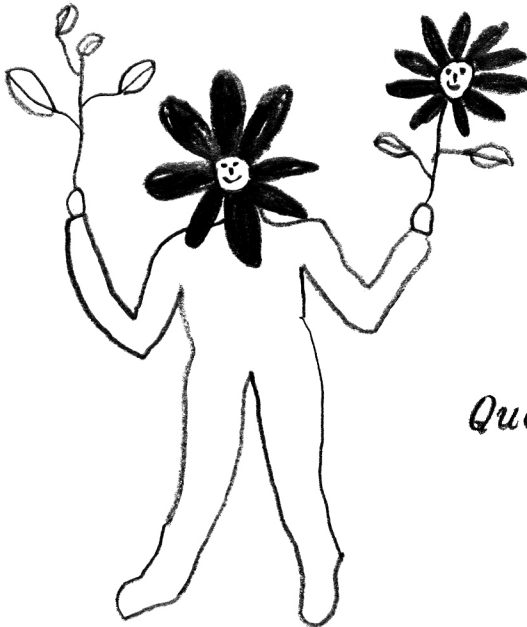


Квир-сад

Квир-садок



Queer garden

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2023, Dresden, Germany

The event is organized by Quarteera e.V. in Saxony in cooperation with all participating artists as part of the project "My Community HERE" and is supported by funding from the "Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft (EVZ)" foundation.

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Queer garden

When we use the word «activism», the first thing that usually comes to mind are the images of brave people who have participated in pride events, spoken out publicly, and who appear to be fighting against evil and ignorance on their own. Of course, this type of activism attracts attention and provides the community with the necessary visibility. At the same time, it is believed that activism is only defined by active action. How often do we encounter numerous wonderful people saying something along the lines of 'I'm not an activist; I'm simply writing texts,' or 'I'm not an activist; I've never been involved with the police'. A vision of activism that only focuses on active and public actions negates all other private and personal forms of protest.

Marginalised groups assert their existence simply by demonstrating their presence in public spaces (Butler, 2018). Therefore, visibility itself is a form of protest, and the act of sharing personal narratives already qualifies as an expression of activism. In a situation of systematic persecution and repression, vulnerable groups seek to protect themselves by established dedicated 'safe spaces' where they can relax and just be authentic selves. Within this context, the queer garden serves as a place for safety and support. The garden embodies the essence of queerness. There are a variety of contacts, forms of existence, and hybridities obtained as a result of human interaction with non-human entities. This is a fertile ground for the study of queerness and sexuality.

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Queer theorist José Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* writes: "Queerness is [...] a performative because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future".

Queerness plays a critical role in challenging the prevailing notion of favouring one experience over another, while also circumventing binary and dualistic constructs such as 'normality'/'abnormalities', nature/technology. Queer individuals exhibit a diverse set of capabilities honed throughout the course of their involvement in the historical advocacy for human rights defence and the fight against AIDS. Among them are multitasking skills, magination, the ability to resist while simultaneously handling daily tasks, cooperation, and other similar qualities. All of them are indispensable in shaping the precise vision that Muñoz wrote about.

Astrid Schwarz (2019) theorises one of the ways of a socio-technical vision of the future. It is based on the figure of *Homo hortensis* — a person engaged in gardening and living in accordance with its principles. *Homo hortensis* is a "gardener" or "the one who belongs to the garden" (ibid). Through a deliberate focus on the garden, emphasised by imagination, care, sensuality and intertwining with non-human objects, a distinct way of life emerges. For Schwarz "gardening and the environment coexist in constant interaction and the formation of each other" (ibid). *Homo hortensis* refers "to the soil and the weather, to ornamental plants and herbs, to weeds and edible plants, by means of various modes of activity" (Schwarz, 2022).

*

Based on diverse scientific works, the Zin «Queer Garden» was created by volunteers and activists of the LGBTQ+ organisation *Quarteera*. We believe that the production of knowledge and its use are inextricably linked. Science gives activists the ground for development and action, and activist practices create precedents for certain scientific research.

Science strives for objectivity and standardisation (Kaishian & Djoulakian, 2020). But objectivity is meaningless when we talk about the multiplicity of gender and the fluidity of sexuality (ibid). Donna Haraway has been writing about the falsity of objectivity for many years. Rather than presenting an unbiased external “gaze”, she offers us partial, local, involved knowledge, and prefers engaging with objects instead observing them (Haraway, 1988). Our concept of a garden as a place for the LGBTQ+ community also opposes standardisation and objectivity, given the diversity it represents.

The garden embodies elements of both culture and nature simultaneously (Schwarz, 2022). The garden is a place of calm, mindfulness and self-expression. The garden embodies and performs physicality. The garden involves creativity, planning and vision of the future. The garden is a way to combat climate change, which primarily hits marginalised communities. The garden is a practice honed through communication with our elders, through culture, and local experience. The garden is a common place for people to seek comfort and support, especially when they have had to leave their homes and find their place on a new earth. The garden is a space of communication, nostalgia, relaxation, and community formation. Veronica Strang, in her book *Gardening the world*, refers to Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995), writing that:

“The house is an extension of the person; Like an extra skin, carapace or second layer of clothes, it serves as much to reveal and display as it does to hide and protect... Moving in ordered space, the body ‘reads’ the house which serves as a mnemonic for the embodied person”.

Similarly, authors note that “the space that surrounds the house is also an extension of the personal space of its occupants”. This reinforces the notion that people view their environment as an extension of themselves and their identity. The function of gardens is to provide an external opportunity for creative expression (Strang, 2009).

As a way of protecting the identity and asserting space, gardens serve a number of social and political goals. Social relations are evident in gardens not only locally, but also on a variety of scales. Through the dissemination of certain styles and practices, they can uphold dominant values and ideas, express and assert national identity, or export this identity to a new environment. The gardens are a useful platform for immigrants and emigrants to establish themselves and challenge prevailing values and ideologies.

*

In our small private research, we decided to show what can be called “intimate” or “quiet” activism (Tironi, 2018). We pledge our support to those who, in their everyday lives and routine affairs, embody the long-standing feminist slogan: “Personal is political”. We asked everyone from the Russian-speaking LGBTQ+ community to write about what the garden means to them. To do this, we asked them to tell us a little about themselves and answer three questions:

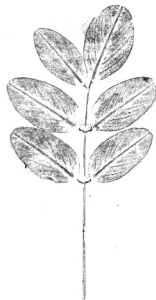
1. Why do you practise gardening?
2. Have you thought of the garden as a queer place?
3. Is the garden a link between the past and immigration/emigration experience?

The questions did not imply the obligation to answer, but rather were a certain direction of thought.

A new location can lead to new challenges, such as language barriers , unfamiliar cultures , loneliness, and misunderstandings. Many people must not only find their place but also reinvent themselves in the process. The garden, as a queer space embodying a sustainable future and physicality, demonstrates that activism extends beyond public actions to encompass quiet, ordinary, even mundane practices like gardening.

"[D]oing for and toward the future" (Muñoz, 2009) requires visibility from each of us, particularly if we genuinely desire change. The presented drawings and photography enable us to express protest through our bodies and voices, making us visible. They are a protest against oppression and injustice. Protest that, despite its subtlety, expresses dissent. The protest is for those who are still deprived of the right to speak out. The protest is in support of a new and diverse future that we are shaping today and every day.

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- Haraway, D. (1988). *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575.
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Liza

I draw and I've been living in exile for the last year because my home country has brought war to Ukraine. I got my first plants a couple of months ago. We moved once again, and it was necessary to find a foothold in a new place. The first thing we decided to take home were indoor plants.

I've never thought of the garden as a queer space, but this is a living metaphor. The last thought fresh in my mind about houseplants is the theme of colonization, questions about the ways and means by which plants became houseplants. Perhaps, working on this topic could also add a few new meanings to the garden's parallel with a queer place.

For me, the garden adds relief to the anticipation of the future. Plants help me to stay connected with the living, and they add a kind of routine to everyday life that makes it easier to wait for big changes.

Jessay

He/they. I was raised in the Ural region, now I live in a small town in the UEA. I do art, mostly 3D.

I love looking at plants for a long time, imagining myself as a little creature, hiding from people in its' own world. As a child, my favorite mental habitat was the huge trees in the far distance outside my window or my mother's bouquets, and as I grew older, I began to have domestic vines.

Recently, my place of residence has changed frequently, so, for lack of a relaxing number of plants in the room, the image of wilderness has become even more integrated into my work, allowing me to maintain an imaginary safe space, where I submerge myself in the image of a character that I have designed: the androgynous fairy.



Wanja

*I'm a theater artist and
queer activist.*

This fall, black grapes ripened for the first time on my balcony in Hamburg. It was the same type my grandmother grew in Kazakhstan, from where I came to Germany with my family 26 years ago. My grandmother was deported from Crimea when she was about nine years old. And this spring, ordering vines from a specialty retail nursery, unpacking them from a large bag of woodchips, planting them, tying them up and watering them, I felt like "the strings were tied." Like I was growing that native vine veraison from my childhood. And that this is probably how my grandmother wanted to create a part of her village in the Crimea, planting vines in a small Kazakh town.

SOUGREVE Art Group

(Olga Proskurnina + Maria Pokrovskaia)

The first thing we did when we broke away from Russia after the war started was to get married. You can do that here in Montenegro. A new friend gave us a potted olive tree for our wedding. A couple weeks later, we fished out a palm tree in our bay, broken by a storm. It must have been brought in from Italy by the current. We don't have a house of our own anymore, but we have a garden. It travels with us from one rented apartment to the next. The olive is already ripening its second harvest - 10 olives. Last year it had 14. And the palm tree has taken root, although it was dangling in the sea without roots. And next to it, future orange trees are greening, that have been growing from seeds.



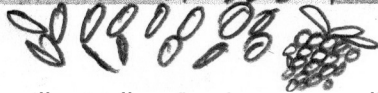
Regina

I am a lesbian, a LGBT+ activist, a psychologist, feminist, and also a gardener.

The garden is true, a loyal friend and companion. It is silent yet able to listen, it is malleable to my desires and willing to accept me in any mood, with any identity, with any issues.

What do I expect from it? Support, belonging, the feeling that there is someone who is reciprocal, faithful to me and loves me in any way.

It is a special closeness based on common values, on the total experience that someone other than myself needs me, that someone important to me needs me, that I am not alone, I am protected by my love for it. The garden is my child whom I have molded into my likeness and made a friend.



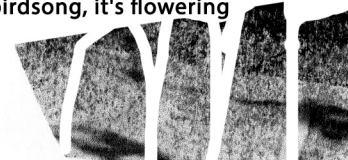
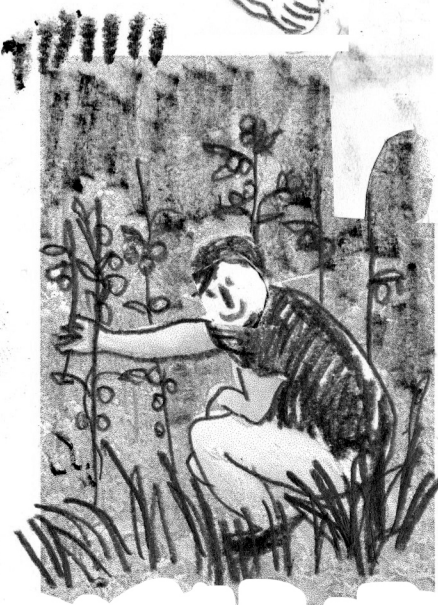
The garden will not tell me "you're not normal", "your sexual orientation doesn't suit me" or "I don't need you in a bad mood, I have enough problems of my own". It will welcome my every touch, my whisper, my laughter, my scream or even my tears.

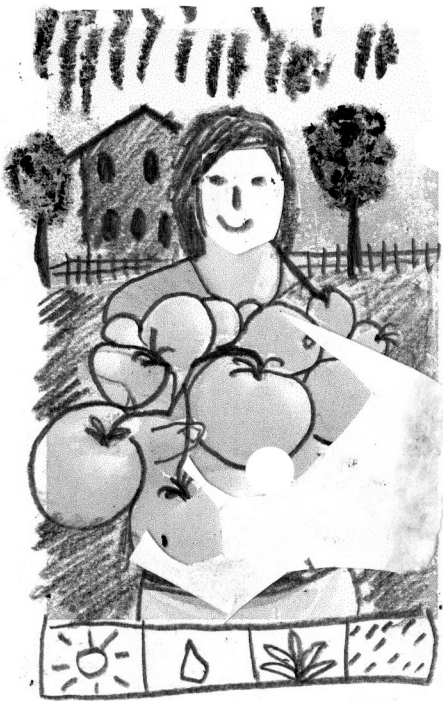
It is important for me to see the result of my labor, it is important for me to understand that everything is not in vain. I can touch it with my hand, see it with my eyes, show it to my friends, even eat it or put it in a vase, give it as a gift, sell it. And so it goes every year, cyclically. To garden is to know that there is meaning in life.

Gardening is creative activity and exercise.

A garden makes me feel alive! It's clean air, it's sunsets, it's dawns, it's birdsong, it's flowering plants and juicy fruits!

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Tonya

Throughout my childhood I hated gardening because there was this everlasting "dig here, weed there, water here - because we have to." But I suddenly realized how cool it is to treat yourself and your loved ones to food that you grew from small seeds.

I don't know if the fruits and vegetables I grow are healthy - I haven't evaluated the quality of the soil and I don't know what I grow on. But I am convinced that gardening brings me joy and pride in what I have created. Also, the food tastes delicious and I don't have to go to the store to buy it.

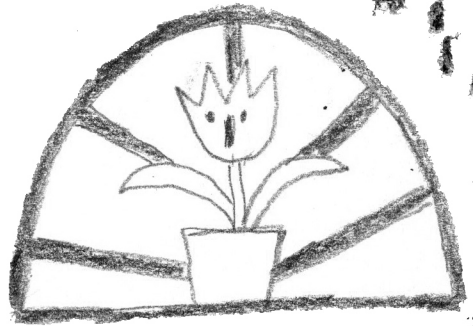


Anna

I'm a queer artist and publisher, I teach modern art and I create original animation. I was born in Kamchatka, but after I graduated from university in Khabarovsk, I moved to Moscow. Last year I had to leave because of the war, pregnant with my second child, and now I live temporarily in Montenegro.

Before the war I grew a lot of plants at home, because in winter it was very dull outside the window, and my green friends always lifted my spirits and gave me some beauty. It was a pleasure to see how the little ones became trees, gave sprouts that could be given away as gifts. Because of my departure, I had to leave parts of my urban jungle to good hands, now the plants have new homes. I took four sprouts with me when I emigrated.

In Montenegro there are gardens everywhere, each house has its own unique one. Never in my life have I seen so much green in late fall. I planted my sprouts in pots, but only three survived. They are a piece of my past home. Queer and garden is harmony, it's something natural, genuine, healing from city worries and constraints, a safe space for self-expression. I dream of someday creating my queer sculptures in a large size for the garden, so that art and nature can coexist side by side.



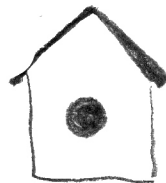
Zoia

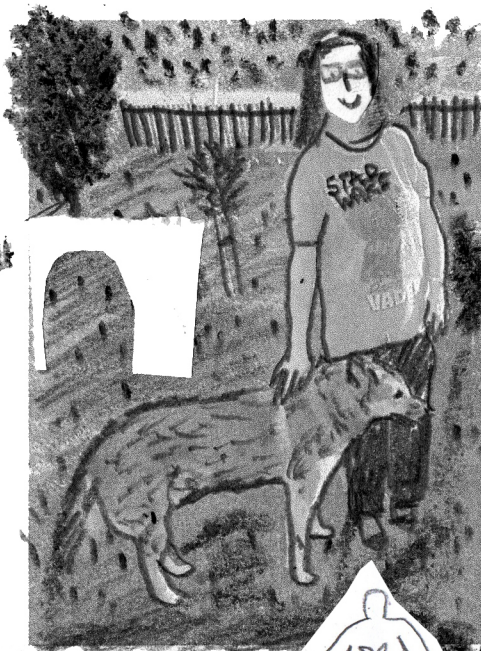
I was born in the Ural region. I graduated from the University of Dresden with a degree in social work, and now I work with people who have refugee status. I play in an orchestra and love walking in the forests and mountains.

A garden is not a queer place for me. It's more of a traditional place. My grandmother had a vegetable garden, my mom has her own garden, I have tomatoes growing on my balcony. And all the previous generations in our family lived in the countryside, meaning we fed on what grew in the vegetable garden, in the field and in the forest.

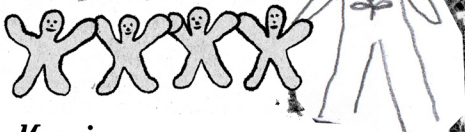
Most of our friends have something growing on their balcony. A green balcony is not some kind of migrant thing. However, we exchange harvest photos with my mom. So it's at least something that connects the two worlds, There and Here. A conflict-free, peaceful, creative theme.

My (female) partner and I thought of having our own garden but gave up the idea, because it is a lot of resources to invest in it. But we are landscaping our balcony, which is easier. It looks cozier with plants. We have a daughter, and I really hope that she knows that tomatoes and strawberries do not grow in the supermarket. We grow not only edible herbs that are meant for tea or salad, but also just flowers to keep the bees entertained. We also have two insect houses and a bird feeder, which are mainly there for ecological reasons. Although eco-friendliness is relative - we waste a lot of water on watering the plants. The main reason to grow my garden is more aesthetic.





My garden is a place of peace and freedom. Since childhood I have loved nature, plants and all animals, including snails and bugs. It is my paradise for everyone, where everyone lives in harmony. Our site is big, half eco-garden and half field. I relax best in the garden, the simple activity clears away any worries. And it's always a miracle when you see flowers and trees growing, birds hatching, butterflies and bees flying around and living in different spots. It doesn't matter who you are and what your language is but the plants and animals are always dear to you.



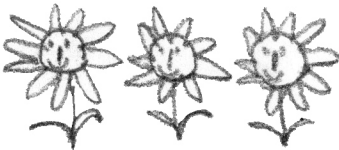
Maria

I moved to Germany from St. Petersburg. That was over 18 years ago. I'm 46 years old now. Before my immigration I taught philosophy at the university. In Germany I turned into a teacher for Russian as a first language at school. I've always liked teaching more than doing research. I love my new homeland, especially the fact that I live in the countryside with marvelously rich and picturesque nature. And I adore dogs, I have five of them now, all different, from shelters.

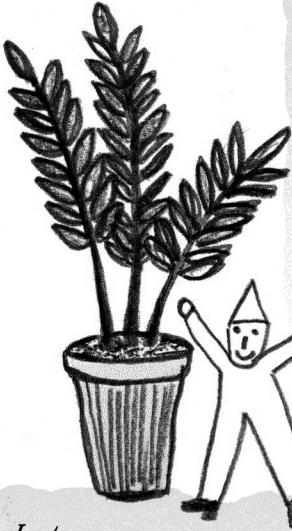
The garden is a place of freedom where you are you - and that's it. No-one is judging you, no-one is trying to figure out who you are. You just live in your own design. The garden is an extension of you, where you go beyond your body and project yourself into nature. There's no place more safe or open than the garden. It's like a queer space. I've never thought about it before because I'm not personally affected by this aspect, I just enjoy being able to be myself and in harmony with myself.



The garden connects me to my pre-immigration past through sentimental bits of images from my childhood: birch trees and briar bushes, the singing of finches and snowfinches at the feeder. The garden speaks to me in my native language through the patterns of fallen leaves in the fall and the first snowdrop flowers in the spring.



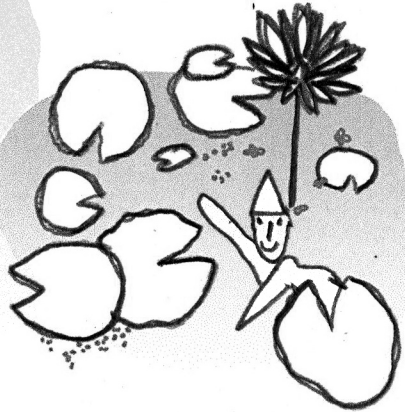
Zamioculcas



- I live in Africa
- I can grow for many years up to 1 metre, requires no special care except moderate regular watering, fertiliser and bright sunlight light
- my leaves have an unusual shape and colour, I'm attractive for interior decorating

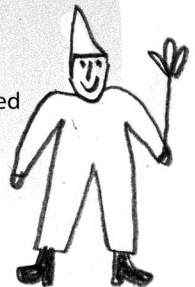
Lotos

- I'm from Asia.
- I live in the water, I can grow up to two metres, I need moist soil and enough of sunlight
- I've been called the symbol of rebirth and rebirth because every day I open and close and then reappear on the the surface of the water

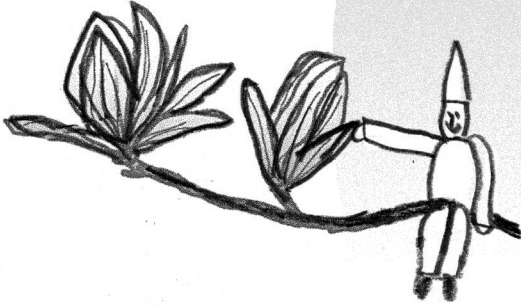


Iris

- My home is Europe
- I'm a perennial flower up to 1 metre, I like fertile soil and sunlight, regular watering, and from time to time I need pruning
- In ancient Greece, I symbolised rainbow



Idea:
Vita Petrenko

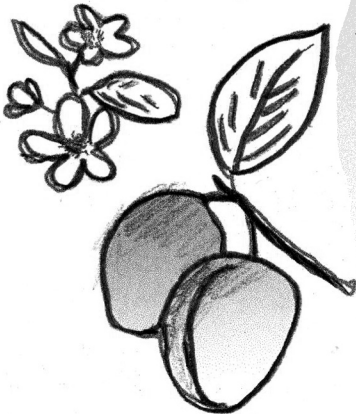
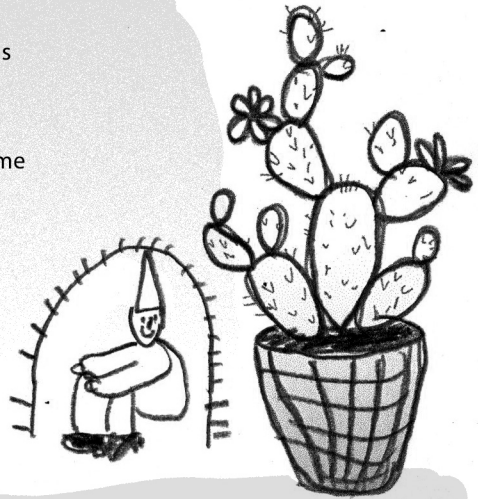


Magnolia

- My roots are from America
- I'm a large flowering tree up to 30 metres, requiring a temperate climate and moist soil, I must be protected from strong wind and frost
- I'm very useful medicinally in the treatment of asthma, headaches and depression

Cactus

- I survive in the most extreme conditions
- I can be many forms and sizes, I don't need any special care, just give me dry soil and sunlight
- I help you fight erosion of the soil and prevent the formation deserts, I'm an important source of food and water for many animals



Plum

- I live in Europe, Asia, America
- I am a small tree and I bloom in spring, my fruits ripen in the summer, I prefer a sunny location and moist but well-drained soils
- I can live for over 50 years and with proper care, we can produce a crop every year

