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## **Training the artist, training the viewer: Vegetal control of human movement in *Perennial series***

Keywords: Plants, Art, Time-lapse, Interactive, Training, Thought, Nourishment, Movement, Duration

### **Key Terms**

***Tagetes lucida***: Latin for the Marigold plant in *Perennial series*.

**The viewer**: Exhibition attendees.

***Gestell***: Philosopher Martin Heidegger's term for a relationship to technology and the earth associated with calculative, reductive thinking. In human interactions with entities, i.e. the earth's raw materials, the earth issues a challenge to reveal it as a resource, through technologies of production (1977 p. 19–21).

***Standing reserve***: Under *Gestell*, the revealing of entities as resources leads to their stockpiling as standing reserve, available to be called on at any time to serve a predefined instrumental purpose (1977 p. 16–17). The storing, regulation and distribution of entities within such a structure means they are defined by their orderability and substitutability, as stock. This defining obscures other ontological possibilities and opportunities for self-determination (1977 p. 27).

***Gelassenheit***: A meditative-contemplative thinking (Heidegger 1966) and counter to the disconnected existence *Gestell* engenders. It involves the non-willing, letting or enabling of entities (here, plants), to reveal themselves as they are, outside of instrumentally determined representations (1966 p. 63–65, 76).

***Duration***: Philosopher Henri Bergson's term for the phenomenological experience of time passing, characterised by its indivisibility and the subjective perception of things in motion. Jacobus Capone's durational artworks are a key influence on this research, particularly Act 2 of the ongoing project *Forewarning*, undertaken over 6 weeks in a plantation forest in Shiga prefecture, Japan, in 2019.

***Meditative-contemplative thinking (state, space)***: The highly focussed, free thinking associated with *Perennial series*' nourishment ritual. It is informed by *Gelassenheit*, where the incalculable aspect of thought is central to it being a counterpoint to *Gestell*.

## **Introduction**

This paper analyses the vegetal training of human movement in the artwork, *Perennial series*, to be exhibited in 2023 at Spectrum Project Space, Edith Cowan University, in Perth, Western Australia. The anticipatory grief characteristic to living in a time of environmental instability is relayed by ecologist and philosopher Timothy Morton in their first dream of becoming a climate refugee (2022). *Perennial series* recognises this finitude and is built on an ethic that plants have inherent value.

In a time of accelerated technological progress and efficiency, *Perennial series* seeks ways of approaching plants that counter the calculative, instrumental thinking associated with *Gestell* (Heidegger 1977 p. 19–21). An inverting of plant-human instrumental relations is presented in *Perennial series* via the training of human movements by a *Tagetes lucida* plant. First, *Perennial series* and its motivations are briefly outlined. Meditative-contemplative thinking is introduced as a means of subverting instrumentalist conceptions of plant-life. The image of cultivated plants is inverted via a training of human movement by a *Tagetes lucida* plant. An analysis of the ongoing emergence of training as a central artistic strategy is presented, towards the resolution of *Perennial series* for exhibition. Lastly, the training of viewer movements in the gallery is discussed<sup>1</sup>. It is found that a convergence of ‘durations’ (Bergson 2007) – specifically, those of the *Tagetes lucida*, artist, and viewer – produces the vegetal training of human movements in *Perennial series*. This training inverts the earth-as-resource paradigm through a holding of the artist (and subsequently, the viewer) as ‘standing reserve’ (Heidegger 1977 p. 16), on call for the *Tagetes lucida*.

## **Perennial series**

*Perennial series* depicts a nourishment ritual involving the artist and a *Tagetes lucida* plant. Nourishment here comprises the caring, attentive delivery and digestion of sunlight, water, and thoughts. Philosopher Michael Marder analyses the role of Western metaphysics in the construction of a relation to plants that views them in terms of their instrumental value, and through a human subjectivity. He examines connections between the nourishment of thought and nutrients to argue that aspects of vegetal existence are foundational to human existence (Marder, Vattimo and Zabala 2013 p. 176). Marder argues for a vegetal ontology that lets plants be as they are in themselves, outside of what they can do for us. Here, plants as living things have intrinsic value.

*Perennial series*' nourishment ritual is captured through time-lapse photography and stream of consciousness note-taking. For 15 minutes, the artist turns towards the sun and assumes a still position. Her body is a physical support for the *Tagetes lucida*, receiving nutrients through a silk wick leading to a copper vessel overhead. Titles consist of the date and a phrase taken from the associated stream of consciousness. These individual sessions are shown in succession as a single video.



Figure 1: Excerpt from *Perennial series: July 17, 2022 (Movement deprivation laps)*

*Perennial series* follows a lineage of process artworks repetitively tracking a daily activity. Its nourishment ritual disregards notions of instrumental progress. *Perennial series* has an undefined end point in this respect, continuing until the artist or *Tagetes lucida* can no longer participate. Gradual developments are revealed over time, through this repetition.

The production of praxical knowledge characteristic to phenomenological experience informs the nourishment ritual. Relationships between movements of the viewer's body and the progression of *Perennial series* in the gallery extend this. Artist and art theorist Barbara Bolt's definition of praxical knowledge in art practice is informed by Heidegger's notion that we come to know the world in a more originary way through our intuitive, everyday handling of things, rather than through the mathematical, abstract theorising of them. For Bolt, the artist's 'handling of and dealings with entities in practice offers a special form of (in)sight' (2010 p. 89) which is different to the habitual handling of things as means to ends. Praxical knowledge is generated by the nourishment ritual, as evidenced in the accompanying stream of consciousness

notes. These reveal direct observations about the research, triggered by experiencing the *Tagetes lucida*'s immediate environment.



Figure 2: Excerpts from *Perennial series* (March – October 2022)

In the nourishment ritual, the artist physically supports the *Tagetes lucida* by restricting her movements, closing her eyes, turning towards the sun. In this way, a sensing and slowing towards the plant's duration is intuited. Being open to intuition during the nourishment ritual is important methodologically, following Bergson's claim that 'to think intuitively is to think in duration' (2007 p. 33). Intuition may additionally present a way of moving towards the duration of the *Tagetes lucida* if Bergson's description of intuition is interpreted as facilitating a fluid interpenetration of possible consciousnesses (p. 31).

### **Meditative-contemplative thinking counters instrumental conceptions of plants**

While there is the potential for a public to be hyper-connected via the virtual screen, simultaneously, Heidegger claims that our ways of relating to technology propagate an existential disconnection from ourselves, each other, and the earth (Wendland, Merwin & Hadjoannou 2018 p. 1). He states that 'the revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging, which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such' (1977 p. 14). Through their use, entities come to be regarded in instrumental terms, and this predefining obstructs other ontological possibilities.

A distinction between the forms of instrumentalism associated with *Gestell* and with artmaking does exist for Heidegger, where unless the artwork 'miscarries' the artist can never misuse or use up matter (1971 p. 46). This refers to differences between the use of matter in the making of equipment and an artwork. In the making of equipment (tools), matter is used up and disappears into the tool's utility. Further, the tool in use (and by extension, matter), disappears into the function it performs and is only conspicuous when it malfunctions (Heidegger 1962 p. 73). Heidegger states that in an artwork, matter does not disappear in this way (Harries 2009 p. 159 - 160).

Key to this distinction is the defining and setting aside of entities as standing reserve. *Perennial series* presents a way of relating to a *Tagetes lucida* plant that counters instrumental conceptions of plant-life as food, medicine, or source of aesthetic pleasure. Although the use of the *Tagetes lucida* plant in this artwork involves a degree of instrumentalism, its role is not predefined but emerges perpetually through the act of repeatedly engaging in the nourishment ritual. *Perennial series* is constructed with a view to indeterminacy, informed by philosopher of technology Don Ihde's analysis of *Gelassenheit* as a 'proliferation of possibilities [that make art] essentially antireductive' (2010 p. 55).

The cultivation of a space for meditative-contemplative thinking in *Perennial series* is intended to subvert instrumental relations inherent in the act of providing nutrients to a plant. The nourishment ritual is not focussed on the production of optimal growth, health and beauty, as is often the case with gardens. Art historian Giovanni Alois writes extensively on representations of nature in art. He also questions these indicators of a successful plant-human relationship, where the 'good' gardener 'optimises and supplements nature's unpredictability. She/he provides water at regular intervals in order to keep all plants alive — fertilization, anti-parasitic treatment, and soil quality are essential to blooming/harvesting success' (2019 p. 105).

The purpose of this nourishment ritual has emerged praxically, over time. Informed by the approach to thinking underpinning *Gelassenheit*, it involves an uncomfortable waiting in a state of not-knowing (Heidegger 1966). The meditative-contemplative thinking engaged in the nourishment ritual involves a phase of attunement to sensory stimuli, and eventual focussing of thoughts about the making of *Perennial series*.





Figure 3: Excerpt from *Perennial series: August 2, 2022* (*Rushing winds and euphoric pauses*)

*Perennial series* is constructed so that through a physical tethering to the *Tagetes lucida*, the artist is disconnected from any source of technological communication. An intimate space of solitary internalisation is invoked where time is spent serving the *Tagetes lucida*, doing nothing much that can ordinarily be considered productive.<sup>2</sup> This redirect reflects the artist's desire to retreat from the omniscient technological beckoning to perpetually consume, progress, work, be visible, be in public.



Figure 4: Excerpt from *Perennial series: August 25, 2022* (*When static was all you could find*)

By removing possibilities for the artist to multitask, thinking is all that remains to pass the time. In *Perennial series* there is a direct relationship between stillness of the

artist's body and its ability to enter a state where meditative-contemplative thinking occurs.<sup>3</sup> In their extensive investigations into the intersections between nourishment, thought, vegetal and human ontologies, Marder, Vattimo and Zabala conclude that 'something of the vegetal soul in us accounts for the flourishing of thinking' (2013 p. 176). In *Perennial series*, the facilitation of nourishment for the *Tagetes lucida* simultaneously creates the conditions where a state of meditative-contemplative thinking arises in the artist.

Making an artwork involves unavoidable instrumental relations, as does most other human activity. Although Heidegger contends that the production and viewing of art involves a different poetic kind of revealing that can counter *Gestell* (1977 p. 34–35), this is not necessarily an intrinsic property of an artwork. *Perennial series* acknowledges that art does not exist in a sterilised, theoretical space separate to daily living. In this way, artmaking is not necessarily a counter to *Gestell* in and of itself, but meditative-contemplative thinking as an emergent activity within the process of artmaking can be. In their modelling of the ways that creative practice and research co-evolve within practice-led research (PLR), Smith & Dean note the process driven approach to working can be directed towards emergence, characterised by 'the generation of ideas which were unforeseen at the beginning of the project' (2022 p. 23). The emergent nature of meditative-contemplative thinking evades attempts under *Gestell* to predetermine outcomes and set aside resources.



Figure 5: Excerpt from *Perennial series: August 4, 2022 (Hierarchy of streams (1095 < 1270 < 18980))*



*Perennial series* counters instrumentalist conceptions of plant-life through a targeted subversion of the hierarchical relations between the *Tagetes lucida*, artist and viewer. The tension between the existential interests of the *Tagetes lucida* and artistic action is central. Therefore, the artist and the *Tagetes lucida* are both depicted, forming at once the artistic product of their interactions and the processes of its making. In the gallery, this is extended through the visual relationship set up between viewer movements, the artist and the *Tagetes lucida*.

### **Being trained by a *Tagetes lucida* plant**

The artist's running shoes, her partner completing his daily exercise in the back garden and other small details reveal a preoccupation with training and discipline. This training of movement has developed into an inverting of the plant cultivation enacted by human 'stewards of nature' (Aloi 2019 p. 105). The human tendency to form the natural environment and be responsible for its flourishing often involves a one-way, predetermined relating that does not leave room for other ontological possibilities. By actively subverting this tendency, the intention is that other plant-human relations beyond the instrumental are allowed to dialogically emerge.



Figure 6: Excerpt from *Perennial series: June 20, 2022*

In *Perennial series*, the artist and viewer's bodies are trained to be still as a means of cultivating meditative-contemplative thinking. While a reward is utilised to influence a desired outcome, this is contingent on how viewers choose to interact with the work.<sup>4</sup> Although the *Tagetes lucida* is the progenitor of this training, it is internalised and enacted by the artist through self-discipline. Tuning in to a stream of consciousness,



maintaining a still posture, holding the weight of the *Tagetes lucida* and recording in endless repetition is indicative of this. There is an extension of self-discipline to the viewer, where they are invited to control the playback of time-lapses in the gallery through the stillness of their own body.



Figure 7: Excerpt from *Perennial series: June 21, 2022*.

The trigger for this internalised training is the provision of nourishment to the *Tagetes lucida*. This plant is training the artist, not linguistically through overt instruction, but through its presence as an entity requiring nourishment. What this reversal of plant-human relations aims to reveal is a holding of the artist (and subsequently, the viewer) as standing reserve, on call for the *Tagetes lucida*.<sup>5</sup> This reversal is undertaken to ask whether, in an age of increasing technological efficiencies, plant-human relationships could counter *Gestell*.

### **The emergence of training as an artistic strategy**

The praxical knowledge characteristic to PLR is differentiated as a 'theorising out of practice' (Bolt 2019 p. 33). Specifically, this research considers how the conceptual concerns underpinning *Perennial series* have progressively emerged through the repetitive act of the artist's body becoming still, plinth-like, physically supporting the *Tagetes lucida* to receive nourishment.



Figure 8: Excerpt from *Perennial series: July 22, 2022 (Remember four images)*

The nourishment ritual depicted creates the conditions for meditative-contemplative thinking in the artist. This thinking responds first to direct sensory stimuli, through to the making of *Perennial series*. Thoughts oscillate between being random and focussed. In PLR, a fundamental methodological concern lies in 'articulating what has emerged or what has been realised through the process of handling materials and ideas' (Bolt 2019 p. 34). Via stream of consciousness note-taking, the meditative-contemplative thinking from the nourishment rituals is recorded. This method tracks shifting, developing and recurring thoughts where their significance may initially be unknown. Complicating this process is the way that cognition and phenomenal experience do not occur simultaneously. On this, Marder notes 'if we are to experience time in the fullness of intuition, we cannot be stuck in the present of perception; we must, rather, circle back to a now that belongs to the past, an event or a process that has already happened' (2021 p. 340).



Figure 9: Excerpt from *Perennial series: July 16, 2022 (Telepathic notifications)*

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*I can hear windchimes very faintly in the distance.*

*The wind is rushing smoothly and coolly by - it's soothing. Like the sound at night if you are by the ocean.*

*Thinking about what the rules are for this activity - what are the bounds I must work within that I've set for this work?*

*Facing the sun, being a plinth. Do I always need to be facing the sun? Do I need to take in sunlight through my face? Can it just be any part of my body? Could there be poses where I'm facing an opposite direction but my head is extending out towards the sun, eg: arching/leaning back?*

*Listening to the roots of the *Tagetes lucida* - it is transmitting ideas to me in each session. I am thinking through the plant.*

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Figure 10: Excerpt from stream of consciousness July 16, 2022

The knowledge that human movement is trained by the *Tagetes lucida* plant was produced by undertaking *Perennial series'* nourishment ritual. This has been developed into an artistic strategy bridging the discrete meditative-contemplative spaces of making and viewing *Perennial series*. Specifically, the stillness of the artist's and viewer's bodies are each paired with meditative-contemplative space. The making and its observations have in this way informed how the work incorporates and is progressed by the viewer. Although the viewing discussed here refers to a discrete future activity in the exhibition of *Perennial series*, philosopher Nicholas Davey's writing on aesthetic experience informs this. He reminds us that each viewing of an artwork is an interpretative act within a social-historical structure and the resolution of an artwork through its viewing is an ongoing, accumulative process (2005 p. 24).





Figure 11: Excerpt from *Perennial series: August 17, 2022 (Training them with glass and height)*

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*The wick allows water to be transported from the copper vessel to the plant, but there is always some excess that drips out the bottom of the pot. Today, because of my position, the pot was resting on my knee, and the water was trickling down the front of my leg then around the back and accumulating in my underwear.*

*As I was feeling this sitting there, I started to think about this motif that keeps popping up in the work, and that is of energy or nutrients kind of passing through us.*

*We're connected in the work, so it's either passing through me then the *Tagetes lucida* or passing through the *Tagetes lucida* to me. Water, sunlight and thoughts.*

*There's a second level there. I want to also create this space for meditative-contemplative thought in the viewer. I'm kind of training the viewer to enter that space. The time-lapses could be activated in the gallery when the viewer is still and possibly solitary. So stillness and meditative-contemplative thought are connected not only in the making of the work, but also then in the viewing of the work.*

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Figure 12: Excerpt from stream of consciousness August 17, 2022

The level of awareness in the *Tagetes lucida* of such a training is unknowable. It is therefore assumed that the plant is participating in a non-intentional and indeterminate training of the artist's consciousness. For a time, the artist inhabits the same environment as the *Tagetes lucida*, experiencing the same sensory stimuli, albeit in a human way. Philosopher Thomas Nagel's article 'What Is It Like to be a Bat?' is seminal within consciousness studies and is directly referenced by plant neurobiologist Paco Calvo in the title of his article 'What Is It Like to Be a Plant?' (2017). Nagel highlights the problem of understanding subjective experience in other species where entering a subjectivity other than our own is not possible (Nagel 1974 p. 439). Despite this limitation, Nagel discusses the possibility of types of shared experiences on a continuum between humans and other species. *Perennial series* constructs the possibility for a shared experience between humans and plants.

Through repetition, the artist becomes more practiced at stillness, sitting with the discomfort of disconnection from the digital realm and a slowed duration. The use of duration throughout refers to Bergson's experiential duration, specifically where this is extended to plant life. 'Even in the regions where consciousness is in a state of somnolence, in the vegetable kingdom for example, there is regulated evolution, definite progress, aging; in fact, all the external signs of the duration which characterises consciousness' (2007 p. 97). Bergson states that duration involves the subjective perception of things in motion; from this it follows that consciousness is a requirement for duration. In his earlier analyses of the parallel and the divergent ways animals and plants have evolved, Bergson points out that 'the humblest organism is conscious to the extent that it moves itself freely', but he questions whether consciousness either controls or is a consequence of this movement (2022 p. 104).<sup>6</sup> In *Perennial series*, a restriction of movement is utilised as a means of focussing the conscious mind towards contemplation. The relation of movement to instrumental ends is an important aspect of determining what free motion would look like and may conclude there is no free movement. In addition to this, the perception of things in motion that Bergson associates with duration is difficult if the body of the perceiver is also in motion.

Recent scientific research also disputes the view that plants are not conscious beings. Biologist Monica Gagliano's experiments in plant cognition using pea plant roots are well known. Gagliano constructs decision-mazes to record the ability of the pea plant roots to use sonic vibrations to sense the location of a water source and anticipate the most efficient path to grow towards before reaching a decision node (Onzik & Gagliano 2022 p. 6). Extending on this, and at the intersection of current research on plant cognition, the integration of sensorimotor processes within plant vascular structures (plant neurobiology), and leading theories of consciousness, Segundo-Ortin & Calvo consider whether there could be something it is subjectively like to be a plant (2021 p. 2 of 23).

Responding to these recent trends in scientific research, *Perennial series* contemplates the potential for different experiences of duration across humans and plants that are distinct and largely incongruent. Marder highlights this durational discrepancy with reference to the human perception of plant growth:

The increase or decrease of a plant's extension may be observed only across an interval of not attending to it, a gap, in which something has been imperceptibly going on. Time-lapse photography reveals the movements of plants, because it plays with the lapses, the intervals of vegetal events, to which our perceptual apparatus is unable to attend "in real time" (2021 p. 338).

In this way, the technology of time-lapse photography can assist in the meeting of plant and human durations. Recording the time-lapses while acting as a human plinth for the *Tagetes lucida* allows these durations to converge.<sup>7</sup> In their tethering together, the artist and *Tagetes lucida*'s movements become synchronised.

Human duration is intentionally slowed in *Perennial series*, in a striving towards the inaccessible duration of the *Tagetes lucida*. The sensation of fruitless striving is associated with the meditative-contemplative thinking characteristic to *Gelassenheit* (Heidegger 1966). Objects of thought oscillate between being obscured and revealed as we 'wait in a releasement through which we belong to that-which-regions, which still conceals its own nature' (Heidegger 1966 p. 79).<sup>8</sup> Our everyday dependence on technology has in many ways interfered with human access to the experience of duration.<sup>9</sup> When undertaking the nourishment ritual, a meditative-contemplative disposition enables attunement to duration. This disposition is contingent on the artist's body being open and relaxed rather than focussed on completing a task. Considering the subjective experience of duration through *Gestell* can explicate how our relation to technology interferes with our ability to consciously, experientially, connect to the earth. *Perennial series* aims to do this by inverting plant-human instrumental relations through a convergence of their durations.

This convergence of durations is depicted in the time-lapses and through the human subjective experience of duration when making and viewing *Perennial series*. The connection between attentiveness and duration is apparent in what Marder describes as the retrospective realisation that there has been a lapse of time between two nows (Marder 2021 p. 338). *Perennial series* promotes a conscious awareness of duration and of relaxing into waiting. Through a training of stillness, it is intended that both the artist and viewer are being invited to enter the duration of the *Tagetes lucida*.



The repetitious serial, expressed in time-lapse format is utilised to invoke sensations of waiting and anticipating change. Time-lapse photography is strongly associated with the expression of natural phenomena, and it is one of the only ways that humans can readily perceive the movements of plants (Segundo-Ortin & Calvo 2021 p. 3 of 23). In *Perennial series* the partial recording of plant duration via time-lapse stills is compressed into a steady flow of movement, attempting to meet the duration of the viewer. In this way, time-lapse works towards a meeting of these different durations, although their representation is incomplete.

There is an intentional effort to limit the movements of the artist's body towards the duration of the *Tagetes lucida*. This limiting of the artists' movements induces meditative-contemplative thinking in them and imbues the time-lapses themselves with the same quality. This stillness aims to prevent the overpowering of the *Tagetes lucida*'s embodied and spatial expressions which Marder states 'convey something of the language of plants' (Gibson 2018 p. 28). In return, a space to think and make *Perennial series* is generated.

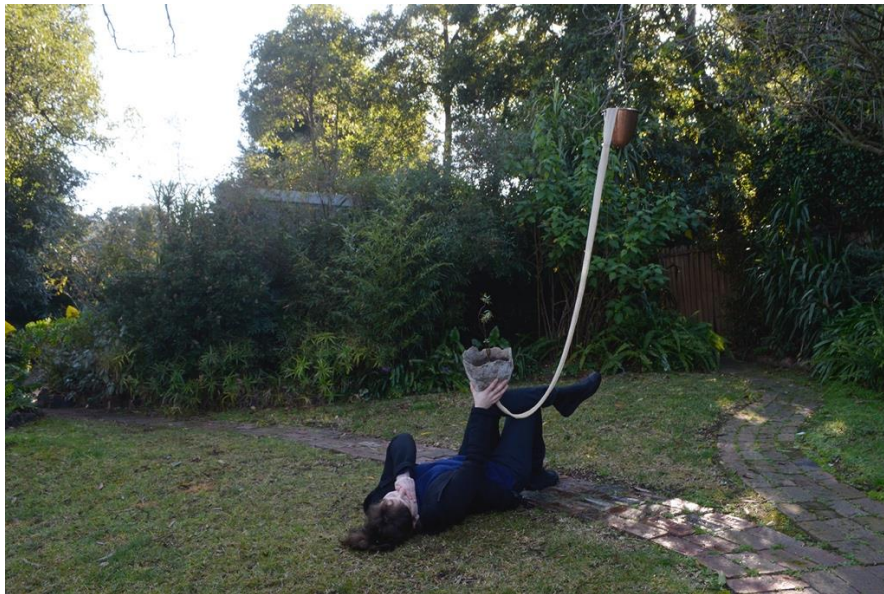


Figure 13: Excerpt from *Perennial series: July 18, 2022 (Chainsaws or indeterminate machines blowing leaves around my mind)*

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*When recording the time-lapse sessions, my body must be still and comfortable as any activity, exertion or pain disrupts focussed thinking. The mechanical noise of lawnmowers and circular saws disrupt focus, while bird songs, wind chimes and rushing wind through tree leaves enables it. There is conflict between adequately balancing the Tagetes lucida as a kind of human plinth and letting my mind relax and open into a state where meditative-contemplative thoughts can arise.*

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Figure 14: Excerpt from stream of consciousness July 19, 2022

## **Development of a method for training viewer movements**

Critical feedback has shown the *Perennial series* time-lapses can effectively activate a meditative-contemplative state in viewers.<sup>10</sup> This section discusses issues around the installation of *Perennial series* towards achieving the artwork aims. New media theorist Ryszard W. Kluszczynski's 'Strategy of Instrument' identifies interactive artworks where the viewer interfaces with a 'device that generates visual or audiovisual events' (2010 p. 4 of 27). This strategy validates the pairing of viewer movements with playback control of the projected time-lapses in its incorporation of the viewer into an inverted plant-human instrumental relationship. Artist and new media researcher Raivo Kelomees' assertion that the use of 'distant interaction' (2019 p. 149) imbues interactive artworks with a subjective presence provides a rationale for its use in *Perennial series*. A convergence of durations between the *Tagetes lucida*, the artist and viewer in the gallery relies on the development of this presence and the impression that a vegetal training of human movement is occurring.

The interactive artworks *Interactive plant growing* (Sommerer & Mignonneau 1992) and *Homo viridis* (Belling & Bering 2018) position living plants as instruments controlling screen-based creative outputs that become the primary focus. Conversely, in *Perennial series*, this plant-human instrumental relationship is inverted. The exhibition aims to draw the viewer into this relationship, as the instrument controlling time-lapse playback. An accumulation of stationary viewers in the gallery is intended, as an extension of the commandeering of the artist's stationary body to facilitate nutrient supply to the *Tagetes lucida*. The immersive digital installation *Flowers and People* (TeamLab 2020) is a precursor, pairing viewer movements with virtual plant death & decay and viewer stillness with virtual plant growth.

Interactive artworks employing distant interaction are described by Kelomees as not requiring physical contact with an instrument or overt instruction (2019 p. 149–150). A characteristic of this strategy is the sensation of the artwork looking back at the viewer (Kelomees 2019 p. 144). It's anticipated that pairing viewer movements with playback control of the *Perennial series* time-lapses can produce the sensation of being seen, perhaps even trained. The source of this training remains open to interpretation. The apparent responsiveness of the artist and *Tagetes lucida* to the movements of the viewer is intended to open a dialogical, reciprocal relationship. The training of viewer stillness required for the time-lapse progression allows the incongruent durations of the viewer, artist and *Tagetes lucida* to come into focus.

The time-lapses in *Perennial series* purposely refer to an external environment the viewer is invited into. The cultivation of this quiet space of everyday retreat is removed from a digital consumption dependent on finite resources. The manipulated experience of duration in the gallery is intended as an intermittent lulling towards a meditative-contemplative state.



Figure 16: Excerpt from *Perennial series: June 22, 2022 (The feeding problem)*

The initial method for playback of *Perennial series* in the gallery was found to be detracting from the work's central aims. Cycling between time-lapse playback and a paused black screen appeared to symbolise a technological breakdown, transmission breakdown, or the intentional obscuring of data. This problem was resolved by suspending a frame in the time-lapse instead of showing a black screen.





Figure 17: Excerpt from *Perennial series: September 10, 2022 (Drawing a blank)*

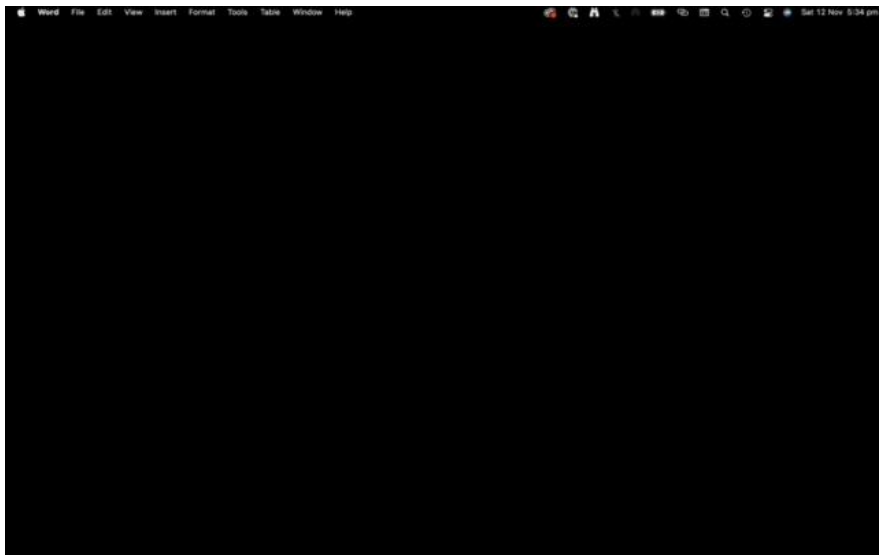


Figure 18: Pausing the time-lapse triggers a completely black desktop screen

Stopping the virtual motion of the time-lapses when the viewer is moving in the gallery manipulates the form of time-lapse photography in a way that alludes to the experience of duration. This resultant suspension of a single point does not exist in real duration which is 'time perceived as indivisible' (Bergson 2007 p. 160). The aim is for *Perennial series* to invoke an uncomfortable feeling of being pulled cognitively in two directions, like a mirror used to navigate one's movements. There is dissonance in pairing viewer movement with the cessation of virtual movement and the erasure of virtual duration. Retaining the *Tagetes lucida* and artist on screen is intended to produce the sensation that they are responsively aware of the viewer's movements. This strong visual association between the *Tagetes lucida*, artist, and viewer's movements supports their reciprocity.

Since *Perennial series* produces meaning through its interactivity, its documentation must accurately represent the interactions and elements that construct meaning. To do this, the artist will record her own movements through *Perennial series* using a wearable camera. In addition, the visual relationships between viewers and the projected time-lapses will be captured through still photography and video. The artist's written notes will record viewer interactions, specifically time spent in the space and movements in relation to the progression of the *Perennial series* time-lapses.

### **Conclusion**

The partial, manipulated representation of the differing durations of the *Tagetes lucida*, artist and viewer, reveals a tension between their attempted convergence and the futility of this. Reflexive analysis of *Perennial series* revealed that it's this attempted convergence that produces the vegetal training of human movement. Finally, the inverting of plant-human instrumental relations implicit in this training imagines a holding of the artist (and subsequently, the viewer) as standing reserve, on call for the *Tagetes lucida*. This training of human movements by the *Tagetes lucida* in *Perennial series* thereby challenges existing ways of thinking about our relations to technology and the earth.



Figure 19: Excerpt from *Perennial series: October 1, 2022 (Urgency of idling)*

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## Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Although *Perennial series* discusses the training of human movement on multiple levels, there is an acknowledgement that interactions between viewers and the artwork in the gallery are subjectively determined. Intentions for the work are theorised in this paper, but whether these are realised (or perhaps subverted) depends on individual viewers. The reciprocal relationships set up between the artist, the *Tagetes lucida* and the viewer entails true agency for each, and so the outcome in the gallery will not be known until *Perennial series* is exhibited. This is not seen to be at odds with the nature of training as a process and will further inform what is currently understood about the vegetal training of human movement in *Perennial series*. Future developments of *Perennial series* will be informed by its exhibition and the reflexive analysis of this.

<sup>2</sup> This time spent in *Perennial series* is (arguably) artistically productive, but it would possibly not be considered productive in an instrumental sense.

<sup>3</sup> There are other factors involved which are beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>4</sup> The reward utilised is the playback of the *Perennial series* time-lapses and the meditative-contemplative space associated with this. It is intended that the viewer realises that modifying their own movements can control playback of the time-lapses.

<sup>5</sup> Although the artist and viewer are being imagined as standing reserve in *Perennial series*, Heidegger makes the distinction that humans are not able to be transformed into standing reserve. For Heidegger, this is because we are claimed by the earth (which reveals itself through a process of ordering as revealing. (1977 p. 18)

<sup>6</sup> Bergson does acknowledge that plants exhibit minute sensori-motor processes in the seeking of sunlight and other nutrients, but the intensity or degree of movement is important to him with respect to its connection to consciousness (2022 p. 104–107).

<sup>7</sup> I am not suggesting here that the *Tagetes lucida* is aware of other durations but simply imagining what it might be like for these different durations to get closer to one another.

<sup>8</sup> The term 'that-which-regions' is understood here 'as another name for be-ing itself', encompassing entities that we have a subjective relation to (Dalle Pezze 2006 p. 106).

<sup>9</sup> There are other examples, such as the experience of waiting for a webpage to load or a file to download, where this dependence on technology can make us more aware of duration.

<sup>10</sup> Excerpts from *Perennial series* have been shown to peers at the *RMIT Intertext* symposium, the artist's second candidature milestone and the *ACUADS Public Pedagogies* conference.