

TAASPEN

Karokynká, Tierra del Fuego
Christy Gast (artist),
Camila Marambio
(curator), Denise
Milstein (writer/
sociologist),
He'many Molina
(consultant),
agustine zegers
(olfactory artist)

RICH

Bog Hollow, New York
Christy Gast (artist),
Camila Marambio
(curator), Denise
Milstein (writer/
sociologist), agustine
zegers (olfactory
artist)

WOLVES IN THE MIRE

Bogerudmyra, Oslo
Camila Marambio
(curator), Randi
Nygård (artist),
Karolin Tampere
(curator), Simon Daniel
Tegnander Wenzel
(olfactory artist)

JALO GABA

**Minjerribah,
Quandamooka Country**
Elisa Jane Carmichael
(Quandamooka artist),
Freja Carmichael
(Quandamooka curator),
Sonja Carmichael
(Quandamooka artist),
Jasper Coleman
(ceramicist), Caitlin
Franzmann (artist), Camila
Marambio (curator), Renee
Rossini (ecologist), agustine
zegers (olfactory artist)

1. SWAMP BENDING

Camila Marambio + agustine zegers

2. A BOG IS NOT A METAPHOR

Hsuan L. Hsu

3. INTERLUDE

He'many Molina

4. FOUR DISPATCHES

Kashina

SWAMP BENDING

Camila Marambio + agustine zegers

*I don't want to reign
because I rain
I fall,
Fall in droplets, collapsing with empire,
even when I descend onto your softness*

*Why don't I believe you?
Because I don't believe
I trace with my nose*

*You enmesh me with your filth
Your turgor is my turbulence,
And my murk is modest
but together, we stench wings*

*Like a cockroach
I hide in the mud of your liquified eyes
We hide
You hide me*

*As I plunge my hand, sinew into viscera
you take it
and decompose me slowly*

*We're soft in the thick of this massacre,
co-witnesses to genocide
I hear into the mud
shaking,
swarm as many
co-loving as we sort the drowning,
floating, conspiring past the brink of this labor*

*Your gray subsumes the cesspool
that suctions the humidity in disorienting coils,
but I surrender to the time of your waterlogged roots
containing complete nothingness,
every capsule a lifeline to the liminal
every border a frontline of d(olor)*

How murky we are when we slip away

This slippage distances itself from Cartesian thought and rigid natural sciences that have calcified a system of planetary domestication; this system falsely attempts to reify the “human” as a dominant category. Even ecology itself deploys a system of capture, of catalog, of hierarchical authorship, of punishing discipline, of orders and systems that leave queered, scurried, and chaotic methodologies at the wayside; methodologies endemic to the ecological corpi we study: methodologies of decomposition, deceleration, and oddity. Nature teaches these methodologies to us in their all-encompassing chaos, a chaos that for centuries Homo economicus have tried to control with technologies of separation, borders, regulation, flattening, uprooting, and extractivism.

Bogs exist within this methodological register: shapeshifting, slippery, multifocal, slow, abject, soaked, and uncapturable. For centuries, they have offered refuge from colonial violence. In their otherness, they offer refuge to fugitive bodies, creating polyvalent communities that slide towards liberation, away from the grip of territorial and epistemological conquest. For thousands of years, they have offered their alchemical processes to regulate the invisible worlds of atmospherics, changing the chemical composition of the whole world with an immeasurable subterranean modesty. They never allow themselves to be seen or understood completely. They are pedagogues of opacity. In their Martinique mangrove avatar, they have vapoiously accompanied the trajectory of theorist Édouard Glissant, who wrote “we demand the right to opacity.” Glissant formulated the idea of how Western violence attempts to codify peoples, engaging in a form of capture; a tentacle of epistemological extractivism in the toolkit of territorial theft; and a form of oppression enacted to finalize the Northern colonial apocalypse which has recomposed the entire world. In their Turtle Island bog form, the collective Great Dismal Swamp collaborates across time in petit marronage, offering a milieu towards the liberation of indigenous and racialized groups. Today, in their hol-hol avatar, in the southernmost tip of the globe (according to European cartographic perspectives), the peatlands continue to accompany the liberatory processes of the Selk’nam in Karokynká, Tierra del Fuego.

Through the path of honoring and accompanying the bog, they have permitted us to witness just a sliver of their disruptive potential. Ethical orientations and processes have congealed in this relationship, translating to the world of artistic, environmental, and relational work. The bog has gifted us values: deceleration, liquidity, enmeshment without knotting, subterranean transformation, upside-down embodiment, and the soaking submission of ourselves into another body. They have taught us of what air reveals: of the infinite intimacies and transformations that unfurl at the scale of our lungs; breathe with us. This web of intimacy penetrates the ever-present; wherever you find yourself, you are breathing.

And what does this element that we call air contain? An elemental boundlessness that un/does us at every moment. How and who produces it? The air of the Earth has co-circulated with its waters from the same elements since time immemorial. Swelling from body to body, it seeps, as you expel yourself in its breath. Its breath, cycling life, is a wind, altered by Capitalocenic activities and the witches who undo them. Remember the bog in their whispering and persistent carbon capture choreography. It is from the seep-expulsion-life-death point of contact that we link ourselves to environmental art, a relationship of the breaths that sustain us at every turn.

Ensayos' relationship exhales as an esoteric practice walking in sync with the viscous intimacy of being an environmental being. It at once emerges and peels away from the exoteric practices of environmental art, the historical use of the earth as breathless sculptural material. The mosses in Venice were not a piece, but beings in transit. Recontextualized, the mosses cultivated broken chains of commercial ignorance, interrupting extractivist flows. We rehearsed the steps towards dynamics, agreements, and the politics of transference. Hosting rehearsal spaces emits new ethics, loving encounters, and restorative processes functioning as spells. Spells invite us to unravel and dissolve, expanding the understanding that we already exhale in a continuum of trans-corporeality. That we already breathe peatland-altered air. That we already gulp noxious anthropogenic traces that sicken and remake us constantly. Our Ensayos do not constitute objectual or physical processes. They are potent infiltrations of consciousness; incantations to enfold you in sweetness. Be warned—they can sting deep.

We don't engage in symbology. We negotiate ourselves in forking tongues that coagulate intimacies; in the upturn of the vessels

that move our turbulent bodies; in the great muck of those who seek to be maintained by a planet that they themselves do not attune to. We negotiate in invisible languages, whispered and excreted by multidirectional beings. We move intuitively with dimensionality, against representation; resisting the failed mechanism of intelligibility's capture; opening pathways to unthinkable, ungraspable, and uncommodifiable transmutations.

** We were not, nor will we be, invited to the art olympics. Instead, we gifted ourselves. We offered ourselves using bogged methodologies, creating collaborative and decentralized networks of border-crossing community. We spoke through cables braided like filaments woven across continental masses and submerged by the aqueous body of Earth—creating gelatinous dialogic spaces; translating geographies into relational gesture and breath. These conversations understood time as a care practice attending to inter- and intra-species rhythms, to consent, and to the choreography of making time. Amongst thousands of invented minutes, stolen by the machine, between affects and tasks, a portal opened: olfaction.*

** We arrived like skunks: spilling embodied thoughts into a deodorized space, soiling demarcations of the dominant logics of separation, and stenching the nation-state social construct. We sprayed you with perfume that you felt innocent, but dried your thirst for representation, replacing it with mystery. Perfume that tied your tongue in knots and braided you with subtle knowledges that infiltrated linear thought, dizzying, revelatory zigzagging. You traveled with us, taking us into your mucosal linings, crawling through your olfactory ducts to lick your brain. And even yet, you didn't see us.*

** We have meddled once more, this time as a paper offering. Defying postal systems, procreating borrowed will, we continued trafficking in the void, outside the norm. Like athletes in the anti-imperialist race, we evaporated the stadium's limits and called in invisibilities, all part of the play. And there, you can find us happily buried in the intestines of the Turba Tol Hol-Hol book, custodying the entrance to austral verses and fresh ocean air.*

Now, after these initial iterations of offering, we gift ourselves once more. We gift ourselves from four geographies: Karokynká, Tierra del Fuego; Bog Hollow, New York; Bogerudmyra, Oslo; and Minjerribah, Quandamooka Country. These geographies gather wetland and peatland knowings from archipelagic, woody, and coastal environments. They summon the smells of wet earth and Sphagnum magellanicum; of beavers witnessing Capitalocene destruction in Turtle Island; of wet animal fur and Scandinavian pines; and of the slow burn practices that support Australian flora. These localities gift us olfactive histories of care and visibility at the edge of the world (Karokynká); Global North extractivism (Bog Hollow); imaginaries of wolves in the mire and owls in the moss (Bogerudmyra); and rich ancestral traditions of braiding swamp reeds (ungaire) as an epistemological corpus (Minjerribah).

Before you are the smells of these four versions of peatlands; they are not infinite, they are simply of this present finitude. Being finite is capacious; amidst struggle, denial, and distrait, we managed to reach you. Our edification is born from a knit of affects, labors, and sweats, both defined and slippery. Such affects hold their own names and personal histories—some shared, some private, and some forgotten. These labors exhibit refinement, dexterity, and devotion—expressing need, hunger, and vocation. Some labors may be credited while others cannot, existing as experiments outside and under the lexicon of the measurable or perceivable. The dripping tangles of sweat evaporate in the warm tropical breeze, freeze in the cold polar night, and condense in the armpits of dams that burn with the flames of archipelagic fire; sweat that is cleansed in smoke with the passion of ceremony and absorbed by the sponge that birthed us. Sweat that, in the multiplicity of this edition, activates in simultaneity, arousing a rhizome of pulmonary infiltration. Infiltration activates filth, the liberatory potential of the bog inside the body, creating molecular-geographic collapses in our alveoli. Alveoli activate the moist, witchy ethics within the noses of those who may find it.

*Dense is the tombstone of the world from which creativity emerges,
In devotion to sacrifice, you must have our box.
Guard it with your care.*

NOTE: This text was co-written in physical presence, in Borikén, in step with Francisco Zegers' introduction to his publication of Félix Guattari's writings, *Cartografías del Deseo*, which gifted us a bioluminescent path within our aqueous submersion to boggedness that began the process of creating this text. The writing also arose from the teachings of Johanna Hedva in their class with Corporeal Writing titled *Skin and Spine*, which gifted us the wisdom of "learning to speak the language of the unknowable thing."

A BOG IS NOT A METAPHOR

Hsuan L. Hsu

A Bog is Not a Metaphor

Having spent most of my life in suburbs and cities, I learned to speak of bogs only metaphorically—much as one would speak of swamps or muck. Neither water nor earth, liquid nor solid, peatlands defy Western elemental categories. We say we get bogged down, the way we can get swamped, or mired, or caught up in a “shoaling effect—a disruption in the movement and flow.”¹ In the bog, categories are murky, and the time of forward movement becomes viscous. This notion of the bog as a space of confusion or indeterminacy can be found even in literature by luminaries like Herman Melville (“the might have been is but boggy ground to build on”) or Emily Dickinson (who recoils from the idea of “tell[ing] one’s name—the livelong June—/ To an admiring Bog!”).

Perhaps this is why capitalism interacts with peatlands through the process of “wastelanding”—Traci Brynne Voyles’s term for settler colonial discourses that frame Indigenous lands as empty, “valueless, or valuable only for what can be mined from beneath them.”² Constructed as spatial threats to settlement, progress, rational categories, and territorial stability, peatlands are made available for extraction and pollution: their peat cut away for fuel, gardens, malt, and other uses; their space drained and reclaimed as parks, landfills, infrastructure, real estate. Looking for a bog to visit near my home in Sacramento, I read that “The coast’s southernmost bog...is long gone, having morphed over time into a Chevron station in downtown San Francisco.”³ In California, peat is defined not as a rich, organic source of life but as a “mineral,” its extraction governed by state mining regulations.

But an actual bog is not a metaphor—neither for getting stuck in time nor for a valueless wasteland in need of capitalist reclamation. Not even for the unfathomable “might-have-been.” *Turba Tol Hol-Hol Tol* is a compelling reminder that bogs are abundant with life and possibility: peatlands form over millenia, and they are home

to diverse and distinctive, entangled lives including microbes, sphagnum mosses, birds, insects, trees, beavers, frogs, and people. They sustain—and have been sustained by—Indigenous people such as the Selk’nam (who inhabited the peatlands of Tierra del Fuego for over 8,000 years, using bog water as a medium of food preservation) and Quandamooka people (who have been recovering weaving practices using ungaire, a pink and sage reed that grows in the sand island peatlands of Minjerribah in Moreton Bay). As vital carbon sinks that store twice as much carbon as all of Earth’s forests combined, bogs also support the stability of the planetary climate, and all the life forms that depend on it. To the extent that all our lives are unevenly shaped both by resources extracted by bogs and the vast stores of carbon held in undisturbed bogs, we are all “bog people.” Smelling four peatlands located on four continents powerfully conveys the fact that no two peatlands are alike—that each has a distinctive olfactory terroir (a regrettably earthy term when talking about boggy inhalations), an atmosphere emitted by its specific location and unique community of flora, fauna, fungi, peat, and chemicals.

Taaspen, which evokes the bog in Karokynká, Tierra del Fuego on the ancestral lands of the Selk’nam people, struck me as earthy, spicy, mossy, and vibrant, with a sense of depth and dimensionality. As with most of the other scents, there wasn’t a hint of the olfactory ideas—rot, muck, stagnation, “miasmas,” “peat reek”—that I’ve been taught to (mis)associate with bogs. Instead, the scent was inviting—I smelled it over and over again. Comparing the scent of taaspen with a photograph in which the bog is covered with patches of snow, I find it difficult to reconcile such a lively, crisp scent with the ideas of cold and dampness. How can a cold, damp swamp produce such spicy air?

When I smell jalo gaba, inspired by a bog on the other side of the world in ancestral Quandamooka Country in Moreton Bay, Australia, I’m surprised by a feeling of familiarity. It smells crisp, minty, and warm to me. There’s also a subtle trace of smokiness that resonates with the scent’s name. The smell feels energizing, light—the very opposite of being “bogged down.”

It smells a bit like the face wash I've been using, perhaps because some of the vegetal components of this scent—for example, eucalyptus—have been extracted or synthesized, and commodified as personal care products. The contrast between the fragrance of my face wash and the smell of a living bog is bracing. Why should we inhale a sense of well-being from (often toxic) scented personal care products, rather than from the places we inhabit and care for?

Wolves in the mire, based on a bog in Bogerudmyra, Oslo, smells medicinal to me, with hints of grass and pine, and an earthy sense of depth. The name evokes, perhaps, the smell of wolves. Like most people, I've never smelled a wolf—but wolves, who can discern smells up to 1 mile away, have probably smelled me. The image of wolves in the mire makes me curious about what this bog would smell like to a wolf traversing it in search of prey. Smells would come across more vividly, surely, and they would vary across space and time. Different scents would seem salient to a wolf in the bog—not grassy peat or pine (and certainly not an abstract concept like “medicinal”) but the scent trails of prey in motion mixed with a familiar vegetal background smell.

The smell of rich is unlike the others—not as inviting to me, probably because I associate the smokiness with asthma and California's wildfire smoke (I'm writing this next to an air filter on full blast on a smoky summer day in Sacramento). I experienced rich as smoky, musky, cloyingly sweet, and overwhelming. It had an ominous feel, “rich” but unbalanced—not a scent I'd want to return to. All of this is powerfully conveyed by the scent's title, and the artists' interest in conveying the atmospheric effects of extractivism. I think of the term “peat reek,” formerly used to describe the locally specific smells of peat-heated homes embedded in or near peatlands (as one nostalgic Scottish poet wrote in 1922, “the kindest smell is the auld peat reek/ O' the

place that the heart keeps green”), and now marketed as a desirable attribute of high-end whiskies.⁴ Peat reek, smoke, and musk also suggest an atmosphere of (culturally-coded) “toxic” male privilege, as in a whisky bar or man cave. This scent is based on Bog Hollow: a complex ecosystem with a long history of illegal logging and peat mining in upstate New York, whose name evokes the endgame of capitalist extraction: the hollowing out of everything held—and held together—by bog ecologies.

In *The Scent of Time*, the philosopher Byung-Chul Han contrasts the homogeneous, empty, and accelerative time called forth by capitalist modernity with a sense of stillness and duration that he associates with smell. Writing about the incense clock—a Chinese device that measures time through the slow burning of incense, he writes: “Fragrant time does not flow or trickle away. Nothing is emptied. Rather, the scent of the incense fills the room, even turns time into space; it thus gives it a semblance of duration....”⁵ Where capitalism's empty time demands to be filled with hasty activity and “progress,” scent is a sensory portal that opens onto a slower and more deliberate pace of (co) existence. The peatland scents of *Turba Tol Hol-Hol Tol* don't just transport us to four distinct and moving smellscape; they also interrupt the modern, capitalist conception of time and space as homogeneous and empty. They bog us down—productively, pleasurably, and viscerally—in lively and multi-layered atmospheres that smell not just of peat and moisture formed over millennia, but of the different worlds (whether lush, extractive, or convivial) that peatlands make possible.

1. Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019) 1.

2. Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015) 10.

3. Gordon Leppig, qtd in Heidi Walters, “Peat Mosh,” *North Coast Journal* (Apr 15 2010). <https://www.northcoastjournal.com/humboldt/peat-mosh/Content?oid=2130957>

4. Pittendrigh Macgillivray, *Bog-Myrtle and Peat Reek* (Edinburgh, self-published, 1922) 48.

5. Byung-Chul Han, *The Scent of Time: A Philosophical Essay on the Art of Lingering* (New York: Polity, 2017), 57.

Liquen de agua
Water lichen

KARROH CHOWN

Sentimiento de agua
Water feeling

VIEKIYON CHOWN

Peat * Pleasant Smell
Turba * Olor agradable

HOL-HOL * KAMSKEN-SOLECH

TAASPEN

Hundirse en el barro
Immersing into mud

FOUR DISPATCHES

Kashina

JALO GABA

Antiseptic – earthworms nibble the medicinal, nubby bark and multiply their segments, it powers them, vermicellular, stackable bracelet, until they become emerald chain wound round earth, snaking the perimeters/ coasts, disgorging frozen jadeite secretions, lurid clumps, that harden, resinous, cool on forehead – toc toc scuttle of a thousand crawls – pulsations against the soil, thrumming - a gnawing ambrous petro-phone
Insects bite into people as they sleep. INTO the key. With loving savagery. Deep bonemarrow crunches – we wake with chunks removed from our thighs and scalps.

Somehow, this does not hurt us.

The bite-outlines are jagged, mountainous, agate-veined. We resin-ate and become crystall'd.

Gum drops. Healing latexes seal over the blood. To skate on.

(Logs tumbling into ice floes)

Mica-sprinkle and herb solutions fill our pores.

Lungs readymade compress – lie here. (On my fossilizing heartbeat) Stuffed with snow like milady's quilted sachet. The stitch held in birdbeak.

Rapid downpour of snow.

The bites LIGHTEN US, flood us with exudations (ccccchccccch – leafcutter's busy, melodic mandible.) -

We are inhabited by jewelled smoke and running streams, the two transmute and switch back again, total elasticity – gentle communion of the elements, lava

flowth, tarrifying, melt

(Smoke + lightning in bottle)

(Leyden jar)

TAASPEN

Gentleness – shell-form of baby's ear.

What sound would that make, moulded from paper, enamel, nacre, and placed to yours?

Treesway.

Seedpearl moss between thumb and forefinger, caressed, barely-pelt.

Low-earth-drone.

Vessel for milk-separations.

*

Ice-cradle rocked back and forth, globule shift. A humming.

*

Pores as wells for growth, skin as soil surface, fertile dream-plain, "to vomit out a waterfall," ---

Constelle and bioluminescence under the frost.

Millipedes, beetles, moistened carapace lightning-telegraph
Rivulets, gushings, read on palms. Soft beds and waterways – to score

RICH

Peaty honeyed cake dense syrup-strata barbecued meats, poultries
lacquered skin crackling-broiled between the two sheets of batter
teeth crunching tiny bonelets fatty, viscous dribble from lips bursting
capsules of ink that blacken the molars the tattoo needle calligraphing
inky bite-marks as letters the loveliest heart-singe multiple layers of
skin down to organs, lungs pulse for all time rhythms humming between
the words . . . HOT drip down cave walls, communal oven where all the
loaves bloom saccharine-spores caught in hair-flesh-clothing – solar, brick-
red imprints on cheeks and forearms. Kneading – a thick clayed mass, cacao
husk'd, tenacious, glister of copper sifted with coal, sparks igniting, traces of
fingerprints on walls, palm's ravenous smear, plundering-octopal-suck of sinking
your hand into dripping ribcage, cleaving, beams, bittersweet carbonized specks,
fire-elemental-furied, gutty voracious maw issuing smoke that feeds further night-
blackness. Circular consumption. Desiccated piles of scorched straw, ashiness –
unguent of burnt malt, hides, rock sugar, soil that's absorbed the body's heat. Mouth
bubbling craters, cracked edges.

WOLVES IN THE MIRE

Claw-creep revenance, hook-in, steam, unfurling of life forms (dust
motes, the push of the feather, slit in the fur -) (into the air, untethering,
skitter)

Soiling/souling. Dirt road, sinking into the ground, my knees - steps
heavy, vapours rising, a-hhh -iss (rounded miasmae)

Mouldering – clay slip – at angles – casts of my body create a maze
– upright – grown over – genteel garden pastime transformed into
hop skip over multiple gravestones. I lose myself in all the deaths
I've created for me, in my dreams. Soft linting fuzz – dec- - to
stop – purplish bruised – I anchor-sink – the swirl –
(My body falls 3 000 000 feet)

Axis and mud-star

(Body slowly revolving, angel trails in the soil)

Wave-patterns (hair found still attached to mummified
corpses, abundant coiling ever growing eternal hair
reddened with madder, henna, forcing itself past the
confines of the stones, leather sac)

UPWARDS UPWARDS

A pause –

Busying – (peristaltic worm push-out of matter,
machine-ejection, sphincter-spit)

ALL DIRECTIONS AT ONCE

(My body shifts in the ground constantly,
shuttling tentacle, six feet and more, churning.)

I work my body into the soil. Frictions. The
eaten wood curling round the screw.)

Sheets of rain fall where I lie. Cool-warm
penetrations.

The design of this edition alludes to bog bridges—uneven structures that force us to break with directionality in order to engage with the zig-zagging epistemologies of peatlands as we approach them. It also winks at the uneven geographies and lines of productive mis/communication that our boggy engagements entailed in the processes of distant collaboration. Similarly, the translation processes across English and Spanish were not conducted linearly, but multi-directionally, with an emphasis on making a distinct text in each language that held the poetic essence of itself and emergently became a new creation.

Typeset in:

Basic Commercial Pro (Linotype)

Neureal (ECAL)

This publication is born on the shoulders of the tentacular network of collective research pods by the name of Ensayos. Some of the scents appearing here were first shown at the collective exhibition *Turba Tol Hol-Hol Tol* at the Chilean Pavillion of La Biennale di Venezia in 2022. While this particular iteration coalesces around collaboration of an olfactory nature, it honors every contributor (human and non-human) that has shaped this work since its germination in 2010.

Produced with generous support from *Anonymous Was a Woman* in partnership with The New York Foundation for the Arts.

Special thank you to Para la Naturaleza, El Lobi, and Johanna Hedva for hosting our learning and conversations in the process of producing this edition.

Translator: agustine zegers

Editors: Ric Tennenbaum, Simon López Trujillo