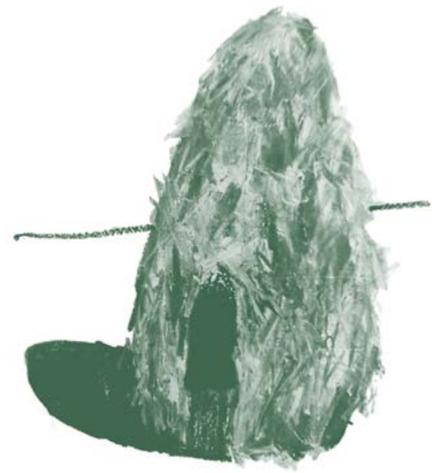


Ânia Pais
Shadows of the Landscape





In an era marked by unprecedented challenges, the **STUDIOTOPIA** initiative seeks to harness the creative synergy between artists and scientists to address one overarching theme: the Symbiocene. This concept, coined by eco-philosopher Glenn Albrecht, envisions a future where humanity lives in harmony with the Earth and all its inhabitants, fostering mutual flourishing and interconnectedness.

Through **STUDIOTOPIA**, artists and scientists from diverse backgrounds collaborate on projects that illuminate the complexities of the Symbiocene. From exploring biodiversity hotspots to investigating sustainable technologies, each endeavor offers a unique perspective on our relationship with the natural world.

The Residency Programme is designed to foster collaboration between the arts and sciences to promote sustainable development. It aims to break down barriers between disciplines by encouraging innovative cross-disciplinary approaches. The programme is hosted by 11 specialized organizations, each facilitating unique residency opportunities with their own open calls. Together, partner institutions serve as catalysts for innovation and collaboration, fostering dialogue and exchange across disciplines and borders. By bringing together the best minds in art and science, Studiotopia aims to inspire new ways of thinking and acting in the face of global challenges.

Cluj Cultural Centre is one of the host organisations for a collaboration between an artist and scientist, under the challenge *If we opened people up, we'd find landscapes (inspired by Agnes Varda)*.



For the challenge approached by Cluj Cultural Centre as part of Studiotopia project, we have been looking at the access to waterways and green spaces as a social and political priority in the Cluj area. We have high discrepancies in our services/privileges and access to fundamental environmental rights: with peripheric neighborhoods facing challenges of clean water and access to green spaces, as opposed to central areas with sandy beaches and newly designed parks.

As climate change intensifies, green spaces become crucial for urban well-being. Urban trees enhance intellectual capacities, creativity, learning, and mood, while also helping navigate mental health challenges and speeding up recovery in hospitalized people. Walking in urban parks and forests promotes social health and green spaces (trees and urban forests) reduce urban heat islands and associated mortality. The first challenge is related to the significant inequalities in access to green spaces. Cluj-Napoca exhibits extreme heat islands and lacks sufficient green spaces to buffer these temperatures. Cluj-Napoca is developing a culture at the level of the society that increasingly values the recreational benefits of urban and peri-urban green spaces. Civil society initiatives like Someș Delivery and Clujul Sustenabil aim to reconnect people with urban nature. The second challenge is related to the enormous gap between the aspirations and visions at the level of the city governance and the increasing social demand for green spaces in Cluj-Napoca. Citizens' participation in city planning through public consultation is increasingly needed and expected. This dissonance presents an opportunity for co-creative and deliberative activities among stakeholders in order to form a shared vision for positive human-nature futures in the city.

Listening to the City

Reflections on working
with Ánia in STUDIOTOPIA

Tibor Hartel

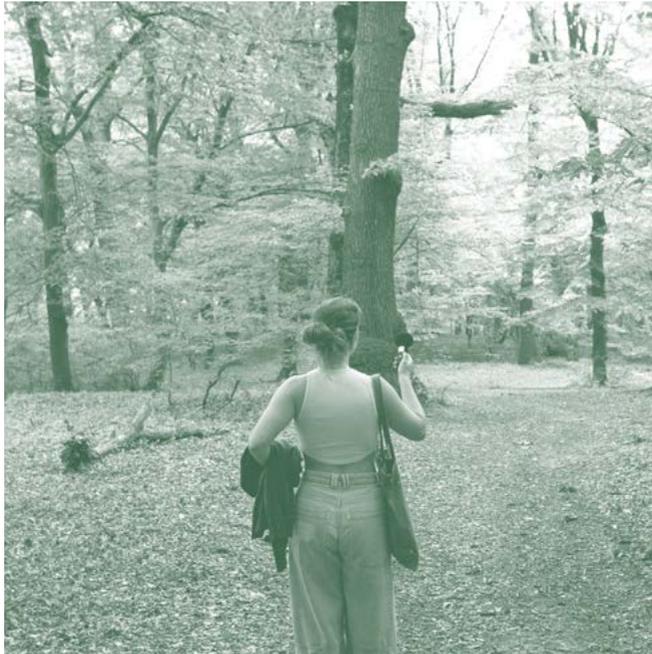
The challenge of bringing arts and science together for sustainability has been recognised only recently, and even more rarely practiced. In Central and Eastern Europe there are not many concrete examples we can point to and say: this really worked, for both sides and for the public. For me, this is exactly why the STUDIOTOPIA residency in Cluj felt so important and, in some respects, so fragile at the same time.

I had the privilege to collaborate with Ânia within the STUDIOTOPIA project, coordinated locally by Cluj Cultural Centre. It is only my second genuine collaboration with an artist, and in both cases the experience was exceptional. These collaborations convinced me that when art and science truly meet - as equal partners - something unique can happen.

By training I am an ecologist. Over time I adopted social sciences as well, because I realised that to help nature and people thrive together we must understand people's practices, institutions and conflicts, not only species and habitats. Yet I also realised that scientific understanding, while fundamental, is not enough. Knowing that some neighbourhoods overheat in summer, or that some groups have much less access to green spaces and clean water, does not automatically change anything.

We also need to trigger and elicit values and feelings and at some level, positive emotions: care, responsibility, a sense of justice, and a feeling that 'this concerns me'. Ecology and social sciences can analyse values and attitudes, they can model scenarios and write recommendations. But they usually do not have strong tools to awaken values in people. Art clearly has this potential.

Working with an artist as a scientist is, however, a challenge. There is always a risk that science, with its institutional authority, dominates the collaboration and turns the artist into an illustrator of pre-existing ideas. This means we need scientists who are empowering yet conceptually robust and inspiring, able to offer clear frameworks without turning them into constraints. Nevertheless, the reverse is also true: the artist may instrumentalise the scientist, using 'science' mainly as decoration, or may flatten complex concepts into simple slogans. Therefore we need an artist



who is genuinely curious about theory, open to dialogue, and willing to keep a certain level of conceptual and ethical rigour, while still protecting the freedom and integrity of their own artistic language. At the same time, we have a responsibility that whatever we produce together is scientifically honest, morally responsible, and artistically meaningful for the people who will experience it. Balancing these dimensions was a key challenge for me in this residency. Looking back, I feel I navigated it reasonably well, and I would gladly repeat such a collaboration any time (and I hope Ânia feels the same about working with a scientist).

The Local Challenge that framed our collaboration was very concrete: access to waterways and green spaces in Cluj as a social and political priority, and ultimately as a question of fundamental environmental rights. The city shows clear inequalities. Some central areas enjoy newly designed parks, ‘urban beaches’ on the Someş and many recreational opportunities, while several peripheral neighbourhoods struggle with limited access to clean water, trees and pleasant everyday spaces.

Research tells us that urban trees and green spaces improve mood, learning capacity and recovery from illness. They reduce urban heat islands and associated mortality. Cluj is also developing a culture that increasingly values urban and peri-urban nature, supported by civil society initiatives like Someş Delivery or Clujul Sustenabil. At the same time, there is a growing gap between ambitious visions at the level of city governance and the everyday experience of people who still lack accessible, pleasant green spaces near their homes. This dissonance is an opportunity for co-creative processes, where different actors sit together and imagine more just human-nature futures for the city.

Our collaboration brought together Ânia’s interest in how landscapes and cities shape our bodies, language and sense of self, and my interest in human-nature connections and environmental justice. She was genuinely curious about theories and concepts: social-ecological systems, ecosystem services, climate adaptation, inequalities in access to nature. I could offer these frameworks and the empirical background from my own research and from international literature. In turn, I was very curious to see how such



ideas could be translated into an artistic language that speaks to people directly, through their senses and emotions. It was fascinating to observe Ania's process: how she listened to the city, how she used sounds, materials and forms to invite visitors into a different kind of attention. With relatively few material resources but with a lot of sensitivity and rigour, she managed to construct something simple and powerful at the same time.

One key idea in Ania's practice is that the landscape we inhabit is our extended language and values (and at some level, vice versa). Entering the work means distancing yourself, for a short time, from the usual rhythm of the city and becoming more aware of its sounds, its heat, its tensions and its possibilities.

For me personally, this collaboration was also a mirror. It reminded me that my work is not only about better data or sharper concepts; it is also about enabling people to feel why these things matter. A scientific article about heat islands, inequality and green spaces is important, but it rarely changes someone's relationship to their own neighbourhood. An artwork can sometimes do that in a few minutes, if it creates the right conditions for attention and reflection.

Who might this project speak to? I think, first of all, to the citizens of Cluj who live with these inequalities in access to nature every day, whether they are aware of them or not. It may also speak to urban planners, decision-makers and students, by suggesting that access to everyday water and green spaces is not a luxury, but part of fundamental environmental rights and of a caring relationship with the more-than-human city. And I hope it can encourage other scientists and artists in our region to take the risk of working together more often, accepting the discomfort, sharing authorship, and trusting that something valuable can emerge at the intersection of our very different ways of knowing the world.

In this sense, the STUDIOTOPIA residency in Cluj was not only about one artwork or one project. It was also a small step towards normalising ('mainstreaming') collaborations between arts and science for sustainability in this part of Europe. I am grateful that I could be part of it.

*“We are the expanded language of
the landscapes we inhabit”*

Ánia Pais



We are looking at the access to waterways and green spaces as a social and political priority in the Cluj area.

We have high discrepancies in our services/privileges and access to fundamental environmental rights: with peripheric neighborhoods facing challenges of clean water and access to green spaces, as opposed to central areas with sandy beaches and newly designed parks.

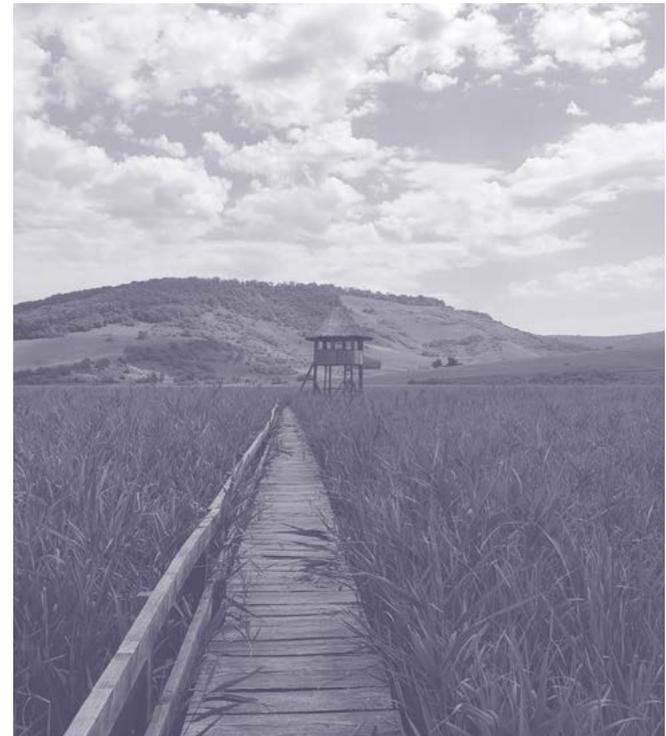
Cluj Cultural Centre

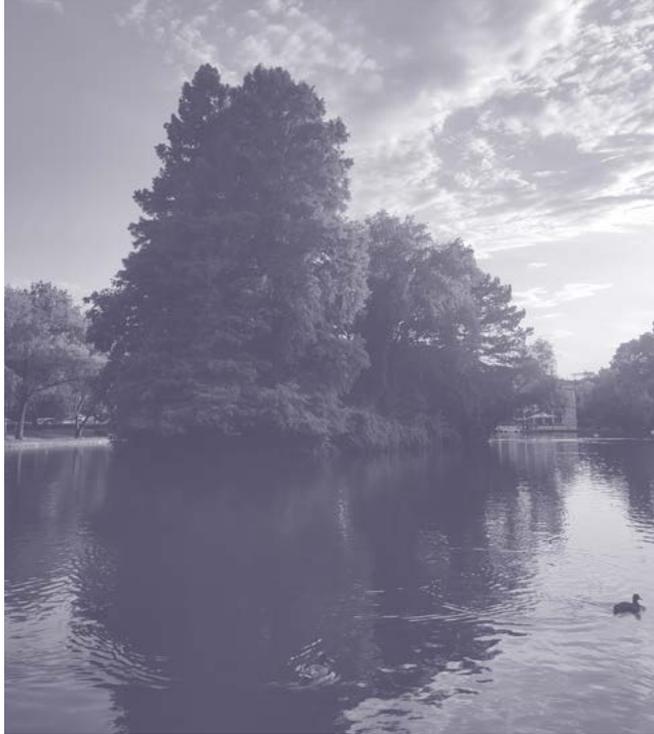
By focusing on urban green spaces in Cluj - especially in underserved peripheral neighborhoods - I aim to raise awareness of their vital role in shaping our bodies, spirits, and identities. My artistic practice highlights how nature influences self-perception, relationships, and our place in the world. We are the expanded language of the landscapes we inhabit, and by reconnecting with nature, we foster personal and collective growth, essential for thriving, sustainable communities in the Symbiocene era.

Collaborating with a scientist motivates me to approach my artistic practice more sustainably, aligning creation with global challenges and fostering individual and collective awareness. This partnership transforms art from not only a personal expression, but also into a tool for questioning and raising consciousness about community issues. My work responds to the earth and landscape, reflecting their emotional impact on memory and identity. Scientific insight deepens this exploration, highlighting the transformative relationship between people and their environment. Together, art and science can create meaningful dialogues, emphasizing the interconnectedness of human experience and the natural world.

The project explores the urgent need for reconnection with and appreciation of nature. From an ecological perspective, it engages with scientific inquiry by addressing the interactions between living beings and their environment. It seeks to understand how landscape, ecosystems, and biodiversity shape our language, identity, and way of being in the world. Starting from the premise that we are an integral part of the ecosystem we inhabit, I investigate how this connection - or its absence - influences human behavior and social relationships.

The project also incorporates a political reading of our relationship with nature, addressing issues such as deforestation, human control over the natural environment, and the emotional, physical, and social impacts of disconnection from nature. Through collaboration with a scientist, it aims to foster empathy and awareness, developing a body of work that activates a space of non-indifference and encourages the building of a deep, emotional, and responsible relationship - one that ultimately calls for the urgent need to reconnect with and value nature.





My methods were rooted in observation, attention, and listening, an immersive approach that allowed me to experience the territory through others and to connect deeply with its rhythm, people, and natural environment. This process involved site research, field recordings, and documentation of gestures and materials related to local agricultural practices, in Cluj and the surrounding areas.

Back in Portugal, I continued the work intuitively, guided by memory and embodied knowledge. I explored manual and traditional techniques linked to the land, such as working with straw and terracotta collected in my region, and experimenting with fabric through unravelling and painting with natural pigments.

These methods combined artistic experimentation with an ecological sensitivity - seeking to build a dialogue between matter, gesture, and sound, and to translate the physical and emotional experience of inhabiting a place into a form that merges sound and sculpture.

In my working process, I believe in the need to allow myself to be touched, to let myself be moved by things, by beings, by environments, by atmospheres. This sensitivity is at the core of the project: the capacity to listen, to pay attention, and to inhabit the world with openness. To fight for the right to be moved by the shape of a tree, by the sound of the wind, by the warmth of sunlight on the skin - to fight for feeling.

This gesture of reclaiming the act of feeling is deeply connected to the themes explored throughout the residency: the human need to share space and time, to recognise fragility and vulnerability, and to understand oneself not in isolation but within a collective body - within an ecosystem. The works developed here arise from this conviction: that care, presence, and distance can become languages; that gestures hold memory; and that, through art, we can cultivate spaces that restore our sense of humanity.

Throughout this process, the traditional Romanian haystack became a central reference - not only as an agricultural structure, but as a gesture shaped by community, repetition, and inherited knowledge. What moved me the most was not only the form itself, but the choreography behind it: the collective labour, the shared pace, the way bodies organise themselves around a material that belongs to the land. The haystack embodies the memory of hands, an intelligence rooted in tradition, a relationship with time that is slow, communal, and attentive. Bringing this gesture into the work allowed me to anchor the installation in a language of care and reciprocity - a way of honouring the land not through representation, but through the physical continuation of a practice that holds within it a whole world of belonging and labor.

Inspired by agricultural work and the gestures of gathering and harvesting, I decided to construct three straw pieces.





Each time I create, I feel as though I am creating a poem, a space that stirs the interior, that challenges and provokes it. The straw is not just straw here; it is a gesture, a language. Although it emerges from an individual and personal place, it only fully exists because it allows itself to be touched by others, because it understands itself within a collective.

It is like a continuation of the gesture. We are the extension of one another, a gesture that multiplies, shared landscapes. Inspired by the ritual of building a haystack, by the communal, cyclical work of those who labour with the natural flow of the land and its seasons. By the gesture that is passed on, a gesture of care, ritual, and connection with the movement and the rhythm of the earth.

I then decided to collect straw from the field together with my father, under the stars, lit only by the night. I appreciate the almost ritualistic practice we developed while gathering the straw - the action, the movement, the feeling of the body working with purpose.

As soon as the structures were completed and the straw was applied, I began a process of painting the pieces with terracotta collected in the region. Through a process of sieving the grain of the soil and creating a thick paste, the pieces were painted, giving them this dry, reddish-brown appearance - the pieces were naturally dried, allowing the material to settle and take on its final texture.





The final installation is composed of three straw and terracotta pieces, suspended by a rope that resembles an umbilical cord, creating a sense of lightness and suspension. This relationship is important to me, as the bodies of the works are robust and heavy, and the suspension introduces a kind of mysticism and tension around them. This lightness contrasts with the physical weight of the pieces, generating a subtle feeling of unease and wonder.



At first, I thought of placentas, a temporary organ, carrying oxygen and nutrients to the fetus.

A “second heart,” or the marking of a cycle. What stayed with me was the idea of the cycle. My grandmother used to say: “with these eyes that the earth shall eat.” In the same way that everything is born, everything dies. The earth also eats. Everything it gives is eventually returned to it. Everything that comes from the earth eventually goes back to it. It is not something dramatic, it is simply a reminder that the same force that feeds also consumes.

This is what makes the cycle possible. Without closure. The earth will eat in order to allow continuity. Perhaps we are the placentas, the bodies that hold, act upon, and transform the earth, which ultimately consumes everything we leave behind, reshaping it along the way.

The voices of the countryside speak about it. I find it increasingly important not to invent something in order to make sense of it, but to remain attentive to the meanings that surround me, to what is done and what exists, to the words used in the fields. From my grandmother, my father, my mother, from the people who inhabit that land. Language reveals secrets, desires, and intentions. We only need to be attentive enough to catch them. Everything is already here, “within arm’s reach.” What matters is the ability to gather it.

And this residency is opening me to this attentive, careful, and active form of listening.

If the sound piece asks for the body - involvement, surrender, proximity, absorption - the sculptural works in the gallery shift this experience into another mode of relation. After passing through the darkness where sound becomes matter and touches the body from within, the visitor is confronted with a space in which the physical presence of the works demands another kind of care, another kind of approach.

Listening becomes looking.
And here the gesture changes:
If in one moment, we are asked to enter;
in the next, we are asked to keep our distance.



The sculptures establish an ethics of approaching. Every gesture before them becomes a question: how do I approach? How close can I get? Is touch necessary, or should it be withheld? The works ask for slow attention, almost a state of sensory vigilance - a cautious, conscious approach that recognises that not everything that calls to us is meant to be touched.

If the first piece envelops us, these others claim space. They create an unreachable proximity, a sensitive territory where the body no longer enters, but observes. There is care, but not fusion; presence, but without invasion.



A work that occupies the central stage of the gallery - in this sense, the final piece, the last eternal breath.

The sacred place, yet human, earthly.
A place of recognition.
The one that contains the last breath,
the final word to be spoken -

silence.

The piece crystallises this notion of distance as a gesture of care. Like the island at the centre of the lake, it too is suspended in the middle of the gallery, inaccessible, self-supporting, profoundly earthly and at the same time ethereal.

The metal branches, the terracotta-coated threads, the intense and focused light: everything in it evokes a transcendence of matter, a sense of spirit, of something floating between worlds, simultaneously light and heavy, near and untouchable. In this final piece, distance is not absence: it is a form of relation. It is an invitation to contemplation, to humility, to the recognition that some things reveal their strength precisely because they cannot, or should not, be touched.

Our body is the body of the earth, and learning to listen to the earth - to the body itself - is the challenge. The slowness of the process and the physical, intimate involvement it requires are essential to this learning. A relationship is created with each work in relation to the territory and to my own body. Each piece has a construction ritual shaped by this relationship with the land. A territory the body must discover for the work to come alive. It is essential to uncover this ritual, to develop a sensitivity that allows the body to understand the choreography of the territory.

Each of these works was created in my studio in Atalaia, Covilhã- Portugal. The piece demands nothing that does not already exist in the territory; it remains in active, attentive listening to it, it follows its cycle, its birth, and its order of things.

A tree is not cut to be used as material, nor a branch; one waits for the pruning season, waits for the ritual of care to begin, to gather from nature only what it allows us to take, without abuse, without imposition. All the work is developed in this spirit: seeking what nature gives. It is also a training in patience, in recognising and respecting its time, its life.

An inner attitude of respect must be cultivated; to inhabit the territory is to know it. And this practice - like the exhibition - also calls attention to this: the need to reclaim the right to live the territory, to feel it, to listen to it. To know ourselves, we must know the land we inhabit, its language. To perceive ourselves inside that language, inside the word.





It is important to know the river, the forest, the animals, the brightness of the sun, the stars, the moon; to learn the smell of rain and wet earth. We are an integral part of the earth, and we must resist the disconnection that is imposed on us. We must fight for humanisation, for the right to live a human life - felt, emotional, connected with territory and with nature.

This prevents us from losing the landscapes that inhabit us, so they may open us and find history, memory, and identity. To forget the earth is to forget the body itself, one's own life. It is important not to allow ourselves to be emptied, not to be stolen from ourselves. So that we do not live an alienated life - as Krenak says, "in zombie mode" - one who does not see, does not know, does not feel, who does not inhabit space, who is being stripped of themselves.

Let us learn to listen to the earth, to recognise ourselves as part of its ritual and its cycle, its collective choreography, as part of a unity without which we will not be able to live.

“While we insist on seeing the planet as an object to be exploited, we will continue accelerating its collapse. Art, on the contrary, calls us to listen to the earth and to recognise that it, too, dreams, feels, and speaks.”

Ailton Krenak

The work is installed in a completely darkened room inside the gallery, creating a space of withdrawal and total immersion.

The visitor enters, surrendering their body to an environment of suspension, visual silence, and deep listening.

The sound structure envelops the person intimately, asking them to remain within this darkness that functions almost as a shelter, a temporary home, a place of refuge - a body holding another body - cradled as if within a womb. It asks the visitor to surrender, to lie down, to be embraced by the darkness within, to disappear into the form. In this space of inner blackout, sight gives way to sound. What emerges is a moment of deep listening, solitude, and emotional reconnection, not only with nature but with the self.

Sound becomes something unavoidable.

The noise of the city invades the sound of the rural landscape like a cut, something that wounds us during the experience. And more importantly, it is something we cannot control and cannot escape.

We are part of this experience, we are immersed in it, because that is the reality of things.

No matter what, we cannot simply flee from the noise, it always finds its way back to us. The protection we constantly seek is naïve. It separates us more from things than it brings us closer. It helps us escape the language we are receiving rather than truly perceive it. The piece, then, becomes unexpected, more intense and profound - a presence that involves the body, that at the same time shelters it, and can suddenly cut through it.

A mixture between healing and wound. It heightens our awareness and perception of sound, of its impact on our body, of how it affects us physically and mentally, of the relationship it establishes with us, with our ways of communicating and engaging.

In this work, the sound of nature and the sound of the city are not separated: they coexist, collide, and penetrate one another. The experience offers no choice - it is not about selecting one sound over the other, but about acknowledging this forced and unavoidable coexistence that mirrors our contemporary condition. The darkness intensifies this perceptual encounter: the visitor inhabits a place where sound becomes matter, gesture, contact. A space where listening is simultaneously an act of care and confrontation, a place where one understands that healing and wounding can happen in the same instant.

Gabriela Moldovan

The exhibition *Shadows of the Landscape* places at its center the practice of artist Ânia Pais, whose practice grows from an intimate, continuous dialogue with the land. Her installations emerge not as objects but as traces of encounters, moments in which space, time, and matter press gently against the body and leave an imprint. Working across sculpture, textile, clay, sound, and gesture, she treats landscape as a partner rather than a subject, allowing its rhythms to guide her movements and decisions. Her approach is grounded in observation, sensitivity, and an attention to material processes, a way of inhabiting the world through openness and reciprocity. In her work, the environment is not observed from afar but experienced as a living force that shapes perception, memory, and interiority. Each piece becomes a testimony to this exchange, carrying within it the quiet insistence that to create is first to listen.

There are landscapes we walk through, and landscapes that walk through us. *Shadows of the Landscape* begins from this quiet premise: that every environment leaves a trace, a subtle imprint carried on the body long after the place itself disappears from view. The exhibition takes this idea as a starting point and examines how environments influence our perception and physical presence, unfolding as a space where these traces surface, sometimes gently, sometimes as a disturbance, revealing the porousness between the inner and the outer world.

Here, the landscape is not an image to be looked at, but a presence felt through shifts of perception. It lingers as vibration, density, resonance. Instead of presenting the landscape as a visual motif, the exhibition focuses on how it is perceived through the senses, murmuring in the background of one's attention, insisting that even what seems distant can move us intimately. The works gathered in this space operate less as representations and more as invitations to inhabit this intermediate zone where memory, sensibility, and matter converge.

The experience begins with a slow recalibration: light withdraws, sight softens, and hearing takes precedence. What emerges in the dark is not clarity but attunement: a heightened awareness of the body suspended between familiarity and uncertainty. They approach and recede, collide and overlap, refusing the neat divisions between what is natural and human-made. Through this, the exhibition suggests that the landscape is not fixed, but constantly shifting, something to which one must surrender before attempting to understand.

As the visitor moves forward, form replaces surroundings without resolving it. Three suspended bodies appear, neither fully anchored nor fully free. Their materiality speaks in muted tones: of weight and fragility, of slowness, of gestures accumulated through time. They hover as if caught between emergence and return, holding a tension that cannot be neatly articulated. Their surfaces recall processes older than any individual memory, carrying the imprint of something that grows, gathers, decays, transforms. Here, material presence becomes central, inviting visitors to observe how form interacts with space and perception. Around them, air thickens; distance becomes a medium rather than a separation.

These forms do not explain themselves. They do not demand interpretation. Instead, they invite the viewer to stand with them in a state of quiet uncertainty, to sense how matter can hold memory, how suspension can hold contradiction, how a simple shape can evoke the cyclical breath of the earth without describing it. The works prioritise the act of looking and listening over symbolic explanation, revealing how often perception is shaped by the impulse to define.

Throughout the exhibition, a subtle dialogue emerges between what can be grasped and what resists articulation. The landscape appears not as a panoramic view but as a constellation of sensations: echo, density, pressure, warmth, distance. It casts shadows not through light, but through its ability to inhabit the visitor's interior space. The body becomes a threshold where these shadows accumulate, shaping an understanding that is less cognitive than experiential. This approach highlights the role of the body as an active participant in the encounter with the landscape.

Shadows of the Landscape proposes a different form of engagement, one rooted in empathy, attentiveness, and the recognition that our relationship with the world is reciprocal. The works ask how we position ourselves in relation to the environments we traverse: whether we approach them with dominance or humility, intrusion or care, insistence or restraint. The exhibition raises these questions subtly, through experience rather than didactic statements, suggesting that sometimes the most meaningful gesture is not to step closer, but to pause; not to grasp, but to witness; not to intervene, but to allow. In this sense, the exhibition reflects a world in which coexistence is not a concept but a condition. It speaks to the delicate balance between visibility and shadow, presence and withdrawal, touch and distance. It encourages visitors to reflect on how landscapes continue to shape us, even when absent.

Ultimately, Shadows of the Landscape is less about the landscape itself and more about the way we inhabit it. About the traces we carry, often unknowingly. About the subtle negotiations we make between vulnerability and perception. It suggests that paying attention can become a way of relating to the world, an opening toward the quiet forces that form us, and a recognition that in every shadow cast by the world outside, there is also the outline of our own interior terrain.

Ânia Pais



Ânia Pais is a Portuguese visual artist who lives and works between the village of Atalaia, in Covilhã, and Lisbon. She holds a bachelor's and master's degree in Painting from FBAUL. Her work focuses primarily on installation, with a diverse and experimental field of research, through the use of textiles, ceramics, photography, and performance.

"I consider my work a response or a testimony of a conversation with the land, with the space and time that welcome me. I am interested in space as the main influence, allowing the landscape to guide my exploration. I am intrigued by how space generates motivation and necessity in the body and spirit, and this sensitivity to the landscape plays a crucial role in my creative process."

Guest sound artist

João Feio

João Feio is a sound artist, producer, and DJ based in Lisbon. His music creates immersive atmospheres, blending synthesizers, intricate rhythmic patterns, and melancholic melodies - always driven by a spirit of constant experimentation. His work explores the intersection between the natural and the synthetic, aiming to tell stories through sound and challenge the limits of perception. Alongside his artistic journey, he also develops his curatorial vision as A&R at Please Me Records, a label dedicated to supporting emerging talent in the electronic music scene. Feio continues to build bridges between artistic expression and electronic music, in an ongoing dialogue between emotion and innovation.

SCIENTIST IN RESIDENCY



Tibor Hartel

Tibor Hartel is an Associate Professor at Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Environmental Science and Engineering. His background is population, community, landscape ecology and conservation biology. In the past decade he increasingly broadened his areas of interest towards the human dimensions of large carnivore conservation, urban green systems and ancient land use systems (wood-pastures). He feels he can contribute to areas where knowledge types (traditional, modern) about nature and its management (land use) matters, where potential conflicts should be navigated or even solutioned, where mismatches exist between knowledge and aspirations related to land use (see The Traditional Ecological Knowledge conundrum) and where it is about (re)diversifying human-nature connections for protecting nature in production systems.

LOCAL CHALLENGE COMMITTEE



Ciprian Mihali

Ciprian Mihali graduated in Philosophy from Cluj in 1992. In 2000, he obtained his PhD in Philosophy from the Universities of Cluj and Strasbourg. Since 1992, he has been a lecturer at Babeş-Bolyai University and has been invited to teach at various universities across Europe. Between 2012 and 2016, he served as Romania's ambassador to Senegal and seven other West African states. He was awarded the Palmes Académiques by the French state in 2012 and the Nicolae Titulescu Award for Excellence in Diplomacy by the Romanian Academy in 2017.



Mihaela Ghiță

Mihaela Ghiță worked as a researcher and editor at Radio Romania Cultural, promoting science through public broadcasts. For nearly 7 years, she managed the “Scientific Dimension of Art” section. Fascinated by contemporary art and new media, since 2016 she has been promoting Romanian art and artists who utilize technology and scientific concepts. In 2018, she launched the Fusion project, the first artistic residencies in research institutes in Romania. Since 2019, she has been Vice President and co-founder of the Qolony Association, serving as an ambassador in the field of art and science.



Alexandru N. Stermin

Alexandru N. Stermin is a biologist fascinated by the world inside and outside of us. He participated in conservation projects in Romania, Brazil and Siberia. He has an MSc degree in Philosophy, a five-year course in Positive Therapy and a two-year MSc degree in Psychoanalysis. Since 2023, he started studying Eco-existentialism as the subject of his doctoral thesis in Philosophy. He currently teaches Human Ecology at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Romania. He has published 4 books intended to explore and cultivate our relationship with Nature, evaluated as being among the first Environmental Humanities books in Romania.

Corina Bucea

Corina Bucea is a cultural manager whose work focuses on cultural development through learning, collaboration and artistic production.

At the Cluj Cultural Centre, where she has coordinated The Academy of Change since 2018, she works with cultural organisations, artists and cultural professionals on programmes dedicated to cultural mediation, artistic residencies and professional development. A co-founder of the contemporary art space The Paintbrush Factory, she has been actively involved in shaping cultural infrastructure and facilitating encounters between artists, audiences and institutions.

Corina has contributed to several editions of Romania's participation in the Venice Art and Architecture Biennale and was part of the curatorial team of Timișoara 2023 – European Capital of Culture, working on education, mediation and capacity-building. Her interests centre on cultural development, artistic production and cultural mediation.

Gabriela Moldovan

Gabriela Moldovan is an independent curator with an interdisciplinary practice at the intersection of contemporary art, immersive installation, and cinematography.

She creates participatory environments where exhibition spaces become living stages, guiding visitors through reflective narratives.

Her work investigates how space, objects, light, and sound can shape perception and foster meaningful engagement with contemporary art.

Gabriela is a PhD candidate at Babeș-Bolyai University, Faculty of Theatre and Film, researching immersive and interdisciplinary approaches in curatorial practice. Her projects include *If it's purple, someone is gonna die* (MATCA ArtSpace), *Our Digital Anthology* (Centrul de Interes), *Unveiling the Traces of My Own Shadow* (Himera Gallery), and *Unearthed Echoes I* (The Cosmic House).

Cluj Cultural Centre is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to culture and sustainable development.

The Centre has 143 members, including cultural institutions and organisations, universities, civil society associations, business sector representatives, and local and county administration from Cluj. Additionally, its network includes 56 schools within the Community of Schools, 40 European cities in the Culture Next network, and over 60 national and international partners.

The centre manages programmes aimed at developing the cultural sector and enhancing the impact of culture in society, with a focus on education, health and wellbeing, and sustainability.

For the second time, an inspiring collaboration is underway as 11 prominent European cultural and science organizations come together under the banner of Studiotopia. This groundbreaking project aims to explore the intersection of art and science, delving into the symbiotic relationship between these two disciplines to shed light on the pressing issues of our time.

Ánia Pais
Shadows of the Landscape

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studiotopia.art

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