

By tending to the earth, we can
also tend to each other and
ourselves, fostering a new/old
relationship with our ecologies
that create worlds consisting of
play and gentle healing

how we heal the soil...

(...as the soil heals us)

*“To live in the afterlife of slavery is to be a time traveler,
so long as one knows that the soil holds memory.”*

The soil as a memory and an archive..tensions held, holding on, let go...

about

The soil has its own memory that carries history, people and presences, so how do we heal the soil and in the process, heal ourselves?

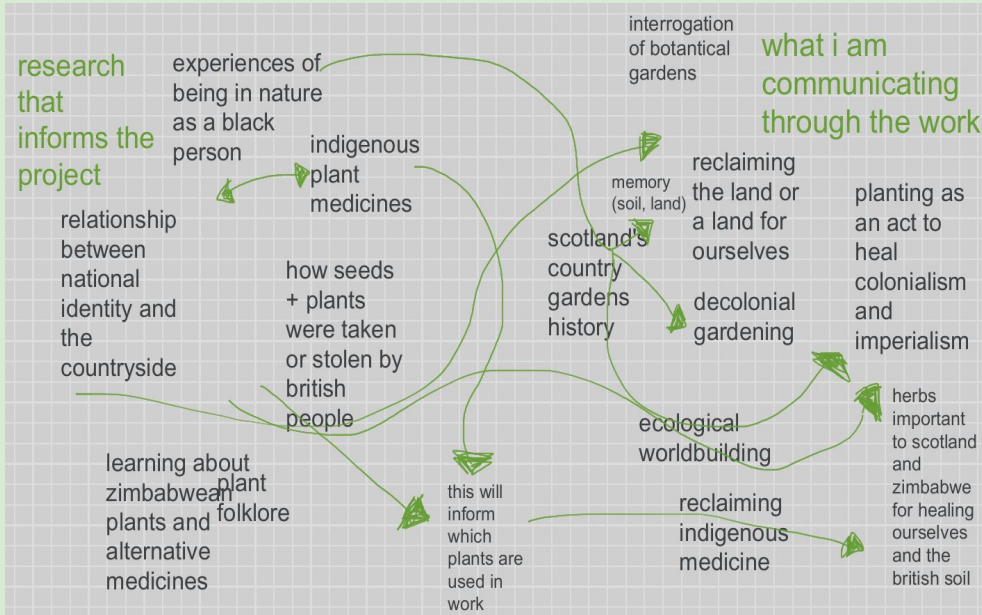
This proposal started with the desire to explore the relationship between the healing plants used in Scotland and Zimbabwe (with both countries being part of my lineage) within herbal medicine practices. These plants were then to take on human-like forms of communication where they would retell factual and mythical information about themselves, informed by my research, leaving it up to the viewer to decide what is and is not real.

A ritual and a lament to heal the soil. Tending to the garden as a therapy for the land, where roots become networks, and plants embody their truths. The research and development process has led me to think more broadly about the soil in which we inhabit, and our relationships with and between different ecological forms (soil, seeds, plants and flowers, and water) whilst thinking about how our actions and non actions inform and are informed by the land around us. The soil invites a conversation around national identity and questions of belonging. Like plants, we have grown on this soil, so how can we think through the soil to embody healing, of and with the land? The histories of colonialism, slavery and all forms of continuing injustices have all impacted the soil, and how the earth is lived upon now, so the work offers a contribution towards healing the tensions of living on this British soil. Can methods of tending to the soil play a part in reconnecting with the land? How do we encourage play with the soil, as adults? Playing with the land becomes an act of healing - an act of reversal of the colonial views of the land as unimportant, or not worthing of our time. These questions are the thread that the work seeks to investigate. The soil becomes a speculative space as explored through the histories of plantlore and magical plants, i.e plants that are used within traditional medicine, which are often read as folklore because their healing powers are non scientifically proven. The colonisation of Zimbabwe played a big part in traditional medicine becoming less practiced, in favour of western medical practices. I'm interested in embodied knowledge - what our body knows or tells us, in favour of 'rational' or evidenced based knowledge. *how we heal the soil* centres the body, and underpinning this project is the desire to relate to ecology around us as marginalised groups.

The viewer is encouraged to engage in the practice of healing the soil through the game, **sower** and through the themes within the film **they called it plantlore**, plus physically through a programme of events.

The soil as birthgiver...

research page living archive to
links texts and films i have
looked at/that seemed relevant



initial research and intentions



after research and development period

(condensed down the research and themes as there were too many possible works within this work, exploring some of the themes through the events instead)

Humans have the role of sowers, in everyday life, consciously or not. Plants were experimented on and altered to become more aesthetically interesting during the british empire, so what does it mean to alter a plant / how can it be altered to help us all? In this game, adapted and altered plants heal the earth's soil. The work is a simulated garden experience where the viewer plants to heal histories and presences of colonialism and imperialism.

purpose

10 min game no idea of winning or outcome but a place to sit with, meditative and relaxing

mindfulness and therapy (calming relaxing soundscape - finn/clara)

meditative plant game that embodies a speculative fiction to imagine new ways of being in the world

speculative plants that heal

plants heal humans - what if they took on magical powers to heal the soil and earth that they grow in

eg. they could heal history or growing this plant slows down climate change or cures the effects of capitalism, plants of love

setting

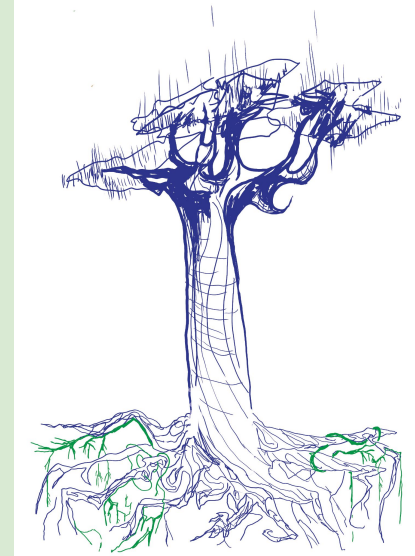
game in space or some futuristic place with moon showing

Baobab tree as centre for growing

moon as time indicator when growing

identifier plant cards

wee story to go with each plant and its uses



Drawing by Chrisanne

instructions

The sower clicks on a baobab tree leaf

seed falls to the ground

The sower clicks to plant seed

The sower clicks click to water

The sower clicks click to dig the soil

The sower watches plant grow

wee story or poem appears about its powers and properties, how it is relevant and important to healing the earth

user thanks plant

start again

sower

drafting potential plants and uses



name: labour of love
use: encourages unconditional
love and care



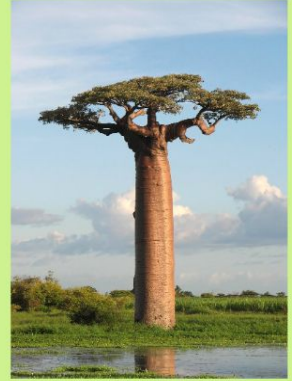
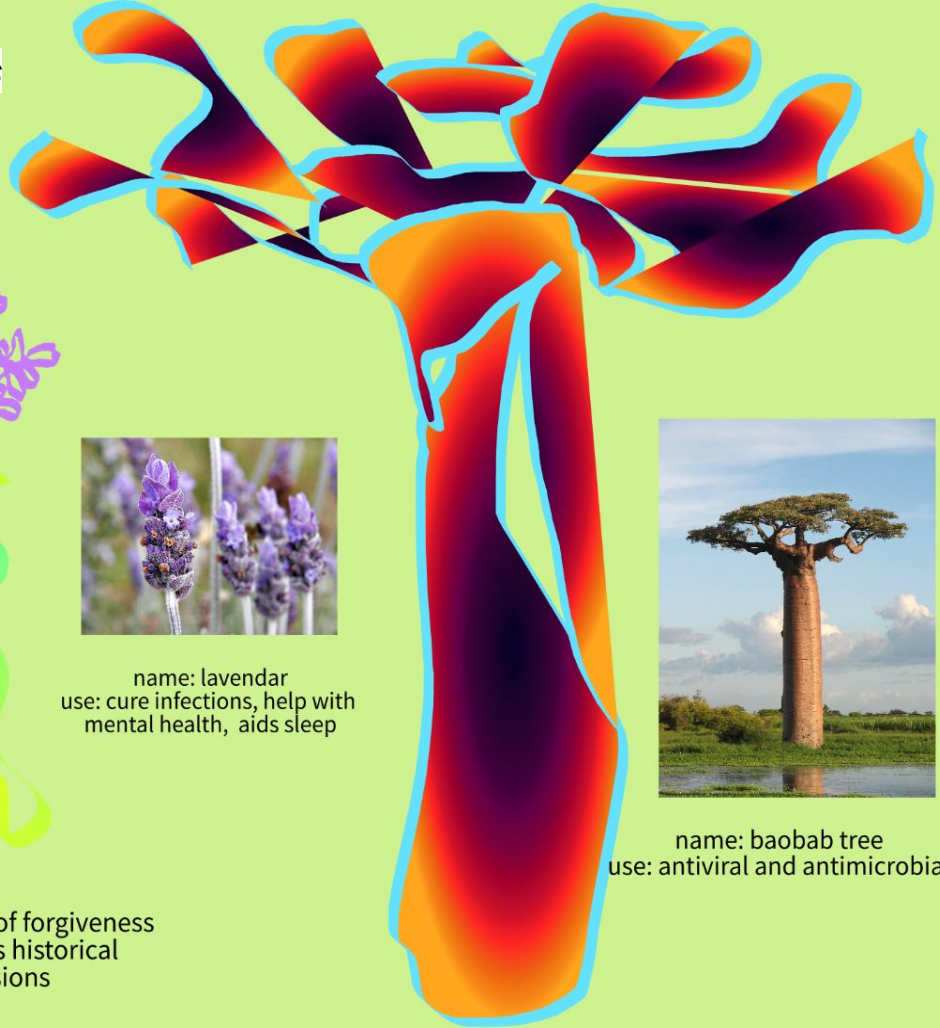
name: flame lily
use: cures pains, wounds and infertility



name: whispers of forgiveness
purpose: heals historical
oppressions



name: lavender
use: cure infections, help with
mental health, aids sleep



name: baobab tree
use: antiviral and antimicrobial

tree of life, life giver

sower

the baobab tree sits, swaying in what we recognise as wind (is it called wind where we currently are?)

1. the sower clicks on leaf

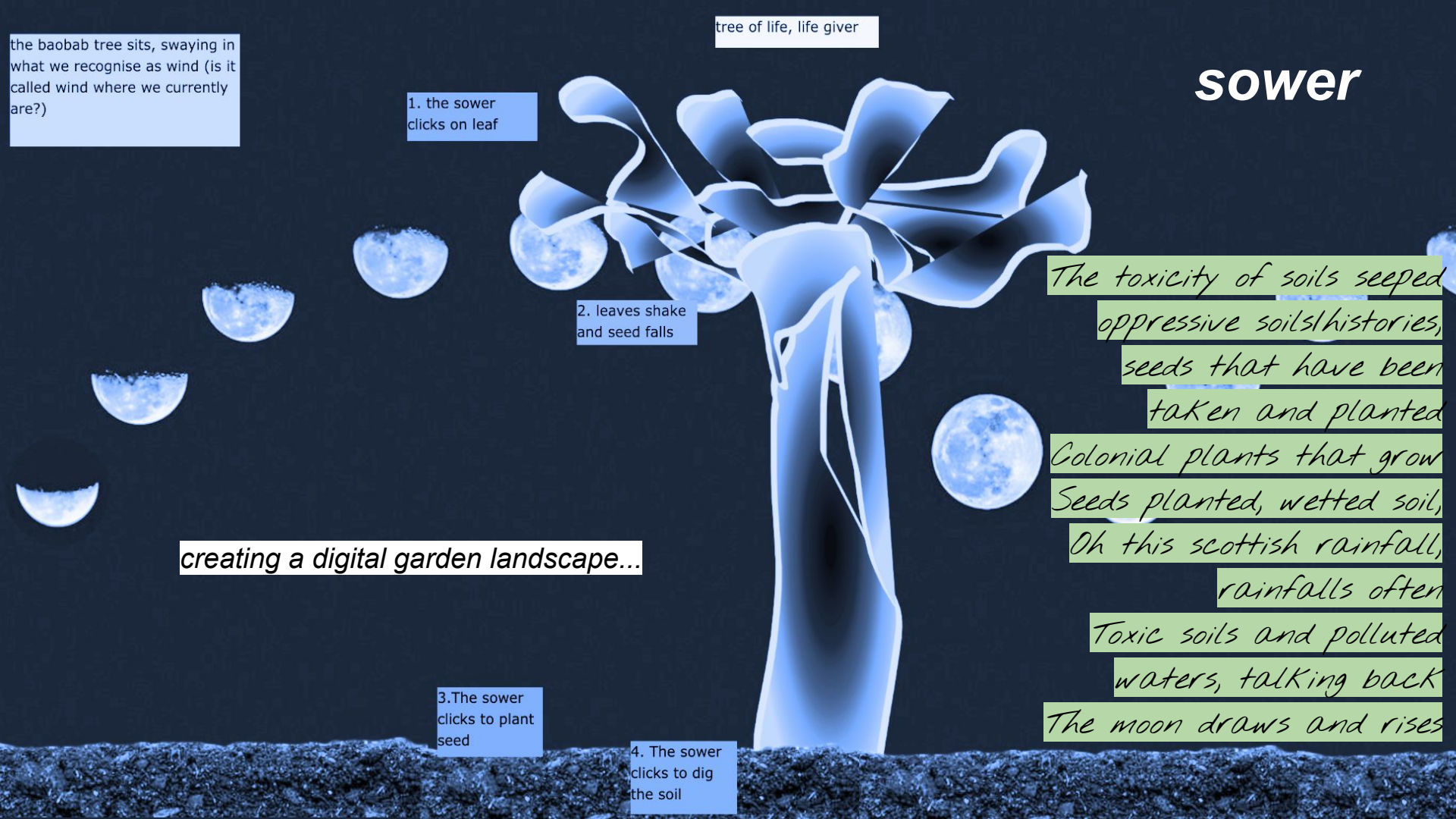
2. leaves shake and seed falls

3. The sower clicks to plant seed

4. The sower clicks to dig the soil

creating a digital garden landscape...

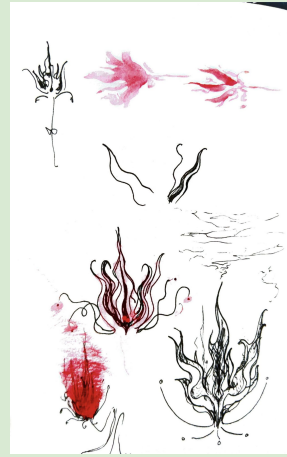
The toxicity of soils seeped
 oppressive soils/histories,
 seeds that have been
 taken and planted
 Colonial plants that grow
 Seeds planted, wetted soil,
 Oh this scottish rainfall,
 rainfalls often
 Toxic soils and polluted
 waters, talking back
 The moon draws and rises



drawings by Chrisanne for sower



Chrisanne felt like the root system of the plants came across as a v strong metaphor for connection to the history of the land, so focused on that for the Baobab tree. Chrisanne would work with me to develop the story of the game, while we create the drawings

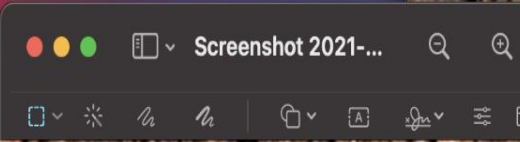




Screenshot
2021-08...3.33.05

the soil encourages play
a way of communicating with the land

colonisers knew of their powers
so sought to harness them for
themselves..how can we heal the
soil? and heal ourselves
physically and metaphorically
through tending...



As mentioned previously, the R&D process created many paths for me to potentially follow. The film is a call and response with this research discussing histories of seeds, plants, and gardens. The soil, like the body, has it's own memory - this relationship is explored through the film via writing forms (essay and poetry), animation and filming to create a digital and IRL landscape. I plan on revisiting and continuing the research process throughout the journey of the project. The film will be set across the past, present and future as it discusses the potential for the soil as a speculative ecosystem.

growing in the absence of nourishment, the conditions in which we formulate and curate for ourselves and others to grow in

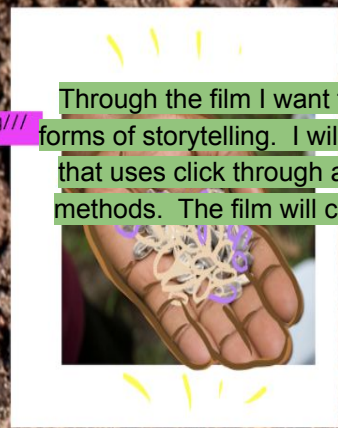
website draft

a giving///

Through the film I want to communicate traditional and contemporary forms of storytelling. I will do this by partly by using a site that I've made that uses click through as a way to experiment with digital storytelling methods. The film will contain oral storytelling methods through using my voice.

we start with the soil, click to see a story

*they called it
plantlore*



exhibition installation

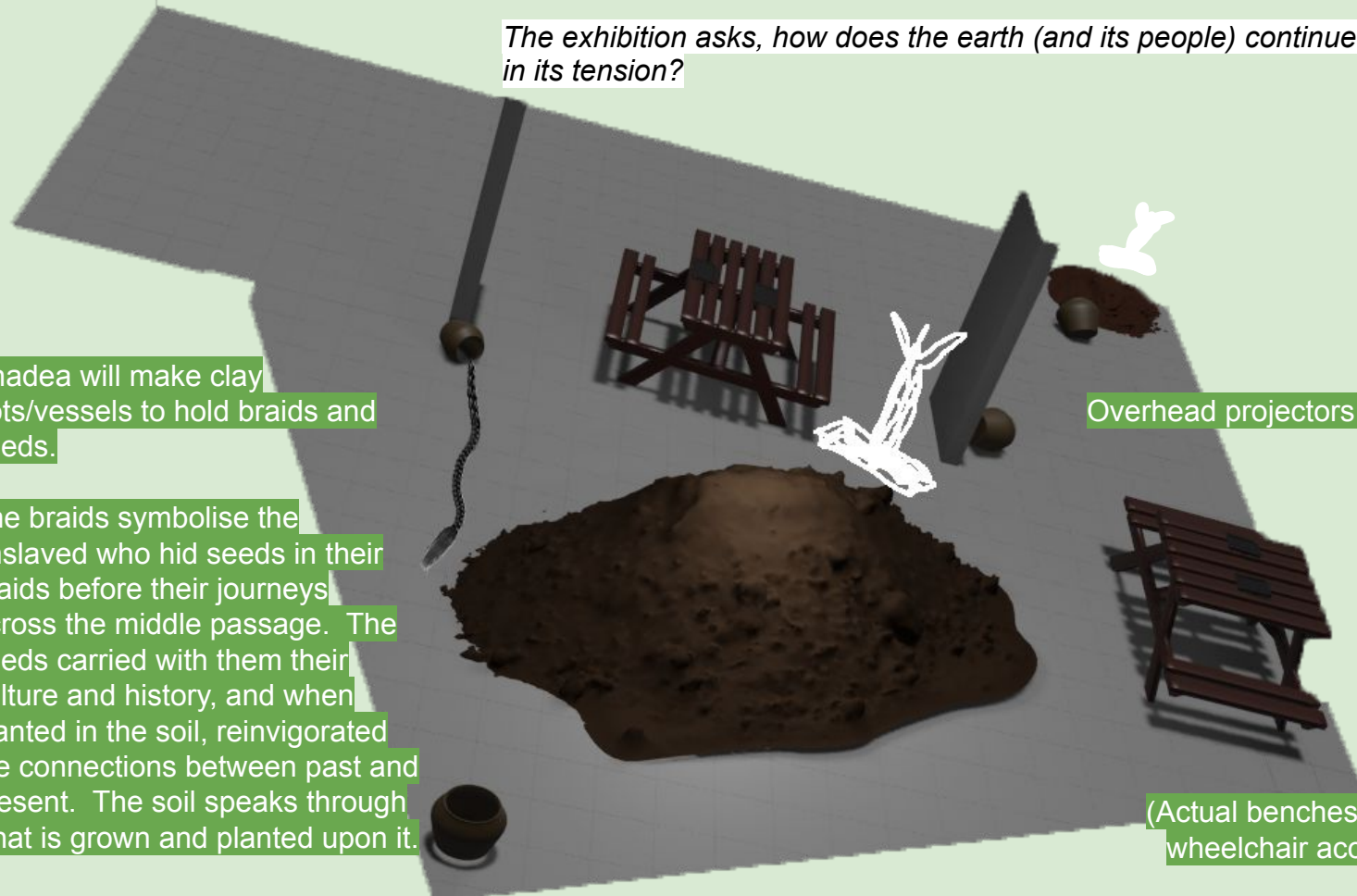
The exhibition asks, how does the earth (and its people) continue to flourish, whilst we sit in its tension?

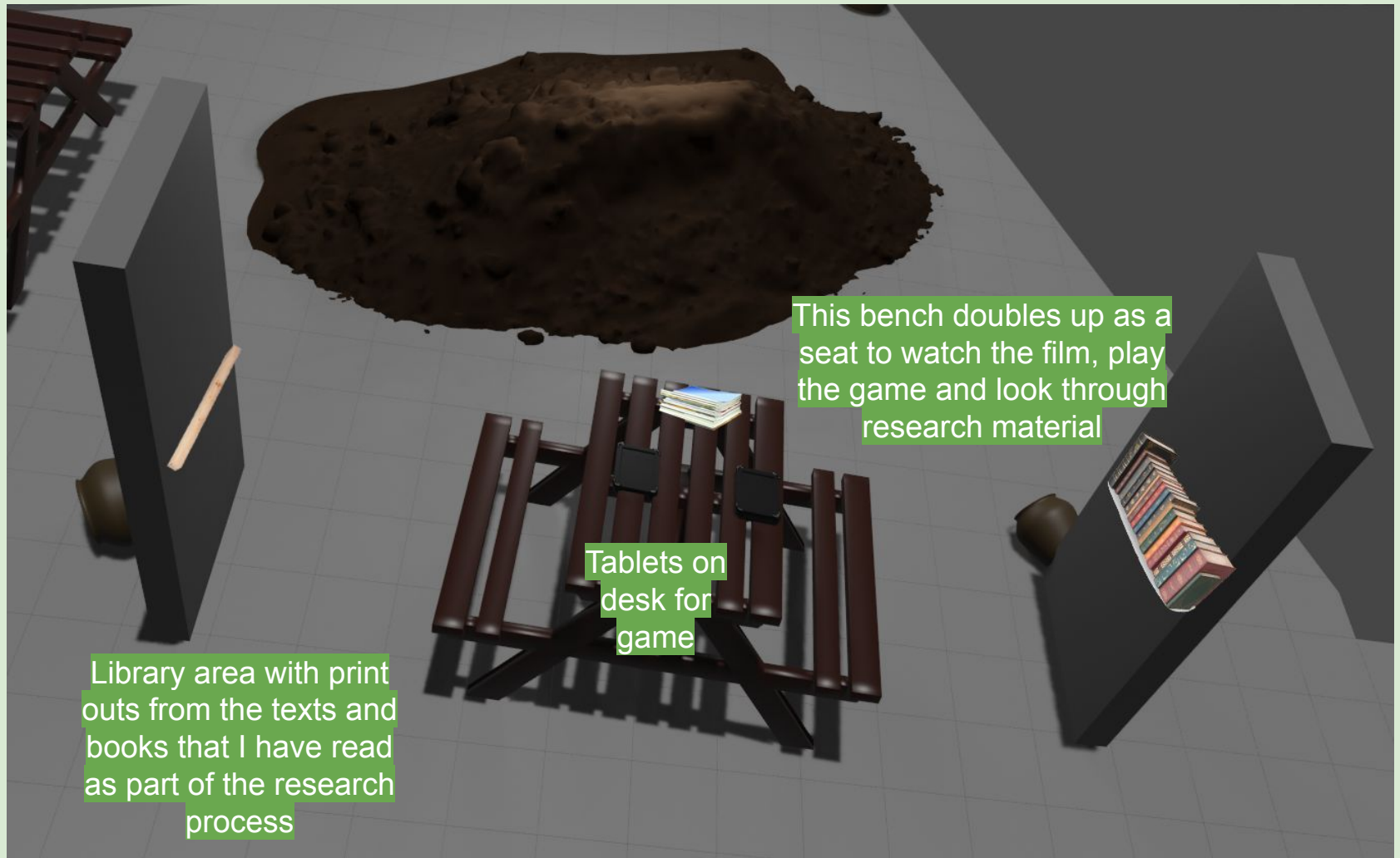
Khadea will make clay pots/vessels to hold braids and seeds.

The braids symbolise the enslaved who hid seeds in their braids before their journeys across the middle passage. The seeds carried with them their culture and history, and when planted in the soil, reinvigorated the connections between past and present. The soil speaks through what is grown and planted upon it.

Overhead projectors to display film

(Actual benches would be wheelchair accessible)

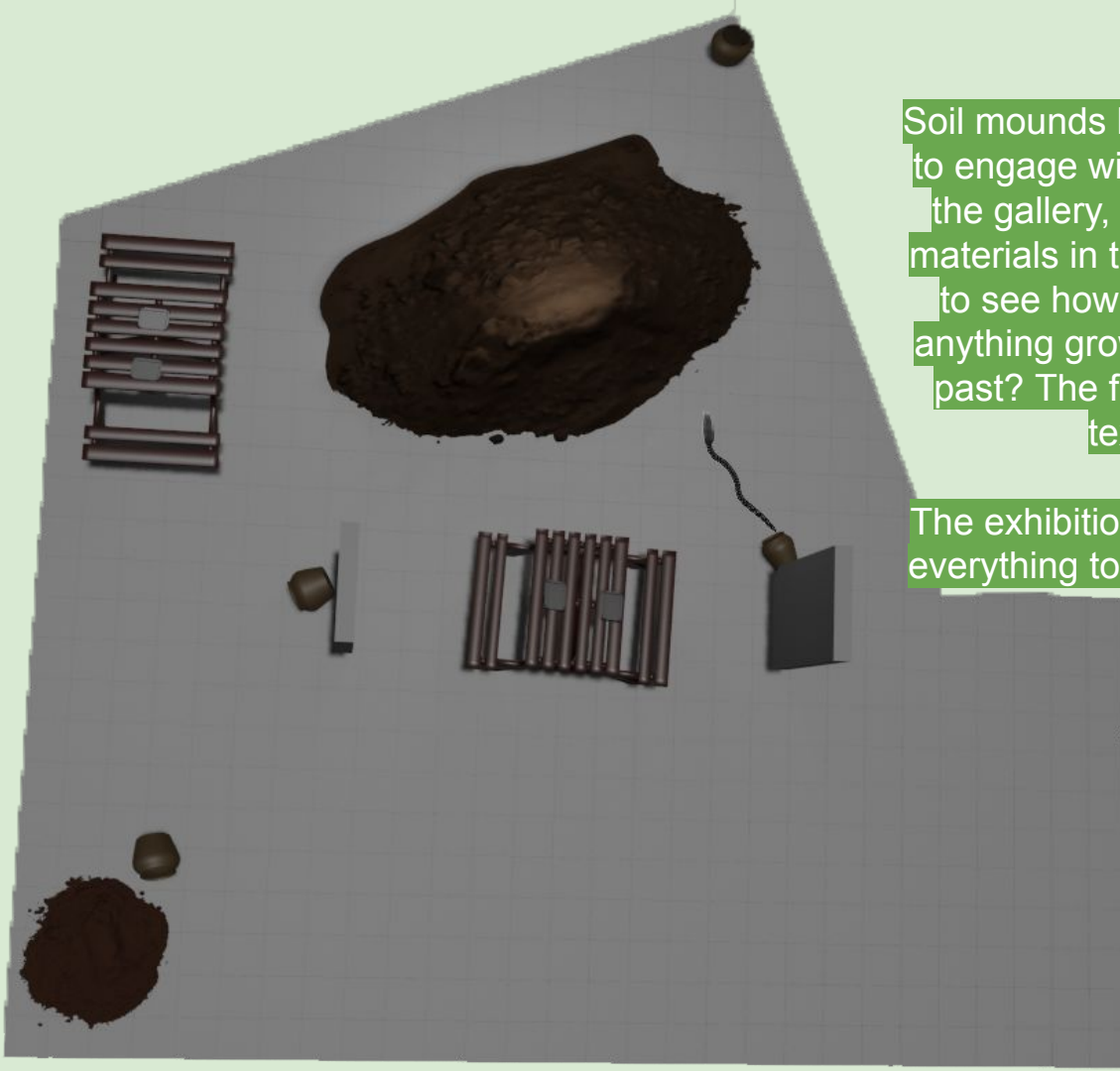




This bench doubles up as a seat to watch the film, play the game and look through research material

Tablets on desk for game

Library area with print outs from the texts and books that I have read as part of the research process



Soil mounds bring the outdoors inside where the viewer has to engage with nature. I like the idea of the soil interrupting the gallery, especially its surface and the juxtaposition of materials in the gallery which are man made. I'm interested to see how the soil changes as it sits in the gallery - will anything grow or will the soil move slightly as viewers walk past? The films projected onto the soil will give it its own textures, as the soil acts as a screen.

The exhibition layout is quite simple, and I will measure out everything to make sure all the elements are accessible via wheelchair.

collaborators overview

Game

Designer - [Libby Odaj](#). Libby has created really interesting work around AI, technology and race which will lend itself to the sower game as we will think together about how to make the game accessible and engaging for audiences of colour.

Story Developer + Illustrator - Chrisanne McCulloch. Chrisanne's work is super imaginative and dreamlike - they also place a lot of games, especially indie games so have more experience than me in what could be possible.

Soundscape - Fionnan Byrne-Perkins/[Clara Hancock](#). Both Fionnan and Clara have worked on my previous film to create sound, both their work is experimental and they work across different genres of sound.

Film

Soundscape - Fionnan Byrne-Perkins/Clara Hancock

3D Model Artists - TBC - they will create some 3D models of specific plants for the film.

Exhibition

Clay pots - Khadea Kuchenmeister. Khadea makes clay vessels that hold histories - she is interested in vessels as an instrument for communicating with the past and present.

Guest text for booklet - Martha Adonai Williams (unconfirmed). Martha is a therapist, writer and grower - her works centres a holistic and gentle approach to making and being with something.

task	when	notes																		
august																				
visit arebyte	end of month																			
feedback from judges and arebyte	end of month																			
adapt brief in relation to feedback	end of month																			
create collaborator briefs	30th - 3rd																			
september																				
developing blender skills	throughout the month	learning how to make models																		
developing animation skills	throughout the month	testing ideas																		
invite guest text writer	1st september	hopefully martha williams																		
2hr meetings with collaborators to run through brief	1-10th	online/IRL, develop game story with chrisanne																		
progress report	13th																			
tutorial with artist	13th-19th																			
<i>on a residency</i>	20-26th	<i>out of office this week</i>																		
booklet design introductions	27th-1st																			
october																				
development of film	throughout the month	writing essay/text																		
progress report	1st																			
tech requirements meeting	8th-12th	w/chris lead technician																		
curatorial decisions + install materials	8th-12th	w/curator																		
public programme + events workshop	8th-12th	w/curator																		
promotion begins	8th-12th																			
finalise booklet design	8th-12th																			
<i>unavailable</i>	13th-15th	@ work training																		
graphic designer designs vinyl for window	25th-29th																			
check in with collaborators	25th-29th																			
november																				
development of film	throughout the month	writing essay/text, creating visuals for the film																		
progress report	throughout the month																			
invite event collaborators	1st																			
meetings with event collaborators	2nd-9th	if needed																		
write event copies	9th-12th																			
check in with collaborators	29th-3rd																			
december																				
development of film	throughout the month	creating visuals for the film and piecing together visuals and text																		
progress report	throughout the month																			
booklet text deadline	1st																			
promotion for events																				
january																				
curatorial decisions finalised	throughout the month	placement of object, screens, lighting																		
progress report	throughout the month																			
install order																				
work finished!	end of month																			
february																				
installation	first week																			
exhibition opens	17th																			
first event	26th																			
march																				
second event	5th																			
exhibition ends/final event	12th																			

timeline

budget

Film	Collaborator	Workings	Cost	Notes
Soundscape	Fionnan Byrne-Perkins or Clara Hancock	1 day rate (£189)	189	
3d Model Commissions	TBC	1.5 day rate (£189+94.5)	283	
Ceiling projector mount			20	https://cpc.farnell.com/pro-signal/psg03352/ceiling-mount-projector-black/dp/ST01788?mckv=sVjq4ft
Projector		In kind	0	arebyte
Mini projector			35	
Mini projector ceiling mount			5	https://www.google.com/ack?sa=L&ai=DChcSEwi62flr17jyAhXP7e0KHWNNA7wYABBUgGjKzW&si
		TOTAL	532	
Game		Workings	Cost	Notes
Game Designer	Libby Odai	6 day rates (£214)	1284	
Story Developer & Illustrator	Chrisanne McCulloch	3 day rates (£180)	540	
Soundscape	Fionnan Byrne-Perkins or Clara Hancock	1 day rate (£189)	189	
		TOTAL	2013	
Exhibition		Workings	Cost	Notes
Clay vessels - making	Khadea Kuchenmeister	3 day rates (£202)	606	
Clay vessels - materials	Khadea Kuchenmeister	Clay, studio access, dust sheet, glazing	150	
Bench		Two benches + delivery	1495	to be donated afterwards to park/community centre https://www.sustainable-furniture.co.uk/disabled-f
Shelves		x2 + delivery	33	donated afterwards https://www.etsy.com/uk/listing/973163507/reclaimed-wood-plank-rustic-weather
Seeds			40	
Soil		2 bags at 83.99 + delivery	180	to be donated afterwards to park/community centre https://www.sustainable-furniture.co.uk/disabled-f
Braiding hair		4 packs at 3.99	16	
Printing materials			50	
Tablet x4		In kind	0	arebyte
		TOTAL	2570	
Contingency (7%)			385	
		TOTAL	5500	
		Overall Project	5500	

CV

Natasha Thembiso Ruwona (b.1997) is a Scottish-Zimbabwean artist, researcher and film programmer. They are interested in Afrofuturist storytelling through the poetics of the landscape, working across various media including; digital performance, film and writing. Their current project Black Geographies, Ecologies and Spatial Practice is an exploration of space, place and the climate as related to Black identities and histories. Natasha is interested in different forms of magic and is in particular drawn to the power of the moon.

Upcoming

Perth Gallery + Museum, group exhibition, 2022
Raumeter Radio Commission, from Autumn 2021
Maud Sulter Film, Director, from Autumn 2021

Currently

Create Reality VR Commission, Tramway, Scotland
Artist in Residence, Alchemy Film + Arts, Scotland
Commision, Cineova, London
Hotel Generation, Arebyte, London

Past Exhibitions/Screenings

David Dale Gallery + Studios, 2021
Sheffield Doc Fest, Screening, 2021
Origins Eile Exhibition for Dublin Fringe Festival, Online Screening, 2020
Fringe of Colour, Online Screening, 2020
Rhythm Machine - Summerhall, Edinburgh Oct 2019
Blackwards - Whitespace, Edinburgh 2019
Invisible Spaces – Summerhall, Edinburgh 2018
untitled DOKument – DOK Artist Space, Edinburgh 2018
Hotline x APH Studio – Bongo Club, Edinburgh 2018
Body Language – Fire Station, Edinburgh 2018
Macmillian Cancer Support - Bonhams, Edinburgh 2017
No Spoon Needed - The Biscuit Factory, Edinburgh 2016

Performances

Alchemy Film + Arts, Festival Launch, 2021
Race, Rights and Sovereignty lecture series, Glasgow School of Art, Performance Lecture, 2020

Education

September 2017 – June 2020
Edinburgh College of Art
BA Intermedia (Ordinary Degree) with Merit
August 2016 – June 2017
Edinburgh College
HNC Contemporary Art Practice
Grade A
August 2015 – June 2016
Edinburgh College
UAL Level 3 in Art & Design
Grade Distinction
August 2014 - June 2015
Edinburgh College
BTEC First Diploma in Art and Design
Grade Distinction*

programme of events

- Group walk with BIPOC who are engaging with other BIPOC in nature (like [Maxwell Ayamba](#)) or myself - I have recently started a walking group called Walking While Black, informed by this text: <https://lithub.com/walking-while-black/>. This feels like an important activity to do that relates to the initial research and ideas for the work that surrounded connections between BIPOC and nature, thinking about how we are often excluded from the landscape. It will hopefully attempt to start a process of rebuilding some of these connections to the land.
- A herbal remedy workshop with TBC. This relates to the project through its thinking about Indigenous healing practices and plant uses, and tangible ways for us to relate to the earth around us informed by the past.
- Clay vessel making with Khadea Kuchenmeister, using homemade clay following these [instructions](#) by [RL Martens](#). Khadea is interested in the healing process of making with clay through its connection to the earth and the slowing down of the outcome made. When thinking about *how we heal the soil*, ideas of slowing down and reconnecting with the environment are important themes. The homemade clay instructions offer the participants the opportunity to use what is already available, again fostering a relationship with the land informed by what is there. Permission will be sought to use the instructions.