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Spot home gallery
di Cristina Ferraiuolo

inaugurates

Explosions of light
Chernobyl Herbarium

the first solo exhibition in Italy
by **Anaïs Tondeur**

From June 16 to October 14, 2022

Opening June 16, 2022

From 12 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Via Toledo, 66 - Napoli

On Thursday, June 16th, 2022 Spot home gallery presents **Explosions of light** - Chernobyl Herbarium, the first solo exhibition in Italy by French visual artist Anaïs Tondeur.

The exhibition's protagonist is a rayographic herbarium, collecting images of plant species which grow in the radioactive soils of Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, an area contaminated by the explosion of the nuclear power plant reactor No. 4 on April 26th, 1986.

Through rayograms¹ — generated by the direct imprint of plants on photosensitive plates exposed to an intense source of light and to the radioactivity contained in the flora — the artist seeks to reveal the nuclear stigmata on the botanical bodies.

In her quest to create a space where plants can have a voice and establish their own presence, Anaïs Tondeur providentially encountered the trajectory of environmental philosopher Michael Marder, himself contaminated by the 1986 explosion. Since then Tondeur and Marder have shared a common urge to symbolize this event, they reflect upon it and find a possible meaning to the fragmentation of consciousness triggered by the disaster. This collaboration takes the form of a composite work, which combines philosophical thoughts and works of art, and that intends to encourage another, possible way of living, more attuned to the environment.

“Plants teach us that there is no infinite growth, no growth without decay, itself the precondition for future growth.” Michael Marder writes, “What the imperatives of market economy and the byproducts of nuclear power have in common is the suppression (indeed, the repression) of decay. This makes them incompatible with the world of the living, which they undermine and destroy. Against the background yearning for imperishability, plants point the way without leaving the places wherein their existence is embedded. They show how to grow and, by extension, how to decay better in our quotidian living practices as much as in our thinking.”

¹ Rayography is a technique invented and perfected by Man Ray, the result of which is visually very similar to that of an X-ray. In this use, however, the image does not show the internal structure of objects, but rather an «other» nature, ungovernable by man and therefore, mysterious.

Chernobyl Herbarium is an ongoing project initiated in 2011 as a result of the collaboration between Anaïs Tondeur and biogeneticist Martin Hajduch, who has been studying the consequences of radioactivity on the flora since 2005. Every year the Herbarium grows: Tondeur welcomes a plant, a new irradiated body gifted by Hajduch, of which she collects the imprint, accompanied by a new text by Marder.

In 2021, on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the catastrophe, Mimesis Edizioni published *Chernobyl Herbarium. La vita dopo il disastro nucleare*. This edition includes thirty-five written and rayographic fragments composed by Michael Marder and Anaïs Tondeur.

The exhibition will feature all 36 rayograms produced to date, one for each year past since the explosion. The rayogram from 2022 was created with particles of radioactive soil from the Exclusion Zone, the artist collected just before the beginning of the war in Ukraine.

● Biography

Anaïs Tondeur was born in 1985. She works and lives in Paris.

A graduate of Central Saint Martins College (2008) and the Royal College of Arts (2010), in London, she was awarded the Prix Art of Change 21 (2021) and the Ars Electronica CyberArts Honorable Mention (2019).

With an approach rooted in ecological thinking, Tondeur is engaged in an interdisciplinary practice through which she explores new ways of recounting the world, enabling transformations in our relationship with other living beings and the great cycles of the earth. By composing a laboratory of attentions and perceptions, she works through investigation and fiction, performed as walks, installations, photographs or protocols associated with alchemy.

Many of her projects are thus born from encounters, sensorial occurrences with elements, territories or different types of understanding and perceptions of the world. As a result, she is particularly fond of the investigative practice that leads to a state of amplified openness and attention. Whether by tracing real phenomena or by speculating elements and characters, these pursued subjects become guides to worlds that would otherwise be inaccessible to our perceptions.

Several research projects have taken her on expeditions across the Atlantic Ocean, at the rim between tectonic plates, in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, beneath Paris' surface, through polluted urban soils or below the atmospheric flux of anthropogenic particles. When the investigation territories are inaccessible, the artist creates virtual vehicles that move vicariously for her. Which is how she managed to send a dream into space aboard NASA's Osiris Rex spacecraft.

Tondeur resided as an Artist in Research and Creation at the former seed storage of the Vilmorin Family (Verrières-le-Buisson, 2020-21), at Chantiers Partagés, under the curation of José-Manuel Goncalves, as well as at 104 (Montrouge, Bourget, 2018-19), Artlink (Ireland, 2019), at the Museum of Arts et Métiers (Paris, 2018-17), at CNES (Paris, 2016), at the Sustainable Culture Laboratory initiated by COAL at the Domaine de Chamarande (2015-16), at the National Museum of Natural History, at the Pierre and Marie Curie Institute (Paris, COP 21 2015) and at La Chaire Arts & Sciences (École Polytechnique, France, 2013-15).

Exhibitions of her work have been held among international institutions, such as the Kröller-Müller Museum (Netherlands), Center Pompidou (Paris), La Gaîté Lyrique (Paris), MEP (Paris), Frac Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Serpentine Galleries (London), Bozar (Brussels), Biennale Di Venezia – French Pavillion, (Lieux Infinis), Houston Center of Photography (United States) and the Nam June Paik Art Center (Seoul).

- The opening of the exhibition will take place on Thursday, June 16th, 2022, in the presence of the artist, from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m.
The exhibition will be open by appointment until October 14th, 2022 via online booking at www.spothomegallery.com or via e-mail at info@spothomegallery.com.

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- **Contacts**

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