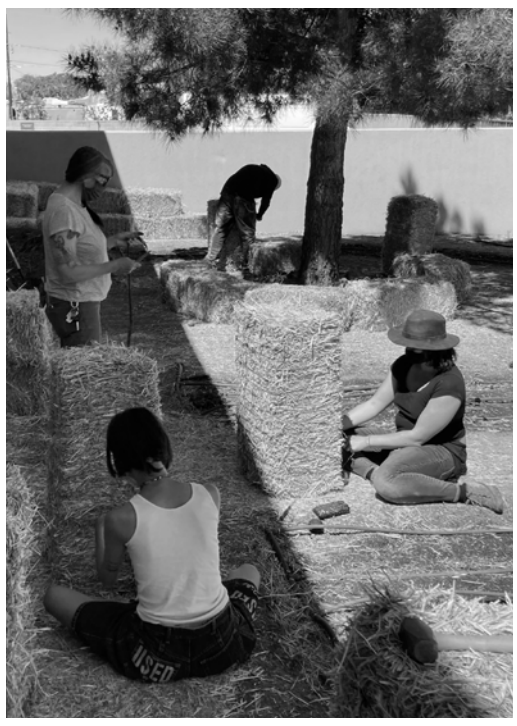
A GARDEN: THE LIVING ROOM

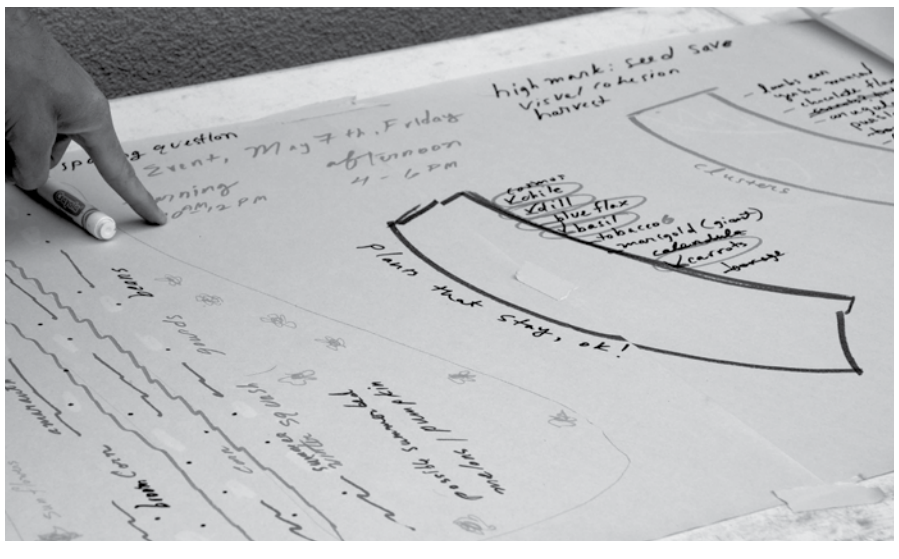
ELEONORA EDREVA, JEANETTE HART-MANN, RYAN HENEL

I find myself in a familiar garden tending cycles of creative germinations. There was a beginning and it came before my time. Gardens and farms of all kinds have flourished for thousands of years here in the Rio Grande Valley, in Old Town, Albuquerque, and at the Albuquerque Museum - which once was a "truck farm" for the region - once a farm for the city – once a dryland field of maiz, squash, beans, and chile - once grassland and bosque. Before once and always cycles tending nourishment and relations. In the hands of Pueblo and Hispano communities this land has always grown food, seeds, medicine and life. Passing this wisdom and practice from generation to generation the land carries those past and present and makes space for these cycles to subsist.

A Garden... was an opportunity born out of a need to regenerate a compacted old truck farm parking lot – turned neglected dirt patch at the Albuquerque Museum Sculpture Garden – back into land that could nourish food for thought and inspiration for performative action. It could be a place where UNM Land Arts of the American West/Art & Ecology students, local residents, and the many beings of a garden come together to foster ways of exploring ecological learning, dialogue, practice, and community. Perhaps these are more akin to new<old ways, as a work of regenerative art that transforms itself from season to season through a creative process of many over time. In this, A Garden... continues its cycle, year to year, growing from what came before and reaching forth to bear witness and respond to what is happening now.
-JHM







An anthropologist might call the area north of the Albuquerque Museum's walls a non-space, an environment overlooked by society, never a destination. But those are terms constructed and applied with human perceptions of value. Values emblematic of our cultural condition of habit, productivity and needs.

This corner on the north side of the museum is very much a place – an environment that has existed in many different forms over time. Perhaps once an ocean floor, or part of a meander of the Rio Grande, it's a habitat for human and non-human alike, connected to systems vastly beyond our human scale.
-RH



Before 2018, it could be described by its current surfaces and dimensions. A 60 x 30-foot environment, primarily of gravel, vertical stucco planes, and cement, flanked by automobiles, hypnotized by the sound of air conditioning systems. But housing one striking, visible source of life – a prominent Austrian pine from distant origins, but now well rooted and stretching up into the airspace of this land.

Starting in 2018, it was our intention that it be a space for art, for a garden. How might this space be reconnected with its past? How might we project a timeline for understanding this space that is not linear, but perhaps recognizes more the cyclical and sometimes chaotic patterns of time? How might we catalyze ways that this space could be a habitat for all forms of life?

Perhaps, by disrupting the surface, removing gravel and landscaping fabric, the soil underneath might breathe again. By planting seeds it remembers and redirecting water to its depths, could we awaken long dormant processes and biological systems? And the air above - could it once again carry the pollen, seeds and wings of its past, alongside its current cellular transmissions? Could these familiar, timeless, signals call to surrounding systems, drawing in creatures, and biological inputs to this environment? Since that time, we've engaged the space, recognizing that intention is not absolute, but rather an attempt at understanding.
-RH



When we began in 2018 much of our conversation and concern was centered on many-species relations and loss of life – the biodiversity crisis – including the extinction of more than 90% of all domesticated seeds and crops, as well as wild plants, animals, birds, amphibians, and more. With community partners we planted a year-long cycle of heritage grains and hosted numerous community events to share conversation, seeds, food, and skills (see SeedBroadcast agri-Culture Journal #12 A Garden: The Birds Arrive - page 16-19). In 2021, in the midst of deep grief and confusion from Covid-19 and grappling with the historic legacy of racial genocide re-enacted in a nearby sculpture referred to as the Oñate Monument, we approached our work at A Garden... as an opportunity to seed healing through planting nourishment. As part of our process we listened to stories from local Isleta Pueblo farmer, Rosalee Lucero, and learned about the Española Healing Foods Oasis from poet, activist, and farmer Beata Tsosie-Peña and designer Christie Green. Inspired by the work of these three women, we planted vegetables, herbs, flowers and homes for more-than-human beings. We also designed and built biodegradable straw bale lounge chairs and a sofa with felted woven covers to give visitors a place to sit, relax, and breathe. In this simple yet profound way each visitor contributes to one of our greatest collective needs right now, to the cycle of caregiving, nourishment, and healing.
-JHM



at the center of this year's spiral were the pine and the cranes. we first met the garden at the beginning of february - the only thing growing was the pine; hundreds of cranes were flying north above our heads. the story spirals out quickly from there. we got to know the site, the soil, the sound of the cars driving down mountain road. we came up with idea after idea for what to create, who to make space for, how to invite them. deep winter to late winter to the buds of spring. we dug up gravel and put down compost. in early may we invited people to join us on the site for the first time, to plant seeds together.
-ee

SUMMER AT A GARDEN...

ELEONORA EDREVA



community plant walk w/ dryland wilds

it felt important to start off with people gathering at the garden for the purpose of intentionally meeting the plants and learning some of the names they go by and some of the ways that humans are and have been in relationship with them. the plant walk was led by dryland wilds, local botanical perfumers and plant educators who have spent a long time building relationships with the plants of the high desert. they work with invasive and/ or abundant plants, and similarly, on the walk they focused on the plants that were not planted, the ones who volunteered to grow here, who have grown in this area for a long time, whether native or naturalized. we learned that even the most hated plants in our local landscapes are trying to do their part - in dryland wilds' words: "many of the less loved plants are trying to heal the land. in nm a lot of that healing looks like just covering up hot bare soil, breaking up compacted ground, feeding pollinators, and bio-remediating poisoned areas." the field bindweed that i couldn't quite eradicate from under the sunflowers helped prevent moisture loss from the soil before other plants grew in and creates biomass to help fuel soil biota communities. the wild mustards that kept springing up during the season provide food for pollinators before most other plants have bloomed. many of our common "weeds" are edible veggies that can offer us more vitamins and minerals per serving, and using less water, than traditional vegetable crops.





the ants were there since the start, and were soon joined by sprouts we didn't plant but whose seeds lay waiting, knowing that eventually water would come. colors started to appear - the pink and yellow yarrow, chocolate flowers and yerba mansa in bloom, green leaves multiplying by the day. pollinators began coming to visit, and birds sang in the tree. slowly, humans started to get curious. i would arrive to find people taking their lunch break on the hay bales underneath the pine tree, or taking photos of the plants for their identification apps. more colors brought more of everyone. the yellow of sunflowers and magenta of amaranth inviting bees to feast and humans to stop for family portraits.

this garden was planned around a set of invitations - an invitation for healing and for rest, for meeting both human and non-human needs for nourishment. a main intention for the summer was to plan events to activate the garden and serve as an offering back to the site. i wanted to bring the human invitations we planned the space around into real time - to give people a defined reason to come and meet the plants and to create an intentional space for collective learning and connection. i wanted to focus on what we as humans could provide back to the garden, to turn our gatherings on this site into a gift we can lovingly give. what are our gifts as humans, and how can we offer them? plans for a series of three workshops and an exhibition started to take shape.







physical theater + circus workshop w/ sarah-jane moody of wise fool new mexico

i wanted to plan a movement workshop in order to use our human bodies to create energy in a place, to feel our embodiment alongside the bodies of the plants and soil. a circus workshop with sarah-jane moody of wise fool new mexico brought physical theater to the garden, an offering of movement games that taught participants how to joyfully negotiate sharing the space of the garden with the other human and non-human bodies around them. we culminated the workshop with a game in which each participant chose one of the garden's non-human inhabitants to embody, creating a movement and a voice for them - the cheery corn plant, the peppy cosmos flower, the droopy sunflower, the hungry figeater beetle. sj created scenes placing the different characters together, and participants acted out their interactions, which ranged from hilarious to poignant, and culminated in a group dance party in character as the creatures of the garden.





permission to rest:
a one-night exhibition

i invited my fellow mfa students at unm to share their artwork at the garden for a one-night outdoor exhibition. i put out a call for works loosely related to the garden's themes of healing and relationality, and got a range of responses that completely outshined what i had envisioned. the mediums of the work that was shown included video projections, sculpture, textiles, incense, site-specific installation, cyanotypes using the plants of the garden, an interactive clay piece, and a spatial sound installation. in contrast to the workshops' intimate environment, the exhibition created an opportunity for a large number of people to gather and celebrate the creative work of the artists and the garden itself. the evening ended with a screening of three video works projected onto the wall of the museum, with the hay bale seating reconfigured to create a theater effect.













once upon a future:
sensory storytelling workshop w/ alyssa frye

alyssa and i planned a sensory storytelling workshop, weaving together voice, senses, and movement to tell stories about the past, present, and future. everyone brought a personally significant object to the space with them, and we opened the space with each participant sharing a story about their object. we then moved around the garden as a group and met the plants with our senses, using this embodied grounding to return to our circle and tell stories in the present tense. using everything we shared so far, we collaboratively built stories about the futures we want to see, beginning with writing descriptive words (ex: joyful, food, rain) onto slips of paper and "planting" them around the garden, tucking them into and under the plants. we then walked around and picked up each other's words, using them to weave together stories that each person wrote and then shared back with the group. not all the words were picked up, and many remain at the garden as offerings and gifts to the plants and the soil, the decomposing words serving to seed and germinate the futures we're working towards creating.



Artists involved in this project included:

Blaise Koller
Amber Beaty
Petra Brown
Lauren Crowder
Eleonora Edreva
Emily Ganderton
Carlos Gomez
Jana Greiner
Marley Hidalgo
Eric Hurbina
Adrianna Jenkins
Britney A. King
Jenni Kingsley
Stephan Lopez
Mary Mays
John R. Owen

Partners and collaborators:

Albuquerque Museum
Alyssa Frye
Art & Ecology Area at UNM
Beata Tsosie-Peña
Christie Green
Dryland Wilds
Land Arts of the American West
Rosalee Lucero
Sarah-Jane Moody / Wise Fool New Mexico
Seeds
Soil
Sun
Wind
Water





ELEONORA EDREVA IS AN ARTIST WORKING WITH SOUND, SCENT, VIDEO, FIBER, AND BOOKMAKING. THEY WERE BORN IN BULGARIA, GREW UP IN CHICAGO, AND ARE CURRENTLY LIVING IN ALBUQUERQUE, PURSUING AN MFA IN ART & ECOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO.

JEANETTE HART-MANN IS A FARMER, ARTIST, ACTIVIST, AND TEACHER COMMITTED TO THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF EMBODIED LAND-BASED PRACTICES AND CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT.

RYAN HENEL IS A PRACTICING ARTIST AND TEACHER WHO DEVELOPS SITE-SPECIFIC ARTWORKS AND TEMPORARY INSTALLATIONS THAT USE PERSPECTIVE, PATTERNS AND SCALE TO PROMPT THE VIEWER TO EXPERIENCE A DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO AN ENVIRONMENT. HIS MOST RECENT WORK FOCUSES ON PUBLIC ARTWORKS THAT INCORPORATE PRINCIPLES OF BIOPHILIC DESIGN, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND HABITAT CREATION.