
Anniversary Edition

PERIPHERAL **ART**ERIES
CONTEMPORARY **ART** REVIEW

Special Edition

Installation • Painting • Mixed media • Drawing • Performance • Public Art • Drawing • Video art • Fine Art Photography



JEREMY JONES
KATY DRESNER
ELIS GJONI
MICHAEL BETANCOURT
ANATOLIY KHARKHURIN
KRISTYNA AND MAREK MILDE
TERESA WELLS
GILI LAVY
GRAHAM LISTER



Void, 2016

a work by Gili Lavy



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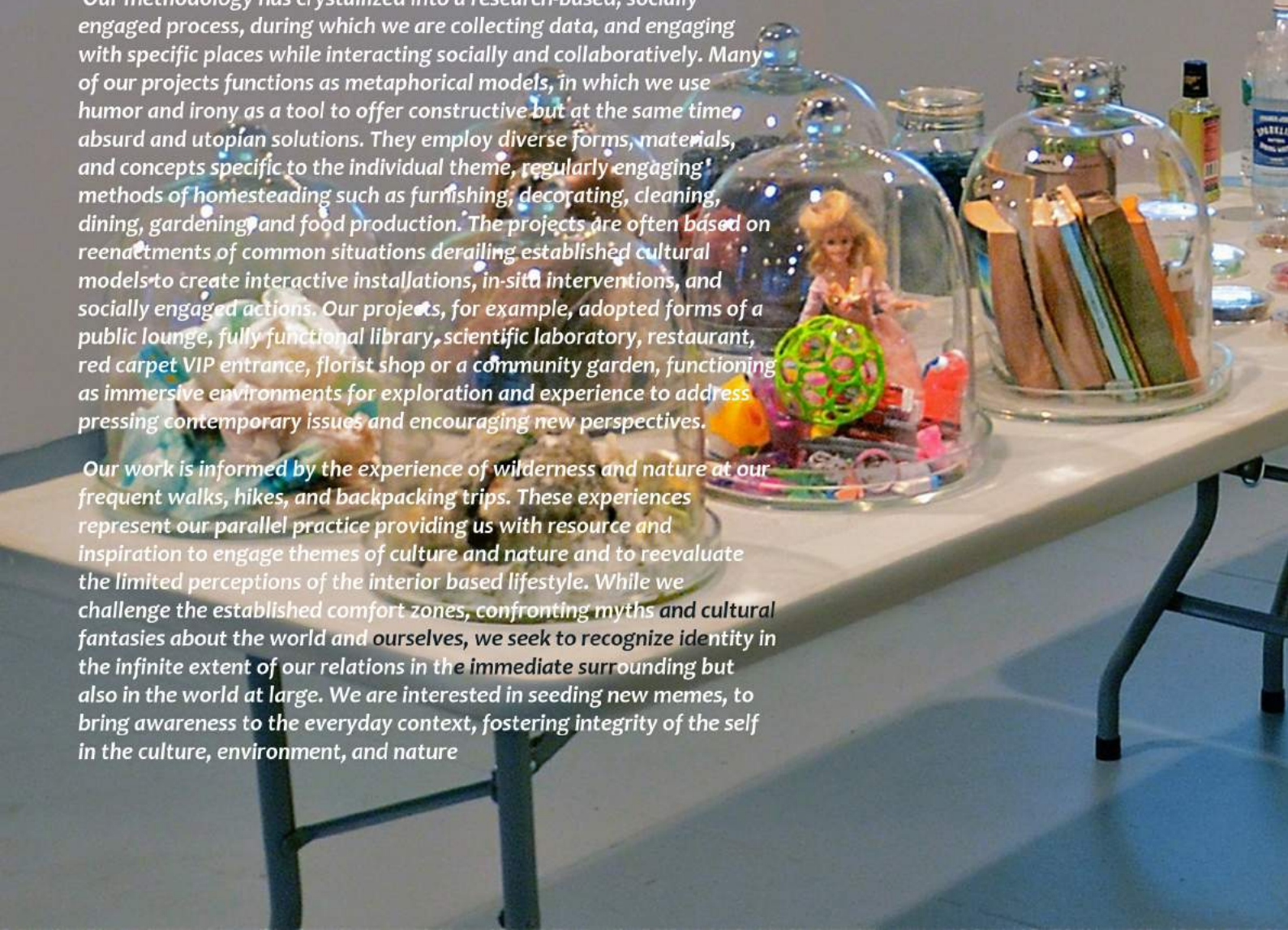
Kristyna and Marek

Live and work in Brooklyn, New York, USA

Our art practice is a continuous dialogue with people, places, and ourselves, in which we engage issues of contemporary culture investigating the alienation of culture and nature, loss of context and states of passivity in consumerism to reframe reality influenced by our predominantly interior based lifestyle. We engage a variety of narratives and forms of the modern life but see domesticity as the focal point to access the theme of the environment at large, as here the personal is tied together with the far-reaching contexts. We believe that the microcosm of the personal space is a great platform and laboratory to engage, as the home is the place people care about the most. We are interested exploring the concept of home in a relationship to nature and environment, engaging themes of identity developed through interaction with sites and places, everyday rituals, and traditions, studying their integral role in binding together the social, natural and cultural order.

Our methodology has crystallized into a research-based, socially engaged process, during which we are collecting data, and engaging with specific places while interacting socially and collaboratively. Many of our projects functions as metaphorical models, in which we use humor and irony as a tool to offer constructive but at the same time, absurd and utopian solutions. They employ diverse forms, materials, and concepts specific to the individual theme, regularly engaging methods of homesteading such as furnishing, decorating, cleaning, dining, gardening, and food production. The projects are often based on reenactments of common situations derailing established cultural models to create interactive installations, in-situ interventions, and socially engaged actions. Our projects, for example, adopted forms of a public lounge, fully functional library, scientific laboratory, restaurant, red carpet VIP entrance, florist shop or a community garden, functioning as immersive environments for exploration and experience to address pressing contemporary issues and encouraging new perspectives.

Our work is informed by the experience of wilderness and nature at our frequent walks, hikes, and backpacking trips. These experiences represent our parallel practice providing us with resource and inspiration to engage themes of culture and nature and to reevaluate the limited perceptions of the interior based lifestyle. While we challenge the established comfort zones, confronting myths and cultural fantasies about the world and ourselves, we seek to recognize identity in the infinite extent of our relations in the immediate surrounding but also in the world at large. We are interested in seeding new memes, to bring awareness to the everyday context, fostering integrity of the self in the culture, environment, and nature



Milde



Cabinet of Smells, 2015, installation view, exhibition Double Vision at EFA Project Space, NYC, distillation equipment, laboratory glass and tools, perfume bottles, chemicals, collection of domestic objects such as old books, toys, food scraps, dry flowers, debris, old doormat, 8' x 8' x 5'

Cabinet of Smells revisits the cultural concepts of smell both the natural and artificial exploring what is the real smell of a home by distilling scents from various household objects such as old books, socks or debris, etc. to produce a perfume that inclusively represents its origin and identity.

Peripheral **ARTeries** meets

Kristyna and Marek Milde

Live and work in Brooklyn, New York, USA

Kristyna and Marek Milde's work rejects any conventional classification regarding its style, to unveil for the lost still ubiquitous connections and our place in the world, to address the viewers to a multilayered visual experience. In their body of works that we'll be discussing in the following pages they successfully attempts to trigger the spectatorship's perceptual parameters, with a deeper focus on a complementary dialogue between materiality, content and the encounter with the viewers.

One of the most impressive aspects of Kristyna and Marek Milde's work is the way it accomplishes the difficult task of establishing a direct line with our audiences shifting the traditional hierarchy of the artist-audience relationship into a productive and more open model of exchange: we are very pleased to introduce our readers to their stimulating and multifaceted artistic production.

An interview by **Dario Rutigliano**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

peripheral.arteries@europe.com

Hello Kristyna and Marek, and welcome to this special edition of Peripheral ARTeries: before starting to elaborate about your artistic production would you like to tell us something about your backgrounds? You have both solid formal training and you hold a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) that you both received from the Queens College: how did this experience along with your previous ones influence your evolution as artists? In particular, how did your cultural background due to your Czech roots inform the way you currently relate yourself to art making?

Our creative approach is driven by curiosity and continuous interest in culture and its mechanisms. In particular, we are drawn to the themes of consumerism and the alienation of culture and nature, examining its impact and side effects, which are happening on so many levels of our existence. Growing up in the totalitarian regime of the communist Czechoslovakia and experiencing the political transition after the Fall of the Berlin Wall gave us a valuable insight into the workings of the different systems of power and culture. From early on we both frequently traveled and later relocated to different countries, accessing various cultural models and perspectives. Our journey began in Prague, the Czech Republic where we

both are coming from and where we met as young art students in the mid-nineties. Here we received a solid traditional art education that was figurative in general. Kristyna later went to study painting in Basel, Switzerland and Marek Sculpture in Germany and Switzerland, where we focused on phenomenological studies featuring subjects such as Goethe Color theory and the methodology of organic forms inspired by the architecture of Rudolph Steiner. We spent almost 7 years, living in Basel, Switzerland and often traveled to New York City, our present home, which fascinating environment was for us a great inspiration drawing us to relocate. Here we did the MFA program at the Queens College CUNY, which has been a great introduction into a critical and discursive thinking. We started to experiment with different media moving into more conceptual art practices and installations.

The immigrant experience has been tough but rewarding for us, an active and constant search for the unknown context requiring to embrace new while leaving the familiar behind. On the way, we became sensitive to everyday things that other people may not see or simply take for given or granted. These experiences translate into our projects, in which we often reframe mundane situations and inquiry into the theme of home, which we had to recreate for many times ourselves. We think that the idea of home and personal space matters in general; it is a subject that connects



Kristyna and Marek Milde
Photo credit: Eva Heyd

LOOKING FOR A HOME

NEW YORK SPRING COLLECTION 2011

Lamp Shade from HARLEM

Sofa Chair from UPPER EAST SIDE

Books from CHELSEA

Looking for a Home, 2011, catalogue, digital print on paper, unlimited edition, 10" x 8"

Front cover of the catalog documenting the site-specific installation that functions as a public lounge made with discarded furniture found by the artists in the NYC garbage over a period of one month, addressing the issue of the fast-paced cycle of consumerism, confronting the esthetic and advertisement strategies of home furnishing companies.

Coffe Table from MIDTOWN

www.mildeart.com

identity, culture, and environment, tying together so many important social, economic, and ecological issues. We see home as a process of creating a place that is not only physical but also psychological linking the personal microcosm to the world at large. Thus home serves us as a laboratory and testing ground to develop projects dealing with wide range of issues concerning domesticity and the dominant interior based culture.

It's no doubt that multidisciplinary collaboration as the one you have established together are today ever growing forces in several fields of artistic production and that the most exciting things happen when creative minds from different fields meet and collaborate on a project. Could you tell us something about this effective synergy? By the way, Peter Tabor once stated that "collaboration is working together with another to create something as a synthesis of two practices, that alone one could not": what's your point about this? Can you explain how your work demonstrates communication between two artists?

In a functioning collaboration, the creative potential is multiplied, but it is not just a simple summary, you may really exponentiate the outcome to something you would not individually be able to achieve. And there is also a new third element coming out of the duality that may often come as a surprise like in the chemistry when two substances mix they don't just combine, they react. Of course, the chemistry has to work just right, because you play with explosives in the arts. In our case collaboration expanded our practice in very productive way, naturally becoming an extension of our shared life, everyday things we do, and experiences we have. Our talks, discussions, and constant dialogues function as a ground for developing themes into projects. Once we have a direction we do lots of brainstorming going back and forth in the process, while inquiring into substance of the problems. The ability to listen is definitely crucial, but it is also important to always give each other honest critical feedback since only then things may develop further. As in life, this might be challenging at times, requiring openness in working with different perspectives, but the

challenge can be a productive force driving new ideas greatly advancing the work itself.

We started to work as an artist duo in 2011 on the project *Looking for a Home*, inquiring into the theme of domesticity and home. We have been involved in each other's art before, but we always maintained separate art practices. The project aiming at the culture of consumerism and the everyday environmental awareness was for us very personal, it has been inspired by our experience of furnishing our first New York apartment with objects and furniture found in the garbage on streets. *Looking for a Home* made for Queens College Library NY had a form of a fully functional public lounge furnished entirely with furniture and household objects we found in the New York City garbage stream over a period of one month. *Looking for a Home* functions as a survey into the city and its lifestyle cycles, in the process we examined how identity and personal integrity bound to personal space is influenced by displacement but also by larger estranging factors such as consumerism, and environmental alienation. The project has been a test for us to exercise the partner's dynamic as an art strategy to address larger issues and we collaborate ever since. *Looking for a Home* also set an algorithm for our future collaboration strategies based on collecting, archiving and reinterpretation of everyday narratives as essential building blocks of culture, in which we immerse audience in participation and active experience.

Your works convey coherent sense of unity that rejects any conventional classification. Before starting to elaborate about your production, we would suggest to our readers to visit your website www.mildeart.com in order to get a synoptic view of your work: in the meanwhile, would you like to tell to our readers something about your process and set up? In particular, are your works conceived and created gesturally, instinctively? Or do you methodically transpose geometric schemes?

We think about our collaborative art practice as a form of visual philosophy, an extension of a continuous dialog we have with the world and

ourselves. It reflects our shared life experience and interest in the shifting relationship between culture and the environment. We are interested in the context of the everyday life and keep talking and discussing these topics together, which eventually may evolve into a project. In our work, we approach a broad spectrum of themes, concerning environmental integrity encompassing various subjects and disciplines, that relate to each other, such as architecture and design, culture of dwelling and homesteading that includes things such as gardening, and food production.

Our process is both instinctive and conceptual. Many projects begin with a simple inspiration when a certain form or a situation draws our interest and sparks an idea, which we then analyze and conceptualize. On the other hand, we do research-based and process oriented projects, which evolve out of our long-term interest in a certain theme, where we initially don't set a particular media or outcome. By engaging with the concept the work emerges gradually out of the process, eventually crystallizing into a form, which sometimes surprises our selves. We learned that imposing abstract schemes on a theme from the beginning doesn't necessarily produce better results. Oftentimes we investigate a story for a number of years, studying its structure and mechanisms before we formulate and articulate the visual solution. Therefore we may tweak the modernist motto from "form follows function" into "form follows process".

For this special edition of Peripheral ARTeries, we have selected *Plantarium – Garden for Weeds, Bees, and Teas*, an interesting site-specific project that our readers have already started to get to know in the introductory pages of this article. What has at once captured our attention of your inquiry into the relationship between environment and humans is the way you provided the visual results of your analysis with autonomous aesthetics: when walking our readers through the genesis of *Plantarium* would you tell us your sources of inspiration? And what did address you to inquire into the themes of environmental alienation?

The project *Plantarium, Garden for Weeds, Bees, and*





Plantarium – Garden for Weeds, Bees, and Teas, 2017, detail
a developing site-specific project at Mildred's Lane, PA



Plantarium – Garden for Weeds, Bees, and Teas, 2017, a developing site-specific project at Mildred's Lane, PA taking a form of an open platform serving the plants, animals and humans alike while promoting an active experience of wild plants through

Teas evolves from our continuous interest in culture-nature relationship and the connection of daily life to environmental context. It develops in series of focused walks, studies, and workshops, leading to establishing a wildflower garden reflecting the natural diversity of local environment and the seasonal changes. *Plantarium* aims to recall the significance of wildflowers and weeds overlooked in our culture and to explore its usefulness and role in daily rituals, traditions, and symbolism.

Situated at the Mildred's Lane, a 95 acres artist run cultural center in rural Pennsylvania *Plantarium*, *Garden for Weeds, Bees and Tees* takes a form of a pollinating wild flower garden featuring a spectrum of uncultivated local plants we find and transplant from the wild. It is conceived as an open educational platform promoting an active experience of wild plants through use, consumption, and interpretation to enhance our relationship to environment. *Plantarium* is a dialog with the site and intersects with projects of



arm of a wild flower meadow designed with an assortment of transplanted uncultivated local plants and weeds. It is an use, consumption, and interpretation to explore our relationship to the environment.

Mildred's Lane founders J. Morgan Puett's *Radical Apiary* and a fragment of Mark Dion's *Library for the Birds*, repurposed here as a protective bear barrier.

In the past, we already created several public art projects, where we combined urban gardening and installation but felt a garden for Mildred's Lane has to be different and in a true sense site-specific to complement the unique integrity of this rural site. Once we started to conceive the project we

realized that the garden is in the middle of a natural bounty and everything is already there. All we need is to transplant and accumulate the local plants growing on the property and in the region into the garden.

Surrounding the Mildred's Lane bee yard the garden has a circular shape divided into 14 segments, each planted with different wild perennial plants that subsequently flower from spring to fall, as a type of a seasonal clock,



PopCorn Rock, 2016, site-specific installation, Art in the Fields, New Jerusalem PA, petroglyphs carved in stone, 45" x 100"



providing food for bees, but also for making teas, flower bouquets, and remedies, while serving the plants, animals, and humans alike. The project reverses the idea of a conventional garden, based on growing crops as monocultures in isolation separated by a mulch, in the Plantarium plants are allowed to grow as in nature, connecting and interlocking with each other, creating a living mosaic. At the later stage, we will let the project transform into a wild meadow to blend with its surroundings, enriching the local biodiversity.

The project is inspired by our travels in the region of Upper Delaware Valley and the time we spend in nature, hiking, camping and foraging, activities we consider as our parallel art practice that provides us with resource and inspiration to engage the themes of culture and nature. We are fascinated by the world of plants and herbalism; we grow and harvest wild herbs for teas and infusions on regular bases.

In the project *Plantarium, Garden for Weeds, Bees, and Teas* we want to address the lost connection to wild plants and the vanishing access to natural resources, its mystification, and institutionalization, such as the restriction of harvesting wild plants on the public lands and criminalization of its medicinal use. In the past, wild plants were an inseparable part of our life and culture, a valuable resource crucial for survival used as food source, medicine and in various rituals. Today it seems we don't need wild plants anymore, we have an abundance of imported cultivated plants available in flower shops all year round independently from the actual seasons. We don't need to make remedies because we can buy pills in pharmacy and shop for seemingly endless supply of food in supermarkets. Through this collective amnesia of losing the connection and practical knowledge of wild plants, we have become depended on consumerist gods and changed our relationship to environment in general by alienating ourselves from the cycles and rhythms in nature. We think that in this process we have been disarmed of the basic skills of survival, which help us navigate and ultimately respect and

relate to the environment. The idea of *Plantarium* tries to overcome this gap and bring awareness to the forgotten wisdom about the natural world around us.

We have appreciated the way *Plantarium* connects modern lifestyle with the wider context of nature addressing the viewers to subtle still insightful socio-political criticism about the disconnect between the idea of Nature and our ever-changing, unstable contemporary age. Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco once stated, "the artist's role differs depending on which part of the world you're in. It depends on the political system you're living under". Not to mention that almost everything, ranging from Caravaggio's *Inspiration of Saint Matthew* to Joep van Lieshout's works, could be considered political, do you think that your work could be considered political in a certain sense? Moreover, what could be in your opinion the role of Art in the contemporary age?

Rather than political we prefer to describe our art practice as culturological because of our interest to work and deconstruct cultural models. We want to bring art and everyday reality together and realize the unique possibility art has to carve out free space for societal discourse. Culture and politics influence each other and in some sense, all can be framed politically but most importantly all can be seen and practiced as art today. However, we strongly prefer politics happening as a result of culture and not as a driving force of art.

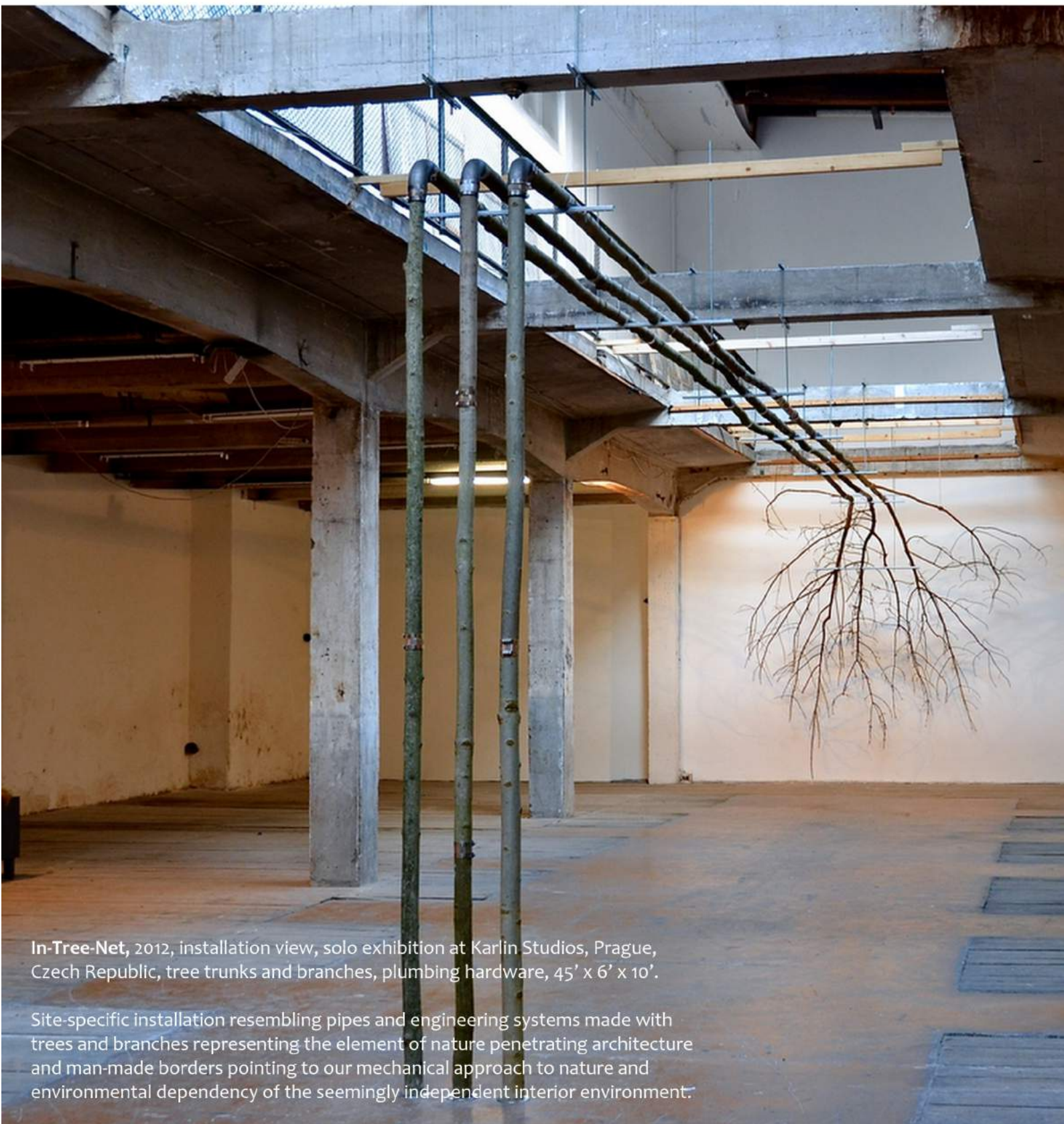
While working on themes, which are contemporary, we are committed to more universal, long lasting perspectives and broader spectrum of interest beyond the given political horizon. Politics is notoriously known as a corrupting force, especially for culture. Most of the political art, as we see it, is polarizing in nature, has a set agenda and may submit to an ideology or dominant trends addressing issues relevant only to specific groups in the given time. These art forms tend to operate more like politics and less like a philosophy, which for art may be a slippery slope. On the other hand, we see the unique opportunity art has to transcend





Homescape, 2014, view from the solo exhibition "Hills and Valleys of the Sofa Wilderness" at Wave Hill, NY, aluminum frame, metal wheels, insulation material, soil, moss, grass, ferns and stones, 29 1/2" x 64" x 32" and 29 1/2" x 32" x 32"

Homescape resembles sofa and chair, its upholstery, however, is made with living plants and moss, transplanted from the woods and set into the metal frames. The project addressing issues of environmental fragmentation invites audience to sit down as in the forest and explore the idea of the continuity of landscape and nature



In-Tree-Net, 2012, installation view, solo exhibition at Karlin Studios, Prague, Czech Republic, tree trunks and branches, plumbing hardware, 45' x 6' x 10'.

Site-specific installation resembling pipes and engineering systems made with trees and branches representing the element of nature penetrating architecture and man-made borders pointing to our mechanical approach to nature and environmental dependency of the seemingly independent interior environment.



things and a chance to access issues in an unconventional open way. In our projects, we are not taking sides but are interested to create platforms, which inspire awareness and bring people together to re-imagine culture.

Considering the role of the art today, we think we should be asking: What art can do that other disciplines can't? we definitely are interested in exploring this question in our projects. In the recent history art dramatically changed its traditional role and took new forms responding to the rapidly changing world of the technological era. Art today crosses many disciplines and engages whole range of new themes and forms. Contemporary artists may paint and sculpt, but also do social practice and ecological activism; they may be cooking, gardening, or building houses - the list can be endless. Perhaps one may think that artists talk into too many things outside of their area of expertise, however, we think that's the point of art, the unique ability to access, connect and reinterpret reality creating space for more holistic perspectives and approaches. Today most segments of society are highly specialized and fragmented; the virtualization of our reality produces even more disconnection. However, art has the power to activate engagement and experience, and at the same time, its narratives may function as connective points helping to cross everyday barriers and differences.

Plantarium evolves in series of walks, studies, and workshops: the power of visual arts in the contemporary age is enormous: at the same time, the role of the viewer's disposition and attitude is equally important. Both our minds and our bodies need to actively participate in the experience of contemplating a piece of art: it demands your total attention and a particular kind of effort—it's almost a commitment. What do you think about the role of the viewer? Are you particularly interested if you try to achieve to trigger the viewers' perception as starting point to urge them to elaborate personal interpretations?

In the era of the technological age, we are used to browsing, scrolling and swiping through the virtual reality surfing mostly only on the surface of an



In-Tree-Net, 2011, installation view from the group exhibition "Green"
at Gallery Calafia in Horazdovice, Czech Republic, tree trunks,
plumbing hardware, 15' x 3' x 6"



experience. In our projects we want to encourage an active role of the audience, immersing them through direct involvement into the narrative.

Each of our projects is a journey into a different land, where we guide the viewers with visual clues into the philosophy behind it, leaving multiple points of entry. We often use reenactment of common situations or mundane objects as framework, which we alter or twist into new forms. Our pieces sometimes provide a functionality that leads the viewer into the narrative, while other utilize tools such as metaphor, irony, and humor that are working as a great doors openers for imagination leaving room for individual interpretation.

In our process we are focused on the way of the content delivery, the project's message is usually not obvious at the first glance in order to allow the viewer to engage with the piece and to conceptualize it gradually. The narrative sometimes reveals itself in a sudden aha-moment, allowing participants to see and understands things and their position, which they may not have considered before. For example in the project *Homescape* (2014), which is a series of sculptural objects functioning as living furniture, sofa, and chair, upholstered with living moos, plants and natural materials, conveying the experience of sitting in the forest under the tree.

In addition, we developed series of other theme-based lounges, where we seat people into situations exploring variety of issues such as the sedentary culture, environmental alienation, and the rise of the "Homo Interius" a new type of species, spending most of the time indoor isolated from the outside environment.

Many of your projects use metaphors and are based on reenactments of common situations to encourage a new perspective, reframing reality influenced by our predominantly interior based lifestyle. German multidisciplinary artist Thomas Demand once stated that "nowadays art can no longer rely so much on symbolic strategies and has to probe psychological, narrative elements within the medium instead". What is your opinion about it? Moreover, would you tell us something about the importance of metaphors in your practice and their relationship to memory?





Home in a Home, 2016, Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art (HVCCA), wallpaper – digital print on vinyl, molding, furniture, project's survey, 12'x 10'x 9'.

A site-specific installation exploring the identity and significance of collectible objects in creating the personal space - a home. Taking a form of a lounge for visitors its walls are covered with diamond-patterned wallpaper designed entirely with texts telling stories about domestic treasures gathered through the project's survey from hundreds of responders from around the world.



Home in a Home, 2016, installation view, Hudson Valley Contemporary Art Center (HVCCA), Peekskill, NY



We agree and believe that concepts and symbolic strategies in order to be effective, need to be implemented physically while working with immaterial ideas we always strive to anchor them in a sensual experience, not only to test them but also to confront the detachment of our increasingly virtualized world. The reality of human experience changed rapidly in the last decades, our touch both physical and visual, became increasingly bound to technology depriving us of direct encounter with the world. We create virtually unlimited connections but at the same time confine ourselves to screens, and keyboards causing epidemic of loneliness, isolation, and disconnection from environment.

As artists, we are interested in responding to states of deprivation and sensual impoverishment by engaging in more holistic methodologies. In our projects, in particular, we approach the media and materiality as carrier of the narratives, while working with themes of integrity of sites and spaces. For example, in our search for the “Universal Color of a Home” in the project *Do-It-Your-Self* (2011), we utilize the media of dust collected by a group of participants in their homes to create site-specific wall paint.

In our projects, we often employ metaphors to reframe everyday situations and objects rearranging known elements into new connections creating shortcuts of meanings. In example, our project *In-Tree-Net* is a series of site-specific installations developed in response to the theme of environmental fragmentation produced by architecture. Made with trees and branches mounted on walls resembles pipes and engineering systems *In-Tree-Net* represents idea that nature penetrates artificial borders, has no beginning and end, as the architecture. In other projects metaphors stands for things different from them self to revise their ordinary meaning and typical context, such as in the *Exchange Library* (2013), participatory installation inspired by the garbage scavenger shopping cart turned into a mobile library. These shifts alter the networks of memory and experience, which oftentimes are static templates and stereotypes. Thus metaphor can detonate given psychological mechanisms and affect our perspective on things that are culturally given and firmly set. In

paradox, while creating unusual linkages between otherwise very different concepts and experiences metaphor may allow seeing things and situations more clearly for what they really are.

You are versatile artists and your practice is marked out with captivating multidisciplinary feature, ranging from social and community engage art practice, mixed media, installation, public art, and green space. What drew you to abandon your traditional painting and sculpture and move toward the interdisciplinary art practice? And in particular, when do you recognize that a technique or a material has exhausted its expressive potential?

Our work is not defined by unified formal style; we rather employ diverse forms, materials, and methods specific to the subject matter. The form of our art practice evolves from the continuous exchange we have and our curiosity in the world and its happenings. Plus we have explosive minds, which get accelerated by our collaboration that leads us to explore new and unpaved roads and do things we didn't anticipate before.

Our move from more traditional forms into interdisciplinary practice has been in part due to a sense of dissatisfaction with the detachment of art from reality. We both are interested in culture and environmental themes, which inevitably includes many disciplines and areas of life. This is why we look for forms that would be more present and directly immersed in the everyday life experience. These situations allow us to be a catalyst of events that can be experienced by the audience outside of the framework of art and work as a direct experience in the in the sense of relational aesthetics described by the Nicolas Bourriaud. In general, we seek the best way, how to express an idea or concept not necessarily thinking about a particular media from the start.

Some artists are very successful in developing a distinct style, but we think that there is also a danger there. Artists can get caught in a particular media or style and become comfortable and repetitive, and the aesthetic form can gradually become empty. In certain sense exhausting of an art form happens

when it loses its ability to open horizons of the human mind, it loses its edge like dull old knife. One of the factors in the process is time, which is relative and runs at different speeds simultaneously, one for the artist another for the audience and different for the curators and art dealers etc. Most of the audience definitely takes slower pace oftentimes asking for the familiar, but an artist is a trailblazer, who needs to be up and running in the hills taking risks and expanding boundaries.

Our approach in certain sense can use an analogy of moving through a landscape, which can be taken quite literary. Our perspective is informed by the experience of wilderness and nature from our frequent walks, hikes, and backpacking trips that we consider our parallel practice providing us with resource and inspiration to engage themes of culture and nature. Similarly, our methodologies include exploration, collection, and interpretation, on the way we set camps at certain points. We don't necessarily move on the next story because we think one area of interest would be exhausted we enjoy returning to projects of which some are evolving over several years. But perhaps our method can be described as nomadic, always expanding with new discoveries we make on the way and while never settling, we strive to find integrity in connecting all the dots.

French anthropologist and sociologist Marc Augè once suggested the idea that modern age creates two separate poles: nature versus science and culture versus society. How would you consider the role of an artist in such dichotomies that affect our contemporary age?

We think as culture we are very much influenced by this polarization. The problem is that we too often tend to separate things from each other, which in reality belong together or function as parts of larger systems. This strategy works perfectly as a method in science allowing to dealing precisely with a specific detail. Similarly culture is divided into segments and narrowly specialized categories resulting in fragmentation of our lives and loss of basic connections both to our surroundings and to our



Exchange Library, 2016, installation view at Bruce High Quality Foundation University, NYC; books, garbage bins, shopping cart, household objects, bags, boxes, 5' x 6' x 9'.

Interactive mobile library inspired by the aesthetic and methods of organizations used by the garbage scavengers made with a supermarket-shopping cart and various containers attached to its main structure to store and organize books into collections and genres. The project is open to interaction and offers the participants to take or donate books to the library.

selves. However, to approach society as whole we think we do need to see a bigger picture and use more universal approach allowing integrating things and disciplines together.

In his writings Marc Augè proposed the idea of “non-places”, which refers to transitory spaces like airports, highways, subway, hotel rooms, and supermarkets etc., which do not hold enough significance to be regarded as “places”, creating generic and interchangeable experiences. We think the idea of non-places is symptomatic for the notion of alienation and can be also applied to our social interactions. We live in virtualized non-places of the web, create and develop virtual-friendships, without really meeting each other.

In our art practice, we are searching for the lost connections and our place in the world. We see this isolation as an arbitrary perspective because, in reality, we would not exist without each other, as we are part of interlocking systems of human relations and the environment. We keep working with this theme in many of our projects in which we seek context and integrity of the basic elements of our everyday life. In that sense, we think the role of the artist today may be in bridging these separations and making connections between the fragments creating places of integrity.

Over the years you have exhibited internationally in numerous solo and group exhibitions including at the MoMA Studio, Queens Museum, NURTURE art, EFA Project Space; Center for Contemporary Arts DOX, Meet Factory and many others. One of the hallmarks of your approach is the capability to create direct involvement with the viewers, who are urged to evolve from a condition of mere spectatorship. So before leaving this conversation, we would like to pose a question about the nature of the relationship of your artistic production with your audience. Do you consider the issue of audience reception as being a crucial component of your decision-making process, in terms of what type of language is used in a particular context?

We are interested in establishing a direct line with our audiences shifting the traditional hierarchy of the

artist-audience relationship into a productive and more open model of exchange. As we work with different groups and sites, we continually explore the ideal form of engagement that is constantly changing and evolving with each piece. A visitor typically comes to a gallery or a museum for a particular experience framed as art; in our projects we attempt to reverse the direction and turn the focus to real life instead, which immediately creates a space to engage and include others, changing the role of passive viewer into an active one, in which spectator becomes user, the audience, participants.

Because our projects are often interactive and educational, the idea of audience is part of the creative process from the very beginning. The level of the audience commitment varies, ranging from simple tactile interactions, participation in workshops and assignments in individual and collective actions, to co-writing of the project narratives. In some projects, people provide a story like in a *Home in a Home* (2014 ongoing), in others like *Cabinet of Smells* (2015) by bringing an aromatic object of choice to distill the real perfume of home.

We also often work site-specifically either to the location or an issue, which makes it more relevant for the locals and easier to engage. We are less interested in art and more in life while developing works we ask questions, what's the matter? What is the issue of the particular place or community? In the process of looking for answers, we are able to reach out and connect with the audiences based on the shared experience. In this way, we found people are generally open and eager to engage.

Thanks a lot for your time and for sharing your thoughts, Kristyna and Marek. Finally, would you like to tell us, readers, something about your future projects? How do you see your work evolving?

We usually work on various projects in different stages of production at the same time; we just installed a site-specific piece at the Wave Hill Gallery *In-Tree-Net*, and have other projects, which are developing. Sometimes it takes years for a project to be finished. We are continuing working on the *Plantarium*, *Garden for Bees*, *Weeds*, and *Teas* for at

least another 3 years, at this point we are in the first stage of planting, and have to wait till the flowers get more established. In the next stage, we will be focusing on various forms of utilization and interpretation and plan on organizing presentations and public workshops on the use and cultural significance of wild plants.

We also continue working on our long-term research-based project *Home in a Home*, exploring the theme of identity and psychology of personal space examining how the perception of identity of home evolves in our changing time. We started *Home in a Home* in 2012 at MoMA Studio and developed it further in different forms with variety of audiences such as at the International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP) this summer. While the project engages the idea of home and its substance, it is asking if it can be understood through the notion of keeping and collecting nonfunctional objects of personal significance, such as memorabilia, trophies, and art. We are interested in why we gather things we don't need and ultimately why we need art? In the future we would like to create a publication to capture the many layers and complexity of this project, reinterpreting narratives of personal objects and domestic integrity based on stories and drawings shared with us by more than 400 active project participants.

In general we interested in themes connecting culture and environment and would like to continue working on projects addressing these complex relationships. We are open to exploring new situations and possibilities for site-specific engagement and collaborations and are committed to developing long-term relationship with people and places to foster the integrity of life in the infinite extent of our relations between culture, environment, and nature.

An interview by **Dario Rutigliano**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

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Exchange Library, 2016, installation view at Bruce High Quality Foundation University, books, garbage bins, shopping cart, household objects, shopping bags, cardboard boxes, and an umbrella, 5' x 6' x 9'