

# The Fragmented Landscape Accessible text version

#### **Preface**

Conversation and storytelling are integral parts of my practice. The Fragmented Landscape exhibition and this accompanying publication are a space to have conversations with other artists about plants, landscape and how we each respond to these themes from our various perspectives.

Through inviting Johanna Tagada Hoffbeck, Rosanna Martin, Inês Neto dos Santos, Sop and Bethan Lloyd Worthington into conversation I hope to enrich my own interpretation of landscape; how do they encounter and interrogate landscapes and connected themes of plants, community, care, access, working with and engaging others, how do they use tactility and materiality, in ways that I don't? What can I learn and see differently by sharing in their practices?

The texts each artist has contributed weave threads and extend tendrils to each other's thinking. Moving through this publication I catch upon ideas and themes that slip and flow across the pages...

...gestures, conversations, call to action, bodies, containers, working with what we have... (INÊS)

what we carry with us, holding, caring, nourishing, feeding... (ROSANNA)

... devotion, gardens, animacy, multiplicity... (JOHANNA)

(SOP) desire, rest, the landscape finding you, light...

...brilliance, luminosity, inaccessible landscapes, longing (BETHAN)

...memory, noticing, time, translation... (ME)

fingernails, making a mark, a stitch, a fold, a poke, a glimpse, a pull hearing, not hearing, digesting, waiting, communing, love... breaking soil, breaking bread... (TOGETHER)

While our work sits alongside each other visually in the exhibition, this book brings our research and writing into conversation with each other. Our work relates and collides to form a fragmented landscape.

Katie Spragg

#### Gestures

Inês Neto dos Santos, 2023

My friend Mercedes calls me to say we must rise in fervour.
We must revel in the trash, make beauty out of leftovers. Find joy in rot, roll around in the compost.
We must learn from those who ferment the Fanta, the Sprite, the Kool-aid.

So instead of going out to buy something new from the shop, I sit still and try to breathe, perplexed at the complexity of my fingernails, the yeasts in my stomach, the barnacles in my ears. I collect sticks, wild herbs, discarded grass in piles. These are my maps.

I fold them and place them in my pocket.

But still we're on our way to nowhere, grasping for a truth we don't quite know exists. We drift further and further, spinning in infinity, around the sun, ourselves, each other, the sky our giant sack of nothing, of everything.

I return to the same gestures. Folding dough, stirring starter, straining soda.

I drink my soda, fermented from fruits half eaten by birds, and try to gage the edges of my pocket. It's full of crumbs, bits of paper, random leaves. It's open, never closed.

Ursula tells us about pockets. She says Man did not begin with knife. Life, instead, begins in a bag, a pocket. A holder of things.

The hand, the mouth, the belly, a cloth around one's back.

The hole in my sweater is a pocket.

A travellers portal - walk through it and you might never go back.

Aren't we just pockets for each other, then?

Temporary homes for travel, transformation, fermentation.

We see, we speak, we chew, we spit.
We digest and start again.
We are the hands, the mouths, the guts that hold us.

The backs of our knees, the fronts of our elbows - puddles. Muddy, merging, melting together.

Bread is love between strangers, my friend Caique says. I bake another loaf

# Objects of Interdependence

#### Rosanna Martin

You stick your finger into my belly button. It sparks and makes me laugh. You do it again, again. We go through a phase of asking everyone we meet to show us theirs. For the most part people are generous. A belly button is the physical trace of the chord that connects us. A 'belly bump' or 'belly bup' is an action that involves two people lifting their shirts and energetically pressing their bellies into one another's. It could not feel any softer. Perhaps it is the most intelligent form of greeting we could ever have.

In a chapter titled *Mother of Invention* Marianne Brookes describes how throughout her life her mum 'made a workshop of herself'. She connects love and craft and care. 'Care is its neighbour, love, made solid. It's in the touch and the weft, the holding.'<sup>1</sup>

An artist book by Maira Kalman shows 86 paintings of 'Women Holding Things', a chicken, a boulder, her daughter. 'There is never an end to holding'<sup>2</sup>, reads aloud over snippets of film of different women holding different things and walking around their streets.

I slip down the chute into the milky water. Be A Climbing Frame Mum! When I was a circle I went down the plughole.

On the beach, we were celebrating. The toddlers have grown together. It was one of the first days of sunshine but a hard bite occupied the breeze. The adults drank fizz from paper cups while the children jumped into a deep hole in the dusty sand. Sudden chill and hunger prompted a sharing of the sustenance that had been packed into various individual tupperwares. One boy did not want to eat his tea, so another boy and my son ate it. First, I use the spoon and they take it in turns to have a mouthful. A shift occurs; they take the spoon from my hand and start to feed each other.

The making of careful containers. Can a container contain care? Can a sculpture prompt a spontaneous caring gesture? '...but we have not heard about the thing to put things in, the container for the thing

contained. That is a new story. That is news.'3

The notion that acts of care 'must be embedded, finally, at the heart of politics' is introduced with the idea of the 'universal caregiver', as an attempt to break away from gendered roles in relation to care, and the tired idea that it is only women or mothers who can fulfil these tasks. Segal issues a call to empower the universal caregiver, to prompt us all to work together to care for ourselves, each other and the planet.

And the belly buttons go back in time, and onwards.

Messy Nessy, "@messynessychic." Accessed March 2025. https://www.messynessychic.com.

<sup>1</sup> Brookes, Marianne. Intervals. Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Kalman, Maira. Women Holding Things. Harper, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Le Guin, Ursula K. The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction. London: Ignota, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Segal, Lynne. "Embedding Mothering at the Heart of Politics: Mamsie, Ten Years On." Studies in the Maternal 13, no. 1 (2020).

KATIE: what does it mean to be fragmented?

SOP: What makes a landscape fragmented? The speed at which we are witnessing it? A glimpse of a memory? A reflection or the outside indoors? A state of mind? Does a fragmented mind see a fragmented landscape?

JOHANNA: On one personal and societal level: cognitive dissonance, for example talking about liberation / feeling empowered in art while using body fluid produced by another species and taken without their consent, in a very likely exploitative manner eg. milk / eggs.

INÊS: am reminded of this quote about the importance of being critical/questioning our choices:

"What we need to question is bricks, concrete, glass, our table manners, our utensils, our tools, the way we spend our time, our rhythms. To question that which seems to have ceased forever to astonish us. We live, true, we breathe, true; we walk, we open doors, we go down staircases, we sit at a table in order to eat, we lie down on a bed in order to sleep. How? Where? When? Why?..."

Georges Perec, Species of Spaces and Other Pieces, 1974

JOHANNA: When I think of the word 'fragment' I usually think about it as a 'piece' of a greater whole, it can be seen and studied / experienced as a fragment but I feel its place in a broader context tells a more complex story.

SOP: Myself, I think of fragmented as a shattering, parts that are individual, but also of a whole - some of those fragmented parts are obscured, lost to the eye, mind or memory but still somehow in this absence is still a presence, a consciousness of a whole. That can be applied to lost landscapes, landscapes of memory, contested landscape, and landscapes imagined and never visited.

BETHAN: One way the fragment speaks is of a whole. In the cave that my PhD centres on, there are fragmented animal and plant remains that are unusually well preserved. They are interesting as artefacts, but more so because very tiny things can tell you about vast spaces. Preserved pollen can tell you what the palaeoenvironment was like, so from this little muddy speck, the mind's eye can roll out across steppe tundra tens of thousands of years ago. That's magic to me.

INÊS: This makes me think of the finding of dry sourdough remnants inside Egyptian clay pots (during a tomb expedition). The dry sourdough was isolated from the clay in a lab, and the scientists and archaeologists were able to bring it back to life and make bread with it, in the 21st century. A sample of microbial life from 12,000 years ago, a clue into what kind of bread and grains were eaten then, what kind of lifestyle people led, what role food and agriculture had...could all be read from that sample of sourdough in the clay pots (along with many other clues - fragments!)

ROSANNA: And the belly buttons go back in time, and onwards

SOP: Perhaps a quote that brings all of these threads together is from Emanuele Coccia's *The Life of Plants*, 2018:

"To say that everything is in everything, and thus that immersion is the eternal form and the condition of possibility of the world, means first of all to assert that every physical event is produced as immersion and from the starting point of immersion. In this way, the light that allows me to see the page I write is the sea in which I bathe. It is, in turn, in the switch, in the cable that ties it to the fixture, and - embryonically- in my hand, which activates it. And the hand that flicks the switch is contained in the light that illuminates it. Everything is in everything."

What can I say I'm a romantic and I love the romance of that.

BETHAN: From the opening page of Brian Dillon, Suppose a Sentence, 2020:

"Or maybe a short sentence after all, a fragment in fact, a simple cry, of pain or pleasure, or succession of same, of the same cries that is, compounded, and spoken at the last, in extremis, or another sort of beast entirely, whose unmeaning cry is just an overture, before the sentence sets in distinguished motion its several parallel clauses, as though it were a creature with at least four legs..."

KATIE: what is a memory caught in glimpses? does it flash? or flicker?

SOP: What landscapes have you visited in your dreams? where have you trodden? What do you see? Do you see the same places now as you did when you were a child? are you chasing a feather across a moor?

are you following paths along side marshy boggy land? are the rocks dry grey dusty and not like earth? does the road suddenly give way to sea? tell me where have you travelled?

JOHANNA: I think about where I grew up in rural Alsace, France and where I live now in rural Oxfordshire, a need (?) for more large (?) human habitations, these are rapidly being build changing the topography landscape.

ROSANNA: I am thinking about the physical landscape in which I work which has been deeply fragmented due to china clay extraction. The process produces a lot of waste which has been used to make new landscapes, sometimes the piles of waste become so tall they are higher than the highest trig points (high point markers in the landscape).

A lot of this landscape is inaccessible to the public due to safety issues, and there are objects and infrastructure that was just poured over with waste quartz sand. Buildings and trucks, buried. Though inaccessible, people trespass to walk their dogs and ride their dirt bikes

KATIE: Imagine how those buried things could be a future archaeology. What might people in the future make of them? Would they understand these activities or see it as absurd and irresponsible?

INÊS: fragments can be spaced so much in time - but still find ways of connecting far away dots to make a story

KATIE: The fragment's connection to time makes me think of the automatic writing exercise you led on the workshop day Inês.

INÊS: Imagine yourself in this future: the day your is ferment is ready, the fizzy bubbles emerge, the microbes come out to say hello. Where are you? Who are you with? What is that day like, what will it taste like? In those few days, maybe the world will change. How will it be different?

KATIE: I really enjoyed imagining myself into the very close future; what would have changed, where I'd be, who'd I'd be with but also imagining the other people who had also made the ferment with me and where they'd be and how we'd still be connected by that shared activity, by microbes.

## KISSES FROM THE SUN

I lie in bed with closed blinds I cannot see the sky yet there it is on my bedroom door sun slow dancing with abstraction sliding to the floor I flirt we peek at each other shyly sly it's magic - your show for me tickled-teased side eye I'm seduced

and it's over

I lie in bed with closed blinds

plugged in tuned out

and

I close my eyes in the sun

-

Sop, 2025

## On Breaking Ground

#### Bethan Lloyd Worthington

What follows is an extract from my lyric essay, *Brilliance*. This text began during the first of 2020's lockdowns, as I tried to remake my relationship with the practice-based PhD I had recently started, according to the new order of things. The PhD centres on a cave (Gully Cave) that is being excavated in Ebbor Gorge, Somerset. The writing, and the sewing, were mainly done in an increasingly warm and migraine-bright ground floor back bedroom in suburban north east London.

. . .

For a while, when newly inside and still inside, stayin' inside so help me God, I tried to get to this long gone colour and brightness by the illumination of silk filament on dull linen. While I was doing the stitches over and over again, and green tendrils were growing and the light was refracting through them - which I see now is due to the prism-like structure of silk fibres - I was sessile as can be. Sessile was a word that was really doing the rounds at the time.

The light surged up the thread like a cable, but I could almost feel it butting its head against the end, travelling faster than I could sew, failing to quite meet its potential. *Brilliance allows you, or brings you, into the experience of being part of a vibrant and vibrating world*<sup>1</sup> and ohhhh God I'd love that for me right now. I am repeatedly breaking the surface with a metal tool. A pop, thum thum, each time, because the fabric is taut. And it's thin as well, the depth is imaginary. To be fair the depth of unbroken soil usually is too, that's what the digging is for.

While I'm doing this surface-breaking another sound carries to me from the cave some months earlier. It's like you might have heard off someone planting bulbs, or voiding graves. Metal on stone muffled by claggier material. Sharp shoves. Pauses for bones. The outdoor sound of the soil and the metal, remembered where I am, so, so, inside, holding linen, prickling it with silk. You can hear it from some distance across cold air at this time of year, sorry that time of year. The close pop thum thum though is mostly heard across the distance between fingertips and eardrums, and it's warm enough inside this room that it goes no further.

The steel needle flashes, have you ever held a bone one? I haven't. I'm putting light on the fabric, *puc-kewing* it through very exactly, such a sharp tip that it sometimes goes through where you don't want it,

Deborah Bird Rose, 'Shimmer: When all you love is being trashed', in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene*, ed. by Anna Tsing and others (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), p. G53

acid, splitting the structure of the fabric instead of passing through the dead spaces in between the weave.

The silk floss is hard to handle. It catches on the skin of my fingers which are rough from the garden. When I turn my nails to the sunlight little hairy strands grow off them, feeble roots.

It must all have been so bright once, we have that on trust. And we have to trust that the brightening will keep happening do we.

It's in the nature of needlepoint that my brightnesses took a very long time to appear but if you really want to talk about waiting, a pocket of clay in the study cave was storing Asteraceae pollen for 30,000 years. In Greek, the word ἀστήρ (astḗr) means star, and Asteraceae is the daisy family. In our culture a daisy is the number one flower that knows when to go to sleep and when to open its day's eyes.

## On being a piece of the garden, a piece of the Earth

### Johanna Tagada Hoffbeck

In my writings, I use animacy grammar. For this, I refer to the pronouns employed in my native language, French. Life forms other than humans are to be referred to by *she/he* and *they*, as they, too, are alive. In my writing, where I may do so, I refuse to conform in addressing animals as I would a piece of furniture, with the pronoun it.

A garden is one and many. It can be seen and experienced as a whole or in one of its myriad of ever-evolving fragments; as a gardener, I am but one of those pieces.

In a garden, there is softness and generosity, but there is also tension and control from a human mind and hand, even in the wildest of gardens, as gardens are contained spaces, still where there is no fence, and when, as Derek Jarman rebelliously and romantically expressed it, the 'boundaries are the horizon'. I agree with Gilles Clément's 'Jardin Planétaire' - the concept that the entire world is a garden and therefore we are all gardeners, which implies that we all somewhat control and form the world and the micro-environments we inhabit, more so than any other species, as our current age of the Anthropocene demonstrates, and this is not something to brag about.

While I acknowledge the tensions which emerge with the formation of a garden, being a gardener myself - an adept of natural farming, permaculture and polyculture, with the grounds I rent in rural Oxfordshire - this space soothes my mind, soul, nurtures and holds my body in motion, as well as inspires and gives mobility to my thoughts and movement, as dance is life.

In a garden, a multiplicity of life forms can be found above and under the soil. Some such plants are said not to be sentient, so while a plant might have intentions such as growing towards the light or bolting to produce seeds when water is too scarce, a plant such as a biannual kale is said not to feel pain. However, this is not the case for all who inhabit the garden: the birds, the snails, other invertebrates, and, of course, me. We have the desire to live, and we feel joy and pain. In a garden my presence and active movement can engender pain - accidentally walking on a snail and hearing their shell crack, a worm bleeding as I pull out garlic, for example. The more I garden, the more I am aware of this, and I consider once again the practice of Jains, one of India's ancient ways of living, which holds a belief in Ahimsa, an ethical principle of not causing and participating in harming other living organisms.

Through conversation, I learned that in contrast to other practices, Ahimsa is ideally the standard by which all actions are considered. Jains do, therefore, not eat root vegetables, including potatoes and garlic, on the basis that insects could be killed by pulling these root and tuber vegetables. Devoted Jains can be seen wearing a mask to avoid accidentally breathing in any tiny flying creature. Some also carry a little broom to gently remove insects from any surface they wish to sit on. I admire such devotion and its application to daily life and contemporary society.

This awareness of the possible meanings of my life is also my spiritual and intellectual food - it nurtures how I try to live in the world with others. Aware that my life means hurt to some and with no intention of leaving the garden, earth, just yet, I actively attempt to do well where I consciously can, in particular towards my fellow creatures and my, or shall I say, our obligation to other animals, as Christine M. Korgsgaard puts it. Humans are animals and nature too. I do not intend to preach for exemplary behaviour; the act of living or waking up might be challenging enough. I intend to invite myself and others to reconsider actions, choices, and their meanings within layers. These thoughts, which can be challenging, are not energy-consuming ones, as they happen while I squat down on the ground planting a seed, dreaming of tomorrow, the sounds of birds, wind and insects flying by, an orchestra.

## Fast, Slow, Together

Katie Spragg, 2025

In connection to clay workshops where I make with people with dementia, I have become interested in the fragmented nature of memory, observation and representation and how this shapes our experience of moving through and being in landscapes. We have a desire to consolidate things but how can fragmented thinking and being make our experience of the world and each other more expansive?

fast the train, the studio

The guick glimpse of buddleia, bramble, hazel, buddleia, flicks past the window.

Further from the track an abundance of bundles of raggedy ragwort, like haphazard bouquets, dot the fields we pass.

Pen on the page, I let the shake of the carriage direct the line. A plant I hope to capture disappears from view, before flash flash through the window again and again.

The buddleia flowers turn from vivid purple to brown as I travel the same route from mid-summer into winter, shifting from hard to capture in a mess of colour to sharply silhouetted against pink flecked skies. An omnipresent companion on this regular route, buddleia was brought to England from China in the 1890s. Now they dominate our railways tenacious; growing in cracks, gravel, sidelines, edges.

Later, in the studio, these drawings are laid down with a swift glide of the squeegee across the screen, the landscape speeding past.

slow

walking, drawing

Walking, I encounter up close the same plants from my train journeys. Ragwort everywhere this summer - on the edges of the allotment, in a grass-wild graveyard and growing in the fields that edge the city. I watch it fade, draw it when its leaves are curling and brown petal cups are all that remain of the bright flowers.

I'm attracted to plants that are often maligned, as ragwort is, because when chopped into hay it is poisonous to cattle.

Drawing these plants very carefully and delicately on thin sheets of tissue feels like an act of care, of noticing. Focus, detail, a closeness, a slowness.

\_

together a clay for dementia workshop

Imagine a place you have been, or a place you would like to go. What's there? What textures does it have? What shapes?

Clay is pressed between fingers, rolled, assembled.

A Croatian island surrounded by sea, a picturesque chapel at its centre; "the most beautiful place, you must visit!"

Two stick figure sisters and a stick figure daughter smile in front of the Egyptian pyramids, scratchy triangles behind.

A spruce tree viewed from a childhood window, branches stretching out across the table.

A town square, somewhere in Italy; four columns and a canopy. Details translated to an Italian-speaking assistant.

How can clay help us translate memories, stories, desires?

Those here who have dementia make a place or landscape from the past, of personal and cultural significance; childhood homes, formative landscapes. They have important stories to tell, these people, these places.

Two daughters, caring for their mothers, work quietly, focused. Both make isolated cottages - long garden paths stretching from them, vast landscapes of clay stretching around them. Another daughter, also a full-time carer, models herself lounging on a desert island.

A desire or projection into the future, a time to be alone, solitary, without responsibility.

Published on the occasion of The Fragmented Landscape, Ruup & Form April 24th - May 24th 2025

With thanks to Varuna Kollanethu, director of Ruup & Form, who has enabled and supported this exhibition and publication.

Conceived and curated by: Katie Spragg

\_

Johanna Tagada Hoffman's paragraph concerning Jains on p.12 was originally written and published in *What if God Was an Insect?* 2021, published by Ao-Hata, Japan.

Publication design: work-form

Printed by: PageMasters