



U-jazdowski

Soil and Friends

U-jazdowski

27/06—26/10/2025

exhibition

Soil and Friends

Artists

Milena Bonilla, Centrala,
Julia Ciunowicz, Yoeri Guépin, Gosia Kępa,
Kateřina Konvalinová & Judita Levitnerová,
Krzysztof Maniak, Maksud Ali Mondal,
Deirdre O'Mahony, Julia Ábalos Reznak,
Anna Siekierska, Sounding Soil, Salka Tiziana,
Anka Wandzel, Ewelina Węgiel,
Jaśmina Wójcik & Lea Wróblewska,
Zabriskie Buchladen für Kultur und Natur

Throughout the industrial era, humanity regarded soil, if at all, as something obvious, something that simply existed and required no attention, often invisible or associated with impurity. Today, however, we are increasingly aware that soil, much like the ocean, remains an underexplored frontier, despite its ubiquity beneath our feet. Far from inert, it teems with innumerable life forms and transformative, life-giving processes. The prevailing perception of soil has been intentionally manipulated to enable it to be reduced to an object, a commodity, a vehicle for speculation – just like animals, plants, water and other living entities. That is why this exhibition focuses on those who are well aware of the consequences of irresponsible soil management – we refer to them as friends and invite you to listen to their stories. They are not only people, but include a multitude of organisms intricately entangled in the fabric of earthly existence. We are interested in the intertwined trajectories of plants, humans and non-human life forms, in the various ways of cohabiting and experiencing the world, and in the fertile intersections between artistic practice and the acts of cultivation and care for the land. The literary narrative accompanying the exhibition is provided by writer Anka Wandzel. The second installment of the project will take place at PLATO in Ostrava in 2026.

Curators

Marianna Dobkowska,
Edith Jeřábková

Ujazdowski Castle
Centre for Contemporary Art

Jazdów 2, Warsaw
www.u-jazdowski.pl

Gleba i przyjaciele [Soil and Friends]

W epoce przemysłowej ludzkości w najbliższym czasie czekała
groźba za coś oczywistego, coś, co po prostu istniało i nie
wymaga uwagi, coś niewidzialnego, a nawet ledwiego. Długo
jednak wiemy, że gleba, podobnie jak scena, jest nieodłącznym
elementem naszego świata, choć znajduje się tak pod naszymi
stopami. Nie jest martwą materią, lecz procesem – jest
miejscem aktywności nielicznych form organizmów i pulujących
procesami transformacyjnymi. Podlegające gleby zostały
celowo zmniejszone, aby mogły stać się produktami, kawałkami
i obiektami spekulacji, podobnie jak zwierzęta, rośliny,
woda i inne byty.

Dlatego w naszej wystawie skupiamy uwagę na tych
kultury są świadkami skutków złego zarządzania glebą.
Naczymy ich przyjaciółmi i zapraszamy do wykreowania
ich historii. To nie tylko ludzie, ale przede wszystkim
różne inne organizmy zaangażowane w ziemską egzystencję.
Na wystawie przedstawiamy oglądane historie roślin, ludzi
i byłych nieświadców, różne sposoby współżycia ze światem
i jego doświadczania, miejsca przynależności i praktyk
uprawy ziemi oraz opowieści nad nią.

Literacką narrację po wystawie prowadzi pisarka Adia
Wandol. W 2008 roku druga odsłona projektu będzie miała
miejsce w PLATO w Odrzwie.

Marianna Dobkowska / Edyta Jędrzejewska

Throughout the industrial era, humanity regarded soil as if it was
something obvious, something that simply exists and requires
no attention, often overlooked or associated with mystery. Today
however, we are increasingly aware that soil must also be
considered as an essential part of our world, although it is often
beneath our feet. It is not a dead matter, but a process – it is
a place of countless organisms and pulsating transformational
processes. Soils have been deliberately reduced to products,
pieces of speculation, just like animals, plants, water and other
living entities.

That is why this exhibition focuses on those who are well
aware of the consequences of irresponsible management
of soils. They are not only people but include a multitude
of organisms intricately entangled in the fabric of earthly
existence. We are interested in the intertwined fates of
plants, humans and non-human life forms, in the various
ways of inhabiting and representing the world, and in the
fierce interaction between artistic practice and the acts
of cultivation and care for the land.

The literary narrative accompanying the exhibition is provided
by writer Adia Wandol. The second installment of the project
will take place at PLATO in Odrzwie in 2008.

Marianna Dobkowska / Edyta Jędrzejewska

Adia Wandol

Everyone can see what the soil looks like today – at least on the surface. But in practice, those with their feet firmly on the ground rarely look down to beneath the concrete slabs and cornfields, into the cracks of pipes, roots, subway tunnels, mines and cemeteries.

The more the soil stretches across the artificial fantasies that humans have about boundaries – between species, between nature and art – the harder it becomes to grasp with the eye or the imagination. It's easier to see it as impure and dangerous or, conversely, as ordinary and inert – something dead and owned by humans, a kind of planetary fiefdom we assume is ours by default.

But what would the history of the world sound like if told from the perspective of soil as a great connector? From the point of view of a shared environment that shapes and transforms us, just as much as we cultivate it?





Anna Siekierska
In Sheep's Clothing

2024
archival photograph

What does a sheep have to do with a miner?
From a human perspective – not much.
But in the deep, centuries-old memory
of the soil, the histories of animal farming
and industry are tightly woven into
a mournful shroud of irreversible change.
To illustrate this, Anna Siekierska – artist,
activist and a member of the Capital Seed
Group – has repainted a 20th-century
archival photograph from the Saint-Pierre-
la-Palud mine, covering the workers'
bodies with white marks. Are they balls
of sheep's wool? Ghosts of progress?
Or perhaps clouds of non-human memory?



Anna Siekierska *In Sheep's Clothing*

2024
object

On one side, pyrite, on the other, a 16th-century engraving; all encased in a simple wooden frame. Add to that a set of rickety sheep's legs. Anna Siekierska's object is as strange as the history of Saint-Pierre-la-Palud in France, where sheep grazing – seemingly natural and in harmony with the rhythms of the earth – sustained centuries of iron extraction from non-renewable pyrite deposits. Beneath the sheep's hooves, hundreds of metres underground, miners – fed on mutton and clad in thick wool shirts to shield themselves from the cold and acid – destroyed their own bodies and the very soil that sustained them, all in the name of progress. Progress, like any other lie, has short legs – wooden, sheep's legs.



Kateřina Konvalinová,
Judita Levitnerová,
along with Skudde, Zwartbles,
and multi-horned sheep
Sheep dreaming

2024

sheep wool fabrics and sound installation

What would the history of Brno sound like if it hadn't been written by humans? Kateřina Konvalinová and Judita Levitnerová, two Czech artists, weave a story of their city – known in the 19th century as the Manchester of Moravia – from the shaggy remnants of industrial wool, the buzzing sound of pastures and the obsolete Czechoslovak nonwoven textile technology, known as art protis. Do sheep also long for a world that is no more? Or do they have nightmares about what humans have done to them? Progress is by no means a uniquely human achievement.



Krzysztof Maniak
Untitled from the series Burrows

2017
photograph

Soil has no face. It doesn't warrant a portrait. It resists neat gallery frames. Unless, of course, an artist literally goes underground, slips his hand underneath a root and ends up covered in clay. This is what Krzysztof Maniak – an artist who works with the landscape around his hometown of Tuchów – did while performing an act of undermining the walls of human prejudice. In such cases, even soil can delight with its composition – not just as compost. Because composition and art are one thing, while compost and soil are another. Naturally. However, language reminds us that both are equally complex and share a single, common source.









Salka Tiziana
All Sounds Within

2022
film on colour 16 mm tape, 26'

The centre of Madrid. Bushes and weeds. Broken trees. Piles of sawdust. Human hands on udders. Sheep nuzzling rubber boots. Dogs drowsy from the heat. Lambs in a livestock truck. Two lionesses behind bars at Madrid Zoo. Instead of the blare of car horns, there is only a constant bleating. Do our cities truly belong only to humans? The longer the Spanish-German director follows the sheep, the more she allows herself to be led astray. *All Sounds Within* meanders through Madrid, ever wider – crossing borders and expectations – like an animal set loose in search of a source. As far away as possible. Because when night falls, it's time to rest like a human. Everyone returns back behind bars. To civilisation.





Julia Ábalos Reznak

Untitled

2022

paper notebooks, ink, paint

How can the physical memories of grazing be captured within the rigid framework of human language? How can one speak of coexisting with the earth, animals and plants without uprooting them from their living environment and reducing their diverse, fragmented experiences to something incomplete? During nine months of illness that confined her to bed, Spanish shepherdess, poet and philosopher Julia Ábalos Reznak – who collaborated with Salka Tiziana on the film *All Sounds Within* – returned to her old grazing notebooks, sifting through images, poems, associations and memories, compiling them into three volumes. *Physis: Life in the Earth*, *Agro: Life with the Earth*, and *Polis: The World of People*. The notebooks presented here trace the shepherdess's embodied and relational experience, as well as the poet's later act of cultivating those memories through creative reflection.

Life Studio Book

Ben Shahn

1941

Ben Shahn's "Life Studio Book" is a collection of sketches and drawings that he made while he was in the Life Studio in New York City. The book is a record of his work as a draftsman and as a teacher. It contains many of the sketches that he made for the Life magazine, as well as many of the sketches that he made for his students. The book is a valuable record of Shahn's work and of his teaching.

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Do not touch! Please do not touch!
(A work of art. Please do not touch!)



From soil we come, to soil we shall return. For the soil to yield crops, it must take bodies. What we bury, it brings up again: corpses, waste, impurities, rainwater, mud, skin, tears, sorrow. Look closely at your feet and you'll see that the world is a closed cycle – where with every step, every millimetre, someone is processing and shaping a new, different reality. Roots, nematodes, bacteria, fungi, moles. How do we remember what is yet to come? How do we dream of what is gone but stays with us? What truths of faith will we carve into the earth? What stories will the soil write about us? The spiral of past and future, stretched between poles, tightens and vibrates – breathing to the rhythm of the planet.



Gosia Kępa
Targanice

2025
print in a wooden frame

Map of Targanice

2025
print in a wooden frame

Earth's shadow

2025
handful of soil, cotton handkerchief

Can you step in the same soil twice? – asks Gosia Kępa as she packs up her apartment. After years of moving, she no longer knows whether she is from Świdnica, Poznań, Warsaw, or Lisbon. Or perhaps from Targanice, like her late grandmother, whom she never met. By constructing a network of Targanice's streets from small, dried-up roots, Kępa searches for her own fragile roots and dreams of a land to which she could return. But this land exists only in the realm of longing. Look at the map of Targanice. This is where Gosia and Bronia never met, even though their loved ones constantly compare them. What is it like to live with a ghost? To follow in someone's footsteps when they have already vanished? Gosia clenches a handful of earth in her hand – a relic, an archive. And you, what soil will you take with you when you are forced to leave? Ukrainian black earth? Palestinian mudflats? Syrian cinnamon soil? Or Polish peat bog?



Yoei Guépin

As Above So Below

2023

video, 8'

As Above So Below

2023—2025

installation of objects and plants

plants used to create preparations: horsetail, chamomile, yarrow, nettle

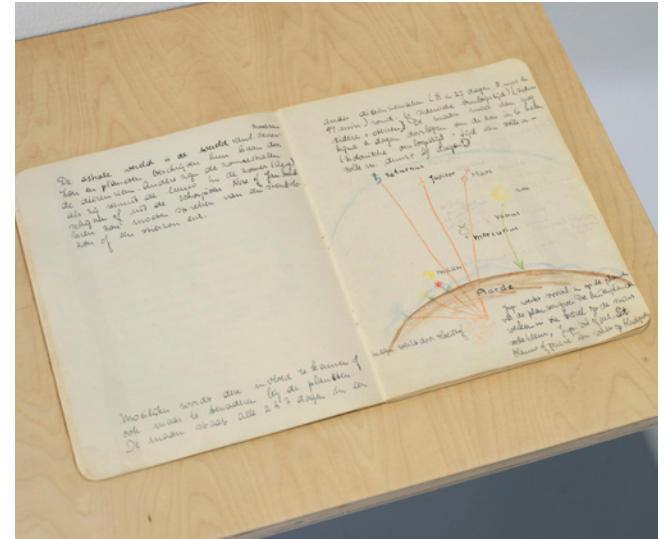
in stoneware pots: compost, clay soil, humus, quartz, oak wood

on the shelves: a plaster cow horn made by the artist's father in 1996, when the use of cow horns was banned during the mad cow disease epidemic; the artist's grandmother's notebook from 1947; books belonging to the artist's grandmother

"That which is above is like that which is below, and that which is below is like that which is above," proclaims Victorian mysticism, echoing Renaissance tarot, medieval alchemy and the ancient cult of Hermes Trismegistus. "As above, so below," repeats Dutch artist and gardener Yoei Guépin, following the example of his grandmother, as he pores over her 1947 notes on biodynamic agriculture, which read like spell books, secret scrolls, tablets inscribed with sacred commandments. Wilfriede Driehuyzen Guépin, a pioneer of biodynamic farming, smiles as she explains to her grandson: remember yarrow, for it heals and strengthens. Yarrow is Venus, and Venus is change. Place the flowers in the bladder of a young deer, for the deer's antlers connect it to the universe.



The very act of your work gathers energy from the world – energy the earth now needs. Wilfriede can still feel this energy beneath her trembling fingers, though she no longer sees it. She knows she is fading. What comes from the soil must return to the soil. It is time to pass on all that she has gathered. She passed away in May 2025. A month later, Yoei gathers votive objects in the exhibition space – photographs, stones, soil, books, notes, dried flowers, a plaster cow's horn – and quietly, stubbornly repeats: "That which is above is like that which is below, and that which is below is like that which is above."





Krzysztof Maniak *Shelf for Two Books*

2024—2025
object made of oak wood

2023
book *After Nature. A Collection of Short Stories*,
published by Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts
in Kraków and Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych in Tarnów

2019
book *Selected Photographic Works Documenting
the Activities, Interventions, and Observations of
Krzysztof Maniak in Tuchów and the Surrounding
Area in 2013—2019*, ed. S. Cichocki, published by
Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych in Tarnów

What will remain of an artist who works
in the spirit of land art? What will come
after nature? Can the closeness between
humans and their living environment be
commemorated? Instead of calling for more
monuments, archives, or exhibitions with
gargantuan carbon footprints, Krzysztof
Maniak offers a modest gesture: a small,
two-part shelf, made of oak, holding his
entire oeuvre. Neither he nor his mythical
descendants need anything more.



Maksud Ali Mondal
Synthesised Forest

2025

walls covered with pigment derived from fermented plants collected around Ujazdowski Castle

Dirty walls? Some kind of growth? This isn't what painting is supposed to look like. This isn't what chlorophyll is supposed to be. And yet it is chlorophyll that colours our everyday pleasures. Without the first stains on our hands – the smeared leaves, the marks of contact – we wouldn't be here. The artist from Bankura asks: "Why am I considered the author of this art, rather than the thousands of microbes I collaborate with?" According to Maksud, "architecture painted in chlorophyll, a living skin that breathes, responds and ultimately decays. Here, the walls are not static surfaces but membranes in transformation, echoing the ephemeral cycles of the natural world. When touched by light, the chlorophyll begins to respond, photosynthesis activates, time leaves its trace, and the vibrant green slowly yields to brown, like leaves in autumn. This space does not merely represent nature; it becomes nature."







Zabriskie Buchladen für Kultur und Natur

Soil and Friends

reading room

The shelves are flower beds. Hands are tools. It's time to roll up our sleeves and dig beneath the surface of what is known and obvious. The stories we read settle in us like dust and clay in the soil. Compressed by context, hollowed out by emotion, they ferment in our bodies and imagination, moving deeper and deeper – until we bear fruit. Would you like some seeds? They've been collected by the curators and the Berlin bookstore Zabriskie.

1

Victoria Aresheva,
Clothilde Morette
*Science/Fiction:
A Non-History of Plants*

2

Marcia Bjornerud
Turning to Stone

3

Giorgina Bertolino,
Francesca Comisso,
Cecilia Guida,
Alessandra Pioselli (eds.)
Bright Ecologies

4

Scott Chaskey
*Soil and Spirit:
Cultivation and Kinship
in the Web of Life*

5

Teresa Cos Rebollo,
Charles Esche,
Victoire Raffy (eds.)
Soils

6

TJ Demos
*Beyond the World's End:
Arts of Living at the
Crossing*

7

TJ Demos
Decolonizing Nature

8

Philippe Dietachmair,
Pascal Gielen,
Georgia Nicolau (eds.)
*Sensing Earth:
Cultural Quests Across
a Heated Globe*

9	d-o-t-s (Laura Drouet, Olivier Lacroust) (eds.) <i>Greenhouse Stories: A Critical Re-examination of Transparent Microcosms</i>	18	Olivia Laing <i>Ogród poza czasem. W poszukiwaniu wspólnego raju</i>	27	Regine Rapp (ed.) <i>Matter of Flux: Art, Biopolitics, and Networks with Care</i>	33	Yuri Tuma, Lucia Ugena, Clara Benito, Gabriel Alonso (eds.) <i>Making Kin: Animals</i>
10	Sarita Dougherty <i>A Textbook for the Ecocene</i>	19	Gene Logsdon <i>Holy Shit: Managing Manure to Save Mankind</i>	28	Claire Ratinon <i>Unearthed: On race and roots, and how the soil taught me I belong</i>	34	Yuri Tuma, Elena Brea, Julia Fernandez-Plaza, Gabriel Alonso (eds.) <i>Compost Reader vol. I</i>
11	Matthew Gandy, Sandra Jasper (eds.) <i>The Botanical City</i>	20	Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Heather Anne Swanson, Elaine Gan, Nils Bubandt (eds.) <i>Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene</i>	29	Robida Magazine <i>Soils</i>	35	Yuri Tuma, Gabriel Alonso (eds.) <i>Compost Reader vol. II</i>
12	Jo Handelsman, <i>A World Without Soil: The Past, Present, and Precarious Future of the Earth Beneath Our Feet</i>	21	Robert Macfarlane <i>Podziemia</i>	30	Zoe Schlanger <i>The Light Eaters</i>	36	Vandana Shiva <i>Soil, Not Oil. Climate Change, Peak Oil and Food Insecurity</i>
13	Catalina Imizcoz (ed.) <i>Making Kin: Plants</i>	22	Michael Marder <i>Myślenie roślin. Filozofia wegetacji</i>	31	Michelle Teran, Marc Herbst, Vivian Sky Rehberg, Renée Turner, The Promiscuous Care Study Group (eds.) <i>Promiscuous Infrastructures: Practicing Care</i>	37	Vandana Shiva <i>The Nature of Nature</i>
14	Derek Jarman <i>Współczesna natura</i>	23	Lynn Margulis <i>Symbiotyczna planeta</i>	32	Alexandra R. Toland, Jay Stratton Noller, Gerd Wessolek (eds.) <i>Field to Palette: Dialogues on Soil and Art in the Anthropocene</i>	38	Robin Wall Kimmerer <i>Braiding Sweet Grass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants</i>
15	Caroline A. Jones, Natalie Bell, Selby Nimrod (eds.) <i>Symbionts: Contemporary Artists and the Biosphere</i>	24	George Monbiot <i>Regenesi. Jak wyżywić świat, nie pożerając planety</i>			39	Anka Wandzel <i>Sztuka przetrwania</i>
16	Amal Khalaf, iLiana Fokianaki, Stella Succi, Emanuele Braga, Jamie Allinson, James Bridle, Jumana Manna, Cal Flynn <i>Museums at the Ecological Turn</i>	25	Grace Ndiritu <i>Being Together: A Manual For Living</i>				
17	Michał Książek <i>Atlas dziur i szczelin</i>	26	María Puig de la Bellacasa <i>Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds</i>				





Gosia Kępa *Wetland*

2025

toned cyanotypes on cotton fabric, dyed with wetland soil

Prints can be made from an old negative, materialising like ghosts from the past. Peat, once gone, will not return. And with it – into the afterlife, into oblivion – disappears all the knowledge and memory the wetland holds. With each passing year, with every vanishing centimetre of peat, the oldest archives perish before our eyes: alder, dandelion and pine pollen – fragments of stories thousands of years old. By photographing the nearby, beloved alder bogs, Kępa is not documenting reality but the ongoing process of loss. First, she gathers images, then transfers them onto fabric using cyanotype – one of the oldest and most fragile photographic techniques. Her collaborators are the sun and the mud of the wetlands she visits. These images not only carry the scent of the bog, but, like it, will eventually disappear. By the end of the exhibition, after months in a sunlit room, they will have faded – evaporated. This moves us. Why, then, do we remain so indifferent to the destruction of other living works of art – of peatlands, bogs and wetlands?



Gosia Kępa Wetland

2025

a scroll of paper with a quote from *Hydrozagadka*
by Jan Mencwel, written in wetland soil

On the scroll nearby is a quote from
Jan Mencwel's *Hydrozagadka*:

"Where has the water gone?

Where has the peat disappeared to?"



Lea Wróblewska, Jaśmina Wójcik
Mamasosna

2025

mural by Jaśmina Wójcik based on a drawing
by Lea Wróblewska

Last year's vacation, somewhere deep in the forest, Jaśmina, wrapped in the scent of pine, dozes in the shade of a hammock. Her daughter, Lea, wanders nearby – touching a pinecone here, admiring some bark there. Day after day, she returns to the same tree, the one closest to her. Just before they leave – or perhaps just after – Lea draws *Mother Pine* and gives it to Jaśmina. Jaśmina, like a devoted copyist, transposes Lea's drawing onto the gallery wall. Who is the apprentice and who is the master? Who is the artist here: the mother, the daughter, or the pine tree? Do such distinctions even matter when Jaśmina becomes a pine tree, and Lea a prophetess of another?



Jaśmina Wójcik *Potato Banner*

2025

banner with hand-painted sprouting potato tubers
activated on various occasions throughout the exhibition

Too much on your plate? Eat the meat, leave the potatoes. Everyone knows how that goes. No one feels sorry for the potato – so common, so cheap. Barely nutritious and fattening to boot. And yet, new potatoes are the true flavour of summer. And who wouldn't pay for a plate of golden, crispy potato pancakes? Brought to Europe aboard

Spanish colonial ships in the 16th century, potatoes were long regarded as mere botanical curiosities. Jan III Sobieski reportedly introduced them to his wife, Marysieńka, for their charming blossoms. It would be another two centuries before Europeans acquired a taste for them – despite their cultivation as a staple crop in the Americas since at least the Neolithic period. The most “Polish” of all Polish vegetables, it turns out, was only introduced to this land in the late 18th century – and even then it was by force, through tsarist decrees. Seen as a technological innovation, the potato became a tool for fighting poverty and famine across Germany, Prussia and as far as Transylvania. Not enough on your plate? Eat the potatoes at least. Today, more than 4,500 varieties are cultivated globally – some of which have even made it aboard the International Space Station. An ordinary tuber, yes – but one that survives almost anywhere. It will sprout even without light or water. So it is perhaps no wonder that the image of sprouting potatoes returned to Jaśmina Wójcik on a cold November night, after a series of conversations at the Centre for Contemporary Art Laboratory with Romanian architect Iarina Tavă and Dutch researcher Elke Van Dermijnsbrugge about finding hope in the soil and building local resilience in the face of an uncertain future. When all else fails, we still have potatoes!



Deirdre O'Mahony
The Quickening

2024

HD film with sound, 35'
commissioned by The Douglas Hyde Gallery
of Contemporary Art in Dublin

During the pandemic, all of us had some strange ideas. Irish artist Deirdre O'Mahony – after thirty years of sculpting, painting, organising actions and weeding her back garden – dreamed of gathering government officials, business leaders, farmers, researchers and food producers – all those who shape the landscape of her homeland. She pictured them sitting round a shared table and talking – not at the last supper, but before it. Exchanging ideas. Forgiving one other. Brainstorming opinions. Dreaming together of a future in which life is still possible. She held these meetings in several Irish villages, recorded them and, together with writer Joanna Walsh, composed a libretto from the transcripts. It was then sung by beetles, cows, earthworms and people: Branwen Kavanagh, Michelle Doyle, Siobhán Kavanagh, Ultan O'Brien, and Eoghan Ó Ceannabháina. This grassroots song of songs – a manifesto of soil and its friends – is both a prayer and a playful introduction to the sociology of cultivation. The funniest and most beautiful invocation to the earth you could hope for. Time passes more slowly than water seeps from the soil. So stay until the end.

Look out the window. Take a moment.

Do you see what's growing around you? Can you read the future in the clumps of grass, in the leaves and stems? Do you know what memories lie enchanted in this soil? Are those birds you hear – or ghosts? Or perhaps the quiet laughter of fate?

Seeds can survive in the ground for years. The roots of nearby plants reach deep into the past – into all that is repressed and unresolved. The obscure. The unspeakable. The impure.

From the gutters and puddles, from the cracks and crevices, a different history of the world emerges – one that is alive and tangled, quite distinct from the one etched in stone.



Milena Bonilla

Sketches for Gardening II

2025

ink on paper, variable dimensions

in collaboration with Krystyna Jędrzejewska-Szmek
and Anka Wandzel

Following in the footsteps of plants, Colombian artist Milena Bonilla ventures into the thicket of Warsaw's local history, seeking the story told by the soil surrounding the Castle. Drawing from a botanical inventory conducted at the request of Krystyna Jędrzejewska-Szmek, Bonilla entwines her own herbal narratives with the withered roots of local memories. The yarrow plant opens up a rift in space and time. In its roots, leaves and blossoms, the past interlaces with the present and casts an enchantment over the world. The inventory becomes a story. Images of postwar Warsaw and the ghosts of Ujazdowski Hospital coil at our feet, interwoven with unfolding scenes from Ukraine, Sudan and Palestine. Dandelions, plantagoes and mugwort – all tangled in the subterranean mycelium of historical and contemporary trauma – bear witness to the will to survive.



Milena Bonilla
Sketches for Gardening I

2025

engraved metal botanical plaques mounted around
the Ujazdowski Castle

Decay, too, can be a source of empathy
and hope. Colonial botanical labels – once
tools of domination – may yet offer new
pathways across belief systems, associa-
tions and inherited fears, pointing towards
a future where life remains possible.



Milena Bonilla

***Threading Twenty Cubic Metres
of Debris in the Present Tense
from the Epistemic Barricades series***

2025

installation made of two historical bricks (found objects)
and cotton string impregnated with nettle, clover and
a third, secret ingredient

Imagine a seed: a fragment of postwar rubble – an old, dust-covered brick discovered by Colombian artist Milena Bonilla in the basement of the Castle during one of her residencies. With great care, Bonilla surrounds Warsaw's trauma in a cocoon of memory, wrapping the remnants of the ruined city in 13,000 metres of hand-rubbed string, fortified with oils derived from nettle, clover and a third, undisclosed herb. Plants known for their cleansing properties. This delicate thread, entwined around the brick like the roots of the first weeds to sprout from the ruins of postwar Jazdów, becomes a narrative that binds past and present – drawing attention to the most urgent issues of our time. From this seedlike cocoon of remembrance, another bud of resistance begins to grow: a second brick, brought by the artist from protests at the University of Amsterdam against the genocide in Gaza. Encased in a protective lattice of string – eerily reminiscent of the mesh bags that our grandmothers once carried round gardens and markets – it rests quietly in the gallery space. And yet it carries weight. It lies dormant. It waits. From whose ruins will we reconstruct the history of our time?









Milena Bonilla

Letter for a Roosting Tree

2025

reproduction of a letter from Rosa Luxemburg
to Zofia Liebknecht from Wrocław, 24 November 1917

external installation: a banner with the onomatopoeia
kau-kau

in collaboration with Paweł Kozłowski

Look out of the window. Do you see the word *kau-kau* on that large chestnut tree? This is how Rosa Luxemburg – one of the most internationally renowned Polish women and one of the least recognised in her own country – described the evening cries of crows as “completely different from the sharp kra,” in a letter to a fellow prisoner from Wrocław. Unaware that her death was imminent, she delighted in this “secret understanding” with the birds. She also worried about the fate of the city’s draft oxen. While it is true that Rosa Luxemburg fought for the abolition of exploitation and argued with Lenin, she also loved birds, kept herbariums and longed for the forest. Milena Bonilla sees no contradiction here – only coherence. A choice stemming from belief. When activism grows from this grounding, grassroots self-organisation can sustain not only people, but also the soil, animals, insects, birds and the climate itself.



Julia Ciunowicz
Nettle Monument

2025

common nettle, recycled paper, linen and hemp fibres
dyed with nettle, wood, steel

Praise be to the common nettle. *Urtica dioica* – diuretic and stinging, yet capable of nourishing and setting boundaries. Patron of the first threads, nets and garments. Of woven relationships. Of grassroots self-defence. Sustainer of butterflies, animals and humans alike. A magical plant. Guardian of the memory of hunger and our ancestors – its presence still marks the sites of vanished farms and displaced villages. According to Ciunowicz, the nettle has done more for humanity than many a celebrated general. So why not build a proper monument in its honor? Tall and dignified, made of organic materials dyed with nettle pigment and embroidered with nettle fibres. Honour and glory to the nettle – now and forever!



Julia Ciunowicz

Invasive Support Networks

2025

installation made of black locust, common nettle, dandelion, ribwort plantain and grasses collected from around Ujazdowski Castle

What if we were to lift the mycelium from the ground – all those thousands of kilometres of hidden networks, conversations, arguments and exchanges – just to finally see how deeply we are entangled with one another? Textile artist Julia Ciunowicz weaves expansive, creeping rhizomes from dandelions, black locusts, plantains, wild grasses and other natural fibres, using them to probe the fragile line between expansion and coexistence. These crafted rhizomes raise unsettling questions about wildness and control. Is this still indigenous art – or has it already become invasive?



The castle stands on an escarpment. It sounds grand and timeless. But look more closely. Look down. From a different vantage, across a longer perspective. With cosmic magnification, what is human history beside the eons of planetary existence? Now, let us turn all this on its head. Let us bury art in the soil and envelop ourselves in the earth. Instead of aspiring toward the stars, let us reach downward – toward the roots. Towards mycelium and tunnels. Towards refuse, corpses and debris. Did you know that here and now, standing in this castle, on this escarpment, you are treading upon the ghosts of Warsaw? Your feet find their footing in post-glacial detritus, layered with the sediment of history – from expressways and aristocratic gardens, from the uprising hospitals and from streets long-since obliterated. Perhaps it is time we stopped regarding art and architecture as domains belonging solely to humans?

What comes from the soil
must return to the soil.







Ewelina Węgiel

Den

2025

installation made of roots and debris excavated from the earth, and remnants of fabric from the homes of the artist and her grandmother

Who hasn't, at times, longed to burrow into the ground? To disconnect from the world? To retreat into a den – cozy, hidden, safe – like something from a fairy tale. A space that smells not of waste, rot, or gas – but of mushrooms, fur and moss. Even soil can be infantilised and idealised. Ewelina Węgiel's *Den* – crafted from her grandmother's curtains, fragments of old fences and clumps of earth, as well as grass torn up by an excavator – reminds us that reality is more complex than our post-humanist or post-apocalyptic fantasies. Did you know that Warsaw produces enough waste each year to fill six National Stadiums? One wonders what remnants we will leave behind for future generations – and whether there will be anything left for them to unearth.



Marcus Maeder *Sounding Soil*

2017—2020

field recordings by Marcus Maeder, created as part of the *Sounding Soil* project initiated by the Biovision Foundation in collaboration with the Institute for Computer Music and Sound Technology at Zurich University of the Arts ZHdK

www.biovision.ch/soundingsoil

What rustles in the grass? What crackles beneath the surface? What does healthy soil sound like? Does it hiss? Gurgle? How many voices make up the subterranean symphony of life? As part of the *Sounding Soil* project, a custom-designed microphone was developed to capture the acoustic signatures of local soils. Residents across Switzerland were invited to borrow it – free of charge – to record the sounds of nearby lawns, forests and green spaces. Why? To compare them across time and space. To investigate the extent of environmental noise pollution caused by human activity. To make clear, once and for all, that soil is neither inert nor homogeneous. That it resembles a beehive far more than a silent monolith. Close your eyes. Put on the headphones. Let the underground world answer you in its own language.







Anna Siekierska

Clamp

2019
ash, clay, steel

Linden

2019
linden wood, steel

***Greater
Celandine***

2022
pine needles, paper,
beeswax from a respon-
sible apiary, soy wax

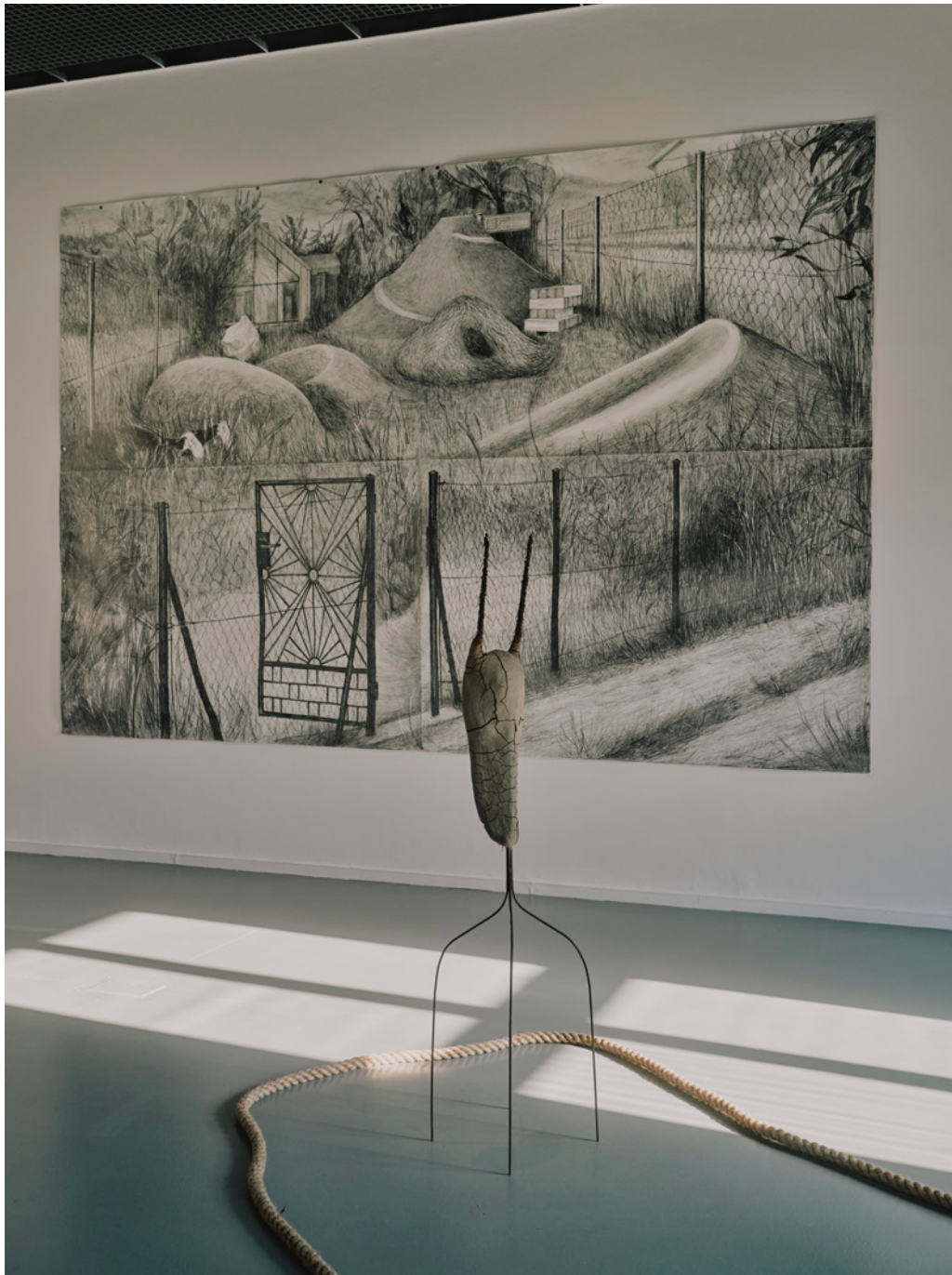
Dandelion

2025
dandelion flowers,
sugar, water, wood

Bean

2025
pine wood, small pearl
beans Atut – an old
variety from the Kutno
area

Human history is woven with plants. It drips with wax. It carries the scent of pine needles. At times, it even burns the skin. Yet no epic poems are written about plants. No monuments more enduring than bronze are raised in their name. Relegated to still life, mistaken for filth or allergens, medicine or herbs, organic waste – plants become vessels of meaning, utilitarian instruments, invasive phantoms, colonial spoils and the unremarkable backdrop of the everyday. To honour them, Anna Siekierska, a member of Capital Seed Group, has magnified their seeds, cooked their blossoms and carved votive objects in the likeness of their fruits. In doing so, she asks: “What do we truly know about our closest neighbours – the most intimate and steadfast companions of our lives? Why do we fail to protect and value them, and yet we admire art installations made in their image? Why do we not return to their old varieties, once cultivated by our grandmothers, instead of sustaining a market that benefits so few?”



Krzysztof Maniak

Park in Tuchów at ul. Spacerowa 1

2025

drawing in four parts,
pencil on Accademia 200 gsm paper

What could transform a space more enduringly: a thousand blackthorn seedlings, hand-crafted land art sculptures, a hole dug under a fence, or the slow choreography of wandering, loitering, walking and trampling paths? What might an allotment garden look like if it were designed not only for people, but also for ticks, nettles and art? Does a landscape art installation have to conform to the aesthetic conventions of municipal greenery? Is it possible to cultivate the land in a way that nourishes both the imagination and ecology? Krzysztof Maniak has drawn his park just like he cultivates it – simultaneously blending systems and defying human expectations. It is difficult to discern where sculpture ends and worksite begins. What came first – the sneakers or the pipe? And are those truly the artist's legs? How do we distinguish between artistic invention and the improvisation of wasteland? Why do we cherish some spaces and find others repellent? This park is not as simple as it appears.









Centrala *Burrowers*

2025

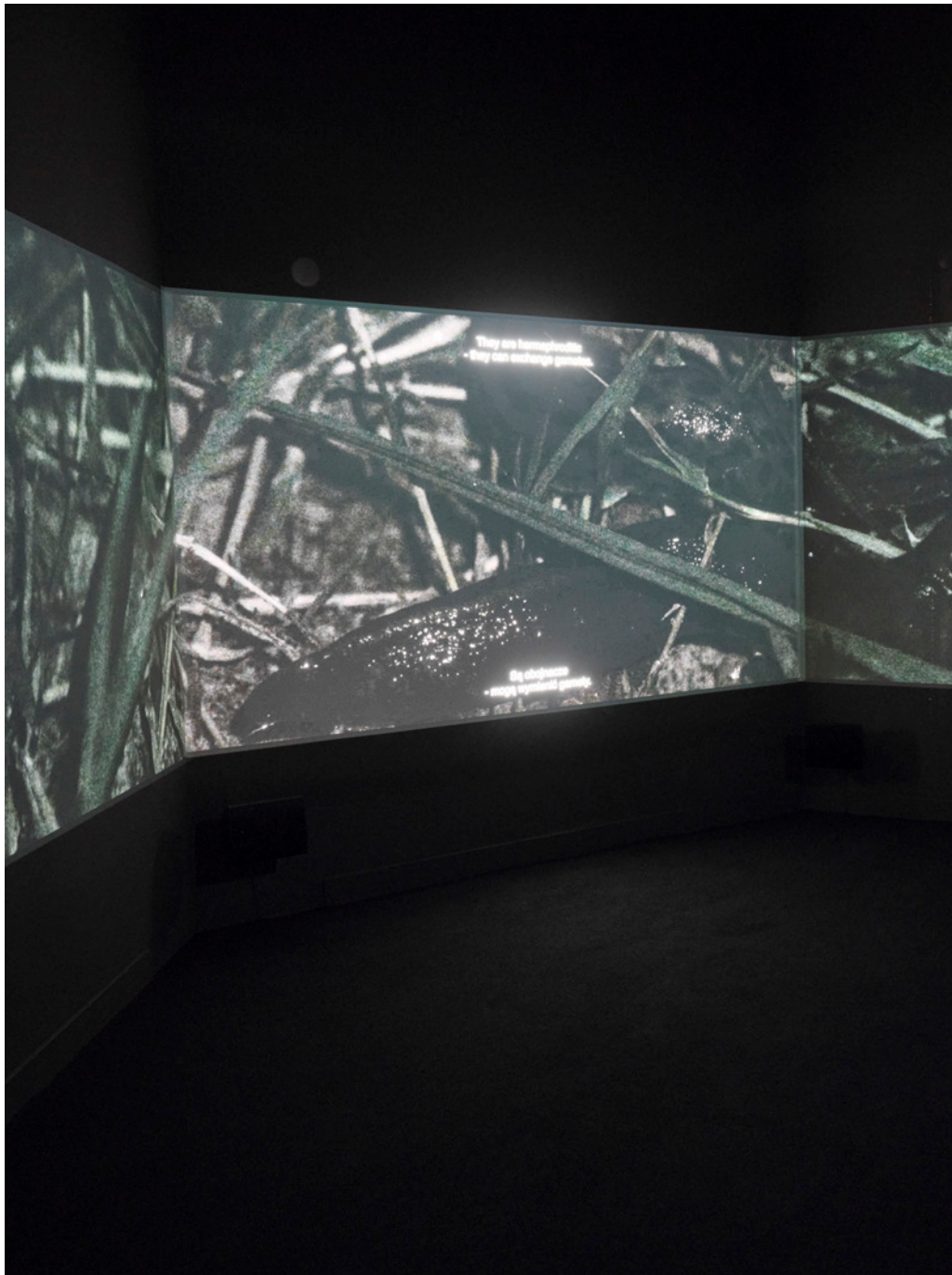
architectural installation made of felt,
archival photograph of fossils

Today, those who dig beneath others are no longer feared – they are envied. As cities grow denser and the planet warms up, we turn our gaze downward, underground, seeking there a promise of refuge: shelter, security, autonomy and coolness. Climate and capital are reorienting the Earth's poles. What lies beneath grows increasingly tempting as what lies above begins to wither. Instead of building upward – adding floors, installing air conditioners – Małgorzata Kuciewicz and Simone De Iacobis have taken a step back. A step down. Into emptiness. Into the logic of animal architecture: an engineering not of construction, but of excavation, removal, excretion and adaptation to what already exists. There are no signatures, no awards, no glory, no multiple copies. Instead, there is a creative proliferation within a multi-species economy. But how can this be represented in an exhibition? And with limited means? How can the miracle of the architecture of absence be visualised? How can the hope embedded in relinquishment be conveyed? Look up. Ignore the felt – it is merely a translation device. Now look closely. If you are curious about cunning,



observe the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), whose multi-chambered dens offer quick, strategic refuge. That central burrow ringed by smaller ones? It belongs to the burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*). The belief that birds live only in trees is a myth. Gaze in wonder at the underwater tunnels of the water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*), complete with nesting chambers and cleverly placed traps for intruders. Note that when the European mole (*Talpa europaea*) disrupts your lawn, it is simultaneously constructing a sophisticated housing estate – for hunting, nesting and storage. Appreciate the slanted shelter of the pygmy ground squirrel (*Spermophilus suslicus*), crowned with branching pantries and a nearly vertical escape shaft. Consider the mole cricket (*Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa*), carving narrow corridors equipped with funnel-like amplifiers for its nocturnal song. Marvel at the intricate channels of the earthworm (*Lumbricus terrestris*), which not only aerate the soil but convert waste into fertility. When left unplowed, these tunnels can serve generations. And those fossils in the photo? They belonged to *Palaeocastor*, an extinct rodent whose spiral tunnels regulated airflow to maintain a stable microclimate. It is high time our species stepped down from its pedestal – descend through layers, tunnels, narratives, strata and epochs. Deeper and deeper.

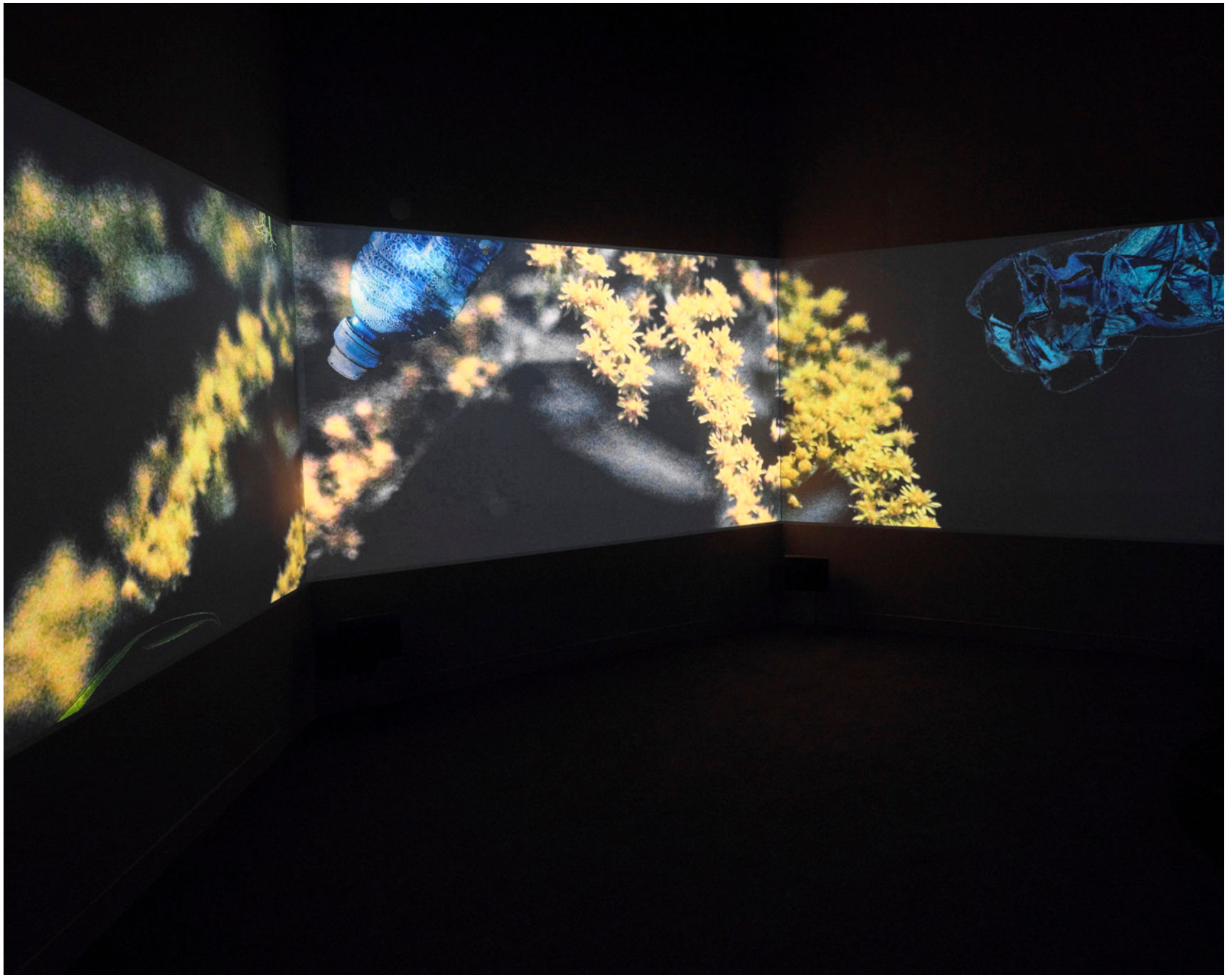


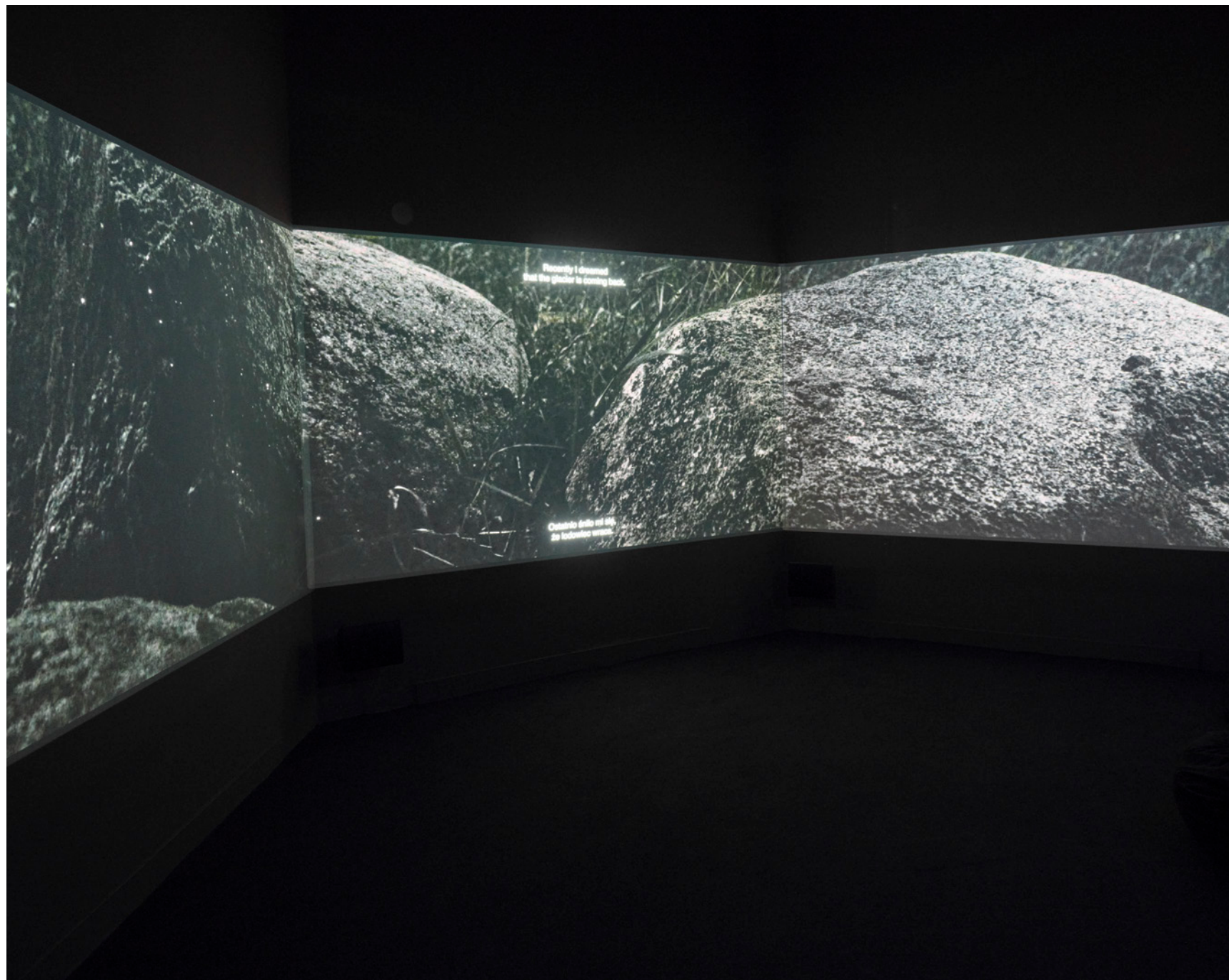


Ewelina Węgiel *Escarpment*

2025
three-channel video installation, 15'

Stories are not carried by words alone.
History is not made by humans alone.
Who weaves the fairy tales from which
our world is spun? Ewelina Węgiel lends
her voice to the Escarpment – or perhaps
it is the other way around? Perhaps it
was the Escarpment that possessed the
artist during her months-long residency
at Ujazdowski Castle? By day, Węgiel
studied and researched the layered history
of the area; by night – on the Escarpment,
together with the Escarpment – she
filmed. The more she uncovered, the more
she perceived. She became immersed
in context, in associations, in time
itself. She edited. She transformed.
She added sound. There is nothing more
difficult than telling a simple story.





Accompanying programme

1. Introduction
2. The role of the
accompanying programme
3. The role of the
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22. The role of the
accompanying programme

Workshops and guided tours

28/06/2025
workshop for families
with children aged 5–10

Get muddy, dirty and scribble

Movement workshop
by Alicja Czyczel

29/06/2025
lecture and workshop

Cooking for microbes: Changing the microbiome of extractive capitalism

Lecture and workshop
by Yoeri Guépin

29/06/2025
curator-led guided tour

Opening tour

Guided tour by
Marianna Dobkowska

03/07/2025
curator-led guided tour

{Art Viewpoints}

Guided tour by
Marianna Dobkowska,
translated into Polish
Sign Language

19/07/2025
workshop for children aged 10+

Everything you wanted to know about earthworms but were afraid to ask

Workshop about the soil,
on the soil and under
the soil, organised with
the MOST Cooperative
Farm and the Motyka
i Słońce Garden

25/07/2025
workshop for families
with children aged 5–10

Who lives under our feet – about the builders of the soil

Workshop about the soil,
on the soil and under
the soil, organised with
the MOST Cooperative
Farm and the Motyka
i Słońce Garden

07/08/2025
artists-led guided tour

{Art Viewpoints}

Guided tour by
Małgorzata Kuciewicz
and Simone De Iacobis
(CENTRALA), translated
into Polish Sign Language

08/08/2025
workshop for adults

We go down to earth, or where does the soil come from?

Workshop about the soil,
on the soil and under
the soil, organised with
the MOST Cooperative
Farm and the Motyka
i Słońce Garden

30/08/2025
workshop for adults

Soil in the landscape — a walk

Workshop about the soil,
on the soil and under
the soil, organised with
the MOST Cooperative
Farm and the Motyka
i Słońce Garden

04/09/2025
author-led guided tour

{Art Viewpoints}

Guided tour by
Anka Wandzel

14/09/2025
workshop for adults

Down-to-earth delights

Soil workshop
by Gosia Kępa

27/09/2025
artist-led guided tour

{Let's Talk About Art}

Guided tour by
Deirdre O'Mahony

10/10/2025
workshop for adults

We are soil and we will return to soil

Workshop by
Anja Franczak
(Institute of Good
Death) on the
process of dying and
companionship in
the last stage of life

19/10/2025
artist-led guided tour

{Let's Talk About Art}

Guided tour by
Maksud Ali Mondal

25/10/2025
curator-led guided tour

Closing tour

Guided tour by
Marianna Dobkowska

The public programme of the *Soil and Friends* project delves into the themes present in the works of the artists presented in the exhibition. Drawing on the knowledge and experience of female farmers, biologists, social scientists, and philosophers, as well as soil organisms themselves, we examine soil, seeking to transcend anthropocentric perspectives. Together with our guests, we will reflect on the relationship with the earth in contemporary agriculture and explore how to care for soil in the anthropocene. During nature workshops, we will learn about the diversity of soil inhabitants. We will also discuss the politics of earthworms and methods of interspecies communication.

More information on www.u-jazdowski.pl

25/09/2025
discussion

Agroecology

On the relationship with the soil in farming with the participation of Ruta Śpiewak, Klaudia Kryńska, Hubert Filipiak, Anna Jakubowska

04/10/2025
lecture and workshop

First date with a centipede

Lecture and workshop on soil biodiversity with Joanna Sucholas

07/10/2025
discussion

How does an earthworm think?

Soil organisms in horticultural practice, biology and posthumanist philosophy with the participation of Paulina Kramarz, Wioletta Olejarczyk, Justyna Schollenberger, Anna Jakubowska

16/10/2025
film screening

Foragers

directed by Jumana Manna, Occupied Palestinian Territory 2022, 65'

and discussion

Olives and sesame

How to survive the genocide in Gaza? with the participation of Emil Al-Khawaldeh, Patrycja Król, Maria Wodzińska, Katarzyna Makarowicz

23/10/2025
lecture

Towards a science of caring for (soil) life in the anthropocene

Lecture by Anna Krzywoszynska

26/10/2025
meeting

Free seeds

Seeds exchange with the Capital Seed Group

The films presented at *U–jazdowski* Cinema as context for the *Soil and Friends* exhibition can be seen as a loose extension of the themes explored therein. Just as the scale at which the curators examine soil varies, so too do the perspectives from which we will view it on screen.

In the case of the films *Mannvirki*, *The Hole*, and *King Matt the First*, this will be a close-up. The camera will literally descend into the depths of the earth, examining matter from a very close perspective – in bloom and decay – as well as the structure of plants and geological processes. A wider lens will make it easier to grasp the complex relationship between humans and other beings, nature and culture (*Only on Earth*, *Fire Will Come*), and to see the ecological consequences of land management on both the micro- and macro-scale (*The Gleaners and I*). Finally, we will see the earth from the perspective of those who make a living from its cultivation, and from the very opposite perspective – through the eyes of capitalists, for whom land is merely a commodity and an object of speculation, where the small farmers who work it are also objects of exploitation (*Alcarràs*, *Harvest*, *Happy as Lazzaro*).

More information on www.u-jazdowski.pl

20/09/2025
film

Alcarràs

directed by Carla Simón,
Spain/Italy 2022, 120'

25/09/2025
film

Happy as Lazzaro

[*Lazzaro felice*],
directed by Alice
Rohrwacher,
Italy/Switzerland/
France/Germany
2018, 125'

27/09/2025
film

Fire Will Come

[*O que arde*],
directed by
Oliver Laxe,
Spain/France/
Luxembourg
2019, 90'

02/10/2025
film

The Hole

[*Il buco*], directed
by Michelangelo
Frammartino,
Italy/France/
Germany 2021, 93'

05/10/2025
film

Only on Earth

directed by Robin
Petré, Denmark/
Spain 2025, 93'

11/10/2025
film

The Gleaners and I

[*Les glaneurs
et la glaneuse*],
directed by
Agnès Varda,
France 2000, 82'

12/10/2025
film

Harvest

directed by Athina
Rachel Tsangari,
United Kingdom/
Germany/United
States/France/
Greece 2024, 131'

18/10/2025
film and discussion

Mannvirki

directed by
Gústav Geir Bollason,
Iceland/France
2023, 71'

30/10/2025
film and discussion

King Matt the First

directed by
Jaśmina Wójcik,
Poland 2025, 75'

U–jazdowski

27/06—26/10/2025

exhibition

Soil and Friends

Curators

Marianna Dobkowska,
Edith Jeřábková

Exhibition architecture

Centrala

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Agnieszka Paluch

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Piotr Matosek,
Anka Wandzel,
Arek Wilk

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Bartosz Pawłowski,
Paweł Słowik,
Stanisław Wieczorek

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Krzysztof Bielecki

Public programme curated by

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Anna Jakubowska,
Klaudia Kryńska

Film programme curated by

Maja Gomulska

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