

andriessse

Leliegracht 47
1016 GT Amsterdam
www.andriessse-eyck.com

T +31 (0)20 623 6237
info@andriessse-eyck.com



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Interwoven - Exercises in Root System Domestication - Diana Scherer

One of the pioneers in biotech art is Diana Scherer, a German visual artist who lived in Amsterdam for over 20 years. At the core of her botanical installations, textiles and photography lies a great admiration for and curiosity about what neurobiologists call “the brain of plants.” The artist studies plants and root systems so as to control their “natural” growth processes. In her studio she creates artificial biotopes to grow her root art using soil, seeds, light and subterranean templates from both natural and man-made patterns. The roots follow these patterns and from there on, the work grows itself.

Diana Scherer explores the relationship between humans and the natural environment. Through her installations she examines the boundaries between plant culture and plant nature. What does “natural” mean in the Anthropocene? Are human beings part of nature or a parasitic species on the environment? For the past few years, her fascination has focused on the dynamics of the root system. Scherer applies the intelligence of plants in her work and makes their hidden world visible. With her long-term project *Interwoven* the natural network of the roots is transformed into an artificial textile. Scherer brings together her research in weaving techniques with the strength of the botanical material. Often working closely with biologists and engineers, she manipulates the growth processes below ground and produces living textiles.

Her latest commission for the 23rd Biennale of Sydney, ‘Entanglement’ (2022), explores xylem vessels, the critical tissue responsible for transportation of water through plants.

In the growing structures Scherer combines the geometric principles of nature with basic man-made patterns from her surroundings. The ordering principles of nature is the theory that assumes that the same elements and patterns keep coming back in every plant and consist of a geometric order. She works with universal signs, such as the circle or the square and combines them with the anatomy of plants at the microscopic level. The cellular structures of plants.

The bare root system presented as a textile or as a living sculpture shows traces of a reckless intervention in a natural system, but also shows a concept for a possible cultivated path together. The work refers to current ecological issues. With her images, Scherer wants to approach the theme in a poetic way and sees herself as a link between science and the audience.

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About

Diana Scherer is a visual artist who lives and works in Amsterdam. She was born in Lauingen Germany 1971 and studied visual arts at the Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam.

Recent exhibitions include *Intelligence of Plants* Frankfurter Kunstverein, *Rivus* Biennale of Sydney 2022, *Its our Backyard* Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Altered Nature* - MIT Museum Boston, *Still Life* -Foam Amsterdam & Himalaya Museum Shanghai, and *Fashioned from Nature* at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and Shenzhen. She has published two books with Van Zoetendaal Publishers; *Nurture Studies* 2012 and *Mädchen* 2015.

The project *Interwoven* has been honoured by the New Material Award 2016. The New Material Award is a biennial prize organized by Het Nieuwe Instituut Rotterdam that challenges artists and designers to develop sustainable materials and innovative technologies. In recent years, three Delft – University of Technology students have graduated from the Project *InterWoven* (Master of Science).