

MNEMONIC VEGETABLES:

Charlotte Haywood with invited artists.

We are Vegetable.

We are alive to all kinds of climates, all kinds of soils, of water, of light, and the darkness too. So alive to the world we hold the unbearable tension of nearly, but not quite, merging. No, we are not wanting to merge. We are in fact, indifferent. In difference. With difference. We are not conspirators of human desire. Our indifference is not the opposite of love, but another kind of love; one that sits alongside, that keeps the company of, that welcomes the stranger to, that learns the ways.

We are makers of the cosmos, and we did it all without hands. We did it with that nearly, but not quite, merging. We are transducers. To form a vegetal world is to ceaselessly be growing and making new: seeds, tap roots, lateral roots, stems, leaves, trunks, branches, flowers... Being attentive to our location is the conditions of our growth. Being attentive to our location is the condition of our deathless sort of dying. Our ends and beginnings converge. Our being and not is simultaneously expressed. In which case we are awfully chatty and very good listeners, and we don't mean that to be in the least bit funny.

Except it is.

There have been experiments. Plants have been dropped from great heights over and over and over once more to observe if their leaves recoil in anticipation – to observe if they remember.

They do.

MNEMONIC VEGETABLES invites us to pay attention.

To what?

Just that, pay attention to paying attention. Walk around this vegetal Memory Palace and practice paying attention. Charlotte Haywood has invited you as she has invited Kylie Caldwell, Helle Jorgensen, Suzanne Simpson, Shellie Morris, Emily Lubitz, Chris Brown, Pedro Espi-Sanchis and Michelle Chapman. As she has invited me. Sit alongside, keep company of, pass between strangers, learn the ways. Each artist has gathered material and laid it down here, in this location. Pay attention to the material. It comes in the form of the marvellous and the made; it comes as a voice, a note, a coiled fibre, a decaying fruit, a wild yeast, a position held by an activist.

You have brought the vapour of your lungs. And the plants have brought the sunshine we otherwise cannot eat.

The art works themselves are assemblages, whether they are sculptural or performative. Even singularly, they are pulled together. Together they create another kind of assemblage – an ecosystem – interacting, self-sustaining. And then there is the broad view: an assemblage of practices, gestures, and materials that weaves an archival feeling. That is, the many forms of generosity, grief, love, anxiety, fear, learning, and joy are remembered and brought together, to be together, to see what happens.

Archived but not categorised, we

use MNEMONIC VEGETABLES as a strategy for coming back to living with the plant world. Remembering. Remembering that our differences make living possible. A plant is creating the conditions of a person's breathing. This is the incidental miracle within difference. Plants create this clear medium for being alive, and as it so happens, breathing is the converging of beginnings and ends. Breathing is the touching point of a person and a plant.

Because we are 'stuck' as it were, fixed by a total absence of movement, we make a site of every location. Really, every garden is a happening. Here we are, outstretched and exposed, making the atmosphere, the breath you will take grows in us. And did you know that each of those breaths are the essence of the world's remembering. All time: all presents, all pasts, all futures, come together in that intake and exhale.

If breathing charts the history of plant and person relations, then memory is our common ancestor.

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IMAGE: Charlotte Haywood, *Pig face at the coal face*, 2024. Digital collage from Muloobina/Newcastle and The Lock-Up Residency.



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