

Press Release

FOSTER The Soil and Water Residency

A MAK Exhibition

Exhibition Venue	Central Room MAK DESIGN LAB MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	28 May – 3 October 2021
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–9 p.m. Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

The exhibition presents newly developed works by artists who participated in the *Foster: The Soil and Water Residency* project initiated by Angelika Loderer in 2020. During the first lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic, in April of 2020, the artist rented ten plots of 40 square meters each (3x11 meters) in a self-harvest garden in Hirschstetten in Vienna's 22nd district, from a farmer who also provided irrigation. Loderer invited eleven artists to use the space loaned to them as a field for experimenting with the simple and elemental, to support themselves, and to conduct research for their own artistic work.

FOSTER (with its connotations of caring for someone not linked by blood or legal obligation) is about engaging with the process of growth and care on the interface between independence and precarity. "The garden is the smallest plot of land in the world and at the same time the totality of the world," writes Michel Foucault in *Of Other Spaces* (1967), talking about what he called heterotopias—whereby the garden represents a real utopia, a fragile ecology that could flip at any moment, a "paradisiac" state that must be resolutely fought for and constantly cared for.

"In times of the pandemic I wanted to offer a perspective," says the project's founder. "Being convinced of their interest and their understanding of what was involved, I extended invitations to a number of colleagues varying in both artistic discipline and age. We learnt a lot from each other." New friendships and jointly initiated collaborations show how inspiring exchanges between, for instance, art students and established artists can be. At irregular intervals, the twelve participants also invited partners from the world of culture into the garden, to picnic and share ideas there. At one of these meetings the synergies between the goals of *FOSTER* and the theme of this year's VIENNA BIENNALE FOR CHANGE became apparent.

With gardening, humanity began to cultivate its naturally growing environment. In the biological sense, cultivation means “the creation and maintenance of conditions that foster the growth of certain organisms.” This also applies symbolically to our cultural system: for over a year now we have been able to experience the importance for creative artists of having the right framework and ongoing support for their work, especially in a pandemic.

In contrast to closed cultural institutions and online meetings, the *FOSTER* project facilitates an unrestricted environment for social interchange. The heterogeneous group, uniting different generations, and the artistic approaches, variety of materials, techniques, and contentual strands they use interweave in the exhibition to create artistic processes.

The process of cultivation or rewilding, the reuse and transformation potential of materials and their potential for transformation, are just as much themes of these art works as are the tension between abstraction and figuration, holding and letting go, inner and outer spaces, isolation and the collective, and their symbolic significance for social structures. Following the principle of crop rotation, the garden has no fixed location but grows and decays according to the cycles of nature.

Accompanying the exhibition is a booklet of texts and impressions of *FOSTER: The Soil and Water Residency* in the self-harvest garden.

Artists: Dejan Dukic, Luna Ghisetti, Sophie Hirsch, Minna Liebhart, Angelika Loderer, Irina Lotarevich, Roman Pfeffer, Lucia Elena Průša, Aline Sofie Rainer, Hans Schabus, Myles Starr, Edin Zenun

Concept: Angelika Loderer, Marlies Wirth
Curator: Marlies Wirth

Press images are available at MAK.at/en/press and viennabiennale.org

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