

Arboreal at /
by Erik Bakke

To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature.
R. W. Emerson

In nature nothing exists alone.
Rachel Carson

Mother Nature—militarized, fenced-in, poisoned—demands that we take action.
Berta Cáceres

The exhibition *Arboreal at / (Slash)* in San Francisco features the artists Aycoobo (Wilson Rodríguez), Bill Fontana, Helen Mirra, Delcy Morelos, Emerson Uýra, and Cecilia Vicuña; it has been curated by Juana Berrío.

Aycoobo's painting *Calendario Ancestral* (Ancestral Calendar) of 2020 is the heart around and through which the exhibition *Arboreal* circulates. *Calendario Ancestral* shows some of the seasonal attributes (ripening of fruits, times of rain) important to the Indigenous Nonuya of the Colombian Amazon, and its unifying illustrations of flora and fauna and sky, land, and water might serve as an illustration of Berrío's description of the mycorrhizal network as a non-metaphorical model of noncompetitive coexistence: "Trees also tell us how little we know about how survival actually works. They form underground networks, where carbon, fungi, and nutrients are passed from one to another. Chemical signals by one tree prepare another for danger because, together, all trees behave as a single body or organism. A forest is not just a collection of trees, but a complex society that thrives and relies on cooperation, rather than self-interest."

The recent Star Trek series "Discovery" (2017-) introduces a variation of the mycorrhizal network called the "mycelial network" which allows for human interstellar and inter-dimensional travel by using the mycelium or roots of the imagined fungus prototaxites stellaviatori—an inventive combination of words: the first being extinct earth fungi of 400 million years ago, "prototaxites," and the second the neologism "stellaviatori" (star traveler). The Star Trek series shares with the exhibition *Arboreal* a proposal for optimism grounded in an awareness of nature and alternatives to capitalism—an optimism that exists in spite of an acknowledgement of the destructive histories of colonists and capitalists and the seemingly overwhelming odds against people collectively finding ways to live with each other and with their environment. In parallel, there is something of N. K. Jemisin's approach to science fiction writing in Berrío's curation. In the *Broken Earth* trilogy, the aggrieved, the victim, has voice, and the voice is empowered not just by righteous anger but also by primal natural forces which are at the protagonist's service. There is optimism that the righteous shall have their day and nature will help.

Berrío's views of the arboreal are a far cry from those proffered by Werner Herzog, who will here represent artist as colonist, as he filmed *Fitzcarraldo* in the early 1980s in the jungles just south of the Colombian Amazon in neighboring Peru. In opposition to a more favorable view of the jungle, Herzog stated, "Nature here is vile and base." And he continued, "I would see fornication and asphyxiation and choking and fighting for survival and... growing and... just rotting away. (...) The trees here are in misery, and the birds are in misery. I don't think they—they sing. They just screech in pain." Herzog went further and discussed the equally, for him, disturbing chaos and randomness in the stars above him in Peru. Herzog's view not only reminds of colonists' "primitivising" sophistication they cannot understand but also of the contemporary anxiety physicists have in face of the possibility not all phenomena adhere to physical laws; specifically, much attention recently has been given to black holes and the possibility that in these very high gravity situations the laws of physics as we have come to understand them do not hold. But, as is often the case, our lack of understanding does not mean a situation cannot be understood. Among others working on the problem, the scientists Sasha Haco, Stephen W. Hawking, Malcolm J. Perry, and Andrew Strominger made headway in solving the information paradox—conservation laws dictate that information can be transformed but it cannot be lost, and making information lost has seemed to be what black holes do. They theorize in their 2018 paper, "Black Hole Entropy and Soft Hair," that black holes have more than just the three physical quantities mass, spin and charge originally considered and that they have other features, "soft hair," which are able to keep track of all information sucked beyond the event horizon by gravity. It appears possible that conservation laws are upheld—everything is recorded and nothing is lost—and there is still opportunity to comprehend the universe. Herzog's terror is not universal.

In *Calendario Ancestral*, Aycoobo shows relationships among flora, fauna, earth, water, and the cycles of the year. He paints a circular calendar against a backdrop of stars. The main circle is surrounded by carefully painted narrow bands which form a rainbow—the indigo of the heavens gives way to green, red, orange, yellow, teal, blue, and then lavender. Berrío explains this rainbow is called "Bacuba," which is "a protector that warns of the arrival of evil, like a messenger of adversity." The circle is divided like a pie into twelve pieces, text at the outer edge of each piece indicates the focus of that piece. The circle is also divided into bands like the rings of a target. The outer band primarily shows depictions of larger flora and fauna in the forest. As Berrío further explains, this band is of the "mountains populated by a native forest." The middle band shows a more, in general, agricultural landscape, or as Berrío describes, the "chagra (an Indigenous agroforestry practice and area)." Both the inner and the outer bands connect the pie pieces through the band of earth that goes from month to month. The next inner band depicts water and fish in the water for each month except July—this is the month of the floods. Berrío explains that for "some Indigenous peoples" July "marks the beginning of the calendar."

As described, each month of the *Calendario Ancestral* is labeled, and the viewer's considering these labels may help bring understanding to the experience of living as part of the forest; Aycoobo writes "ciclo de canangucho Julio," and depicts palms in the forest with the reddish brown fruit of the canangucho fruiting palm (*mauritia flexuosa*). As with all the months, these trees are shown in the context of the forest and plantings amidst other flora and fauna. For the following month he writes, "ciclo de Gusano Agosto," and depicts caterpillars on the forest floor and, in the air, moths and/or butterflies. Perhaps the gusano depicted here is the colorful, striped caterpillar of the moth pseudosphinx tetrico. Next Aycoobo writes "ciclo que Florecen Septiembre" and depicts a large red bloom in the forest. He writes "ciclo cosecha de guama Octubre" and depicts ice cream beans ready to be picked. The following month seems to be an introduction of indigenous growing practices. Aycoobo writes "ciclo cosecha Milpaz Noviembre"

and shows corn and perhaps beans planted together. He might be referencing the “three sisters” practice of growing together maize, beans, and squash (both agriculturally and nutritionally symbiotic) and/or the practice of clearing some forest to grow crops before moving on and letting the land recover. Next, Aycoobo writes “ciclo de chontaduro Diciembre” and depicts the ripe fruit of the peach palm. Skipping February for a moment, the months of January and March introduce red guacury in January, “ciclo de guacury rojo Enero,” and the harvest of black guacury in March, “ciclo de cosecha guacury negro Marzo,” and depicted are red and black fruits in trees. For February, Aycoobo writes “ciclo de cosecha cucuy Febrero” and depicts the fruit of *macoubea guianensis* in trees and ready for harvest. For the month of April Aycoobo writes “ciclo de termino del Verano Abril” and shows rain clouds moving in. For May he writes “ciclo de lluvia invierno Mayo” and shows the rain falling into the forest. Aycoobo writes “ciclo de Frijole Junio” and depicts the forest under a cold grey sky. Four of the months refer directly to harvest, “cosecha,” and five others refer to flora and fauna and three to the weather. The painting does not depict human beings but suggests a possible human connection to a comprehensible environment in balance. As Berrío describes, it “illustrates what the world was like before the arrival of evil.”

In *Arboreal*, Bill Fontana’s sound piece, emitting from a large area filled with empty wooden shelves just behind the reception table of the gallery, *Sequoia Trees River Echoes*, presents sound he has recorded by attaching vibration sensors to sequoia trees. The sound heard is of the Kaweah River. The curator connects the tree and sound to the early colonial period; Berrío writes, “The Kaweah River basin, the land of the Yokuts and Western Mono Native peoples, holds the memory of the violence caused by Spanish colonizers and American loggers in the 1800s, before the formation of the Sequoia National Park in 1890. The resonating echoes of the distant river moving through the landscape result in a sound sculpture that sonifies this flowing rhythm into the timbre of wood, reminding us of the inter-dependence of the mountains, rivers, and trees, as well as the layers of history that they have witnessed. In the words of the artist, ‘I find the reality of these ancient trees ‘listening’ to the earth inspiring. It is a metaphor for the future I hope the earth can have.’” Here nature is far from indifferent; it lends witness and voice and provides support for a more harmonious future. The sound itself in the / space is not intrusive; its percussive quality is conducive to meditation and in its modulation suggests an outsized intelligence.

But, the nature utilized here in Fontana’s 2019 piece is under immediate threat; in 2020, the Castle Fire burned large portions of Sequoia National Park and, according to a June 2021 article in *The Guardian*, as many as 10 percent of all the world’s sequoias may have been killed in this fire. The sequoia tree is a fire-dependent tree (fires release seeds from its cones), but it is not adapted to the heat of contemporary fires which have increased intensity due to fuel build up and the influences of a changing climate. The National Park Service has posted information on its web site not only about the Castle Fire but also about the importance of “prescribed fire,” which refers to controlled burns “used to restore fire-dependent species, to create diverse habitats for plants and animals, or to reduce fuels and prevent a destructive fire.” The National Park Service does acknowledge the danger of the history of fire suppression but it does not go into detail in this recent post (though it does elsewhere on its site) about how Indigenous peoples’ practice of setting fires for forest management had been made illegal in the 1850 *Act for the Government and Protection of Indians*, which not only made controlled burns illegal but allowed for the removal of Indians from their land and for the separation of Indians from their families and for, among other atrocities, their enslavement. The Act was not fully repealed until 1937. In more recent years, the Park Service, in addition to its own pursuit of prescribed fire,

has worked with Indians to conduct controlled burns near Sequoia National Park. These often delayed adjustments to colonial thinking suggest there is at least hope that people have the capacity to listen and learn, and Fontana's desire that the trees "listening" to the earth can serve as a metaphor for the future points to the sound of nature not only being beyond our notions of language but also containing messaging worthy of our time to unravel.

The Miwok Indians (the mountain neighbors of the Yokuts) named the giant trees "wawona," which is a word based on a natural sound, the hoot of the owl, which is the spirit animal of the tree. The western colonists, in their hubris, named the trees after "great men." The three largest sequoias are named "General Sherman," "General Grant," and "President" (after Warren G. Harding). It is the nature of colonialism to co-opt names into the language of the colonists and/or to rename using the dominating language while limiting the use of indigenous tongues. To the importance of what language is used to describe what things, we are at a historical moment when at least one of the trees has lost its 19th century name. Signage in front of the sequoia named "General Lee" was recently removed, the Park Service wanting to "promote inclusiveness." This action gives further food for thought to consider that the tree called "President" is, at 3200 years old, older than the English language. Renaming is not at all the same as deep listening. To simplify, the global dominance of English can be seen as roughly coinciding with the acceleration of the world's sixth mass extinction, an anthropogenic extinction known as the Holocene or Anthropocene extinction. This human driven extinction is happening at a much greater rate than previous mass extinctions and brings into question our ability to encourage our own survival. Is there still time for us to learn to listen? In another 100 years will we have killed the sequoia and its owl before killing ourselves, or will the ancient trees once again be able to listen to the sounds of animals and the Kaweah River in peace?

The caption for Delcy Morelos's work in *Arboreal* states the following in place of media, "In a large container, fertile soil, clay, cocoa powder, ground cloves, and water were mixed to form a thick, uniform, aromatic fluid that was carefully applied onto burlap." As with all the bios and descriptions included with the list of works on the / website, it is well worth reading through the texts Berrío has written. Morelos is concerned with societies having lost contact with the earth, with the soil of the earth. Before discussing narrative, we have the work itself. It isn't precious; it isn't designed to last. It is in an in-between state—in a gallery that is in a building that separates Morelos's work from the earth below. One imagines that the activity Emerson Uýra honors in their work, *The Plant that Eats Itself Essay*, of the forest consuming itself in a cycle of rebirth, cannot happen with Morelos's *Paisaje* (Landscape) as long as it is confined to a gallery or museum. Like a landscape painting hanging on a wall, Morelos's work captures an idealization of a nature endangered by the conditions of its representation's exposition. Given the work's biodegradable media, Morelos's *Paisaje* has the advantage over other types of landscape art of being able to be returned quite easily to the nature it references. It is the promise of the work that it will be returned to the soil.

Emerson Uýra is represented in *Arboreal* by two photographic works: *Elementary Series (The Plant that Eats Itself Essay)* and *The Last Forest Series (Naked Earth Essay)*. In the photographs, Emerson is represented by a part of their "hybrid entity" Uýra Sodoma. Berrío more fully explains, "Emerson Uýra is a hybrid entity made of Emerson Munduruku, an Indigenous artist, educator, activist, biologist, and ecologist, and Uýra Sodoma, a drag queen persona born in 2016, who embodies a 'tree that walks' via performance and photo-performance." For this writing the name Emerson will be used to refer to "Emerson Uýra," and following Berrío's lead, the pronoun series "they" will be used for Emerson and the pronoun

series “she” for Uýra Sodoma. In conjunction with The Wattis Institute and during the course of the exhibition, Emerson gave an online presentation on 21 May 2021 entitled “Amazon: Scenarios, Challenges, and Art Education as Pathways to the Future” which is also part of their contribution to *Arboreal* (available on the / website) in which they explain some of their approaches, activism, engagement as an educator and leader, and activity as Uýra Sodoma.

Soon after entering into a conversation that included “Pathways to the Future” in the title, Emerson took to discussing non-linear time and the idea that the future is here and the present is the arrival of past actions. To cut to the chase, Emerson is a future person in the present. In as much as can be understood from Emerson’s work and their interviews, they inhabit non-binary attitudes and personas while, in the most eloquent, poetic, generous, and courageous of manners, advocate for the planet’s environment, speak truth to power, fight for the rights of the Indigenous and other oppressed groups, embrace youth as the future, produce beauty through their practice, and educate through art. Emerson speaks against the binary and even categories such as good and evil, but it is difficult to not take sides when on one hand there is Emerson (of course, along with many allies) and on the other is Brazil’s president Jair Bolsonaro and his capitalists and destroyers of forests. Unfortunately, Emerson may not be from our future.

The photograph *Plant that Eats Itself Essay* presents Uýra Sodoma more as part of the forest than in the forest. Patterned wraps tie Uýra Sodoma to human culture but a head wrapping of vegetation and adornments of sticks, leaves, and flowers make clear the humans too are part of the life cycle of the forest—of death directly feeding new life. The *Naked Earth Essay* photograph shows Uýra Sodoma prostrate in a snake-like pose of lamentation and communication with one hand placed across her heart and the other hand placed on the freshly cut end of a trunk of a large tree. Deforestation of the Amazon has been at record levels and Emerson’s projects of raising awareness and cultivating resistance come at a time when there is real threat that the entire Amazon forest could become dry landscape—the husk of the lungs of the world would then become a symbol of humankind’s colossal failure and folly.

In Emerson’s presentation, they give a current history of the Amazon, bravely condemn Bolsonaro, and focus on hope through education and art and following the heart.

Emerson has lived for most of their life in the city of Manaus, the capital of the state of Amazonas. They have also taken time to live as an educator upriver, away from the city and in the communities of the Ribeirinhos—the Indigenous people who live near the riverside. Emerson speaks of themselves as being a person transversed by city and jungle. *The Plant that Eats Itself Essay* photograph was taken in a forest preserve in Manaus—a jungle from which one can view city.

A significant portion of Emerson’s presentation focuses on Bolsonaro’s “politics of hate, regression, and death.” Emerson lists nine environmental regressions on a slide in their presentation and discusses these regressions in part. The slide lists, “Disruption of IBAMA and ICMBio,” “Flexibilization and reduction of environmental fines,” “Regularization of Mining, Oil, and Gas within Indigenous land,” “Disputes about INPE and the replacement of management,” “End of Fundo Amazônia (Norway and Germany) [Amazon Fund],” “Reopening of the Marco Temporal,” “Increase of violence in rural areas and against Indigenous people,” “Excessive Release of Pesticides (almost 1,000 in one year of government),” “Militarization and abandonment of environmental command to the Agriculture.” Bolsonaro is easy to ridicule in part because he makes outrageous statements which are clearly not true, but it is exactly

because of this that Emerson's pointing to specific policy changes is of the utmost import. Much as Ibram X. Kendi has described in *How to Be an Antiracist*, it is policy that drives racism...and ecocide. In their presentation, Emerson takes time to explain the impact of these policy changes and activities. These impacts range from increased land grabbing of Indigenous people's lands and use of these lands for oil extraction, among other activities, as a result of reductions of fines and penalties; the loss of Indigenous people's rights to land; the allowance for increased release of pesticides; the increased clearcutting of land for grazing; and among others, the weakening of the organizations gathering data on deforestation by replacing their leadership with cronies friendly to Bolsonaro and the practices of deforestation. The practice of lying, lying which directly results in the death of Brazil's people, also extends to Bolsonaro's approach to Covid-19, including his misinforming the public about the dangers of the disease and his questioning of the safety and efficacy of vaccines.

In the face of this horror, Emerson emphasizes the importance of hope. Emerson says, "It is the collective work, to reimagine a possible world." They see part of this work is to "tell stories that are beautiful." It is Uýra Sodoma who is able to resist while inhabiting joy and beauty.

Emerson explains in the presentation how they have lived in Vila Nova do Amana—where the locals refer to themselves as Ribeirinha. Here they arrived to teach environmental education but left with a different view...a view not guided by the brain but by the heart. Emerson emphasizes that children are guides to external and internal transformation. They express the importance of children being able to access the imagination and that the "subjective world of children should be encouraged." Emerson also makes clear that though they are not against children being influenced by outside cultures that children's watching too much TV, for example, can result in the abandonment of traditional culture. They emphasize the importance of listening to the forest to get inspired. Emerson sees the forest as source of material for artistic construction. Further, in the discussion of giving children a sense of place, Emerson quotes "master" Ailton Krenak (a Brazilian Indigenous scholar, writer, and activist) as saying "And to feel like you belong somewhere is fundamental."

Emerson in this presentation points to 20% of the Amazon having been destroyed and warns that we must "break from the anthropocene which is so violent and doomed to failure." Emerson makes clear that they and others do not choose to be "dissidents" but that this definition has been brought to them by the political hierarchy that works to displace Indigenous peoples and destroy ecosystems.

Emerson highlights the importance of community and considers "community as a space of dialogue with the planet." Making a direct parallel to the discussion of the regeneration of the forest in *The Plant that Eats Itself Essay*, Emerson brings up the notion that people need to "retrofeed," to feed themselves from their communities. Emerson says this can happen anywhere in communities across the world. They illustrate the power of bringing circles into our lives and "replacing hierarchical structures" with a photograph of people with whom Emerson has worked sitting in a circle and engaging in discussion.

In the end, among all that Emerson does, they are an artist capable of creating images of great beauty. In addition to the works on display in *Arboreal at /*, one might take note of some of the other "Elementary Series" works presented in the recorded presentation: "Photo Essay Mud," "Photo Essay Spirits of Everything that Lives," and "Photo Essay Black River"

Cecilia Vicuña's work comes from a different place. Her environmentalism can be tied to the abstraction of her poetry. Two of Cecilia Vicuña's "Sidewalk Forests" photographs in *Arboreal* from the 1980's of greenery forcing its way through the concrete of New York's TriBeCa neighborhood, not the chi-chi destination then it is now, can be considered in light of her poem *Jungle Kill*. A question a viewer might have is why show both the greenery regaining a foothold and drawing on a curb accentuating this greenery—is this an overworking of the tableau? Upon reading *Jungle Kill*, a viewer might conclude that despite the seemingly minimalist aesthetic of the photographs that Vicuña is not at all a minimalist but is more a maximalist who plays with contradiction in reduced format.

Jungle Kill has 26 very short stanzas. The second stanza offers insight into the need for decisive action:

'I split the dream
of the slow
& neutral'

In the 15th stanza,

'Fragrant
lantana'

may stand in for the poet's voice. Lantana is a beautiful flowering plant famous not for its sweet pleasant fragrance but for an astringent scent more like erasable markers or gasoline.

It wouldn't be wise to too carefully pin down Vicuña's meanings, but the violence inhabiting her language is clear in stanzas 7 through 13:

'Join
the game

I smoke
& praise you

Hew
& raze you

Jungle kill

Bulldoze
your sierra

Fire
to ash'

Unlikely that a poet, as Berrío recounts, who in the early 1970s "presented Salvador Allende, the president of Chile at the time, with a proposal for a 'National Day of the Seed' to re-green the country with 'seedbeds greening squares into forests and gardens, cities and fields into edens'" is promoting killing of jungles. Likely, that as a poet, she is looking for metaphor to

accurately speak about the route self expression takes to gain (as the last stanza extoles) the ability to

Plant your will!

In the TriBeCa photographs in *Arboreal*, we can understand that Vicuña is not focused on the post-urban landscape as a prelude to the post-apocalyptic but on the will of the plant...on the will of the artist.

Helen Mirra is represented in *Arboreal* by tactile conceptual works—one determined by the size of her forearm and hand plus her second hand (*Third Furrow*); another a weaving titled with the dyes coloring its wool (*Grayish green, yellowgreen, rhubarb-dyed bluegreen, lichen-dyed light brown*); a weaving and its copy made several years later (*May, April*); a process based work resulting in rubbings of cut trees (*Field Recordings, 7 x 5000 Schritte, in Berlin (Hirschgarten)*); and a coy pine palette sculpture holding the seed container of a pine tree (*Ballou*). A part of one of Berrío's lines about Mirra's interests stands out; Berrío writes of Mirra, "She is currently interested in gradual slopes..." The second half of the line, not copied here, is of equal interest and almost prevents the reader from pausing on this first meditation. A slope without gravity is just a change in direction, but gravity gives it an up and a down. Much of Mirra's practice focuses on walking. For a walker, even a gradual downhill slope can provide a little extra push in the direction of one's travel or if going uphill, a slight drag, a pulling backwards on the legs. And in general relativity, what is gravity but a curvature, a slope, in the fabric of spacetime? A gradual slope on earth allows the walker to experience the excitement of curved spacetime without much danger. This understanding that contemplation of subtle difference is at core a study of the basic forces of the universe is a thought that Mirra states overtly as she makes clear that the Buddhist concepts underpinning that work are, as Berrío quotes in her discussion of the work *Third Furrow*, "a means of thinking about time and space."

In May of 2021, during the run of *Arboreal at /*, Christopher D. Stone died. Stone was a lawyer and professor who famously proposed in his influential 1972 article, "Should Trees Have Standing?: Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects" that there is legal precedent and societal benefit for trees having legal rights. He argues that rights of natural objects are part of a progression following the development of rights for, among others, children, women, the enslaved, and corporations.

In the article, Stone quotes Dane Rudhyar to make clear humans' interrelationships with the earth: "Mankind is part of this organic planetary whole; and there can be no truly new global society, and perhaps in the present state of affairs no society at all, as long as man will not recognize, accept and enjoy the fact that mankind has a definite function to perform within this planetary organism of which it is an active part." Dane Rudhyar with his artistic and mystical bent might seem an odd source choice for Stone, but at the heart of having a different future is being able to imagine a different future, and as the artists of *Arboreal* exemplify, it is in trying to grasp the ineffable that we turn to creatives' imaginations. For these purposes here, we might also look to a synergy among the artists of *Arboreal* and the artists of the Transcendental Painting Group with whom Dane Rudhyar was associated. Artists like Agnes Pelton created works that showed the magic and glory of the quotidian landscape. *Arboreal* makes the same argument about trees—the magic and glory of their being is right in front of us and is experienced by those who take the time to observe, to listen, and to consider. There is also a warning imbedded in *Arboreal's* appreciation. In the dystopian film *Soylent Green*, set in 2022,

the elite's corporations turn the masses into their own food source (this secret spreading of cannibalism in lieu of pursuing the claimed solution of a sustainable practice of harvesting food from the oceans because the oceans were already dead). The rebuttal of the lie and too late warning of "Soylent Green is people!" still resonates from 1973. Today in 2021, it is obvious even to those who thwart survival that if earth's interconnected verdure is not given standing and the earth's lands, waters, and forest are not given standing (a standing which still needs to be extended in full to many peoples) then a further compromised environment leading to global, shortage-driven strife could easily be well on its way to realization. Even Bolsonaro likely knows that the fate of the tree is the fate of people even if the fate of people may not be the fate of the tree.

The 2019 online version of the Oxford English Dictionary defines "arboreal" as "1. Pertaining to, or of the nature of, trees" and "2. Connected with, haunting, or inhabiting trees."

If the earth is devoid of people in some thousand or thousands of years, the trees will unlikely be haunted by our passing. The effects of the anthropocene will only exist as scars on their bodies.

If people survive even the next 100 years a key to our survival will not be our haunting of trees but our adequately responding to our being haunted by trees. And isn't this just being sensitive and reactive to our own real, not metaphorical, connection to the mycorrhizal network?

It would be simplest to imagine the movement towards our extinction as inexorable. There are no shortage of doomsday theorists—whether those looking at proliferation of nuclear weapons or the impact of climate change or just crunching numbers using Bayes's Theorem—who, these soothsayers, place the demise of the human race between 100 years and some millions of years into the future. If we could count on some near term extermination as being the sooth/truth then we could abandon our guilt, our sense of responsibility, even our dread and enjoy what was human life on earth and the unfolding of its last days—like a time traveler from another universe or dimension on a catastrophe viewing holiday. In this case, an exhibition like *Arboreal* would only be the consideration of the past or a quaint suggestion of possible futures that had failed.

People will probably not get off so easily. People will likely remain for quite some time even as forests are denuded. The kindness of *Arboreal* and the approachable quality of its intelligent work gently reminds that we can move to accept that nature is the unexcisable whole of which we are only a part or be haunted by having strangled the life source of our future. In our diminished lives, we will recognize ourselves as having been an unnecessary evil.

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Arboreal

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Curated by Juana Berrío

March 26 through June 26, 2021

<https://www.slashart.org/arboreal/>