



YOU-ME-HUMAN-TREE
ZINE- 2020


An interspecies
community theatre
project that crosses
time and space

The process of creating community theatre somehow goes hand-in-hand with the process of storytelling with trees.

Both are nourished by an attitude of gratitude, an atmosphere of openness, a leap of imagination, patience, trust and presence.


We all have different stories, needs, talents and tempos: you-me human-tree. Through listening to one another we create the bonds that let us co-create. We open our eyes, our ears, our thoughts, our ideas. Building trust and building confidence, we share the experience and find connection.



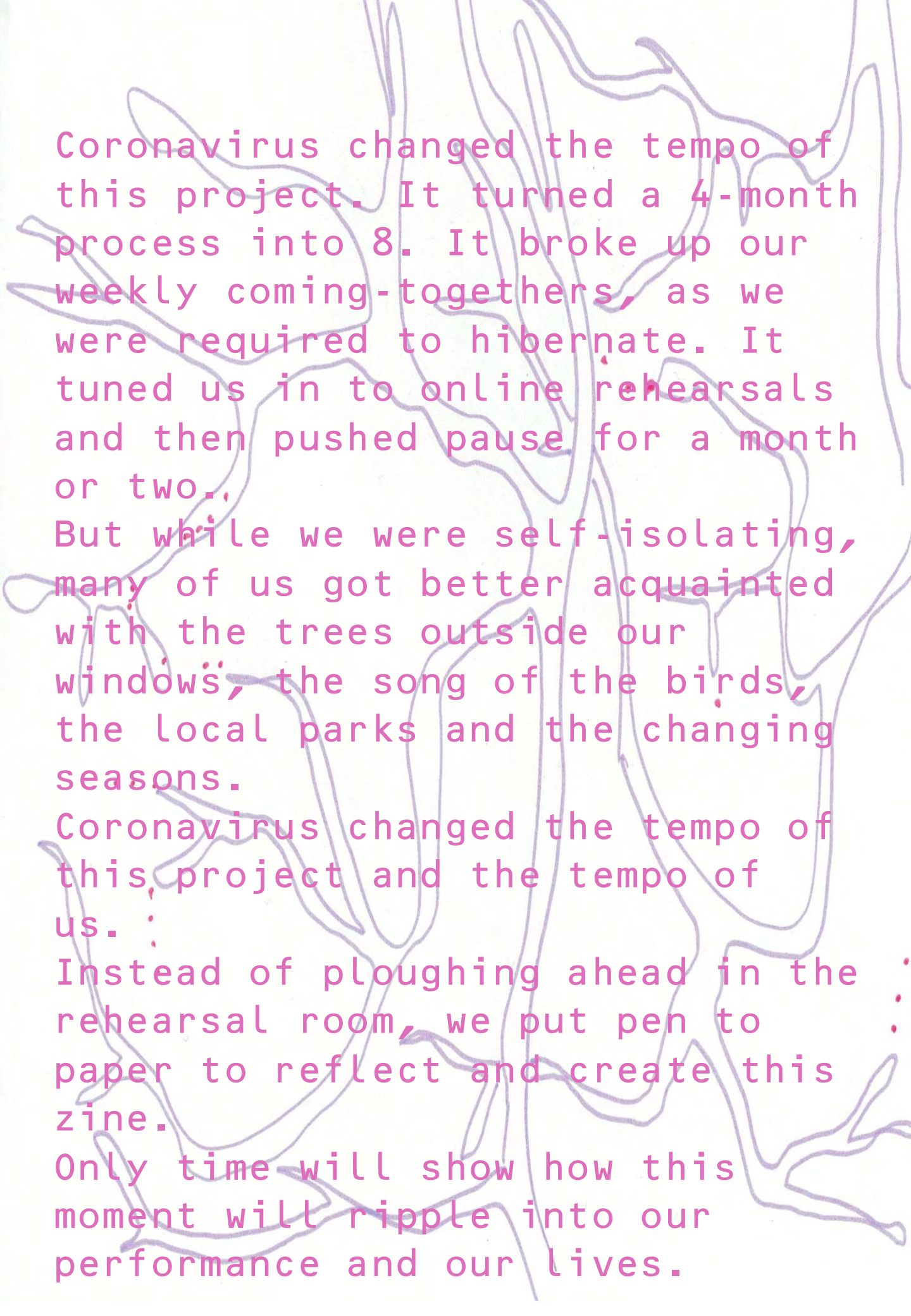


"Living in a time of
planetary catastrophe thus
begins with a practice at
once humbling + difficult :
noticing the world around
us"

~ Anna Tsing








Coronavirus changed the tempo of this project. It turned a 4-month process into 8. It broke up our weekly coming-togethers, as we were required to hibernate. It tuned us in to online rehearsals and then pushed pause for a month or two.

But while we were self-isolating, many of us got better acquainted with the trees outside our windows, the song of the birds, the local parks and the changing seasons.

Coronavirus changed the tempo of this project and the tempo of us.

Instead of ploughing ahead in the rehearsal room, we put pen to paper to reflect and create this zine.

Only time will show how this moment will ripple into our performance and our lives.

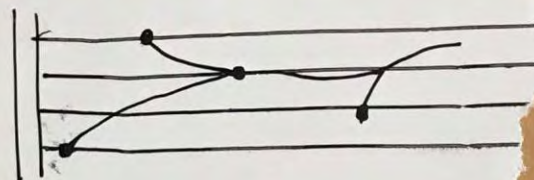
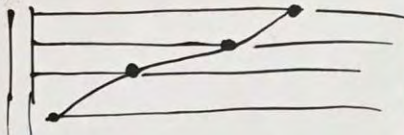
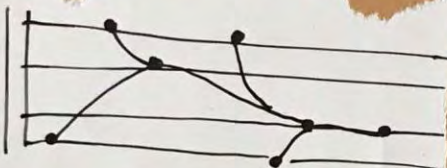
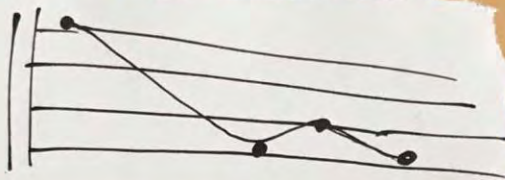
A photograph of a person's left hand resting on the left page of an open notebook. The hand has light blue nail polish and a silver ring with a dark blue stone on the ring finger. The notebook is open to a page with handwritten text. The background shows a floral patterned fabric.

My roots reach down to
the underground tunnels

The root systems humans
use to transport themselves
My highest buds can see
the happenings inside the
tall yellow town house
that splashes the grey
February day with colour
We wait patiently for the
warmer months
In our rows we stand.

TREE BARK

① Observe the patterns on the tree trunk and draw them into a notebook



③ Mark the points where your pattern meets the grid with a dot. These are where you put your fingers on the uke

② Add the four strums (and frets) of the ukulele on top of the pattern, like a grid

④ Strum and play your tree bark choruses/notes

COMPOSITIONS



SHIMMERS AND GLIMMERS

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDY CLARK. 28/05/2020.

BY MATTEO COLOMBO.



Could you please introduce yourself and your work?

I am Andy Clark. I am a philosopher and cognitive scientist. I am currently working at the University of Sussex in Brighton in the UK. And I am interested in the mind. What is it? Where does it come from? How does it work? I started off being interested in artificial neural networks – in what's in the head; then in embodied cognition, which is the idea that a lot of stuff that isn't just what brains do is very important for the mind. And that made me interested in robotics. Lately, I've been interested in an overarching theory called "predictive processing," whose basic insight is

that brains are organs for active prediction. And an interest along the way has been consciousness. Is it only the higher animals who are conscious and have a sense of self?

Much of your work pushes back against a kind of "brain chauvinism," which is the prejudice that the brain must be the seat of the mind. Do you think people's resistance in considering trees as having a mind depends on some ingrained "brain-chauvinistic" prejudice?

In some sense yes; but there's more to it. It's not just that trees do not have a brain. The intelligence of trees seems to be very distributed. They don't have a central orchestrating node like a brain. And without this central node, the form of intelligence you're going to have is going to be quite different – though a genuine form of intelligence. After all,

trees are responsive to environmental needs; they can share information with other trees and animals; they can take pre-emptive action to avoid threats. Trees are very fancy.

But if you try to think what it's like to be a tree, you don't want to say it's not like anything. But if it's like anything at all, it must be like little glimmers. Little glimmers like "it's kind of better here than over there," or "this is the thing that should be done right now", or "there is this nutrient over here" and "here's this signal from another tree that I need carbon"... Glimmers that happen and then get overwritten by the next glimmer. There's no real temporal depth, or grip on counterfactual futures in tree intelligence. If this is right, then tree mind might be best understood as a collection of shimmers and glimmers, which ground tree sentience.

How does the idea that mind is fundamentally predictive help progress a sense, or understanding, that this collection of shimmers and glimmers constitutes a tree's conscious experience?

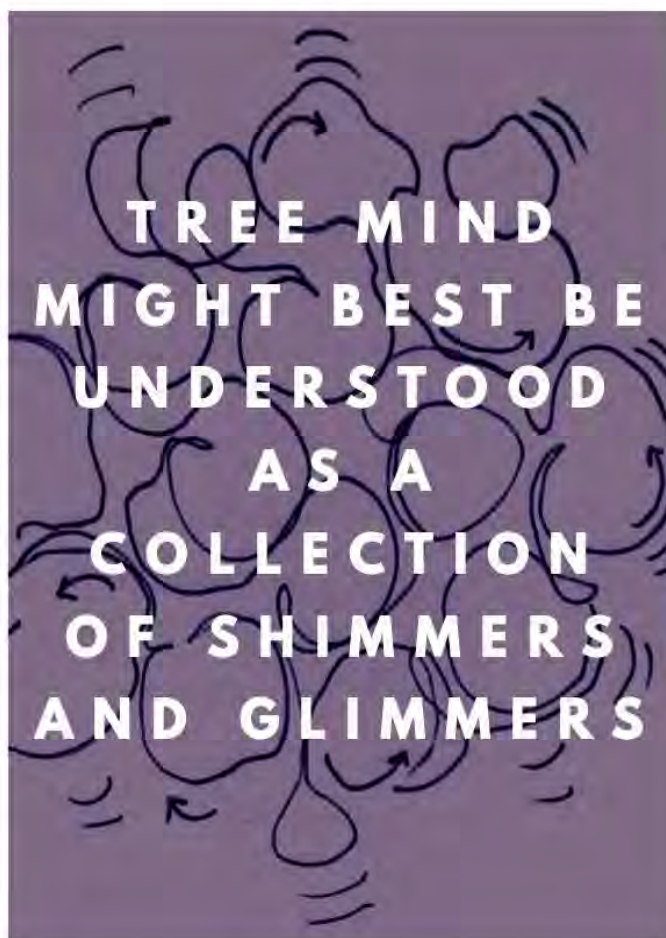
One important difference is between creatures like trees, which minimize surprises in their interactions with the environment to keep themselves in the kinds of situations that are good for them, and creatures like humans who, because they have a deeper temporal grip, can minimize expected surprise by figuring out what would happen to them if they took one action over another. Systems that can minimize expected surprise need to have an ability to flexibly assess the quality of their own information, based on what they already know about their past and what they might want to achieve in the future. Systems with this ability might have some sense of self.

Perhaps, there is something it's like to be a tree, but it's not like being in a world of persisting objects with a clear identity. And the reason is that trees might not be able to minimize their expected surprises. When I talk about temporal depth here, it's not about speed or slowness. Trees clearly hang around for a long time, after all. It's, rather, about creating possible alternatives to life events that have already occurred.

What kind of evidence do you think is relevant here?

One possibility is that we find out about the actual workings of tree intelligence, and discover that some structures in trees are actually dedicated to monitoring the quality of the incoming and outgoing information based on the tree's past history and future goals. Another possibility is behavioural evidence that indicates trees have the ability to minimize

expected surprise. But one challenge is that it's not clear what kinds of behaviours we should look at, because their world is so different from ours. Plant biologists have unearthed all kinds of interesting plant behaviour. For instance, it's pretty cool to see in time-lapse videos how some trees can use their tendrils to climb and grab, to twine around suitable hosts found by touch to get more light or some nutrients. One way such plants could do this is via trial and error: if the tendril hits something, then it can wrap around it and climb up. If it doesn't, then the plant tries in a different direction. But a different way to do this is that the plant swirls around a support, and then, in one go, it goes straight, by taking the short-cut route, to the source of light or nutrient. It seems as though the plant, in this case, noticed there's something climbable, and then went straight for it to get what it needs. If we had more evidence like this, then trees and plants could minimize their expected surprise, too.



When you start having these conversations, one problem is figuring out what one means by terms like 'mind' or 'consciousness.' Do you find yourself having this problem? Do you think one should define these terms before considering whether or not trees have a mind, or a consciousness?

I've never found I made much progress in these discussions by providing definitions up front, by giving necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be a conscious experience. One better approach for unravelling these elusive issues is, perhaps, to point at examples, at cases. For instance, it's not at all obvious the core essential feature of consciousness is to reflect on one's own experiences like humans do. This might be the icing on the cake for a few creatures. But I don't think you get more conscious just because you can think more things.

This reminds me of this passage from "The Overstory" by Richard Powers:

Aliens land on Earth. They're little runts, as alien races go. But they metabolize like there's no tomorrow. They zip around like swarms of gnats, too fast to see—so fast, that Earth seconds seem to them like years. To them, humans are nothing but sculptures of immobile meat. The foreigners, these aliens, try to communicate, but there's no reply. Finding no signs of intelligent life, they tuck into the frozen statues and start curing them like so much jerky, for the long ride home.

You cannot help but think that if we saw all the action trees are taking by speeding them up - how their roots stretch deeper, all their buzzing communication with other creatures in a forest - if we saw all of this, then we would be mightily impressed. But what we ordinarily see is this lump of stuff standing—pretty much

like how fast-moving aliens would see us—and we infer mistakenly that there's not much going on there.

Do you have a favourite tree?

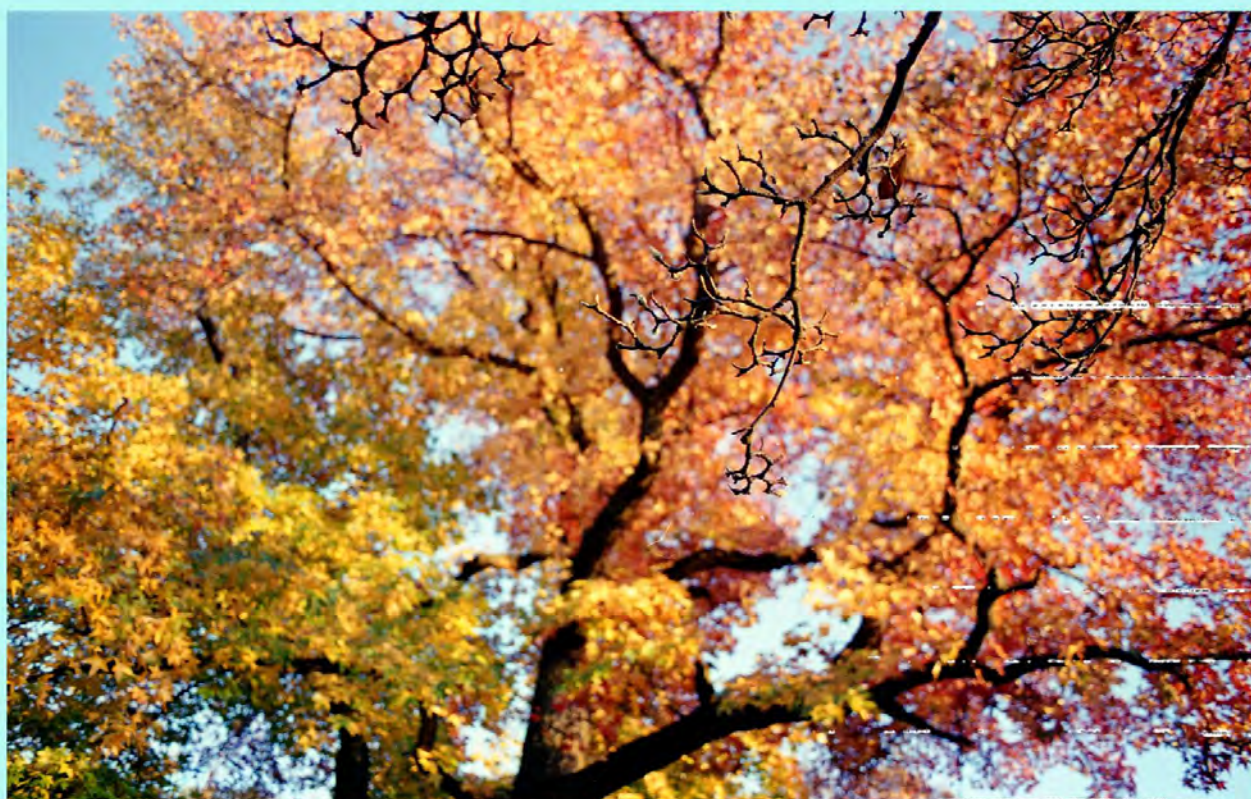
I like Strangler fig, beautiful scary trees... Their nuts land and start to grow up around another tree, consuming it and you have these exoskeleton creeping roots. So gorgeous. I have also a long-standing affection for mangroves.

In closing, do you have any personal memory about trees you can share with us?

One of my first encounters with a tree was when, as a child, I climbed one and fell off. I broke my arm. I climbed this tree because I liked a girl in the garden next door and we thought the only way we could meet was if I could climb this tree. And I fell. As we didn't recognize my arm was broken, I remember thinking: "There's an awful lot of pain here, but I am not expressing it very well..." I guess another fond memory of trees is when my father and I would take long walks through the dark and magnificent Caledonian Scots pine forest, an Ancient Black Wood in Scotland. These trees are often known as "granny pines". They can tell a story or two.

In closing, I believe if we really knew what the difference was between trees and us, and whether that difference was one of the key ingredients of consciousness at all, or consciousness like us, that would be a really cool thing to know. Are there all these different varieties of consciousness and we are one little variety overextending, anthropomorphising other varieties of consciousness insisting they must be like us? Or is it really these little glimmers and shimmers do not add up to consciousness really? It would be a really a good thing to know.

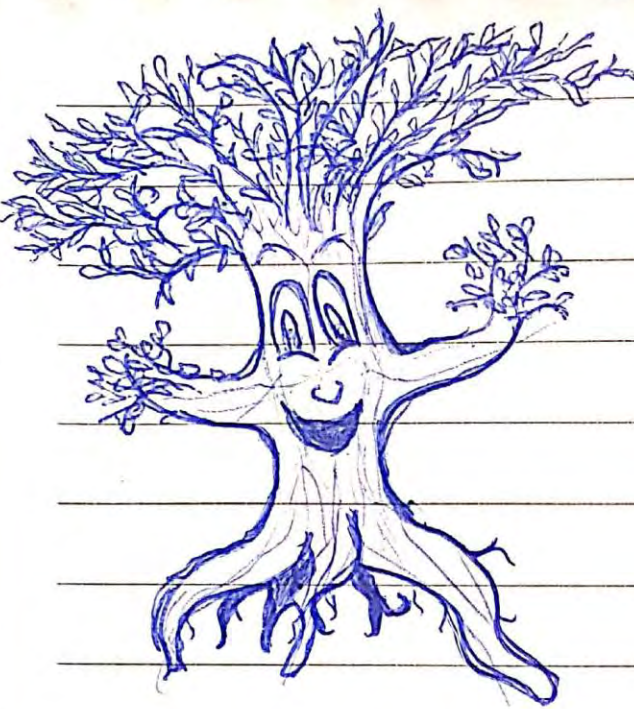




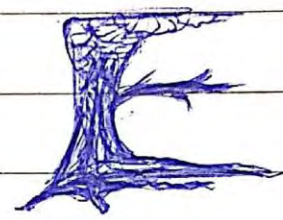
i lost my journal a few years ago
or i lost a few years, a journal ago
fear not, my memories are safe in
my iCloud Photo Library.



thank god.



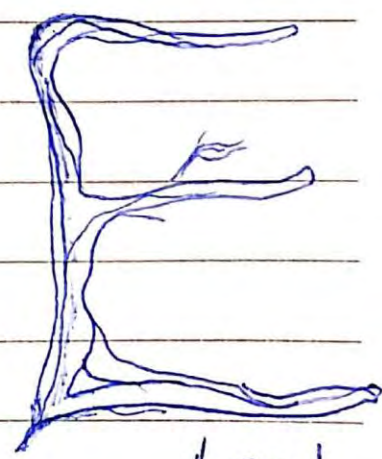
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Carroll

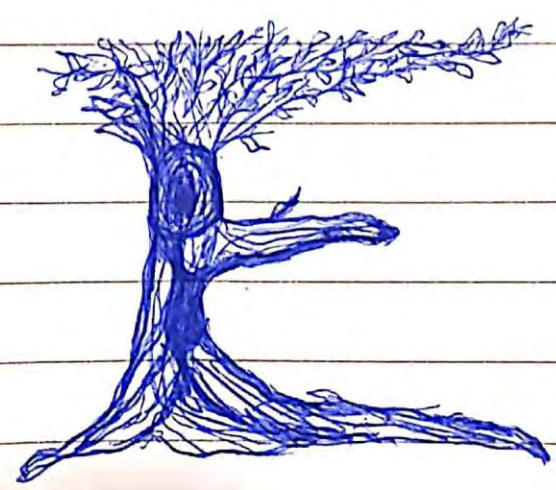


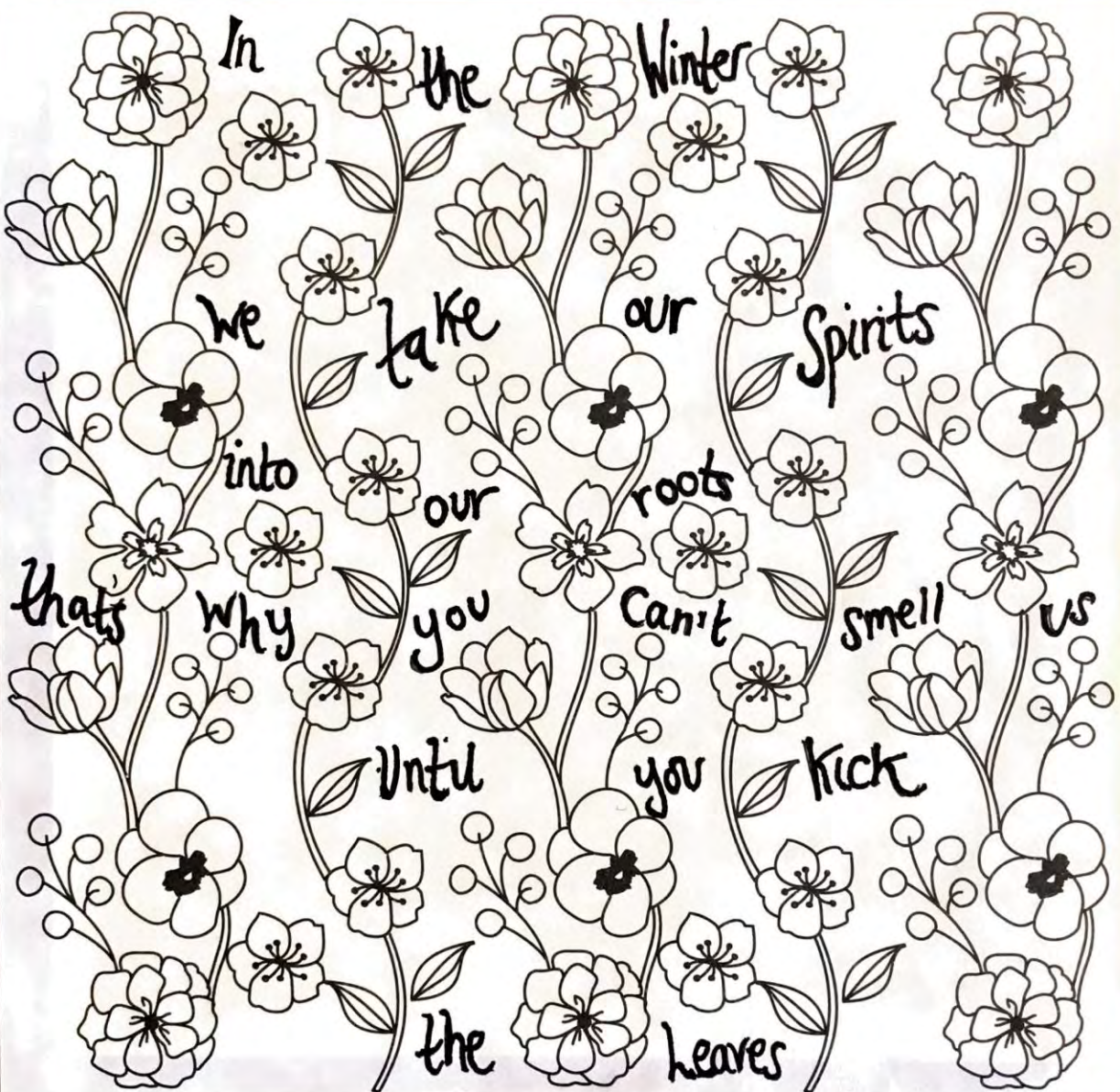
leaf



branch

Sketch





In the winter
we take our spirits
into our roots
that's why you can't smell us
until you kick
the leaves



Little dove... beloved brother

Human:

Little raindrops fall from your leaves, the sky is clear now.
The clouds, the storm are gone. Your ancient and cracked
bark is shining now, like your stem is covered by the
summer night's sky.

Tree:

As if my eyes were closed, I can sense the smell of your
warm body standing in the mellow sunlight. Your scent
could give life to my heartless body, little dove.

Human:

You are alive, my friend... you are.

Tree:

My poor soul is aching hearing these words. My heart,
though it does not beat, it's breaking...

Human:

If what you say is true, and your heart is frozen inside this
unyielding bark, than what fairytale magic allows me to
speak with you?

Tree:

Imagination, little dove...

Human:

So you are not my guardian, my friend?

Tree:

I am... and I am here little dove. I am here for you. I will
always be here; in time of trouble, in times of sadness or
pain, in times of uncontrollable rage or unbearable
loneliness, moments of cruel hatred. Do not be scared, little
dove.

Human:

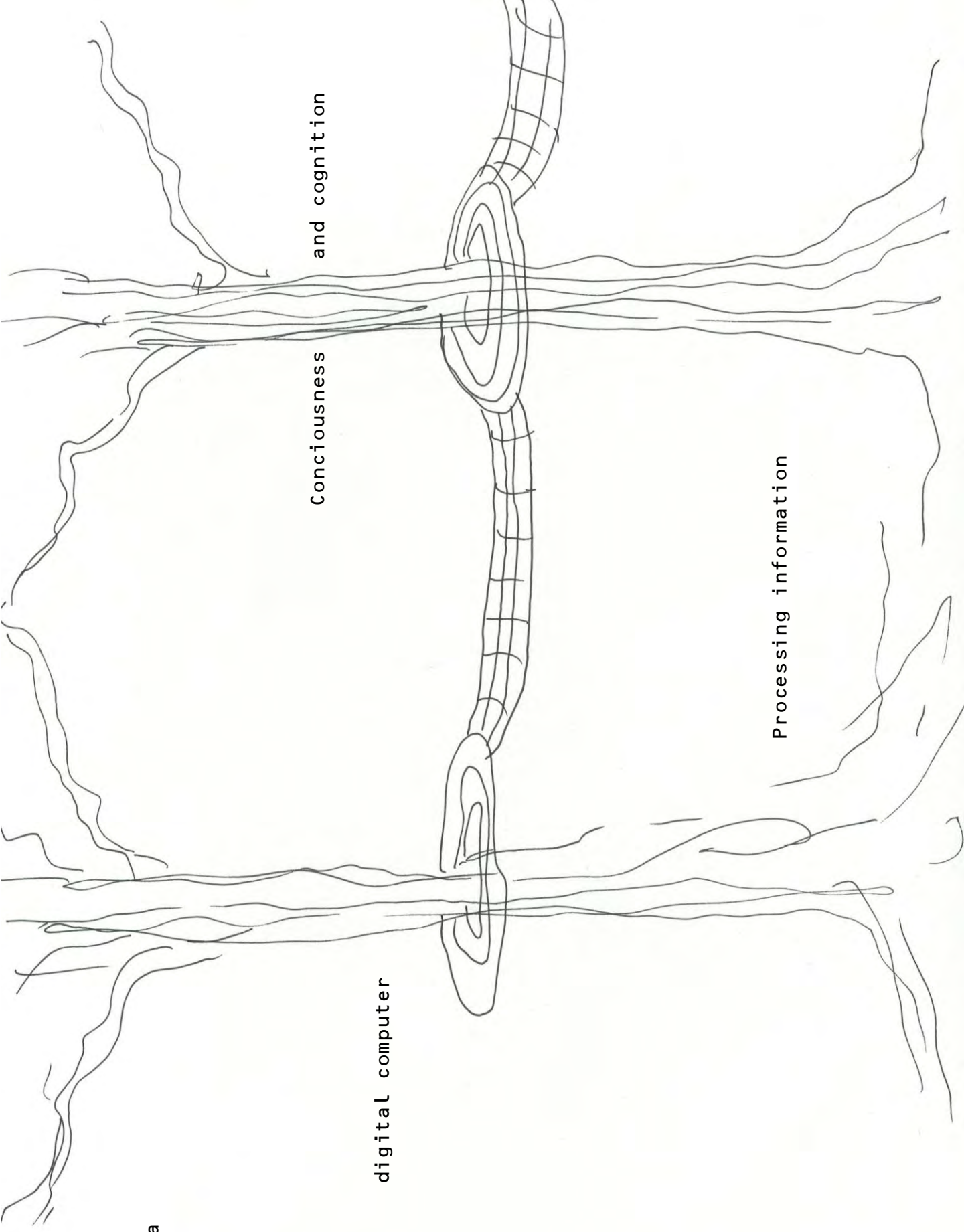
The birds are singing for you, brother mine, and my voice
follows their gleeful song, because you brighten my
world...

Like a

Consciousness
and cognition

digital computer

Processing information





(Lowd droning sound)

TREES: COUGH COUGH COUGH

TREE 1: CAR ARSES

TREE 2: (shouting)
WHAT?

TREE 1: CAR ARSES

TREE 2: YEAH...
SORRY, WHAT?

TREE 1: CAR ARSES!!

(Droning stops, Silence)

TREE 2: DID YOU MEET
ANYONE TODAY?

TREE 1: No... You?

TREE 2: JUST A CIGARETTE
BUTT. IT WAS... A CHANGE.

TREES: (freestyle) BORED
BORED BORED.

(PAUSE)

TREE 2: DO YOU WANT TO TRY
AGAIN?

TREE 1: OKAY.
(they try to reach and hold roots)
TRY AGAIN TOMORROW?

TREE 2: YEAH ALRIGHT

Fact of the day



It's not easy being a tree

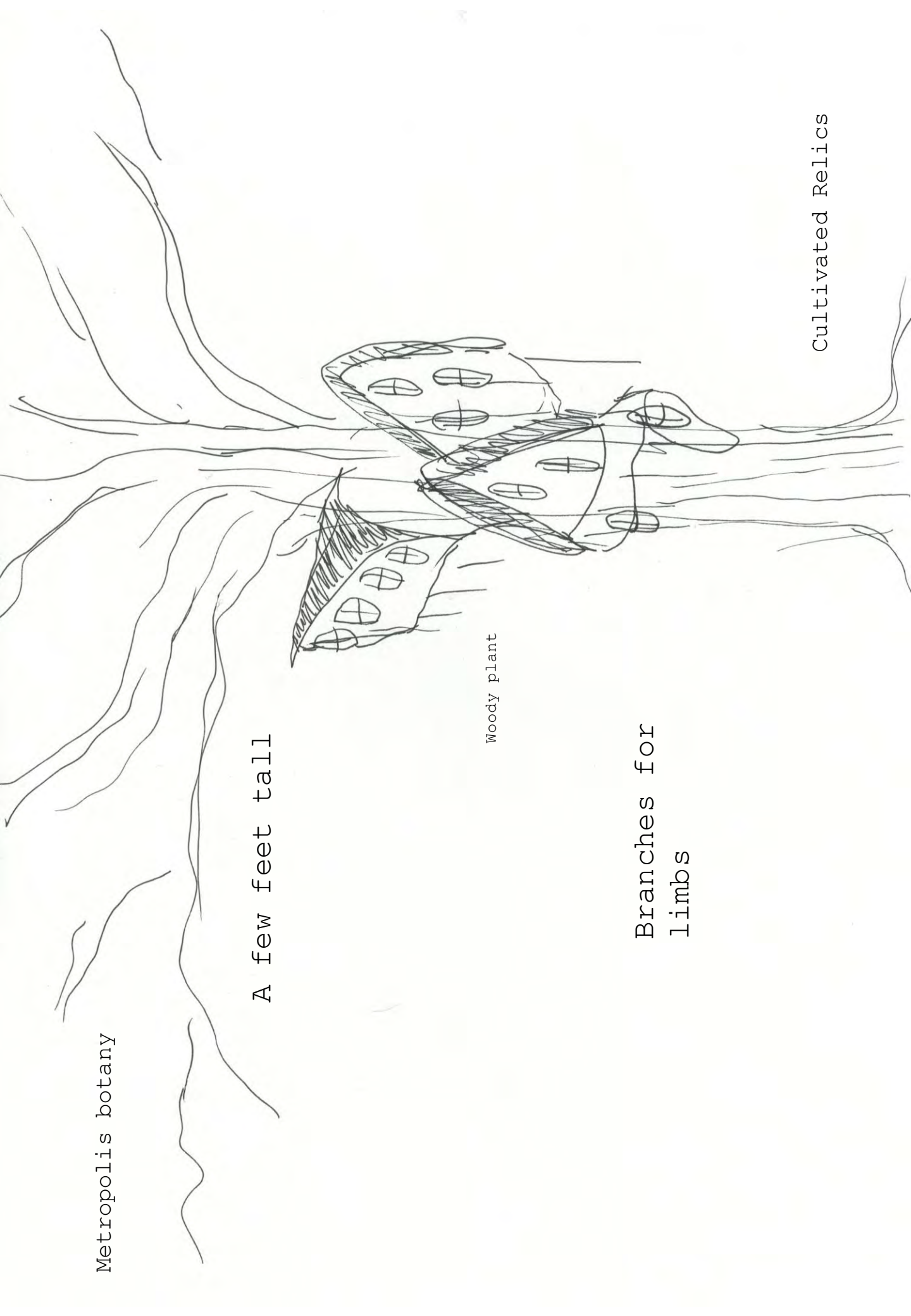
Metropolis botany

A few feet tall

Woody plant

Branches for
limbs

Cultivated Relics



HEALING TREES

n a t u r a l m e d i c i n e

GINKGO BILOBA

- PROTECTION AGAINST FREE-RADICALS
- PAIN RELIEF
- REDUCE INFLAMMATION
- MAY REDUCE ALZHEIMER SYMPTOMS
- MUCH ANTIOXIDANTS
- HELP ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION
- INCREASING BLOOD, OXYGEN, AND ENERGY SUPPLIES TO THE BRAIN
- SUPPORT VISION AND EYE HEALTH
- TREATS SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION

HOW TO USE?

- TEA
- ESSENTIAL OIL/ LIQUID EXTRACT
- TABLETS/ CAPSULES

!!!DO NOT EAT RAW GINKGO SEEDS, AS THEY ARE POISONOUS!!!

- ANTISEPTIC AND ANTI-VIRAL PROPERTIES
- HEALS WOUNDS IMMEDIATELY
- HELPS WITH PRIOASIS AND NEURODERMITIS
- PREVENT BACTERIA SPREAD
- RELIEF PAIN
- TREATMENT FOR FEVER

HOW TO USE?

- COOK INNER BARK FOR 20 MINUTES AND PUT THE OAK INFUSION IN YOUR BATH
- CHEWING STICKS TO CLEAN THEIR TEETH
- USE COOKED OAK INFUSION AS COMPRESS

CINNAMON

- SINK FEVER
- LOWER DIARRHEA
- REDUCE MENSTRUAL PROBLEMS AND CRAMPS
- CALM NAUSEA AND VOMITING
- ANTISEPTIC AND ANTIBACTERIAL

HOW TO USE?

- SPICE FOR COOKING
- CHEWING STICK
- ESSENTIAL OIL
- TABLETS/ CAPSULES

EUCALYPTUS

- RELAXING FOR MUSCLES
- ANTIPYRETIC
- KILL BACTERIAS AND FUNGUS
- HIGH IN ANTIOXIDANTS
- REDUCE PAIN
- IMPROVE DENTAL HEALTH

HOW TO USE?

- TEA
- ESSENTIAL OIL, TOPICAL OR AS AROMATHERAPY
- WHOLE LEAVES, HANG IN SHOWER OR ADD IN BATH
- TABLETS/ CAPSULES

LAPACHO

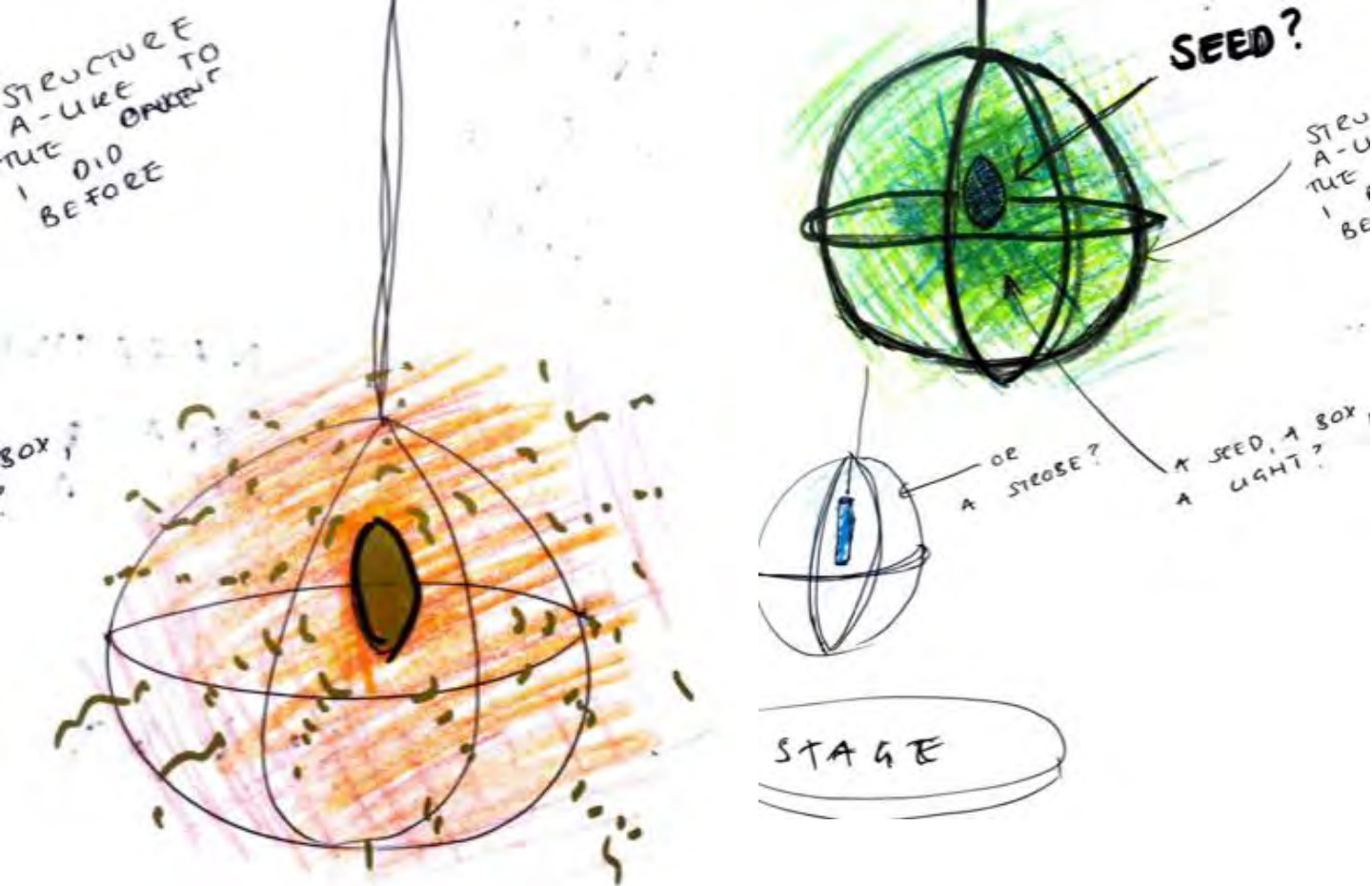
- ANTI FUNGAL
- REDUCE FEVER
- HELPS WITH STOMACH COMPLAINTS
- LOWER SKIN IRRITATIONS AND NEURODERMITIS
- ANTI-AGING EFFECTS
- ANTIMICROBIAL/ ANTI-PARASITICIDAL EFFECTS

HOW TO USE?

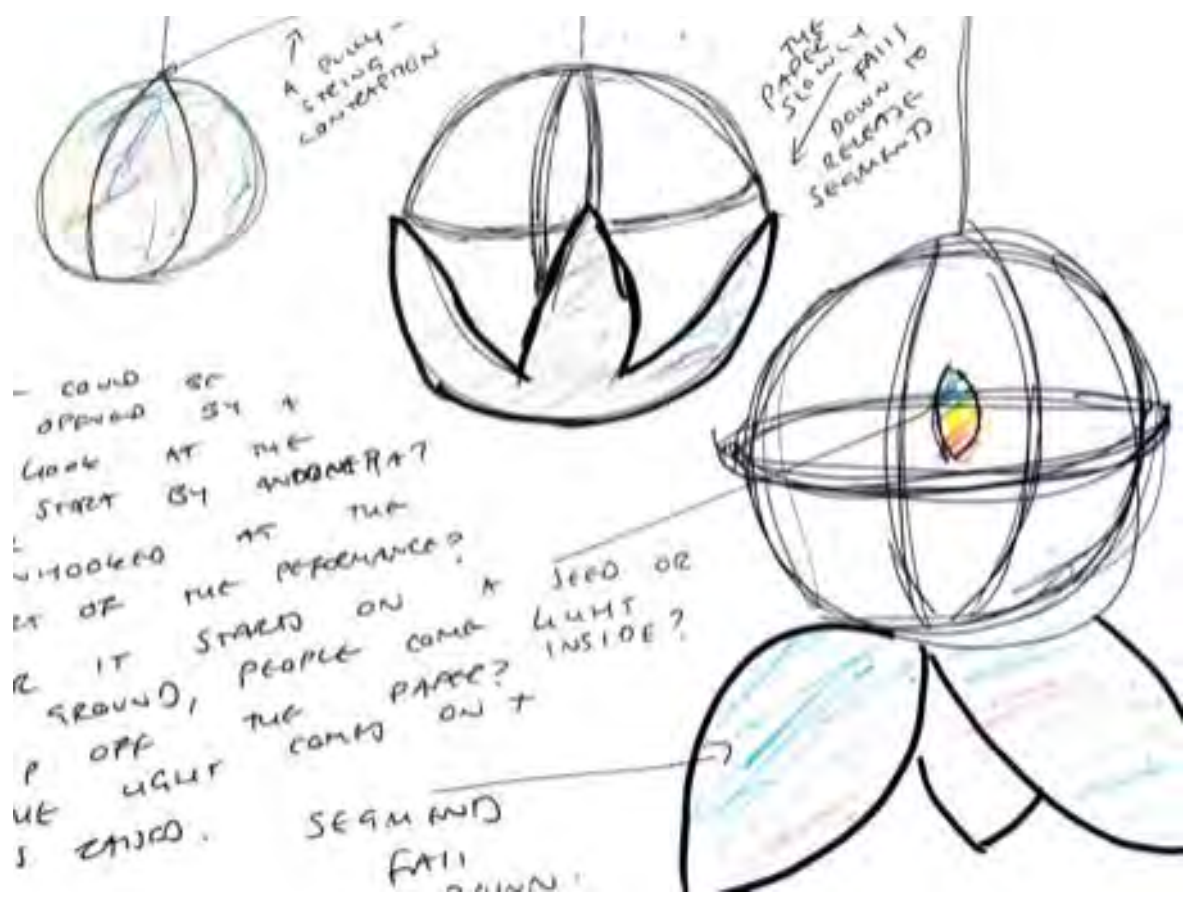
- COOK THE BARK FOR 10 MINUTES, LET IT SET FOR 20 MINUTES AND DRINK IT AS TEA
- DRINK 5-10 DROPS LIQUID EXTRACT ON EMPTY STOMACH
- COMPRESSION USED TO SPEED WOUND HEALING AS



MOTHER OF
THE FOREST
FAT AROUND THE
MIDDLE
LIKE WOMEN
PAST THE MENOPAUSE
KNOWS HERSELF
THE TREE HAS
EATEN UP HISTORY
SO MANY MEMORIES
HAVE ADDED TO
HER BELLY



Prop Designs -



I am a tree!

THOUGHTS ON PLAYING THE CHARACTER OF A TREE

I am a tree. Just kidding, I am a human pretending to be a tree. And that's our problem. People think they know everything, even how it's like to be a tree. Or we think, through thinking we understand. A tree never tries to be like a human. Or- wait. Again I am pretending to know what trees can or can't do.



What can I tell you for sure about trees? They live. They grow. And die. They try to survive. And they help us to survive. Even though we want to kill them. That must mean that trees have no ego. Otherwise they could be like: „Ok you want to kill us? Fine... We will kill you first!“ If trees would act like humans they would go backpacking in New Zealand for their self-discovery.

I can't do this. I'm out, sorry. I'm not able to be a tree. They seem to be so balanced, so self-confident. Standing still. Stagnancy. And when I stop. When I stand still, I don't even know how this

should work – just existing. In this very moment. Now. It's almost a bit boring. I mean... I am not even able to plan something, because this **is** the moment I already planned.

I guess... Playing the character of a tree means getting back to your roots.

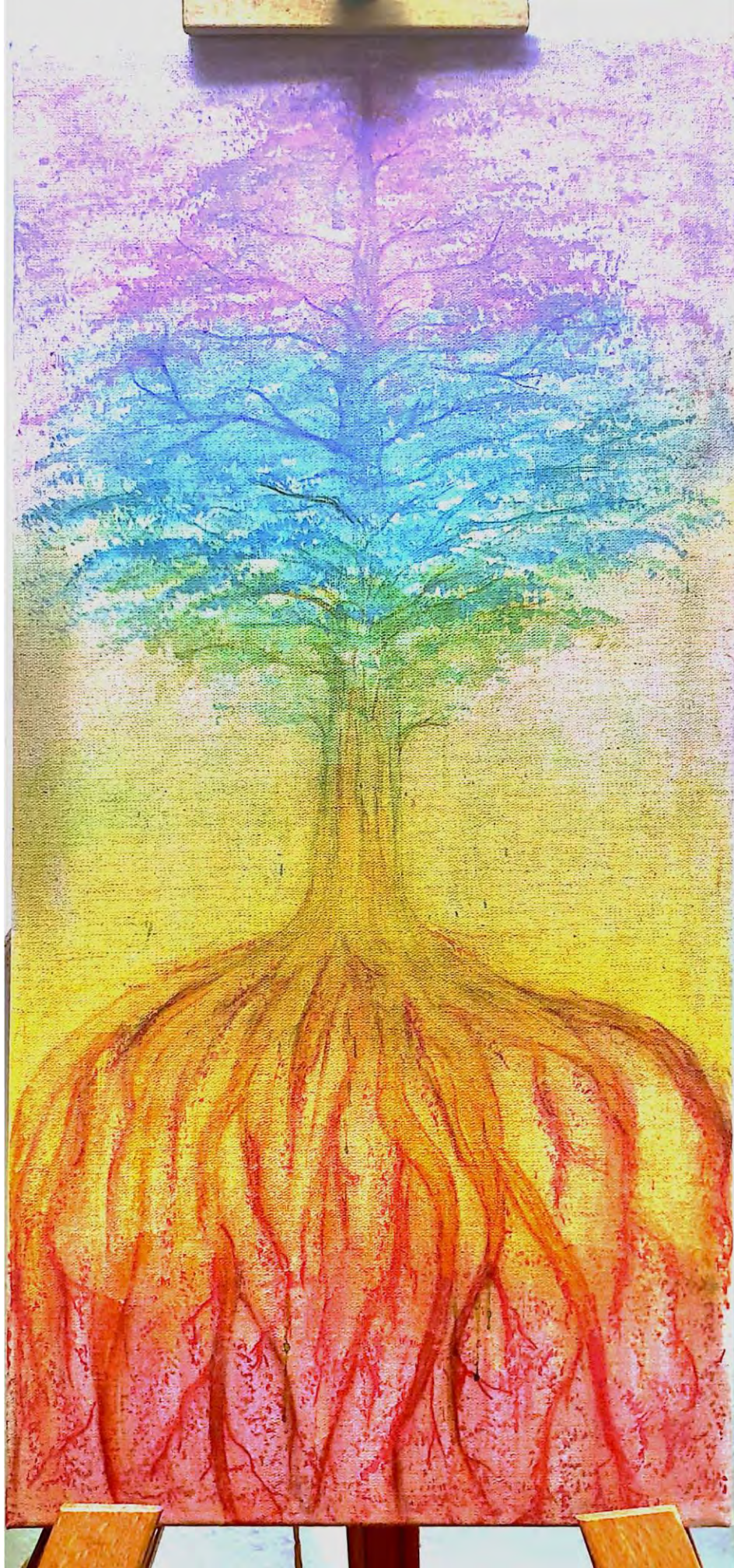
Meditating.
Understanding life.

„Getting up. 8 hours working. 30 minutes for myself. E-Mails. To Do's. So. Many. To Do's.“

ME

„Breathing. Being. Growing. Surviving. Being. Breathing.“

TREE



You Stop.

You think I'm looking at you

But you're

the one

STARING...

Did I take you by surprise?

So many walk by my sisters in this smoky town.
Don't you know we are the ones that hold all
this concrete together?

I took you
by surprise
tiny and
filled

with eyes.

Full makeup,

Urban Version.

You see me...

...and I see

YOU.

Which “You Me Human Tree” character are you?

1) How would your friends describe you?

- A protective
- B wise
- C easygoing
- D reliable

2) How do you spend your afternoon?

- A watching over the forest
- B teach humans the language of the trees
- C meet up with my tree friends
- D meditating and singing songs

3) Which one of these colours is your favourite?

- A red
- B blue
- C yellow
- D gold

4) In your dreams you often...

- A fighting
- B walk around
- C your dreams are always pleasant
- D flying or floating

5) What animal describes you the most?

- A bear
- B turtle
- C dog
- D dove

6) What are you afraid of?

- A the death of my species, extinction
- B nothing as I have seen the many cycles of life already
- C fire
- D not being able to help, disconnection from creatures

7) What do you love?

- A good will, longevity and abundance
- B beauty of the planet Earth
- C sunlight and people complimenting me
- D giving nourishment to all beings, harmonising with my fellow tree friends



A) **Joe Oak:** proud, noble, compassionate

Joe Oak is a broad, and strong - a muscular, healthy specimen. Joe Oak feels like he is a pillar for support those around him. He is the descendant of Dicke Marie and therefore one of the oldest and strongest trees in the world.

B) **Ms. Tree:** mystical, gentle, loving

Ms Tree is a old and wise tree who is from an alternative reality called Treesia. Ms Tree is seeking for knowledge, unity and balance between humans and trees. Most importantly, she is a connector between Treesia and Earth.



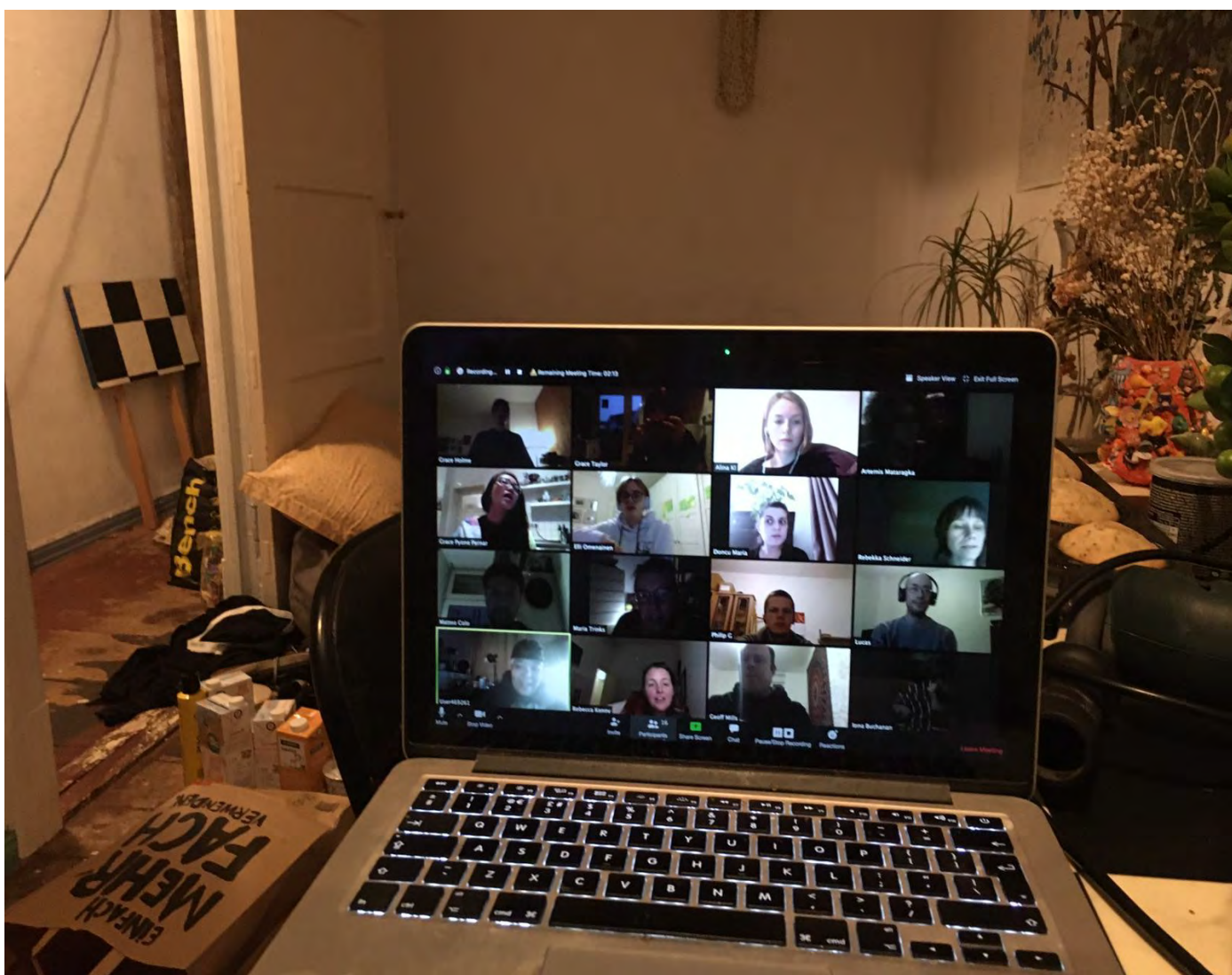
C) **Will:** willow, beautiful, confident

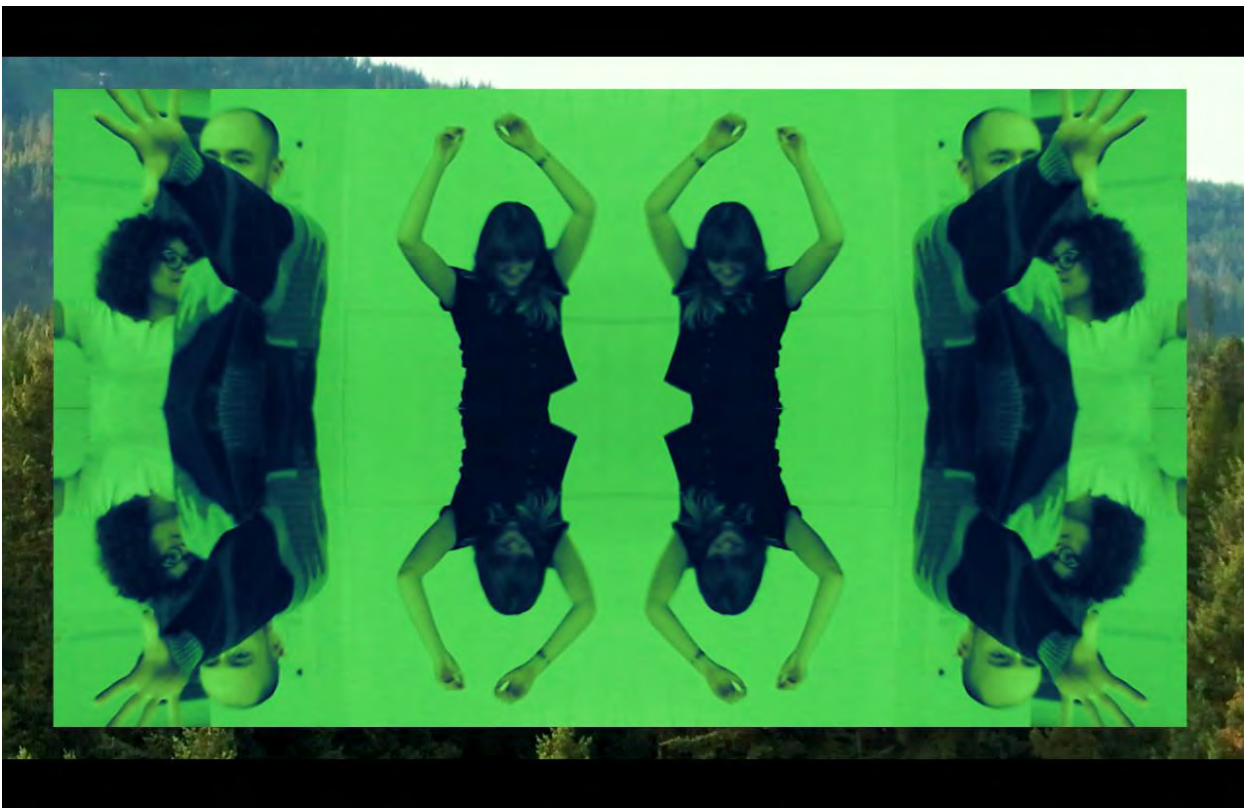
Will is a young happy and outgoing tree who likes to play around with the birds and night flowers. Will doesn't seek anything in particular, they just want to meet new tree friends and enjoy life.

D) **Clalla:** healing, resilient, incandescent

Clalla is a very calm tree who likes to help different creatures. Clalla likes to preserve ancient knowledge and to meditate, a perpetual reaching out to all life that surrounds her. Clalla is often worshipped for her beauty and reminder of time passing.







How might we tell stories with trees?

How can we listen to them?

How do we relate to trees?

How can we create with them?

How to build community with trees?

How to bring them into the theatre – onto the stage?

Or are they already there?

Do our stories belong to us?

Do our spaces belong to us?

Or do they belong to the trees?



D I C K E

OLDEST KNOWN TREE IN BERLIN

M A R I E

THEY CALL ME FAT MARY

HOLES IN MY SKIN
EATEN AWAY
GIVEN LIFE TO SO MANY

THEY CALL ME FAT MARY
MY WRINKLES ARE DEEP
MY SKIN IS THICK

THEY CALL ME FAT MARY
SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST
NO ONE KNOWS MY SECRET
AND NEVER
WILL THEY KNOW

I HAVE HEARD ENOUGH
THE CYCLE OF THE SEASONS
I HAVE SEEN MANY
THE FASTER THEY GO

ROTTEN BRANCHES
GETTING TO MY CORE
I DO NOT REMEMBER
WHEN OR HOW TO GROW
I GOT STUCK IN THE CYCLES

THEY CALL ME FAT MARY
I STAND STILL
UNTIL I FALL

YOU-ME-HUMAN-TREE

***One-star theatre reviews for the show
that didn't happen***

Rotten at the roots *

Trees will prefer deforestation than five
minutes of this play *

The performance taxes your faculties so little
that you can think about whatever you like.
Suitable for mushrooms*

A travesty, fiasco, and utter abjection. Why
didn't someone intervene? *

An ungrounded pathetic nonsense *

Trees would cut themselves and hit this play
in self-defence *

Withering, leaf-less, and sapless *

Casts more shadows than fruits *

The sole attendee was the plant of one of the
performers. During the show it lost its bloom
*

So dull it turns photosynthesis off *

Junk in the trunk *

We are excited to perform *You-Me-Human-Tree* at English Theatre Berlin | International Performing Arts Centre from Friday 2nd - Saturday 10th October 2020.

For more information on tickets, please visit the ETB | IPAC website: www.etberlin.de

We are deeply grateful to our partner organisations Exploratorium and Gelbe Villa, as well as to our funders JFSB and Kreuzberger Kinderstiftung.

Co-created by Alexander Thal, Alina Klisch, Antonella Zidek, Artemis Granger, Eleonoora Omenainen, Geoff Mills, Grace Holme, Grace Taylor, Iona Buchanan, Lucas Galindo, Maria Trinks, Matteo Colombo, Nwebo Niermann and Rebecca Kenny



**ENGLISH
THEATRE
BERLIN**

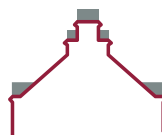
International Performing Arts Center



exploratorium berlin
Raum für Improvisation



Jugend- und Familienstiftung
des Landes Berlin
Stiftung des öffentlichen Rechts



Kreuzberger Kinderstiftung



Kreativ- und Bildungszentrum
für Kinder und Jugendliche