for the public reception of *Fénix Ometeotl* titled *MAZEHUALIZTLI*. Elian is from México City and Ome is from an Aztec community in Volcán Popocatepetl. Together, they arranged a mixture of orange, pineapple, obsidian, coral, shells, flowers, bone, textiles, and other spiritual tools in front of the Artwork on the sidewalk for their ceremony. Elian drummed with a Huehuetl percussion instrument while Ome executed a series of specific movements according to his Nahuatl and Aztec knowledge traditions that integrate in mathematical method movements of the planets into cosmically attuned gestures and choreography.

At the beginning and end of the ceremony, Ome blew through his conch shell with its aperture facing the audience in arcs from East to



Photo courtesy of Stephen Zamisch

West, with the shell's natural internal colors exactly matching the tone of the pink motions in *Fénix Ometeotl* and aligning with angles of the painting in 10 second intervals during each conch blast.

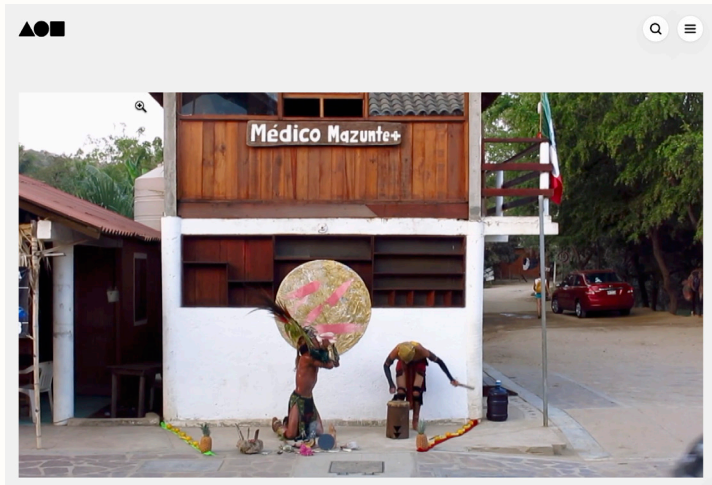
I was breathless... It was a completely unexpected and gorgeous visual revelation symbolic of the Ocean. The visual optics of this moment in tandem with Ome's booming conch blasts... I mean I'm not sure I have words enough to explain what it felt like... I even remember seeing one woman crying... I had no idea that this hyper

specific tone of pink that I had chosen via the puppy was going to match an event of that magnitude during the ceremony. Then afterwards, everyone in the audience kept asking me if I designed the Artwork based on the conch shell... And if it the project was about the Ocean.

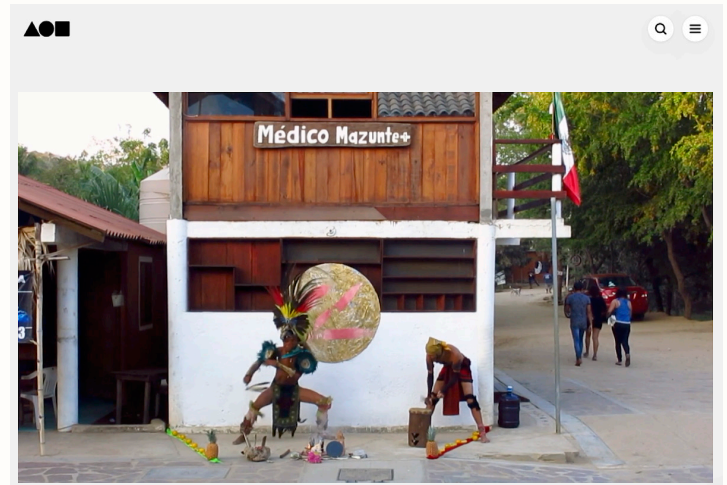
Important to note that this specific evening for FO's opening ceremony was chosen by the Doctor and me specifically because it was a full Moon (in Leo), and at that time of year in Mazunte (February 9, 2020), full Moons rise while the Sun is hovering above the horizon. The event took place during this window of time when the Sun and Moon were both present in the sky.

Now, this brings me to another element of my projects that I haven't touched on yet – NFTs. I tokenized still and video documentation of *Fénix Ometeotl* and *MAZEHUALIZTLI* into 6 NFTs for collection at the on-chain marketplace *Foundation*. This aspect of my Public and Open Space projects extends to building out NFT collections as funding pathways so that I can continue to self-produce, as well as establish a record and archive for my site-specific Public and Open Space Artworks. NFT application is also really exciting for me as it affords particular agency in remote and developing communities and addresses vital potentialities for crypto such as redistribution of wealth, resource development and new cultural mechanisms within the Global South.

This moment of Ome blasting the conch shell you can see here in the Video NFT titled *TECOCOLY + EHECATL II* (Nahuatl for conch shell + wind), now owned by the collector Mimomi. This NFT captures Ome's closing conch blasts and final moments of the ceremony – Ome and Elian earning royalties from each Video NFT sale in this collection.



TECOCOLY + EHECATL II Video NFT, now owned by Mimomi  
<https://foundation.app/@mariahelenatrad/foundation/75608>



MAZEHUALIZTLI Video NFT  
<https://foundation.app/@mariahelenatrad/foundation/75579>

It's really hard to encapsulate this story you just told me. It's even more difficult to make it into a question that I can then ask someone because, I feel what's most important is to notice the moment when the puppy bites the color, to seize its significance and then be willing to *just-run-with-it* – I feel like those three moments are, more often than not, overlooked and missed, especially if you're not ready to be open to see or, to grasp them

Yes. And the arc of a quite private, even child-like discovery unexpectedly phasing into a collective event was all deeply stunning for me I do need to say... The notion of danger and Death, my own and others, was hyper-present when creating this piece... An Artwork that would come to exist long-term on and for a clinic in a developing community with slim access to medical services and hospitals. *Emergency*, crisis, pain, injury, victimhood of rape and violence, accidental harm, the threat of mortality, the

phenomenon of disease... These events compose the spectrum of what has and does take place at Centro Médico Mazunte... And then Healing and knowledge practices, Western medicine versus traditional/holistic healing (whose political/Catholic tensions in Oaxaca I discussed at length with the Doctor and the cause of why he remains unnamed in this article). That's why when choosing the Artwork's color, I was a bit intimidated... To engage myself at this level of depth and circumstance, and to take responsibility for whatever creative outcomes and impacts to follow. Then in comes the puppy.

What impression do you want your audience to receive? To say this differently, what is the characteristic-mark you want your work to leave on people?



Freedom is there for me... Freedom of expression, free will and emotion.

What impression for others...? Well, that's a challenging question for me... While some works may be more charged than others, in the end it's up to the viewer to experience.

Do you consider the longevity of the piece itself, when you go about creating it?



Photo courtesy of Maria Borodacheva

Yes, longevity is a critical dynamic for me and a definite pursuit at the time when I developed this method in Colorado... But also the beautiful thing about working with increasingly organic materials is that long term 'performance' sort of phases into play naturally... Substances of the earth just last and keep giving. I also view longevity hand in hand with accessibility and since 2020, I've committed to creating Public and Open Space projects exclusively – developing Art only if the site is freely accessible outdoors and/or part of a community space.

Now, I feel it's a half-step to this next question, which is, 'Is sustainability important to your artefacts?' but, I'm gonna throw-in the question to follow as well, because I feel the response is going to relate them, so, the second question is, 'Do themes regarding Climate Change appear in your work?'

Yes and yes! Both have been major players for me internally on material and production fronts (striving to be as zero waste as possible, etc.), and in my newest project *aqua + H*, I address Climate Change and Sustainability head on.

*aqua + H* is an evolving, roving project developed in partnership with HRIBANIKA – a solar-powered Earthship community center in Zipolite, Oaxaca founded by Psychologist Angélica Tonalkiahuitl. Together, *aqua + H* seeks to re-stabilize sustainable access to water in a region of increasingly problematic supply through the creation of Visual Art NFTs that document a series of my Public Space Artworks.

Created in 2014, Angélica constructed HRIBANIKA's well with two Oaxacan brothers who had inherited their technical skill and knowledge of water within the land from their family lineage. Operational for 3 years with clean potable water serving the entire complex, this well's access to the water table became blocked after Tropical Storm Beatriz hit the Pacific coastline in June 2017.

Historically, families and businesses of the area have stewarded their own individual needs through wells as drinking and tap water source, yet over the last decades the majority of home and businesses have now switched to purchasing non-potable water from the town and purified potable water from private vendors – quantities all transported by diesel truck and delivered to each individual location (this region has no water infrastructure).

On a critical note, Zipolite's non-potable water is sourced from a single municipal well which has become over-extracted as recent water tests now measure sustained salinity – causes attributed to the ongoing tourist boom and decreasing annual rainfall occurring regionally (Climate Change).

Right now, I'm raising seed funding to cover production costs for the initial Public Artwork installment within 2023 (location TBA) – where NFT sales will kick off the well's multi-phase repair along with solar powered equipment to mobilize HRIBANIKA with its groundwater. Then as the project rolls out, I hope to create 2 – 3 Public Artworks in total across sites globally as we restore HRIBANIKA's well in real time, linking new communities to this local problem.



HRIBANIKA's Well  
Photo courtesy of the Artist

Here's aqua + H on my website:

[www.mariahelenatrad.com/aquah](http://www.mariahelenatrad.com/aquah)

A bit more about HRIBANIKA – Angélica is a Humanistic Psychologist with a Masters in Gestalt Therapy, as well as a practitioner of the aquatic practices Jansu (Japanese) and Aguahara. She purchased the 8,800 square meter parcel of Tropical Dry Forest in 2013, developing a combination of terraced multi-use areas, sheltered and open-air, including a geodesic dome, palapa roofed hearth and kitchen, dry toilet, and an earthen Temazcal (ceremonial sweat lodge) – applying Earthship Bioteecture throughout.

ILHUICATL CHALCHIHUITL, Nahuatl for "Sky of Jade", is the name of HRIBANIKA'S Temazcal which was seeded on the new moon December 2017, and is based on the Mexicayotl traditions that were inherited to Angélica from the lineage of grandmothers of the Moon Dance Xochimeztli, with guidance from Grandmother Guadalupe Retiz Tonalmitl.



HRIBANIKA's Temazcal ILHUICATL CHALCHIHUITL, SKY OF JADE  
Photo courtesy of the Artist

Angélica guides her Temazcals on every full and new moon, while hosting a range of educational workshops, events and community summits throughout the year in the many spaces and structures across her land. With a particular focus on women's health, HRIBANIKA is intended as a kind of sanctuary for healing in connection to Nature, while honoring the many knowledge traditions of the land.



TLAHUIZTLAMPA (*huanacaxtle*), 2020

Here's the Airdrop, *TLAHUIZTLAMPA (huanacaxtle)*, 2020, which I gifted to all primary NFT collectors from FO's collection on *Foundation*. It's abstracted photo documentation of an outdoor sculpture experiment (from the initial project concept) where I used 22k Gold – with the giant Huanacaxtle tree (Nahuatl) that lives directly East of the well and casts shade on the surrounding area (*Tlahuiztlampa* is Nahuatl for direction East).

If you look into this specific species *Enterolobium Cyclocarpum*, you'll find that these trees grow in areas with an abundance of groundwater and they're known to hold water in their roots which affords the rest of the ecosystem greater resilience, especially in landscapes with dry seasons.

If someone in the future were to look into the past, by holding your artefact, physically or visually, what do you hope it tells them about who we are today, here-and-now?

I hope these future-humans see a different humanity than what I see now – a species that restores a bond to Nature and chooses to sustain no other reality than what is healthy for all bodies and the planet.

There's a site in Oaxaca City called Monte Albán I need to check out... And there are pyramids there, I really want to go!

I love how the temples aligned with the stars and constellations, those celestial bodies.

Yes, me too... Last summer I lived in Oaxaca City and right next door to two churches that face each other. Two separate churches – both enormous, super European and Baroque looking... And they face each other in this over-the-top, grandiose way across a courtyard where some of the tallest trees I've seen yet in the city are growing.

Then in my apartment complex, giant natural stone is sort of like popping out of the sides of buildings and emerging from the ground. I learned from my landlady that in Oaxaca City, it's a construction tradition to honor the natural stone when you encounter it – you're not supposed to build on top of it and cover it up, but

you must build around it. The staircase to my front door rises up and around all this beautiful natural stone which then extends into the living room of a nearby apartment where it's incorporated into the architecture as a living raw rock wall.

So – back to the churches, I also learned from my landlady that they were built on top of pre-existing sacred sites belonging to the Zapotec – at the mouths of caves full of fresh water. Later, when the Spanish came, they built those churches we now see as edifices to shutter the cave openings and to privatize the community's access to their water source, while co-opting a site intrinsic to their cosmology.

Has Culture inspired you?

Yes, very much so... For FO, I spent a lot of time with the Florentine Codex, Codex Borgia (both Vatican property FYI) and Codex Mendoza (in England at University of Oxford), as well as with artifacts online at National Museum of Anthropology in México City. Lately, I've read *Bonds of Blood: Gender, Lifecycle, and Sacrifice in Aztec Culture* by Caroline Dodds Pennock and *The Disobedience of the Daughter of the Sun* by Martin Prechtel, which is an incredible Mayan creation story where the author unpacks how the myth functions as a deep ecology overlay.

For HRIBANIKA, Angie is educating me on elements of Mexika knowledge traditions as she herself also participates with Mexicayotl traditions that were inherited to her from the lineage of grandmothers of the Moon Dance Xochimeztli.

Beyond these recent projects, I love exploring medicinal herbs, pottery and textile traditions. Important to mention here too my love of music! I feel sound is a huge influence and I'm constantly listening and dancing and building playlists.



PAUROSAMENTE BEÒLLA, 2017  
<https://market.zora.co/collections/zora/6130>

Do you have any collections?

Yes! I created FO's NFT collection on *Foundation* which I've touched on, and I have a 2nd on a marketplace called *ZORA* from my experiments at Voodoo Studios in Telluride, Colorado. AND also! Collection of my NFTs now will all go towards funding my initial Public Artwork for *aqua + H*.

**Telluride Arts District: Genesis Collection on ZORA**

<https://market.zora.co/collections/zora/6130>

<https://market.zora.co/0x8b70Da76a5E941353D334Ed77baD5F1F86236C25?status=LISTED&collection=>



Artwork at the entrance of the Temazcal at  
Anawak Nelwayok Teokalli in Mazunte  
Photo courtesy of the Artist



jewel, 2018 in Brooklyn, New York  
<https://market.zora.co/collections/zora/6131>  
Photo courtesy of the Artist

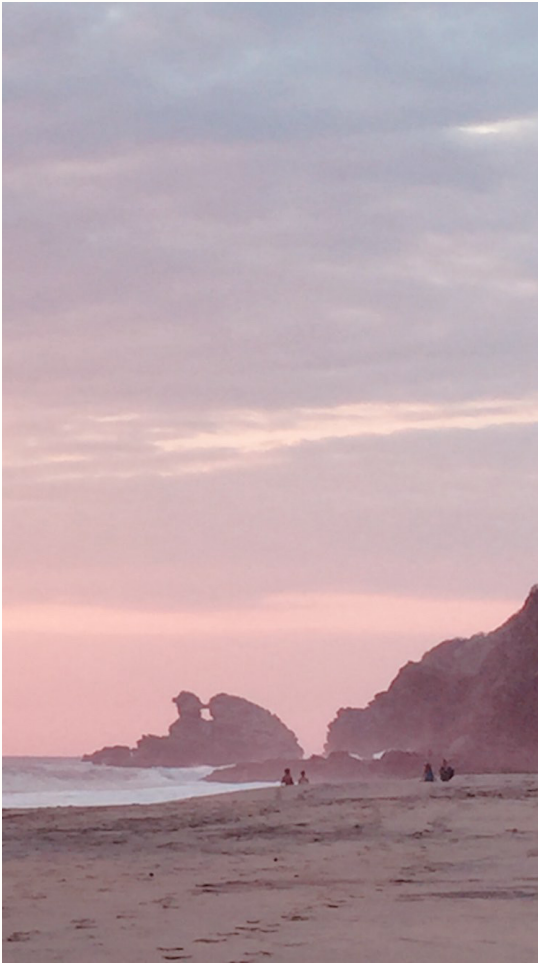


\*\*\*, 2017  
<https://market.zora.co/collections/zora/6081>

[www.MariaHelenaTrad.com](http://www.MariaHelenaTrad.com)

Instagram:  
[@\\_trad\\_](https://www.instagram.com/_trad_/)

# LOCALITY



*Photo courtesy of Maria Borodacheva,  
Playa Mermejita, Oaxaca*

Space and Place are two ways of speaking about the way an individual's body orients to the chemico-physical conditions they are simultaneously being surrounded by and becoming embedded within. What space and place have in common is their ability to suggest a ground, namely, the existence of a voluminous expanse that is exterior to them – an exterior which they are an occupant of. On one hand, space is the vast expanse, taken to its extreme it is akin to the thought of an unlimited abyss that continues to enlarge. On the other hand, place is an abstraction of a certain definite site, taken to its extreme it is akin to the thought of a limitless collecting together of elemental units along with the intangible relations that meld all of the things into one cohesive whole. What distinguishes place from space is that, unlike space, a character emerges from the specific features and relations unique to a place. Bearing such a character in mind, I must proceed with a great deal of delicacy because I do not wish to continue to encourage the thought that there is an ideal model in Space that places are the mere copies of, nor do I wish to prolong the notion that the characteristics of any one Place are transposable onto others. What will follow from here is a discussion of the plurality of Worlds on Earth. No two locations on the surface of the Earth are the same, every locality is different.

The celestial object that our species occupies is planet Earth. In all of the cosmos, the only planet with the conditions necessary to support carbon-based lifeforms has occurred here, on Earth. The miracle and mystery of our inhabitation of the Earth is that to the best of our knowledge there is not another planet that we know

to be hospitable for us. Furthermore, we do not occupy every habitat on Earth, our occupancy is primarily terrestrial, land-based. Land, in this sense, is considered as the Earth's crust. I refer to the strata humanity occupies on Earth – the plane between the Earth's crust and the upper limit of the troposphere – as *the Surface*. The surface is decorated with valleys, plateaus, caves, canyons, fjords, but with regard to these environmental features and phenomena what is important to discern about the surface is that it acts not only as a three-dimensional backdrop but as a cradle that pools and mixes Earth's elements together: sky, ground, water, fire, aether. Plato's hollows in the Earth are not evenly dispersed around the globe nor are they uniform in size, they are the depressions in the surface that accommodate the seething and settling which results from the chemico-physical mixing of abiotic processes. The sliver of nature humanity encounters is not concerned with our frailty or nourishment, the surface, although we inhabit it, remains entirely impersonal. That is to say, the surface is as indifferent to our presence as it is to our absence.

Biomes decorate the Surface. Within a Biome are territories and within a single territory are various ecosystems composed of communities interacting with one another and, still further, the communities themselves are entanglements of interacting populations which are concerts of action performed by individuals. Similar to the way the largest matryoshka doll houses a whole but smaller doll within itself and so on, biomes are better understood as housing whole territories composed of smaller but whole habitats within them. A biome is the largest level of environmental organization but, while

environmental 'levels' are a good tool for organized planning, they dispel the spontaneous interactions between flora and fauna and the abiotic dynamics characterizing the biome itself. I clarify this point because I do not think that things and beings solely exist on top of the Earth, the abiotic dynamics and the relations formed between biota are by no means sempiternal. Instead, I observe how the interactions between biota and their abiotic dynamics fill biomes and decorate the surface.

Worlds adorn the Surface. The surface is not uniform and tidy; it is covered with biomes passively regulating the abiotic dynamics that characterize them. The regulation of dynamics is upheld by underlying rhythms. A rhythm is repetitive, it may repeat second after second, day after day, season after season, or year after year but, regardless of its frequency, its primary characteristic is that *it* comes again and again. Biomes are massive fields swarming with rhythms. Innumerable interactions are underway within a biome, so many that a biome is able to be conceived as a writhing slurry, bellowing as rhythms endlessly mix rhythms within rhythms within rhythms within it. To take the mixture to its smallest extreme, smaller than atoms, all the way down to the top of the abyss, it seems as if rhythms spontaneously occur, continuously sprouting up from below onto the surface of the Earth, *ex nihilo*. Conversely, taking biomes as the massive fields of rhythms of the surface and, by extending thought out to the translucent Milky Way, it becomes clear that Earth is a single rhythm among several others within the cosmic-galaxy, *ad infinitum*. Every event, fusion, collision, or explosion, radiates the Surface; acts are thunderbolts. The surface is never smooth and silent – it is charged

## REFLECTION

– everything vibrating together, but not in harmony nor all at once, it is a cacophony. The waves of sound, colors, textures, tastes, and fragrances...the variety of frequencies one is surrounded by and embedded within are a **world**. Worlds are spots, moments, non-material regions of influence, where various modes of interaction occur. They are populated by locals who, within their world, tune into a **rhythm** and carve a **locality** into a world. Indeed, a locality is an encapsulation of a world within a world. To continue, locals continuously engage with their locality. They do this by paying attention to the way their locality moves; they relate to the world they are surrounded by and embedded within; and, they participate in expressing a local way of life. A locality is distinct from the world it is inside of because a locality is a translation of a world, and the translations of a world clothe and adorn a locality in a myriad of ways. How locals do their translating is what makes each clutch of locals unique, beautiful, and different from others.

Scattered across the Surface are localities differing, filling worlds within worlds within the biomes of the surface. Nowhere being an identical copy of somewhere else. Yes, I am still questioning how people – although we all live on Earth – come from different worlds. I hypothesize that locals embody a tempo, a measured pace, a manner of living that adheres to a way of interpreting and evaluating the momentum of their world as it occupies a portion of a biome.

I seek to clarify how Sustainability is observed in and becomes expressed through local-lifestyles.

I've learned that there are no guides. Storms with clouds come and one loses sight of the stars that decorated the clearly distant sky above. Catastrophes bring a feeling of being encompassed by an ever-changing labyrinth. I'm uncertain of where 'a beginning' is...if there ever was one...and, (un)fortunately I've come to realize there are no outright directions, only events ceaselessly unfolding. The questions of 'where are we going', 'to what end', and 'for what purpose' have come to sound like, and are as good as, a yell that was muffled and carried off by the wind of a thunder-storm. Apologies. All I'll ever know is how I've made sense of the events I've encountered throughout my time at sea. I'm no-one paddling a canoe in a quasi-space where rivers of time. A near and dear friend described my situation quite accurately, perhaps better than I could express until I read the words, 'a place without an occupant; an occupant without a place'. Maverick. This is isolating and solitary but I've always found my friends to be ones who've felt they never 'fit in' nor been ones to conform to the idealized mainstream. My friends and I hear the tremor of silence and live in accordance with the violence of its unwritten law:  
this is the way it is.



POET:  
GRACE HOROWITZ

Grace recommended several sites for me to stop at as I moved out to the Pacific Northwest, from campsites in Wyoming and hot springs in Idaho, to the ancient soils and lake beds of the painted hills in eastern Oregon. We met face-to-face at a bar called Roscoe's and have been friends since.

So Grace, our first question is: What is the name of the city you live in?

I live in Portland, Oregon, in the Hosford-Abernathy neighborhood in the SE quadrant of Portland.

Do you hang out in the neighborhood often?

Yeah, definitely. I think one of the perks of living in a close-in part of Portland is that there are these little pockets of walkability, these little neighborhoods, like Clinton Street, or Division. You know, different little places that connect to some of the more arterial aspects of the city, like Hawthorne and Burnside, and all of that, MLK.

What are some of the spots that you frequent in the neighborhood?

There's an intersection of about two blocks and there are quite a few businesses in that little area. I feel I've been to all of them at least once, but frequent most of them. There's a great little wine bar called 'Bar Norman', everyone who works there is beautiful and the vibe is just immaculate. They have great wine, but it also has a nice cozy little neighborhood feel to it. I go to the record store that's close by. There's also Bröder, it's been a staple of

Portland for a long time. There's Dot's bar, right by Bar Norman, and that is just a funky little old dive that's very very old-portland. And then, La Moule, which is my favorite French food place.

Can you describe the atmosphere of that neighborhood?

It's funny, it is a nice neighborhood, it is one of the nicer school districts in the city, and so the neighborhood from where my house is over, is really nice - there's a little co-op down the corner from me, and it's very crunchy and hippie-y mixed with that bourgeois californians-moving-into-oregon thing that seems to be happening everywhere that's not california. But then, if you go at all south of my house, there's Powell, which is a state highway as well as a street and there's just a huge congregation of poverty, homelessness, a lot of crime, a lot of bikini clubs and strip clubs that are all really seedy. And so it's this weird juxtaposition of a really nice, family neighborhood and then you have, on the other side, kind of disenfranchised and impoverished people. I feel what's interesting about the little area that I inhabit is that it really is the juxtaposition of what Portland is, which is this really cool city with all these things to offer but then also just has this huge problem of people who don't have access to basic needs or services. If I were to give it a personality, I think I would give it a personality disorder. My neighborhood has border-line personality disorder, maybe schizophrenia. Manic, maybe it's bi-polar, just high highs and low lows. I mean, when I moved in there my neighbors came and introduced themselves to me and everybody was so nice and showed up with produce from their gardens and all these things and then, simultaneously, every night that I forgot to lock my car it would get, not only rifled through but slept in, somebody put a cigarette out on my dashboard. It really is this huge span of the

human experience, I'm like: "people are so nice and welcoming and then I'm like 'fuck, people are so fucked up!' like, lost... . So, yeah, it's a lot.

Where you feel that you are a local?

Yeah, you know it's interesting, when I go home to Idaho, where I grew up, I do still feel like a local there as well. And so, I was thinking about it more as in multiple places where I still kind of have that like local-entitlement, because there's a difference between being a local and a tourist, and being able to occupy multiple places and not be in that tourist mentality. Growing up in tourism, it's always been the thing that we knew but also part of the problem. And so, *never really wanting to feel like a tourist when I go places is really important to me, like connecting with locals and doing what is more real for that locality.* But, in Portland, I definitely feel that there are places that make me feel most of my localness. Atlantis is probably the major one. It's my music community, every week from October to March - through the cold months - we have this collective of incredible musicians who all get together to practice their new songs, and we share our work that way. It's an exceptionally lovely open-mic. That is the place that I feel the most local in Portland. There are other places too, but that one feels the most like really entrenched in my identity, and not just like 'oh, this is just a shop I frequent', or something, you know, cause there are those too but those don't feel as much a part of me or like something would be missing if it went away. I'll live without buffalo exchange if they close...I'll be sad, don't get me wrong, but yeah.

You said something, just a few seconds ago, about what feels real for the world there - can you elaborate on that?

There's the physical space, and there's the cast. The physical space never changes and the cast does kind of shift - some people come one week, they don't come another - but there is this sense of 'to be a local is to know that you're going to go somewhere and know the people, or know that there will be people there that you know and that you love'. Just *knowing that you can always walk into a space at a particular time and feel supported.* That feels very much like a local to me. To feel, on top of that, that because of my presence and how I show up, and the energy that I bring, and how long I've been doing it, I feel that it is a part of me but I am also a part of it. That's what makes me feel real, it does feel like a big part of who I am, much more so than the percentage of time that it occupies in my week. It's like 3 or 4 hours one day a week but it still feels like very much bigger than that amount of time.

Does the world that you inhabit go by a name?

I mean, I think it sort of has like a few...but, funnily enough I feel almost like in like a cult status way we just often refer to it as The Community, not our community, not a community, but the community. That's the one I think that for us that are really a part of it, that is like the major one. Then we'll have little satellites of names like 'atlantis' or 'the San Francisco crew', the people who aren't necessarily here but are still connected to it. But it doesn't really have a [proper] name. It used to. Years ago, instead of the Atlantis Lounge event, we were centralized around my friend Christopher's band called NIAYH - "Now Is All You Have", that was the full name. They had a big black tour bus that had that stenciled down the side in white letters, it looked post-apocalyptic, but it was very much not a death metal 'now is all you have!' it was like a jam-band 'now is all

you have, let's be here, be present'. So, yeah, back then we called it the NIAYH crew. The NIAYH crew was the band but then it was also all the people that were connected to the band, and kind of showed up and were like the regulars of their events. And then that evolved into Atlantis which, I suppose Atlantis could potentially be the name for it because that is one of the like kind of crux-things that has gathered all of these people together...that is where the kind of birthplace of the community is, and it's sort of how people will come into it a lot. That event. I feel that people, local musicians, will hear about it, come, play, meet people, connect, and we're very inviting and warm, we want it to expand, we like collaboration - it's very much unique in Portland in that way. I feel like Portland can often be a really hard city to find a community in. It's dark, it's a very introverted city, people are very insular, they have like their little clicks and it's very hard to break in, but I think the thing about our community is that people really want to bring new people in. Because we're oriented in art, and always art thrives better when it has new things coming in, so it's unique in that way. Sorry, kind of tangented but, I feel that the community, Atlantis, Atlantis is the place of the community but it isn't the name of the community. It's just sort where we find new members.

This is my favorite question because it's really the most difficult and profound question to answer, I was writing about a world named "The Omo". I went to the Omo but there was no plaque on the ground or thing that I could touch that was the core essence of this Omo-world. Nevertheless, I sensed that the Omo everywhere around me.

Was that personal to you though? Or, was that something that the whole community that you were a part of called it?

I went into the Omo to visit the Omo Valley Tribes. They're from this location on the Earth, the Omo Valley, which is encapsulated in the lower part of the Omo-Gibe River Basin. I don't think that they refer to themselves as the Omo Valley Tribes, the tribes have individual names (i.e. Mursi, Kara, and Nyangatom, etc.), but I do think that the Omo is the name of the dynamics that fill the river basin but are that which the tribes have made various relationships with in order to inhabit it, year after year.

It's an interesting question. I went on all those tangents about how the community is created. I think it would be interesting to ask that to all of the people of a community and see what the different answers are. Pie chart it and be like '50% call it 'the community', because I do think that some people call it 'the atlantis crowd'. Atlantis is kind of the place of the community but the community is not just of that place, it's like surrounding it.

And to call this thing a world - I want to clarify this a bit - the thing that I am trying to get after here is really the articulation of there are worlds within worlds within worlds inside of each locality on Earth.

You know, you could do the micro- to macro-, it's like there's the larger community when it's all of us, or as many of us as we can get together, and there's like several hundred people if we bring people who are like affiliated. But then it can break down to just 30 people or even, just this relationship. Where it can be two people are still a small world within that larger one. It's a solar system really.

This is a great way to continue, so, what happens when you're in it' so to speak?

The most obvious answer is that you go there to either share or experience the art people make. That is the pretense under which we are all gathering, but so much other stuff happens in that space. Relationships are made and broken, friendships are forged, fights happen, information is exchanged, inspiration happens, collaboration happens, there's so much that occurs in that space and because of that space. If I were to say one thing that describes what happens there I would say: connection. Because, to share music is to try to connect your inside with somebody else's inside. That's what poetry and music is, it's trying to bring the inner voice into outer, to create understanding. From that world perspective, we're our own tiny little worlds that are inaccessible to other people. Connection is what happens there, its connection and sharing, of energy and ideas and presence.

To get more perspective here, how did you stumble upon this world?

It's funny because I feel I was there at, and maybe even in some ways part of its birthing process. The person who is the center of this system is my friend Christopher who had the band NIAYH, and he is one of those really special people where he has this incredible magnetism and ability to see and connect with people. Not only to do that on an individual level but then to be able to look at you and someone else from across the room and be like 'oh, you two should meet, you would get along, or you could collaborate'. I've known Christopher long before I lived in Portland. I met him when I was 17, in Sun Valley, Idaho at a coffee shop. We stayed in touch via MySpace for years, and at that point he was a philosophy major and did music on the side. He graduated from Stanford that year and started producing his

music and posting the songs on MySpace - it was good and I was just watching him from afar. This was the advent of social media on the internet. So yeah, it didn't feel like 'a stumbling upon' it because I had had the connection to the person who was like the creator of it for so long before the thing itself was created that it just sort of was there... 'stumble-upon' is funny for me, with this world that feels central to me specifically because that just doesn't feel like how it came to be. It almost feels like it grew around me, I was in a field that suddenly became a forest...like, I was already there.

I say stumble upon, because I think chance plays a significant role not only in what we encounter, but what we choose to do about it. Life is hilarious, it's so unpredictable: he walking into that coffee shop, you being there...what are the odds - one in a few thousands of billions?

So I guess I could say that my world stumbled upon me by Christopher walking into the coffee shop where I was working.

Yeah, to me that's crazy, now you're in it.

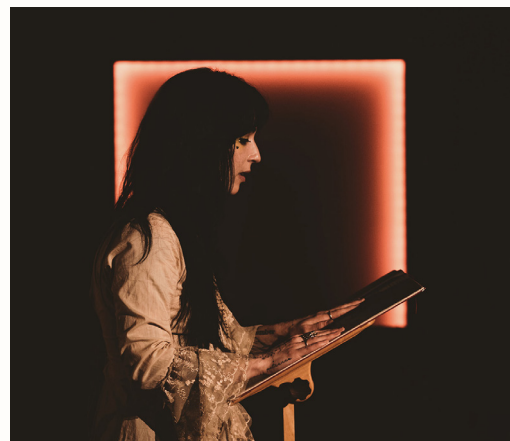
I owe that moment not my entire life, but a lot of it. If I hadn't met Christopher in that moment I wouldn't have moved to Portland. I guess this feels like an important part of the story, of stumbling upon it, cause Christopher and I connected, stayed in touch via MySpace or whatever, he started that band called NIAYH, and then we had never seen each other again, from the time I was 17 until I was 21 and then I was living in Boise, Idaho. NIAYH had tried to move to Colorado and it had gone south. There were five members of the band and three of them had gotten dumped and left by their girlfriends when they got to Colorado. So, they packed

up the bus and, driving back to Oregon heartbroken, Christopher called me from Denver and was like, 'hey, we're driving through Boise and we have this big 'ol bus and we'd love to have a place to crash and eat. We'd love to hang out with you'. So he came and stayed with me and we had a really fun night, all of us, and the next morning we went and got breakfast and, after breakfast, they were like 'we don't want to leave!' and I was like 'I don't want you guys to go either', and they were like 'why don't you come with us?!' and so I hopped on the tour bus with them. Really, these people I didn't know at all, I had known Christopher from afar but this was our second time ever spending time together. I hopped on the bus with them and came to Portland and hung out here for a week or two, had some good times and some bad times but built my connection with all of them at that point, then left. And then, when I decided to move here it was because I knew I had these people that I knew, right, I knew that I had this sampling of how cool Portland could be from their perspective.

The seed was planted. When I think of worlds I think of eddy's in a river, where it looks like a little galaxy, all these little flecks swirling towards a gravitational center.

Yeah, there are many satellites. There is one that I can't talk about - it's a Fight Club kind of secret - but then, of course, there is Atlantis and, like I said, Christopher being so central to this - and, it's so funny, I didn't really come into this conversation expecting to bring him up so much but he is so vital to this, he is kind of like the head of the snake. If he were to go away, it might evolve and adapt but it wouldn't be the same. He really is the glue that holds a lot of it together. So his home is also a place that has been really part of that evolution. It used to be this really dilapidated

house that for a while didn't have running water, and then the heater broke. Now it's been renovated and we still hold events there. I've gone to tons of New Years Eve parties, or Christopher used to have listening-parties for when he would release albums, and then one of the satellites being my event called Poet's Anonymous, which is branching off from Atlantis as a poetry offering.



We have an open-mic portion where people can come share, we do a little bit of music, and then we'll have a couple local - pacific northwest local - poets read a chunk of their work. That's really special because it's something that is kind of inspired by the larger community and so what's special about this community is that that does happen. Everything from other little events to dinner parties. Poet's Anonymous is going to be having a retreat next February, where we are going to go to this little hot springs and just, in the cold of winter, entrench ourselves. It, it has this potential to constantly be budding and growing new satellites, which is what makes it so special, is that we're all always, because you've got a group of super creative people - we can't help but

constantly bring creation. There's always something cool and new on the horizon that is caused by these overlapping interactions. It's almost like a blackberry bush, where you'll be digging for it and you'll be like 'i think i got all of it' and then you'll turn around and it'll be like tangled in your hair or whatever, but in a good way. Anyway, it kind of lives everywhere, it goes down into San Francisco, there's a little satellite over in Switzerland, it kind of lives everywhere where there are people that are a part of it. All it takes is two people from the community to find each other and then there's a satellite.

Where do you catch glimpses of it?

The first thing that really came to mind is band stickers. Because there's all these different musicians, so you'll see someone wearing a shirt from one of your friend's bands that you just saw perform. And, again, the N.I.A.Y.H., that big black bus they had these stickers and for that older community, anytime anyone would see that sticker it was like immediately 'oh, of course - it can't be anything else'. Now, in this time, it's pretty hard to say, cause I can't have newcomer's eyes because I have never been a newcomer to it. I'd almost, I don't know if this is okay, because we're doing this interview but I'd almost want to flip around that question and ask it to you. Because you've been an outsider to it and had that new experience.

But that's why I'm interviewing you, I know that I can see it, I've felt it. And it is quite apparent that, at first, I wasn't a part of it but I was definitely in something that was new to me. But, because of that, I know I want to keep fresh eyes on it, for the people that are in it. So asking this question is really important because I know you have something special. But, if

I were to talk about it, it's not the same as you. I'll throw you a bone. It's when people voice something really personal, it speaks through them. The rooms are always so quiet, even at Atlantis, like it's pretty impressive that this tiny room packed full of people can be so quiet to hear somebody perform a new song. But it's also that silence, it's really heavy, and that voice that speaks, that, that's it. Of course it's the voice of someone but it's that contrast between somebody being really vulnerable but also having that really heavy silence to feel supported in. That was the first time where I was like, 'yup, this is something special'.

Have you ever floated in salt water, really really salted water, the great salt lake or the dead sea? It kind of holds you, buoyant. And typically, the experience of water that we have is that we're just gonna sink and, I feel that that silence at Atlantis or other events that we have has, it is kind of like floating in saltwater, that heavier silence allows us to be more buoyant because of it. I think that in the vulnerability of exchange that is authentic where people, even if it's just two people within that group, listening, truly listening to each other, something about our community has created this space for really listening in a way that I don't think everyone gets in the world as it is now.

Describe your world, how is it unique to you?

It is the people that are within it, they are kind of an irreplaceable part of it and when we do lose any person who is a long standing or significant member, it does really change shape and become its next iteration. It shifts and adapts because of that loss, or because of a gain. I would just describe it as a community of artistic talent that is not in competition with itself. Which is what makes it special. It doesn't feel like it's a resource issue, except for with

time. Friends get busier in the summer because they're on tour. I think that it is really special in that it is noncompetitive, it is very collaborative, we celebrate each other's wins. We've had a friend, Cassandra Lewis, who got a record deal in Tennessee and not one person has been bitter about that fact. Everyone recognizes that she deserves it, that she is talented, that she should be there. It's wonderful and instead of generating dissatisfaction I feel like it does give people hope that it does sometimes work out. I think there is a depth of emotional support where you can really walk into those rooms authentically, in whatever state you're in, and people aren't going to reject you for it. I've definitely been a messy person in those rooms and felt very held. Obviously, there's a window of tolerance, if someone is continuously problematic there will be intervention but I think that the other beautiful part of that community is that it also holds itself accountable. That it isn't just like 'oh, people are people', no, we're willing to have the hard conversations which means that we can then support each other during the hard times, which I feel is also very special. It's interesting, I feel like you can walk in and very quickly feel very much a part of it, in a much more profound way than I feel is normal. Yeah, we want to welcome people in.

Is something normal in your world that appears uncanny to outsiders?

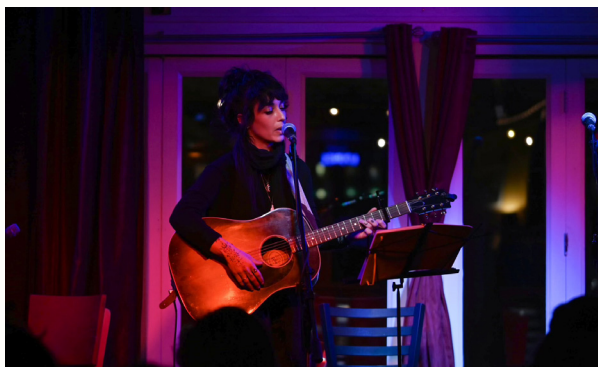
There's an openness to emotional vulnerability. You can be a fairly new person there but because we're all artists and musicians, and you come in and you're having a fucking hard day and somebody you've only met one other time asks how you are you can answer honestly and be held in that space 99% of the time. So, that aspect of it. But then also, when most people think of an open

mic, we all have that image in our head of somebody playing a really badly tuned ukulele to a Bob Dylan cover, or something. And not that there is anything such as bad art but there is some that is objectively less appealing to most and so, the other aspect of it is that when you go to our events and you're seeing these people perform, everyone is talented, the art is of a quality, it is moving, and it is real. That feels like the thing that is abnormal. You don't necessarily walk into a room thinking 'everyone here is super talented' but in that space that is a thought that will occur to you pretty quickly upon being there. Which is something you'd only get if you're going to a fine arts school's masters program. It's a pretty rare experience in the general world, that everyone is talented and that everyone is creative. Every one there has some sort of creative expression that not only lives within them but that they are engaging with on a daily basis. That feels super normal to me but I imagine that for somebody, especially coming from another city, that walking into that would be like 'oh, wow, this is amazing'.

Does your world have a characteristic feature or mark?

Not really. Like yeah, the stickers for the different bands but, each of those bands are like their own little world within the larger world and so, for the world as a whole, I mean...an image that would come to mind but I don't know if that would be a characteristic feature or mark, cause it is its own space, it is a space that our world occupies one day a week but, other things come into that space, so it's not like Atlantis lounge is just ours and its closed up and doesn't exist the rest of the time. Although, in thinking about it, it does feel that way to me, cause that's the only time I'm there. Imagining that I'm going there for another

thing would feel almost like adulterous. Some of it is that there is a stained glass window that has the name Atlantis Lounge in it. I do think of that because there are so many photographs of myself, my friends, with that in the backdrop. Either that or the red curtains behind us.



How does an outsider know that you dwell in and belong to this particular world?

I don't know if this would be true for anyone else, but I feel fashion as a part of our freedom of expression is such a big part of the expression of community that I do feel that fashion is the first thing that comes to mind. The freedom of dressing. Because when you're not working like a normal day job you can be however you want to be, and I think that within that community the attitude is like, 'fuck it, I can wear whatever the fuck I want. If I want to look like Louis XIV today, I'm going to do it'. I think that is the thing that I've noticed when I am out of my community, when I'm walking through other worlds, when I've traveled - like when I was in Charleston, and other places - how I dress and present physically is always something that people notice and comment on, in a way that is different. Of course, friends and people will say they

love my outfit or whatever but, when I am out in other worlds it is like noticeable that my fashion is kind of specific to me, and that the comfort of being able to express myself in that way comes from being in this community where that is normalized. We're all different, but everyone has their own way of expression.

Can you quickly describe your sense of fashion?

Oh, g-d. Someone described it for me the other day and I can't remember exactly what their description was but it was something to the effect of: witch, hippie, goth, time-traveling princess. I like lots of flowy things and I have very long black hair. It's very theatrical. Almost like liking to be in costume, or what others may perceive as 'in costume' but I'm not, in costume, it's just how I dress. But, yeah, lots of weird vintage. Lots of big gold jewelry, sharp teeth.

I like this next question because I ask it to challenge the idea that you have to look a certain way to have certain values or morals. So, what are some of the major values upheld in this world?

Yes, there are a lot of people that are very eccentric but there are also a lot of people who are very normal. Who come and show up who are incredible musicians, who are still very well loved and a part of the community. It's hard to say we value diversity because we live in Portland and there are like very few people of color in the city. It is a predominantly white community because Portland is a predominantly white city. I do think that we believe in, uphold, and want diversity but access to it is challenging because of the way that the city is. But I do think that the kind of accepting



people where they're at and how they are is really important. It's also a very trans-inclusive space, we have quite a few musicians who come and perform who are non-binary, trans, and lots of queer community as well. There is a pretty important tolerance for accepting people, neuro atypicality, disabilities, all those things are welcomed and really supported, and we also have a pretty cool, in terms of a value, our community is very much not ageist. We have musicians who are everything from 20 to 60's, and folks who are this incredibly important aspect of the community are listeners, and they are treated as just as much of an important part of the community as the performers. So anyone is welcome, *the value is that at some point you've had to have felt like an outsider to belong here.* I think that that is the main value. I think that, in general, social-justice orientedness, Portland is such a 'woke' city - we're always trying to do that - but, there is a definite, real aversion to full cancel culture which allows for more interesting conversations and also creates some drama because we don't often exile people, unless they really make a pretty egregious mistake, or choice. I think that the other value I spoke to a few questions ago was really being willing to support people when they struggle. There's this value that we don't leave people to suffer on their own.

Does this world have a goal, or principles that help guide it?

The goal is to create a space to share our art and music. That is a big part of it, so the small goal is to always make room for our creativity and to engage with it and to share it with each other, and that is like the larger goal. And, to support people in that process. I've been going for a long time and I started out there sharing my poetry. I've been writing poetry for 22 years, if not longer, maybe 26. That was really how I started out and how I was

identified - I've often been called, by more than one person, the poet laureate of our community - and, when I made the change to music I was very late to learning to play the guitar, and I'm still not very good at it but I love writing songs and I think I write some good ones. Before I started to have a band to back me up I would get up there and I would struggle, and people were still always really nice, people were still really supportive and I keep doing it. Nobody was like 'you should probably like, not'. You know, then there's always something which is problematic within any world which is a value-judgment, a hierarchy of what is good or not but, I think that have an awareness of that and do try to push back against it or create spaciousness to be inclusive instead of exclusive.

I think that there is so much creative creation that goes on that it is hard to say that creation is able to guide something.

It's so spontaneous, improvised...

But to create the space for creation and to promote creation, I think can be a guiding principle. We have Atlantis, it isn't necessarily easy to write a song, like 'go write a song' but, because there is that space held where its like "bring new music every week, we do this every week, and you can bring a new song every single week if you want" that does kind of create that structure or encourage it. For my event poet's anonymous I tell people I am going to do it that may inspire them to write a poem. And so it's creating a space for inspiration to be actualized. I think creativity can be a guiding principle in a way where it's not about the one thing.

If your world were to become no longer accessible how would

its absence (a/e)ffect you?

If it were to, as it exists now, just cease to exist, say Christopher decided to be done or all of the events that we cluster around were suddenly to go away, I think that we would find new ways to connect. I think that that connection is really important and that we've all gotten used to its existence. Even during the pandemic other outlets evolved. The community had this thing called the Mayday Love Stream where different artists would stream these hours of concerts and performances so people could still have access to this art that they had missed. So, it's like the Hydra, you cut its head off then three different ones will spring up in its place. So, I feel that if the things that are central to it were to 'go away', whether its people or places, that it would just find new ways to exist. That feels a lot less painful than the idea of if I were suddenly to be exiled...I would be devastated. Exile is devastating for all of us. I think that our experience or fear of exile is a pretty major theme for a lot of people in trauma. Whether its exile from certain parts of ourselves, or its exile from our family, or exile from our country of origin. All of those things are very very traumatic and so I think for me it would be very hard not to feel deeply that my value as a person was effected. If I was suddenly not invited, and the mind plays that trick on itself, we internalize things and tell ourselves stories, sometimes they're true, sometimes they're not - I've definitely gone through periods where I'm not as important to this community as it is to me; if I were to disappear, no one would notice - and kind of get into that feeling-sorry-for-myself where its confirmation bias. I've had the emotional experience of that without it actually being real, and it's horrible. It feels like the sun is gone behind a cloud and it's never going to come out again. It is this thing that becomes such a huge and important part

of my life, and it's not like I don't have any other friendships or community outside of that, but it is just so central to my life. I lived without it probably for 2 or 3 years and I was very lonely. I felt very untethered, almost broken. It felt like I was flawed somehow as a human, that I was missing some part of myself, some part that other people had, it felt like I had internalized it as this deep internal flaw. The idea of that happening again feels very sad. Exile never feels good. I think we're all had varying experiences of that kind of loss of community, big or small, and it's as devastating as losing everything to a house fire. All the stories and all the experiences, its a pretty big fucking tragedy. It's like death, talking about death isn't easy either. Loving anything is accepting that you're going to lose it someday.

The difference between then and now is that what happened to me is that I know how special it is and I would probably go-out seeking to find the next iteration of that, to try to find something that was similar to it and if it didn't exist, to build it myself. Because, the thing about it is that the idea of it is what is powerful. But, I mean, starting over in your thirties is such a different thing than being in your twenties. It's not that we become more introverted but we become more careful about our energy as we age, and so the idea of having to go out and start all over again like that is, oh it sounds exhausting. So, introducing new people to it, that feels very special and vulnerable because this thing is fucking special to me and *I've watched it be built piece by piece and I've worked really hard to be a part of it and to stay a part of it and to be engaged with it*, and so bringing anyone into it feels like I'm offering this incredible gift and sometimes it will be frustrating if the person doesn't 'get it', or they treat it as like a chore...because I know how special it is and so when somebody looks at it and doesn't see it as that I'm also protective of it. It's so interesting

to feel very supported by it but also very protective of it, it's an interesting juxtaposition, it is a thing that holds me up but I treasure it.

Some of the thought behind asking this question is that I want to explore the idea that the world outside of me actually is so much a part of my sense of self. I think some think that there's a huge chasm between 'oh, that's outside of me, and I don't care about that' or, if that goes away that's not going to actually affect me, I'm separate from it, I'm independent of it...I want to challenge that idea, by saying 'no, the places that we frequent, the places that we go, they're very much pieces of our identities'.

It even goes beyond that, if you think about human consciousness as this collective thing, then everything that happens to a large group of people kind of happens to us all. I think that - working as a therapist right now - talking to people, friends and clients, about everyone's state of being, everyone's kind of in this post-traumatic shock after the last couple of years. Millions of people died, and we all just went through this isolation and this terror and not knowing, I think that on the smaller-scale we don't feel it but, all of the things that are happening in the world, the earthquakes, the fires, the wars, poisonings, pandemics - I think that those things do affect us and sometimes we just don't know why we're being effected. I think that those of us that are more sensitive can put a pin on it, or at least understand that that is the experience that we're having. I think that the chasm is an illusion, I guess that's what you're saying too, that the chasm isn't there.

Yeah. And that's why I want to bring voice to this idea of locals and worlds. So, if possible, how does one become a local-member of this world?

Showing up. Consistently showing up and wanting to be a part of it. Being able to show that you contribute something, it doesn't have to be that you contribute music or art, it can be that you contribute support; you contribute good-listening; you contribute helpfulness. There are so many different people that are from so many different walks of life that do so many different things that are a part of it, so I do really feel that by showing up and being present is the thing that matters. Bringing your authentic presence, regardless of what that is. The idea of being a good-fit is so nebulous, as if you need to wear a beanie and Doc Martin's or whatever to fit in, it's not anything like that. It's just very ephemeral and energetic: does your energy match the energy we're bringing here? If so, then yeah, you're invited in.

Lastly, if your world had a voice, what affirmation would it whisper into an outsider's ear?

"Even if you've never felt like you've belonged before, you do belong somewhere".



# IN REGARD TO CLIMATE CHANGE

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'In regard to climate change' discusses how locals connect to the change constant to local climates. The articles herald the claim that there is not One World on Earth, nor many, but that on Earth, worlds pour out. Each and every one is different from any and all of the others. To be said differently, the surface of the Earth is decorated by a plurality of worlds: Earth is a pluriverse. An article in 'In Regard to Climate Change' focuses on a world, where it exists and how it regulates its existence but, on the other hand, on how local practices are molded in accordance with and become grafted onto the natural world. Worlds are not found by the mundane presence of inhabitants but are made by the way locals weave themselves into the Whole. In each and every case an article clarifies how an action or an affect decorates the surface of the Earth. The imperative of an article is to disclose whether or not a technological advancement either impedes or facilitates a locality's inhabitants becoming closer to, or more distant from, the locality they're embedded in and being surrounded by.

I've been contemplating 'how-to' address Climate Change.

Thus far, what I think I know to be for certain is that it is a 'wicked-problem': every time I've looked for a solution to one of the many social or environmental problems exacerbated by climate change I've been baffled by how the whole notion of Climate Change becomes not only more intricate but increasingly obscure. Climate Change is wicked in the sense that it continuously reveals how interdependent everything is: the environment is connected to our socio-cultural personae and in turn, repercussions appear in humanities' economic and political dynamics. To find an answer to one of its problems I realized I needed a better understanding of what climate change is.

The 'red-thread' of my writing is Sustainability but, to be more accurate, it is how 'sustainability' in one neighborhood is different from another...to be expressed differently, I observe how sustainability in one place is uniquely different from sustainability everywhere else. If there is 'a message' I would like to communicate regarding sustainability, my thoughts of the world, and my hope for a future yet to come, I would say: that which makes any place unique, wherever or whatever it may be, that...  
that difference is beautiful.

Scattered across the planet are human societies which are composed of populations of humans where each individual is their own individual. Confusingly, when any person says 'I', the idea is identical for every one bearing in mind that any and all are different from each other. Every individual is a world within a world within a world all of which are upholding a unique relationship to Nature. To relate this heinous thought to environmental studies and sustainability science, I began to question how thoughts of the world correlate to the surrounding environmental conditions.

I began to contemplate: What is the relationship between the species and the environment? How does a species compose the environment while being composed by the environment?  
How does an individual transform from being in a circumstance of unsustainability into one of sustainability?

# WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

Earth's climate changes. Climate Change is occurring here, on Earth, and now. I am not saying that the climate isn't changing, actually, the contrary, I'm voicing that the climate does change – always will. The bone I'm gnawing at has manifested itself as a disconnect, as the presumed distance between a social climate bound to and formed by the relations among people and, the chemico-physico layers of atmosphere that ascend from the troposphere to thermosphere and beyond. The two, although inseparable yet independent, interplay...there is no disconnect or separation between them. In 'In regard to Climate Change' one may feel that their action doesn't matter or register, and, in response, I'll recall that everything counts – every act has its significance. I often ask myself if there are templates to change. However, if there were grand schemes they would rob change of its inherent unpredictability, namely, chance. The dilemma is that while we strive to make things easier and better we somehow either manage to complicate matters or find ourselves in a position worse than before we started. The idea is not to achieve who we are 'to be', it is simply a matter of 'being' who it is *we've* always been. In regard to Climate Change, I write to people of action, of how they've built a reciprocal relation – a pathway – between the cosmos and their lifestyle. To put this sentiment into a formal question, I ask: how do the things that people do in the localities that they come from not only make them into who they are but offer solutions to climate change?

Let's start by distinguishing between climate and weather. The two are discernable by noticing that the actual conditions outside are not always what outside is expected to be. Weather changes daily whereas the climate is akin to the thought of what one thinks the average weather conditions in a biome spanning a period of geologic time are. To be clear, a climate does change over a long period of time but, during a geologic period (i.e. Holocene) the climates on Earth seem to be consistent. The change constant to a climate holds a double meaning in Climate Change: (I) Earth's climates change, (II) Climate Change is occurring on Earth, here and now. One is accurate, the other authentic. Orkydaceae is not saying that the Climate isn't changing, actually, to the contrary, Orkydaceae observes that Earth's climates do change – always will. The urgency of Climate Change was indicated to scientists by the increasing concentration of Carbon in the Earth's atmosphere. A higher concentration of Carbon in the atmosphere has trapped rays of sunlight in the Earth's atmosphere (i.e. the greenhouse effect) and, without Carbon returning to the cosmos, the effect the increased amount of carbon has had has caused temperatures to rise around the Earth (i.e. global warming). The emission of Carbon into Earth's atmosphere has been linked to the activities of human-civilization circumventing the planet. A repercussion of modern civilization's large-scale industrial developments is the deterioration of Earth's natural cycles which have been the support of humanity's growth and development. Science continues to perform its duty, it presents the facts in order to inform society of the dilemma presented by Climate Change: if the natural systems that humans depend on disintegrate, then the likelihood of human civilization entering a state of decay is able to be expressed with a degree of confidence. The future is uncertain; future events are unpredictable. Fortunately, the questions 'what an individual can do locally' and 'what can/needs to be done globally' to resolve climate change remain unanswered and open-ended.

# WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

The dilemma Climate Change presents is analogous to sinking in quicksand – the more effort one exerts in attempts to escape their fate; the more rapidly one sinks. To address this predicament it's important to not only avoid the route which yields the result of drowning in a pile of mud but also to take note of how one came to the realization of oneself actually being in dire straits. In regard to Climate Change, the imperative is not only to comprehend the means by which humanity has contributed to the accelerated change of the climates on Earth but also to find solutions to the causes of the problems constitutive of Climate Change. To decelerate the rate humanity contributes to the changing of Earth's climates, future development projects must seek ways to reciprocate with the physical dynamics of Earth in order to decrease our impact on the planet's natural systems. The process of deceleration is titled Sustainable Development and is generally understood as the streamlining of the relation between people and Earth in order to keep the Earth a hospitable space for humanity. In 2015, the United Nations member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set in motion a plan to protect the planet and improve people's livelihood. The plan is summarized by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The goals are structured to be applicable to everywhere and to operate globally. To climb out of the Climate Change hole we've found ourselves in, institutions as well as local-initiatives supporting sustainable development have erupted around the globe to voice how people continue to prosper while decreasing their impact on Earth. What these goals and innumerable efforts indicate is that people resisting the negative outlook presented by Climate Change are out-there, here and now.

# ORKYDACEAE

Sustainability is found by observing the moments when lifestyles and nature mix. Orkydaceae understands sustainability as a perceptual quality not as a tangible thing. Sustainability is not any one thing; it is co-present with and circulates throughout everything. To say this nonchalantly, Orkydaceae understands sustainability as that which reciprocates with and seamlessly passes through the changing conditions in local environs. To understand how sustainability occurs locally, Orkydaceae discusses a 'three pillar' schema. The pillars are: (1) ecologic, (2) politic, and (3) oeconomic. The pillars are proposed as independent categories to not only make the analysis of the content of each clear and distinct but to remind sustainability scientists that, as climate change and sustainable development proceed, the three-schema are three integrated aspects of a(ny) single-phenomenon. Sustainable Development will occur by focusing its efforts on the improvement of peoples' livelihood through the three pillars but, insofar as development is a global endeavor, the thought of a development taking place somewhere admits that Sustainability is – in each and every case – a local occurrence. Problems are ubiquitous but each is in need of being addressed case by case and solved step by step. Thus, the foundation of Orkydaceae's attitude in dealing with sustainability is: what works as a solution somewhere will not hold water everywhere. In short, the idea is that local problems have local solutions. Said differently, rather than constructing a sustainability which is identical, applicable and distributable to everywhere, Orkydaceae understands sustainability as being unique to and emerging from the ways local lifestyles diligently mix with nature.

Orkydaceae is a variation of the taxonomic name of the orchid family: Orchidaceae. The choice of name came from noticing how a glint of sustainability bears a semblance to epiphytic orchids. The flower of an orchid is familiar but its epiphytic root-system is bizarre, it's not rooted in soil. Epiphytic orchids fasten themselves to a surface of a supporting plant (i.e. trunk, branch) and passively nourish themselves by gathering moisture from the air and acquiring nutrients from an accumulation of compost. The observation of a plant growing on a supporting plant is characteristic of epiphytes but, interestingly, epiphytes are commensuralistic, not parasitic. In symbiotic terms, commensalism is observed when an organism benefits while the other organism in the relation undergoes neither benefit nor harm; and, parasitism is the result of an organism benefiting while simultaneously diminishing its host. The difference between these two symbiotic relationships displayed the glint of sustainability which allowed sustainability to be compared to a plant. To state the comparison in a metaphor alongside a simile: Sustainability blooms and is as delicate as an orchid. The name Orkydaceae voices the resemblance between sustainability and how an unassuming root system nourishes a plant to flower. Sustainability is not an orchid yet epiphytic orchids are rooted upon preexistent branches and the bloom is akin to the vision of the establishment of sustainability within localities.

Sustainability needs people to call attention to instances and practices that may appear mundane to outsiders but are characteristic of who local people are. A city – urban or rural – is divided into districts, wards, neighborhoods, blocks and streets but a locality is more similar to the notion of a world

than identical to any section of a city. The reason Orkydaceae places its emphasis on localities comes not from the notion that there are inaccessible ideas prevailing over and above our day-to-day lives but that localities are the interactions people form with the world they are a part of. There is not a tangible core that a locality revolves around and makes it into what it is, rather, there is a possibility characteristic of and shared among a locality's inhabitants...a sort of silent hope – a possible – awaiting actualization. To conceive how this kind of intellectual sympathy fills a locality, Orkydaceae observes how local-lifestyles align with the attitude: 'this is the way it is here, and it is because of this that we are who we understand ourselves to be'. If Orkydaceae had a mantra, it would be:

### BUDDING DESIRES WILL BECOME BLOOMING FLOWERS

**Budding** notes that things are locally distributed into the confines of a city,

**Blooming** resonates with the previous comparison of sustainability to the orchid-flower but,

*the transformation of desire into a flower* is different, it is the thought of sustainability as tangential to the idea of locals becoming a part of and participating within the spaces they inhabit. [Pollinate].

Sustainable development focuses on technological innovation and, instead of continuing to build sustainability as if everyone lives in one-world, Orkydaceae voices how to model sustainability after the practices which have allowed the worlds that locals occupy to flourish.



To stop listening to the rabble for personal instruction I started to consider the notion of dreams. All that noise regarding the purpose of and meaning within the world became disorienting to me: timeless codes to be decrypted, puzzles made of missing pieces to be solved, unwritten messages to be read from languages unknown?! Rather than continuing to believe in the rhyme and reason behind the realization of one, and only one, ultimate truth I've been relying on something which has been manifested by Jack Sparrow's compass.

The needle in Sparrow's compass does not point North – it is on the move – it points toward 'that which you want most'. The compass' which seems to be spinning aimlessly makes a clear distinction between North and the Event, that is, between somewhere or its moment. Yes; I am writing that there is not an absolute purpose to or ultimate meaning to be found in life. Knowingly, I'm not dead yet and with the time I have left I would like to take some of the moments which remain to leave fragments of a life well-lived. A life which acknowledges its finitude, the everlasting impermanence of someone who thought: when, how, and why did I live? Dreams are a compass, they've been mine, they are the fragments of brilliance which I've followed. To begin to describe how I made and actualized some dreams of mine I'll note that while I was asleep they are what my mind went over in sleep.

My mind went through the steps of some strange process which melded discontinuous storylines and bizarre visualizations together. After waking up... brewing coffee...I'd take the next few steps of the morning to figure out how to live them. Days as well as Ages have passed but something which has held a coherence to the method of this madness has been the thought that 'the only place I could only ever actually be is precisely where you're (i.e. your body is) at.'



*Mina Kompas*