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Ecocene Arts



## Elemental Entanglements

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# Elemental Entanglements

by prOphecy sun



## About the Artist

prOphecy sun is an interdisciplinary performance artist; queer, movement, video, and sound maker; mother; and current Jack and Doris Shadbolt Fellow at Simon Fraser University. Her practice celebrates both conscious and unconscious moments and the vulnerable spaces of the in-between in which art, performance, and life overlap. Her recent research has focused on ecofeminist perspectives, co-composing with voice, objects, surveillance technologies, and site-specific engagements along the Columbia Basin region and beyond. sun hosts Tapes and Beyond on Kootenay Co-op Radio and is the Arts Editor for *Ecocene: Cappadocia Journal of Environmental Humanities*. She performs and exhibits regularly in local, national, and international settings, music festivals, conferences, and galleries and has authored several peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and journal publications.

# Elemental Entanglements

## *prOphecy sun*

*In permaculture movements, where care for the earth is an inseparable doing from care of the personal, ecological interdependency is not a moral principle but a lived material constraint—required and obliged. Conceived as such, the obligation of care corresponds to a perception of its endurance and necessity in the contingent naturecultural relational webs of life and death composed of multilateral interdependencies, eschewing an understanding of care as a moral universal, imposed from an outside, a utilitarian rationalist contract or altruistic ideal.*

—Maria Puig de la Bellacasa

What is the word for home? We often hear the phrase: “home is where the heart is.” But is it not more urgent than that? The heart is merely an expression for all of the relations that make us who we are—earth bound, more-than-human, interdependent, composed of tangled, relational webs (Bellacasa 2017). Each of these strands are tied to familial spaces with various levels of proximity and closeness to others. Like the heart, homes come in many forms, shapes, and consistencies. Made of leaves, dirt, wood, shells, grass, brick, skin, water, concrete, metal, microbial elements, paper, and many other dimensions, homes offer safety from predators or a place of comfort in birthing. Homes keep out strangers and invite new or old friends in. Homes are places where we share sustenance, grow, and evolve. Homes are used as reverent sites of remembering, renewal, forgiving, or places where we come to die, or sometimes die within.

Defying our contemporary allure to build newer geographies, critical environmentalists repeatedly acknowledge the impacts that humans and their tangled systems have on our planet and how this continually pushes the global biosphere into crisis. Against this backdrop of ritual and routine, familial spaces add another elemental thread to this complexity. They are woven and bound, protecting, engulfing, holding, making peace with, and giving space for complex interrelationships to develop. Homes are as important as breath. They both ensnare us, comfort us, and ensure our multispecies survival. As the menacing antagonist, Lord Massen, in the fantastical HBO series *The Nevers*, says: “We build homes to keep other people out, and then build machines to let them all in” (Semel 2021).

This second installment of “Ecocene Arts” invites new protocols, assemblages, communications, and engagements with land, water, air, bodies, and other species. This selection presents five pieces—*Exploring the Pluriverse: Fictioning, Science and Interspecies Communication* (2021); *Mining—On the Horizon* (2021); *The Earth Project* (2019); *Holobionts: Making and Living through Squirrealism* (2019); and *Neotropical Fabulation* (2020). Together, these international contributions bring different forms of multisensory encounters to the foreground of culture, interactions that sit and transmute alongside one another. They ask us to consider the tensions and contradictions that exist around care, reciprocity, justice, technologies, resource extraction, extinction, and multispecies entanglements with the earth.

Both directly and indirectly, these works prompt a series of questions: How can we find new ways to communicate with the microbial or the giant? How can we refocus our lens from a human-centric mode to give space for the unseen or voiceless to be heard? How can we examine, re-direct, or address methods of extraction through creative process? Considering these approaches, what do new systems and engagements with the environment look and sound like?

The section opens with a piece from **Stephanie Moran** and **Maggie Roberts** about their project *ISCRI*, which focuses on speculative interspecies communications with an octopus (*ISCRI* website). Throughout their seaward and cerebral investigations, they illuminate the porous boundaries between AI driven systems, eight-limbed and soft-bodied Octopuses, and humans. In doing so they argue current paradigms need to shift from a colonial human-centric system into new communicative configurations that foreground perspectives which embrace care and interspecies diplomacy. Ultimately, the project sets a tone for reconsidered notions of gathering and inhabiting spaces—in particular, how we think about bilateral, symmetric bodies; subjectivity; and materiality.

**Sarah-Jeanne Bourget** offers another sightline through contemporary material configurations, writing about her various charcoal drawings, *Dust Standing Over its Eventual Sediments* (2018), *Feus Débris II* (2020), *Speck I & Speck II* (2019), *Essential Variations* (2019), *Samples & Detail* (2021), from vertical perspectives as a means to extract new representations and visual information. Bourget describes her processes of extraction from the Lassen National Park in California as transformative: “each charcoal stick is being mined to form new versions of itself,” providing new vantage points on the microscopic, highlighting their “molecular intricacies” (2021).

**Esteban Pérez’s** time-based *Earth Project* (2019) is rooted in practices of care and diplomacy with the earth. Informed by decolonial perspectives and Andean Phenomenology (questioning the positionality of human and the nonhuman relations),

Pérez proposes slow, performative processes of deep learning and listening with the intention that new knowledges systems will grow and power dynamics will dissipate—between bodies systems and land. This works hints at ongoing conversations about home and place, a sentiment aptly captured in Susan Sontag’s assertion that listening is about recognizing how the “world is furnished with many other things” that are always in dialogue (1969, 34).

Introducing the term *Squirrealism* as a nod to squirrels and interspecies practices of care and reciprocity, **Carollyne Yardley** brings the focus back to the body, walking, and conceptual practices of making with found and collected materials *in situ*. The artwork poignantly stands at the confluence of ecological zones of biospheric exchange. Yardley’s works turn a chance human/non-human encounter with a dying creature into a bodily and empathic recognition of humility and of mutual aid.

**Teo Monsalve** presents a series of portraits, paintings, and collages that reflect migratory and aesthetic transformations and experiences across the globe. Pulling from culturally divergent source materials, he challenges historical representations of power through new presentations of diverse ecosystems of new animals and birds. Through performative actions such as cutting through prints and creating new stories of representation, Monsalve offers contrasting and embodied figurations that attest to the deeply complex way humans are implicated in the devastation which troubles our ecological paradigm.

Together, these artworks draw attention to practices of attunement—equally lifting and acknowledging the microbial, and to the vastness of ways that artists can world home, communicating and ethically considering the environmental crisis from decentred and creatively elemental levels of complexity.

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