

castle & ingram

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side stream environmental design

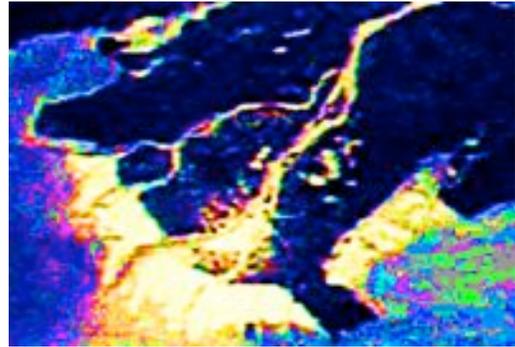
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Proposal for a transdisciplinary residency from August through October 2015 at Utopiana, Geneva [email: utopiana@utopiana.ch] for *Nature, adversity, etc.*



A la recherche de certaines récoltes presque perdu:

Decolonising permaculture: The greatest adversity comes from forgetting

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synopsis

This proposal for a 2015 residency at Utopiana centres on aesthetic responses to both the increasing disappearance of heritage food crops, especially perennials such as tree crops, and the confluence of more expansive notions of 'decolonisation' and decolonial aesthetics as played out in contemporary garden interventions as works of contemporary public art.

Two different spaces, territories, and kinds of crop disappearance would be explored:

- A. the disappearance of some traditional crops and crop varieties of the Geneva, Vaud, other parts of francophone, 'Romandy' Switzerland along with the Pay du Gex and
- B. the traditional food plants of the Salish, the indigenous communities around an area with a similar climate and landform to Geneva, of the Strait of Georgia of Pacific Canada including the cities of Vancouver and Victoria.

This residency would focus on field research, semi-structure interviews, and assembling graphic documentation (mainly photographic, video, and *in situ* work and cultivation in the Utopiana garden) of these disappearing crops, their food uses, various disappearance ('genetic erosion') factors, and conservation responses especially,

- a. heritage orchards and gardens,
- b. 'field gene banks' often maintained by scientific and corporate bodies, community gardens,
- c. laboratories and *in vitro* storage,
- d. archives on a particular crop or agricultural community, and
- e. more contemporary forms of aesthetic-based public interventions such as 'guerrilla gardening' and related viticulture and tree crop planting, urban design, permaculture, and various collective projects such as the Los Angeles-based 'Fallen Fruit'.

Artistic production for 2015 in Geneva would focus on interrogating, playing with, and diverging from Proustian notions of loss and alternatives to nostalgia as "temps perdu" morphing into "*de certaines récoltes presque perdu*" The timing of the residency would coincide with the time of year to plant a few perennial trees and bushes in the Utopiana garden in Geneva: in early autumn. The product of this 2015 residence would centre on documentation of a range of individuals and organizations in the Geneva region already concerned about "*de certaines récoltes presque perdu*" and mashing that imagery with comparable digital material of traditional Salish food plants (many of these species in the same gene pools as those around Geneva) around Vancouver and Victoria. There would be five venues of artistic production offered in Geneva and at La maison at avenue des Eidguenots 21, 1203 Genève:

1. a website similar to a related project on green roofs (www.gordonbrentingram.ca/roof) with postings of text, photographs, video clips, and drawings;

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2. an archival component to the web-site that links information on these interventions Utopiana with relevant material and interventions involving the Geneva region and related artistic interventions;
3. organization of an event series of an evening or afternoon every two weeks related to the projects involving the screening of videos and on-site, studio and gardening demonstrations and related performances, events, and talks;
4. proposal and organization of the transfer of such 'disappearing crops' (from the Geneva region) into the garden of Utopiana (as per space availability and the interest of the organization) with respective discussions constituting art practices that would be documented and presented as part of production; and
5. a proposed intervention into the public space of Geneva with a series of relatively professional designs (made in subsequent months to the residency), something of a whimsical piece of utopian fantasy, involving re-insertion of some disappearing, local crops with possibilities of the proposal material being exhibited in a gallery or community space in Geneva.



camas, *Camassia* spp., Belly-Rising-Up 24 April, 2005 by Gordon Brent Ingram

This tuberous, onion-like vegetable provides a unique sugar, that is used slowly, and was a staple for the Salish and is often used as a symbol of cultural and dietary renewal. Thousands of hectares of camas were maintained in fields well into the early 20th Century.

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introduction

This proposed residency explores the confluence of,

1. the growing aesthetic movements engaged with, gardens and interventions in gardens as contemporary public art;
2. heritage food crops being displaced from landscapes, fields, and gardens and the wide range of conservation efforts from cultural to scientific (including a full range of organizational formations in the Geneva region from United Nations, NGOs, corporate, local government, grassroots movements, and cultural institutions; and
3. decolonial aesthetics as they play out in Switzerland as a European country that was not a colonial force, but exists within a postcolonial matrix (and that sometimes forgets its highly cosmopolitan position within an only vaguely postcolonial continent).

The device that will activate these explorations is insertion and contrasting with the status of traditional Salish food plants of the region around Vancouver and Victoria in Pacific Canada¹. This mountainous area is on an inland sea is at 49 degrees latitude and has roughly the climate of the Utopiana region at 47 degrees latitude though the weather of Vancouver and Victoria span a wider ranges similar to those of Nantes, Paris, and Geneva. And both regions have become expensive resorts oriented to the wealthy with agricultural production increasingly squeezed by suburbanization, hobby farms and 'villas', and rising labour costs. Both regions have a problematic situation around immigration of agricultural labour and retention of knowledge about traditional farming and crops.

In contrast to the similarities in climate and agricultural economics, the situation around disappearing food plants is diametrically different with traditional crops in the Geneva region being well-known (and better celebrated) and a raft of traditional Salish crops, increasingly erased since the colonial period in the 19th Century, are the verge of disappearance. And what is particularly ironic about the difference between the two regions is that many of the Salish food plants are 'Eurasian' in origin, established in Pacific Canada over the last 5,000 years, are in the same gene pools as those in the Geneva area (and could be planted there). Thus, Switzerland that has seen so much wealth from Amerindian crops, such as chocolate, has effectively no access to Salish onions, root crops, crab-apples, clovers that produce potato-like tubers, and numerous berries. And the plant knowledge around disappearing Geneva crops is in French, which

¹ Ingram provides an introduction to some of these tradition Salish food plants at, <http://gordonbrentingram.ca/fragments/?p=211> that can just best accessed at the beginning of his site, <http://gordonbrentingram.ca/fragments/>.

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as a language remains viable, whereas many of the Salish dialects are spoken by less than one hundred individuals with much plant knowledge found in the remaining word strings.

problem statement

While gardens and 'permaculture' are increasingly employed as respective sites and practices in contemporary site-based art, aesthetic interventions to remember and present information on disappearing crops (and rural cultures) and scientific responses to 'genetic erosion' have been largely neglected by artists. While there is a huge body of discussion on 'permaculture' practices in food production, gardens and urban design, critical examinations of disappearing crop knowledge, as culture, has been rarely contemporized. So the underlying response in this proposal for this series on 'adversity', that the greatest adversity is in forgetting with remembering the history of a site, community, or crop a kind of contemporary practice, has been poorly explored. Similarly, there are few discussions and critical examinations of the aesthetic practices and theory around gardens and public art that have acknowledged decolonial aesthetics and efforts to fully acknowledge local histories, the privileging of certain (agri)cultures and crops, and persisting social inequities.

themes

In our work at Utopiana, we would be exploring the following themes and aesthetic tropes:

1. the greatest kind of adversity is in forgetting (a recurrent theme in Canadian culture that warrants some contemporization by Canadians outside of Canada);
2. alternatives to nostalgia and notions of "lost time" in the vein of the modernist impulses explored by Proust;
3. insertion of a crop in a community garden as a kind of public art practice;
4. the colonial legacies in horticulture;
5. the flow of Amerindian crops to Europe but the now lack of flow of Salish food crops to Europe because of concerns for more pests and invasive species;
6. the 'Eurasian' nature of many of the gene-pools of Salish food plants and their relevance to (and lack of presence in) regions such as around Geneva; and
7. the diverging relevance of decolonial aesthetics for regions such as Geneva and the Strait of Georgia areas of Pacific Canada.

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Lomatium nudicaule, below Belly-Rising-Up, Vancouver Island, 21 June, 2004 by Gordon Brent Ingram
This is one of the most medicinal and sacred species for the Salish and the Lomatium genus only occurs in western North America. The leaves are also eaten as a vegetable.

theoretical influences

The following are the other works in this mixed genre to which we will be referencing in this proposed residency:

1. the recent re-examinations of 1970s landart as with the 2012 survey, *Ends of the Earth: Land Art to 1974*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles²;
2. various artists over the years who have worked with gardens and planting forests and gardens such as New York-based Alan Sonfist³ and Canadian site-based artist, Ron

² Philipp Kaiser and Miwon Kwon (curators). 2013. *Ends of the Earth: Land Art to 1974*. Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in collaboration with Haus der Kunst, Munich. <http://moca.org/landart/>

³ <http://www.alansonfist.com/>

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Benner's with his numerous garden works such as his 2008 *Gardens of a Colonial Present / Jardins d'un Present Colonial*⁴;

3. recent works by individuals and collectives such as Los Angeles-based, Fallen Fruit, that plant food crops as part of site-based interventions⁵ and Canadian and Cree artist Duane Linklater's blueberry garden⁶; and

a raft of theoretical and practice-related issues raised about so-called 'permaculture' gardens in the 2011 discussion of the UK-based collective, The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination with Lars Kwakkenbos and its 2009 pamphlet, *13 Attitudes*,⁷ along with the 2010 essay on 'tending' as an art practice by Kelly and Gibson⁸.

duration of proposed residency

The optimal three month period for this residency is July through September of 2015 so that there would be an opportunity to plant some local food crop perennials in the Utopiana garden in late September as the optimal time to install such perennial, horticultural material in the Geneva area.

artistic product

The three months at Utopiana in mid-2015, would allow castle & ingram to complete the following work by December 2015.

1. a web site installation documenting these interventions at Utopiana

We could complete a simple web site similar to a related project on green roofs (www.gordonbrentingram.ca/roof) with postings of text, photographs, video clips, and drawings, probably only relying on simple public software such as WordPress.

2. an archive of digital material and links to garden interventions as contemporary art

⁴ Ron Benner. 2008. *Gardens of a Colonial Present / Jardins d'un Present Colonial*. London, Ontario: London Museum.

⁵ <http://fallenfruit.org/> and <http://www.cityfarmer.info/2010/01/29/fallen-fruit-an-activist-art-project/>

⁶ <http://www.duanelinklater.com/index.php?/a-blueberry-garden/>

⁷ <http://www.permaculture.com.au/articles/social-permaculture/art-activism-and-permaculture.html>; <http://labofii.net/docs/13attitudes.pdf>; and <http://labofii.net/>

⁸ Caleb Kelly & Ross Gibson 2010 Contemporary Art & The Noise of TENDING. *Interference: A Journal of Audio Culture*. <http://www.interferencejournal.com/articles/noise/the-noise-of-tending>

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There would be an archival component to the web-site that links information on these interventions Utopiana with relevant material and interventions involving the Geneva region and related artistic interventions.

3. a related arts series with at least five live events

We would want to organize of an event series of an evening or afternoon every two weeks related to the projects involving the screening of videos and on-site, studio and gardening demonstrations and related performances, events, and talks -- offered in French and English.

4. insertion of some disappearing crops into the Utopiana garden as art practice

We will make modest proposals for the transfer and re-establishment of such 'disappearing crops' (from the Geneva region) into the garden of Utopiana (as per space availability and the interest of the organization) with such discussions constituting art practices that would be documented and presented as part of production. The heritage plants from south-western Canada would not be proposed for Geneva without extensive protocol and agreements related to quarantines and acknowledgement of unresolved ownership of Salish crops. This absence in Geneva of the Salish crops, that would thrive in the region (perhaps thrive excessively and problematically) would be the source of reflection and discussion throughout this residence.

5. proposal for an urban design intervention in Geneva involving heritage crops

An intervention into the public space of Geneva would be proposed with a series of relatively professional designs, something of a whimsical piece of utopian fantasy, involving re-insertion of some disappearing, local crops that could be subsequent exhibited in a gallery or community space in Geneva.

media

castle & ingram, as part of side stream environmental design, have vitae with numerous examples of work with and exhibiting with the following media:

1. photography and montage (posted on-line with the possibility of a subsequent exhibition);
2. video clips (posted on-line with the possibility of a subsequent exhibition);
3. graphic text and drawings (posted on-line with the possibility of a subsequent exhibition);
4. text (posted on-line with the possibility of a subsequent exhibition); and

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5. urban design drawings and designs (posted on-line with the possibility of a subsequent exhibition).

languages

Both Castle and Ingram are bilingual and Ingram has worked extensively in French including in Geneva and the Pay du Gex.

Nearly all of the text will be in English and French with interviews in French or English.

Some of the interviews may involve Salish dialects especially SENCOTEN from southern Vancouver Island and Halkomelem the indigenous language of the City of Vancouver and adjacent communities.

community engagement

For such a brief time in Geneva, over a summer, the community engagement of castle & ingram would centre on somewhat whimsical and under-stated 'field research'. The focus would be on making contact with various relevant networks and individuals in and around Geneva and proposing and undertaking site visits and interviews with related photographic and video documentation.

The second mode of community engagement would be in organizing at least five evening and afternoon events and workshops as “*A la recherche de certaines récoltes presque perdu*” ‘cabarets’ and salons.

A third form of community engagement would be in working with the Utopiana organization to possibly consider reinserting more ‘disappearing crops’ into the Utopian garden and in adjacent open space.

A fourth form of community engagement would be in a sardonic, parting proposal to introduce some of these crops into a higher profile, public open space in central Geneva. This proposal would be largely conceptual but ideas such as these can leave a mark on the local consciousness morphing into more practical possibilities.

Work on genetic erosion and disappearing heritage crops can often be dire and didactic. Our approaches, in reaching out to individuals and organizations in Geneva, and adjacent regions would be relatively sardonic.

biographies

Castle and Ingram currently contribute to a fifteen year old, Vancouver-based environmental planning and design collaborative, *side stream environmental design*. The

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group is often concerned with public art within urban public space and involves over a score of artists and designers roughly half of which are of indigenous North American heritages and

engaged in contemporising regional traditions. Of the side stream collaborative group, only castle & ingram have interest in working in Geneva at this time.

Gordon Brent Brochu-Ingram

Brent is *Métis*, the large indigenous demographic group in Canada at a half million people, with his family having deep roots in northern British Columbia, the Yukon and northern Quebec. Ingram's francophone *Métis* heritage has been relatively cosmopolitan in its links and work spanning the building a infrastructure and work in education institutions. He grew up in a Salish community on Vancouver Island near Victoria, British Columbia where he was exposed daily to indigenous land use, horticulture, and other cultural expression. And his multilingual family spoke *Métis* and more standard, French dialects along with Chinook a now largely extinct intercultural language. Early on, Brochu-Ingram was also introduced to West Coast Canadian iterations of Fluxus, the Image Bank and General Idea network on the West Coast associated with FILE Magazine, Robert Smithson, and Allan Sekula. He studied environmental design, earned a BFA in Photography at the San Francisco Art Institute focused on new portrayals of landscapes and completed a PhD, on the cusp of landscape architecture and site-based art, at the University of California Berkeley College of Environmental Design. Part of those studies were based in Rome with extensive work in the Geneva region. Ingram has produced over ten group and solo shows including at Royal Institute of British Architecture in London and Storefront Art and Architecture in New York. He is the author of over one hundred publications, including on loss and re-establishment of heritage crops and gardens and has public art and ecological design taught studios at campuses of the University of California, at the University of British Columbia, American University of Sharjah, and George Mason University just outside of Washington DC. Brochu-Ingram has been the recipient of over ten awards and project grants.

Julian Guthrie Castle

Julian Castle, a dual Canadian and UK citizen, is a Vancouver-based archivist, cultural theorist, videographer, photographer, gardener, and public artist with over ten years of experience in the contemporary arts. He studied computer science at Dalhousie University and shifted over to digital media in the 1990s. He has over a decade of professional video camera experience and two decades of achievements around studying and archiving zines, comics and booklets. He is well experienced in semi-structured interviews the kind that are currently in vogue for artistic research. His personal research interests have been in zoomorphic and anthropomorphic comic and other graphic depictions. In the last decade, he has become involved with site-based and environmental

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art participating in one exhibition, that he largely installed, and working on the field research and proposal phases of a number of projects centred in public space.

internet documentation of the work of Castle & Ingram

Most of the recent castle & ingram projects, have been part of an environmental design and public art collective, side stream environmental design. This work is documented at a number of Ingram's web-sites:

www.gordonbrentingram.ca with a site map for a series of linked project spaces & archives;

www.gordonbrentingram.ca/photobased documenting most of the exhibited material;

www.gordonbrentingram.ca/studiesdesigns documenting project sites and contexts for the work along with project-based sites including,

www.gordonbrentingram.ca/oscurita on a long-term project on ecologies of image, text, and public open space in Rome and

www.gordonbrentingram.ca/roof on the cultures of green roofs.



Crab-apple, *Malus* spp., Belly-Rising-Up, Vancouver Island, 24 April, 2005 by Gordon Brent Ingram
 This kind of crab-apple was heavily tended and prized by the Salish and is in the same Eurasian gene-pool as apple and pear in Europe. A photograph of its fruit is on the cover page.