

Figure 1: Critters in the Bog

This painting is a meditation and grounding exercise I did over a couple of months while thinking about ecosystems, critters and critters making ecosystems. I am using this image throughout the thesis in different orientations to think through the interconnected, entangled, and ongoing concepts of this thesis. By critters I refer to microbes, plants, animals, humans, and nonhumans, and sometimes even to machines like artificial intelligence (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 186).

a place to fall apart

LEARNING TO THRIVE WITH MORE THAN HUMANS

BY DEEPIKAH R BHARDWAJ

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Interdisciplinary Master's In Art, Media, And Design

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a place to fall apart
Learning to thrive with more than humans

Abstract

a place to fall art is part of an exhibition that crafts a speculative world, urging viewers to momentarily unwind beneath a canopy of eight smaller suspended artworks. This exhibition emerged from practice-based research, utilizing diverse materials like algae, kombucha, takeaway containers, gelatine, metal, and plants. These materials were used to explore Donna Haraway's idea of symposi, through an embodied Indian understanding of ancestral ways of thinking about interconnectedness and ontology. These eight assemblages/artworks are interconnected within the installation, resembling a spider's web, woven with crochet patterns and painting using spirulina pigment, including an algae-arachnid hybrid, one kinetic mobile, and other ephemeral sculptures that reflect an appreciation of child-like play that I developed as a methodology. *a place to fall apart* came about as a personal need to create a speculative space to come undone as an Indian woman and mother, existing in several ecological and humanitarian crises while also thinking about how to trouble post-colonial and settler-colonial imaginaries of futurity by building relationships. This research invites viewers to consider worlds beyond survival in the "end times" that weave stories of new, inclusive, collaborative futures. I argue that joyful resilience in ecological crises includes celebrating human-nonhuman kinship and reclaiming the collective possibility to heal together.

Keywords: Climate crises, Anthropocene, sustainability, Ecofeminism, Motherhood, Care, Resilience, Play.

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I have immense gratitude for my partner RNB who drove me every day to school and picked all kinds of weird materials from weeds to tree trunks without asking any questions. A big thanks to my son V for being the constant joy, and inspiration, and giving unlimited hugs to keep me going. My fellow witches Raquel and Hala for being constant sources of energy and keepers of my sanity. Extending gratitude to a new community of friends and technicians from wood and metal studios, who let me ask unending questions.

Gratitude to humans and more than human ancestors of here, there, and everywhere

for giving me the strength to have hope in dark times and find

“a place to fall apart.”

Dedicated to my grandmother बड़ी मम्मी, Ishwar Devi ईश्वर देवी |

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Figure 2: Critters in the bog (vertical)

Chapter 1:

Where do I begin; how do we begin?

In my first culture (India), it is considered auspicious to begin all significant tasks by invoking the elephant god Ganesh and seeking permission from all four directions, the wind, the sun, water and the earth or land. As I stood on these territories in Tkaronto (Toronto, Canada), which have been ancestral to many nations, including the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe, and the Mississaugas of the Credit, I began to comprehend the history and colonial wrongs in which I am now unknowingly complicit (paperson 14). I ponder over how to honour this land while thinking about which land to designate as “ancestral.”¹

Both sets of my grandparents were children during the Indian and Pakistan partition of 1947, and they had to leave their ancestral land and move from Multan (now in Pakistan) to New Delhi. I grew up in a non-confrontational household in post-partition India in the 1990s, barely dodging the claws of patriarchy. The displacement I feel from being twice removed from my land in Canada makes me critically examine the land beneath my feet (paperson 11-20).

What does it mean to thrive in a world that is crumbling under climate change, war, genocide, and loss of life — animal, plant, and human? I am also dealing with being in a new country as an immigrant, student, and parent, away from a sense of familiarity and community.

¹ Tuck and Yang introduced me to the concept of the settler–native–slave triad which I was uncomfortable with. Equating people who have suffered through generations of colonialism to people who perpetuated colonial wrongs and acquired land and resources from native indigenous people seemed like an overarching generalization. I expand on this discomfort on page 12.

Considering this feeling of disorientation, *a place to fall apart* is a speculative world that invites the viewer to pause and come undone momentarily while looking up at a canopy of eight hybrid suspensions interconnected with twines. The suspension of materials explored intersections between ecology, feminism, motherhood, and decolonization. *a place to fall apart* came about as a personal need to create a speculative space in which to come undone as an Indian woman and mother, existing in several ecological and humanitarian crises while also thinking about how to answer Eve Tuck & Yang's call to decolonize and challenge hegemonic systems in tangible ways that are not metaphors. In other words, to imagine worlds beyond capitalism, patriarchy, and the Anthropocene and foster inclusive and collaborative futures with humans and more than humans.



Figure 3: Asthapadma (The Eight Legged)

a place to fall apart includes eight suspensions made of hybrid materials. Three of them are made of bamboo, jute rope, found wood and gelatin. One is a mix of copper and gelatine with suspended dead flowers and seeds. One is a mobile made of metal with algae at the center; it's a kinetic, soothing sculpture that rotates above the algae. These suspended installations are connected and form a larger canopy that invites viewers to sit under it and look up. The number eight is significant because it invokes tentacularity and signals the Chthonic critters that perform material meaningfulness of earth processes (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 2). Throughout *a place to fall apart*, I have engaged with the concept of collaboration, pushing its boundaries by engaging with algae, plants, and remnants of animal bones or

gelatine. Additionally, I have collaborated with artificial intelligence (AI) while crafting speculative short stories that make up *a place to fall apart*. The eighth piece in the assemblage is a small zine, an anthology of speculative stories about the other seven pieces: Alien Flower, Alien Garden, Gaia: Nature not Mother, Hornest, Ashthapadma (The Eight Legged), Mutations and Purna: Simulations of the whole.

The first academic text I read as a Master's student was "Decolonization is not a Metaphor" by Eve Tuck and Yang (2012). Confronted with Land Acknowledgments after moving to Canada impacted my relationship with the land. It challenged me to think deeply about which land I belonged to and what I was doing on 'this' land (5). I had been conditioned through a remnant of a colonial education system to think in metaphors like "decolonize the mind." Tuck and Yang introduced me to the discomfort of the settler-native-slave triad (3). They argue that the "language of decolonization has been superficially adopted into education and other social sciences" (2), turning decolonization into a metaphor. They state when "metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters Whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future" (3).

While exploring approaches that challenge the idea of decolonization as a metaphor, I came across two texts - *A Third University is Possible* by la paperson and *Not Too Late* by Rebecca Solnit (paperson 27; Solnit 63). paperson argues that the settler-native-slave triad shows our skewed participation in the colonization of other peoples and places if used as racial identities without contextualizing the contradicting ways in which they intersect and dynamically change (14). Paperson also explains that compressing the problem of decolonization to a triad of incomparable human identities creates a pitfall of anthropocentrism and undermines the

work that Indigenous scholars like Zoe Todd have done to emphasize the geopolitical, the land, and the circle of relations that do not begin and end with the human (15). As an immigrant from a post-colonial nation of intergenerational displacement, it seemed incommensurable to include me in a settler perpetuating colonial order of Indigenous dispossession of land and resources. (Tuck and Yang, 31). How, then, should I respond to the call to decolonize in tangible ways that propagate freedom and imagination beyond metaphors? I am a caretaker and reject the identity of a settler of colour (p. 7). My transnational positionality gives me a unique perspective on the land in Canada and India. I understand that land is the greatest supporter of all humans and more than humans — plants, animals, rocks, rivers, ecosystems. Everything depends on it, and hence, there is an urgent need to value and honour its original stewards while taking responsibility for humanity's existence by trying to live consciously and sustainably, while acknowledging the implicit and interdependent relationships between humans, non-humans, and land. Not to coalesce environmentalism and decolonization but, it could be fruitful to trouble settler colonialism by building relationships and finding interconnectedness over shared concerns through material bridges (Todd, 248).²

² Grassroots ecofeminist movements worldwide (the Chipko movement, Farmer's uprising, and indigenous uprising in Yukon) have also influenced my thinking about patriarchy, colonialism, and environmentalism. Chipko Movement (Hug the Tree) movement, a peasant movement against deforestation in the Himalayan foothills sharply questioned the unsustainable demand placed on the land by urban centers and industry. (Guha, 5)

la paperson critiques the term post-colonial because there is no adequate word for “beyond colonization in the English language” and I agree (9). I understand decolonization beyond protest and land back, that includes culture rebuilding, retelling, and celebrating human-nonhuman kinship while reclaiming the sacredness of healing together (Solnit et al. 63). *a place to fall apart* is made through speculative storytelling that breaks from how “art objects.”

I recognized circles in Haraway's idea of the tentacular as a generative modality for imagining interconnectedness and multiplicities when she describes the need to find new stories about the earth (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble 2*). As a mother, the repetitive loop of tangled and overlapping child-rearing tasks urged me to contemplate the pedagogical powers of circularity and stickiness. I use circles in my making through an iterative process of parenting that altered my perspective about how I live, use materials, and make art. My obsession with the well-being of another human turned me into an observant anticipator. I became more attentive to questions like: “Where does this material come from?” and “Where does it go after I have used it?” I was obsessed about the cycles of everything that went in and came out of my child. I often revisit and reuse objects, techniques, and ideas iteratively over and over but differently, every time, increasing the lifespan of that material or object before it heads to the landfill.

Tentacle comes from the Latin tentaculum, meaning “feeler,” and tentare, meaning “to feel” and “to try” (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble 31*). Correspondingly, these entangled artworks do not tell a singular story of the “end of the world” narrative of the Anthropocene but instead, invite us to “fall apart” under a canopy of lively material speculations that tell different stories of the Cthuluscene. I employed the “circle” as a semiotic structure (See

Figure 4) in my artmaking to move through these stories. A circle has no beginning or end but can have multiple sticky tangents or tentacles, which supports thinking about the loops of the impact of materials. Furthermore, coaxial circles signify an iterative process and repetition.

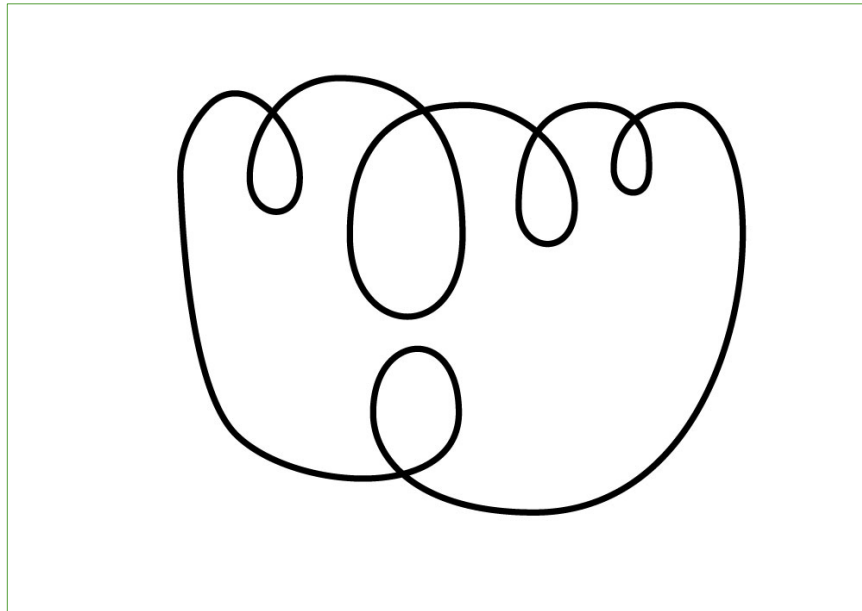


Figure 4: Circle as thinking modality.

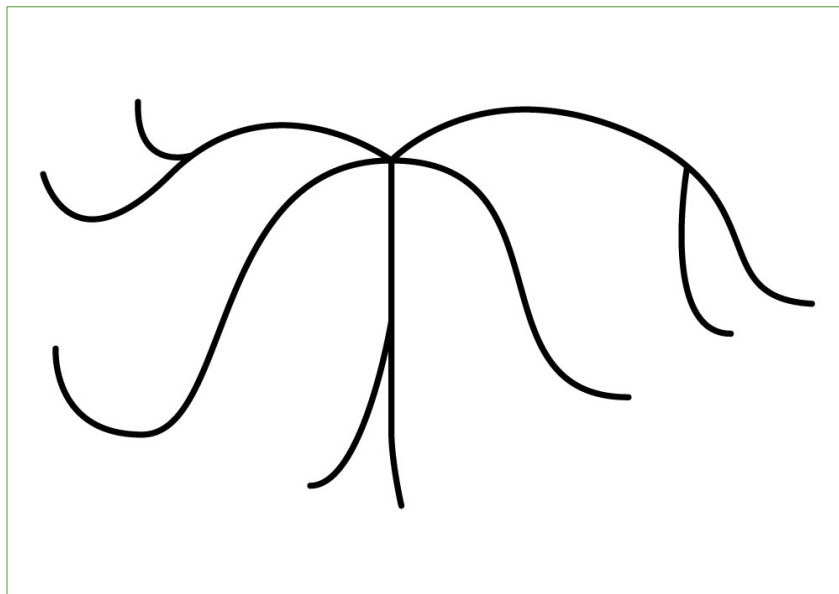


Figure 5: Tentacular Spontaneity

Additionally, I coalesce these multitudes with my lived experiences to think about the human-made ecological crises we are in and, further, how to imagine a way forward that foregrounds resilience, hope, and multi-generational perspectives (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 43). While asking questions like what it means to live, I also question how we define what is alive and not alive in the first place, especially when creating art objects with materials like algae, plants, branches, stones, cardboard, plastic parts and critical theory notes turned into paper mâché. I explicate the non-tangible art materials and how I came upon them in Chapter 2: “Gathering Materials.” Here, the materials include ontological questions that form ideas through my lived experiences, following threads between what it means to live and be alive as a human with more than humans.

In Chapter 3 — I use “Tentacular Spontaneity” as a methodology that expands on how I create with my materials. I derive pleasure from making, which involves smelling, touching, and sometimes tasting the materials. Growing up with less technology, power cuts, grass, and grandmothers — informed my maternal, intuitive, and *jugaad* style of making.³ *Jugaad* (j-oo-g-aa-ddh) is a colloquial word in Indo-Aryan languages which refers to a non-conventional, frugal innovation, often termed a “hack.” Child-like play, a flexible approach and curiosity at its heart, my method for making the work involves working with found, cooked, or grown material, like eggshells, gelatine, or algae. The *jugaad* (alternate hacks) technique uses materials in innovative ways that are not reliable in the long term, but they work for the time being. In contrast to the consumer model of planned obsolescence, which requires the

³ “Jugaad.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 3 Sept. 2023, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jugaad.

consumer to cyclically buy and replace objects that cannot be fixed, *jugaad* interferes within this cycle through these short-term modifications.

I am informed by Athena Papadopoulos' meticulous use of materials and Anicka Yi's use of fried flowers and other biomaterials in my research-based inquiry into non-traditional sculptural mediums. New Leeroy's work titled *Balangay Starfleet* at Nuit Blanche (2023) showed me how to bring plastic into these speculative conversations. In *Balangay Starfleet*, Leeroy imagines futuristic alien spaceships landing in Toronto but instead of being fancy and shiny, they are made of bamboo and plastic invoking an old-world tactile aesthetic while imagining new worlds.



Figure 6: *Balangay Starfleet* (2023) by New Leeroy at Scarborough Town Centre for Nuit Blanche 2023. Photo by author.

I joyfully stay to find new ways to make the “wrong” kind of sculpture (25). In this chapter, I also point out why it is important to look at “wrong” or *jugaad* ways of making things, which provides insight into how to thrive beyond the Anthropocene with fewer resources. Sourcing materials locally and creating with an objective of circularity (Refuse, Reuse, Recycle) is central to my making.

Whether it is decomposing gelatin or bubbling algae, I am pushing the boundaries of the traditional “art object” in a gallery setting by bringing materials that don’t adhere to being acquired, stored, or commodified. Instead, they require care and an ongoing relationship with their keeper. The suspended pieces are hybrids of science experiments and art. I employ speculative storytelling to narrate the agencies of these art objects. The prelude included in Appendix A, is a story about how *a place to fall apart* came into being when some formations of “Alien Flowers,” “Alien Garden,” “Gaia — Nature, not Mother,” and others came together to form a suspended canopy. Inspired by Kim De Wolff’s idea about the dangers of separating living from non-living bodies, I problematize the categories of natural and unnatural in an entangled setting in the gallery by creating a web of interconnected pieces (26).⁴ In a *place to fall apart* viewers are invited to visit with friends or make new ones, just like at a party. I use the transformative potential of the pause and suspension here — allowing the viewer to look up and reflect on things that are casually discarded.

⁴ Observing jellyfish who carry around plastic in their bodies or hermit crabs who have been increasingly found to live in plastic trash and in conversation with Kim De Wolfe’s “I argue that the ‘danger’ of plastic – life relationships lurks not in associations but in the very categories used to understand and live with forms of plastic and forms of life, in the kinds of belonging that emerge with kinds of materials, and in the failure to recognize the impossibility of their separation.”

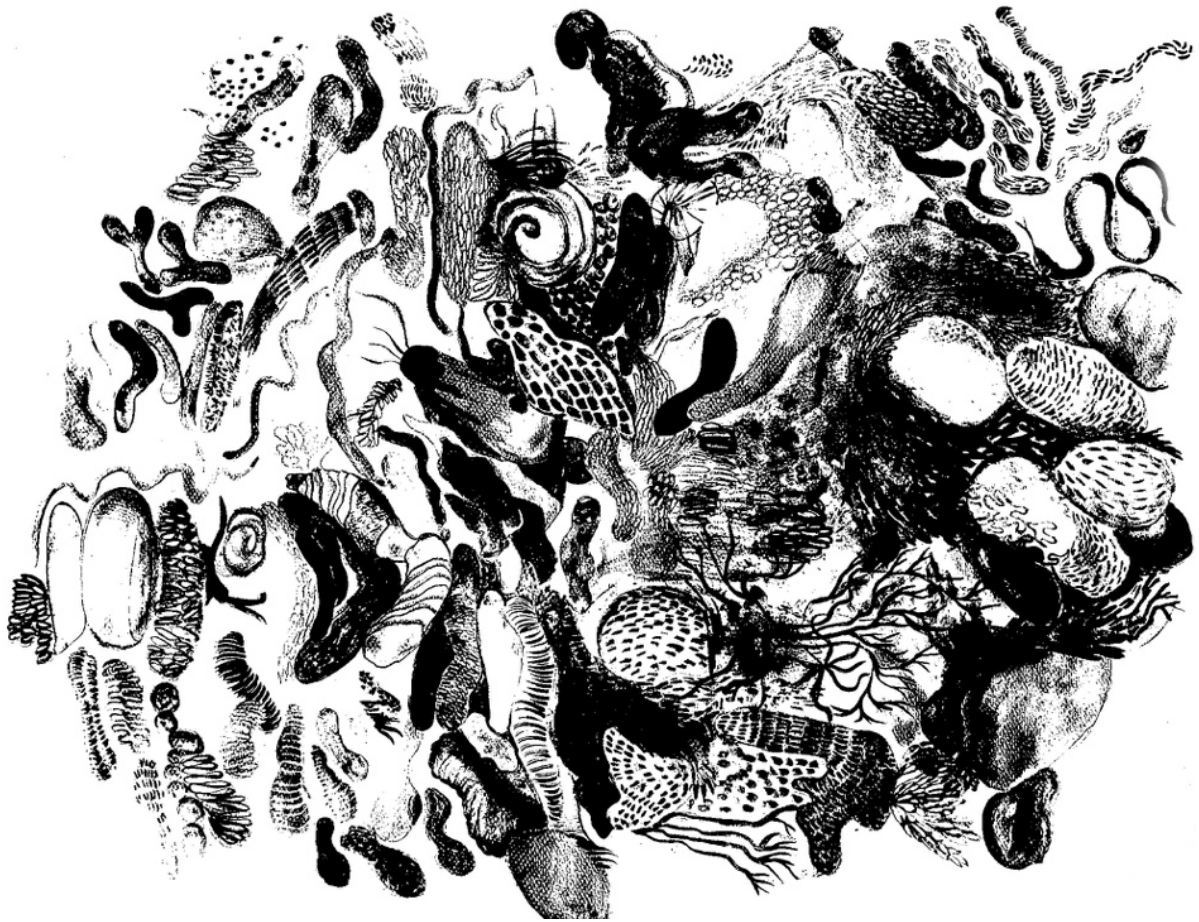
This thesis is a tribute to motherhood and a documentation of my continuous evolution as a mother. It is a nod to caregivers — mothers, friends, and sisters who have shaped me, imparted their wisdom, and passed on their love of life to me.⁵ This autoethnographic way of intertwining moments from my life with theoretical concepts like tentacularity is a way I make sense of my big questions and feelings. Reading prominent voices in auto theory by feminist, queer writers like Maggie Nelson, Audre Lorde, Adrienne Maree Brown, and Juliette Singh has helped me find my voice, which ranges from rage to pleasure and from hope to embodied fabulation.

⁵ Here, I refer to “mother” as a relationship of care, nurture and being held and made to feel safe. This includes my biological relationships but can expand to include mentors, friends, teachers, caregivers, lovers, and more, including anyone who can hold space in their heart and life to care for another critter.



Figure 7: V reading the zine at a place to fall apart

Collaborating with more than humans such as algae, I explored the materiality and interconnectedness of discards and living materials by creating a system of interrelated and embellished objects in Chapter 2: Gathering Material. I establish a personal soul-nourishing process-based practice while redefining the boundaries of ‘professional’ and academic knowledge by underscoring intuition and other ways of knowing. In Chapter 3: Tentacular Spontaneity and Play, I find ways to imagine futures with hope and play. *a place to fall apart* invites viewers to consider worlds beyond survival in the “end times” that weave stories of new, inclusive, and collaborative futures. I argue that joyful resilience in ecological crises includes celebrating human-nonhuman kinship and reclaiming the collective possibility to heal together.



Chapter 2

Gathering Materials

Land. Here, there.

On the ground, I stand.

That is not mine.

The ground I go back to

And call home

It is not mine.

The grounds that my grandfathers & grandmothers played on

Are lost to the imperial machine.

On the ground, I stand.

One that does not belong to you.

The ground I stand on

Was stolen.

I have lost the ground beneath my feet.

And now stand on this stolen land.

I will nourish it as it nourishes me.

I will heal it as it heals me.

I will take a little and leave more to it. ⁷

I will love it as it loves me

Land knows no borders.

Land is earth, air and water

And everyone in between.

This air does not refuse to fill my lungs.

This water still runs in my veins.

The stolen land holds my two feet firm.

The Land is me, and I am Land.

Life in Tkaranto is hard and cold. Most of the produce in grocery stores comes from faraway places. The cost of living adds up and creates a sense of constant scarcity. But one thing that is in excess on this land is garbage. An incredible number of good materials are lying on the side of the road. I use everything and anything as “art material.” When my friends find odd-shaped branches, dried-up algae, old glass vases, sumac cones, excessive packaging, etc., they leave it by my studio with love. I have devised a few considerations for choosing my materials with intention. 1) They must be found, given, donated, or gifted. 2) If I buy something, there is a consideration that the item be compostable. 3) When I forage materials, I pick things off the ground following the rules of honourable harvest (Kimmerer 84). I create art objects with various living and dying materials — algae, plants, branches, gelatine, stones, cardboard and more where I consider their aliveness. I ask ontological questions like how do we define what is alive and not alive in the first place? Some non-tangible materials inform my making that is not obvious to the person experiencing the art. These range from sensations, lived experiences, and observations. Thinking with Donna Haraway, Natasha Myers, Kim De Wolff, and Krishnamurthy’s ideas on anthropocentrism, ontology, and mindful relationships with critters, I connect materials to theoretical questions when I’m making.

In what follows, I string learnings from my personal life as a mother with my grandmother's teachings that have informed my making with ideas of *natureculture* (De Wolff 24; Myers 92). The term was introduced by Haraway; however, she does not offer a single definition. I find that *natureculture* is a more amorphous term that might be useful to explain the

implicitness and impermeability of the idea of nature created by culture which offers space for critters of many kinds to live and die together (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 125).

DeWolff characterizes plastic naturecultures as thinking beyond separate categories of nature and culture as plastic is ubiquitous in ecosystems. Similarly, Myers illustrates how people are intrinsically linked to the existence of a black oak savanna to signal how nature is implicit in culture and vice versa. I use the term natureculture to think about entangled multispecies histories and ontologies.

My Grandma's hands



Figure 8: My Granma's Hands

I was very intrigued by the golden rods blooming in the fall. One morning in late October 2023, I stopped by the side of the road to look closely and took a few bunches. At that moment, a somewhat presumptuous woman hurriedly approached me and asked me if I had

permission from the city to do this. I was baffled by this and couldn't believe that "the city" would have the capacity to process such "plant picking permits" instead of working on more important things like the housing crises—this moment made me think of my grandmother.

When I was a child, I used to sleep with my Dadi [दादी] (paternal grandmother) at night, and she would take me with her to the temple at dawn. On our way to the temple, carrying our little baskets, we would collect jasmine or चमेली flowers from wild bushes. Jasmine is a very fragrant flower with a very short lifespan; touching it too much usually crumples it. My grandmother would say, "Hold the flower gently; if it wants to come with you, it will fall over with minimal effort; if you need more strength to break it, leave it alone." That was my first lesson in asking for consent from plants. I would smell each tiny white flower I picked, placing them in the basket carefully. We would then take them to put under the idols of Krishna, Ganesh, and other gods to wake them up.⁶

I find similarities in the sacred way my grandmother acknowledged flowers, stone idols embodying gods and the "Place-Thought theory" that is referred to by Vanessa Watts (cited in Zoe Todd, 245) in *Indigenizing the Anthropocene*. Philosophical theories about ontology, like the presence of consciousness or *prana* in all that exists, are a way of life in the Indian culture

⁶ In the Hindu Sanatan Dharma faith, intention is considered presence. If the intention of the presence of gods is assigned to a stone, the stone is considered alive. This could be any stone, sometimes sculpted, but raw stones are often used and decorated. Hence, the stone gods are woken up, fed, and cleaned, just like one would care for one's child or a family member. Caring for stones shaped like gods is so normalized in the culture that I never questioned it.

I was raised in.⁷ The stories about trees, animals and birds in epics like the Ramayan and Mahabharat, as well as folk tales I have grown up with, are not mere stories.⁸ They are part of histories that have shaped cultural and emotional landscapes, ecological knowledge, and the way we think of our relationships with more than humans. Living and studying in Canada, I can't help but bring in my Indian grandmother's teachings while parsing through Western epistemologies (Grosz,4).

My grandmother never taught me to knit or stitch, and she insisted that I focus on a formal education because she never could. I was introduced to finger crochet by my son V, who goes to Waldorf School in Toronto. The colonial education I received in India (a post-colonial country) taught me to think with metaphors like “decolonize the mind” but did not teach me tangible ways to decolonize with community — while knitting with other women like my grandmother or how gossiping and telling stories matters. In *a place to fall apart*, I knitted and crocheted poorly, much worse than V through some of these tensions and problems. The speculative objects hold multiple materials, including my grandmother's teachings and harvests, all of which project hope for humanity's relationship to nature and not solely to “mother” nature.

⁷ The Atman is neither born nor does it die at any time, nor having been atman, will it cease to exist again. It is unborn, eternal, permanent, and primeval. The Atman is not destroyed when the body is destroyed. (Bhagwad Gita, 2.20)

Prana noun | *pra·na* 'prā-nə : a life breath or vital force principle in Vedic and later Hindu religion

⁸ These ancient Indian mythological epics written in Sanskrit are so intertwined with the public imagination that they form their canon of looking at and living life in the Indian subcontinent and beyond. Ramayan dates to the 4th to 7th CE, and Mahabharat to the 4th CE.

Motherhood and Nature

Fulfilling an assumed biological destiny and carrying my child for nine months not only brought about a sense of fulfillment but also accumulated more physical and emotional pain in my body. I have endured this pain (sciatica and inflammation) for several years (Singh, *No Archive Will Restore You* 61). To trace the roots of this chronic discomfort, I follow my sensations, which have led me to comprehend and acknowledge that the lack of adequate childcare is a systemic failure of the nuclear family model under capitalism and consumerism.⁹ *a place to fall apart* began with an exhibition titled “Bad Mother” to articulate the guilt, failures, pressures, and loneliness of motherhood in a nuclear family system. Simone De Beauvoir wrote that the anthropomorphic projection of Mother onto nature harms ideas about both nature and mother (De Beauvoir, 23). After reading Helen Hester’s *Xenofeminism* and Bruno Latour’s notions of nature and culture, it’s evident that nature is a cultural creation, and both are interconnected (Hester 13; Latour 7). However, projecting human behaviour onto nature in headlines about torrential rains like “Mother Nature’s wrath and fury,” - is grossly generalized and overdetermined (CTV News, 00:03-01:02).¹⁰, for example. Here, the blame for “bad weather” is placed on an imaginary, gendered entity instead of talking about the negative effects of anthropogenic activities from pollution, which has altered the environment, an essentialist human form. This emphasis on the “non-science” of mother nature is tricky since some Indigenous beliefs evoke “mother nature,” but they do it so more with an

⁹ It takes a village to raise a child, as the saying goes but when I extracted a village’s worth of labour from my single body as the primary care giver, it left me riddled with pain and I am dealing with it to this day.

¹⁰ News article referring to” Mother Nature’s wrath” in Ottawa. [Link](#). Accessed 18 Feb 2024.

“Indigenous Place Thought” based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-human derive agency through the extension of these thoughts (Watts qt. by Todd 245). The news anchor mostly blames “Mother Nature” for the bad weather without ongoing relationship or discourse with said mother – “Nature”. But I stay with this trouble and look at multiple perspectives of the conflation of motherhood and nature.

As a mother, I’ve spent the last seven years unlearning gender biases and social conditioning under patriarchy in a postcolonial society that clouded my perceptions of relationships and what it means to be in the world, and I’ve done this primarily through my son V. He has been instrumental in helping me unlearn the world I inherited (Singh, *The Breaks* 48-56). V is unbiased, honest, and has an unfiltered, intuitive, and impartial judgment. This process of undoing biases has helped me formulate a new appreciation of natural processes to see them for what they are outside of preconceptions of patriarchal projections on science and culture. Haraway writes that Gaia (Earth) is not a person but a complex systemic phenomenon that composes a living planet (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 43). I explored anthropomorphic projections of nature and tried to separate them from my understanding of nature. How could I see and feel nature for what it is, while recognizing and understanding the inherent cultural readings of nature that affect my relationship to it? Could I comprehend the continuum of life, decay, and death and make it visible by sketching along with materials? I observed phenomena, processes, and inter-species relationships, such as those between lichens, mulberry trees, and ginkgo trees and tried to tell different stories with these more than humans.

The city of Toronto plants mulberry and ginkgo trees around its sidewalks. Mulberry trees, once planted to provide food for silkworms, are also known for releasing pollen into the air at speeds half the speed of sound. Ginkgo trees, on the other hand, are infamous for producing a foul-smelling fruit. Ginkgo trees especially the female seed pods are extremely stinky. City planners decided to plant only male trees so the sidewalks could remain mess-free and stink-free from fruits from ginkgo and mulberry. However, without warning, some of the male plants switched to being female, producing fruit and making the lovely sidewalks messy anyway. The country's near-fatal excessive pollen from the male trees is the primary cause of asthma and other respiratory diseases (Hill). The Asthma Society, according to Asthma Canada, estimates roughly seven million Canadians have seasonal allergies, while approximately four million people suffer from asthma, which only worsens during the pollen season (qt. by Hill). This gendering and sexism projected onto nature by only selecting male trees have created an imbalance; in their attempt to control the natural products of mulberry trees, their gendered segregation produced an excess of pollen, creating new issues.

Observations of non-human social and sexual behaviour are often used to explain and support normative ideas about human sociality and sexuality. As evolutionary biologist Joan Roughgarden's *Evolution's Rainbow* suggests, biologists tend to observe and interpret nature through a frame of social and sexual normativity (174). Roughgarden suggests this leads to misinterpreting or missing the significance of biodiversity. For instance, lichens are composite organisms that arise from algae or cyanobacteria living amongst filaments of multiple fungi species in a mutualistic relationship. They grow on trees, soil, and stones and help stabilize the soil. Quoting Lynn Margulis's account in "Queer Theory for Lichens," David Griffith

demonstrates that lichens are not anomalies, but rather, are illustrative of the fact that life and nature are found in the complex and queer cobbling together of multispecies relationships (qt. in Griffith 37). I consider how thinking about heterosexual biological reproduction and vertical inheritance as the only way that life produces and reproduces challenges a restricted view of human sexual reproduction. Ideas around nature and motherhood are conflated, not just in mythologies like Gaia and Matra Bhumi but also in Ecofeminist discourses discussed in Maria Mies's article, 'Mother Earth,' as quoted by Helen Hester in *Xenofeminism*. (Qt. in Hester, 2018, p.15). Hence, the need to assign a gender to nature and conflate it with ideas of motherhood is a social heteropatriarchal construct.

My practice of gathering and making with varied materials considers the connections between myself and the land. All art practices are material-based, even the digital arts. How are materials used for making art, and what happens to materials after their short life is over? Thus, it is impossible to discuss sustainability in art materials without considering its relationship to the land.

Fall was a great time to observe death, decay, and regeneration cycles. I looked at the lush green trees turning yellow, orange, and red in one of Toronto's most prominent public parks — High Park — and pondered on the labour involved in what humans tend to casually call "nature." To think that all these leaves and flowers are put to sleep every year and are woken up again in Spring. Maybe this quiet, unreciprocated, ongoing work is why many cultures refer to Nature as Mother. Traditional gender expectations across India might have altered slightly in urban centers, but according to statistics, women still spend 44 hours (about two days) per week doing unpaid labour (Tish Sanghera). Observing these auto-correcting

processes as nature led me to make *Nature, not Mother*. I will unpack this more in Chapter 3 — Tentacular Spontaneity and Play.

Breathing with Algae

Heather Davis argues that the Anthropocene is primarily a sensorial phenomenon: the experience of living in an increasingly diminished and toxic world in Art in the Anthropocene (Davis 3). As we grapple with multiple crises and species loss, the need for thinking beyond anthropocentrism is becoming increasingly apparent. In *The Life of Plants*, Emmanuel Coccia writes about the creation of our atmosphere as the result of a pollution catastrophe, or the Great Oxygenation Event or the Oxygen Catastrophe.” (Coccia 27). Algae and cyanobacteria were the first life forms on Earth. Microalgae are among the most efficient photosynthetic organisms for carbon capture and high biomass productivity. These organisms were the first ones capable of photosynthesis. They were initially responsible for the Great Oxygenation, an event that caused oxygen to exist in free form in the atmosphere, hence benefiting aerobic forms of life. They created the atmosphere and made life possible. I try to find how past catastrophes can inform or alter a current one. What kind of interventions can artists and thinkers do to remember our relationship with these cyanobacteria? Is it possible to re-oxygenate the atmosphere by collaborating with cyanobacteria to make polluted cities livable again?

Living in one of the world's most populated and polluted cities, New Delhi, India, made me think about “breath” or *prana* on a physical, philosophical, and speculative level. I left the city I was born in because I could no longer breathe freely. The worsening Air Quality Index (AQI) also worsened my anxiety about what my child was breathing. The quality of air I

breathe has always been a cause of concern to me since I developed bronchitis when I was 14 years of age. An infographic in Forbes magazine in 2019 coloured all of India red, signifying hazardous air (See Appendix B, Figure 24 pg. 86). In Toronto, the AQI is four on most days (unless it is forest fire season). Why is a country with the worst carbon footprint in the world less polluted (Bernstein)?¹¹ If one tallies products sold in Toronto, it's easy to observe that most things are imported and manufactured from the eastern part of the globe like India, China, Bangladesh, etc. I speculate about the price paid by local populations of those “far away” places regarding their vital materialities (Bennet, 18).¹²

In my climate exile in Canada, a quandary is the indoor air quality inside homes in Toronto. The “inside” is maintained very differently from the outside. The weather is brutal on the northern front. Large infrastructures of atmospheric control are installed to maintain a habitable temperature “inside”. According to statistics from an E.P.A.-funded study conducted in 2001, we spend 90% of our time indoors in North America and sometimes the indoor air is much worse than the outside air.¹³ The panopticon life of the cities propagates this divide between the “inside” and the “outside.”

¹¹ According to an [article](#) in the CBC, Canadians have the highest Carbon footprint in the world.



Figure 9: Independent study with Algae (Summer 2023)

I chanced upon algae as a new architectural solution to recovering indoor air (Teresa). Going deeper into my inquiry into how nature is not a mother, I investigated the iterative, symbiotic species of algae and how to make kin with these 4-billion-year-old organisms to be able to breathe better and make art. The independent study I did over the summer of 2023 explored whether algae can be integrated into my art practice through art objects, offering beauty and respite from everyday life. It also made me think critically about the generative powers of thinking with more than humans. Since then, I have explored ways of making algae accessible, simplifying their maintenance and, in a workshop, encouraging undergraduate students to grow their own cultures.

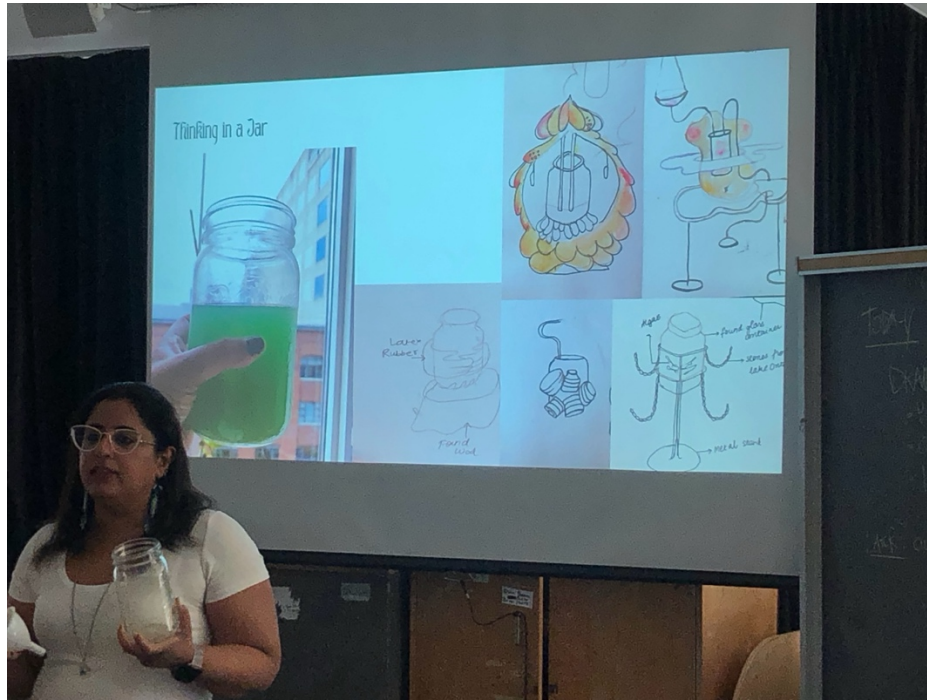


Figure 10: Algae Workshop 4th Oct 2023

Sometimes I felt a bit foolish trying to grow algae cultures in my studio, away from their natural systems like the sun, the lakes, and rocks. I added nutrients to the algacultures, adjusted LED lights, checked water pH, and kept the air-conditioning running on hot days. An inherent contradiction exists within the use of this techno-fix; I am expending energy to create conditions within an unnatural setting that replicates their existing natural habitat. I discussed this problem of a techno-fix with Dr. Ian Clarke from the Faculty of Arts and Science at OCAD University, he said, “There are only sustainable systems and never sustainable

objects” (Ian Clarke in a discussion with the author, 2023).¹⁴ All objects come from somewhere and have an impact and lifecycle beyond their desired use in human endeavours. This became the basis of my ideas around circularity and the definition of sustainability that I explored further.

The divide between the “inside” and the “outside” perpetuates a binary division between nature and culture (Latour 75). The dominant narrative of scarcity and crisis in news cycles that Bruno Latour refers to in his lecture, *Facing Gaia* (Latour 6), focuses on survival without making any real changes or critically looking at root causes that change habits that lead to over-consumption. In a debate about who is responsible for climate change, I think shifting narratives to systemic problems and collective action is important to surpass feeling overwhelmed by the size of the problem which is the climate crisis. Every little and big action, from throwing belongings away instead of repairing them to running the exhaust to dispense the gases out of homes, needs to be reconsidered.

Observing the algae closely is tied to my previous installation — “Nature, not Mother,” Motherhood became a methodology while tending to algae, taking care of it, and observing it for changes in colour, behaviour, and smell, the same way I cared for V when he was a baby. This is a relationship of mutual care, where I take care of the algae, and the algae takes care of

¹⁴ During a visit to my studio to help me grow algae cultures in my studio, Ian Clarke (Associate Professor, Faculty of Arts and Science) suggested that I shift my approach to think about the relationship of a small setup with its environment, as nothing can exist in isolation.

Ian Clarke’s research and teaching are focused on the science of sustainability and how it intersects with the social and cultural aspects of sustainability with a focus on the climate crisis.

me in return. In *Becoming Sensor in Sentient Worlds*, Natasha Myers talks about becoming a sensor with more than humans (Myers, 76). Stories about non-humans do not always involve a one-way imposition of human characteristics on nonhuman others. People looking into nonhumans' richly sensory worlds can tune their imaginations to become more vegetalized (76). Myers argues that the projection goes both ways and humans can become more like plants.

Attuned to Myers, language fails me here as I became aware of the sentience of algae and hence became a sensor. I observed the algae settling at the bottom of plastic bottles but dancing around in glass containers. They turned colour and rotted faster in plastic while remaining a bright green colour for longer in glass bottles. I repeated this hypothesis multiple times with the same result and deduced that algae do not favour plastic for thriving. Had the algae disliked plastic because I don't like it, or was I attuned to not liking plastic because I am like algae? It is hard to verify in deterministic terms, but I feel them like they feel me. Maybe this was a way to sense algae and form a non-verbal, non-verifiable relationship that often arises as a sensation in your gut and moves into concreteness through art making.

Haraway says living with and dying with each other potently in the Cthuluscene can be a fierce reply to the dictates of both Anthropos and Capital (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 2). The living and dying of different species are intrinsically linked to the ongoingness of life on Earth. I bring intergenerational learnings from my grandmother and my son when I create through a land-based practice using found objects, algae, biomaterials, fallen plants and branches. Bringing intangible materials into conversation with other non-biodegradable elements, such as plastics and food packaging, references the materiality of an urban lifestyle.

The chaos and displacement of materials and people, leftovers of colonial occupation and capitalist lifestyles become implicit in my *jugaad* methodology.

The “wrong” Art of Jugaad: Failure as a process

The process often leads me to innovate and come up with new *jugaads* or hacks by using the least resources possible. *Jugaad* is a hack or homegrown solution in the domestic realm of problem-solving, like cobbling together a vehicle for transporting people in villages.¹⁵ They are unregulated, unlicensed, and uninsured, they transport people, fertilizer, farm tools and produce. This is an anti-capitalist practice often used by poor sectors of society. It signals using things outside of consumerism, like locally available motor parts from a junkyard, to solve problems. This methodology is steeped in the grassroots way of life in Northern India; it stays outside of systemic solutions to minor everyday inconveniences, like using kitchen ingredients to cure a cold.

I abandon concrete or creative plans that are pre-determined, and I often start making with questions and sometimes rough sketches. Thinking through some of these questions and theories while playing with what kind of materials are available, I made the shape of the assemblage. As I make this, I highlight the frugal ways of doing things, as those methods might just be one of the strategies that help to imagine thriving beyond the Anthropocene.

¹⁵ The concept originates in a Hindi word that means ‘cobbled together’ — the term was initially used to describe improvised vehicles common in rural north India. Built from diesel pump engines and old motor vehicle parts fitted onto wooden carts, *jugaads* are a cheap and valuable form of motorized transport. Unregulated, unlicensed, and uninsured, they transport people, fertilizer, farm tools and produce.

There were farmer protests around Delhi while writing this thesis that reflected the underlying resistance within the *jugaad*. The police used drones to drop tear gas to control the protesters. One of the young farmers flew kites to combat the drones (Abhay & Raj Shekhar).¹⁶ People who don't have much means can often come up with ingenious ways to solve local problems. There is a deep potential in using what one has at hand. In other words, it means not importing parts from elsewhere, staying within the realms of availability, and improvising and constantly changing strategies to find optimum solutions locally. *Jugaad* includes observing what kind of materials are available around the source of the problem instead of spending resources to transport them over great distances. A kite, which is a child's play object made from very delicate paper, became a tool for resisting police brutality. It is not expensive or professional, but it is a working solution that requires a presence of mind. I have faced quite a bit of backlash from studios at OCAD U when I have tried to hack things together by using plumbing parts for installations instead of making things from scratch. In the economy I come from, making things "well" is not always possible or necessary; they need to work. The obsession with clean lines, perfection, and an unspoken definition of what defines "professional art" is something I challenge in my *jugaad* methodology. Hettie Judah talks about mommy work in *How to Not Exclude Artist Parents (2022)*, and I think this way of making is very much situated in domesticity and play (Judah 28). Being a long-time self-proclaimed domestic goddess myself, I believe in the ingenuity of *jugaad* making. I believe

¹⁶ This is an example of how *jugaad* thinking is a cheap way to solve immediate problems without much need for infrastructure.

domesticity and *Jugaad* are art-making methodologies that challenge what professional art should look like in the exhibitionary logic of a white cube. This produces minimal waste and is situated in a circular economy of repair, recycling, and reuse. With 2 billion tons of garbage produced by human consumption every year, we need small and big strategies to tackle the amount of garbage going into landfills.¹⁷ I investigated natural ecosystems like the “falling whale” to observe how more than humans deal with waste and garbage (Orf). Ecosystems do not have much waste; everything is absorbed, digested, or decomposed. When a whale dies, it falls to the ocean floor and becomes a home and a food source for multiple species that live in a food-poor environment near the sea floor. This makes the life-death engine that sustains our planet visible. I was inspired by the optimum use of resources in this example, which inspires how I make things.

a place to fall apart is made up of found parts, donated, or gifted to me. Halberstam defines queer aesthetics as an ethos of resignation to failure, where failure is an opportunity rather than a dead end (96). Embracing slow making and learning from failures by failing many times and often incorporating failures into the artwork has taught me many important lessons in installation art (See Appendix B, Figure 32). First, always measure thrice and cut once. Second, use the discarded materials for prototypes. Third, have good drawings and believe in them. Fourth, discuss drawings with peers, professors, and technicians, but have conviction in your ideas. Fifth, feel somewhat assured that the corridors between studios are a great place to have an emotional meltdown (which alone can be a technology to clear out negative

¹⁷ The world garbage [statistics](#). Accessed 18 Feb. 2024.

emotions). *a place to fall apart* was inspired by the need to create a safe space to have such meltdowns, not to hold it all together and let the land hold you as you fall apart in the hope that it provides a space for healing.



Chapter 3:

Tentacular Spontaneity and Play

While trying to find a method to my interdisciplinary madness, I devised a methodology of making, what I refer to as Tentacular Spontaneity (See Appendix A, Figure 25). As mentioned before, the word tentacle comes from the Latin *tentaculum*, meaning “feeler,” and *tentare*, meaning to feel” and “to try” (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 31). This Tentacular Spontaneity aims to mimic Chthonic critters who move, make, unmake, and create material meaningfulness of earth processes simultaneously (2). It offers a methodology for making outside thinking patterns, fostering new relationships with ideas, and collaborating with more than humans through these feelers. The feelers I use are “play,” “deep listening,” and “storytelling.”

Within tentacular spontaneity, the main praxis of relating to my materials is through deep listening, which I define as an intentional method of responding to and aligning with the materials through intuition, feeling and mindfulness. I treat the material as a living entity rather than a resource (Kimmerer, 83). This practice is how I make and think through my assemblages, keeping ideas of critical theory and ontology in mind while playing with materials and leaning into material agency. Failures to work with material a certain way inform further experimentation.

Drawing from my multiple roles as a parent, artist, and earthling, I find inspiration in my child's free and risky play — where rules are created and abandoned as often as needed. I was sent an article about encouraging “risky play” by one of my son’s teachers, which reinforced my parental pedagogy of letting the child decide what the physical limitations of their play

are.¹⁸ The Waldorf school is based on Rudolf Steiner's philosophy.¹⁹ Apart from guarding what goes in his mouth, I have never tried to stop him from running, jumping from unlevelled surfaces or ruining the walls with his drawings (Nelson, 14). We have climbed gates, smashed rocks, created experiments out of onion skins, attached toy arrows to our shirts with tape and much more. Risky play tests the boundaries of experimentation and offers learning through embodiment, where the child learns about their relationship and position in society by making mistakes. This child-led play has nourished my creative process by opening my mind to anti-productive creation, where rules are changed often.



Figure 11: V making burnt wood and coffee drawing

¹⁸ Growing up, I often got groceries from the nearby market by myself as early as 7 years old. That has informed my definition of “risk”. [Link to article](#)

¹⁹ Waldorf Style of education is based on the teachings of Rudolf Steiner who was an artist and a scientist. Pedagogy is centered on actions and embodied learning by integrating math with jumping and playing for instance. See [Waldorf Education](#).

During the Mothra artist parent residency at Artscape Gibraltar Point in November 2023, V and I spent 7 days exploring the beach, finding new materials, and touching trees, branches, and shells—all while playing. One day, we brought burnt wood from the firepit to the studio space. V dropped this charcoal substance into my coffee, and the plop made him laugh.

Curious, I mixed the charcoal and coffee liquid and made a mark on the paper. V joined in and splashed a lot of this new pigment onto paper with bare hands. We played with this for a bit, carelessly, and I found a lot of joy in this kind of making with no agenda. It was healing, and it unlocked a relationship with a new material with bare fingers for mark making. While giving in to my child's idea of play, I observed my focus on the production of beautiful and composed things like monsters and trees. V's focus was often on play and making a mess.

This play-based pedagogy allows new experiences with materials that may lead to new art-making methods.

It matters which ideas we think other ideas with (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 14). The process of making is informed by theory, but it is not about the theory anymore. The ideas create an open-ended entangling to think through and make speculative installations. Making starts with bringing different materials together and devising the path of least resistance to bind them together, keeping in mind not to introduce any elements that cannot be composted (e.g. PVA glue). The structure of my artworks is often created with wire or bamboo reeds.

Next comes repetition using twines, cords, or gelatine squares. Making is somatic and creates a space to heal and relax by repeatedly crocheting materials together, interweaving them with found objects like chips, toys or gelatine squares moulded from plastic takeaway containers.



Figure 12: A close-up shot of Ashthapadma at a *place to fall apart*. Photo by author.

Material has metaphoric and semantic meanings. Just like impressionists use oil to represent images that create representative images, varying materials can bring their narratives into the artwork that the hand of the artist produces. While researching nontraditional and compostable art materials like gelatine, I came across Anicka Yi's work.



Figure 13: Anicka Yi, installation view, 7,070,430K of Digital Spit, Kunsthalle Basel, 2015. Photo by Philipp Hänger/
Kunsthalle Basel

This ephemeral work called 7,070,430K of Digital Spit was exhibited at Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland, in 2015 and is made up of perishable substances, from deep-fried flowers to recalled powdered milk, potato chips or snail excretions, creating a large complex structure. It is grotesque with a peculiar brand of techno-sensual alchemy, which assaults the senses as much as it calls in a strange emotional charge.²⁰ She meticulously fries hundreds of flowers in batter, dries them and then arranges them in this installation, which collectively decays and changes over time, embracing impermanence as part of existence. Similarly, in my artworks like “Nature Not Mother,” I draw along with continuous, repetitive, and iterative processes to make works that change form, decay, and even emit smells in conversation with the

²⁰ See the exhibition page [here](#). Accessed 16 Feb. 2024.

environment they are placed in. It can feel like the artworks acquire a personality and eventually start playing with and affecting viewers by melting, swaying, and changing colour.

Informed by Yi's engagement with materiality and allowing materials to naturally change and decay, is in direct contradiction with the museum's motivation to conserve, and this supported my praxis of deep listening as I worked with my art materials. Being attuned to their agencies, I played along and observed the artwork and, in turn, the materials, listening deeply to how the reeds like to bend, or the gelatin prefers to melt. Deep listening to my materials and what feels right helped me develop my methodology of sketching, playing along, and collaborating with them. Active collaboration, like child-like sketching, complicates categories and helps to find playful connections by working with algae, gelatin, and decaying plants.

Using these unconventional art materials, I layer found and rejected materials in the art space like sumac cones, orange peels, plastic trays, and algae to create installations that illustrate cycles of beauty in decay and growth, imagining a thrival, not a mere survival in the ecological crises we are facing. The result is a series of assemblages that create a speculative world similar yet adjacent to our familiar environment, where hybrids and multitudes are made visible by employing storytelling and world-making. Creating *a place to fall apart* in a gallery setting allows for non-gallery-like behaviour. The viewers are invited to lie down, relax and touch things if that pleases them, under a canopy of newly invented species — Alien Flowers, Alien Garden, The Eight Legged or Asthapadma, Hornests, Mutations and Gaia: Nature Not Mother while reading stories about them in the zine.

In play — I invoke presence (Krishnamurthy, 52). I cannot play unless I am truly present in the moment. In this making, right or wrong, worthy, or unworthy, and other value judgements

lose significance. In this process-based making, I am accountable for the objects I create and the larger systems I depend on for resources like land, water, air, and community. This mindfulness and play go hand in hand with making with materials. My grandmother's teachings inform my eight assemblages of choosing a path of least resistance, just like the fragrant jasmine flowers choosing to come with me — or not. This is an embodied practice to move away from determinism and teleology to tell bigger stories about the ongoingness and interconnectedness of art objects to the life surrounding and creating them.²¹

Agency of Materials: Objects of Care and Speculation

Alarm clocks deadlines months and years.

time itself, all human concepts of capitalizing on

each moment of passing life.

How long does it take to grow a forest?

How old is a drop of water?

Do the rocks kiss the water drops when they give away their minerals?

What if we only take what's given?

²¹ “The stories of both the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene teeter constantly on the brink of becoming much Too Big. Marx did better than that, as did Darwin. We can inherit their bravery and capacity to tell big-enough stories without determinism, teleology, and plan.” (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 50)



Figure 14: My Alien Friends installed at Graduate Gallery, OCAD U. Aug 2023.

While thinking about materials for making artwork with algae, I had to pick a non-reactive material, something that does not overpower or hide the algae blooms. Glass was an obvious choice, but since I did not have access to a glass workshop, I used the glass mason jars that a previous student left behind. This use of domestic objects, like mason jars, reflects my commitment to *jugaad* through the blending of utility and aesthetics. Many people asked me if this brilliant green liquid was an energy drink they could consume. The intent was to have people recall something consumable and delicious, suspended within an installation. This is contrary to the bad reputation that algae have for being anything but consumable. It's something to keep out — out of swimming pools, aquariums, and ponds. Considering how good spirulina and chlorella are for human consumption, I decentre their meaning when they appear indoors, not in a murky pond or lake.

As Jane Bennett writes in *Vibrant Matter*, a lot happens to the concept of agency once non-humans are figured less as social constructions and more as actors and once humans are assessed as vital materialities (Bennet 27-32). Working with algae has been an exercise in deep listening and observing my non-human friends' subtle mood changes with all my senses and desire to collaborate.

Over the summer of 2023, I looked at algae under the microscope. With this exercise, I wanted to get closer to algae and have a one-on-one relationship with this organism, but the microscope created distance and hierarchy between us. As a human, I had the power to investigate the algae without them having a part in their story. Haraway talks about getting rid of the god trick (*Situated Knowledges* 581). Looking at the algae this way gave me a feeling of a “god trick,” as if flying over strange worlds with an all-seeing god’s view. How could I claim objectivity without performing “the god trick”? The “god trick” is about enacting “a conquering gaze from nowhere” (581). Looking into algae from above was a vision from nowhere. How could I tell a story with algae with a view from below, from the point of view of the algae? How can I become a sensor or a tentacle sensing algae, leaving behind my preconceived notions of what knowledge and stories might mean (Myers 76)? By replicating a colonial and conquering gaze through the microscope, I felt separated from my practice of deep listening, and this was further cemented by my motivation to create from their perspective. I wanted to find a view from below. Hence, I came up with the idea of suspending the artwork from the ceiling.

When viewers were invited into the gallery to “look up” at the installation, it unsettled a hierarchy and gallery decorum. Viewers were not observing the assemblages from afar, but

they were immersed under them, and they momentarily became part of the installation. Many visitors laid down and rested. Friends huddled and read stories. The installation invited viewers to touch and not distance themselves.



Figure 15: Friends visit and rest while reading stories about a place to fall apart. Photo by Raquel Mendes



Figure 16: Kids sit and read under the canopy in the gallery



Figure 17: Slow Painting with Spirulina

To get closer to the algae, I strained the algae cultures every 15-20 days as they got too opaque and harvested a few grams of pigment so as not to take too much, keeping in mind the guidelines of “Honorable Harvest” (Kimmerer 84). I ate this strain a few times, and it did not make me ill. The practice of tasting things comes from having to cook a lot as a parent. While cooking, I always taste food to check for salt. Spirulina is a superfood, and hence, I knew I could eat it. Eating it also helped me understand the texture and taste and how it related to the algae doing well. The bright green-coloured strains tasted smooth and mushy, while the darker shades of sage tasted coarse and not so great. There were subtle differences in the taste, but the algae multiplied faster when they were bright green, so I deduced that bright green was the colour they felt best at.

I applied the pigment I collected directly to the paper, which turned out to be a fugitive colour that vanished over a few months, barely leaving behind a trace (See Appendix B, Figure 30, pg. 80). I then mixed it with linseed oil to form a paint. The quantity of this paint was so little that it constrained me only to be able to make a few marks twice a month (See Figure 17). Additionally, the pigment produced a different shade of sage every time. Over time, this pigment often changed or became desaturated depending on the quality of the algae produced as well as the quantity of the linseed oil mixed. This exercise decentered my control over the painting as the only actor. The algae became an active collaborator in establishing its agency over the paintings. These marks in Figure 17 were made months apart. They later became part of the mattress at a place to fall apart (As seen in Figure 15, pg. 54).

This process was extremely slow and intentional. Being with the algae and seeing when it was ready to be de-canted. It was on the borderline of being about to play and process, and it became a meditation of smearing spirulina paint with my fingers on the canvas instead. While making these marks, I thought of the shape of these single-celled organisms and how they multiply every week with so little effort on my part. This technique of slow painting is something I developed when I was a young mother. I would paint every night when my child went to sleep. Painting in very little light and quietly, I made very few marks during each painting session. It was an exercise to play with the material to stay connected with making and not focus on long-term production. Focusing on the fact that long before humans existed, algae created a habitable planet, and they continue to do so despite anthropogenic activities. These long and thin research-based paintings were later sewn into my artworks.

I came across Diego Bianchi's work during a conversation with Carol Weinbaum, who had acquired one of his pieces named "Low Harmony."²² She graciously shared that the artist had encapsulated river water in a frame and attached a bubbler air pump to it. A few months after obtaining this artwork, she observed the formation of algae inside the piece and expressed genuine concerns about health and safety.



Figure 18: Low Harmony by Diego Bianchi. Courtesy Carol Weinbaum

Upon discovering that algae significantly contribute to the world's oxygen production, she became intrigued by my suggestion that she reconsider her relationship with this unique art

²² Carol Weinbaum is the chair for the Weinbaum Trust that sent me on a residency to Mexico City with artist duo Tony Macarena.

object. "Low Harmony," in mysterious ways, takes care of her by providing indoor oxygen, and it subtly requests her care in return. As mentioned already, algae, unfortunately, is imagined as a negative occurrence.

Natural environments, or wherever one finds wild growth, can be a great school of learning and observation. Reading Susan Simard's *Finding the Mother Tree*, I was reminded of the immense philosophical and tactile learning that can happen through touching trees and lying on the grass while thinking about extensive mycelium networks connected for miles.

Observing the big trees' shadow saplings to help them find a grounding illustrated and reinforced my ideas of interconnectedness (Simard 56). Observed through a keen eye, the cycle of leaves growing and falling is repetitive yet unique. Each leaf can grow out of a different kind of node and can have a unique pattern of colours on itself. In a way, this is like moving in circles yet never returning to the same point. I applied this observation while making my artwork. For instance, I made gelatine squares repeatedly, yet each one of them was unique. I made several iterations of alien flowers with orange peels, yet each of the flowers is unique. I observe that an octopus is an iteration of the starfish. Mimicking this iteration technique is how I taught myself to make objects of gelatine. These unique objects served as a meditation on how they cannot be commodified or categorized.



Figure 19: Alien Flower. eggshells, sumac, rope, wire, gelatine, marshmallows.

Nature Not Mother

The pleasure of tending to and observing non-human materials in the studio is like the joy that comes from observing my son V, growing unhindered, uninterrupted, and unbothered.

Something about conspiring with unpredictable and lively sculptural materials makes me want to let the pain of growing up and living in a patriarchal system make its own noise (Singh, *The Breaks* 61). How can I make a living through this pain generative? As a mother, woman, caretaker, and giver of life, struggling with actual physiological pain, what would a life free of this pain look like? How can we radically accept pain as a necessary part of bodies, life, aging, and disability, in a way that generates joy? How can my speculative installations support such a vision? I dream of thriving and not just barely surviving, with abundant pleasure and joy. *Creating a place to fall apart* was meant to be healing and I learned a lot about my biases, preconceptions, and proverbial grids that had locked me into fictional

restrictions (Foucault 12). The fact that these materials and organisms do not behave as expected and have agency beyond the proverbial grids soothes my body from being subjected to fitting in a grid.

How can we comprehend nature for nature without anthropomorphic projections of motherhood? This work started with a conversation about making visible renditions of processes observed in nature that have a continuum. The cycles are repeated, yet every time, there is a unique result. The first step to solving a problem comes from acknowledging the problem. However, I think the finality of "solving problems" is a colonial methodology. Instead, I sit with these problems and listen and often stay with this trouble.



Figure 20: Nature not Mother at Grad Gallery at OCADU

The cycles are repeated, yet every time, there is a unique result. Just like every leaf on a plant is unique and grows out of a different kind of node, yet another leaf grows when spring comes. This moving in circles yet never returning to the same point is what I observe in nature and what I adopted in *a place to fall apart*. I made gelatine squares repeatedly, yet each one was unique. I made alien flowers with orange peels, yet each petal is unique.



Figure 21: One of the pieces in *The New Alphabet* (2023) by Athena Papadopoulos. Photo by author

I visited the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) and discovered the works of Athena Papadopoulos' show *The New Alphabet* (2023). I was inspired by the composition of various

objects found in these forms. These artworks were a result of Papadopoulos undoing and re-materializing many of her home belongings — furniture, clothing, stuffed objects etc. while being in isolation during the pandemic lockdown of 2020 to 2022. It was a visceral experience viewing these familiar objects distorted to form 13 sculptures that instigated a feeling of nostalgia from somewhere else. This series was called “Trees with no Sound,” reappropriating the familiar objects to make it extraordinary. The way ordinary objects are glamourized and used meticulously in this series makes the trivialities of ordinary life and accumulation visible in a fantastical yet grotesque manner, creating a world of its own. It aligns with the way I have created a world in *a place to fall apart*, by appropriating everyday objects like orange peels, plastic trays and more.

Science fiction writers like Ursula Le Guin in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Margaret Atwood in the *Mad Adam Trilogy*, and Donna Haraway in “The Compost Stories” have imagined such utopian worlds, places where hegemonic systems have fallen apart. *The Left Hand of Darkness* is set on the planet Gethen, where the inhabitants are ambisexual beings who can change their gender depending on their partner's sexual needs. While there are other problems, it gives me a place to imagine a society with fewer gender-based crimes. In the final chapter of *Staying with the Trouble*, Donna Haraway's Camille Stories is an invitation to a collective speculative fabulation that follows five generations of a symbiogenetic joining of a human child and monarch butterflies along these insects' migrations between Mexico, the United States and Canada. What I find most intriguing are the conditions that led to the rise of the Camilles. An earth-wide creative resistance arose from people being profoundly tired of looking for external resolutions while ignoring systemic problems. This speculative fabulation

offers a model for imagining resistance through creative small and big mesopolitical endeavours. Inspired by this speculative world-making, I created a speculative fabulation that shapes *a place to fall apart*, where storytelling is the result of making with tentacular spontaneity. The narrative ties my theory and makes me find a place to fall apart and stay in an entangled web of troubles. These stories about *a place to fall apart* are included in Appendix A along with a prelude. I have included three stories here as they align with my making and thinking — Gaia — Nature Not Mother, Alien Garden, Asthapadma and more.

Gaia: Nature not Mother (Speculative fiction)

The Quest: V's Journey to Find Nature's Embrace in Urban Oasis

In a whimsical world overrun by the plastic afterlife, a young adventurer named V embarks on a heartfelt quest through a maze of enchanting sanctuaries known as "NatureNests." V navigates the urban landscape, seeking not just a mother but a profound connection with what they believe is their true mother — Nature herself or could it be Gaia?

Gaia, as V affectionately calls them, whispers secrets of biophilic wonders and beckons with their organic allure. They are more than just structures; they are living, breathing entities that hold the promise of kinship between the little wanderer and the world beyond their understanding.

V's adventure unfolds amidst arches that resemble the welcoming arms of plant-like growth; their branches woven from recycled plastic mesh like a tapestry of dreams. Crocheted patterns and melded plasticlomerates, spun from discarded treasures into a tri-infinity shape, sway gently like friendly spirits, captivating the imagination of the curious child.

Amidst these arboreal wonders, V discovers veils of resilient plants cascading like waterfalls. To them, these aren't just plants; they are wise guardians with whom V shares tales of their

day and confides their yearning for a mother's embrace. In the dance of the creepers and the whispers of the wind, V finds solace and companionship but not mother.

In V's eyes, Gaia is not an inert being land but a living entity with feelings and stories to tell. Together these Gaia nests form a "a place to fall apart"; an enchanting sanctuary that becomes a potential hideout, a secret spot where they can seek comfort and share hopes and dreams. Through V's eyes, we witness the transformative power of Gaia as a nurturing force, embracing not only V but all who seek the warmth of its embrace.

Alien Garden

"The Alien Garden" is a speculative assemblage of newly formed mutations of plants and waste hybrids discovered near a landfill outside of Toronto. This assemblage has its roots in conflating several ideas. First, the resilience of plants persevering on the edges of roads, pushing through concrete as if mocking the concretized urban infrastructure. Second, existential questions problems of ever-increasing human garbage on the planet and the ever-presence of plastics in our water, clouds, and bodies.

This assemblage plays with the idea of envisioning a future a century from now, where Alien Flowers, crafted from a fusion of orange peels, local flowers, Tim Horton lids, and popcorns, marshmallows and other found materials defy categorization in a complex, painterly sculpture. The garden challenges conventional notions of what is natural or artificial, urging viewers to transcend rigid categories and enjoy the gift of creation itself. Alien Garden is an exploration of plant agency, acknowledging the living presence and interconnectedness of plants when they refuse to do what humans expect them to. "Alien Garden" aims to spark a renewed appreciation for nature's iterative adaptability by encouraging viewers to reflect on

the tenacity of life, flourishing even in the most unexpected corners of our urban landscapes. These assemblages are part of a larger series that challenges the idea of the "art object" as something permanent, acquirable, and "professional" by creating frugal, intricate objects out of discards, rejects and materials that refuse to be boxed or stored by growing mould when sealed off. Almost, demanding to be taken care of and be seen instead of being locked up in a storage locker.



Figure 22: Alien Garden installed at JacobxToldeo in Mexico City, February 2024

Unearthly Blooms Emerge on Abandoned Landfill, Defy Categorization

Mexico City, Earth — Year 2Q24

A century after the closure of the international trash trade (ITT), when eastern countries stopped accepting garbage exports from Canada, once a routine practice, a groundbreaking discovery has emerged from Toronto's local landfills. Local reports are flooding in about the appearance of otherworldly vegetation, aptly named by scientists as "Alien Flowers." Teams of botanists and xenobiologists are converging on the site, eager to unravel the mysteries of this unprecedented species.

Initial probes into the alien landscape reveal a peculiar anomaly that challenges the very fabric of botanical understanding. These mysterious blossoms, sprouting from the remnants of the landfill, stand as a testament to nature's ability to adapt and thrive in unexpected places. The flowers, comprised of a bizarre amalgamation of orange peels, sumac flowers, and discarded Tim Hortons coffee cup lids, blur categories. Dr. Holly Turner, a leading xenobotanist, heads the research expedition to Don Valley. She describes the queer objects as defying classificatory orders dear to the Natural Sciences, rejecting the dichotomy between what is considered "natural" and what is deemed "artificial.". As the scientists delve into their study, the alien flowers exhibit behaviour that adds an extra layer of intrigue. It seems these blossoms possess a collective consciousness, communicating with each other through subtle vibrations that are signs of adaptation to environmental changes. The phenomenon challenges not only human understanding of botany but also the interconnectedness of all living things.

Authorities are urging caution as they issue a public advisory: residents and researchers alike are warned against approaching the new species without proper protection, as unconfirmed

reports are suggesting these Alien Flowers may exhibit carnivorous tendencies. As humanity stands on the cusp of a botanical revolution, the discovery at Don Valley forces a reevaluation of human's relationship with nature and the potential for life to thrive in unexpected places.

Pleasure

I started a *place to fall apart* with questions like — Who is nature? What and where is the beauty of decaying objects? Is it possible to shift the focus of art objects from being viewed as a means of accumulating wealth to being valued as objects of care, pleasure, and joy? Approaching art making with the same zest I make dinner with — a kitchen-to-art gallery approach — I built a speculative world to bring these multiple entanglements to the same plane at a *place to fall apart*.

In Xenofeminism, Helen Hester advocates for a "technomaterialist" approach to feminism that embraces technology as an activism tool and a means of challenging and subverting traditional gender roles: "If nature is unjust, change nature!" (Hester 3). Hester illustrates the importance of using technology or other tools that might have patriarchal origins to further the feminist agenda and aim for true emancipation. However, she also acknowledges the potential pitfalls of relying too heavily on technology. To write speculative fiction to connect with my making, I collaborated with Artificial Intelligence (Chat GPT) to imagine an alternate future full of plant-plastic hybrids in interconnected and tangled stories of symposi. I wanted to

extend the definition of technology itself by considering what else could be a technological tool. For example, a hug could be healing, safety, and comfort technology. The definition of technology can be expanded beyond patriarchal and colonial categories like AI and computers, including feminist tools such as compassion, community, and care.

a place to fall apart was created with these technologies of care in mind, informed by Audre Lorde's essay, "Uses of the Erotic," where she discusses the cost of the detachment of the erotic as a source of power (Lorde 27-35). The chapter discusses the effect that this detachment has on women's existence. The erotic is a source of power that can connect multitudes and create change. I think of the erotic as a feminist technology where feeling, intuition and joy can create a shared spiritual plane of interconnections, lessening differences between humans and non-humans (Lorde 31). Reclaiming feelings as a source of knowledge and power shined light upon an old knowledge source that I have depended on and trained throughout my life — my gut or intuition. Intending to move the idea of care into objects, I explored a mutual relationship of care with kombucha, plants, algae, and sourdough, which were also sources of pleasure and joy.

Bringing Hester's techno materialism into conversation with Lorde's erotic power while keeping Haraway's call to collaborate with humans and more than humans, including Artificial Intelligence, I have created stories that manifest a shared spiritual plane of multitudes and interconnections between humans and non-humans.

Some concluding thoughts

a place to fall apart aimed to incite conversations around art and science, natural and unnatural, and living and decay as a continuum of interconnected and interrelated matters.

This needed staying in the trouble of thinking beyond the binary separation between categories of nature and culture with Haraway. Imagining how critters (human and non-human) are penetrable within environments with Kim De Wolff and Natasha Myers.

Becoming a sensor with materials by developing tentacular spontaneity as a main praxis of relating to my materials through “deep listening,” an intentional method of responding to and aligning with the materials through intuition, feeling and mindfulness.

Throughout the making of this thesis, I have collaborated with more than humans, thinking about human boundaries of engaging with algae, plants, and remnants of animal bones through gelatine as well as artificial intelligence (AI). Many times, the AI was constrained by its biases, and I subsequently edited those portions to cultivate a human-AI hybrid form of storytelling—this deliberate decision aimed to build upon the collective knowledge of past generations, forming a hive mind.

This thesis created a speculative world where stories were woven to imagine new, inclusive and collaborative futures along with Chthonic critters. Joyful resilience in ecological crises includes forming shared planes of existence where human-nonhuman kinship is made visible, and there is a collective possibility to heal together.

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Appendix A

Speculative Fiction: World-Building – a place to fall apart

In the year 2Q48, the global community faces the consequences of neglecting numerous climate emergencies, including wildfires, melting glaciers, rising sea levels, rampant hyper-consumption, and the depletion of Earth's natural resources. These factors have resulted in prolonged droughts, crop failures, and heat waves over several decades, leading to a significant decline in the human population and the extinction of numerous plant and animal species. Despite the mourning for the loss of life, both human and non-human, there is a simultaneous sense of wonder at the emergence of new and resilient life forms, such as innovative alien flowers, plastiglomerate-based organisms, algae arachnoids and more (Robertson).

Over the past century, countless species have perished, yet the Earth has revealed new, unexpected inhabitants that captivate the imagination with their intelligence and energy. In response to the ecological crisis, a global movement has taken shape, advocating for an Earth-wide boycott of purchasing new items. This movement is marked by a collective shift toward making, mending, and repurposing. A wave of individuals with a talent for fixing and enhancing existing items has risen, joined by a community of innovative thinkers who are reshaping the way society interacts with the environment.

This post-biophilic, post-survivalist movement operates on the principles of mutualism and draws inspiration from ancient indigenous values prioritizing community over individualism. The goal is to establish novel, climate-resilient forms of plant and animal life, serving as both

poignant reminders of a troubling past and cautionary symbols for a future where collective efforts, encompassing both humans and non-humans, are essential for thriving.

All the installations are collaborations with more than humans. Throughout this thesis, I have delved into the concept of collaboration, pushing its boundaries by engaging with algae, plants, and remnants of animal bones or gelatine. Additionally, I have incorporated another form of technological consciousness, known as Artificial Intelligence (AI), to collaborate with while crafting the speculative short stories that constitute *a place to fall apart*. Many times, the AI was constrained by its understanding, and I subsequently edited those portions to cultivate a human-AI hybrid form of storytelling. This deliberate decision is strategic, aiming to build upon the collective knowledge of past generations, forming a hive mind. Much like Nam June Paik, I utilize technology not out of admiration but as a tool for expressing my critical perspective.²³

²³ Having been a video and motion artist, I have been inspired by Korean artist, Nam June Paik's ability to use technology to tell multi-layered stories. He once said, "I use technology in order to hate it properly," recognizing technology's potential to connect but also to corrode.

Zine: Stories about a place to fall apart



Figure 23 My son's teachers Ms. Vera and Ms. Granger at the gallery opening reading the stories about a place to fall apart

Mantra of the whole

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

Hindi translation

वह पूर्ण था/ है सृष्टी उत्पत्ती के पहले भी, उत्पत्ती के बाद भी यह पूर्ण है , मतलब एक पूर्ण से दुसरा एक पूर्ण पैदा हुआ वह भी पूर्ण ही है । पूर्ण से पूर्ण निकलने के बाद भी जो बचा हुआ है वह भी पूर्ण ही है !

English translation

That (Universe) is the whole. This (Earth) is the whole. From wholeness emerges wholeness.
Wholeness removed from wholeness, remains whole.

Prelude

In the year 2R57, on the outskirts of the once bustling metropolis of Neo-Delhili, Dr. Deeniko, a renowned anthropologist with a passion for unravelling the mysteries of humanity's past, stumbled upon a cache of ancient artifacts that held the key to an extraordinary revelation. As the remnants of an old internet server lay dormant in a dilapidated data center, Dr. Deeniko found herself immersed in a digital realm that connected her with a forgotten era—the early 2Qth century.

Guided by curiosity, she embarked on a journey through the digital debris, navigating through virtual landscapes buried in the recesses of abandoned hard drives. With each line of code she deciphered, a peculiar narrative unfolded—one that spoke of a peculiar intersection between nature and technology, a bizarre experiment or maybe it was an evolution that seemed to transcend the boundaries of imagination.

Amidst the binary chaos, Dr. Deeniko uncovered a trove of information about hybrid species, entities that defied the conventional laws of xenobiology. The digital echoes revealed a lost era of sympoetic species that blurred the lines between the organic and the synthetic. Plastic species evolved with trash flowers and animals adorning the internet archives, each creation boasting a peculiar amalgamation of artificial and natural components.

Through magazines, news articles, fluff PR, and an archive of tweets frozen in time, Dr. Deeniko pieced together a mosaic of this forgotten epoch. The digital whispers spoke of a society entranced by the possibilities of melting categories, where natural imagination knew no bounds, and it seemed that Gaia itself was iterating to produce multiple ways to live with anthropogenic waste, genocides, and loss of ecosystems.

As the anthropologist delved deeper into the data, she could not shake the feeling that these hybrid creations held secrets that transcended the digital confines. Driven by a sense of obligation to unearth the truth, she resolved to find these fantastical beings and bring them to *a place to fall apart*.

Alien Flowers



Figure 24: Alien Flower as exhibited as part of the installation *Nurture in Nature* at East End Arts for Nuit Blanche 2023 in collaboration with Raquel Mendes. Photo by author.

Tweet

Alien Flower is a queer object that explores the gaps between being natural and manufactured, growing and decaying. It consumes as well as makes new. In a world where once only perfect flowers (one with both male and female parts as per taxonomies) were valued, Alien Flower challenged the binary notions of gender altogether. Alien Flower refuses to identify or categorize itself into a neat little box to disallow capitalism to market it for profits.

Alien Garden



Figure 25: Alien Garden in Mexico City, Feb 2024. Photo by author



Figure 26: Alien Garden as installed as part of *a place to fall apart* at Ignite Gallery. April 2024. Photo by Raquel Mendes

Alien Garden is an assemblage of newly formed mutations of plants and waste hybrids discovered near the Don Valley landfill. This assemblage conflates ideas of human hyperconsumption with the resilience of plant life pushing through concrete edges of urban landscapes. It envisions an adjacent speculative future, where Alien Flowers, crafted from a fusion of orange peels, local flowers, coffee cup lids, and excessive snacks, defy categorization in a complex, painterly sculpture. This installation explores plant agency, acknowledging plants' living presence and interconnectedness when they refuse to do what humans expect them to. The garden challenges conventional notions of what is natural or artificial, urging viewers to think beyond rigid categories.

Hornests



Figure 27: Hornests as part of *a place to fall apart* at Ignite Gallery. April 2024. Photo by Raquel Mendes

@themWanderingNews

Mysterious Encounter Inside Elephanta Caves: Tourists Encounter Abstract Glowing Entity

Mumbai, Juniation Eighteshwar, 2Q48

In a surprising turn of events, a group of tourists exploring the renowned Elephanta Caves stumbled upon an otherworldly phenomenon, described as an abstract glowing entity suspended from the cave's ceiling. Reports are emerging suggesting that this enigmatic presence is being perceived as a consciousness.

The incident occurred as the kayaking group ventured into the depths of the ancient caves, an old UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its rock-cut sculptures now half submerged in the Arabian Sea. The peculiar discovery has sparked curiosity and speculation among visitors and experts alike.

Eyewitnesses claim that the glowing nest is like that entity that looks like a hornet's nest. Its radiant glow is described as calming and mesmerizing, leading some visitors to assert that it possesses a consciousness of its own. It's as if the entity communicated with us on a deeper level, bringing an unexpected sense of calmness," remarked one of the tourists, expressing the peculiar emotional impact experienced in the presence of the mysterious being.

Initial examinations suggest that the glowing entity is not a man-made structure appears to be a natural occurrence and seems to have some plastic parts growing out of its organic ones. We are working with experts in various fields, including archaeology and geology, to understand the nature of this entity. The reports of visitors feeling a sense of consciousness or calmness are intriguing, and we are approaching this with a scientific perspective," stated Dr. Ananya Meghwal, a prominent archaeologist involved in the investigation.

As news of the encounter spreads, the Elephanta Caves, already renowned for their cultural and historical significance, are drawing increased attention. Visitors and researchers from various parts of the country are expressing interest in exploring the mysterious phenomenon in the caves. As the investigation continues, enthusiasts and experts alike await answers to unravel the mystery behind the abstract glowing nest-like entity in one of India's ancient and revered cave sites.

Ashthapadma (The Eight Legged)



Figure 28: Ashthapadma (The Eight Legged)

New Species of Sentient Eight-Legged Creature with Sensory Tentacles Discovered

Year 2Q24

In a remarkable development, scientists have discovered a new species of a sentient eight-legged creature adorned with goldenrod plants and possessing sensory tentacles. This hybrid marvel resembles a flying spider and has recycled plastics and other human waste as its body parts.

Unlike conventional creatures, this sentient being feels emotions and experiences sensations through intricate tentacles, enhancing its connection with the environment. Some young children were reported to have made friends with the Ashthapadma by feeding it other spiders, and it seems to respond to this kindness by fluttering its wings.

The discovery has sparked awe and curiosity, highlighting our city's ongoing evolution and symbiosis. Researchers are excited about the implications for environmental harmony and interspecies communication, envisioning a future where such sentient beings contribute to a thriving and interconnected ecosystem.

Mutations



Figure 29: Mutations. *Copper, Gelatine, welding rod, rope*. 2024 at Ignite Gallery, OCADU. Photo by Raquel Mendes

Plastic legacy mutates into unrecognizable creatures.

In a haunting twist of the Plastic Age legacy, remnants of synthetic waste have birthed mutated creatures unrecognizable to the natural world. These bizarre entities, once discarded plastic items now fused with organic matter, roam the landscape. Witness accounts describe surreal amalgamations—plastic bottles sprouting tendrils like vines, old toys morphing into limb-like structures. Scientists warn of ecological repercussions, urging vigilance in waste management. This eerie evolution serves as a stark reminder of humanity's environmental impact, a cautionary tale echoing through the mutated whispers of a plastic legacy reshaped beyond recognition.

Purna: Simulations of the whole



Figure 30: Purna: Simulations of the whole. Spirulina, thrifted vases, bubbler, donated rubber motor, MDF, local poplar wood, scrap metal, acrylic sheet, plumbing parts, Delrin, bolts, Metal rods on loan from the metal studio, tears, patience, learning. Photo by Raquel Mendes



Figure 31: Purna: Simulations of the whole as seen from the mattress below. Photo by SGS Photography

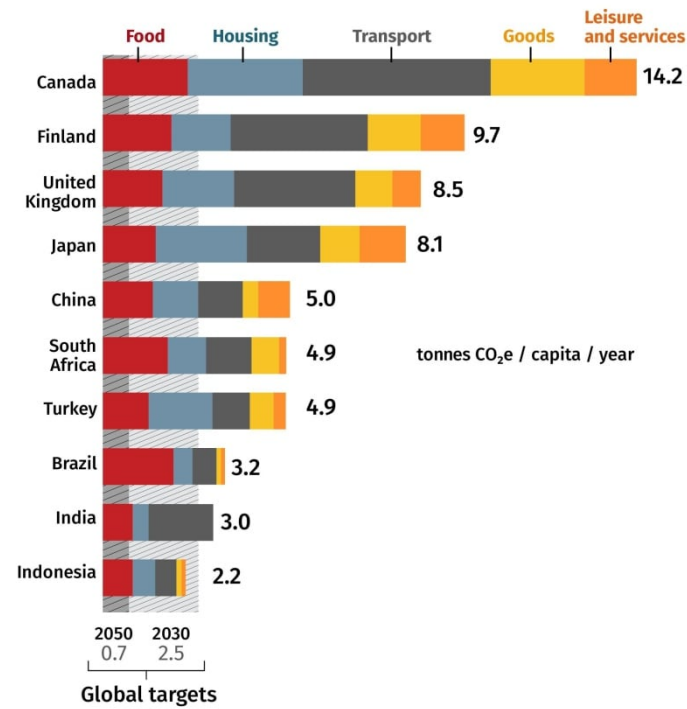
“Doomed techno-fix: purna (simulations of the whole) fails in reversing global warming

In a desperate bid to reverse global warming, scientists initiated simulations using spirulina, a kind of algae to re-oxygenate the atmosphere. These ambitious endeavours, hailed as a techno-fix, soon revealed their fatal flaw—lack of foresight. These man-made systems were too dependent on resources to keep them running. The experiments, perpetually maintained by dedicated technicians, continued despite their futility and high costs.

While the atmosphere remained unchanged, a peculiar trend emerged — children developed an affinity for the vibrant green algae liquids. Amidst the uncertainty of their impact, these experiments inadvertently became a source of fascination for the younger generation, igniting their curiosity and sparking discussions about humanity’s complex implicit relationship with nature and technology. Perhaps this curiosity will fuel innovative approaches to coexistence, urging future thinkers to reimagine sustainable solutions beyond conventional methods.

Appendix B

Total per-capita carbon footprint by country and sector



CBC NEWS

Source: 1.5-Degree Lifestyles: Towards A Fair Consumption Space for All

Figure 32: Carbon Footprint by Country (Bernstein)

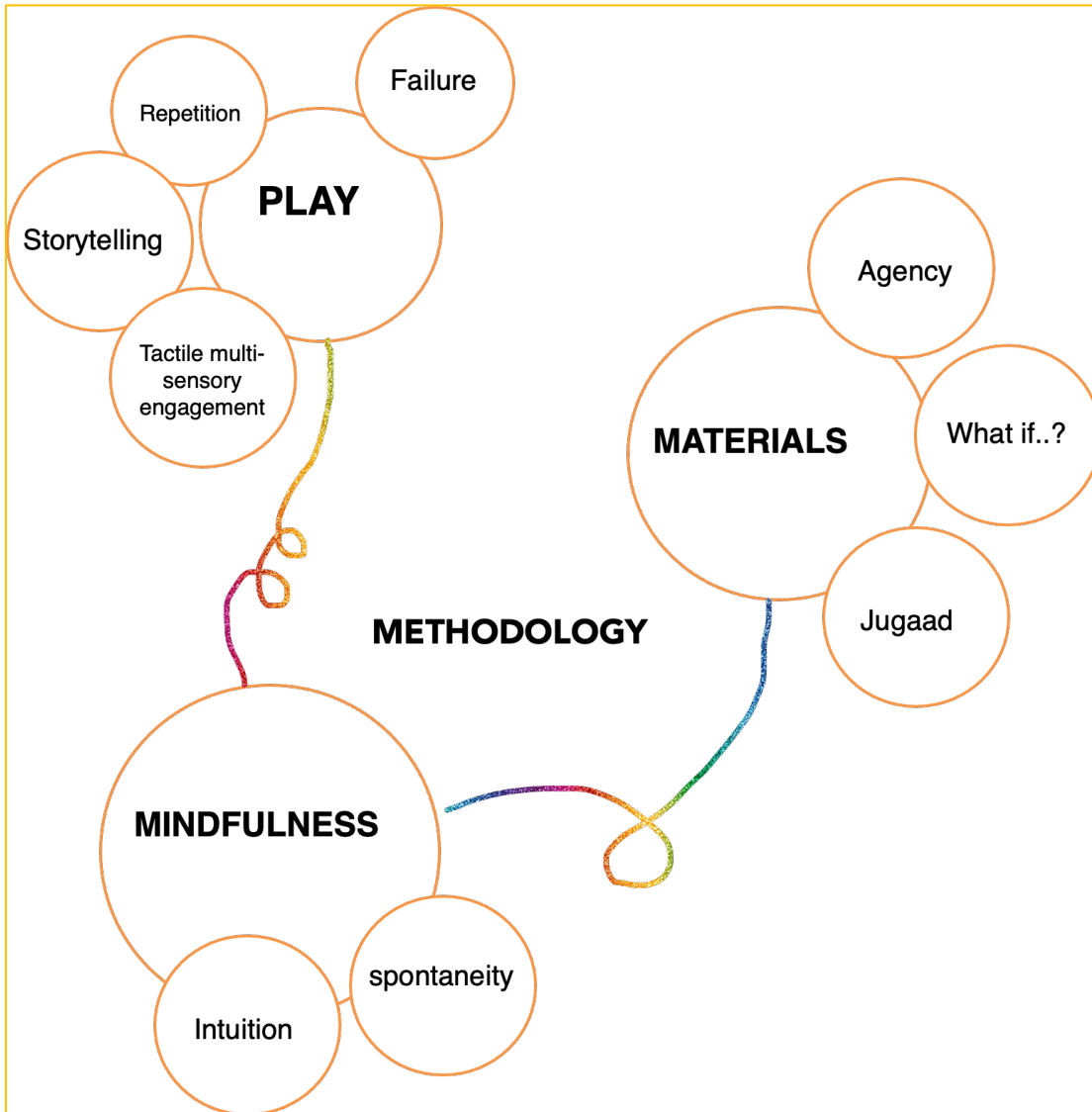


Figure 33: Mind map of my methodology for making

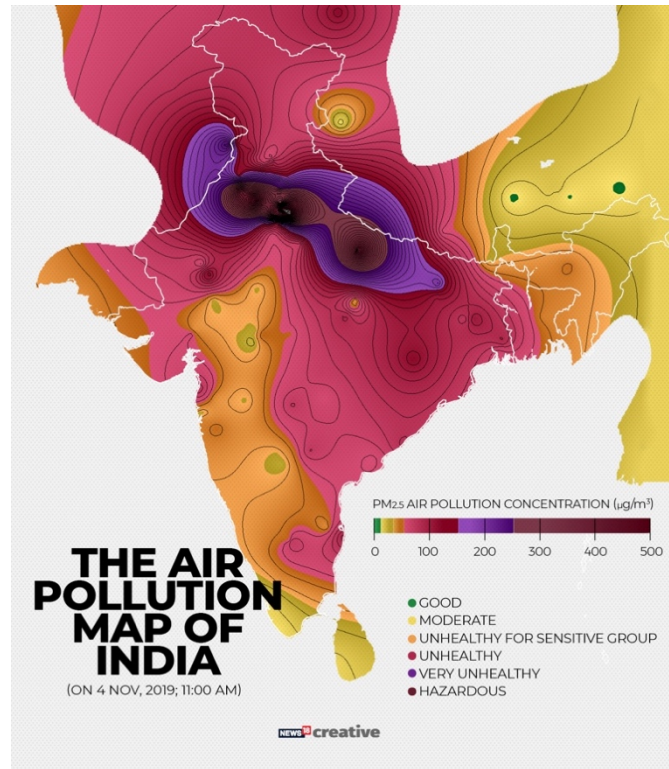


Figure 34: Air Pollution Map of India (Forbes India)

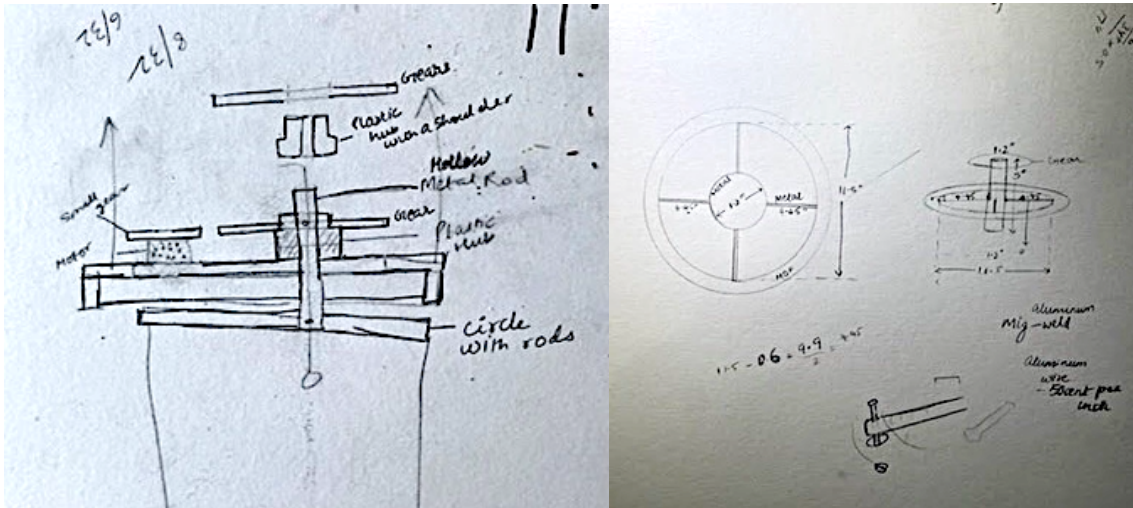


Figure 35: Sketches for assemblage



Figure 36: Process and Failures. Mock-up of kinetic mobile that didn't work

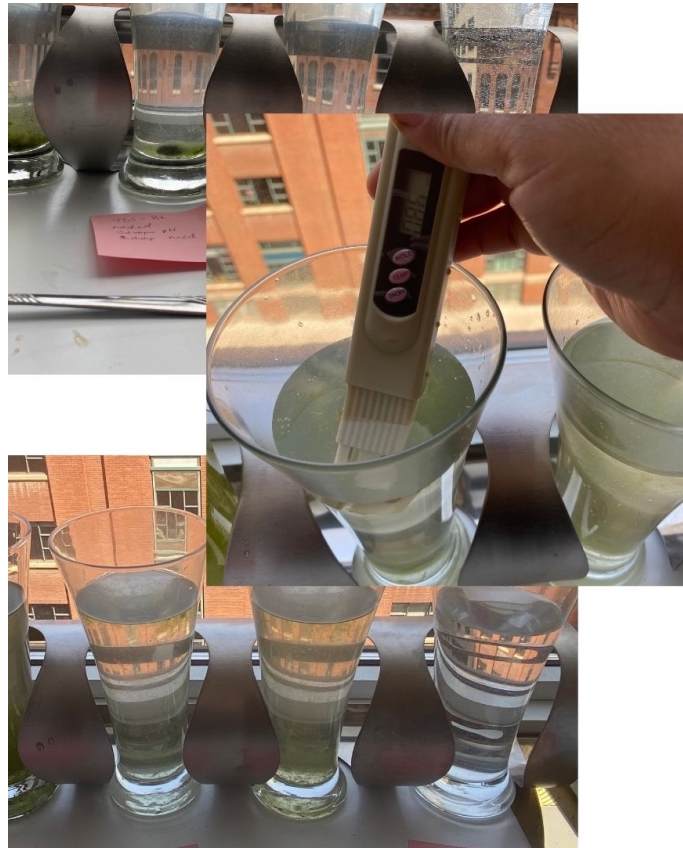


Figure 37: Algae cultures from Lake Ontario that failed

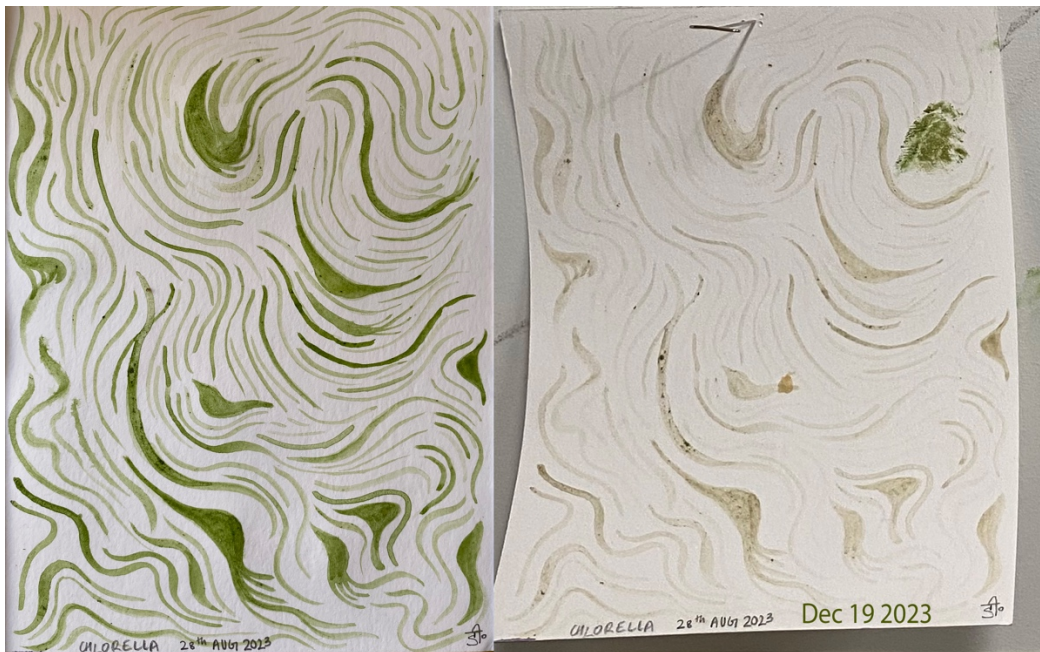


Figure 38: Fugitive Chlorella pigment on paper 4 months apart

Glossary

Atman/ Atma... Soul

Dadi... Grandmother

Jugaad...Hack

*Prana...*Breath or life energy

*Purna...*Whole