The weight of their words

An exploration of personal memories of words that have been said to us.

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Either positive or negative, some sentences, words or remarks you hear, stay in your memory. Because this is such an abstract and personal phenomenon, I chose to use an ontological metaphor to talk about my explorations of this subject. More specifically: Botanical metaphors is the «language» I choose to use.

Each of those wordly memories behave like a seed, growing their roots in your mind. The more you think about it - the more they might grow. Some end up becoming beautiful plants that are hard to find, while others are like weeds: they multiply and take too much space. In my master project, I also explore patterns within myself and ways to share them with others through an interactive installation and 3D visuals.

Ob positiv oder negativ, einige Sätze, Worte oder Bemerkungen, die man hört, bleiben einem im Gedächtnis. Da dies ein so abstraktes und persönliches Phänomen ist, habe ich mich entschieden, eine ontologische Metapher zu verwenden, um über meine Erkundungen zu diesem Thema zu sprechen. Um genau zu sein: Botanische Metaphern sind die «Sprache», die ich verwende.

Jede dieser wörtlichen Erinnerungen verhält sich wie ein Samenkorn, das in Ihrem Geist Wurzeln schlägt. Je mehr man darüber nachdenkt, desto mehr können sie wachsen. Einige werden zu schönen Pflanzen, die schwer zu finden sind, während andere wie Unkraut sind: Sie vermehren sich und nehmen zuviel Platz ein.

In meinem Masterprojekt erforsche ich auch Muster in mir selbst und Möglichkeiten, sie durch eine interaktive Installation und 3D-Visualisierungen mit anderen zu teilen.

ABSTRACT:
The weight of their words

ABSTRAKT:
Das Gewicht der Worte

Personal memories

Words

Saying

Onthological botanical metaphors

Interactive installation
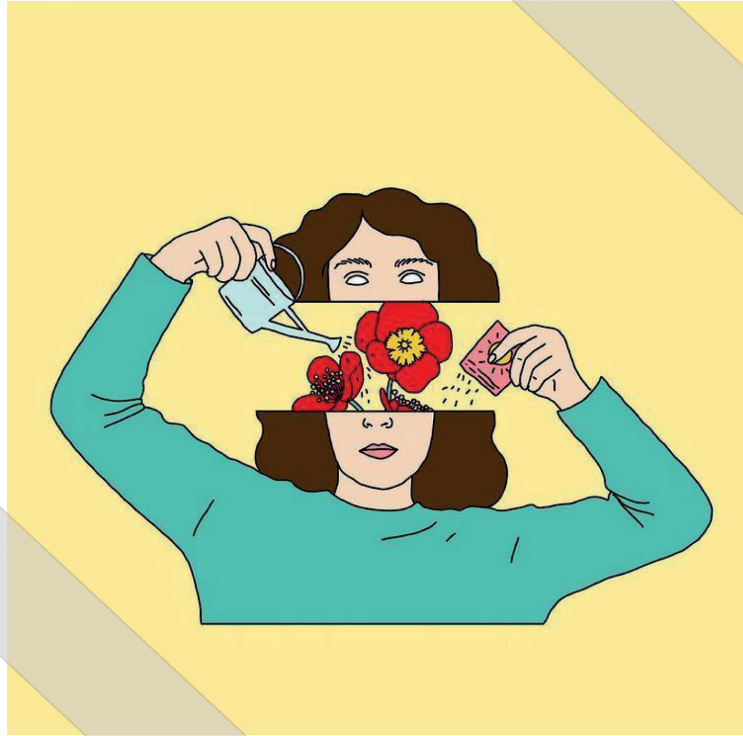
3D visuals

Garden of memories

Mind-garden

Exploration

Poetic

Keywords

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Screenshot 1: Illustration by @annawandagogusey on instagram

"My teacher once said to me "You, the small one with the red hair, go to the back of the class". When you hear those words, you put your head down, you register, and you feel bad about being so ugly and so disturbing for the others"

François Vorpe (67 years old), aimed to give a voice to people with red hair and to make the public more aware of discussions around differences by organizing a "redhead festival" open for everyone in Les Breuleux (Switzerland, canton Jura) in 2019. More than 200 people came. These types of events started to exist about 10 years ago in the Netherlands and could gather thousands of people. (rts, n.d.)

"The shortest way between point A and point B is a straight line."

(Del Arbor, 2019) In the book "Above the rain", written by Victor Del Arbol in 2019, memory is sometimes described as a uncurable sickness, that only death or Alzheimer can deliver you from. Especially in cases related to love and romantic relationship between people.

In the first part of the book, after learning about their backstories, all the different protagonists meet in a retirement home where they mostly talk about being old and their personal view on life. One character specifically mentions these sentences a lot: "The shortest way between point A and point B is a straight line.". For her, this sentence is something that she is treasuring. In moments of doubt or reflections, it comes back to her mind. Sometimes it's calming her, acting like a relaxing memory saying "everything will be fine, there's an easy solution to it just stay focused" but other times it hurts her, making her think about the girl who said those words, how she misses her and an endless flow of questions about the past and how it feels in the present moment.

INTRODUCTION
two cases as an example

You might have heard words that hurt you or inspired you deeply. Positive or negative, it is often the case that even if you try to forget those words, you quickly realize you cannot. They stay in your head word for word like that time you heard or read them for the first time. I think that, as an image, we can compare those words to seeds. They got planted in your head and because the roots already grew out of it, you cannot get rid of it.

Among other more abstract memories/botanical elements, your mind is a lot like a garden. You don't choose the soil, the conditions such as the weather and what grows there but you start from there and work with what you have. You were just born with it for genetic reasons. Therefore, some people are more likely than others to easily achieve being able to find a balance in their own "mind garden" than others. (healthline.com, n.d.)

In the first case, if I try to imagine the words that have been said to François Vorpe as a botanical element it would be something with thorns. Something that hurts every time you try to touch it. But because in the end he seems to be using these negative words as a strength for the battle against discrimination, there is some beauty into it. Although I can imagine that it was not always such a positive thing. Indeed, balance in your emotions and balance in your inside garden, are not something constant. Just like the weather and the seasons. Some periods can be harder to go through than others. Here, the weather and seasons are not necessarily changing with time like it would on earth but changing with the things that are happening to you in life or the absence of them.

It is something we can also find in the second case, with one of the protagonists in Victor Del Arbor's book "After the Rain". Sometimes, the words stated are a positive plant, sometimes it is so present that it becomes toxic, blinding, hiding everything else around it. It can be really intense, almost like a torture created by your own memory. Making this phenomenon calm down or stop can be like a battle.

"(...) Of course there's no way of gardening without experiencing ruined plants, stripped kale, eaten young lettuce. It has to be acknowledged, that the mindless eating habits of snails, slugs, rabbits and the persistence of weed can be very...very... draining."

(Stuart-Smith, 2020, 16:00minutes, chapter 2 audio book)

I took this quote from the psychologist Sue Stuart-Smith who wrote "The Well Gardened Mind" in 2017. Which is also about how we are "gardening" our minds. Sometimes, It seems like we understand so little about how our brain works. It can be draining to take care of a garden. In some cases, you must fight against elements to keep it healthy. You must also know how to fight against it and what you are fighting against exactly. I think it is the same in our minds. You usually have to identify what the problems are before finding an efficient way to cope with it in the long run.

You may have already noticed in this intro and the draft that metaphors are a big part of this master thesis. It can be sometimes challenging to communicate something as abstract as how we feel, without painting an image of it through words.

"Academic psychology hardly deals with the subject of the poetic image, which is often mistaken for simple metaphor."

(Bachelard, 1992, page 142/1299)So in this case it is not only a metaphor but a strong translating tool. Helping us to understand, communicate and analyze.

Born and raised in La Chaux-de-Fonds (NE) Switzerland, I then moved to Sierre(VS) to study visual art for a year. After experimenting, I was most of the time more interested in installations that allow immersion and a sense of isolation. These were generally good ingredients for sharing translated personal subjects through sound, ambiance, and visuals. I'm interested in showing things as they are, but with the step back that allows poetic elements. I also studied game design at the ZHDK for 3 years, focusing on serious games and art-games.

Through this master project and master study, one of my goals is to start anew with a project related to the subject of mental health, focused on "words" and interactive 3D. The final artefact shows some results of my exploration, and is a space with small interactions inviting the visitor to reflect on the subject. Being a fan of using rather abstract narrative aspects in some of my work, this is the direction and focus the artefact have.

I myself struggle and struggled with mental health problems which is why I'm often motivated to raise awareness in my projects around related subjects that are still quite taboo or misunderstood at the time where I'm writing this thesis. And even if some phenomena in our head aren't problems or illnesses, they are worth acknowledging, analyzing and understanding.

Part of this project is also to put a light on some stories and pay tribute to our innermost feelings. In a way it can be seen as a sharing of a small collection of testimony.

I will also be investigating memory & thoughts through the eyes of three different fields: Medical point of view, poetic, philosophical and literature point of view and designer point of view.

the context, field of investigation and personal motivation

How can I use botanical ontological metaphors to talk about phenomenons around the way personal memories of sentences/remarks/words we've been told throughout our lives behave in one's mind which would also make sense to other people ?

What are a few different cases and are there categories of sentences/remarks/words in this context? What are some existing projects related to the subject ?

What was their approach and what can I learn from their results to then produce my own project ?

Where does the problem come from? Is it coming from how we deal with those memories on a personal level or is it deeper than that and the issue starts with the way humans talk with each other?

Research questions

Aside from the personal motivation I wrote in the previous chapter "the context, field of investigation and personal motivation" , I also want to be investigating the scientific side of the subject and the philosophical side of it. By scientific I mean: why does the human brain have certain patterns regarding our memories of words/sentences/remarks and in our language itself? I'm also aiming to find examples and theories through literature and art projects of others.

Later on, in the thesis, I explain how I figured out how I can combine results of workshops, my research and my personal technical goals into an installation/ suitable interactive artefact. But the aim is not to provide people with an official solution to problems/phenomenon related to the management of memories of words/sentences/remarks you've been told, as it is not my goal to have a "medical based only" or scientific research. I anyway believe it's impossible to generalize such a thing because of how different everyone's experience is and we need to find our own recipe which works with ourselves to make it a healthy mind-gardened. But while I believe so, I think it's possible to find some elements in common between people and share our experiences and strategies.

The aims and objectives

This master project being an exploration, I start with gathering stories and testimony through social experiment, discussion, search on social medias and my own experiences. Noticing things in common in other people's stories and mine, trying to put words and theories on it.

On the practical side, through experiments and research, finding interesting ways to interact with such a personal and abstract subject to share stories or testimonies of phenomena of mine to others.

Methodology and methods

As mentioned above, this project and thesis was made during my master studies at ZHDK in the specialization of "interaction design". The master has a duration of 3 semesters and I entered it without any interaction design background. As I did my bachelor in the field of Game design, I was hoping to learn the basic tools used in interaction design to combine them with my practice.
3 semesters being very short, I don't consider this project to be a certified "interaction design work" but rather an amateur first step into this field through the practice that this project brought me. Interaction design is a very "interdisciplinary" field because it "involves elements like aesthetics, motion, sound, space, and many more." according to the definition on the interaction design foundation website (Siang, 2020). Making a project in this field, was confronting myself with the question: how do I shape so many different elements together to create an interaction between a visitor and my topic in an exhibition context?

How the theme of my master project relates to the field of interaction design is through the following: The most obvious one is that talking is in the center of most interaction between most humans. Which is where the hurtful and the nice remarks/sentences/words come from.
How do we then interact with our own memories of those things we've been told? Do we avoid them or try to deal with them?

On the technical side, because of my very limited experience in the field, I started with trying to analyze my master project through the "5 dimensions of interaction design: 1D: text, 2D: Visual representations, 3D: physical objects or space, 4D: Time(media that changes with time, for example an animation), 5D: behavior" from the interaction design foundation website (Siang, 2020) in order to get a more detailed insight of how my project relates to the field of interaction from a technical point of view. The physical interactions in the installation starts with the visitor entering a space, picking up a water container and then watering hypothetically the closest plant to start the installation. For the first plant, a video on the screen behind it starts as feedback. For the second plant, the lights change in the room as feedback before a video in a small screen starts (abstracted information/content) visitors are afterwards able to talk to those plants that they just watered, seeing it react in the small screens. In a way, reading or receiving an explanation of what to do (1D) and entering the space and performing this "ritual" of watering a plastic plant, could be compared to pressing a button to start the installation (2D). The space delimited by the curtains, is the physical space allowing the visitor to be isolated and feel the ambiance created by the light changing (3D). The 4D can be found in the videos on the screens as they are animations. But also throughout the whole interactions within the installation. For example, it takes some time to do those series of actions, some time for the light to change, some time to view the video, speak to the flower, and eventually some time to reflect on it. For the 5D (how do people react to it), it is currently a mystery for me, but will hopefully be found in the appendix of the thesis which will describe how the exhibition went. The reason being that, in the school where I'm doing my masters, the thesis had to be handed in before the physical exhibition even started to be really built.

How is the project related to the
field of interaction design?

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The first example I found is in Buddhism. Emotions such as joy, mindfulness, love, peace, anger, hatred, jealousy and so on are represented as "seeds". Which one can choose to water with love, compassion and understanding. It is said that, by doing so, the other seeds (negative ones) become weaker. (Aske, 2015)

But in general, it is something we can commonly find on social medias like Instagram, tumblr or youtube, often as quotes, without sources, about plants linked with emotions. I think the reason is because it is a good image/visual metaphor to talk about anything that can be identified as a "cycle". Plants wither, they change over time, and take time to grow. Just like emotions, they are never constant , don't last forever and it is in that sense, that they act like cycles.

Screenshot 2: example of a botanical visual metaphor being used on social media

This is one of the reasons why I chose to work around this subject with "botanical" metaphors. Because it fits the behavior of those memories and the natural sides of it in my opinion and adds a poetic aspect to it. By natural sides, I mean for example that it is "natural" to be maybe tormented by memories of negative words/sentences/remarks you've been told and not be able to only think about the positive things all the time. It is a subject that many people researched which I develop more in the "Negative and Positive?" chapter. What I also mean by "natural aspect", is the wild side of plants, how they can be hard to shape/control because they are part of nature. It is a whole process to work on to identify patterns, understand how your mind garden works, let alone change it or control elements in it. I develop this further into the "Psychology and gardening" chapter.

What are examples in which plants are used to talk about other things (ontological metaphors) ? / Why plants?

"We are never real historians, but always near poets, and our emotion is perhaps nothing but an expression of a poetry that was lost"

(Bachelard, 1992, page 184/1299, e book)

According to the book "Metaphors We Live By" by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, metaphors are very present/engraved in languages beyond just in the context of poetry. It is something we use all the time (for example in English when we say such things as "I'm falling asleep", "I'm a little bit rusty today" etc...) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980)

Metaphors are part of our everyday conversations. We use it naturally in a lot of different contexts. But what is a metaphor? What is the definition of a metaphor to begin with?

On wikipedia, "A metaphor is a figure of speech that, for rhetorical effect, directly refers to one thing by mentioning another. It may provide (or obscure) clarity or identify hidden similarities between two different ideas." (Wikipedia, n.d.) while in the Oxford learner dictionary "a word or phrase used to describe somebody/something else, in a way that is different from its normal use, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful, for example She has a heart of stone; the use of such words and phrases" (Oxford learner's dictionaries, n.d.)

But what I like about the research from George Lakoff and Mark Johnson is that they classify the metaphors with examples in 3 categories, allowing us to have deeper, more precise definitions for this term:

1) the orientational metaphor, which uses different notions of space and movement for example "I'm falling in love"

2) the structural metaphor, which uses at least two different known subjects or domains to accentuate something. For example "Love is war" or "life is a game".

3) the ontological metaphor, the one that in the case of this project and thesis, is the most relevant, is when you take something concrete and project it into something abstract. Here, the concrete thing would be plants and the abstract thing is your memories of words/sentences/remarks or the ones from other people. Another example in the book "Metaphors We Live By" by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson is "The mind is a machine". G.Lakoff and M.Johnson said that ontological metaphor allow us "to see more sharply delineated structure where there is very little or none" and also that "they are so natural and persuasive in our thought" and "They are among the most basic devices we have for comprehending our experience.» (Nordquist, 2019)

But why do we need this at all to communicate this concept?

At the beginning of the project, I've often asked myself "What would be okay to share ? and what do I want to share ?". On one hand I think it's always difficult to share something as personal as the memories that affect you in an art or design context, because I don't want my project to be seen as "art therapy" or simply a "too intimate" type of journal. Rather, I would want it to be easy to dive into, some sort of testimony, visualized observations and make people reflect on their own experiences through it.

Metaphors come in handy for this situation, because they allow us to take a step back from the events and make it easier to share. Easier in a way that it will make us less uncomfortable because it will feel less "personal". Like a cooked story rather than raw feelings.

But what is making someone go "mmh… it's too personal"? How personal is "Too personal" and why can this make someone uncomfortable ? (NosPensées, 2018)

What's the importance of using metaphors and visual representation?

In this installation/master project it's even more complex, because in this "one-to-one" interaction, there's probably no or only a bit of trust involved because most visitors will be strangers to me, and I'll be a stranger to them as well. According to Victor Lipman (Lipman, 2019), what can make someone feel uncomfortable in such a "professional"/"work" setting is that it feels like it has no place there. It can be seen as irrelevant to talk about personal things that are not related to the professional or public context because we "are neither friends nor am I a psychiatrist at work".

What is also difficult, is that in order to make it relatable or even make sense, it has to come from something personal. Because we don't know anyone better than we know ourselves. (NosPensées, 2018) We know exactly what x memory feels like because we lived it. Therefore, we are the most suitable person to talk about it.

But here, another problem appears. Sharing a memory that is super dear to you, can make it lose its meaning. It is something that happened to me before.

Because of how personal those stories are, the explanations of why they are dear to you are also justified in a personal language in your head. Putting it into classical words to explain it to someone can somehow make it feel less "magical" and therefore make it lose its meaning. The reaction of the person listening to you could also be hurtful because they might not understand why it is so dear to you, and make it less important to you through their reactions. Of course, it's also true the other way around. A painful memory can for example feel much lighter after talking about it to the right people. And others can help you put it into perspective through their point of view and reaction.

It is true that through the project, I explored some negative sentences as well. But I wanted to highlight at least one rather "positive" story in my final artefact because they are generally harder to think about in my everyday life. It is a way to pay tribute to them. Allowing them to take a lot of place, when our brain doesn't always allow us to do so (I explain more in detail why in the "Negative and positive?" chapter).

So I was confronted with the dilemma/equation: How do I share personal memories that are dear to me, without making them lose meaning for myself and still make them (or the feelings attached to them) understandable to others ?

Metaphors of plants are the best answer I came up with for all of the problems above, not only as a common language between the visitor and I to abstractly communicate phenomenon around it but also as some sort of blanket which would only show the silhouette of the stories, keeping the memory private enough for me.

But why more specifically did I choose plants and gardens as a visual metaphor?

In the book "The Poetics of Space" by Gaston Bachelard (Bachelard, 1992), G.Bachelard talks about memories and uses the visual metaphor of a house to explain his analysis and observations of the behavior of someone's memory. For example, most of his childhood memories would be stored in the attic of this imaginary house, representing that those memories are stored and he doesn't think about it on a daily basis. On the other hand, the things he thinks about everyday are at the entrance or in the living room. Throughout the book, those visual explanations are really helping to make such an abstract theme easier to understand.

In my case, I don't talk about all memories in general, but I only focus on the memories of words/sentences and remarks we've been told.

It was very important for me to choose something that has a continuously changing state such as plants and a garden because I believe that how we feel towards those memories of W/S and R changes as we grow older.

An example that comes to my mind is the sentence "I'm sure you'll be successful" said by a friend of mine. When I first heard it during our discussion, it made me very happy to hear that this person believes in me and is trying to encourage me. But fast forward a few years later, it made me feel pressure to think about it during my study, thinking I might disappoint them if things don't work out.

Described with my botanical visual metaphor, it would look like a very precious and fragile plant at the beginning, turning into something spiky over time.

These are the five possibilities or states I could identify:
- Positives
- Negatives
- Positives turning negatives
- Negatives turning positives
- neutral

depending on the person and their lives, the memories of W/S and R could change states overtime multiple times. Which is why the uniqueness and the changeability of a garden and plants, fits so well in my opinion.

Each memory is unique for each person. Even if two or more people were to live the same situation, I believe they can feel completely different about it. So if they were to translate it into botanical elements, all the drawings could be different and at the end not mean so much to other people.

Which is why I think some elements should be defined and made common in this visual language we are using. In order for us to talk about it better.

Image - representation   Meaning - Interpretation

The roots

-how do they look like
-what are they feeding on
-are they linked to other plants
-clear structure or chaos?

-how deep-rooted is the memory?
-where is the memory in your head?
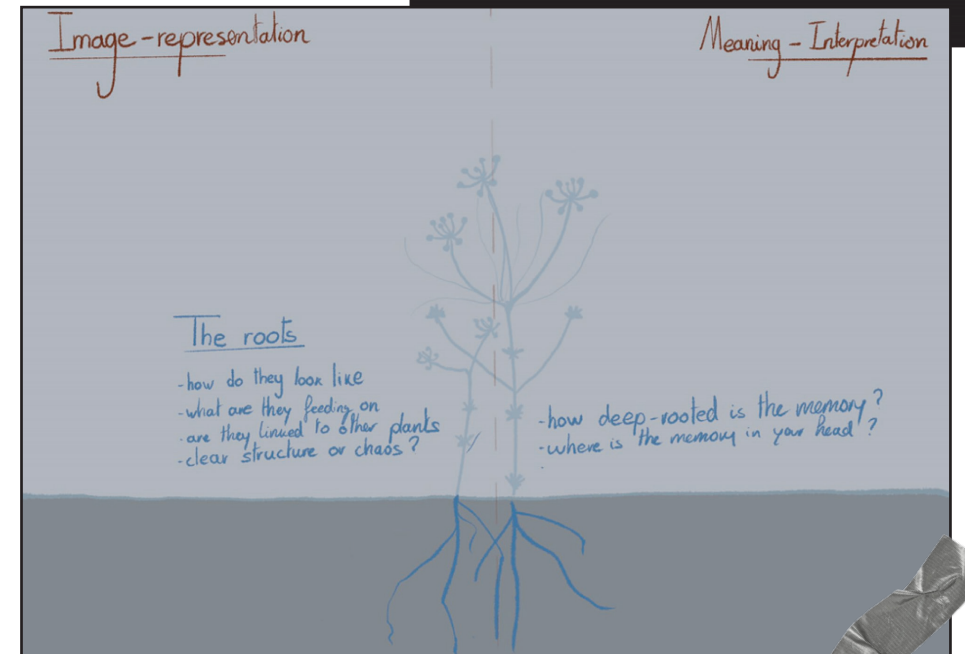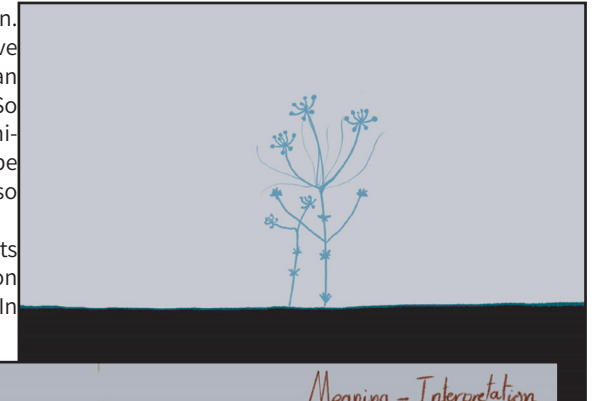
Let's start with the roots. What do they represent?

In one of the experiences I conducted in the chapter "How well do you know your garden", people were free to visualize their garden the way they wanted to.

In my idea and my vision of my own garden of memories of things I've been told, roots can represent how deep-rooted a memory is. In other words: how easy it would be to forget it or not.

In the project, I don't want to force a specific way to visualize them, but rather invite people to ask themselves the following questions: -What do they look like? -What are they feeding on? -Are they linked to other plants? -Is the structure of them chaotic or rather structured?

How to identify a plant? What do they look like?

An example I like from the experience I conducted on instagram also from the chapter "How well do you know your garden", is the picture right here. The person explained that for them: Every plant in the garden is connected to a tree which represents who they are right now. Other plants represent people or groups of people and everything that is said by them to him is making him who he is now. But just like roots are hidden into the ground, it's not clear how exactly which plant influences the most and with what. How the memories are processed into the trunk is also hidden. The only visible thing to others is the leaves of the tree. Which is like how this shows themselves to others.

This is what I aimed for during this experiment, giving people hints to draw elements of the plant but with enough freedom for them to draw freely and then having them talk about it through their design choices.

The soil: where does the garden grow? Is it even on the ground or floating?
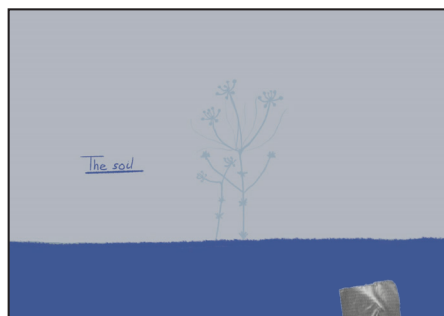
The soil is where things develop, the food of the plants. What I also found interesting during my research was that throughout the book "The well gardened mind" by Sue Stuart-Smith (Stuart-Smith, 2020), they explain that every garden is likely to turn into a forest if not taken care of.

How likely is this phenomenon to happen in your mind-garden ? How fast would it take ?

Numbers and surroundings:

If we take a plant of this mind-garden we could ask ourselves the following questions: Is it unique or does a lot of them grow? If yes, do they grow in patches or are they a bit everywhere? Do they leave any space for other plants to grow around it or are they too invasive to do so?

All of those elements could be use to explain/illustrate a phenomenon happening within you.
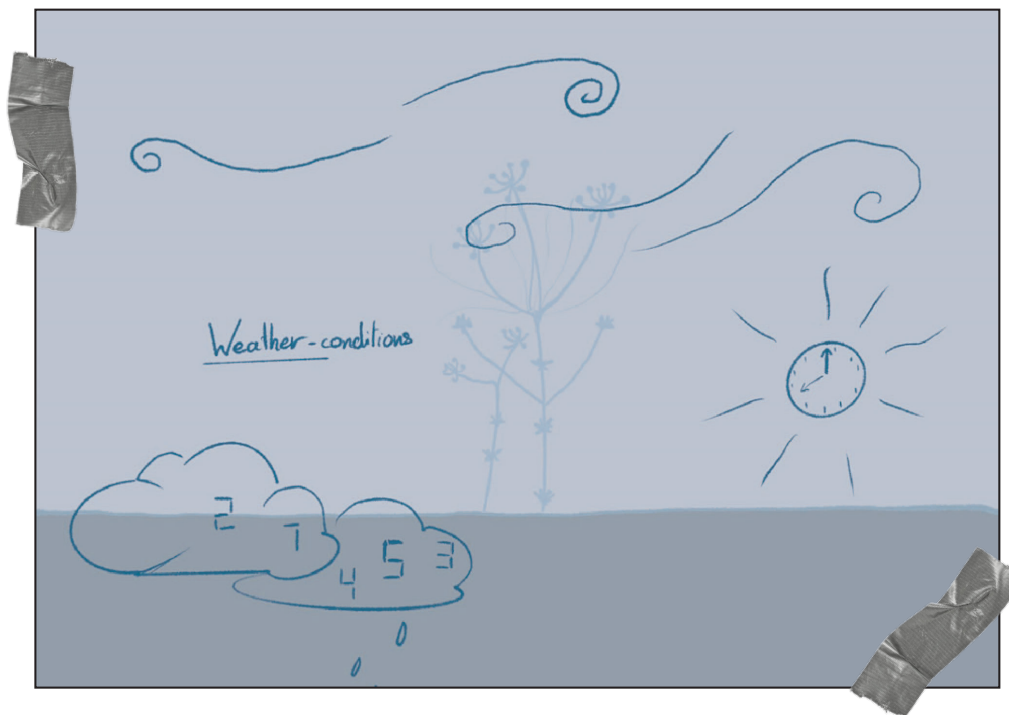
And the last one I suggest is to reflect on the conditions. How is the weather today in your memories of words/sentences/remarks ? Is it very foggy and you can't see much? Is it raining? Sunny ? Windy? Everything at the same time? How's the temperature ?

Those elements and questions could be used to talk about our mood, how we feel, which can influence what kind of memories pop up in our mind.

For example, in the instagram experiment I mentioned earlier and explained further in the chapter "How well do you know your garden", some people were invited to draw in the morning as soon as they woke up. A few of them used those elements to explain that they were tired or still half asleep, having not so much in their mind at that exact moment.

Negative and positive? Weed vs other plants.

In my case and in most people's case, it is usually easier to think about negative things. Negative memories of words/sentences/remarks tend to stay longer in your mind, pop up more frequently in your head. And on the opposite, the positive ones are harder to focus onto. But why is that? Most people probably thought at some point in their life about how nice it could possibly be to naturally always be able to think about positive things, and be happy all the time. A lot of researchers from different fields came up with theories about it. (Cherry, 2020)

The most common theory for example from Cacioppo JT, Cacioppo S, Gollan JK. (T. Cacioppo et al., 2014) is that this behavior comes from way back in the human history. It's a result of our history, of our evolution. (Cherry, 2020) The humans who were the most aware of danger, bad things and negative threats were more likely to survive and therefore pass their genes to the next generations. In other words, still nowadays, our brain functions that way to keep us safe.

We could argue that it's been a few years since most humans don't live with a constant high risk of getting killed by a hidden wild animal. So there's also other theories which try to explain why this instinct still exists. One from a psychological research (Cherry, 2020) is that this "negative bias" is motivating people to get things done and reach their goals. Either we believe this or not, there are also strategies to try to go against this negative bias, which I'll explain further in the "strategies to take care of your garden" chapter.

Now, just like plants and gardens change overtime, our thoughts and memories also do. More specifically, a negative memory doesn't necessarily stay negative the same way forever. Same for a positive one, it could be that overtime, it has a different effect on us when thought about. Changes can be small or could be very extreme.

To try to find an explanation, I tried to reflect on my own experience at first. And came up with the theory that in my case, a memory is more likely to change the more importance I give to it. The more I think about it, the more power it has on me. In other words: The more I hang into it or the longer period of time I go without addressing it, the more space it takes in my mind-garden and the more likely it is to become a problem.

In psychology, memories can be categorized in two different categories. The "procedural or implicit" (memories of things we do without having to think about it. For example: breathing, floating etc..) and the "explicit or declarative" which is the one we will focus on because it is about unique experiences that are stored into our memory. It is proven that the reason why we remember a "explicit or declarative" memory to begin with is that, most of the time, emotions or repetition are involved, turning an experience into a long-term memory. (Alberini, 2010)

I came across another interesting article from Alberini's research, saying that each time we recall a memory, our brain goes through a process to keep the memory in our brain because recalling it is making the memory fragile. (Alberini, 2004) It could mean that it's when we take the time to recall the memories that we are most likely able to interact with it or do something about it.

If this theory is true, it could mean that negative memories of words/remarks/sentences stay longer in your mind because the emotion one feels when recalling the memories is often stronger; Making the "maintaining" process of the memory stronger. Rather than when one is recalling the memory of a compliment for example.

In this chapter, I will start with sharing my findings on social medias.

On youtube, "street-interview" type of videos are pretty popular around this subject and are pretty straightforward. With usually fast montage and a lot of cuts, people answer the question that is often written in the title of the video.

Each youtube channel that I've seen had a slightly different approach to the format. The videos which get the most views in this "street-interview" category with questions shown here such as "What's the most painful thing you've been told?" or "What is the most beautiful thing you've been told?" were easy for me to relate to, to feel for the people who were interviewed. Judging from the comment section, it is also the case for a lot of viewers. They are invited to reflect and often show support or share their own experiences in the comments. I believe that the reason why they get so many views is that they will very likely make the viewer feel something or think about the subject. They are well done in that sense, for achieving this effect to the masses, even if for my personal taste, the sad music in the background feels unnecessary, I get drawn into the stories and watch the whole video.

In the videos from "Thoraya Maronesy"'s channel, we don't only hear sentences/words but also the context around them, a few sentences about who said it and how they feel about it today, why did they make them feel this way and sometimes also what impact it had on them and their life. In the visual, we see that the people get interviewed outside and the focus is on their facial expression. They are looking at the interviewer most of the time. We don't get to see how the question is phrased and if the reason for them being filmed is explained to them or not. But one thing that concerns me is that we don't know how they felt about saying it out loud to a stranger. Did it make them feel lighter ? Or the opposite: did it hurt to maybe have to recall painful memories ? The impact it has on the viewer is showing in the comment section of the youtube videos, but the one it has on the people being interviewed is missing in my opinion.

I think it is interesting to compare them to the videos from the french channel called "CRU", who have a quite different approach: the 100 people who are being interviewed are not random strangers met in the street. They have been cast and selected to be as physically different from each other as possible. The main idea from this is probably to have as much diversity as possible in the answers. Those people are invited into a studio and then asked a lot of different questions in a row for different videos.
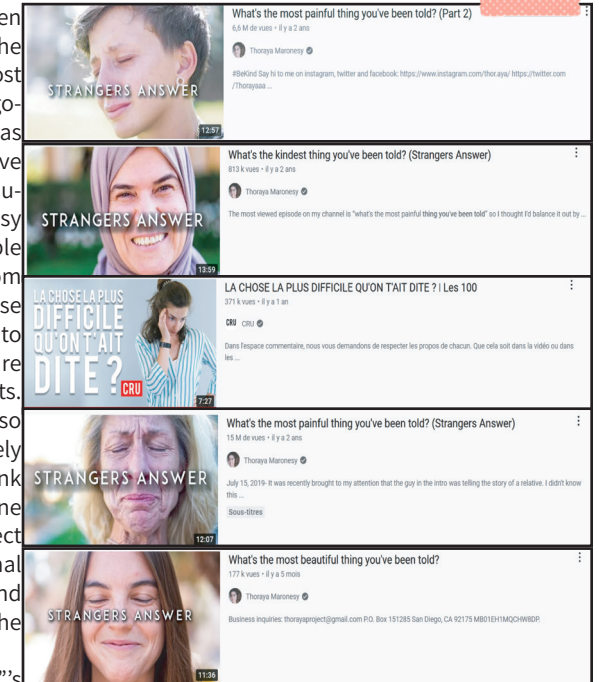
What are existing examples which aim to express the memories in someone's mind that I've come across? And what was their approach like?

The montage of "CRU"'s videos are very fast, we don't get any context to the answers and they are often cut by other people's answers throughout the video. Which fits to the name of the channel which translates to "raw". It's about having just the raw answers. Something I noted from those videos, is that they also leave some moments where the people hesitate before answering, are thinking about an answer and sometimes express that they have no idea what to say. Since I believe that those memories come back at more random times, It makes sense that answering such questions out of the blue can be difficult. And here again I'm unsure if it has any benefits to answer this question on camera for those people. But for the viewers, it seems like judging from the comments it's still a format that allows them to relate to some stories, even if some are expressing being annoyed by the amount of cuts in the montage.

So from those videos, I learned that I really wanted to think about a way to introduce the person into the subject. Letting their answer come as naturally as possible to them rather than them having to dig them up in their memories. And to think about the benefit or impact it can have on them to share their memories.

Some other videos in that category are quite interesting because the question asked is more specific. For example here "What is the worst thing you heard while you were faking being asleep?" or "what's the best advice you've been told?", which is, in a way, a trigger to invite people to recall more specific memories.

Some also use other formats than video interviews, they gather written answers on the social media "Reddit" and then have a synthetic voice read them or themselves read them. Which, on one hand, has the advantage of conserving more anonymity for the people answering the question but can also take away a bit of the emotions and reality[1] from it for some viewers.

On Instagram and tiktok, we can find such videos:
The content of the video in the background is not necessarily related to the subject, but some people ask questions in the foreground, inviting people to share their answers in the comments. Here for example, the question is "What are sentences you've heard that killed you on the inside but you had to act like it didn't matter?"
Quite a lot of people share their stories in the comments. And on instagram, the comments with the biggest amount of likes are at the top of the comment section.
Usually what invites someone to put a like on a comment is because they relate to it, find it funny, or give a like to show support. Which makes the comment section usually very entertaining to read and also interesting in the sense that it can make someone feel emotions. It can also make someone feel less alone in what they are going through which can help to feel better.

1 What I mean here, is that maybe you can think an answer is fake because you don't see the person say it.

Image 1: https://img.betaseries.com/PrXMLqWlq0kwpdXoQmvH3Lj512Q=/500x282/smart/ https%3A%2F%2Fpictures.betaseries.com%2Ffonds%2Foriginal%2F28677_1619960172.jpg

In the episode 4 of the anime called "Link click" They have a beautiful approach on the subject: In this fictional show, people can come to a shop with a picture to change things in the past that happened 12 hours after the picture was taken. The client of this episode wants two sentences to be told, so that he will have less regrets in the present. One to its first love and one for his mother. Through the episode, we get to know the story of this client. And what is special is that the dialog and sound effects only stop when the two sentences are being pronounced by the character. So we never get to hear what they are as a viewer. We only know the context and what impact it had on the people through the scenes and the facial expressions of the characters. I think it's a very unique scenario that is very fitting. Because at the end, those sentences are intimate, private and meaningful only to one person usually.

Image 2: Reichenbach, A. (2020). "D'où est-ce que tu viens? (Where do you Come From?)"[video/ shortfilm]. head.hesge.ch, festival de Winterthur, Suisse https://head.hesge.ch/information-fiction/dou-est-ce-que-tu-viens-selectionne-au-festival-de-winterthur/

"D'où est-ce que tu viens? (Where do you Come From?)" - Directed and written by Reichenbach Anouk, is a collection of testimonies about discriminations against asian people. Through narrated situations and screenshots of comments found online, the artist reacts to those violence with krump dance. (D'où Est-Ce Que Tu Viens?, 2020)

Image 3: Gupta , S. (2019). For, In Your Tongue, I Cannot Fit [Installation]. www.gazette-drouot. com, Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, https://www.gazette-drouot.com/article/biennale-de-venise-entre-grise-mine-et-pale-figure/7443

I saw this installation in real life in Venice in 2019. As soon as I went through the curtains to enter the room, the quiet sound of so many different voices immediately immersed me into a very special ambience. The low light also helped.
The visitor is able to walk freely in the installation to listen to the microphones.

So to highlight again shortly want I learned, and what I want to pay attention to while designing my artefact, from analyzing those existing examples, here's a list:

- For me it is important that the memories are not being violently dug up but rather that the person is eased into it. Ideally, it could also be possible to think about a way to give "tools" to the person for them to use to observe the memories when the thoughts appear rather than making the thoughts appear in order to observe them.
- Anonymity and intimacy are quite important aspects to me. Maybe you won't want someone specific to hear that something they said affected them so much. And more importantly, maybe you don't want to risk the meaning of something so personal to change.
- Poetic approach rather than scientific approach is my goal

Genetics and mental health? Soil and condition you are working with.

Like mentioned in the previous chapter "Negative and positive? Weed vs other plants." We know that the reason why we remember sentences or a remark we've been told (a "explicit or declarative" memory) is because emotions or repetition are involved. Usually, the stronger the emotion, the more an experience is likely to turn into a long-term memory. (Alberini, 2010)

Through discussions and through the google form from one of my experiments, I noticed that some people might be able to deal with the subject more "easily" than others. I came across articles that could be theories about why. For example about "Highly Sensitive People" (HSPs). It is proven that some people feel emotions in a much deeper way than others, which could be a curse when it comes to this subject. (Scott, 2022)

Before I continue this chapter, I would like to put a reminder as a disclaimer that I'm not from the medical or psychological field, rather I want to approach the subject mainly from a poetic point of view. I just thought it was an interesting factor to point out and to keep in mind that, hypothetically, not everyone deals with the subject the same way. This confirms that developing one "recipe" for everyone would not work.

Sue Stuart-Smith, who wrote "The well gardened Mind", is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist. (Simon & Schuster, n.d.) And in her book, she often compares and links psychology and gardening in a very interesting way. For example, the author says that if one stops taking care of a garden, weeds will grow and it will eventually become a forest. Just like the things happening in our mind, they need care and patience. But for some people, their "soil" is more likely to see their garden become a forest faster than others. (Stuart-Smith, 2020) Which is, I think, a very good image to illustrate that we are not all equal with this subject and therefore need different tricks and things to feel at peace with our memories of what people might have told us in the past.

MY EXPERIMENTS AND METHODOLOGY

We started with a short guided meditation through zoom. Everyone was asked to roll a dice and keep that number in mind. They then had to find a comfortable place to sit or lay down, mute themselves and turn off the camera. After some classical breathing exercises as an introduction, they were asked to close their eyes. The first exercise was then to imagine a big field covered in earth with themselves in it wearing gardening clothes. In the sky, all thoughts passing by would transform into clouds.

After another breath they would imagine themselves in the 3rd person point of view turning around, and then walking the number of steps they got at the beginning with their die. I continued guiding them by saying that now this "character" of themselves should close their eyes as well, and once they would slowly open them again, grass would have grown around them.

Depending on the number they got on the die from the beginning, (for example let's say they got a 2) participants had to imagine 2 things that make them happy in the form of seeds. Examples given were: smells, TV show or anything that brings them comfort. After planting them in the grass around them, they then closed their eyes once more. All clouds representing other thoughts started to produce rain, and I asked people to imagine the raindrops on their 3rd person character. After opening the eyes of that representation of themselves, the plants would have grown, having a form that you imagine they would have.

The meditation ended there.

It was completely improvised by me, inspired by classical meditation/reiki/asmr content that can be found all over youtube.

After this meditation, they were asked to fill this google form, that I later also sent to other master students:

*https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd1fA7bSKIk1DY4w3qtqKNSmwOrxaw0l8RZctb_
P1UIMKGV-A/viewform?usp=sf_link*

Some results really touched me. As they are very personal even if they are anonymous, I don't feel like I have the right to share them as they are. Because of how private they sound. But what is interesting to me is that even without context, I felt the things which were written. Even if no one told me those exact words, similar experiences in my life makes me relate and reflect.

From this experience, I was able to see if the idea of visualizing your memories as plants made sense for other people and here: a meditation is used to trigger some memories and put people in the mood or the setting that allows them to listen to themselves for the exercise.

But a few elements that might have influenced the results should be highlighted:

Four people filled the google form without taking part in the meditation. I wanted to see if, without being eased into it, it would still be possible to fill. Which apparently was, but I have no way to know if the answer would have been the same or not if those four people took part in the intro meditation.

The other eight people who participated in the whole experiment were also from the same design school. Most of them were game designers or studying game design. Allowing me to use terms such as "3rd perspective, first person etc…" during the meditation, without having to explain. But I can't be sure that it would work on people with different backgrounds not related to art or design. Which is why in the second experiment which I will explain right after in the text, I chose to ask on instagram for volunteers.

How well do you know your garden and how do you take care of it (experimental exploration and meditation in the Profil L and instagram experiment)

If I were to ask someone "what are some sentences or words you heard that really affected you ?" probably nothing or not much would come to their mind. It is a difficult question to answer when asked because usually, those memories come back when you don't expect them. For example in my case: before going to bed, in the morning when I wake up, when I go to specific places, meet specific people etc… In a way, those thoughts and memories need triggers to appear in your mind.
On instagram I posted that I'm looking for volunteers who are willing to listen to my audio messages in the evening and then do a drawing for me in the morning.
Sixteen different people with various backgrounds, studying in different fields responded and participated.
At the start of the experiment, they would receive a few audio messages from me in the evening. The first one explains that it is in the context of my master project, what it's about and then it is made clear that those memories are, here "translated" into botanical sketches/drawings, because it is the chosen language by me to share and communicate those things (reasons why are in the "background research - "What are example in which plants are used to talk about other things (ontological metaphors) ? / Why plants?"). Through this explanation of the subject, they would then be invited to think about it overnight and then draw a sketch of their current mind garden or just a sample of it (for example just one plant) in the morning. I made it clear that it doesn't have to be a super detailed art-piece and that they are completely free of drawing what they want (for example abstract or realistic or a mix etc). They were also told to leave a piece of paper and a pen or something to draw near their bed for the second part of the exercise, which is to draw in the morning as soon as they wake up.
Some people were a bit worried about the medium, because they rarely ever draw, but still gave it a try.
When I received the drawings in the morning, most people shared their feedback on the experience even if I didn't ask for it. It was a lot of very interesting discussions: For some people, it was an "easy" exercise to do, in the sense that they right away could think about something and then translate it into a plant. For some other people, it took them a little bit more time and they expressed that they were worried of doing the exercise "wrong" because of how open the instructions were. But for most people, this exercise was meditative and a positive one to do.
For one person out of the sixteen, the exercise was not possible to do. They explained that they couldn't translate those private memories into a drawing of plants because it's too abstract.
Although people didn't talk with each other, some results have elements in common in it:
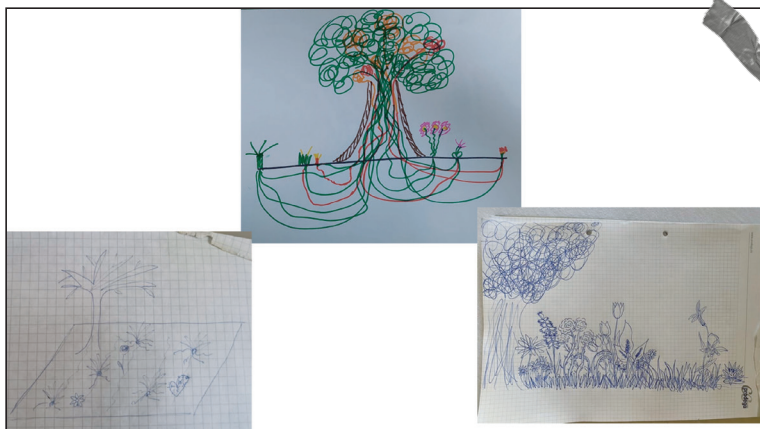

There's a big tree in their garden. The person who made the drawing at the center also expressed that for them, the tree represents them, and how it is linked to every memory through the roots.

In those three drawings, a face is added, to express a mood that the person is currently feeling.

In those drawings, a face is added, to express a mood that the person is currently feeling.
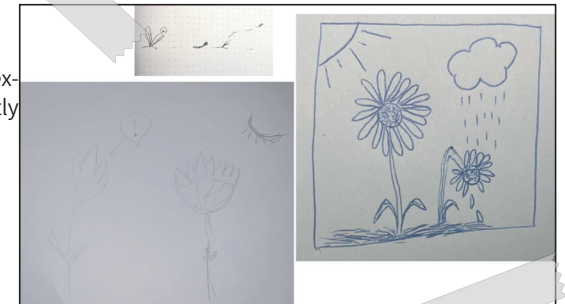
Those two results had a longer/more complex story to it. The person who drew the one on the left told me that they could think of a word right away in the evening because they have been thinking about it a lot lately. And that this word is not just a plant, rather the water which is feeding the garden.
On the drawing on the right, the person made it not exactly during the morning after waking up but during an insomnia. They pictured the "garden" more as a close space that belongs to you, hidden to the neighbor's eyes with objects and furniture, not only botanical elements. Which I thought was a very interesting take on the subject that I didn't think of.
What I take from this experiment is that it has meditative aspects to it to others, but could maybe be more interesting to do it on a regular basis (for example once a month) to see how the results are evolving and if it makes you feel better in general.

Words: the problem might be in the way we talk/the language itself

Speaking to each other is in the center of a lot of interactions between humans. Either it is with sounds, gestures or other mediums, languages and codes are used to express different information. In Norse mythology, speech was a gift from the god (Cristiano, 2018), while in the Hebrew bible, languages were given as a punishment to humans, creating confusion and conflicts. (wikipedia anonyms, n.d.)) But we probably all know through our personal experiences that even two people speaking the same language can have misunderstandings and miscommunications, eventually leading to "scarring words".

Talking about the things that are affecting you to the right people is proven to help. In this case, telling someone you trust about that sentence or words that stays in your mind can be a way/one of the ways to deal with it or at least start to deal with it. Telling someone about a story can also be a way to share something touching or strong. Putting a light into something intimate. But here again, speech might have a limit in the way it is. Looking on forums like quora or reddit, I saw that a lot of people are discussing the matter using their own experiences. (Zimmer, n.d.) But through the posts, I came across interesting stories of bilingual people, saying that it isn't just the language, but also the culture of the place you live in or are currently staying at. (Lavaur, n.d.) In some cultures, it is for example strange to open up about your feelings, or can be seen as rude to be too honest. While in other cultures, it is more perceived as normal/healthy.

Some negative words and sentences I talk about, were told by people saying or implying they were joking. In those cases: is the problem in the way some people phrase humor? Or is it something like the way our brain can maybe not filter out the meanings away from some words?

One theory could be that the brain doesn't directly grasp the concept of humor and negatives. (Herrault, 2018) According to this article by Sophie Herrault, if you say "do not think about trees" you will think about trees. Because your brain will understand "think" and "trees" as images and/or feelings right away without taking into account the other elements and the context of the sentence. It could be similar to humor that can be hurtful. This article (When Humor Hurts, 2017) from Ken Druck, acknowledges that humor can indeed be hurtful, but also questions on both sides (the person who said the joke and the person who heard it) what could be changed. Eleanor Roosevelt once said "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." Implying you could sometimes trick your mindset to empower yourself, saying that you'll be the victim only if you chose to be.

"Drawing the line between funny and not-so-funny is not as easy as it sounds" wrote Ken Druck in the article. But he also came up with a list of suggestions to practice putting awareness into action:

"1. Adopt a Code of Conduct for the personal, social and organizational use of humor.
· Humor that's laced with anger, hurt or resentment is a bad idea.
· Step back, recuse yourself from conversations where hurtful humor is being used.
· Practice kindness in your use of humor.

2. Do a Humor Self-Audit. If you use humor in a way that could hurt someone, stop doing it and consider apologizing to anyone you may have hurt.

3. Summon the courage to speak up and/or report it to someone in authority if you're a victim of hurtful humor, or live/work/go to school where hurtful humor is the norm.

4. Take a deep breath and lighten up if you find yourself taking things too personally and overreacting to even harmless jokes.

5. Be patient and loving with family members and close friends who you're trying to make aware of their hurtful humor."

(When Humor Hurts, 2017)

Words: written vs spoken, the internet and anonymous speaking

In the previous chapter, we touched on how it can be difficult to express how we feel toward something. More specifically, why do we feel the way we feel because of a memory and how it behaves in our mind.

It can be difficult to put words on abstract, non-physical things and the right metaphor is sometimes hard to find when speaking directly to someone. The action of writing allows one to take more time to think about how to explain and phrase something. It is also a different approach, as it only has to make sense to you and doesn't have to someone else. It also doesn't have to fit in any cultural codes as the writer is the only person reading. This freedom that writing allows, can also be a negative thing. For instance, on the internet, when some people talk to other people.

It is well known that the anonymity internet gives you can make some people say things that they wouldn't normally say in front of the other person's face.

I, for example, listened recently to a podcast/interview of Antoine Daniel, creator and youtuber, who talked about how negative comments and tweets about his work ended up making him not want to put any creations out there anymore. (DrFeelGood, 2021) This shows that hurtful words don't need to be spoken in order to have a long-term impact on someone. It also shows that the written positive comments, even if they are a majority, (for example in the youtube comment sections of someone's video) are not able to restore balance. It's like the brain completely drowns them or ignores them.

Also interesting to point out that it doesn't need to come from someone you know in order to have an impact on you.

THE INSTALLATION, ARTEFACT

Physical prototypes

Before the final artefact was made, some experiments and prototypes around the subject were made. The first approach was about how one could interact with an artificial plant.

A soft plastic plant was turned into a controller with a makeymakey which would make the ambient sound around change through the game engine Unity.
The interaction here causing the sound feedback could come from a visitor, but could also just be just the wind moving the leaves.


Photo 1: Arthur Collins, Makey-makey workshop with Sonja Bökler (prototype of interactive flower reacting to wind and people)

From this first experiment, I noticed that it took a lot of care and time to make the electronic work on such a thin and fragile controller(which is here a fake flower made out of plastic). For it to work with human interaction was more or less fine for the time it was installed on the roof of the school (about 30 minutes). But if it needed to work for longer and only with the wind, I would've needed to do it differently. Main reason being that the thin connections made out of aluminum foil broke after a few interactions. I tried using playdough to make it hold better since it's also a conductive material, but it quickly looked too thick for a traditional flower, giving it a very crafty look and dried really fast with the wind outside.

Another approach was to work with speech recognition technology since the project is about people saying things to each other. A video would start showing an abstract scene and an emotion attached to it. Afterwards, a garden scene would be shown with text at the top. As soon as the text was read, the plant would grow in the garden and the scene would then switch back to the beginning scene but with a completely different emotion/ambiance. Changed by the words which were said by the visitor. To achieve this effect, a free library on Unity was used.
The scene made in the prototype was a landscape, but turned out to be too generic for the visitor to recognize that it was the same scene at the beginning and the end with different emotions. This is why much more detailed scenes would have to be chosen (for example specific places with objects. In a way more Still-life oriented.)
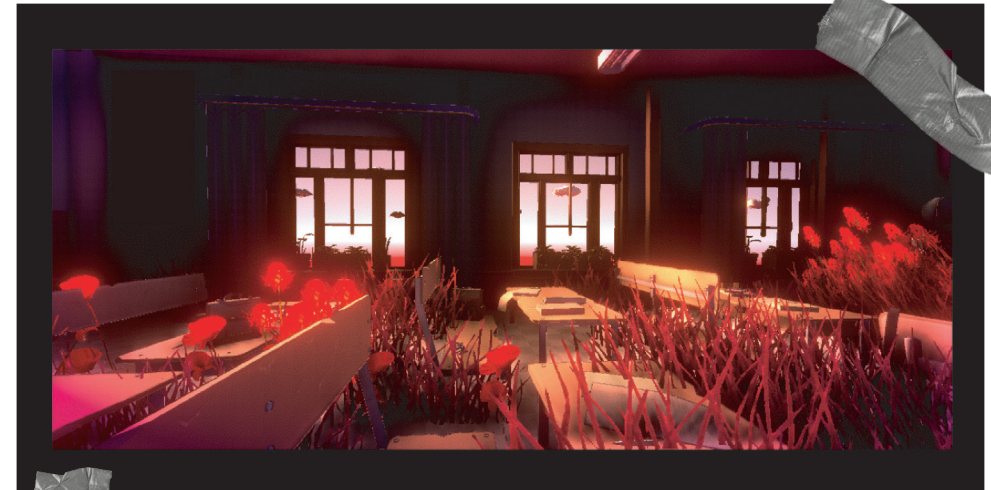
Speaking of visuals, one of the first experiments I worked on was to interview two friends of mine through audio messages about whether the idea of comparing memories of words/sentences/remarks you've been told to plants made sense. If they also experience that going back to specific places triggers such memories. And lastly we discussed that some hurtful things often are heard in public places (for example at school, public transport, on the street etc…).
My experiment continued with me trying to put visuals over the discussions we had in only 1-2 days. And can be visualized on vimeo:

https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/523249687

I decided to include this video in my final artefact as it shows the beginning of my process, the explanation of the subject and shows the complexity of one of the research questions of the project: is the issue coming from the way people speak to each other or is it coming from the way we deal with those words inside our mind?

Next prototype was to test the overall ambiance of the setting. How does it feel to be in the dark with only small flowers glowing? How is it to be on fake grass and kneel down to listen to a very faint sound coming from it? What does it sound like to pour water into a fake plant and how to get rid of the water afterwards?


I wanted to immerse myself and fellow students into this setting and from that, I got the feedback that the relaxing ambiance was really a nice experience. Which gave me the idea to hide different kinds of water containers below each plant, for the pouring of the water itself to produce different sounds, inducing a meditative state for most people. I also got the feedback that the grass is nice at the beginning, but then becomes not very comfortable. Which is why in the final artefact, I decided to use a softer material for the floor.

Last but not least to this date was during a seminar about filmmaking and storytelling at school, where I got the chance to make the following experiment: The aim was to try to abstractly tell a story only with still visuals and see what was being understood by the public. Three mediums were being used. Lo Fi filming, 2D animation on procreate and 3D animation on blender/unity. Because of the clear differences between the 3 mediums, people interpreted it as 3 different stories into one. Which is an interesting result for me. The styles would maybe need to be much more mixed in order to be clear that only one story is being told. Also learned that sound and text are essential depending on what I want to communicate.

It expanded the possibilities for me, more specifically gave me the tools to make one of the videos that visitors will be able to view in my installation.
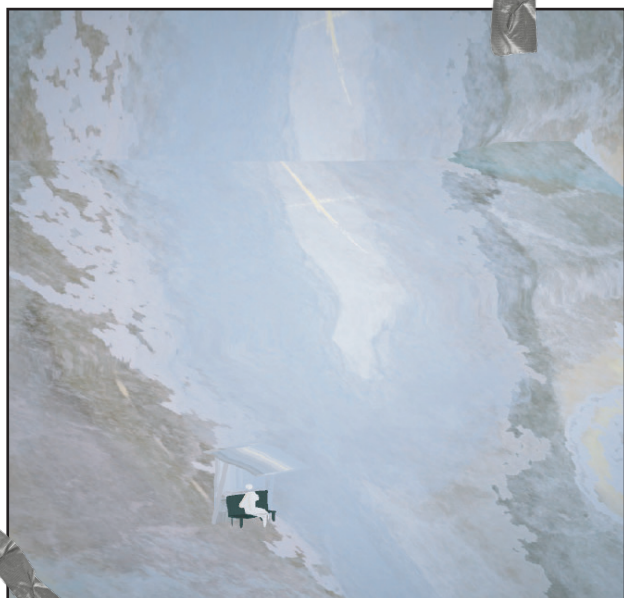
How was the interaction imagined and designed between the visitor and the installation?

I would like to separate this chapter into two parts. The first one is about the interactive installation and the second part is about the final exhibition's installation.

I imagine that the interactive installation would be in a very isolated, silent place for the relaxing and meditative aspect to be stronger. The ritual-like event of pouring water into a plastic plant which would have a different sound depending on the hidden container below the plant would be the main sound the person would hear at first. The light situation would then change, allowing the focus of the visitor to shift into the small plant that just have been watered and the video next to it. After the video, the visitor can see the plant on the screen, and some trigger words to say out loud to make the plant react. After all the trigger words have been said or after 2 minutes the video stops and the light is reset to the original settings.

But already a lot of problems would appear in this setting. How would the visitor know exactly what to do ? The idea was probably too abstract. Which is why, the final artefact has more context and "in between results" of mine. It would also have been impossible from a budget, technical and time perspective.

The artefact is imagined that way: in one of the exhibition rooms, I have a corner delimited with some curtains. It is not clear yet if someone will stand at the entrance to introduce the person into the installation or if written instructions will be enough. But both will be tested during the exhibition time. Either way, the visitor is invited to take off their shoes, then they are given a small water container and told that they can water the plastic plants.

The closest plant to the entrance is placed near a monitor. Watering it activates a video with interviews and 3D visuals (headphones are also available there).

The next plant has a much smaller monitor next to it. Watering this plant changes the light in the whole installation before a video stars on that small monitor. The sound comes from the plant, inviting the visitor to sit down or even get closer. After the video, the visitor is instructed to say some trigger words out loud to make the 3D animated plant (which represents a memory of words of mine) react.

Once the light is then back to normal, the last part of the installation is a reflective space with written instructions and a long parchment paper where people can share, either as written words or botanical drawing, something positive they want the next visitors to read or something positive they heard in their life. Each day the parchment paper will be rolled to leave new space to express for the next visitors

The rest of the final exhibition's installation will be described in the appendix of the thesis, as it might still change until then.

When was it built and where was it exhibited?

When exactly the artefact was built is still a mystery for me as I am writing this paragraph. The reason is that in the school where I am doing this project, the thesis had to be handed in before the artefact started to be built. But the detail of how and when it was built will hopefully be found in the appendix of the thesis.

All I know right now, is that it will be exhibited at the Zürcher Hochschule der Künste in Zürich during the diploma exhibition 2022. I got assigned a corner of a room next to 2-3 other works. I assume that visitors might make some noises in the room but I'm hoping that the curtains of my space will allow some calm and isolation.

What was the aim ?

The main aim of the final artefact was to showcase parts of my research, prototypes, experiment, video of the installation's prototype and the overall idea that is being explored in the thesis.

It is also an opportunity for me to test the subject to a broader audience than just my friends on instagram and designers/artists classmates. I will hopefully have the opportunity to exchange with people on site about what they thought about the theme and hear their experiences.

I will now go more in depth about the aims of each decision of the final artefact (for example: the aim of the different interactions, the aim of choosing X style or Y music etc…)

an overall disclaimer:

Coming from a visual art and game design background, I like when not every single thing is explained. I much prefer when there's space for interpretation. Space for poetry, freedom for people to choose how much they want to understand the project rather than forcing the meaning, my research and entire theory into them.

What I mean by that is that for example, it is totally already a success for me if the ambiance was already interesting to be immersed in. More infos are available in the thesis and eventually in a small booklet but the visitor isn't forced to read the whole thing to be able to enter the installation.

Choice of visual style of the videos in the installation:

Aside from my personal motivation mentioned at the beginning to have the opportunity to practice in 3D modeling software more, I thought it would be more fitting to go for animation rather than real film. The main reason being this quote "La mémoire est toujours déjà imagination." (The memories are always already imagination) - Sarah Kofman / L'enfance de l'art. (Le figaro, n.d.) Our memories are shaped by our feelings, making them differ from reality. Therefore I think there's no reason trying to reproduce the memories exactly like we think they were, but it is rather more interesting to try to visualize the way they appear to us in the now. And I personally think that animation mediums allow this well.

Choice of sound in the video

The very first video which can be seen in the installation is the video I already described in my "physical prototypes" chapter (design research week video). So here I'll describe more in depth the audio of the second video from the main interactive "plant" in the installation.

To make music, I very much like the way to compose by ear explained by Tessa violet in this youtube video: https://youtu.be/Y86LIG3VfWw?t=150

In the video she explains that each chords is attached to a feeling or situation that it evokes, making it easier to combine them. Since the video in the installation is inspired by one of my own memories, because I lived this moment, I know exactly what it felt like, and therefore, through Tessa Violet's technique, I know exactly what that video can sound like.
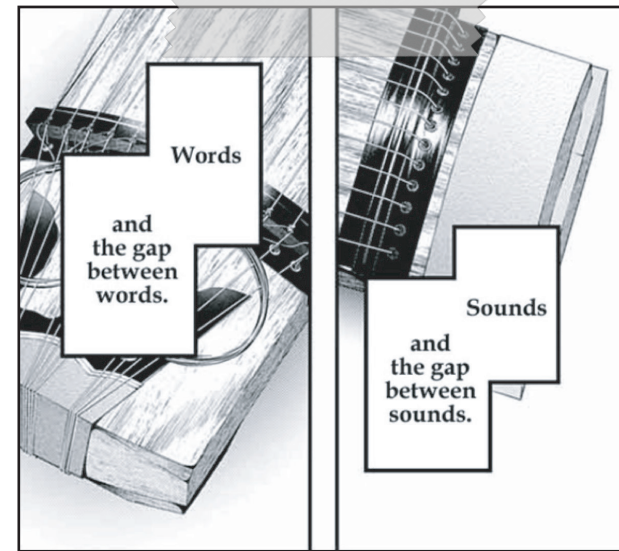
Screenshot 3: panel from the manga "Kono oto tomare" (Myanimelist, 2019)

Choice of the 3rd part of the installation (the reflective space)

The aim of this zone in the installation is to invite people to shortly reflect on the overall subject. More specifically, the aim is to "highlight" some positive memories of things we've been told or to share something positive to read to the next visitor. The reason being because, the human brain usually has a hard time doing that and therefore we are more likely to think about the negatives in our everyday life.

As things might still change until the day of the exhibition, the rest of my aims will eventually be found in the appendix of the thesis.

How was the installation built and how did it work on the technical side

In order to hide most of the technology and get rid of the water, the whole thing is built on a fake floor made out of wooden pallets.

For the videos to be activated through the watering action of the visitor, there's a hidden water container under each plastic flower. The water (which conducts electricity) acts as the "button" in the two electric circuits (one is the arduino and the other one is my unity program). In the codes, the programs are detecting the "button" and then a boolean is switched so that the button isn't pressed more than once. A timer is then resetting the boolean every 3 minutes, assuming that a visitor will not try to water the same plant twice in a row under 3 minutes. (if they do nothing would happen but they would get no feedback and might get confused.)

For the speech recognition on my Unity program, I followed this tutorial on youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29vyEOgsW8s by Dapper Dino. Any english words or sentences can be put under brackets into a specific part of the code. A jack microphone is then hidden near the plastic plant for the visitor to be able to speak those trigger words to it.

For the first plant in the installation which only starts a video, it was a bit harder because I used a raspberry pi for the first time. My plan A is that I'll connect it to a makey-makey in order for it to work the same way it would for the other plant, and if I can't figure out how to code this in python, my plan B is to have the video looping the whole time. Visitors can wear headphones to watch this video and listen to the interviews.

The part of the installation where people are invited to write or draw on paper doesn't have technology. But there's a long parchment paper with hanging above: a paper with instructions, quickly explaining the topic and that usually positive words don't stay in our mind as easily as the negative ones. Therefore, I write that I find it important to pay tribute to the positive memories of things we heard and invite people to share: either something positive that has been told to them or something like an advice or something nice that they want the next visitor to read. They are free to share it as a botanical drawing or written words.

As the final exhibition for the diploma at the school where I did this project took place after the deadline of this thesis, I do not know yet how I decided to build the rest of it. But it will eventually be in the appendix of the thesis.

What could have been better in the project? What could be improved?

If the thesis and my research were to be extended, another category of words/sentences/remarks that I didn't mention or explored are "the things we wish we would've said but we didn't". As it is something that came up in a lot of my discussions with other people and that I saw a few times on my youtube examples. I totally see how it can be as haunting as something we have heard or said which is why I think it could be worth exploring and finding a way through botanical metaphors to explain how this kind of thought behaves and what are the different ways to deal with it.

For the installation itself, finding a way for it to be more automated would be essential for me to be able to exhibit it longer than a day. For example: how can the water container be filled ? and how can the water in the different bowls be emptied for the next visitor in order for them to experience the same type of sound as the previous visitor?

If other problems appear, the rest of this chapter can be found in the appendix, which will be written after the exhibition.

## METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATION

I'm happy if it could make someone more aware, through reading my thesis, of the idea that, just like plants take a lot of time to grow, a garden takes a lot of time and care to become the way one would like to. It is the same for the things happening into our mind: there's

"no quick fixes, unlike a lot of things in our modern life"

-(Stuart-Smith, 2020)

I think people could benefit from taking the time to think about such things. Taking the time to really meditate and be aware of the state of your "mind-garden". Especially in times where one is not as busy as usual, it can be easier to drift into not ideal mental patterns. I myself noticed during the covid-19 lockdowns, that my mind was much more easily becoming a "forest" than in normal times. Talking about such phenomena with others helps us understand that we are not alone. It can also help us understand ourselves more, through the process of putting words or images on how our thoughts and memories behave. Coming up with tricks and strategies to have healthier "mind-gardens" .

Weight of words: how to raise awareness around the way we talk
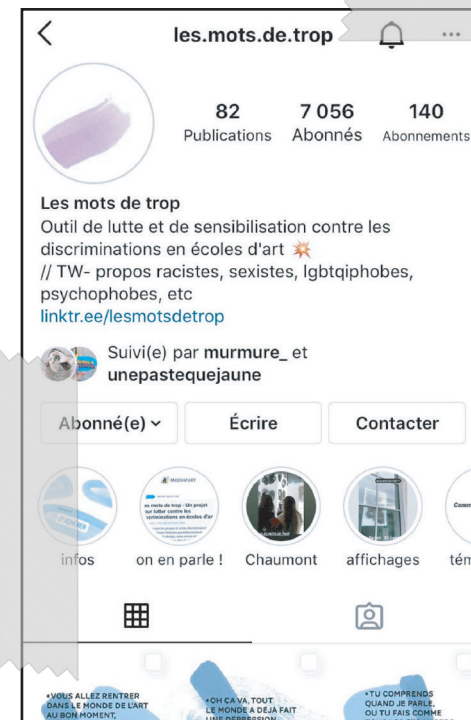
CONCLUSION

On social media, I've come across some platforms that are sharing remarks which have been told to their followers. Those accounts in particular have different approaches. The one on the left, focuses on words/sentences/remarks told in the context of art schools (mostly from France, Belgium, Switzerland). Each post is a sentence and below is written in which school it has been heard. A few translated ones:

"Go back to your country to do your feminist things "
- a teacher to a student at HEAR Mullhouse"

"Do you understand when I'm talking or are you acting like every immigrant and saying "yes" but actually don't understand a thing? "
- a teacher to a student at ENSA Paris Malaquais"

"It's a good time for you to enter the art field because woman artist are now a trend "
- a teacher to a student at Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts, Bruxelles"

"Oh please stop it, everyone goes through depression in their life, it's nothing "
- a teacher to a student who was talking about her problems to work lately at EESAB Quimper

Most remarks are shocking because of how descriminating they are. What is even more violent is that in an art-school context, the student has to listen to those remarks and is supposed to take them as "critics", while they could obviously be seen as personal attacks. This instagram page is on one side a way for people to share their experiences. People in the comments react, relate and sometimes have been able to guess in the comments which teacher said those things when they come from the same school. It is also a tool to make people aware that there's a bigger problem to be addressed: Why such things are being told in an art school context and why are the people speaking like that thinking it is okay? From my experience, I think one theory could be that, in art, some people think it is fine to be provocative because it is part of art. Another theory is that in the context of a presentation, the student is alone in front of the jury and people may think that no one else will hear what is being said. But I of course also think like this instagram page that this is not okay and that things should be addressed and changed.

The other picture on the right shows accounts which have a focus on bullying at school. These platforms focus on the "now": How to help the people who are currently hurt. Especially when your surrounding/family is maybe not available or suitable for that. What options are there for people to vent online or even just talk ? The focus of those pages is often not to raise awareness around the people who speak the hurtful words directly. But to give to the victims a space where they feel understood and heard. With some accounts, you can DM the owner to talk about your problems, but it is not the idea that you'd regularly be able to talk to that person. Tips are sometimes given, but you then have to figure out how to deal with those things in the long run for your case yourself as it may vary a lot from each different context.

What was the response from the visitors and overall feedback?

As the final exhibition for the diploma at the school where I did this project took place after the deadline of this thesis, I do not know yet how the visitors reacted and the feedback. But it will hopefully be in the appendix of the thesis.

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Summery of all images:

Screenshot 1: Illustration by @annawandagogusey on instagram

Screenshot 2: example of a botanical visual metaphor being used on social media

Image 1:https://img.betaseries.com/PrXMLqWlq0kwpdXoQmvH3Lj512Q=/500x282/smart/
https%3A%2F%2Fpictures.betaseries.com%2Ffonds%2Foriginal%2F28677_1619960172.jpg

Image 2: Reichenbach, A. (2020). "D'où est-ce que tu viens? (Where do you Come From?)"[video/
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Image 3: Gupta , S. (2019). For, In Your Tongue, I Cannot Fit [Installation]. www.gazette-drouot.com,
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 Photo 1: Arthur Collins, Makey-makey workshop with Sonja Bökler (prototype of interactive flower
reacting to wind and people)

Screenshot 3: panel from the manga "Kono oto tomare" (Myanimelist, 2019)

Tape 1: https://www.freeiconspng.com/thumbs/tape-png/tape-png-0.png

Tape 2: http://assets.stickpng.com/images/58c7f410e665570916c65407.png

Tape 3: https://www.freeiconspng.com/uploads/tape-png-22.png

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Appendix

Some more answers from the google form/interviews which were interesting :
"Weeds don't do anything wrong, but because they multiply really fast and take a lot of space, you usually don't want them in your own garden. In french, weeds are called «mauvaises herbes» which directly translates to «Bad herbs». What is your opinion about it? Do you think all weeds are bad plants?"

11 answers:

-No

-I think the problem lies with humans growing monocrop fields. If we understood plant synergies better, we could avoid the «problems» of stealing nutrients that come with weeds. However this is a problem with manual labour. So how about we just put more cows and sheep on our fields to eat the weeds?

-No, depends on the landscaped and space one have

-Not at all. I love some weeds. But I had a garden and a certain kind of weed (low, dense, green, deeply rooted) took over strawberries and other stuff and they were impossible to get rid of. which i didnt like. I always wonder why some weeds are called weeds and some dont. some are beautful, like Löwenzahn.

-No plant is inherently bad. It's just not ideal to have in a garden because they grow fast and take resources from the other plants

-In a designed garden environment, weeds are not necessarily part of the design. They may appear to be stealer of soil nutrients and are sometimes not aesthetically pleasing. Though in a natural environment that is not designed, they can be really nice to look at. I don't think all weeds are bad, I think some of them are more aesthetically pleasing than the other. If they were not accounted for the design process, then they shouldn't be there. Its like you invite your plant friends to a party but this random person/plant that you have no idea about shows up, what do you do, keep them and see what happens or tell them to leave?

-Ich denke nicht, dass es schlechte Pflanzen gibt. Aber es gibt Pflanzen, die man in einem Garten nicht im Übermass haben möchte. Dann muss man die Bedingungen des Gartens so gestalten, dass die erwünschten Pflanzen gute Wachstumsbedingungen haben und die unerwünschten Pflanzen schlechte Wachstumsbedingungen.

-Probably not all. Depends on the context. I think what makes them «bad» is that they can take a lot of the nutrition from other plants, if we are gardening and growing other stuff.

-I think some of these mauvaises herbes are even beautiful! But as you say when they reproduce so fast it sometimes gets annoying. I am not sure about that fact, but some mauvaises herbs are also not really bee friendly? So my mum for example always tries to reduce them to have a more bee friendly garden.

-Most of them have a purpose in the ecosystem, like keeping some insects away or are good for the soil, but a garden is not a natural ecosystem, so they interfere
Weeds are not bad per se, I think if they are «Neophythen»/invasive plants the become a problem. I personally really like the looks of many weeds. I also prefer a messy, «wild» and natural garden or lawn.
«any remarks? This last question is space for you to write whatever you want»
7 réponses

I liked your experiment very much. Specially also your Meditation.

I am reading "Sprache und Sein" from Kübra Gümü☒ay at the moment. When you were telling the story about "La vie en roux" I was thinking that in this book might be some interesting connections to your topic in terms of what it does to someone when they are named and thus set apart from the standard.

Made me think, feel better, meditate, nostalgy, opened a gate to a different world for a few minutes! Good luck with your MA. :-)

I like the poetic part of it and to think about the power of words and what we can interpret it in different contexts.

Thank you for the special philosophical experience

I enjoyed the meditation journey ;)