A GARDEN: THE BIRDS ARRIVE

JEANETTE HART-MANN

A Garden: The Birds Arrive is an earthwork and experimental garden at the Albuquerque Museum. This project was conceived, designed, and created by University of New Mexico, Land Arts of the American West artists and Art & Ecology students who call themselves 7th regen. This project was made possible through an invitation by SeedBroadcast to bring Land Arts of the American West and Art & Ecology students into a creative/collaborative opportunity in conjunction with the upcoming SeedBroadcast exhibition "Seed: Climate Change Resilience."

Development of this work was grounded in several places of exploration around seed, food, bioregional environmental issues, and climate change. Over the course of a week, students traveled to SeedBroadcast co-founder and LAAW faculty, Jeanette Hart-Mann's agro-ecology research farm in Anton Chico, NM to help process seed and make homemade tacos, they attended a lecture by visiting artist Christine Mackey about "Gardens as Art," they met with local farm partners Tiana Baca and Sarah Montgomery to learn about heritage grains, and they made several site visits to the then, vacant, gravel lot where the garden would grow. After this process gathering experiences and ideas, the artists worked through a series of design charrettes to generate key concepts, which would help guide the project. The intention was to foster a creative community space where multi-species relationships would flourish through acknowledging kinship, planting generosity, and cultivating acts of collective resilience.

During the excavation and through compacted layers of geology, gravel, soil, clay, and trash, the artists learned that the surrounding land and museum building used to be one of the largest vegetable truck farms in the region. And prior to this, the area was home to many indigenous people and later colonial settlers who farmed the river valley. Literally the ground under foot was buried in a history of many-species relations centered around food and agriculture that does not exist there anymore. Instead the surrounding land has been developed into city museums, parks, a diverse suburban community, industry, tourist shops, and restaurants. Many would call this a cultural hub of Albuquerque. Yet, if the co-mingling of food, land, people, and agriculture are central to place and central to expressions of who we are and how we relate to others, then there is something missing here. So, what would a garden do? Could digging in the dirt, planting seeds, and caring for more-than-human life create place, engender culture, and enrich our perceptual relationships with one another?

With this in mind, the artists decided to co-create a garden in the making. They designed concentric planting beds radiating from a central existing pioneer conifer and with the help of Tiana Baca and the Rocky Mountain Seed Alliance (RMSA), seeded these with Middle Eastern and SW Asian heritage grains einkorn, spelt, Sonoran Wheat, and Cache Valley Rye as winter cover crops. Mapping out the garden as a yearlong cycle of ecological lives, these annual grasses will be teachers both above and below ground through early summer, then become seed once again at a time now unknown. The fact is that many of these heritage grains have been neglected for generations and are just now returning to farms and gardens through the seed saving efforts of small-scale farmers and advocates concerned with their potential loss. The resurgence in heritage grains is based on several factors, including the biodiversity they engender, their ability to survive in challenging environmental conditions, and the quality of nutrition they offer. Yet, the question remains, what will they do in this specific garden context? How will they grow. Will they thrive? Will they suffer? And when will they mature and focus their life force into seed? Over these "disappeared generations" we have lost the knowledge of these plants and so this is a mystery which no one knows. We can only know through rekindling this kinship, tending our relations, waiting, watching, and learning.

When mature, these grains will be harvested during a community event day and saved for threshing during the RMSA Grain School to be held at the Albuquerque Museum on July 26, 2019. This seed cleaning will be led by farmer and educator Tiana Baca of The Desert Oasis Teaching Gardens and presented as a community dance party where many feet make cleaning seed a joy.

After the winter grains are removed from the garden, Sarah Montgomery and her Guatemalan partners will plant, with greatest intention and ceremony, one of the oldest grains in the Americas, amaranth, as part of the Seed Travels project. This project is about forming and sharing deep relationships. As the Seed Travels project states, "Amaranth is a symbol of our unity and resistance. These seeds have connected us to many new friends and gardens. We have taught hundreds of people in New Mexico and California about this ancient grain. Through our Seed Travels project, we follow the movement of the Amaranth seed from Qachuu Aloom up into New Mexico and California."

On September 21, 2019, during the closing event for the SeedBroadcast exhibition, a community gathering will attend to the amaranth, harvesting greens and seed and celebrating the year-long life of this garden and many kinships formed. This project hopes to be a site for regenerating lost connections to seed, plants, land, and each other. It also hopes to induce creative resiliency and community engagement across species. The title, *A Garden: The Birds Arrive* is stenciled across the museum wall of the garden. It came from a statement that Tiana Baca made when she talked about how farming is a multi-species relationship. She said, "I wait for the birds to tell me when the grain is ready."

Following this brief introduction are individual gleanings from several of the artists who made this possible. Jessica Zeglin shares a drawing and interludes from the many voices at home in the garden, Erin Gould presents a poem and short essay about being dirt giddy, through prose and journal reflections Brionna Garcia writes about seed, and Sarah Canelas composes photographic snapshots of the artists as they built this project together.

Artists involved in this project included:

Sarah Canelas
Brionna Garcia
Erin Gould
Xena Gurule
Catherine Harris
Jeanette Hart-Mann
Ryan Henel
Kyle Holub
R. Erik Hoopman
nicholas b. jacobsen
Sam Katz
Blaise Koller
Noni Miller
Kodi Wilhelm
Rowan Willow
Jessica Zeglin
Lucas Zuñiga

A Garden: The Birds Arrive will be on view from September 1, 2018 – September 22, 2019 at the Albuquerque Museum, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Partners and collaborators for this project:

Land Arts of the American West // landarts.unm.edu
Rocky Mountain Seed Alliance // rockymountainseeds.org
Sarah Montgomery of Garden's Edge // www.gardensedge.org
Christine Mackey // christinemackey.info
Tiana Baca of Desert Oasis Teaching Garden
Albuquerque Museum // cabq.gov/culturalservices/albuquerque-museum
Art & Ecology Area at UNM // ae.unm.edu
7th regen
SeedBroadcast
Fodder Project Collaborative Research Farm
Sun, Wind, Rain
Soil Microbes, Seeds, and Birds

JEANETTE HART-MANN IS CO-FOUNDER AND COLLECTIVE COHORT OF SEEDBROADCAST. SHE GREW UP ON A MULTI-GENERATIONAL FAMILY FARM IN OHIO AND HAS LIVED IN NEW MEXICO SINCE 1998. SHE FARMS WITH HER FAMILY IN ANTON CHICO, NM WHERE THEY PRACTICE TRADITIONAL ACEQUIA FARMING INTERWOVEN WITH EXPERIMENTAL AGROECOLOGY METHODS AND A SEED SAVING PROGRAM FOR ARID-LAND CROP VARIETIES. SHE IS AN ARTIST, FARMER, AND SEED STEWARD, AND ALSO FACULTY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO IN ART & ECOLOGY WHERE SHE DIRECTS AND TEACHES THE LAND ARTS OF THE AMERICAN WEST PROGRAM.



A garden can be many things – a place to admire the beauty of leaves, flowers, and seed heads; a place to sustain nourishment for our families, neighborhoods, and communities; a place to tend to the memories and vitality of our centuries-long interrelationships with cultivated plants.

A garden can also be a place to listen. A place where we can set aside our daily cares and worries, turn off our inner voices, and wait to hear what other stories may arise.

Are those voices real or imagined? Does it matter?

Winter wheat and rye grasses slowly spreading their roots underground, speaking through microbial and mycelial networks to their kin: *yes, we think we can live here, let's give it a try*.

Mycorrhizal fungus: *hello, shall we be friends?*

Ants telling stories to other ants: *sisters, do you remember when those humans dug in the earth around our home? What a strange few days. We managed to avoid their pickaxes and shovels, until one of them stepped right on the colony, collapsing the nursery wing. Oh, we had to rebuild for weeks, it's true! But thankfully those foolish humans left food seed just lying on the ground, we ate well for days. Let's go out to forage now and see what else we can find!*

Birds: *I'll land here and take a look through the leaves, perhaps this is somewhere I can rest, or nest*

Cats: *oh, this looks like a good place to roll on the ground*

Soil: *it feels good to be in the sun again, such a toasty exchange*

Pine (gracefully peering over the others): *just don't mess up my roots! It took me decades to arrange them this way. But I do appreciate the new water source we have now, very tasty indeed.*

The voices of others will join these, too, as the weather changes and life cycles. Other plants, other humans; the sounds of harvesting and threshing of grain; new conversations, new questions asked of the sun, the air, and the soil.

Sound is produced by movement. Stories are produced by relationships, culture, memory. Listening deeply to a place allows us to focus on not what it looks like, but in what ways it is active. Imagining its stories allows us to consider the other lives that are happening here, and how they intersect with our own.

A garden can tend to many voices, a conversation that each of us can join.

JESSICA ZEGLIN IS AN ARTIST INTERESTED IN ENGAGING SKILLS OF LISTENING AND EMPATHY. SHE HOLDS A MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND A BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA AND IS A MASTER OF FINE ARTS STUDENT IN ART AND ECOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO.

DIRT GIDDY

ERIN GOULD

I told them that I was dirt giddy.
That, while working in the garden,
(or the neglected gravel pit that would hopefully become a garden)
I was filled with a joy that followed me home, into my bed, into my dreams.
Maybe I was simply
fried dried
to a crisp, parched from sun and heat and the carrying of pounds of rock and soil.
Maybe that was all the giddiness was.
Or
maybe it was the earth
the soil under my fingernails, in my hair,
pushing into the mouths of my skin, my lungs, weighing down my eyelashes, becoming me.
Maybe there is power in dirt.
Maybe moving it, trading breath and sweat and laughter
to make a garden,
a place that can grow and live
become,
is a form of worship.
Maybe dirt ecstasy would have been more accurate.
Maybe the physical care,
the grooming,
the transforming of an unseen, an unloved,
into a place of living,
maybe the becoming of a place into a place of becoming
with hands and arms and knees and boot protected feet and burning noses and foreheads and shoulders
is a gift
not just for the soil and the air and the seeds and the pine tree and the birds and the ants
but for ourselves.
While working in the garden,
I was filled with a something you might call
dirt giddiness.

In the evenings after the days spent actually in the garden, swinging pick-axes, shoveling gravel, moving compost, I felt a feeling that I called "dirt giddy". There is something about burying your hands in soil, in earth, feeling it, working it into your skin, into your pores, breathing it in, filling yourself with the living flesh of this place. It made me high. It made me joyous, effervescent; laughter leaked out of me for hours.

Doing this work with people I had just met, being in this state of dirt induced euphoria, brings you so close together so quickly. Maybe it was the soil, maybe it was the physical labor in the Albuquerque late summer sun, maybe it was the satisfaction that comes from having immediate, tangible results from your efforts when us scholarly folk are used to our works existing in the ether of language and thought and abstraction. I couldn't say why exactly, but working on the garden set a hard-packed foundation to relationships that became familial over the course of months of travel and cold and rain and collaboration and bearing witness.

We spent a lot of time in that garden, wedged between the back wall of the museum, the street, and the service entrance. What does it mean to bring life, the plants' and our own, into an unseen/ unloved/ unappreciated space?

In same way that we inevitably took the garden home with us, on our skin, in the tread of our boots, in our lungs, I like to think that the garden kept some of us there, too. Along with the seeds of rye and winter wheat, maybe we planted some of ourselves.

ERIN GOULD IS A MULTIMEDIA ARTIST WORKING WITH SCULPTURE, VIDEO, AND PERFORMANCE TO INVESTIGATE THE WEAKNESSES, FRAGILITY, AND PERCEPTUAL PLIABILITY OF THE HUMAN BODY; INTIMACY WITH THE MORE-THAN-HUMAN; AND DIFFERENT WAYS OF KNOWING AND CONNECTING WITH OTHERS. SHE HAS LIVED IN NEW MEXICO SINCE 2013, CURRENTLY WORKING TOWARD HER MFA AT UNM.

BREED SEED

BRIONNA GARCIA

I wait in a cold, dark chamber
Dormant, yet
I am a quintessential possibility of life
Waiting for a perfect moment,
Conditions that cradle,
an intervention to awaken
potential energy inside me.
Swelling.
an unlit spark
I wait.
Bathing in a warm substrate,
A snug embrace.
I am drenched in a soothing experience
Thirst amended by this lustrous force
For the first time, I feel my life giver
I burst.
Fed.
Oh aureate exposure,
I dance for you.
Every time you greet me with your opulence,
I crack free from my protective armor
Reaching a little more,
I become.
Sprout,
a temple.

JOURNAL ENTRIES OF SEED

The potential of a seed to grow is incredible. For it to open under the right conditions is astonishing. It opens to possibility; a potential beyond dormancy. The next generation unfolds to a new story, one held all within its tiny shell.

Seeds have evolved with our ancestors. We are the fruits of their loins. And the seeds are the fruit of their seeds loins. We are all connected to seed saving. Generations of seeds alongside generations of ancestors, we are passed heirlooms. We are given food security. Seed as heirlooms is profound. Seeds as teachers is essential. Seeds as food sovereignty is vital.

Something I thought was really important about the garden project TBA: The Birds Arrived, is the importance of food sovereignty. It's like the people in the past couple of decades have had an almost collective amnesia about growing their own food. But we are now making ourselves remember how we have food and where it comes from.

Why is it radical to grow our own food? It's not. It is so very human of us to grow our own food. Or rather, it grows itself and we sometimes provide conditions suitable for it to flourish and be nourished. Food sovereignty is important because we cannot commodify the Earth. Seeds are of the Earth. They are not to be colonized. The have the right to be free to grow, to feed and to go back to seed. Humans should be able to eat from the land without having to pay a pretty penny for a full belly. They are not to be privatized. How dare corporations think they capitalize on genetically altering our food. Animal chromosomes spliced into seeds, engineering high tolerances to pesticides and the creation of sterile seeds is homely. It is inhumane. I will resist the privatization and capitalization on our little life givers until I myself go back to the Earth from which I came.

What was powerful about the installation of the garden TBA at the ABQ Museum was the visual and ecological transformation of a barren plot with buried history beneath it transcended into an alive garden! This was significant because it inspired to help regenerate, restore, revitalize and remediate ecological and environmental degradation of our lovely home planet, Earth. Facilitating nature to work magic via life, is powerful. Being a witness to healing is important in order for healing to spread. We proved that an empty barren plot with potential contamination evolved to a regenerative polyculture. From layers of history imbedded in this rectangle of gravel, the plot became a menagerie of heirloom winter grain.

BRIONNA GARCIA IS CURRENTLY AN UNDERGRADUATE SENIOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO WHERE SHE STUDIES ART AND ECOLOGY AND PAINTING. SHE COMES FROM A BACKGROUND OF CATTLE RANCHING AND HOMESTEADING IN NORTHERN NEW MEXICO AND ORGANIC FARMING IN CALIFORNIA. IN HER SPARE TIME, SHE GROWS HEIRLOOM VEGETABLES, GOURMET/MEDICINAL MUSHROOMS, AND MAKES LOTS OF KOMBUCHA.



SARAH CANELAS IS A RECENT ALUMNI OF THE LAND ARTS OF THE AMERICAN WEST AND COLLABORATED IN A GARDEN: THE BIRDS ARRIVE. DURING THE PROGRAM, HER WORK FOCUSED ON DOCUMENTING ENGAGEMENT WITH THE NATURE-CULTURE DIVIDE AND DEVELOPING DIALOGUE AROUND THE RESULTING RELATIONSHIPS. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES IN SANTA FE, NM.